





A

BEQUEST OF
REV. CANON SCADDING, D. D.
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By Robert Dehonestone Williams
Sometime Pastor of the New Month

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THE
YOUTH ⁵¹⁹⁶⁴₁₉₀₁
OF
SHAKSPEARE.

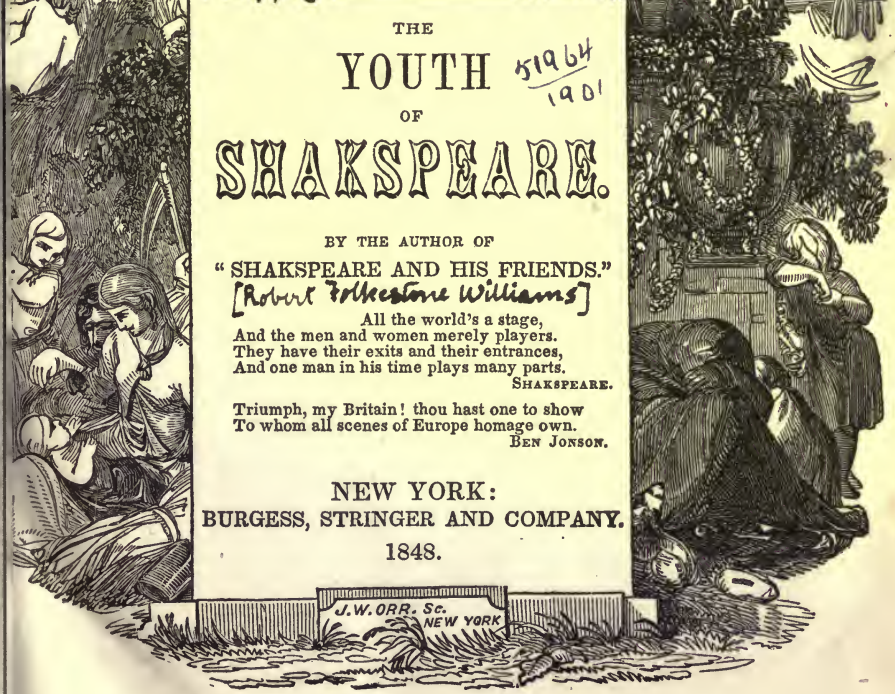
BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SHAKSPEARE AND HIS FRIENDS."
[Robert Folkestone Williams]

All the world's a stage,
And the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.
SHAKSPEARE.

Triumph, my Britain! thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage own.
BEN JONSON.

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TO
THE ADMIRERS
OF
"Honie-Tong'd Shakspeare,"
AND OF THE OTHER ILLUSTRIOUS SPIRITS OF
THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENGLAND,
THESE VOLUMES,
WITH TRUE HUMBLENESS,
AND ENTIRE DEVOTEDNESS TO THE SUBJECT,
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY
THEIR FELLOW-WORSHIPPER,
AND VERY OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE,

ADDRESSED BY THE AUTHOR, WITH A SUITABLE PROPER RESPECT IN HIM, TO
HIS SINGULAR GOOD FRIEND,

THE COURTEOUS READER.

METHINKS an apology is necessary for adventuring on a subject of the extreme difficulty essayed in these volumes; but the cause of my entering on so notable ambitious a task, will perhaps hold me excused in some measure; for this was it: I had noted with exceeding sorrowfulness, and a becoming indignation, divers small biographers, muddle-headed commentators, and insolent cyclopædia scribblers, with as scarce a commodity of truth as of wit, garnishing their silly conceits of the noblest heart and brain that ever labored for universal humanity, with a prodigal store of all manner of despicable vileness, and wretched impudent folly; and having had much deep study, and moreover, being possessed of a very boundless love of the subject, I thought I would strive, as far as lay within the compass of my humble ability, to put to shame these pitiful traducers, and set up before the world a statue of this High Priest of Nature, as he ought to be entitled, as like as might be unto the wondrous admirableness of his natural gifts.

I doubt hugely there has ever been a writer of so catholic a reputation as this so slandered character; for, as I firmly believe, it is scarce possible to point out any one part of the huge globe, where some faint whisper of him hath not penetrated. On the desertest rock, in the savagest country, in all extremes of climate, and among the goodliest and gloomiest features of land and sea, somewhat of the countless great heaps of comfort he hath left us, hath had its exquisite sweet influence. In what remote wilderness hath the missionary set up his dwelling, which knoweth not in his lighter hours, the cheerful piety of his matchless preaching? Over which inhospitable towering mountain doth the traveller seek a path, that hath not heard, to beguile the way of its weariness, the welcome remembrance of his infinite wit? And over what far distant ocean hath the sea-boy strained his gaze, that never caught from such lofty gallery snatches of the inimitable music of his everlasting tuneful verse? There are no such places. He hath adventured wide and far; and his stream of purest English hath flowed from the gentle Avon through every monstrous sea that dasheth its violent, fierce billows against the walls of the globe; and it is drunk with a like delicate rare freshness as its humble source, on the banks of the gigantic Miss issipi, the mighty Ganges, and on those of their in good time, as glorious rival, the Darling.

Amongst the living, there existeth no sign of any such greatness. Every succeeding generation it seemeth to increase, whilst such examples as had un-

disputed supremacy before it made itself manifest, have since wrapped their antique cloaks about them, and been content with humbler places. The shades of Sophocles, Æschylus, Euripides, Menander, and Aristophanes, are stirred from their long deep lethargy by wondrous memorials of the wood-stapler's son of Stratford uttered within the ruin which was once their "Globe," by some adventurous tourist from an island that never had name or existence in their memories; and so their masters in arms yet pupils in learning, the haughty Romans, rise from their desolate theatres marvelling exceedingly to hear there proclaimed in all that appertaineth to excellence in the writing of Tragedy and Comedy the undisputable omnipotence of a Briton.

Thus, in his national proper apparelling, goeth he so famously abroad, but in a foreign dress he is scarce less revered, for the principal nations of Europe have strove to make his excellence as familiar with them as was possible, and have turned his English into as eloquent language of their own as they had at their commandment. By these means, the Spaniard, the Italian, the Frenchman, and the German, have got him into their friendly acquaintance. But of these only the Germans can be said either to know him thoroughly, or appreciate him with a proper affection. These excellent worthy persons do love him with all their hearts, study him so intently, they will not let the slightest of his manifold graces to escape without the full measure of admiration it meriteth, and do so much make of him the general talk, as though all Germany were but Stratford-upon-Avon, and her sole glory no other than William Shakspeare. I have ventured to style him the High Priest of Nature, and truly not without proper warrant. He is the chief interpreter of her mysteries, and the sovereign pontiff of her universal church, wherever the beautiful is felt or the intellectual understood; and Nature, who gave unto him his surpassing attributes, receiveth back, in a myriad of exhaustless channels, as I have insufficiently noted, the divine excellence that came of her giving. Since he hath ministered at her altar there hath been no schism as to her doctrine, nor sign of dispute of her authority; for he so put her religion into language and action, that wherever there is enlightened humanity, there must ever remain the most earnest, loving, deep-hearted devotedness. In this capacity it is as utter foolishness to attempt drawing up an inventory of the riches hoarded in the treasuries of the deep, as to seek to particularize, with any thing nigh unto faithfulness, the prodigal amount of good he hath caused to be distributed to mankind. As a benefactor, 'tis vain to look for his peer; as a philanthropist, no one hath lived with such profit to his fellows. The legacy which he left in trust to Time, for the universal benefit, hath this peculiar property, that the more of it is disposed of, the more abundantly will it increase; and so rapidly doth it multiply itself as it getteth to be spread abroad, that it may, without any color of exaggeration, be said, it is a benefaction that must embrace all space and all eternity.

Whilst endeavoring to exhibit something that approaches to the true character of the man, I have also sought to portray the principal characteristics of the age on which he conferred such marvellous honor. Perchance some may think that these volumes are worthy only of that sort of credit a mere romance can look for; but let them be assured, there is more of history in these pages than divers books purporting to be histories can boast of, and, whenever they hold not Truth by the hand, they tread as nigh upon her heels as may be. Mayhap too, others may look on divers passages, savoring in no slight prominence of over-boldness in the writer, but in very truth, it is nought else but the daring which love inspires, and ought, it is respectfully urged, in no case to be considered as coming of any other source. Of the imperfectness of the elaborate picture I have essayed, I am as conscious as any person that breathes, but I doubt not amongst

all liberal kind hearts, I shall find such charitable constructions put on my deficiency, as may induce them to allow that the performance, humble as it may be, hath not been altogether unprofitable. This I have been the more induced to look for, from the generous encouragement afforded to "Shakspeare and his Friends," by such critics and scholarly persons who have taken it in hand, who both publicly and privately have bestowed on it their commendation with such exceeding bounteousness as I had not dared to expect. That the praise so generally given, applied much more to the subject than its treatment, I cannot help but believe; but let that be as it may, I will ever seek what means I have at my disposal, to prove how earnestly I strive for the desert in which it ought to have originated.

Doubtless, it would be but fitting of me here, to make some apology for publishing these works out of their proper order, as the present should have preceded its predecessor; but methinks I cannot do better than leave the fault to be dealt with by the reader as he shall think fittest—hope it may be found a matter of such heinousness as to deprive the offender of some excusing, particularly as each is a distinct work; complete in itself. If there exist no other objection, I doubt not, despite their irregular starting, they will now run their race together as fairly and as gallantly withal as can be expected of them.

There hath been some stir lately made concerning of the orthography of the ever honored name of our "Sweet Swan of Avon." On that point, it is only necessary here to say that it was customary with divers notable persons of the age of Elizabeth, to write their names in more than one form, just as it took their fantasy, proof of which will be discovered in the letters of the time, wherein Raleigh sometimes signeth himself "Rawley," Lord Burleigh hath some three or four ways of spelling his name, and others do the like sort of thing; therefore, to find a variation in the autographs of the illustrious Shakspeare is in no manner strange. The orthography here adhered to, hath the recommendation of being that which the great Bard employed in the latter period of his life, when it is supposed he must have settled it to his liking; is moreover the same that was used by the choicest of his friends, who doubtless, had the best means of knowing his humor in it, and hath been made familiar to us, in consequence of its adoption by the most learned of his editors, critics, and scholars in this, and in all other countries, who so it is presumed, ought to be the properest guides to follow in such a matter.

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HERE BEGINNETH THE STORY

OF

THE YOUTH OF SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

All was this Land ful filled of Faerie,
The Elf-Quene with hire jolie company
Daunsed full oft in many a grene mede,
This was the old opinion, as I rede.

CHAUCER.

The vallies rang with their delicious strains,
And pleasure reveled on those happy plains.

CHALKHILL.

What if my lordinge doo chance for to miss me?
The worst that can happen his cudgel will kiss
me.

TRAGICALL COMEDYE OF APIUS AND VIRGINIA.

OH! what a beauteous night was that time-honored twenty-third of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand five hundred and sixty-four! The air was clear as any crystal, and the wind just shaking the fragrance from the young blossoms, as it swept along to make music in the fresh leaves of the tall trees, did create such harmony and sweetness therein, that nothing could have appeared so delectable, save the star-bestudded sky above, wherein the lady moon was seen to glide with so silvery a brightness that the sapphire heavens, the flowery earth, and the sparkling water, were appareled in one mantle of the delicatest light. Peradventure so fair a night hath never been seen before or since; yet, of such bountiful beauty as it was throughout, there was one spot wherein its exquisite rare attractions were heaped together with so prodigal a hand, that the place, for the exceeding pleasantness of its aspect, must have been like unto that

famous garden of Paradise, that held our first parents in their primitive innocency and happiness.

It was a low meadow field, marked by sundry declivities and inequalities, whereon a goodly show of all manner of spring flowers were sleeping in the moonlight, even to the very waves of that right famous river the Avon, which was flowing along in all its refreshing loveliness, at its margin. Trees were here and there of divers kinds, garmented in their newest livery of green; a row of alders, a clump of beeches, a solitary oak, a shady coppice, were stretching far and wide in one direction; and hedges of hawthorn and elder, interspersed with crab, wild plum, and towering elms, would intersect the country in others. Close at hand was the town of Stratford, with the tall spire of the church, and the quaint eaves of the houses distinctly visible. Here stood the mansion of one of its persons of worship. There the more modest dwelling of an industrious yeoman. At one place was the cottage of the sturdy laborer; in another the tenement of the honest miller; whilst, as the eye stretched out to the distance, other buildings might be faintly seen which doubtless marked the situation of the neighboring villages.

But, although signs of habitation were thus plentiful, of man or woman not one was there in sight; for this especial reason, all manner of honest folk had laid them down to sleep long since. Little could be seen of live things, excepting perchance a water-rat swimming upon the Avon, or mayhap, a fold of sheep on the adjoining

farm; or heard, save the tinkle of the sheep-bells, or the bark of the shepherd's dog, occasionally responded to by some dog afar off; or the rushing of the water at the mill-wheel, or the croaking of the frogs among the rushes, or the hooting of an owl as she passed by, intent on a mousing expedition to the nearest barn; and these sounds made as excellent sweet music as ever poet did delight to hear. Certes this was just such a scene, and these the very properest accompaniments for awakening in the heart that profound sympathy with nature which the few to whom such feeling is familiar give expression to, in sentiments that partake of the same beauty and immortality as the source whence they spring. All at once a new and unfamiliar sound came floating upon the air. It was faint and indistinct, a mere murmur; yet musically soft and low. Gradually it grew upon the ear, as a blossom opening to the sunshine. A gentle harmony became distinguishable; then came tones of such exquisite melodiousness, it was ravishing to listen to them. At last voices, seeming in some number, were readily heard, and then, words becoming audible, they were at last distinctly repeated in the following order:

"We come from the violet's azure cells,
 We come from the cowslip's golden bells,
 From the hawthorn's odoriferous bloom we fly;
 From the dewy eaves
 Of the primrose leaves,
 From the daisy's blushing buds we hie;
 And fill the air with sounds and sights
 As though to earth all heaven was streaming,
 More sweet than lover's stolen delights,
 More bright than aught loved maid is dreaming.

We come from the snowdrop's pallid head,
 We come from the heather's lowly bed,
 From the wild bee's haunt and the wood-lark's
 home;
 From the grassy couch
 Where the lev'rets crouch,
 And the coney hides;—we come! we come!"

Whilst this roundelay was being sung, there appeared moving in the atmosphere, all manner of bright colors, like unto a goodly rainbow in the heavens, or a shower of all the delicatest flowers upon the earth, and presently forms could be distinctly traced amongst them; and as they approached the banks of the river, it was seen that they were crowds of tiny beings, of shape as beautiful as ever the eye looked on; garmented very daintily in what seemed to be blossoms of divers kinds and colors. Their complexions were marvelous fair; their hair of a bright golden hue, curling

very prettily, decorated with exceeding small wreaths, or, mayhap, a dainty sweet flower worn as a helmet; and they floated on the air with infinite ease in every possible position; some plunging head downwards; and others, as it were, reclining backwards, looking to observe who came after them. On they came, as countless as the stars; and in the centre was one, round whom the rest were thronging with a wonderful show of love and reverence; and she reclined in a car, carved of pearl that seemed to be as light as a gossamer, was shaped like a shell, and drawn by two bright-winged butterflies. Her face was as lovely as the morning light, and on her brows she wore a coronal of jasmine studded with fresh dew drops. A scarf of rose color of a singular fine fabric, the material whereof had doubtless been stolen from the silkworm's web, was tied from the shoulder to the hip, where it was fastened in a bow over a close vest of a sapphire hue, richly ornamented with gold leaves; and the rest of her appareling was of the like pretty fantasy. Scarcely had this exquisite fair creature and her companions alighted on the enameled banks of the river, and the voices had become hushed into an indistinct murmur of pleasure at finding themselves at their journey's end, when the air was again filled with the same wondrous harmonies and delicate words, that had there been created so recently; but the voices now were of a deeper tone.

Presently there appeared, hovering about, a vast crowd of similar little beings as those that had a moment since alighted on the ground, only these were of a more masculine aspect, and garmented in hose and doublet, fitting tight to the body, of divers delicate colors, wearing famous pretty feathers in their caps, mayhap filched from the small birds; and some had quivers of arrows at their backs. Some wore a smart rapier, of at least the length of a tailor's needle; and many carried spears of a marvelous fine point and thinness. These were floating on the air in all manner of picturesque attitudes, save one who sat in a fair car of gold, drawn by a pair of gigantic dragon-flies, attended by a company who appeared to act as a guard of honor. He wore a crown on his head, and a rapier at his side, and a purple robe of fine velvet, richly embroidered with stars, over his vest. Perpetual youth sat smiling on his countenance, and his limbs were of so graceful a shape, my poor words have not the cunning to describe it. As this assembly descended to join the other, a chorus of mutual con-

gratulation arose, whereof the burthen of the sylphs was, "Hail Oberon!" and that of the others, "Hail Titania!"—showing that those two were the king and queen of fairie,—which seemed to be sung with such wonderful joy and so sweet a spirit, that it was exquisite to hear beyond all conceiving.

King Oberon having stepped from his car, advanced to that of his queen close by, and with a very excellent courtesy, did hand the fair Titania out, perchance to tread a measure on the verdant mead; whereupon their discourse ran thus:

"Light of my life, and life of all my joy!" rapturously exclaimed the fairy king.

"In whose fair eyes, the fountains of my bliss, My soul drinks sweeter and more delicate draughts

Than flowers or fruits provide; say with what aim,

For well I know some hidden purpose lies Within the covert of thy fantasy, Have I been summoned with my company From the deep dingle in the emerald wood, Where, 'mid the tangled roots and gnarled boughs

Of reverential oaks and hoary pines, With our rude mirth we rouse the dappled deer Or chase the owlets to their dark retreats."

"And what wouldst give to know?" asked Titania, with a pretty seriousness.

"What give, sweetheart?" replied he.

"How like a very woman art thou grown! Thou hast some pretty meaning in the act, Some quaint device, mayhap some harmless jest,

Whereby the rosy hollows of thy cheek Shall be arrayed with all thy fairest smiles, To bear glad witness how man's wiser mind Can by a woman's wit be set at nought. And for the secret thou'lt a bargain make, Which having ratified, the secret's told; And in its nothingness must lie the jest, And in its point thy triumph."

"Tush, my lord!"

cried his fair companion, half turning from him.

"Art thou so little curious as this?"

Nay, by the trembling beam that leaves the skies

To steal soft kisses from the yielding wave, I'll hie me hence and tell thee not at all."

"In pity say not so!" said he.

"I'll say and do!"

answered the other with a famous show of resolution.

"Seem'st thou not more inclined to learn the drift

Of why on such a night of all the year, I bade thee hasten to this favored spot."

"Then am I curious to such excess," observed her lord,

"As passeth all conceiving. I prithee say What was thy purpose. Tell it straight,

For my impatience is so powerful As will endure no hindrance."

"O my word!" cried Titania,

"Thy nature grows impatient of a sudden.

Fie on thee, my lord! Dost mock me so!

With such conceits dost think a woman caught

Who for a curious humor hath been famed,

And therefore knoweth how it shows itself?

Hadst thou a secret, I would never rest

A minute, nay, a moment of the hour,

Till I became its mistress. I would watch

All fittest opportunities to ply

The searchingest questions ever spoke;

And at thy rising and thy lying down.

The hunt, the walk, the banquet or the dance;

In brief, in every time and ev'ry place,

I'd importune thee with such earnestness,

And in a way so lovingly withal,

Thou couldst not hold it from me if thou wouldst;

Or shouldst thou still attempt to keep it hid,

Then would I venture close to where it hides, And with sweet force dislodge it from thy lips."

"Then thus such sweet enforcement I employ."

Thereupon his elfin majesty very gallantly did salute his lovely queen, the which she received as if in no way inclined to anger, as may be supposed; and then they, saying manifold loving pleasantries unto each other, walked to where there was a banqueting table, set out for them, with all manner of tempting delicacies, and sat themselves down, each in a sort of throne; for the reader must be made aware, that whilst the king and queen of Fairie were conversing as hath been described, there were raised upon the green sward by their attendants, a royal canopy of crimson silk and gold, and a goodly display of most delectable cheer; and hundreds of the little people were running about putting the things in order, whilst groups of beautiful sylphs were receiving notable sweet courtesies from their elfin gallants; some reclining their graceful figures on the delicate grass, and others standing up as if preparing for the dance; and in another place, there were seen a score or so of musicians, a tuning of their records, theorbos, citterns, harps, sackbuts, and the like choice instruments. Presently the queen gave the sign for them to begin their revels, and then the music struck up a most ravishing minstrelsy; the dancers commenced treading a measure with such infinite grace as hath never been visible to mortal eyes, and the rest were disporting of themselves in all parts of the meadow, laughing, jesting, feasting and making merry with such a prodigality of happiness as dull mortality hath no knowledge of. Some were a hunt-

ing of the field-mice into their holes, or driving the leaping frogs into the river, with a famous hallooing and admirable cheerful noise; others of the merry elves were amusing of themselves by jumping over the toadstools that grew thereabouts, and mayhap one, not being so good a leaper as his fellows, would jump clean into one of these dry fungous plants, to the near smothering of himself in its dust, and choking of his companions with laughter. Then some of the sylphs, who were not of the dancers, were engaged in making wreaths of the delicatest blossoms in season, either for those they affected of the other sex, or for their own wear. Others were putting together a true-love posie. Here and there might be seen a couple, apart from the rest, by the exquisite earnestness of their countenances, declaring themselves to be employed in such delectable manner as showed there was no lack of affectionateness betwixt them; and a company of others had got in the midst of them an elf of a most jocund spirit, known to divers by the several names of Puck, Robin Goodfellow, and Will-o'-the-Wisp, who, as was evident from their faces, with his droll jests and diverting tricks, kept them in a constant humor of laughing. Here would be one mischievous elf running after a sylph with a huge worm, which it was manifest she liked not the looks of; and there another pelting a companion with cowslips, who was making ready to fling at him with a like missile. Everywhere there was the appearance of the very absolutest free-heartedness; not a grave face was to be seen, not a sigh was to be heard.

Now there were seen amongst them such abundance of pleasant pastime, as was quite a marvel to behold, in the which the tricky Will-o-the-Wisp, or Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, as he was variously called, did appear to enjoy himself to the very bent of his humor. In the meanwhile Titania and Oberon moved from the banquet, and were soon pleasantly engaged treading of a measure to the delicatest music ever known. All of a sudden as they were disporting of themselves, every one of them very merrily, there came one hastening from the other end of the meadow, crying out something, the which as soon as it was heard, banquet, canopy, dancers, musicians, and all the fairy world disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, and of that gallant company no vestige now remained. The blades of the young grass, unharmed by the light footfalls of the tiny dancers, bent to the midnight wind. The frogs came peeping from the rushes.

and the timid water-rat ventured to put her head out of the covered hole beneath the river's bank, wherein she had made her home.

"It be woundy cold o' nights, still dame, for all it be getting so nigh unto the flowery month of May," exclaimed an awkward varlet, looking to be something betwixt man and boy, and dressed in a humble suit of russet, famously worn and soiled, that fitted him not at all, as, carrying of a huge lanthorn with an outstretched arm before him, he seemed to be guiding of a short stout woman, well wrapped up in a serviceable cloak and muffler, who bent her steps through the field towards the neighboring town.

"Ay, it be cold enough, out of all doubt," replied his companion, in a quick thick voice, half swallowed in her muffler, as she endeavored to keep as near as possible to his heels. "Yet do I remember me a colder night than this, two years ago this very day."

"Odd zooks! was it so indeed?" asked the other in a tone of monstrous wondering.

"Ay, that was it, Humphrey," replied the woman with impressive earnestness. "That night I had laid me down to rest my weary bones, and nigh unto midnight I had got me into the comfortablest slumber weary body ever had, when there came at the gate so huge a noise, I had like to have been frightened out of my sleep and my wits too. I dressed me in a presently, wondering who could be a sending at that time, not expecting to hear from Mistress Hathaway, for a month to come, nor from Dame Hart, for a full week; when looking out from the lattice I spied a horseman, in a cloak that swept down close upon his horse's heels, who, in a terrible high voice, bade me come quick, for life and death depended on my speed. Thereupon, as may be supposed of me, I made all convenient haste in my appareling—for thou knowest, Humphrey, I like to keep none waiting."

"O my life, Gammer Lambswool," exclaimed the other drily, "kept you not me an hour by the clock, ere I got sight of you; I know not what waiting means."

"Nay, nay,—thou couldst not have been at the gate so long as that," replied the old woman; "for ere thou hadst well knocked twice, I called to thee from the lattice."

"So God me save," cried out Humphrey, with wonderful emphasis, "I knocked some scores of times—to say nought of the monstrous bawling I kept up, loud enough to wake the seven sleepers: and I doubt not

at all, master will give me a taste of the cudgel for having tarried so long."

"He shall do thee no such unkind office, be assured," said Gammer Lambswool, "for I will take care to bear thee blameless in the matter. But to return to what I was a saying," added she, too glad at having a listener, to let him off without the whole story. "On coming to the gate, the stranger was for having me mount upon a pillion behind him, which I liked not at first: but upon his pressing the emergency of the case, and placing a gold piece in my hand, I made no more to do—for I like not appearing over scrupulous in matters of jeopardy, the more especially when an honest wager is to be gained by it. I had scarce got my seat when the stranger said he must needs blind-fold me, the which I liked less than the other; but upon his assuring me I should suffer no harm, and placing another gold piece in my hand, I suffered it to be done, for thinks I, mayhap, the occasion requireth secrecy; and I oft had a huge suspicion there was no necessity for me to seem to know more than those who paid my aid, would allow; if so be they paid me well for holding of my curiousness."

"Here be a villainous thick cloud about to cover up the moon, and be hanged to it!" exclaimed her companion in a tone of vexation, as, with a face waxing marvelously fearful, he watched the approach of a broad black cloud spreading over the sky. "Make more speed I pray you, good Gammer, else we shall be left in the dark before we have got out of this field, which hath the horridest reputation of any place in these parts; and I like not passing through it at this late hour, I promise you."

"In honest truth it be not in good repute," observed the old woman, quickening her pace somewhat. "Unnatural strange sights have been seen here, and it be well known that they by whom they have been looked on, have never been themselves since. But to my story. Hardly had he blindfolded me when he spurred his horse to so monstrous a pace, that it seemed more like unto flying than riding; and, not having been used to such, perchance I should soon have been jolted from my seat, had not I held my companion round the girdle as firm as a vice. Now began I to repent of my too great willingness to venture on this errand. I was going I knew not where, with I knew not whom, to do I knew not what; but when I bethought me of the stranger's largess, I took heart, for out of all doubt a piece of gold is a notable fine recommendation in a new acquaintance! and methinks

it be ungrateful to think ill of those who have behaved handsomely to you; so I said nought, and proceeded on my journey with as much contentation as I might."

"A grace of God, Gammer, make more speed!" cried her companion earnestly.

"I be getting on as fast as my old legs can carry me," answered she; and then continued her gossip. "Well, we travelled on at this terrible pace for I know not how long a time, till the horse came to a dead stop; and, with an injunction to be silent, my companion quickly alighted, carried me some little distance in his arms, led me up some steps, and then leading me yet a little further, suddenly pulled the bandage off my eyes. I found myself in a very stately chamber, having the most costly hangings eye ever beheld, and everything of a like splendor about it. Lights were burning on a table close upon the bed's foot, but I had not time to notice one half of what was there, when my conductor haughtily bade me look to my patient, as he pointed to the bed; and hearing a most piteous groan, I hastened to do his bidding."

"Mercy, good Gammer, make more speed! These clouds be close upon the moon, and we not half through this terrible field yet;" cried Humphrey, evidently more attentive to the look of the sky than the speech of his companion.

"Marry, 'tis so sure enough!" exclaimed the old dame, taking a hasty glance at the moon. "Well, there found I a dainty young creature, assuredly in as doleful a strait as poor lady ever was; and I came in the very nick of time, to do her such desirable service as she required of me. I sought to give her what comfort I could, but I was stopped by the voice of him who had brought me, angrily bidding me hold my prate, and speed my office; and then broke he out into such bitter invectives against the poor lady, as were dreadful to hear, to the which she replied never a word, for indeed she could not, she was in such severe travail. At last, to my great joy, the lady became a mother; but scarce had I took the babe in my arms, when my gentleman, who had been all this time striding across the room, seemingly in a bad humor, hearing the child cry, darted towards me, snatched it rudely away, and hurried out of the room with it. I felt at that moment as if 'twould be an easy matter to knock me down with a feather. I could have no doubt there was a most cruel mischief a-doing, and my blood run cold within me, at the thought of it."

"There! the moon hath gone clean out of sight!" exclaimed Humphrey, as if in

utter despair. "Alack, what an unchristian place for an honest poor body to be in at this late hour."

"Well, we must e'en get on as well as we can, and the lanthorn will help us to make sure we go not astray," observed the other consolingly.

"What to do I knew not," continued she. "The poor mother looked to be scarce alive, that was pitiful enough to see, let her fault have been what it might; but taking away the life of an innocent babe that had scarce began to breathe, could not be ought else than a very devilish and unnatural murder."

"Nay, talk not of murder I pray you, good Gammer!" cried her companion very movingly; "I cannot see the length of my arm, and I know not what monstrous fearful things may be in the darkness, ready to pounce out upon us."

"Nothing unnatural can hurt you if you be not evil inclined, let them here lie ever so thick," observed the old dame: but this seemed not to add much to the other's small stock of courage, for he continued to walk along, looking suspiciously about him in as perfect a fear as ever was, whilst Gammer Lambswool strove to keep as close at his heels as she could.

"Ere I could recover myself from the strange fright, what had been that moment done, had put me in, he returned, and without the child," added she with much emphasis. "Whereupon I was so confounded and terrified at the sight of him, that I remember not what further took place, till I found myself at mine own door with a full purse in my hand; but less glad at the sight of it than I was to be quit of the villain's company."

"Mercy, Gammer, what be that!" cried Humphrey, in a monstrous fearful voice, as he lifted up his lantern, evidently a trembling from head to foot, and seemed to be gazing at something in the distance.

"Where, I pray you!" inquired the other eagerly, as she strove to raise herself on her toes for to peep over his shoulder.

"It moves!" whispered her companion, drawing his breath hard.

"Heaven save us from all harm!" muttered the old woman, beginning to partake of the other's alarm, though she knew not as yet what it was caused by.

"By St. Nicholas, it be making towards us!" added he as plainly as his fright would allow, and the next moment the lantern dropped from his trembling hands, and he fell on his knees, saying of his prayers, with his teeth a chattering as if he was taken

with an ague. Gammer Lambswool, being in the dark—for their light had been extinguished by the fall—and hearing something approaching, was about to take to her prayers also, when she was startled by a quick succession of blows, that seemed to fall upon her companion with a force that quickly put all conceit of a ghost out of her head.

"Why, thou idling varlet!" exclaimed a voice close beside her. "Wert not strictly told not to tarry a moment, and thou hast been gone nigh these two hours past—a murrain on thee."

"Oh, master!" bawled Humphrey, most lustily, writhing under the punishment he was receiving. "Hurt me no more, I pray you. Mercy, good master! In honest truth I tarried no more than I could help."

"Indeed, Master Shakspeare, he is not to blame, for I was hindered from coming," cried the old woman. "But tell me, I beseech you, how fareth your sweet wife?"

"Badly, as she needs must, when she hath been crying out for you so long," answered he, as if somewhat out of humor.

"Well, dear heart, lead you the way, I will haste to her without a moment's more delaying," said the Gammer, in a sort of coaxing voice; upon which Humphrey, picking up his lantern, and quite forgetting his fear in the cudgelling he had lately had, although, in honest truth, he had been scarce hurt at all—seeing his master and the midwife moving off as fast as they could—kept close to their heels till they reached John Shakspeare's dwelling in Henley Street.

CHAPTER II.

At first THE INFANT.

SHAKSPEARE.

Porter. On my Christian conscience, this one christening will beget a thousand; here will be father, godfather, and all together.

Man. The spoons will be the bigger, sir.
LEID.

He ruleth all the roast
With bragging and with boast,
Borne up on every side
With pomp and with pride.

JOHN SKELTON.

Now there was an admirable jovial company assembled at the dwelling of Dame Shakspeare, to do honor to the christening of her child, and among them were many of the worthy burgesses of Stratford; for

be it understood, John Shakspeare was known to be a thriving man, and such are sure to have no lack of acquaintances; and his excellent partner having come of a family of some repute in those parts, being no other than the heiress of Arden, was much looked up to; and, as she appeared unto all, of an honest kind heart and admirable sweet nature, she possessed every one's good word; of which the consequence was, the house could scarce contain the company the occasion had assembled. Some stood about the porch jesting and making merry; others were in the garden, especially of the younger sort, amusing themselves with pleasant talk one with another. One or two decent motherly dames were in the kitchen bustling to and fro, looking to the dinner, of which a huge fire covered with pots and kettles, and having a famous large joint at the spit, a little ragged urchin kept turning—being well minded of all not to let it burn—showed some preparation—the whilst a stout wench with famous red cheeks and elbows, evidently in her best finery, along with Humphrey, in his Sunday jerkin, kept hurrying in and out, laden with knives, napery, drinking vessels, trenchers, and other needful things at a feasting.

In the best chamber of the whole house which looked to be newly strewed with fresh rushes, and garnished here and there with such flowers as were in season, some in china bowls, and some in parcel-gilt goblets, there was a large recess, made by that end of the room abutting out into the street, wherein were most of the principal personages of the company. First, for in respect of his calling, I would give him precedence of the others, there sat Sir Nathaniel the curate, easily to be known by his portly person, his merry eye, his loud laugh, and his free speech. It was bruited abroad that he loved good living better than became a churchman, and his maple face and famous round belly did confirm such tales wonderfully. In apparel he was slovenly, and not over clean in his linen; but being of a ready wit and of a cheerful humor, he went on from day to day feasting wherever there was any store of victual, a welcome if not an honored guest. Beside him was one Stripes the schoolmaster, and as folks said, a notable conjuror, who had a very lean look with him, and wore such garments as seemed to be clean past all recovery of tailoring, they were so threadbare. By what was going on, it appeared as if he was content to be the butt of the other, for he took in good part all the jests the curate aimed at his shrunk shanks, his

lantern jaws, his darned hose, and his old fashioned doublet, and moreover assented to what the other said, with a readiness that savored much of servility. Nearer this way sat a substantial looking yeoman, by name Richard Hathaway, clad in honest homespun, in deep discourse with a neighboring wealthy sheep farmer, concerning the market price of wool, the state of the crops, and the like matters. A knot of burgesses were standing round two aldermen of the town, who were debating very stoutly upon business connected with the corporation; and the parish clerk, a little dumpy man, with monstrous thick legs, was leaning half out of the casement, in earnest talk with some one in the street below.

At the further end of the chamber were all the women congregated, appareled in their very best, and talking as though none had a mind to listen. The rich farmer's wife, sitting very stately in a robe of fine scarlet, with a white hood, a gay purse, and a bunch of keys at her side, hanging from a silken belt of silver tissue; whilst her waist was bound with a sash of grass-green silk richly embroidered, no lack of jewels about her, and on each finger two rings at least, divided the admiration of her companions with the aldermen's wives in watch-colored tunics and fringed kirtles, with golden coifs and other costly toys, wherewith they had attired themselves. In the midst of them sat Dame Shakspeare, modestly and matronly clad, and without doubt, as seemly a woman as any there, looking contented and happy, and giving very earnest thanks to her good friends and guests as they made up to her with some pretty gift or another—mayhap, a set of apostle spoons, or a standing cup of silver, or a gilt bowl, for the boy, who, with the chrisom-cloth about him in token of his recent baptism, lay in the arms of his nurse—a rosy faced dame, who stood beside her mistress commending of the babe to all comers above babes that ever lived. And lastly, by the door, giving a hearty welcome to all who entered, dressed in an excellent suit of Lincoln green, and having as cheerful face as a man ever wore, stood worthy John Shakspeare, the giver of the feast.

"Come in, neighbors! I pray you come in!" exclaimed he, as some were entering. "I am heartily glad to see you, and my good dame be as ready to give you a welcome I'll be bound for't. Well met Thomas Hart! Robert Bruce I commend me to your good will. Worthy Hammet Sadler I am much beholden to you for this visit. Ha, Oliver Dumps!" cried he, as his eyes lighted on a

melancholy looking little man, in a new leathern jerkin and black karsie hose. "Though most men hugely mislike visits of the constable, I greet you well."

"God requite you, neighbor," answered the man, not altering a whit the solemnness of his aspect.

"Methinks we are all indifferently honest," continued his host. "Yet are we well inclined you should exercise your office amongst us with as little hindrance as may be."

"Marry, 'tis a villainous world!" exclaimed the constable. "But if any dishonesty hath been done, point me out the knave, that I may take him up before his worship."

"Nay, by your leave not so," replied the other. "If you are for taking up, we are only willing you should take up the dinner: but with such an offender we doubt not being able to play the high bailiff as well as any in the county, and would on the instant commit him to safe custody in our own keeping." Thereupon there was a laugh of those around; for when the host taketh upon himself to jest, even if his wit be not of the brightest, the guests must lack good manners sadly, if their mirth break not out at it without stinting.

"See you, John a Combe?" inquired the buxom wife of one of the aldermen to the other, as they now stood somewhat apart from the rest, observing the scene I have endeavored to describe.

"Ay, yonder is he, Mistress Alderman Malmsey," replied the other, pointing to one who had just entered, and seemed by his apparel to be somewhat of a gallant, for he was very daintily dressed in a new puce-colored doublet, with scarlet hose, buff shoes, and fine rosettes to them: a well starched ruff below his beard, and a handsome rapier at his girdle.

"By our Lady, Mistress Alderman Dowlas, he beareth himself bravely," exclaimed the first.

"I'faith methinks he is as pretty a man as any of his inches," added the other.

"And then to note how civilly he beaveth himself," continued Dame Malmsey. "He ever speaketh of us women in such delicate, respectful terms as would do a woman's heart good to hear; and if any so much as insinuate aught to our prejudice, it moveth him so, he will be ready to fight the biggest man of them all."

"And yet I marvel he should still remain a bachelor," observed Dame Dowlas. "He cannot be less than a good manly age, for as Master Alderman, my husband, hath told me,

it was twenty-five years come Whitsuntide, since old John a Combe bought his wedding suit of his father; and that he is well accommodated for a wife there can be no question, seeing that he hath ever a fair sum of money in his purse at a friend's need, and old John a Combe hath the reputation of well filled coffers."

"Perchance the old man is not willing his son should marry," said her companion.—"Or, mayhap, thinks it fit he should wed with none but the chiefest families, for he hath taken infinite pains, and spared not the cost, he should have as good schooling as any in the land; whereof the consequence is, you shall find young John a Combe one of the properest gentlemen to be met with in all Warwickshire."

"Certes, he seemeth not to affect one more than another," exclaimed Dame Malmsey.—"But I would wager my best kirtle, there is never a maid for five miles round Stratford, who would not give her ears to have him for a husband."

"In all sincerity I say it, I wish he may find a wife worthy of him," said the other, to which her companion added a like sincere wish. In the meanwhile, the object of their friendly commendations passed across the chamber, very courteously returning the courtesies of those he met,—and few were there that did not hasten to greet him, as soon as they caught sight of him at his entrance, which showed in what estimation he was. These as quickly as he well could be parted from, and made up to Dame Shakspeare, who with a face radiant with her choicest smiles, gave him her hand at his approach.

"I beseech you, pardon me, I have come so late," said he to her, in a very soft, gentlemanlike voice; "I have been detained against my will, else would I have been here long since."

"I pray you, trouble not yourself about it," replied she, with an excellent pleasant kindness. "Believe me, you are infinitely welcome, Master Combe, honor our poor dwelling when you will."

"In sooth, I regret exceedingly not having sooner paid my respects to our young master here," added he, looking from the smiling mother to the pretty babe with a delighted countenance. "For never saw I, in all my days, a child whose exquisite comeliness made earliest acquaintance so desirable."

"Nay, sweet Sir, it is your goodness that maketh you think so," replied she, though pleased beyond measure with the compliment.

"An' it please your worship, it be very

"exquisite comeliness, indeed!" exclaimed the nurse with some emphasis, as she held out the child to be seen by him more conveniently. "In all honesty I say it, I know not the babe so choicely featured. I pray you, note how fair a forehead it hath—the hair, no silk ever was of such marvelous fineness—here are cheeks that bees would cluster at taking them to be such delicate rarities as they have had no experience of—but the eyes. I pray your worship, look at these eyes! What pretty twinklers they be! So mild, so soft, so loving, and so roguish withal! Faith, eyes of so rare a sort surely no child ever had; and as for this dainty little mouth—if there shall be found any cherry so tempting to look upon, I am no true woman."

"O my life, he is wonderfully pretty!" cried John a Combe, gazing with an admiring eye upon its many attractions.

"Dost think so, really?" asked the happy mother.

"But then, it hath such strange, wise, notable ways with it as exceed all my cunning to describe," continued the nurse, jumping her charge up and down abt as nurses do. "And for a curious nature, his exceedeth all comprehension. There shall nothing pass in his presence unnoticed of him; and if any thing new come within his reach, doubt not he will have hold of it in a presently; nay, his curiousness is of so extreme a sort, that if he but get sight of a thing, he will allow of no peace till he have it in his hand, and thereby gain some knowledge what stuff it be made of."

"Methinks, nurse, there is much sign of after wisdom in being so early a learner," observed John a Combe.

"Ay, an it please your worship, that is there I'll warrant you," replied she. "Then as for his temper, he is so sweetly disposed, none can help loving him. He is none of your cross-grained, restless, ill-behaved little brats that be ever a squalling and bawling from morning till night, disturbing of every one—not he by my halidom! for he is so peaceable, you might live in the house and not know a babe was in it. He goeth to sleep just when it is proper for him, and wakes himself up only at such times as may be most convenient for him to be looked to. In short, I will be bound for't, his like is not to be found in this world; and if he come not to be a bishop or at least a justice o' the peace, I shall be hugely mistaken in him."

"O my word, nurse, you have mighty hopes of him," exclaimed Dame Shakspeare, gazing fondly, and somewhat proudly, on the object of so much eulogy, as it lay dandling in the arms of her attendant. "In good

truth, I cannot expect for the boy any such famous fortune, and should be well satisfied, could I be assured he would live to play the part of an honest man, and die in the estimation of his fellows."

"If such be your desire, believe me the assurance is easily come at," remarked John a Combe, courteously; "for it is manifest from what nurse hath said of him, that he possesses his mother's excellent rare virtues, and with such commendable gifts he cannot fail to realize all honorable expectations."

"I am proud of your good opinion, worthy Master Combe," answered she, with the unaffectedness of a truly modest woman. "It shall at least keep me at my powerfulest endeavors to deserve it better."

"As some small token of my regard, I beseech you, accept of me this poor trifle for your sweet son," said he, as he produced a very daintily wrought silver cup and cover.

"Beshrew my heart, but that is as pretty a present for a babe as I have seen this many a day," exclaimed the nurse; and then addressing the infant, as she let him rise and fall in her arms, cried out, "Hoity toity, my young master! thou hast a goodly store of friends methinks! But thou deservest it every bit, thou dost, thou pretty rogue!" And then she fell to tickling of him with one hand upon his chest, whilst she held him by the other, till the babe laughed after so delicate a fashion as was exquisite to see.

"I feel too much beholden to you, worthy Master Combe, to say aught of the matter," said the delighted mother.

"And here, nurse," he added, taking out of his purse a piece of silver, which he placed in her hands, "is some small token you should bestow your best attentions on this my young friend here."

"That will I, your worship, depend on't, and a million of thanks for your worship's largess," exclaimed the other, dropping a curtsy, as she accepted the coin. "Well, commend me to Master Combe, for a true gentleman!" continued she as he had retired to another part of the chamber.

"He is ever so," answered her mistress. "He giveth signs of a most liberal heart, and is at all times a ready mean for the doing of any good. Perchance one might travel many miles, and not meet with so good a neighbor, so true a friend, or so worthy a Christian."

"Now, neighbors! now friends! an it please you in to dinner," cried John Shakspeare: on the instant, all were in preparation to obey the welcome summons, and John a Combe hurrying back to Dame Shakspeare, gallantly led the way with her, followed by

the rest of the company, till he had placed her in her proper seat. After Sir Nathaniel had said grace, the company set down to a dinner that would have gladdened any but to have beheld; for there was brought upon the table a famous store of all things in season, with plenty of excellent liquor, both ale and cider, and all set to with good appetites and with an evident determination to enjoy the cheer that had been provided for them. Of these, none so distinguished himself as did the curate and the schoolmaster. Stripes sat nearly bolt upright in his chair, as serious as a judge and as ravenous as a wolf; yet there was not so glaring an impudency in his proceedings as was in the other, for he was not importunate—he waited to be asked—eat what was given him—was ready again; and with small pressing, continued at it till long after all else had done.

The host and hostess seemed ever anxious that each person should have what he liked, and plenty of it, and kept Maud the girl, and Humphrey, the boy, at their vigilance, supplying of what was needed, whilst John a Combe busied himself in pressing those nearest him to make good cheer, and looked as if he cared not what he had himself, as long as the rest fared well. Of a surety every one appeared to enjoy himself to his heart's content, nor were the women altogether unmindful of the bountiful hospitality that had garnished the board; for they eat and praised, and smiled in such a sort as showed how well they were pleased with their entertainment.

At last the meal was over, the dishes removed, and in their stead the tables were covered with a plentiful variety of cakes, such fruit as could be got, Marchpane, apples and comfits, stewed prunes and dishes of other preserves, syllabubs for the younger folks muffle of new milk and verjuice, and wine for the elders of two or three several kinds; besides which, John Shakspeare was brewing a goodly bowl of sack with sugar in it, for such as affected such delicate drink, of whom the two aldermen were most conspicuous, swearing there was no such liquor in the world, whilst his excellent sweet wife opposite was preparing a jug of spiced ale, such liquor being desired, above all others, by such of her guests as were farmers or yeomen; ever and anon saying something to the nurse, who was standing behind her chair with the babe in her arms; or acknowledging with some few gracious words, the courtesies of John a Combe, who sat nigh her, and by his own readiness took heed that she should have everything she

needed ready at her hand. The jingling of glasses, and the like noises, caused by the moving of bottles, and other drinking vessels, having in some degree subsided, and all having before them what they most desired, it was observed that John a Combe stood up with his glass filled in his hand; and, with some ado, the rude prating of Sir Nathaniel being stopped, he was heard to speak after this fashion:

“My worthy good neighbors and friends! There is a custom now of old standing in this our very dear country, which methinks should be held in good esteem of all true English hearts; to wit, the drinking of healths, which, I take it, is a great encourager of honest love; and keepeth true friendship in excellent remembrance among all men. Now it may be known unto you, that this same estimable custom is in most request amongst those of old acquaintance. Therefore I beseech you pardon me, if on this occasion I require of you to follow the custom with some alteration. There is no old familiar friend I would now ask your remembrance of; but one whose very name hath been unknown to you till this day. I cannot point out to you what noticeable virtues he hath shown, worthy of your commendation; for as yet I have been so little in his company, he hath not had time to show his goodness to me; but knowing his father's extreme honesty of soul, and his mother's manifold excellencies of nature, I am assured he cannot fail to have in him such bountiful gifts, as in good time must bring to him all good men's affections. Neighbors! I pray you, with full cups join with me very heartily in drinking—health to our young friend, William Shakspeare, a long life and a prosperous!”

Methinks there should be no need to assure the reader that the desire of John a Combe was followed on the instant with the sincere good will of all present.

“Well done, John a Combe,” shouted Sir Nathaniel; “O my life, a truly excellent proper speech; and very scholarly spoken. What sayest Ticklebrech?” cried he familiarly to the schoolmaster, who sat over against him. “Is not the speech a sound speech, ay, and a notable speech, ay, and a speech of marvelous discretion?”

“An' it please your reverence,” replied Stripes, looking all the whilst as solemn as if it was a matter of life or death with him; “touching the speech that hath lately had utterance amongst us, I will make so bold as to say, that a properer speech shall not be found, even should you seek for it in the choicest of Demosthenes his Philippics, or

of Cicero his Orations. It is a speech that hath in it these several excellences; excellence of matter, excellence of rhetoric, and excellence of"—

"It may be known of all here I am no scholar, like unto our good friend and neighbor Master Combe," observed John Shakspeare, with his honest cheerful face all of a glow, and to the complete cutting short of the schoolmaster in what threatened to be an exceeding prosy discourse. "Yet had I what I lack the most, I doubt it would do me such good office as sufficiently to assure him of the full great love I bear him in my heart for the friendliness he hath shown to me and mine on this and other occasions. Fain would I dilate concerning of what numberless famous proofs he hath exhibited of the generousness of his humor, but that I know none of you stand in any ignorance of them. From his earliest life he hath been given to all manner of truly estimable virtues; and now his riper manhood, in its thorough honesty and free-heartedness, declareth what proper effect hath come of the exceeding virtuosity of his youth. I feel proud that Stratford can boast of such a one; and I pray you pardon me, when I add, my pride is none the less at finding such a one should hold me in his commendation; for, as I take it, to be well spoken of is ever to be desired; but the praise of the praiseworthy is a thing beyond all price. In testimony that your opinion accordeth with mine own, I beseech you neighbors, join with me in drinking to the health of our worthy townsman, John a Combe, desiring that he may long continue to live amongst us, in the same pride and honor as he doth at this present."

"Marry, but this looketh to be the properest speech of the two!" exclaimed Sir Nathaniel, as all prepared themselves, and with evidence of great good will, to do as their host would have them; "What sayest, Pedagogus?"

"Indeed, and as your reverence out of your singular wisdom hath observed," said the schoolmaster, refraining awhile from the pippin he was a moment since intent upon adding to the great mass of victual that had gone before it. "It be out of all comparison the properest speech. In short, it shall be found, on the very searchingest examination, of so proper a sort, that its fellow shall not be met with, seek where you will."

Much more of the same poor stuff he might have added, had not the voice of John a Combe sent him, nothing loath to the munching of his pippin; for he was of that well-disposedness, he would hold his prate

when his betters were talking; but among poorer folk he would say out his say, were it a mile to the end; and heed none, should they talk ever so. Master Combe, thereupon quickly disclaimed any title to praise for whatever he had done; asserting that it was what every man should do, regardless of all else but the good that came of it. This brought others to speak, especially the aldermen and burgesses of his particular acquaintance, who in homely fashion gave their evidence of his worthiness. In fact, every one appeared anxious to say in what great estimation he was held of them, only with one solitary exception. Of the company was one Master Buzzard, a gentleman of those parts, who, for all he was of better estate than any there, was an ignorant vain person, living in great dissoluteness, with such companions as the priest and the schoolmaster, and other roysterers; and cared for nothing so much as hawking and spending his time in riotous ill-living among such as were ready to fall into his humor. He was of a middle size with strong body and full look, and affected to dislike anything like niceness in apparel. Indeed, his manners were of the rudest, but being an excellent customer of John Shakspeare, he got invited to the christening. At hearing the praises that were so bountifully lavished upon John a Combe, his soul was stirred with a very devilish envy; and though he said nought, save 'twas to mutter some contemptuous expression, unheard of any but those nighest him, it was easy to be seen that he was in wonderful ill-humor.

At this time a many of the company were amusing themselves at the game of Barley Break, in the warehouse and places where the wool was stored, and other things in which John Shakspeare dealt; and it did so happen that Master Alderman Dowlas, the draper, was shut up in the middle room with the buxom wife of his neighbor, Master Alderman Malmsey, the vintner, and he must needs be making love to her, though he had as exquisite fair a wife of his own as any honest man need desire. Now this worthless draper was a man of no particular likelihood to fall in with a pretty woman's fantasy, having features by no means comely; a long thin nose, and a mouth about as expressive of any particular affectionateness as a roll of broadcloth. Indeed, there was a sort of sanctimoniousness in the cut of his beard, and the cropping of his hair, and the sober suit of grey in which he was usually appareled, that seemed to give the flattest contradiction to love of any sort, unless it were the love of godliness

and a decent life. Whether what he had been drinking put into his head any such villainy, or that he was of a very amorously disposed nature at all times, I know not; but certain it is, he left the table to play at Barley Break; of an equal surety is it, he was, in the course of the game, shut up in the middle room with the young comely wife of his brother alderman; and it is beyond all contradiction that, after flattering "the very infiniteness of her most absolute and inconceivable beauty," as he was pleased to style her somewhat attractiveness, in a sufficiency that ought to have satisfied the vainest woman that ever lived, he in a monstrous earnestness, swore he loved her better than aught else in the universal world.

"Fie on you, Jonathan Dowlas!" cried the pretty woman, evidently, from the twinkling of her merry dark eyes, taking the affair as an excellent good jest. "I marvel you should so conduct yourself to your friend's wife, and you a godly man too, that hath been married this seven year!—as I live, methinks it is too bad of you."

"Alack, adorable sweet creature!" cried the Alderman, twitching his chair as nigh as possible to hers, the which she marked by immediately increasing the distance between them. "'Tis all on account of the insufficiency of the flesh. The flesh rebelleth against all discretion. It stirreth, as it were, yea, it be exceedingly moved."

"I would it would move farther off then," exclaimed his fair companion, as she removed herself a short distance, upon finding him again attempting to get closer to her than she liked.

"Sweet, Mistress Malmsey," continued the draper, very pathetically, "as the hart panteth for the water brooks, doth my enamored soul thirst after thine incomparable sweet perfection."

"Then you must quench your thirst at other fountains, I promise you," pithily replied the vintner's wife. "My husband hath a famous store of wines. I doubt not, if you would give him an order for some, a draught or so occasionally would do you, out of all comparison, more benefit than would the draining of my incomparable sweet perfections to the dregs."

"Nay, that never could be, my honeysweet!" exclaimed the Alderman, trying to take her hand, which she presently snatched away from him. "Sooner shall princes wear buckram, and penniless rogues ruffle it in ready money better than credit, and large costliest cloth of gold. Believe me, as I love profits before any loss, I shall grow into a desperation, succeed I not in my suit."

"Your suit is like to go unshod, for it is bootless," answered Mistress Malmsey, with a pretty laugh at her own jest; then added, more seriously, "Marry to prevent such a mischance as your falling into desperation, I would acquaint your wife with your desires, and doubt not at all she'd suit you in a presently."

The Alderman looked as if he relished not this raillery. He spoke never a word for a minute or so. What more he might have said, I know not; for soon after by the chances of the game, they were released from their imprisonment, and she allowed him no more opportunity of having any such conversation with her that day. In the meanwhile, they at the table were still jovially employed in making good cheer. John a Combe was intent upon setting off every one to enjoy themselves after such fashion as pleased them most, and seeing that all had proper refreshment when their sports had tired them in any way. John Shakspeare was employed in a like manner, and so was his good dame; whereof, the consequence was, as has been acknowledged many times since, that there never was known, at any merry-making, such a general contentation of the guests; and he who was the general cause of this great content lacked no honor which the occasion seemed to warrant. He was praised as bountifully as if each had taken a cue from the nurse—all the women must needs have a kiss of him; and divers among those nigh unto marriageable estate would not be satisfied without dandling him a bit in their arms—mayhap to show certain of the young men there how apt they were at so notable an exercise. At last, having been caressed and praised of all, with a liberality that exceedeth conception, amid much regret of the young folks nurse took him away—as in sooth, it was high time he should be asleep in his cradle.

Master Burrard continued at the table eyeing, with a marvelous sour and gloomy aspect, the attentions that were paid to John a Combe and it fretted him to find that he, for all his greater state was held in no such estimation. Along with him, were Sir Nathaniel, Stripes, and Oliver Dumps; and sometimes others would join them for a time, upon getting weary of their sports; but these four appeared to like nothing so well as continual tipping of such liquors as were before them, seasoned with such talk as persons so disposed, were most like to affect.

"It may be, or it may not be," observed Sir Nathaniel, after rehearsing to his listen-

ers a scandalous story ; " but here is a child found, and as far as my learning may go, I know of no child having been born without the help of a mother. What sayest, Sir Conjuror ? "

" There can be no doubt of it, please your reverence," replied the schoolmaster. " Though it hath been asserted, by divers creditable historians that Venus sprang from the foam of the sea, and Minerva from the brain of Jove ; for my own part, I would maintain, yet with all due deference, the utter impossibility of any one person coming into this world without having to boast of a mother, and perchance, if there should be no doubt on't, of a father also. "

" Thou art a fool old hocus pocus, and no conjuror ! " exclaimed the curate, sharply, " a very fool, and as ignorant as a heathen. Had Adam a mother, or Eve ? Surely thou hast forgotten thy Testament—thou Balaam's ass ! But thou never wert half so wise an animal as he ; for it be well known of all men, that once upon a time, when he was carrying off Potiphar's wife into Egypt, he spake unto Moses, saying, ' Paul ! Paul ! thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian. ' "

" Methinks asses must have been wiser in those days than they be now," said the constable, gravely. " My father hath had an ass of his own a long time past, but it never gave any sign of speech. "

" It hath begun at last, then *ecce signum*," cried Sir Nathaniel, laughing famously, in which he was joined by his companions. " But touching this child. It doth appear that Dame Lucy made discovery of a young child that had been abandoned, as it was said ; and as it could not have been Sir Thomas Lucy's, it could not, with any toleration, be Sir Thomas Lucy's wife's. That child the good dame had me christen, some short time since, by the name of Mabel ; and she hath resolved, as she told me, to bring it up as her own ; the which she must needs do with the perfect likeness that ever was, for many do say she hath other right to it than that of first discoverer. "

" By God's body, it be infamous ! " cried Master Buzzard, in a rude loud voice that attracted the attention of all within reach of it. " The vileness of these women hath no rivalry save the craft with which they hide it. They are traitors to honesty, all of them ; and I would as soon believe in the trustworthiness of a cut-purse, as I would in the virtuousness of any one of them. "

" An' it please you, Master Buzzard, the Queen's Highness whose unworthy constable I am, is a woman, as I have heard," here remarked Oliver Dumps, with the air of

one who cometh to the resolution of doing his duty though it be unpleasant to him. " And though no later than yesterday I did put in the stocks, for wantonness, one Marian Loosefish, a woman also, as in my conscience I do firmly believe ; yet as it seemeth to me it be like to bring her Majesty's name into contempt among all her loving subjects—the which be against the law—to say that women be given to all manner of villany, and to assert at the same time that the Queen's Highness is a woman, I must maintain it by virtue of my office, that if all women may be queans, then is the queen no woman. "

" Pooh ! " exclaimed Master Buzzard.

" But I will not have it ' pooh,' " cried the constable, raising his voice, and seeming in some indignation. " It be flat contumaciousness, and very sedition. I will allow of it on no account ; and I charge you, on your allegiance declare the Queen's Highness no woman, or any such vileness, else will I straight with you to the cage. "

" What, wouldst put a gentleman in the cage ? " cried Sir Nathaniel, as if in some surprise. " Hath no respect for persons ? "

" No, nor for parsons either, should they conduct themselves unadvisedly," answered the little man determinedly. " I am put in authority for the preservation of the peace, and it behooveth me to keep good heed there be no idle prating like to lead to a brawl. "

" The man's an ass," said Master Buzzard, in very evident contempt.

" Hullo, my masters ! what hath caused this unseemly to do amongst you ? " called out John a Combe, as, drawn by the constable's loud voice, and violent manner, he, with others, was attracted to the table. " I marvel, on such an occasion as this, to see any quarrelling. I pray you, say the matter of difference betwixt you, that I may do my best, as speedy as may be, to bring it to an amicable ending. "

" Marry, this is it," replied Oliver, in no way abating the greatness of his indignation, whilst Master Buzzard sat with a perfect indifferency, mingled with some scorn of the whole business, rocking himself on his chair, " Master Buzzard hath given me ill words, and I will have the law of him ; moreover, he hath spoken shamefully of the queen's grace, for the which he shall have to make proper amends ; and, lastly, he hath insinuated evil opinions of my lady, the wife of his worship Sir Thomas Lucy, in particular, and of all women in general, saying that they be notoriously dishonest, and ever given to unlawful behavior. "

" What he hath spoken ill of you, worthy

Master Constable, be sure he said in jest," remarked John a Combe. "And I cannot believe you to be so unneighborly as to allow of such a thing moving you."

"Nay, but he hath called me an ass, Master Combe, and there be no jest in that as I can see," cried out the offended constable.

"He meant it as a jest depend on't," replied the other.

"Ay, 'twas a jest out of all doubt," here observed Sir Nathaniel, just after draining his goblet. "Didst not take it take it for a jest, Ticklebreech?" added he, turning to his companion.

"O' my life yes, an't please your reverence," answered the schoolmaster; "as excellent good jest as ever I heard."

"Well, an' it be a jest, indeed," said Oliver Dumps, in a quieter tone; "believe me I was ignorant of it, else would I have said nought of the matter, for I am not so crabbed as to take offence where none be intended; but what saith he concerning his ill speech of the queen? that was no jest, at least he will find it none, I warrant you."

"You must have misunderstood his meaning surely?" observed John a Combe. "'Tis not at all in reason that one known to be so well disposed towards her Majesty as is Master Buzzard, should say so much as one single word to her prejudice."

"If he said not all women be mere wantons, count me the lyingest knave in Christendom," asserted the constable with some vehemence.

"Perchance he may have said, it, but that he had any such meaning will I never believe," remarked Master Combe.

"I will wager my life on it he had a very different meaning," exclaimed the curate. Then called he to his sworn-fellow, "What sayest, Lanthornjaws?"

"Please your reverence, I will vouch for it, his meaning must needs have been of a clean contrary sort," readily answered the schoolmaster.

"Marry then, since that be the opinion of these honest gentlemen, I will not stir in the matter further," said Oliver. "I would torture no man's speech to do him hurt, not I, even though I might be made alderman to-morrow for't. But touching my lady, Sir Thomas Lucy's wife, I heard of a child she had found and bringeth up as her own, of the which if I remember me, Master Buzzard believeth the good lady to be the mother, without consent first had and obtained of his worship, her husband; and this I take it, can be no other than scandalum magnatum—a terrible heinous offence as I have heard."

"I cannot believe Master Buzzard would speak of such a matter, save as the common talk of the vulgar sort, who know no better," said John a Combe. For mine own part, there is nothing of which I am so well assured as of the wonderful excellence of woman. All that extreme force of rhetoric could speak, or most famous cunning of the pen could describe, in my humble opinion could never give her such sufficient justice as her infinite merits deserve. Whatever there is of goodness—whatever there is of kindness, of pitifulness of heart, of nobleness of disposition, have their chiefest place in her, and she is the origin of that marvellous sweet power that gives humanity its rarest excellence, and binds all nature in one unending chain that never rusts, that will not clog, and that cannot be sundered—the links whereof are those endearing sympathies that join to form the universal bondage of the affections. Such bountiful store of graces does she possess, that although poets from earliest time have been endeavoring to make them known to the world, in our own day such attractions as have escaped notice, are found to be out of all number; and it hath been well asserted, the same is like to continue to latest posterity. Methinks there shall be no need of saying aught to show what great share she hath in the production of everything that tendeth to happiness in this world, for you cannot help knowing that all true pleasure is of her giving. Of her excellence I would content myself with asking—What virtue is like to a woman's?—What honesty is like to a woman's?—What love, what courage, what truth, what generosity, what self-denial, what patience under affliction, and forgiveness for wrong come at all nigh unto such as a woman showeth? Believe me the man who cannot honor so truly divine a creature, is an ignorant poor fellow, whom it would be a compliment to style a fool; or an ungrateful mean wretch, whom charity preventeth me from calling a villain."

"Thou liest, knave!" shouted Master Buzzard, starting to his feet, and drawing his rapier, and looking to be in a monstrous deadly rage. "Thou art thyself but a paltry villain as ever lived, and a coward to boot, as I will presently prove—so come on, or I will make no more account of thy pestilent body than I would of a stinking mackerel."

"Aid in the Queen's name, you that be good men and true!" exclaimed the constable, amidst the shrieks of the women and the outcries of the men, as he bustled up between the expected combatants.

"Put down your weapon, Master Buzzard, I pray you," cried John Shakspeare, hastening with others to the scene.

"I will cut off thy ears as a supper for my dogs!" continued Master Buzzard, seeming to increase in his passion.

"A riot! a riot! Surrender you my prisoner in the Queen's name!" added Oliver Dumps, advancing close to the offender, as if with the intention of seizing him.

"Out fool, or I will pin thee to the wall," shouted Master Buzzard, making a pass at the constable, the which to avoid he made a leap of so prodigious a length, it hath been said he never did such a feat before or since.

"Oh, here will be a foul murder done!" exclaimed Dame Shakspeare, piteously wringing of her hands.

"Come on fellow, and take thy death!" cried Master Buzzard, going furiously at John a Combe, who had got his weapon out in readiness to defend himself, but ere his opponent reached within thrusting distance, John Shakspeare had fast hold of his arm, and others springing on him at the same moment, he was soon deprived of all means of offence.

"I marvel a person of your quality should be for a quarrel at such a time as this," observed his host.

"Is't fitting such a pitiful coxcomb of a fellow should preach to me," cried the other very furiously, striving to break from those who held him.

"Hold him fast, good neighbors," exclaimed Oliver Dumps, now coming nearer, seeing that his prisoner was disarmed. "Let him go on no account, I pray you. He hath sought to do me deadly injury in the execution of my office, and it cannot but go hard with him at assize."

"I beseech you, pass it over!" said John a Combe. "It was but some sudden heat of temper in him, and I doubt not he will regret it in the morning."

"Away coward; I spit at thee!" shouted Master Buzzard, in a fiercer rage than ever, as he was being borne out at the door. "I do long to be at thee. I would make more holes in thy body than shall be found in a sieve."

"Bring him along, neighbors," cried the constable. "We'll spoil this killing humor of his, I promise you."

Master Buzzard was forcibly carried out of the house, yet without any rudeness on the part of his bearers, who because of his quality were loth he should be punished for his brawling; and after much opposition from Oliver Dumps wanting to be thought

the Queen's trusty officer, who liked not of an offence being hushed up, it was agreed that no notice should be taken of it, on condition of the offender's going peaceably home. In the mean time, the guests recovering from their alarm, got to dancing a measure, and other diversions, as if nought had happened to disturb their sports, and went not away till late, vowing that of all the merry meetings they had been at, for the pleasure they had had, none had been like to the christening of William Shakspeare.

CHAPTER III.

These things begin

To look like dangers, now, worthy my fates.
Fortune, I see thy worst; let doubtful states,
And things uncertain hang upon thy will;
Me surest death shall render certain still.

BEN JONSON.

I held it ever

Virtue and cunning were endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches; careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expend;
But immortality attends the former,
Making a man a god.

SHAKSPEARE.

Their angry looks, their deadly daunting blows,
Might witness well that in their hearts remained
As cankered hate, disdain, and furious mood,
As ever bred in bear or tiger's breast.

GASCOYNE.

"SAUL, what art doing?"

"Looking to see that the gesses and bells
of this tercel gentle be in the properest trim,
master."

"Ay, well thought of; but, as I have
ever marked, thou hast wonderful foresight."

"Marry, my sight be good enough; methinks
I can trace a hawk as well as any."

"In truth thou hast many commendable
qualities, and I would fain give some token
of how well esteemed they are of me."

"Indeed! but that be kind of you, master;
monstrous kind! and, as for my qualities, I
doubt they be anything out of the common.
Peradventure I am as cunning at the rearing
of hawks as any fellow in Warwickshire;
at quarterstaff, wrestling, pitch the bar,
running at the quintain, and other games,
care for none; and will dance a morrice,
play the hobby-horse in the May games,
or take a fling at a Shrove-tide cock,
with as much perfectness as you shall see
among a thousand."

His master was silent for a minute or so;
yet his aspect wore a troubled, and by no

means pleasing expression, that looked as if he wanted to disburden his mind of something. For a while he kept feeding of a hawk he held on his wrist. His companion was a sturdy varlet of some thirty years, with a freckled face, a thick clumsy head, and features expressive of one alike reckless and impudent. He was clad in a forester's frock of Kendal green, confined at the waist with a belt, having a pocket at the side, below which little could be seen, save his crimson hose and thick buff boots; and he wore a rapier and a dagger. Of these two the one was Master Buzzard, of whom the reader hath already some knowledge, and the other was his man Saul, his chief favorite and confidant. They were together in the hall, once a fair chamber, in Master Buzzard's house, with a famous timber roof, and a goodly store of old armor hung about, but on account of the great number of hawks and dogs that were kept in it, some being here and some there, a litter of pups in one corner and a cast of falcons in another, with lurchers, deer-hounds, and spaniels of every kind, running in and out of every hole and corner, with little regard to cleanliness, the place was scarce fit for any human being to be in. All amongst the corslets and plates of mail, were nailed the skins of herons and the tails of foxes, the antlers of a stag and the heads of divers kinds of wild fowl, badgers, pole-cats, and other vermin; and there seemed to be but little furniture in ordinary use, as chair or table, unencumbered with things necessary for hawking, or hunting, or fishing, or some sport of a like nature. On a corner of a long table, close to where Master Buzzard was standing, there stood a tray with the remains of a pasty, and a flagon beside it, which was some sign that the place, however unsightly it might be, was not badly off for victual.

"Thou knowest, Saul, how good a master I have been to thee," continued Master Buzzard.

"Ay, by gog's blood, that do I!" exclaimed his man, with great earnestness, "and many thanks to your worship. I'faith, there is no denying I am well off for a master, for one more cunning in hunting, and hawking, and all such goodly sports, of a more valorous nature, let his weapon be what it may; or of a more truly prodigal disposition, upon any proper occasion, I doubt hugely, I should meet with, sought I ever so. Marry, if your worship is as well off for a servant as am I for a master, then ought we to be envied of all men."

"By God's I value not my best goshawk

as I do thy faithful service," replied his master, still seeming to keep his attention fixed upon his bird. "In truth, Saul, I do look upon thee as my right hand; and I do intend, before any very long time hath passed, to show thee such excellent instance of my good will as must rejoice thee infinitely to see."

"'Fore George! master, I want none such," said his companion, albeit with a marvelous lack of sincerity. "Yet would I on no account baulk the generousness of your humor. I am not unmindful how oft your worship hath stood between me and harm, when a parcel of poor linsey wolsy knaves of the town yonder, went about telling of me the horriblest slanders that ever was heard."

"Ay, it hath been said of many thou wert he who stabbed Daniel Short, of Bars-ton, who was found dead in the meadow," observed the other, regarding of his goshawk with a more intense earnestness. "But I heeded them not. It was sworn before the high bailiff thou didst misuse Joan Springfield at the town end, and he was for proceeding against thee with as much severity as might be; but I stayed him in the matter. And there was much ado made of thy shooting at Daniel Buckthorn, of the Mill; and it would have gone hard with thee had I not stepped in and hushed all up."

"Never was man so abused!" exclaimed Saul with a very monstrous vehemency. "I have enemies, master,—scores of them, I promise you; and they be such thorough-going cowards and dastardly poor villains as cannot come with any fair weapon before me, and challenge me with the infamy they would lay to my charge, that I might disprove it on their pestilent bodies, but needs must whisper all manner of the horriblest false stuff that ever was uttered, among such pitiful fools as they can get to listen to them. 'Slife, master! there be no living for such knaves, and an honest man might as well go hang at once as be pestered with them. For mine own part, I do think the ridding of the world of any a very commendable thing; and could I meet with one who had been playing his knave's tricks on your worship, or on any other for whom I am so bound, I would slit his weason for him whenever the time served, and none should be the wiser."

A smile of peculiar meaning appeared on the face of Master Buzzard at this intimation.

"Dost know John a Combe?" inquired the latter with an assumed indifferency.

"Know John a Combe!" exclaimed Saul

in some surprise, and with a more evident contempt. "Is he not the errantest skip-jack in all the country round?—a fine Sunday gentleman, forsooth! that looks as if he layeth himself up in lavender o' nights, that he may smell sweet i' the morning? Why he is as common as the stocks, and as like to be avoided by all true men as is the pillory or the whipping-post. I should as soon expect Gammer Lambswool to inquire for the gossip's bridle, as your worship to ask after John a Combe. 'Sblood! he taketh upon him, too, to come Master perfection over us, and must needs be seeking to be thought an example of goodness, and wisdom, and every virtue under the sun, thinking to be as famous as Sir Guy of Warwick. I would forfeit a year's wages found I not more virtue in a bunch of nettles than you shall discover in him, search you from now till doomsday."

Master Buzzard sought not to interrupt his man in his speech, for a very excellent reason, because it was much to his liking, the which the other knew full well; for he was a cunning knave, that ever studied to jump with his master's humor at all times, and was aware of what had passed betwixt him and Master Combe, and moreover, was willing enough to reap advantage of it.

"Indeed, I take him to be as scurvy a fellow as any that lives," observed Master Buzzard with wonderful bitterness.

"That is he, out of all doubt," replied his man in much the same sort of spirit. "I hate such popinjays. It be monstrous fine certain'ly for such a paltry knave as he is to be ever schooling of your worship, as it were"—

"I tell thee, Saul, I will endure his swaggering airs no longer!" exclaimed Master Buzzard, interrupting his man with great fierceness. "He is ever thrusting himself in my way—a murrain on him! I cannot do as my wont for his pestilent meddling. Wherever he is I must need play mumchance. All run to John a Combe; all bend to John a Combe; all listen to John a Combe! 'Slife! it maketh me mad to see him so noticed, so praised, so courted, whilst his betters must be thrust aside as worthy of no better heed than a mangy cur."

"Doth the caitiff ruffle it so bravely?" inquired the other. "Well, never heard I of such thorough impudency. But what ignorant poor fools must be they who would be led by him! Marry! I am so moved with indignation at the slights put on your worship by so paltry a villain, that I know

not what mischief I should be ready to do him."

"But that is not the worst of it," continued his master with more vehemence. "He hath put on me intolerable affronts, and as yet all attempts, seek I when I would, to be revenged of him, have been bootless. No later than this very morning, scarce an hour gone, meeting him alone in the back lane, I drew upon him, thinking I had him sure; but the villain carried some amulet or devilish charm; for though I made my deadliest thrusts with all the skill of which I am master, he remained unhurt, and in a short space my weapon was sent flying out of my hand a full twenty yards; whereupon, with a Judas smile, the villain bowed to me, and wishing me 'Good day,' took himself off on the instant."

"O' my life! 'twas but a coward's trick, master!" cried Saul. "I marvel you did not after him and stick him as he went."

"By this hand, I would gladly have done it!" exclaimed his master. "But I was so confounded at the flight of my rapier, and at the fellow's assurance, that I knew not what to be at, and ere I had resolved, he had gone clean out of sight. Doubtless he will go bruiting it abroad, as far as he can, how he had me at his mercy and spared my life. 'Slife!" continued he with an exceeding uneasy and malignant look with him, "methinks I am poorly served when such a fellow as this can do me all manner of offence, and go unharmed."

"Nay, by your leave, master, not so," quickly answered Saul, "when you have had my service in this business, I will be bold to say you shall not count yourself poorly served."

"I would I could be well rid of him," said Master Buzzard in a lower voice.

"If it please you, master, let that be my care," observed the other.

"I hear that he is oft to be met with after dark in the narrow lane at the town end," observed Master Buzzard, his voice gradually sinking to a whisper.

"A goodly place, and a goodly time too," added the other, with a sort of half audible laugh, "but mayhap his worship shall choose to go there once too often." Thus went they on, as bad men do concert their villainies, half ashamed to look each other in the face, and as their intentions became manifest, dropping their voices to a close whisper, that the evil they would be about might not be heard of any. But in this I can follow them no longer, having game in view more worthy of the reader's attention.

There was a hall to be holden at the town that day, at which the aldermen and others of the corporation had been summoned in such terms as showed it to be a matter of the very hugest importance that called them together. Whether it related to certain intelligence of some rebellion broke out against the Queen's Highness, to risings of the papists, or to rumors of invasion from the Spaniards, seemed not to be clearly ascertained; for among the honest burgesses who had got note of this extraordinary meeting, there were heard as many reasons for it as there were tongues to speak them, whereof the general belief at last rested upon the three above named. That nothing threatened to affect the immediate safety of the town was apparent from the usual air of carelessness and security that prevailed throughout the principal street. Here might be seen a troop of boys fresh broke out from school, hallooing like mad; there a knot of a meaner sort at play, whilst a little one from the school, though hastening home to his parents, kept casting behind him a wistful look, as if he did long to join in their pastime. One or two big dogs were seen stretched at their length by their master's doors, and now and then some one or other of a smaller kind would dart out of a doorway, yelping at the heels of the noisy children, till one more courageous than his fellows would up with a stone, and send him back yelping louder than he came, making the tailor leap from his board, the cordwainer throw down his lapstone, and the apprentice leave his work, to see what was the hubbub. Here and there careful mothers were calling out of their casements to hasten home their boys, or some provident housewife would be casting a store of victual for the feeding of her stock of fowls, who, with fluttering wings and eager throats, would be seen eagerly flocking towards her.

In several places, there might be seen some two or three of the neighbors conversing soberly and with great show of earnestness, more particularly about the doors of the principal burgesses; and in front of the casements of Master Alderman Malmsey, the vintner, where there was a famous group, with a horseman in the midst, looking to be so busy of speech as to pay but little heed to the tankards and drinking horns held by some of them. Opposite was the dwelling of Master Alderman Dowlas, the draper, with its lower windows showing divers rolls of cloth of sundry colors, whilst at the open casement above sat his buxom fair wife, with Mistress Malmsey at her side, plying of her needle with a very commend-

able industry, and as it seemed using her tongue with a like speed. Coming down the street was a drove of cows, some of which must needs put their heads in the water-trough before the inn, thinking to have a good drink, but the stable boys would not allow of it, for they drove them off presently, by throwing up their arms, and making a great shouting. A little curly-haired child scarce big enough to run alone, was standing in the midst of the road mooing at the cattle as bold as you please, and putting out its little hands as if to prevent them going further; and an elder sister, with a marvellous anxious frightened face, was rushing from a neighboring door-way to hurry him out of danger. All the casements, and nearly all the doors, stood invitingly open for it was a hot summer's day, at the latter end of June, and every where there where signs of a desire to be relieved of the oppressive sultriness of the atmosphere, either by seeking of the shady place, or where a draught of cooler air might be gained, or by drinking of tankards of cider and other refreshing liquors, wherever they might be had.

For all this gossiping and carelessness on every side, it was noted that one or two of the elder aldermen who were going to the hall, wore visages of exceeding gravity, and seemed intent upon avoiding the approaches of such of their townsmen as they met in their way, with looks so suspicious and fearful, that the latter knew not what to make of it. Presently, there came by John Shakspeare and Master Combe, likewise on their way to the hall; but they looked to be in a more serious humor even than the aldermen, and would on no account stop for any, which was the more strange, because both were well known to be of a most friendly spirit, and had ever cheerfully answered any man's salutation.

"Whether so fast, my master?" shouted Sir Nathaniel, as he popped his fat rosy face out at the casement to call them. "Dost pass so exquisite a house of entertainment as this, at the pace thou art going, when the sun seemeth to be intent upon making of us so many St. Bartholomews? Two rabid dogs could not have behaved less reasonably towards good liquor. Prithee, come and share with us, and doubt not being welcome, even if thou pay for all."

To this invitation, the two merely shook their heads and continued on their way, to the huge discontent of the curate and the schoolmaster, who, at the sight of them, expected to have had at least an extra tankard or two without hurt to their own purses.

John Shakspeare and his friend then proceeded without further hindrance to the church, and soon afterwards entered the vestry—a chamber of no great dimensions, furnished only with a long table, at the head of which was a high-backed chair, and on each side were a couple of benches. In the chair was the high bailiff, one Timothy Mallet, the wheelwright. Opposite, on a low stool, with a many papers, and two or three huge books before him, sat the diminutive form of Jemmy Catchpole, the town lawyer, who was said to be so learned in the law as to be fitter to be a judge of assize than any living. His sharp grey eyes twinkled with a perpetual restlessness, and his parchment-skin seemed growing of a deeper yellow, as, with a pen in his hand, he watched or made notes of the matter proceeding. On each side were seated such of the aldermen as attended, likewise others of the corporation who were not of the aldermen; and Master Alderman Malmsey, with his purple in-grain countenance and very puncheon of a person, who affected the orator in no small measure, was on his legs, if such round things as he had might be so called, denouncing with a monstrous vehemency a motion, then under discussion, for repairing the parish well. Some listened to him attentively, others were conversing apart; but it might have been noted, that a few wore aspects so anxious as plainly showed their minds were intent on another matter. His argument was to the effect, that water was a thing which all honest men ought to eschew, unless as at the marriage at Cana it could be turned into wine, and that wine was a thing most absolute and necessary to a man's well doing; therefore, it would be much better to buy a pipe of such fine hippocras as he could sell them, for the use of the corporation, than to apply any of its funds for the repairing of so unprofitable a thing as a well. At this, up-started at once a baker and a butcher, swearing with equal vehemency, that nothing was so necessary as plenty of bread and meat, and advocating the greater laudableness of laying in a store of such victual, which they could not do better than have of them, to wasting the corporation funds in the project that had so injudiciously been proposed. Others might have followed in a like strain, but at this instant John Shakspeare, who had waited with his stock of patience getting to be less and less every moment, now rose, and with his honest face somewhat pale and of an uneasy expression, proceeded to take a share in the debate. It was noticed, that on his rising, the few who

had appeared so unmindful of what was going on, looked marvelously attentive; and the others, as if curious to know what one so well esteemed had to say on the matter, were no less careful listeners.

"I pray you lose not the precious time in such idle stuff as this," exclaimed he. "We want your wisest counsel. We are threatened with such calamity as is enough at the mere thought of it, to strike us dead with fear. We cannot thrust it aside. It hath come upon us unprepared. All that can be done is to endeavor to keep the mischief in as narrow a compass as may be possible. Up and be doing then, my masters, without a moment's delaying, for the negligence of one may be the destruction of all."

At the hearing of this discourse, so different from what all, excepting the anxious few, expected, the greater number stared in absolute astonishment, and the rest waited as if in the expectation of hearing what was to follow.

"My friends!" continued the speaker, in a low, thick voice, as if he could scarce speak, "*The plague is in Stratford!*"

"The plague?" exclaimed many in the same moment of time, leaning forward from their seats, breathless with horror and surprise.

"I would to God there could be a doubt of it!" replied John Shakspeare. "My worthy and approved good friend, Master Combe, of whose honorableness there can be none here present who have not had excellent evidence, hath, in one of the manifold generous offices he is ever intent upon doing to his poorer neighbors, made this doleful discovery; and with the advice of divers of the most experienced of my fellow burgesses, who alone knew of it from me, I have had you here assembled, that you might learn from him the exact truth, and then consider amongst yourselves which will be the fittest way of providing for the common safety."

At this there was a dead silence; and when Master Combe stood up, every eye was strained to scrutinize him, and every ear stretched forward to hear the most distinctly the promised communication.

"I pray you, my worthy neighbors and friends, fear nothing!" exclaimed John a Combe; "fear will only make you the victim of what you dread; but courage and good conduct will help you to drive the pestilence from your door. That it doth exist amongst us, I would could doubt; and this is how I came at the knowledge of it. Hearing that there was a poor family visited with a sudden sickness, of which some were like

to die had they not help presently, I speeded thither with what medicine I usually carry on such occasions knowing them to be of special benefit in divers disorders. In a low cottage, ruinous, and exceeding dirty, I came upon the sufferers. As God me save, I there saw a sight such as I have not seen in my whole life before; and trust in Jesu never to see again. I entered at the kitchen, where, in one corner, on a litter of rushes, I beheld one dead, the father of this wretched family, and, by his side, his wife in the last agonies; the fixed stare of whose yellow eyeballs settling into death, I saw at a glance made all help of medicine out of the case. A babe was crawling on the floor towards her; but it had a sickly look with it that was ghastly to see. In another corner was a young girl dead also, her fair face getting to be discolored and unsightly; and in a chair was a boy who, by his dress, I knew was used to labor in the fields, and he complained he felt so deadly bad he could not return to his work. I went into another chamber, where was the old grannam, lying upon a truckle bed, moaning terribly, but saying nought; and doubled up at her feet was the figure of another ancient dame, who had been her nurse till she dropped where she was, and could not be got to move hand or foot. I was informed, by a charitable neighbor who came in with me, that this illness had only appeared amongst them since the preceding night, soon after unpacking of a parcel they had received by the carrier from some friends in London. On hearing this I had a sudden misgiving, for I had received certain intelligence the day previous, that the pestilence had broke out there. My heart was too full to speak; and when I was further told, that in addition to the inmates of the cottage, sundry of the neighbors who had called in, hearing of their sickness, had been taken with a like disorder, one of whom had given up the ghost not half an hour since, my suspicion took firmer ground. Presently I examined one of the dead. My fears then received terrible confirmation. The plague spot was upon him. Having given such orders as I thought necessary, without exciting any alarm, I fumigated myself well, and acquainted my good friend, John Shakspeare, with the fearful truth; and by his advice you have been called here to take instant measures to prevent the spreading of this direful calamity. In whatsoever thing I may be of service at this unhappy time, I pray you use me as one friend would use another. Believe me, I will do it lovingly, whatever may be required."

Though the speaker concluded what he

had to say, for some moments' space none sought to interrupt the awful silence which followed, but sat like so many statues of fear, with eyes almost starting from their sockets, mouths partly open, and big drops of perspiration standing upon their wrinkled foreheads. Of the most terrified was the little lawyer upon the stool, who, leaning his elbows on the table, and with his pointed chin resting upon his palms, kept his sharp eyes fixed upon John a Combe, looking more frightened as the other proceeded in his narration, till he gave voice to his consternation in an audible groan. Presently, some began to turn their gaze from Master Combe to each other, and finding in every face the horror so visible in their own, they remained stupified and bewildered, till one nigh unto the door rushed out, and with the look of one struck with a sudden frenzy, ran home, shouting at the top of his voice, "The plague! the plague!" and many others of that assembly, put out of all discretion by the greatness of their fear, made from the place with as much speed of foot as they could use, in the hope of securing the safety of themselves and families. They that were left then proceeded to take counsel among themselves what was fittest to be done; and Master Combe, being invited by them to assist in their deliberations, did give such excellent advice, that it was agreed to by all, with wonderful admiration of his wisdom and greatness of heart; and they sat for several hours making resolutions in accordance with what he had proposed.

"I cannot hear of a denial," said Master Combe to John Shakspeare, as they were returning together from the hall. "This can be now no proper place for your sweet wife and her young son, or any of her family. Stay they here, it must be at the hazard of their lives, for none can say who shall escape; whilst if they seek refuge in my poor dwelling till the danger hath passed, they need have communication with none, and so shall be in no peril."

"In honest truth, I like it well, Master Combe, and am much beholden to you for your friendly care," replied his companion. "Yet am I fearful of accepting of your courtesy, thinking it may put you to inconvenience, and to some danger also."

"Speak not of it, an' you love me," said the other, with a very sincere earnestness; "it is at your entire disposal, as long as it may be at your need. As for myself, *this* is my place. Whilst so many of my neighbors are in such imminent peril, here will I remain to do them whatever office may be expedient for their good."

"An' if it please you, worthy sir, I will assist you with what humble ability I have," added John Shakspeare; "I will take order that my dame and her babe proceed forthwith, with their attendants, to the security provided for them; for which sweet kindness I and mine shall feel bound to you ever after, and will make provision for her having all things necessary; and then I will hold myself in readiness to do whatsoever you shall think fittest."

"I would accept of no help in this matter sooner than your own," answered Master Combe; "knowing your thorough honesty and well disposedness, as I do; yet, methinks you shall find sufficient in this strait to watch over the safety of those dearest to you, and cannot advisedly, when they are looking to you for help, put your life in jeopardy for the security of others."

"Nay, by your leave, Master Combe, though I am no scholar, I cannot allow of that," exclaimed John Shakspeare, with some eagerness; "methinks my duty to my neighbors calleth me to their assistance when they shall require it of me, quite as loudly as it may yourself."

"But forget you how many are dependant on your exertions for an honest living, which is not my case," answered his companion.

"I will see to their safety, and I will look with as much care as I may to my own," said the other earnestly; "but, in mine own opinion, I should be deserving of the good will of none, were I to slink away when danger was at the heels of my friends, and leave them to stand it as they might, whilst I cared only for the safety of myself and what belonged to me."

"Your hand, honest John Shakspeare!" cried Master Combe, shaking his friend's hand very heartily in his own. "Believe me, I love you all the better for having such notions. But I must down this lane," continued he, as they stood together at the corner. "I beseech you hasten your sweet wife as much as you can, that she may out of the town with as little delay as need be at such a time, and I will with all convenient speed to my house to prepare for her reception. A fair good night to you, neighbor."

"God speed you, worthy sir, in all you do!" exclaimed the other, with the same friendly feeling, as Master Combe proceeded on his way. "There wends as good a man as ever broke bread!" continued he, when the object of his praise was out of hearing; and he stood where he was for some minutes, leaning on his staff, with his honest heart full of admiration, watching the progress of his companion, till a turning of the lane hid

him from his view. It was now just up on twilight, and the lane being bordered by tall trees, closely planted and in their fullest foliage, a great portion of it was in deep shadow; but this seemed only to make more fresh and vivid the high bank on the other side which led up into a cornfield, whereof the rich yellow ears, and the crimson poppies blushing beneath them, as seen in every gap of the hedge, gave promise of abundant harvest; and the hedge, being of elder in great patches of blossom, looked at a distance like unto pure white linen a drying on the green branches. John a Combe, as he walked along, noticing the quick movements of the bats, whirling here and there in quest of such insects as formed their victual, on a sudden had his eye attracted by a gleam of light on the opposite bank, which at first he took to be a glow-worm, but the next moment distinguished a large black mass moving in the deep shadow; the which he had scarce made out to be the figure of a man, when two men, armed and masked, rushed upon him from that very spot. As quick as lightning his rapier was out and he on his defence. A muttered execration was all he heard, as they came upon him both at once, in such a sort as proved they would have his life if they could. John a Combe was on the brink of a dry ditch, and within a few yards of a gate leading to the cornfield, over against which was an opening in the trees that gave a fair light to see all around; and for this he made, defending himself the whilst so briskly, that neither of his opponents could get him at an advantage. Here having got himself without hurt of any kind, he put his back to the gate, and now, seeing that he had before him two stout varlets in masks, who pressed on him as though they would not be baffled in their aims, he presently put forth what cunning of fence he had, and so nimble was his steel, and so quick his movements, that he avoided every thrust. This, however, only seemed to make them the more savage and desperate, and they pressed closer upon him. What might have been the end on't, had things gone on, I cannot take on me to determine; but the conflict was stopped much sooner than was expected of any, for one of the two was felled to the earth from an unseen hand, and the other varlet at the same moment got such a thrust in his wrist as made him incapable of any mischief.

"Lie there, caitiff!" exclaimed John Shakspeare, who, loitering at the top of the lane, had heard the clash of the weapons, and hastening to the spot had come in time to deal a blow with his staff that rid his friend of the fiercest of his assailants. "Lie there for a

pitiful coward, and a knave to boot. I doubt not hanging be too good for thee, thou murderous villain, to seek the life of one of so excellent a nature. But thou hast not done amiss in hiding of thy face, for I warrant we shall find rascal writ in every line of it. As I live, Master Buzzard!" cried he, in some surprise, as he took off the mask of him he had knocked down.

"And here have we no bigger a villain to help him than his man Saul!" exclaimed John a Combe, as he tore off the visor of the other. Master Buzzard came to himself presently, for he was but little hurt, and finding he had been completely baffled, he said never a word. As soon as he regained his footing, with a look of devilish malignity he took himself off, leaving his man to follow as he best might. Neither received hindrance from Master Combe or his trusty friend, who were in truth monstrous glad to be rid of the company of such thorough paced villains.

CHAPTER IV.

And what's a life? A weary pilgrimage,
Whose glory in one day doth fill the stage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepit age.
And what's a life? The flourishing array
Of the proud summer meadow, which, to-day,
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow—hay.

QUARLES.

How now! Ah me!
God and all saints be good to us!

BEN JONSON.

Death may usurp on nature many hours,
And yet the fire of life kindle again
The overpressed spirits.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE house of John a Combe, so handsomely offered by him for the reception of Dame Shakspeare and her infant son, lay about a mile from Stratford, the highest way across the fields; and had been built some twenty years in a famous quaint pretty style, with projecting gables, curiously formed and carved; a latticed porch, whereon all manner of delicate flowers were climbing very daintily, and it was enclosed with its garden in a high wall that had iron gates, in an archway in front, from which a broad path led on each side of a well-kept lawn right up to the house.

Dame Shakspeare had a famous fire of good logs burning in her chamber, the light whereof shewed the goodly hangings of the bed, and rich arras brought from beyond seas that were about the wainscot, with all the

store of needful furniture in high presses, cupboards, chairs, tables, and the like, exquisitely carved in choice woods that stood around her on every side. The good dame, clad in a simple long garment of linen that wrapt her all around, sat at some short distance from the fire-dogs, knitting of a pair of hose, whilst over against her sat nurse Cicely, with the babe in her lap, the front of his white frock hid under a dowlas cloth, that was carefully tucked under his chin, feeding him with a pap-spoon. Nurse talked on without ceasing, gossiping to the mother and prattling to the babe, all in a breath; but Dame Shakspeare scarce spoke a word. Indeed, her thoughts were in a strange mis-giving humor, fearing for the present, and doubting of the future, till her eye would light on her sweet son; and then noticing of his exceeding happiness at what he was about, her aspect would catch a sudden brightness, and mayhap she would say something is if there was nought to trouble her.

"Of those who are dead some say there is no knowing for the number," continued nurse. "They die out of all calculation; not here and there one, as in honest fashion they should, but everywhere scores. Humphrey heard at the gate, of Oliver Dumps, that they went so fast, it was supposed there would soon be none left to tend the sick.—Ods lifelings, what an appetite thou hast!" added she, as she kept feeding of the child. "Beshrew my heart, but thou wouldst eat up house and home kept thou this fashion at all times. Well, it's all one. They that are dead cannot help themselves; and for the living they must trust in God's mercy. How now, chuck? What, more! Well, heaven send thee good store of victuals! By my troth, methinks Master Combe shall deserve well of us all our days. As for myself, I wish I could know the service I might do his worship, I would not spare my old bones, I promise you. He hath been a mean for the preserving of our lives, that be a sure thing; for it standeth to reason, had we remained in the town, we should have been no better than loathsome corpses long since."

Dame Shakspeare replied not; but her nature was too forcibly impressed with the load of obligation she lay under, not to assent to all her attendant would express on that point.

"And thou hast especial reason to be thankful to him, my young master," continued the old woman to her charge; "by'r lady, thou hadst best make haste to be a man, and shew his worship how grateful of heart thou art for his goodness. And then to put us all in so delectable a place as

this," added she, looking round the chamber in evident admiration. "O' my life, 'tis a house fit for a prince, and it hath in it every thing that heart could desire. This is his worship's own bed-chamber, as I have heard. Happy the woman who shall have the owning of it, say I! I protest when I hear how nobly he hath borne himself throughout the dreadful raging of this doleful pestilence, I am clean lost in wonder and astonishment at his infinite goodness."

"Surely, nurse, it must be somewhat beyond the time they usually come?" here exclaimed Dame Shakspeare; "I hope nought amiss hath happened to either, and yet I fear. Alack, it would go hard with me were I to lose my husband; and Master Combe hath showed himself so true a friend I could not but grieve at his loss. I pray God, very heartily, both are safe."

"Amen!" said the nurse very devoutly. "But keep up a good heart, I pray you, mistress. I would wager my life on't no harm shall happen to them. They must needs be much too useful to be spared when such pitiful work is going forward. But concerning of the time of their usual coming, I cannot think it hath yet arrived, though mayhap it shall be found to be no great way off. Peradventure, rest you patient awhile, you shall hear Humphrey give us note of their approach before long. Ha! my young rogue!" continued she, addressing the babe, and fondling him very prettily, upon finding he would take no more of her food. "I warrant me now thou hast had a famous meal! Art not ashamed to devour such monstrous quantities, when victual is so scarce to be had? O' my conscience, he laughed in my very face! By your patience, mistress, this son of yours is no other than a very horrible young reprobate, for he seemeth to care for nought when he hath all that he standeth in need of."

"Bless his dear heart!" cried the much delighted mother, rousing up from her melancholy at sight of her babe's enjoyment. "It glads me more than I can speak to see him looking so hearty, and in so rare a humor. But I must to the casement, I am impatient of this seeming long delay;" and so saying she suddenly rose from her seat, and made for the window, a broad casement which looked out over the porch, for the chamber was above the ground-floor, and opening it she leaned out to watch for her husband. The night had set in, though it was scarce eight of the clock; but being the latter end of October that was no marvel. Dark clouds were floating heavily in the sky, and the trees, though half denuded of

their foliage, made a famous rustling as the wind came sweeping among their branches. Every thing looked indistinct and shadowy within the range of sight, and beyond, all seemed as though closely wrapt up in a shroud. Certes, to one of Dame Shakspeare's disposition, the prospect around must have appeared wonderful melancholy, and it gave a chill to her heart that filled her with monstrous disquietude. All was in perfect silence and solitude, save down below, where Humphrey, armed with a rusty harquebus, was marching to and fro within the gate, of which station he was exceeding proud, as was manifest; for, immediately he caught sight of his mistress at the casement, he held his piece firm to his side, made himself look as tall as he might, and with a terrible valorous countenance, as he supposed, continued to walk backwards and forwards at his post.

"Hast seen any thing, Humphrey?" inquired Dame Shakspeare.

"Yes, mistress, an't please you," replied he, stopping short in his walk, and holding of himself as upright as any dart. "I have seen old Grammer Lambswool's two sandy colored pigs making for home with all the speed of foot they were master of."

"Psha! hast seen any thing of thy master?" added the good dame.

"No, mistress," answered he.

"Hast seen ought of Master Combe?"

"No, mistress."

Hearing no further questioning; Humphrey continued his marching; and his mistress, in no way satisfied with his intelligence, remained at the casement silent and abstracted. She could hear nurse Cicely walking up and down the chamber, evidently by her speech and occasional humming striving to get the boy into a sleep.

"Well, never saw I the like!" exclaimed Cicely, in tones of such monstrous astonishment as drew the mother's attention in an instant. "Instead of getting into a good sound sleep as I was assured thou hadst fallen into, I know not how long since, here art thou as wide awake as am I, and listening to my poor singing with a look as if thy very heart was in it." Certes, it was as the nurse had said. The babe lay in her arms, seeming in such strange wonder and delights as surely no babe ever showed before. Even Dame Shakspeare marveled somewhat to note the amazed smiling aspect of her young son.

"By my fay!" continued the old woman, "if this babe come not to be some great master of music, I am hugely mistaken in him. I remember me now, this is the first time I

have chanced to sing in his hearing.—Marry, an' if his worship be so taken with my music, I warrant me he shall have a rare plenty of it, for I have as famous a store of ballads as any woman in Warwickshire."

"I doubt not they will be well liked of him, judging of the manner he hath taken the first he hath heard," observed his mother.

At this moment there was heard such horrible unnatural screaming and strange uproar, that made Dame Shakspeare, more full of misgiving than ever, rushed back to the casement with as much speed as she could use. The first object that met her eye was no other than Humphrey, half lying on the ground, supporting himself with one arm, and one leg doubled under him, and with the other hand holding in his trembling grasp the harquebus he made so brave a show with a few minutes since. He was shaking in every limb; his hat had fallen off, leaving his face the more visible, which bore an aspect of the completest fright ever seen. His eyes were starting forward, his cheeks pale, and his mouth half open, one jaw knocking against the other as hard as they could. Turning her gaze in the direction in which the boy was staring, as if incapable of moving away his eyes, though for a single instant, she saw a sight the horribleness of which made her scream outright. It was a spectral figure at the gate, with long bare arms and legs, all livid and gastly, and a face that seemed more terrible to look on than death itself. The pestilence in its worst stage was apparent in every feature; and the glaring eye, blue skin, gaunt jaw, and ragged beard, were more distinguishable for the sheet in which the head and part of the body were wrapped. He shook the iron bars of the gate as if he would have them down, and tried to climb them, all the whilst giving out such piercing shrieks as made the blood run cold to hear.

"Jesu preserve the child!" exclaimed the terrified mother.

"Flames and the rack!" shouted a hollow sepulchral voice, as he shook the iron bars again and again. "Hell rages in my every vein! Fires eat into my heart! O mercy!" Then arose another scream more wild and piercing than any that had preceded it, and the poor wretch flung his head about, and twisted his limbs, as if in the horriblest torture.

"Drive him away, good Humphrey!" cried Dame Shakspeare, the sense of her child's danger overcoming all other feelings in her.

"Ye—ye—ye—yes, mistress!" answered Humphrey as plainly as his fright would allow him, but moved he never an inch.

"Oh, good God!" shrieked the diseased man in his phrenzy. "Oh, the Infinite Great One! This is the day of doom! Hide—hide, ye wicked!—the ministers of judgment compass ye all about. There is no 'scape from the consuming fire. It scorches my flesh—it burneth my bones to ashes. Ah!" and again the same horrible yell pierced the air as he writhed under his pains.

"Humphrey, I say, drive him away, I prithee!" cried the frightened mother more earnestly than at first. "Alack! if he should break in now we are clean lost!"

"Ye—ye—yes, mistress," muttered Humphrey, but he sought not to move either his eyes from the man, or his limbs from the ground. However, it did so fall out, that the terrible cause of all their fear, after spending of his strength in vainly essaying to shake down the gates, screaming and calling after the fashion that hath been told, in the height of his frenzy fell from the place he had climbed to down to the hard ground within the walls, where, after twisting himself about for some few seconds in the horriblest contortions, and shrieking as if in the last agonies, he finally lay stiff, silent, and manifestly dead.

"Humphrey! Humphrey! get you in doors this instant," exclaimed his mistress in a manner as though she scarce knew what she said. Then wringing of her hands exceeding pitifully, exclaimed in a low voice, "Woe is me! the plague will be upon us, and no remedy."

Dame Shakspeare had called to Humphrey many times, and though he answered her at first, he paid but small attention to her commands; but when the frightful object got within the walls, he did nought but keep regarding of his motions with an uneasy stare, as if his wits had clean gone; and now his mistress again called to him, he moved not, nor spoke a word, nor gave any sign, save the loud chattering of his teeth, that he was one of the living. Presently there was heard the sound as of sundry persons, running, and ere any very long time there appeared at the gate divers of the town watch, and others, with torches and lanterns, armed with long staves and other weapons.

"Get you in, dame, I pray you, and shut to the casement," cried Master Combe from among them.

"In with you, in God's name, or you are lost!" almost at the same moment of time shouted John Shakspeare; and his wife, with a hurried ejaculation of her great comfort at hearing of their voices, did as she was bid, and sunk into a chair more dead than alive.

"I would rather have given a thousand pounds than he should have escaped," said Master Combe. "I pray God no harm come of it to your sweet wife and children."

"I cannot help but fear, the peril is so great," replied John Shakspeare in a somewhat desponding tone.

"Lord ha' mercy upon us!" muttered a voice not far off of them.

"As I live, 'tis my knave Humphrey!" exclaimed his master, looking through the bars of the gate. "Why how now! what art doing there? Get thee in by the back way on the instant, and stir not while we are gone."

"La, what, be that you, master, indeed?" cried out Humphrey with a sort of foolish joy, as he recognized the voice.

"Get thee in, I tell thee!" replied the other sharply, and Humphrey not caring to take another look at the dead man, walked himself off, and soon disappeared behind the house; whereupon his master with a key he had, opened the gate, and by the directions of Master Combe, the corpse was presently placed upon a hand-barrow and carried away by the watchmen; then a fire of dry sticks was made on the spot where it had fallen, in which certain aromatics were flung, which made a cloud of smoke that filled the air all round about for a great space. After it had burned some time, John Shakspeare called to his wife that she might open the casement, and she waited no second calling. Then passed they nigh upon an hour in very comfortable discourse one with another, as if it was a customary thing of them, she leaning out of the chamber, and her husband and worthy Master Combe standing upon the lawn beneath, closely wrapped up in long cloaks, and carrying lighted torches in their hands.

"I cannot express to you how glad I am to hear of the abating of the pestilence," said Dame Shakspeare. "'Tis the pleasantest news I have heard this many a day. But think you it may be relied on?"

"I have taken the very surest means of proving its perfect credibleness," answered Master Combe.

"Not so many have died of it to-day by twenty as died yesterday," added her husband; "and yesterday we buried ten less than the day before."

"I am infinitely thankful!" exclaimed she in a famous cheerfulness. "I heartily pray it may continue so."

"So do we all, sweet dame," answered Master Combe. "And I have good assurance, now we are blessed with the prayers of one so worthy, we cannot help but speed

in our endeavors. But the night wears on apace. I pray you pardon me for hurrying away your husband. O' my life I would not do it, only we have that to look to this night, which cannot be done without him."

"Ay, Dame, we must be going," added her husband. "So a good sweet rest to thee, and kiss my boy lovingly for me I prithee."

"That will I dear heart, without fail," answered she. "And a fair good night to you both, and may God above preserve you in all perils."

"Good night, sweet dame, and infinite thanks for your kind wishes," said Master Combe; and then he and his associated left the house, locking the gates after them; and proceeded straight to the town.

Now was there a wonderful difference in this town of Stratford to what it had been only a few months since, when I sought the picturing of it; for in place of all the pleasant riot of children and general gossiping of neighbors, all was dumb as a churchyard; save at intervals, the wail of the sorrowful or the shriek of the dying disturbed the awful stillness. Scarce a living creature was to be seen excepting the watchman keeping guard, to whom divers of the unhappy burgesses would talk to out of their windows, inquiring who of their friends were yet spared, or one or two having been close prisoners in their own houses, would creep stealthily along the street to breathe the fresher air, looking about them suspiciously and in great dread, and ready to fly at any unusual sound; and instead of the sun throwing its warm beams upon the house-tops and other open places, there was a sullen darkness everywhere about, except just where one carried a torch or a lantern with him, which made a faint red light thereabouts, or when the moon burst out of the deep black clouds, and disclosed to view the deserted streets grown over with patches of rank grass; the melancholy houses,—many untenanted because of the pestilence having spared none there,—divers with a red cross upon their doors in evidence that the plague had there found a victim, and the rest with doors and windows carefully barred and lights streaming through the closed shutters—a glad sign that there at least none had yet fallen.

John Shakspeare and Master Combe, closely wrapped in their cloaks, entered the principal street just as the moon made a clear path for herself in the sky, and threw such a light as made them distinguish objects for the time almost as well as in broad day. The first person they met was no other

than Oliver Dumps, armed with a bill, and wearing a face so wo-begone as was pitiful to look on.

"Well Oliver, what news?" inquired Master Combe.

"News!" exclaimed the constable in his dolefullest manner. "Prithee what news canst expect to hear at such a miserable time? As I am a Christian man, and a sinful, I am nigh worn out with melancholly. What a world is this! Alack, what will become of us? I see no end to the evil whereof this town is so full. We are all villainy—very villainy, as I am a Christian man."

"Why what hath happened, good Oliver?" asked John Shakspeare.

"Wickedness hath happened," replied Oliver Dumps; "the very shamefullest wickedness ever I came a nigh. Well may we be visited by plagues. Our natures are vile. We run after iniquity as a curtail dog runs i' the wheel." Then, being further pressed by Master Combe to come to the point, he added, "First, there is Sir Nathaniel, who will not be moved to do any good office for the sick; and Master Buzzard, who, setteth his dogs at me, should I venture to ask of him to assist his poor neighbors. Then Stripes is ever getting of money from a parcel of ignorant wretched folk to conjure the pestilence away from their houses; added to which, no longer ago than scarce the half of an hour, I came upon Simon Lumpfish and Jonathan Swiggle, two of the town watch, in the kitchen of an empty dwelling, making use of a barrel of strong beer without any color of warrant, by each laying of his length on the floor, and putting of his mouth to the bung-hole."

"They shall be looked to," observed Master Combe; "but come you with us, good Oliver, perchance we may need your assistance." Then turning to one of the watch, who was stationed at a door-way, he inquired how things went in his ward.

"One hath died within this hour over at Peter Gimblet's, an' it please your worship," answered the man respectfully; "and there are two sick here at Dame Holloway's. They do say that Morris Greenfinch be like to recover; and in some houses hereabouts, where the plague hath been, they have taken it so kindly that it hath scarce been felt."

After bidding of him keep strict watch, they continued their walk; and presently heard a voice of one calling across the way to his neighbor opposite.

"How goeth all with you?"

"We are all well, thanks be to God! neighbor Malmsey. And how fareth your

bed-fellow?" replied one from a casement over against him.

"Bravely, neighbor Dowlas, I thank you," said his brother alderman; "they do say there is some show of the pestilence abating; I would it were true, else shall we be all ruined for a surety. I have not so much as sold a pint of wine for the last week past."

"Nor I a yard of cloth, for a month," added the other. "I pray God, the survivors may have the decency to go into mourning for their lost relations."

"And so your good dame is well, neighbor?" asked Alderman Malmsey.

"As well as heart could wish," replied Alderman Dowlas.

"Commend me to her, I pray you," said the other; and then with a "good night," each closed his casement. Upon proceeding a little further on, the party were stopped by the melodious sweet sound of several voices, intent upon the singing of some holy hymn. Perchance it might have proceeded from some pious family; for in the quiet night, the ear could plainly enough distinguish the full deep bass of the father, joining with the clear sweet trebles of his wife and children. And exceeding touching it was at such a time to hear such proper singing; indeed, so moved were the three listeners, that they sought not to leave the spot till it was ended.

"That be David Hurdle's voice, I will be bound for it," exclaimed the Constable. "Indeed, it be well known he hath, during the raging of the pestilence, spent best part of the day in praying with his family, and in the singing of godly hymns. He is a poor man—some call him a Puritan, but I do believe him to be as honest good Christian man as any one in this town, be they rich or poor, gentle or simple. But what villainous rude uproar is this, my masters! that treadeth so close on the heels of such exquisite music?"

I'faith, Oliver Dumps had good cause to cry out as he did; for all at once they were startled by a number of most unmannerly voices, shouting in very boisterous fashion such profane words as these:—

"If we boast not a fire,

That is just our desire—

What then? We must needs burn the bellows;

And if here there's a man

That hath nought in his can—

What then? He's the prince of good fellows."

"Odds, my life!" exclaimed a voice that was heard, amid the din of laughing and shouting, and other lewd behavior. "Odds,

my life, that is as exquisite a catch as ever I heard. Methinks, 'tis the very movinest, mirthfullest a —— . What sayest Ticklebrech ?”

“Exactly, so, an' it please your reverence,” replied the voice of the schoolmaster, in a tone somewhat husky.

“By'r lady, master parson,” said another, “methinks 'tis of that superlative exquisiteness 'twould tickle—(a hiccup) the ribs of a tombstone.”

Master Combe, and his companions, peeped through the crevices of the shutters, and beheld Sir Nathaniel seated at the head of a table covered with drinking vessels, with Stripes opposite him, and nigh upon a score of low idle disorderly vagabonds sitting round making merry, but with monstrous little assurance of sobriety in their looks.

“Lord! Lord! an' these fellows be not heathens, I marvel what they shall rightly be called,” said the scandalized constable.

“It grieves me to see Sir Nathaniel so readily accommodate himself to such discreditableness,” observed John Shakspeare.

“Slight!” exclaimed Master Combe, whose nature was vexed to behold such a scene with such actors in it; “he is a very hog that will swill any wash that is given him, let it be where it may.”

The ringing of a large hand-bell now attracted their attention elsewhere; and looking along the street, they observed a cart slowly proceeding towards them, accompanied by two or three stout fellows, some carrying torches, and others armed with bills. It stopped at a house where was a red cross on the door, at which having knocked, and the door opening, two stepped in, and presently returned, bearing of a heavy burden betwixt them, with the which they ascended a short ladder, and, without any word spoke, cast into the cart. Then ringing of the bell again they continued their way, till some door opening noiselessly, they stopped, entered, and with the same dreadful silence carried out, what on nearer approach, proved to be a corpse, which was added to the rest they had, in the manner that hath been described.

“Hast taken many this round?” asked Master Combe, of one of the watchmen walking in front of the horse.

“No, your worship, God be thanked,” replied the man.

“Hast many more to take?” asked John Shakspeare.

“I expect not master,” said the other. Indeed, from all I have witnessed and can

get knowledge of, it seemeth to me the pestilence be abating wonderfully.”

“God send it may come to a speedy ending,” exclaimed Oliver Dumps, with some earnestness; it maketh me clean out of heart when I think of what ravage it hath made.”

The three now walked at the horse's head, conversing concerning of who had died, and who were sick, and the like matters, stopping when the cart stopped, and going on when it proceeded; but always keeping before the horse, because of the wind blowing from that direction. At one house the men remained longer than was usual, and the door being open, there was heard a great cry of lamentation as of a woman in terrible affliction.

“Ah, poor dame, she hath infinite cause for such deep grieving,” said the constable.

“Go, get you hence!” cried one very urgently from within the house. “As God shall judge me, he shall not be touched.”

“What meaneth this?” inquired John Shakspeare.

“I say it shall not be,” continued the same voice. “I will die ere I will let him be borne away from me. Hast hearts? Hast feelings? Dost know of what stuff a mother's love be made? Away villains.”

“'Tis a most pitiful story,” observed Master Combe. Wondrous pitiful! in sooth, she hath been sorely tried. But I must in, else in her desperation she will allow of nothing; and mayhap they may be violent with her.”

“What wouldst do?” inquired John Shakspeare, catching his friend by the arm, as he was making for the door. “Surely, if there is one dead here, you will only be endangering of yourself by venturing in, and no good come of it to any.”

“I pray you think not of it,” cried Oliver Dumps, seeming in famous consternation. “There hath more died in that house than in any two in the town.”

“Fear nothing; I will be back anon,” said Master Combe, as he broke away and entered at the open door.

“Alack, think not of following him, I pray you, John Shakspeare!” called out the constable, in increased alarm, as he beheld the one quickly treading upon the heels of the other. “Well, never saw I such wanton seeking of death. They be lost men. 'Twill be dangerous to be in their company after this; so I'll e'en have none on't.” And away started he in the direction of his home. In the mean while the other two reached an inner chamber, where was a sight to see that would have melted any

stone. On a low bed there sat a matronly woman, of decent appearance, with an aspect pale and exceeding careworn, and her eyes full of such thorough anguish as is utterly impossible to be described; and she held, folded in her arms, the body of a youth seeming to be dead of the pestilence.

"The last!" exclaimed she, in most moving tones, as she fixed her tearful gaze on the discolored object in her lap. "Husband—children—all gone, despite my tender nursing, and constant hope this one might be spared, and now that—each followed the other, and here am I—woe is me!—widowed, childless, and heart-broken. Alack, 'tis a cruel world!" And thereupon she sobbed in such a sort as could not be seen of any with dry eyes.

"But they shall never take thee from me, my dear boy," continued she in a like pitiful manner. "Heretofore I have borne all and flinched none; but thou hast been my last stay, whereon all the love I bore thy good father and thy brave brothers, was heaped together; and losing thee, I lose my very heart and soul; so, quick or dead, I will cling to thee whilst I have life. Away! insatiate wretches!" she cried, turning her mournful aspect upon the two men; "Hast not had enough of me? Dost not see how poor a case I am in for the lack of what I have been used to? Begone!" And then she hugged the lifeless youth in her arms as if she would part with him on no account. Neither Master Combe or John Shakspeare felt as they were complete masters of themselves; but they knew it could not be proper that the dead should stay with the living.

"Believe me, we sympathize in your great afflictions with all our hearts, good dame," at last observed the former to her, with that sweet courteousness which was so natural to him. "But I pray you, have some pity on yourself, and be resigned to that which cannot be helped."

"Ah, Master Combe!" cried she, now first observing him, "I would I could say I am glad to see you; for, in truth you have been an excellent good friend to me and mine in our greatest need; but as it seemeth to me my heart's strings be so upon the stretch, 'twould be but a mockery to say so. Oh, the misery!" and then she bowed her head and wept exceedingly. At this Master Combe endeavored all he could to give her comfort; and as his speech was wonderfully to the purpose, though at first she was deaf to all argument of the sort, by degrees he won her to some show of reason.

"But he shall not be touched!" she exclaimed, mournfully, yet determinedly.

"Who so proper to carry him out of the world as she who brought him in it? I will have no rude hand laid on his delicate limbs. I will to the grave with him myself. Alack! poor boy, how my heart aches to look at thee!" Then carefully wiping off the tears she had let fall upon his face, she proceeded to wrap him in a sheet, ever and anon giving of such deep sobs as showed in what extremity she was in. This Master Combe sought not to interrupt; and John Shakspeare's honest nature was so moved at the scene, he had no mind to utter a word. Even the men, used as they must have been to sights of wretchedness, regarded not what was going on in total indifferency, as was manifest in their aspects. But the movingest sight of all was to see that hapless mother, when she had disposed of her dead son as decently as she could, bearing the heavy burthen in her arms with a slow step, looking pale as any ghost, and in such terrible despair as can never be conceived. The men, as they led the way with a lantern, were forced more than once, to draw the cuffs of their jerkins over their eyelids; and Master Combe and John Shakspeare followed her, full of pity for her sorrowful condition. She bore up bravely till she came to the door, when the sight of the dead-cart, made visible by the red glare of the torches, came upon her with such a suddenness, that she swooned away, and would have fallen on the ground, had not Master Combe ran quickly and caught her in his arms. Then, by his direction, her dead son was placed with the other corpses, and she carried back to the room she had left; and after seeing she had proper attendance, he and John Shakspeare proceeded with the watchman and others that had the care of the cart, calling nowhere else as they went in so doleful a humor that they spoke never a word all the way. They came to a field outside of the town, where was a great hole dug, and a large mound of fresh earth at the side of it. At this time, some of the men took in their hands mattocks which were stuck in the soil, others backed the cart so that the end of it should come as nigh as possible to the pit, and the rest held torches that the others might see the better. Scarce any spoke save Master Combe, who, in a low tone, gave such orders as were needed. Presently the cart was tilted, and in the next moment the bodies of those dead of the pestilence swept into the rude grave prepared for them.

"By God's body, I heard a groan!" cried John Shakspeare, with a famous vehemence. In an instant there was so dead a silence

you might have heard a pin drop. What had been said was true enough, for ere another minute had elapsed, all there distinctly heard a sound of groaning come from the pit. Each of the men looked at his neighbor in silent terror, and speedily as they might brought their torches to throw as much light as they could into the pit's mouth.

"Alack! I fear we have buried the living with the dead!" exclaimed Master Combe, evidently in a monstrous perplexity. Every eye was strained to note if any sign of life was visible amongst the mass below. What a sight was there presented to the horror-struck gazers! Arms and legs and upturned faces that had burst from their frail coverings, all discolored and ghastly, looking more hideous than can be conceived.

"As I live, something moveth in this corner!" cried John Shakspeare.

"A light here, ho!" shouted Master Combe in a voice that brought every torch to the spot ere the words had scarce been uttered; and all were breathless with expectation. To the extreme consternation of every one there, Master Combe suddenly seized a torch out of the hands of one of the watch who was nearest to him, and leaped in amongst those foul bodies, close upon the spot pointed out by John Shakspeare.

"Help all, if ye be Christian men!" cried Master Combe, as if he was exceeding moved, whilst those above were gazing down upon him, bewildered with very fear. "Help, I pray you! for here is the widow's son alive yet; and if care be used without loss of time, perchance we shall have such good fortune as to restore him to her to be her comfort all her days."

Methinks there needs no telling of what alacrity was used to get the youth out of the pit with all speed, every one forgetting of his danger in the excitement of the case. Suffice it to say, he was rescued from his expected grave before he had any consciousness of being there, and that such treatment was used as soon turned to his profit; for he recovered, and grew to be hale soon. Of the infinite joy of the late bereaved mother, when that her dead son was restored alive to her loving arms, shall I not attempt to describe, for to my thinking, it is beyond the extremest cunning of the pen.

CHAPTER V.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
GREENE.

O flatterer false, thou traitor born,
What mischief more might thou devise
Than thy dear friend to have in scorn,
And him to wound in sundry wise?
Which still a friend pretends to be,
And art not so by proof I see.

Fie, fie upon such treachery!

WM. HUNNIS. (*Paradise of Daintie Devices.*)

Who will not judge him worthy to be robbed,
That sets his doors wide open to a thief,
And shows the felon where his treasure lies?"

BEN JONSON. (*Every Man in his Humor.*)

TIME passed, and with it passed away all sign of the dreadful scourge that had fallen so heavily on the good town of Stratford. So out of mind was it, that the honest burgesses scarce ever talked of the subject, save peradventure some long winter's eve, when tales were going round the chimney corner, some one or another would vary the common gossiping of ghosts and witches, fairies and such like, with a story of the fearful plague, the which never failed to make the hearers, ere they entered their beds, down on their marrow-bones, and very heartily thank God they had escaped such imminent, terrible danger. Everything was going on just in the old pleasant way.

John Shakspeare had been made an alderman of, and was now advanced to the dignity of high bailiff, being also in a fair way of business, and in excellent repute, for his thorough honesty, among his fellow-burgesses; nor was it forgotten of them the good part he played with Master Combe in the time of the pestilence. Of these, neither had suffered by the manifold dangers in which they had oft ventured; nor had Dame Shakspeare, or her family either, notwithstanding of the frights he had been put to. As for her sweet son William, he grew to be as handsome and well behaved a child as ever lived in the world, and the admiration of all who could get sight of him. Concerning of his intelligence above all other children that ever lived, nurse Cicely gave such marvelous accounts, that he must needs have been a prodigy ere he was in short coats. Be this as it may, there can be no manner of doubt he gave, at an exceeding early age, many signs of excellence, and of aptitude for such learning as the inquisitive young mind is ever most intent upon.

Once when John Shakspeare, with Hum-

phrey and others who assisted him in his business, were laboring hard in weighing and sorting and packing certain tods of wool, the good dame was in her chamber seated, plying of her needle famously, and on the floor, just at her feet, was her young son, having by him certain toys such as children commonly find some pretty pastime in. Sometimes he would seem monstrous busy diverting of himself with these trifles, prattling to himself all the whilst; anon he would leave off, and lifting up his face, would ask some question of his mother, the which if she answered not, be sure he would importune her with infinite earnestness till she did. Close at hand there was a spinning-wheel; on the wainscot were two or three samplers, containing divers fine texts of Scripture, with flowers worked round the border, doubtless of the good dame's own working. On a square table of oak was a basket with threads and tapes and the like in it; beside it was some cloth of a frolic green, of which she appeared to be making a new frock for the boy, with such pretty fantasy of her's in the fashioning of it, as she thought would become him most. The casement, which looked out into the garden, being unclosed, there was upon the ledge a large ewer filled with sprigs of lavender, that made the chamber smell very daintily. Nurse Cicely was assisting of Maud in a further room, the door of which being open, the two could be seen at their employment, getting up the linen of the family—for nurse had grown greatly in her mistress' confidence, because of her constant affectionateness and care of the child, and of her trustworthiness and wonderful skill in all household matters.

"Mother, I pray you tell me something concerning of the fairies of whom Nurse Cicely discourseth to me so oft!" exclaimed the boy.

"Prithee, wait till nurse hath leisure," replied his mother. "She knoweth more of them than do I."

"An' you love me, tell me are they so mindful of good little children as she hath said?" added he more ungently.

"In deed, I have heard so," answered the dame.

"I marvel where they shall find lodging, be they of such small stature?" observed the child.

"It is said they do commonly sojourn in the cups of the sweetest flowers," said she; "hiding themselves all the day therein, in the deepest retreats of woods and lonely places: and in the night time come they out in some green field, or other verdant space, and dance merrily of a summer's eve, with such deli-

cate, sweet enjoyment as is unknown to mortals, till the morning star appeareth in the skies, when away hie they to their hiding-places, every one as swiftly as if he had wings to carry him." The boy listened with his fair eyes upturned, gazing in his mother's face in a famous seriousness and wonder, then seemed he to ponder awhile on what had been told him.

"And how many little children be possessed of such goodness as may make them be well regarded of these same fairies?" asked he at last.

"They must give way to no naughty behavior," answered his mother. "They must not be uncivil, nor froward, nor capable of any kind of disobedience or obstinacy, nor say any thing that is not true, nor be impatient, or greedy, or quarrelsome, nor have any uncleanly or untidy ways, nor do any one thing they are told not."

"I warrant you I will do none of these," exclaimed the boy.

"But above all they must be sure learn their letters betimes," continued the other; "that they may be able to know the proper knowledge writ in books, which if they know not when they grow up, neither fairy nor any other shall esteem them to be of any goodness whatsoever."

"I warrant you I will learn my letters as speedily as I can," replied the child eagerly.

"Nay, I beseech you mother, teach them to me now, for I am exceeding desirous to be thought of some goodness." The mother smiled, well pleased to notice such impatience in him, and bade him leave his toys and fetch her a horn-book that was on a shelf with a few books of another kind, the which he did very readily; and then as he stood leaning on her lap, seriously intent upon observing of the characters there put down, she told him of what names they were called, and bade him mark them well, that he might be sure not to mistake one for another. This very willingly he promised to do, and for sometime, the whilst she continued her work, yet with a frequent and loving eye on his proceedings he would pore over those letters, saying to himself what their names were, or if he stood in any doubt, straightway questioning of his mother upon the matter.

"But what good are these same letters of, mother?" inquired he all at once.

"This much, replied Dame Shakspeare— "knowing of them thoroughly one by one, you shall soon come to be able to put them together for the forming of words; and when you are sufficiently apt at that, you shall thereby come to be learned enough to read all such words as are in any sentence—

which you shall find to be made up of such ; and when the reading of these sentences be familiar to you, doubt not your ability to master whatsoever proper book falleth into your hand—for all books are composed of such sentences."

"Is it so, indeed !" observed the boy in a pretty sort of innocent surprise. "And do any of these goodly books discourse of the fairies you spoke of awhile since ?"

"Ah, that do they, and famously I warrant you," answered his mother.

"Oh ! how glad of heart shall I be when I can master such books !" exclaimed the child very earnestly ; "for I do long to learn more of these fairies. Dost know, mother, that after nurse hath sung me songs of them, or told me marvelous pretty tales of them, as is her wont till I have fallen asleep, it hath seemed to me as if crowds of such tiny folk out of all number, shining so brightly in their gay apparel of the finest colors, as though I was with them in the fair sunshine, have come thronging to me, offering me this dainty nice thing and the other dainty nice thing, and singing to me sweeter songs than nurse Cicely sings, and dancing and making sport with such infinite joy as would make any glad to be of their company ; and whilst they continue, they show me such wonderful great kindness, and afford me such extreme pleasure, it grieveth me when I wake to find they are all gone. So that I am exceeding desirous, as I have said, to make myself as good as I can, and to learn my letters as speedily as I may, that I may be admitted to play with them, and be loved of them as much as they will let me."

The good dame marvelled somewhat to hear this, and to note with what pleased excitement it was said, for sooth to say, it was a right pleasant picture, as ever limner drew, to see those intelligent eyes so full of deep expressiveness, and the fair forehead surrounded with its clustering, shining curls, and the delicate, rosy cheek and smiling mouth, that could of themselves have discoursed most exquisite meaning, even though that most melodious voice had failed in its proper office.

"Marry, but you have pleasant dreams, methinks !" exclaimed she at last.

"Ay, that have I," replied the boy : "yet I like not waking, and all this sweet pleasantness go away, I know not where. But I must to my lesson of the letters," added he, as he took to his horn-book again ; "else shall the fairies take me to be of no manner of goodness, and straightway have none of me."

"Yes, an' it please you, mistress is within. I pray you enter," nurse Cicely was here

heard to say in the next chamber—"I doubt not she will be exceedingly glad of your company ; so walk in, I beseech you. Here is Mistress Alderman Dowlas, an' it please you, mistress !" exclaimed she, entering the chamber, closely followed by the draper's wife, looking very cheerful, and dressed in a scarlet cloak and a hat, with a basket in her hand and her purse at her girdle, as though she were going to marketing.

"Ha, gossip, how farest ?" inquired the visitor, making up to her host, with a merry tripping pace.

"Bravely, neighbor, I thank you heartily," replied she, and then they two kissed each other affectionately, and nurse Cicely got a chair, and having wiped the seat with her apron, sat it down close to her mistress.

"And how's the dear boy ? Come hither, you pretty rogue, I would have a kiss of you !" exclaimed the alderman's wife, as she sat herself at her ease, and gave the basket for nurse to place on the table.

"An' it please you, I am learning of my letters," said the child, shrinking closer to his mother's side.

"Nay, by my troth, this is somewhat uncivil of you," cried the dame, though she laughed merrily all the time. "But I doubt you will use a woman so when you get to be a man."

"He will have none of his father in him an' he do," observed nurse, "for he had the wit to win one of the very comeliest women all the country round."

"La, nurse, how idly you talk !" exclaimed Dame Shakspeare, then bending her head to her young son to hide a slight blush that appeared on her fair cheeks, she said to him—"Go you to neighbor Dowlas like a good boy I pray you."

"Ha, come hither straight, and mayhap I shall find you some keepsake ere we part," added her neighbor. The child moved slowly towards her, with his eyes steadfastly regarding of his horn-book, till she raised him on her knee and caressed as ever ; and yet he was as intent on the letters as him.

"And what has got here, I prithee, that thou art so earnest about ?" asked Mistress Dowlas, as she examined what he had in his hand. "A horn-book, as I live ! and dost really know thy letters at so early an age ?"

"By'r lady, of all children ever I met, he exceedeth them in aptness at any sort of learning," cried nurse Cicely, putting of his frock straight because of its appearing somewhat rumpled ; "as I live, I never heard of his fellow : wilt believe it, mistress ?—if by chance I sing him a ballad—the which he is ever a calling of me to do, he will have it

again and again; and, perchance, ere the day is over, he will be playing with his toys and singing of that very ballad all the whilst!"

"Oh, the dear boy!" exclaimed the draper's pretty wife, as she cuddled him closer in her arms, the mother looking on with a famous satisfaction in her features; "and canst tell me those pretty letters?" inquired she of him.

"Nay, I doubt I can tell you them all," replied the child ingeniously; "but methinks I know a good many of them." Then pointing with his finger on the several characters as he named them, he continued—"first here is A, that ever standeth astraddle;—next him is B, who is all head and body and no legs;—then cometh C, bulged out behind like a very hunchback;—after him D, who doeth the clean contrary, for his bigness is all before;—next," here he hesitated for some few seconds, the others present regarding him with exceeding attentiveness and pleasure—"next here is—alack, I have forgotten of what name this one is called: mother, I pray you tell me again!" It was told him presently. Then went he on as before, with great seriousness naming of the letters with some few mistakes, in most of which he quickly corrected himself, and coming to a halt when he was in any doubt of the matter—which ended in his asking help of his mother—none interrupting him till he came to the last of them.

"There is a scholar for you!" cried nurse Cicely in an ecstasy of admiration; "saw any such wonderful cleverness? O, my Christian conscience, I am amazed at beholding of such a marvel! Well, an' he come not to be some famous learned clerk I shall be hugely disappointed."

"Dear heart, how I love thee!" exclaimed Mistress Dowlas, kissing him with an earnest show of affection; "nurse, prithee give me the basket; I have got him there a delicate piece of march-pane, which I doubt not will give him infinite content; and here in my purse I have got a bran new silver groat fresh from the mint, which he shall have of me as a keepsake."

"Marry, what a prodigal goodness!" cried nurse, as she did what was required of her without loss of time; but he meriteth it well, he doth, I will be bound for him, and every good thing in this world that might grace his having."

"What say you to neighbor Dowlas for her great kindness?" inquired the much delighted mother, as her young son took in his hands her visitor's gifts.

"I thank you right heartily, neighbor Dowlas," replied he, lifting up his fair eyes

with such modesty and gratefulness expressed in them, as charmed her heart to see.

"I'faith, should I be inclined to become covetous, methinks here I should find ample excuse for it," observed the draper's wife, patting of the child's rosy cheeks as she put him down from her lap; then rising, added, "But now I must hie me home as speedily as I may for the getting of dinner ready, for I have tarried so long a space since my coming out, that perchance my good master shall give me up altogether."

The draper's wife having gossiped all she had to say concerning of her neighbors and their doings, kissed the boy and his mother very lovingly, and took her leave.

Now the reader hath already had some acquaintance with those worthies, Master Alderman Dowlas and Master Alderman Malmsey, but methinks 'tis high time he should know more of them for the better understanding of this story. Both had been married some time to two as proper women as ever were seen. The former of the two was a rigid, serious, methodical fellow to all outward appearance; somewhat tall and slender, with hard solemn features, as hath been described; and the other was one of a right jolly face and portly person, with a merry dark eye, ever a winking at some pretty woman or another, and a short black beard, with hair of a like color. Each was turned of forty, and therefore ought to have been of discreet behavior; and as for their wives, if ever men had inducement to honest conduct, they had in possessing of such women; for they were ever of an admirable pleasant humor, of notable excellence in what women ought to be, and in all respects such good wives, that it was not possible to say ought to their discredit. Each was a little short of thirty, and having had no children, had not yet parted with their youthfulness, and the innocent happy carelessness which is so oft its companion. They were friends from girls, and loved each other as though they were sisters.

"Neighbor Dowlas!" cried a well-known voice, as the draper's wife was crossing to her house; and looking up, she saw her gossip Mistress Alderman Malmsey leaning out of her casement. "I pray you come in a while, I have a matter of some moment for your private ear."

"I'll come to you this very instant," answered the other, and straightway passed into the vintner's dwelling. Scarce had she got within the threshold, when the jolly vintner bustled up to her with a marvelous obsequious courtesy welcoming her to the house, pressing her to taste of his best wine,

and leering in her face the whilst, whispering all sorts of sugared compliments in her ear.

"Nay, prithee let me go!" exclaimed she, striving to free her hand, which he held in his as they stood at the bottom of the stair. "You hurt my fingers, you vile wretch, with your intolerable squeezing."

"Oh, delectable Mistress Dowlas!" cried he, kissing of her hand in seeming rapture; "the stars are but pitiful rushlights to those exquisite bright eyes, and that delicate fair cheek out-rivalet the peach's richest bloom."

"Away with you, and your poor flattering stuff!" said the draper's pretty wife, still striving to break away from him; "I'm not to be cozened so easily, I promise you."

"I beseech you, dearest life, allow me one sweet salute!" whispered he, in most entreating tones, as he brought his face as close as he could to her's."

"There's one prithee, make the most on't!" exclaimed she, as she took him a box on the ear that made the place ring; and then ran laughing up stairs.

Neighbor Malmsey wore a more serious face than was her wont. At least so thought neighbor Dowlas, as she entered her chamber; and after the customary courtesies were over, and the two were seated close together, neighbor Malmsey looked more serious still.

"I have a matter to speak of, that maketh me exceedingly dull at heart," commenced Mistress Malmsey.

"Doubtless, 'tis concerning the improper behavior of her wretch of a husband," thought Mistress Dowlas; then added aloud, "Believe me, I am infinitely concerned also."

"I hope you will not think the worse of me for telling you," continued the vintner's wife; "but I assure you, rather than allow of your being unhappy by knowing it, I have for many years past endured much of unpleasantness at his hands, and said nought but rebuke him for his wantonness.

"Alack, we cannot all have good husbands!" exclaimed her gossip, in a consolatory sort of manner.

"Now, my Jonathan ——"

"But he only groweth the bolder for my forbearance," continued neighbor Malmsey, interrupting the other. Indeed, he getteth to be quite abominal, and must have a speedy check put to his misdeeds, or his wickedness will soon make such a head, there will no putting of him down."

"O' my life, I cannot count him so bad as that," observed neighbor Dowlas, as if, with a view of affording the ill-used wife

some comfort. "Perchance, it is only a little wildness that good counsel will make him ashamed of speedily. Now, my Jonathan ——"

"I am glad you think no worse of him," quickly answered the vintner's wife; "but methinks, it looketh to be a very shameful impudency in him to go on so, and have so good a wife."

"Ay, 'tis monstrous that, of a surety!" cried her gossip.

"But I have done with him," added neighbor Malmsey, with some earnestness; "he hath lost my good opinion long since. I will foreswear his company, an' he mend not soon."

"Prithee, take not to such extreme measures!" said the other, concernedly. "Finding no profit in it, I doubt not he will alter his way, and I will take good heed he shall do you no matter of dishonesty."

"Marry, I can answer for that," observed her companion; "but I do assure you I have talked to him many times of the heinousness of the offence, and never at any time have given him the slightest provocation for such notorious misbehaving to you."

"Of that I feel well assured," answered neighbor Dowlas; and if at last he do not love you as fondly as ever man loved his wife, I shall be hugely mistaken."

"Eh? What? Love me?" exclaimed her companion, looking in a famous wonder. "But I marvel you should make jest of it. I would not in such a case I promise you; but it glads me infinitely to say there is no fear of such a thing. My Timothy giveth me no sort of uneasiness."

"Indeed!" cried her neighbor, seeming in a greater amazement than the other had been.

"I would your husband would take a pattern of him."

"I would nought of the kind, neighbor Malmsey," quickly ejaculated the draper's wife, with a very absolute earnestness. "I like not my husband to be ever a running after another man's wife, seeking of unlawful favors of her, as for years past Master Malmsey hath done to me, I promise you."

"My Timothy run after you, neighbor Dowlas!" screamed out the vintner's wife, bounding from her seat in as absolute astonishment as ever was seen.

"By my troth, yes," answered her companion.

"Oh the horrid villain!" exclaimed the other.

"He is ever pestering of me with his foolish flatteries and protestations of love,

and the like poor stuff," added the draper's wife. "I have no rest from him when I have such ill-hap as to be in his company. Nay, as I came in here he would needs have a kiss of me at the stair-foot, but I up with my hand and gave him so rude a salute on the ear, I doubt not I have taken all conceit of such favors out of his head."

"Oh, the abominable caitiff!" cried neighbor Malmsey.

"I liked not telling you of it, thinking it might vex you," continued the other, "so I bore it as good humoredly as I could, and should not have spoke of it now had you not begun the subject upon my entering of the room."

"'Twas of Master Dowlas's shameful behavior to me I was speaking," said the vintner's wife. "He hath followed me up and down for years in this way, spite of all I could say or do."

"What, my Jonathan!" now cried the other, starting from her chair in a greater to do than her companion had been. "The absolute wretch! But I will be even with him, I warrant you. Please you, neighbor Malmsey, to leave the revenging of the wrong done us by these pitiful hypocrites; it shall be done after such a sort as shall punish them handsomely for their intended villainy, and in remembrance of it, keep them from all such baseness for the future."

"That will I, and willingly, gossip," answered her companion with the tears in her eyes. "But he hath oft pressed me to give him a private meeting, prithee, say what I had best do."

"I have a merry cousin of mine, who will help us in this purpose of ours," replied neighbor Dowlas. "So you must e'en invite him to sup with you alone at Widow Pippins.' I will do the same with my worshipful gallant, and if you learn your part of me, we will have as exquisite sport as ever misused woman had of a vile husband."

"Rely on me," said neighbor Malmsey. "But, as I live, I hear the voice of your precious partner talking to mine on the stair-foot!" exclaimed she.

"Doubtless they will both make for here, so do you as I have said, and leave the rest to my managing," added the other. She had scarce said the words, and they had re-seated themselves, when, as they appeared intent upon some deep discourse, there entered Master Alderman Dowlas, with his usual great soberness of manner, having his brother alderman behind him in a jesting humor, as he seemed, as if quite forgetful of the box of the ear he had just had.

"Perdie! here is one about to send the

town crier after you, fair Mistress Dowlas!" exclaimed he, making up to her as gallantly as ever.

"Indeed, I have marveled hugely on account of your long stay abroad, knowing not how you had disposed of yourself," said the draper. "But I am wonderfully content to find you in such admirable company. And how doth my fair life?" whispered he, glancing at his friend's wife most enamoredly, as he followed her to a distant part of the chamber, and vowing and entreating and flattering of her, as though it were done for a very wager. Nor was Master Malmsey in any way behind him in such ill-doing, as may be supposed, for he sat down with his back to the other, before Mistress Dowlas, exercising of his tongue with the movingest expression he could think of, and gazing at her comeliness as though it were the rarest feast for the eye that the whole world contained. Neither thought of glancing towards where was his wife. Indeed, each was too intent on what he was about to heed what the other was a doing, not imagining such a thing as his friend attempting of the same thing as he was himself straining might and main to accomplish. Howsoever, in the space of a few moments this private talk was broke up, manifestly to the exceeding contentation of these worthless husbands.

"What an absolute fool is neighbor Malmsey, that he looketh not closer after his wife!" thought Master Alderman Dowlas, as he descended the stair looking solemn as an owl.

"What a very ass is neighbor Dowlas, that he cannot see that I am making love to his wife before his face?" thought the vintner, with an inward chuckle of satisfaction at his own cleverness and better fortune.

All that day the draper appeared in a most exquisite satisfaction with himself. The seriousness of his aspect was oft disturbed with a happy smile, and as the noon wore out, he kept ever asking of the hour.

"Dame," said he at last, after he had spent a wonderful time in washing and decking himself out in his best apparel, till he looked as spruce and stiff as a roll of buckram; "there is a certain godly man over at Hillsborough, that I have promised neighbor Hurdle to go and hear preach this night; if, peradventure, I should tarry long, prithee, get thee to bed betimes. I am loath thy rest should be shortened by waiting up for me."

"Marry! I should like to go myself to hear the good man," observed his wife, somewhat mischievously by the way, "for

methinks his preaching cannot help being as good for me as for you."

"But the distance is far too great for thy walking, dame, else shouldst thou without fail," replied he very readily.

"Nay, but I walked to Barston last Shrovetide, which is a good mile longer," said she. "I doubt not such a journey will do me an especial good service, to say nought of the godliness of it."

"Indeed, I would take thee with all my heart," added her husband, "but since the last rains some parts of the road are utterly impassible for huge deep ponds that go right across."

"Then will we borrow John a Combe's grey horse, and I will ride behind you on a pillion," answered his wife, as if desirous to bring him to a nonplus.

"O my life! I cannot wait to go a borrowing now, so I must e'en wish thee good bye, and take thee another time," replied Master Dowlas; and then, as if fearful she would more strongly desire to go, as quick as he might he took himself straight out of the house. Scarce had he entered the street when he was hailed by his jolly neighbor opposite, standing at his door in his Sunday jerkin and new gallygaskins, as finely trussed as ever he was when a good score years younger. To his question where was he going so fine, the draper answered as he had told his wife, then Master Malmsey declared to the other that as his good dame had gone a visiting to her aunt's, he intended making a night on't with a few choice spirits at his cousin Birch's. Thus each were deceived, and each laughed in his sleeve at the other's credulity.

Jonathan Dowlas proceeded on his way, hugging himself in his own conceit at the pass he had brought matters to with the buxom Mistress Malmsey, till he came to the outskirts of the town, where was a small inn known as "The Rose," kept by the widow Pippins, in famous repute for her careless free humor, and fondness for jests of all sorts. The building, or buildings, for there seemed more than one, were connected by a wooden gallery that run across right in front of the yard, on one side of which lay the more respectable portion of the tenement, with its boarded front covered with grapes, that hung in famous clusters even up to the thatch. The other part looked to be the stables, pigsties, and the like sort of places. Jonathan made for the entrance holding up his head as high as he might.

"Ha, ha! Master Alderman, ar't there!" exclaimed a voice from the gallery, and looking up, the draper's eye caught sight of

the widow Pippins. There was she leaning on her elbows over the railing, as if watching for him, her brown face crinkling upon her red arms, like a rasher of bacon on the burning coals. Perchance she might be laughing, but Jonathan Dowlas was not nigh enough to see very distinctly. Get thee in quick, I prithee, and I will be with thee straight."

The alderman obeyed her bidding with a stately alacrity, and he had scarcely got fairly housed when he was met by mine hostess, whose still bright eyes, albeit though she was a woman, somewhat advanced in years, twinkled with a most merry maliciousness.

"Follow me," whispered she, evidently striving to suppress a laugh, and then giving him a sly nudge and a wink, added, "Oh, thou villain!" led the way to a chamber, of the which she had scarce closed the door, when she burst out into a long loud laugh, the draper looking on as though he knew not what to make of it. "By my fay, now who would have thought of this!" exclaimed she, holding of her sides, and looking at him with exceeding, yet with a monstrous ludicrous intentness. "Where didst get the powder to make so exquisite fair a woman so infinitely in love with thee as is Mistress Malmsey?" The alderman relaxed somewhat in the seriousness of his aspect at hearing this intelligence. "She dotes on the very ground thou dost walk on!" continued she, and the alderman smiled outright. "But who would have suspected this of one so serious as thou art? O my womanhood! what a very rogue thou art!" saying which she fetched Master Dowlas so sore a thump on the back, that it went some way towards the knocking of him off his legs.

"Poor Master Malmsey!" cried she, as plainly as she could in the midst of her laughing, "Alack! he hath no suspicion of his wife's huge fondness for thee, I'll be bound for't. Knowing of thy notable gravity, he cannot have the slightest color of jealousy. But, I charge thee, use her with a proper handsomeness. She is none of your light madams—she hath a most gentle spirit, and is the very delicatest, sweetest creature I ever came nigh." Then fixing on him a look in which seriousness and mirth seemed striving for the mastery, she cried, "Go to, for a sly fox!" and hitting of him just such another thump as she gave him a moment since,—with a fresh burst of laughter—she left him to himself.

Jonathan found that he was in a long narrow chamber, strewed with rushes, with

a door at each end, and one at the side, at which he had entered—having in the middle a small table set out for supper, with a larger one at the further end of the chamber, completely covered with a cloth that fell down to the ground on all sides of it, and it was fairly hung round with arras, somewhat the worse for its antiquity, for it gaped in some places sadly. He had hardly noticed these things when the door at the bottom of the room opened, and there entered Mistress Malmsey, clad in her very gayest attire, and looking, as the alderman thought, more blooming than ever he had seen her. He with an exceeding formal sort of gallantry, hastened to get a chair for her, expressing of his extreme rapture at her goodness in giving him this appointment, and then sat himself down as close to her as he could, taking her hand very lovingly in his, and commencing his famous fine compliments, protestations, and entreaties, with an earnestness that he imagined was sure of prevailing with any woman. The vintner's wife answered with some coyness, that convinced him what the widow Pippins had said was true enough, and he straightway redoubled his exertions, fully assured that his success with her was beyond all doubting.

"Divinest creature!" exclaimed the enamored draper, looking at his companion as lack-a-daisical as a hooked gudgeon, "fairest, sweetest, super-finest she alive! I do assure thee my affections be of the best nap, and will wear in all weathers, and I will give thee such liberal measure of my love as shall make thee infinitely loath to have dealings elsewhere."

"Alack, men are such deceivers!" cried Mistress Malmsey. "They soon depart from what they promise."

"Count me not as such, I pr'ythee," replied the alderman, "I am warranted fast. I do assure thee, I am none of such poor fabrics—I am of the finest quality, even to the fag end. Oh, exquisitest Mistress Malmsey, an' you do not take pity on me straight, I must needs lie on the shelf like a considerable remnant, of which the fashion hath gone out of date."

"Hush! as I live, there is my husband's voice!" here exclaimed the vintner's wife, to the great alarm of her lover, and both started up together, seeming in a wonderful surprise and affright.

"What ho! house here!" shouted Master Alderman Malmsey, from the stair foot.

"Hide thee, good master Dowlas, or I am lost," exclaimed the vintner's wife, and

before Jonathan could look about him, she had vanished out of the bottom door; but he was not allowed time to think what he should do in such a dilemma, for he heard the footsteps of his neighbor close upon the door, so, as speedily as he could, he crept under the table at the further end of the room, imagining that the other was merely paying of a passing visit, as he was proceeding to his cousin Birch's, and would tarry but a short time. Here he lay snugly ensconced, not daring to peep out for fear he should be seen. Presently, in came the jolly vintner, humming of a tune, and bandying jests with the widow Pippins, who led the way with a light—it getting to be nigh upon dark—and, by her loud laughing, was in as fine a humor at beholding him in her house, as she had before been at seeing his neighbor.

"Odds pittkins, what a jest!" cried the merry widow, putting the light upon the supper table. "Happy man!" added she, looking on him as seriously as she could, and then giving him a sly poke on the ribs, exclaimed, as plain as her loud laughing would allow, "but what a monstrous poor fool is her husband!" At which saying of hers, Master Malmsey joined in the laugh right earnestly.

"There is never such an ass in Stratford," said he, when his mirth would allow him words. He is so weak of conceit in the matter that he will allow of my making love to his wife before his eyes. But mum, widow—mum's the word," said he, mysteriously, "I should not like of his knowing what kindness I am doing him. Mayhap he would take it somewhat uncivil of me. So be close, widow, I prithee.

"As a fox," replied the other knowingly.

"Dost not think, a man who taketh no better heed of his wife, ought to be so served?" inquired the vintner.

"O' my troth, yes!" answered the widow, breaking out into a fresh peal of laughter; "And trust me, I would think it good sport to help make a fool of him."

"I thank thee exceedingly," said Master Malmsey.

"Nay, thou hast small cause of thanks, believe me, Master Alderman," replied his merry companion, with the tears running down her cheeks from sheer mirth; "I do it out of good will—out of good will, I do assure thee." Then nudging him o' the elbow, having an exceeding sly look with her, she added—"Art thou not a rogue, now,—an especial rogue—a very cozening rogue, to make the flower of all Stratford to be so taken with thee?"

"It cometh entirely of her fool of a husband," answered the vintner, chuckling mightily. "He would allow of our being together at all times, and was ever thrusting of her, as it were, into my arms. How could I help myself. I am but a man, and she so exquisite sweet a creature! So, whilst he was humming and hawing to my good dame, I had her up in a corner, making of love to her by the hour together."

"Fie on thee, Master Alderman!" said she, shaking her head as if with a famous seriousness. "Thou art a dangerous man for any poor woman to be with, so I will e'en be quit of thy company. I'faith thou art a sad rogue." Then fetching him a poke i' the ribs that made him gasp for breath, she hurried out of the room laughing more heartily than ever.

All this made Jonathan Dowlas prick up his ears, and he marvelled hugely who could be the frail wife his neighbor was enamored of as he had had no suspicion of such a thing; whereof the knowledge of it he had now gained, made him think of his designs on Mistress Malmsey a proper punishment for his brother alderman's unpardonable conduct towards his friend, whoever he might be. Full of all sorts of speculations on the matter, he remained in his hiding place without moving, for he could hear the vintner humming of a tune, and walking to and fro, and was cautious his hiding place might not be discovered. Presently the door opened and some one entered, whom Master Malmsey addressed in such a manner as made Jonathan feel assured it was the very woman the other declared he so loved. She answered in so small a voice she could not be well heard in the draper's hiding place; and, in a minute after, the two seated themselves at the farther end of the room, where, although he had heard each word his neighbor spoke, because of the greater loudness of his speech, of his companion distinguished he never a word, it seemed to be uttered in such a whisper. The extreme movingness of the vintner's speech at last filled his neighbor with so absolute a curiousness to know who it was the other was so intent upon loving, that he began with wonderful cautiousness, to lift up a part of the table cover, so that he might take a peep without being seen.

The first thing he got sight of was neighbor Malmsey, kneeling on one knee with his hand to his heart, with nothing but the most desperate and uncontrollable affection in his looks, and such an absolute irresistibleness in his speech, that it was as if no woman must stand against it. Before him was

seated a female very prettily attired, whose face being somewhat in the shade, and a little turned from him, Master Dowlas could not at all make out. The candle wanted snuffing abominably, or perchance he would have seen better.

"Prithee turn not away those lustrous eyes," exclaimed the vintner in a rare impassioned manner; "the poor knave thy husband heedeth not their brightness; and that most delicious lip, that rivalet my choicest wines in the tempting richness of its hue,—why should such a sorry fellow as he is have its flavor to himself, who manifestly careth not for it. All my heart longeth but for a taste. My dear sweet, prithee allow it but this once. I will be bound to thee ever after. I will hold thee in more regard than my chiefest customer. Come, we dally with opportunity. I will be bold and steal it an' thou wilt not give after so much asking." Just at this moment the speaker made an effort as if to salute his companion, and she moving at the same time brought her full face to the light, and Jonathan Dowlas beheld his own wife. A clap of thunder would not have startled him more than such a discovery; indeed so monstrous was he moved at it that he clean forgot where he was, and rising quickly hit himself so sore a crack o' the crown against the table, that he could do nought for some minutes after but rub his pate and vow vengeance against his false wife and wicked treacherous neighbor.

"By'r lady now, I must go up," cried Mistress Malmsey from below, so loud that all heard her.

"O' my troth, here is your wife coming, and if she catch us I shall be undone!" exclaimed Mistress Dowlas, immediately after which the unhappy draper heard the shuffling of feet, and he was left in darkness.

"Now if his wife come here, I will have excellent revenge," thought he. Presently he heard a door open, and some one cry out in a whisper—"Master Alderman," whereupon he stealthily left his hiding place.

"Hist!" cried he, fumbling his way on tip-toe across the room.

"Hist!" replied some one else, evidently making towards him with as little noise as possible.

"Prithee where art, my honey sweet?" inquired the former; "since thy departure here hath been that most wretched villain, thy husband, seeking to do me the most monstrous wickedness with my wife; but if I pay him not handsomely there is no smoothness in velvet. Come hither quick, my dear life,

for I am impatient to have thee in my most fond embrace!"

"Ha, indeed!" cried Master Malmsey, who had hid himself behind the arras when his fair companion had ran off with the light, and hearing a voice cry "Master Alderman," crept out, thinking she had returned to him. "Take that and be hanged to thee!" whereupon he made a blow; but, being in the dark, he hit nothing.

"Villain, art there!" exclaimed Master Dowlas in as towering a rage as his neighbor; "let me but get at thee, I'll maul thee I warrant;" and both proceeded to strike the empty air in a most terrible passion ever seen—ever and anon giving the panels such famous thumps, that it made their knuckles smart again.

"Dost call this going to hear a godly man at Hillsborough, thou traitorous catiff?" sarcastically asked the vintner, hitting on all sides of him, and jumping here and now there, in his desire to punish his false neighbor.

"Ay, marry, as much as it be going to Cousin Birch's," retorted the other, coming on more cautiously and with less noise, yet no less intent on vengeance. In consequence of the one being so wonderful quick in his movements, and the other so quiet he could not be heard moving, there was no harm done for a good space, save by hurting themselves stumbling over chairs and the like, which was sure to make he who was hurt in a greater rage than ever, and to be more intent upon having his vengeance of the other. It would have been a goodly sight to have seen this precious pair of husbands, if they could have been seen in the darkness, each so earnest upon punishing of the other for the same thing he was himself guilty of, and giving vent to no lack of ill names and execrations, which he who uttered quite as richly merited as he to whom they were addressed. At last the vintner got within an open door at the top of the room, where the draper pounced upon him like a cat, and as they were tussling away with all their might it was closed behind them and fastened without their knowledge. Neither had the slightest idea he was now in a different chamber, for in truth neither had time to give the matter a thought, each having enough to do to defend himself from the other's hearty cuffs, sometimes rolling together on the floor, and anon hustling each other on their legs, yet with no great damage to either. After some minutes spent this way both left off, being completely out of breath with their great exertions. Somewhat to their astonishment they heard loud bursts of laughter from the adjoining cham-

ber, and noticing the light streaming from under the door, both impelled by the same curiousness, crept softly towards it. Jonathan Dowlas stooped to take a peep at the keyhole; Timothy Malmsey put his eye to a crack in the panel,—each was aware of the other's vicinity, but not a word was said by either. They looked and beheld a supper-table well laid, at which two handsome gallants, clad in delicate suits, with rapier and dagger, were regaling themselves and making merry, evidently to their heart's contentment; whilst the Widow Pippins stood by as if waiting upon them, and giving them a narration, which she seemed as though she could scarce tell for laughing.

"Indeed, an' it please your worships, it be the very excellentest trick ever I heard of," said she, holding of her sides. "Here came these poor fools of husbands, each desperately enamoured of his friend's wife, which these merry women allowed of only that they might the better punish them as they deserved. P' faith, what wittols must they have been to have fancied themselves likely to prevail with such. They ought to have known that when a pretty woman is so inclined she looketh to something above her. There is no temptation in it else. Little guess Master Dowlas and Master Malmsey, that 'tis to your worships they care for, and none other."

"Here's a horrid villainy come to light!" muttered the draper.

"Oh, what a vile quean have I for a wife!" exclaimed the enraged vintner in the same low voice.

"Little guess they how often you two have had secret meetings here with their buxom wives," added the widow; "or what exquisite, sweet pleasure you have found in their delectable company."

"O' my word, neighbor, methinks we have been foully wronged!" cried Jonathan in a monstrous dismal tone.

"Slight, there be no doubt on't!" answered Timothy, manifestly in a still worse to do. "Alack! my head aches horribly."

"By my troth, I do feel a sort of shooting pain there myself," added the other, rubbing his forehead with his palm very dolefully.

"I pray your worships, make haste," continued the laughing widow. "There is Mistress Malmsey below stairs, and Mistress Dowlas in the next chamber, wonderfully impatient to have with them their several lovers. Never saw I women so dote on men as they dote on your worships. Alack for their simple husbands!"

"We've been infamously abused, neighbor!" exclaimed the draper, whilst the others

in the next chamber were laughing very merrily. "As I live, we are two miserably wretched husbands." And thereupon, mayhap out of sympathy for his brother in misfortune, he threw his arms around his neck, and moaned very pitifully.

"God's precious! I shall go mad!" cried the vintner, lifting up one leg and then the other, like a goose treading on hot bricks. "But shall we not burst in on these dainty gallants, neighbor, and spoil their sport?"

"Nay, nay, see you not they have weapons," whispered his more cautious companion. "Peradventure they would give us our deaths were we to venture upon them unarmed. Let us seek to get out of this place as speedily as we may, and find assistance; doubtless we shall be in time to disturb them at their villanies, and so rid ourselves of our cozening false wives, and be revenged on their paramours."

"Ha! prithee set about it on the instant," said the other; "then Master Dowlas began feeling of his way along the wainscot with his brother alderman close at his heels doing the like thing, till they came to a door, which was soon opened by the former, and to the great joy of both, proved to lead out into the gallery. From here they were not long before they found themselves in the parlor of the house, where was a famous company assembled of their friends and neighbors, among whom were John Shakspeare, the high bailiff, and Oliver Dumps, the constable. These were quickly informed of the grievous wrong doing, in such moving terms, that the whole party, arming themselves with what weapons they could conveniently lay a hold on, proceeded under the command of their chief magistrate to seize upon the offenders.

"What a villainous world is this!" exclaimed Oliver, putting on his most melancholy visage. "Marry, an' aldermen's wives must needs take to such evil courses, how shall a constable's wife escape?"

They soon burst into the chamber, where they found the two gallants up in a corner with their backs towards them, with the Widow Pippins standing in a manner as though she would not have her guests rudely meddled with.

"Hollo, my masters!" exclaimed she.—"Are ye mad—that ye enter thus unmanerly before two gentlemen of worship?"

"Mind her not, neighbors—she is nothing better than a very villainous go-between!" exclaimed Master Alderman Malmsey in his deadly rage-flourishing of a spit he had got in his hand, as if he would do one or other of them some dreadful injury.

"These be the same two fine fellows that must needs be meddling with our wives:—I will take my oath on't!" cried Master Alderman Dowlas, in a horrible bad passion, pointing towards them with the kitchen poker.

"Down with them!" shouted one.

"Let us dispatch them straight!" bawled a second.

"By goles, we will be their deaths—the monstrous villains that cannot let honest men's wives alone," cried a third; and all seemed moving forward with mischief in their looks.

"Respect the law, neighbors, respect the law!" exclaimed the constable, striving all he could to repress the desire for instant vengeance so manifest in his companions.

"Ay, we must have no violence, my masters," added John Shakspeare. "If these persons have done aught amiss, I will take care they shall answer for it, but I cannot allow of their being hurt."

"Oh, what monstrous behavior is this in an honest woman's house!" cried the Widow Pippins.

"Stand aside, mistress, I prithee," exclaimed Oliver Dumps, pushing by the widow, and seizing hold of one of the gallants by the shoulder, added, in a louder voice, "surrender you in the Queen's name."

"Now, neighbor Dowlas," said John Shakspeare, "look you in the face of this one, and say if you can swear him to be the villain that playeth the wanton with your wife; and you, neighbor Malmsey, do the same with the other."

"I warrant you," replied both, moving with alacrity, and with the terriblest revengeful aspects ever seen, to do what their high bailiff had required. Each caught hold of one of the dainty young gentlemen with great rudeness, and poked his beard close in his face, and each at the same moment started back as though he had been shot, amid the loud laughter of every one in the room. These gallants proved to be no other than their own wives; and all been let into the secret by them for the more complete punishing of their faithless husbands.

"Go to, for a sly fox!" cried the Widow Pippins, giving Master Dowlas just such another famous slap of the back as she had saluted him with on his first entrance to the chamber. "I'faith, thou art a sad rogue," added she, fetching Master Malmsey so absolute a poke i' the ribs that it put the other poke, bad as he had thought it, clean out of his remembrance. The jests that were broke upon these poor aldermen by their

neighbors were out of all calculation, and they were so ashamed they could say never a word for themselves. And indeed they made a famous pretty figure—their best apparel being all covered with dust and broken rushes from rolling on the floor, and their hands and faces, hair and beards, instead of being in such delicate trim as when they first entered "The Rose," were in as dirty a pickle as was any chimney-sweep's. However, they ever after turned out to be the best of husbands, and would as lief have taken a mad bull by the horns as sought to make love to another man's wife.

CHAPTER V.

*And then the whining SCHOOL-BOY
With satchel and shining morning face,
Creeping, like snail, unwillingly to school.*
SHAKSPEARE.

Some there are,
Which by sophistic tricks, aspire that name
Which I would gladly lose, of necromancer ;
As some that used to juggle upon cards,
Seeming to conjure, when indeed they cheat ;
Others that raise up their confederate spirits
'Bout windmills, and endanger their own necks
For making of a squib ; and some there are
Will keep a curtain to show juggling tricks,
And give out 'tis a spirit ; besides these,
Such a whole ream of almanack-makers, figure-
fingers,
Fellows, indeed, that only live by stealth,
Since they do merely lie about stolen goods,
They'd make men think the devil were fast and
loose,
With speaking fustian Latin.

WEBSTER.

"BRING hither thy hat, William, I prithee, 'tis nigh upon school time," said Dame Shakspeare to her young son, as they were together in her chamber.

"Ay, that is it," replied he, doing what he was desired with a very cheerful spirit. "Sooth, though I lack knowing what manner of pleasure is found in school, methinks it must needs be none so little, nurse Cicely speaketh of it so bravely." The mother carefully smoothed the hat, and placed it on her child's head, smiling the whilst either at what had just fallen from him, or mayhap at his exceeding comeliness, now she had, after infinite painstaking, attired him with such a show of neatness and cleanliness as made him appear worthy of any mother's love, were she the proudest in the land.

"Nay, school hath its pains also," replied she ; "but such are unknown of any, save

unworthy boys, who care more for play than for book, and will learn nothing that is set them."

"Well, an' they behave so ill, it be plain they deserve no better," observed the boy.—"Yet it seemeth to me from what I have learned of nurse Cicely in ballads and stories, and from such sweet stories as you have oftentimes repeated to me concerning of brave knights and fair ladies, that if other pleasures of a still sweeter sort are to be found in books, whereof you can know only by going to school and conning your lesson with all proper diligence, school cannot help being as pleasant a place for good boys as any goodly place that can be named."

"Doubtless," answered the mother, evidently pleased at noting in her son such sensibleness at so early an age. Then she busied herself in putting each part of his dress as it should be, smoothing this, and pulling down that, and turning him round with a thorough, yet most affectionate scrutiny, that no fault should escape her. At last, she appeared satisfied with her labors, and hanging round his neck a satchel, that looked as if it contained no great weight of books, she quickly put on her own hat and cloak, and, laying hold of him by one hand, carrying of a basket in the other, with many cheerful, pleasant words to his unceasing interrogatories, she led him out at the door.

The good dame and her young son proceeded together through a part of the town, with such passing commendation and salutations from such of the neighbors as were standing at their doors or approaching them as they went, till they came to the lane where John a Combe was set on by Master Buzzard and his man Saul, as hath been related, when, in the middle of some speech of his, the boy let go his mother's hand, and so forgetful of school, of goodly books, and of sweet verses—which had formed the staple of his talking all along—as though such things had never been, he on a sudden, darted off as fast as he could after a butterfly that came flying past him. Dame Shakspeare called many times, but it appeared as if he heard not her voice, for with his hat in his hand he run, now on one side of the lane, now on the other, and now dodging hither and thither wheresoever the dainty insect spread its delicate wings, as if there could not be in this whole world any one thing of such huge importance to him as the catching of that butterfly. At last, his mother was obliged to hasten after him, finding he heeded not her calling, called she ever so, and succeeded in overtaking her little truant, just as he stood, with his hat thrown on the

grass in a vain essay to catch what he had been in such earnest chase of—with hands and eyes uplifted, watching with some vexedness in his aspect, the swift retreat of the enticing insect over the hedge.

Some scolding followed this as the good dame wiped her son's hot face, and dusted and smoothed his hat, and set it on his head again; but he made such famous excuses concerning of the marvelous beautifulness of this same butterfly beyond all butterflies he had ever seen, that the loving mother contented herself in the end with kissing him, and bidding him never again run from her side. The great delight he had found in what he had previously talked so largely of now left him altogether, and he could say nought, save of what rare pleasure would have been his had it been his good hap to have captured that choice fly, with sundry pertinent questions concerning of whence came such brave toys, how lived they, and whether they could not be kept at home, and fed on marchpane, and such other delicacies as he could give them, to all which she answered as she best could. On a sudden he started a new subject, for spying of many wild flowers on the bank he must needs stop to gather some. In vain his mother reminded him of what great promise he had made of diligence in learning, and alacrity in going to school, he implored so movingly, she could not help allowing him what he required of her; and this led to his stopping at other flowers he saw, to do the like thing, making such pretty exclamations of admiration at the sight of them, that the good dame could not find it in her heart to speak of his tarrying as he did, with any harshness. Presently, a bird flitting through the hedge, would make him pause in a strange wonder to look after it; and all his talk of flowers in a moment changed to as importunate a questioning upon the birds. Indeed, school now seemed to have no more charm for him than hath the brightest landscape for a blind man; and he kept so tarrying for this thing and for the other, as showed he was in no little reluctance to be taken away from such fair sights.

Certes, it is a long lane that hath no turning, and the boy, with his mother, got at last to their journey's end, which proved to be a low mean building at the outskirts of the town, whereof part of the casement having been broken, the missing panes had been pasted over with leaves of copy-books. It was a wooden building, crumbling with age in many places, with a ragged thatch, of so dark a color it could not help being of some standing, underneath which were

sundry nests, with the birds flying in and out; and upon it, up to the roof-top, was a famous company of sparrows, flitting about and making so great a chirruping as was wonderful to hear. The door being open, there was heard a low murmuring as of the humming of a whole hive of bees, which increased in loudness as they came nearer, till it was interrupted by a loud rough voice, calling out "Silence!" when it sunk a little. At this moment they entered at the door. They came first into a chamber with a brick flooring, where they saw a number of small boys; some seated upon old forms, clipped at the corners, and carved with letters of every sort, as might be seen by the empty ones; and others, in groups, standing before one or two bigger boys, each of whom held a book as if hearing others their lessons; but as soon as the strangers were observed, there was seen on the instant, an infinite lack of both learning and teaching amongst all. One whispered to another—others pointed—and some stood up to have a better view; and all stretched their necks, and strained their eyes, in a very absolute marvel, as to the intent of the dame and her son in coming there at that time.

The two were curiously and steadfastly gazed on by every boy there, as they advanced up two steps that led to a part of the same chamber, having a boarded floor, where were some long desks, at which bigger boys had been writing of copies, with one of a greater height at the top, where sat on a tall stool no less a personage than Stripes the schoolmaster, of whom the reader hath already some knowledge. He sat up stiff as a post; his gaunt visage as thin and sharp as though his ordinary diet was of flint stones, or other such matter that affordeth wonderful poor nourishment; his hair and beard standing in great need of the barber's art; an old gaberdine on, which for its rags the cursedest old Jew that ever clipped coin would have been ashamed to have been seen in; his falling bands rumpled and soiled; his bases open at the knees, and his hose in slovenly folds falling down his shrunk shanks to his heels, where a pair of huge pantofles, of the oldest out of all doubt, hid in some measure the numberless holes that had there begun to show themselves. He held a cane upright in one hand, and in the other a book, having before him a boy, who by the earnest scratching of his head, and the intentness of his gaze at the broken ceiling, had doubtless come to a halt in his lesson; and his dull stupid face wore an aspect of severe seriousness, which boded no good to the young student. But for all this as he

caught sight of Dame Shakspeare with her son advancing towards him, the cane was put out of sight in the twinkling of an eye, and a sort of something that was meant to be a smile became visible in his cadaverous countenance, as he gave the unprepared scholar back his book, and bade him to his place.

Marvelous to look on was the suavity with which the pedagogue heard Dame Shakspeare say she had brought her son William to have his schooling, hoping he would prove an apt scholar; thereupon famously did he launch out into all manner of fine scholar-like phrases, whereof it was in no way easy for any to find where lay the sense, and then proceeded he to catechise the child in a monstrous pedantical humor, and to examine him as to the extent of his acquirements in the rudiments of profane learning; and although the boy showed some shyness, which was exceeding natural at his age, before so forbidding a person, yet, by dint of his mother's praises, he was got to evince a tolerable acquaintance with the spelling of simple words. All this time the curiousness of the entire school exceedeth conception. No sign of studiousness was visible in any; instead of which the eyes and ears of the whole assembly were bent upon getting the completest knowledge of what was going on; and whilst some of the highest part of the school kneeled on their seats, or leaned over their school-fellows, sundry of the bottom part stood on their forms, and a few crept up the steps, with countenances all agog to learn as much as they could of this strange matter.

"And I have brought you here a fine capon for your own eating, worthy Mr. Stripes," said Dame Shakspeare to the schoolmaster, whose mouth seemed to water at the very name of such delicate food, as she took from her basket a fowl carefully wrapped about in a clean white cloth; "the which I hope will prove to your liking, and I do trust you will favor me in what my heart most covets, so much as to give what attentiveness you can to my boy's schooling, that he may do you credit in his after years."

"I am a very heathen an' I do not," replied he, taking the gift with a famous willingness.

"Then I will now leave him to your charge," observed the dame, and, kissing of her young son, with a loving admonition to be a good boy and speed in his learning, she departed out the door. Stripes, first placing of his new scholar amongst others of his age in the lower room, which movement of

his caused a famous show of studiousness amongst all the boys he came nigh, and setting him a lesson, returned to his desk; and then, undoing the cloth, examined the capon both with his eyes and his nose, with such extreme satisfaction, it looked as though he cared not to wait for the cooking. At last, putting it in the cloth again, he marched with it out at a door close upon his desk, feasting his eyes upon it as he went. Scarce had the door well closed upon him, when there arose such a hubbub in the school, of talking and shouting one to another of all the boys concerning of the new comer; those who had some knowledge of his parentage telling others who had none, and some of the bigger boys leaving their places to have a closer view of him, or ask him questions, as seemed to astonish William Shakspeare exceedingly; but he was not allowed to be in a long marvel, for the door opened presently, and then there was an instant scuttling to places, and an infinite affection of attentiveness everywhere. Speedily as this was done it escaped not the eye of the master, who seized on his cane in a twinkling as soon as he had entered, with an eye of severe menace, and thundered out his commands for sundry of the offenders to come up to him without delay; for although he was so obsequious in his spirit before Sir Nathaniel and others he was fearful of offending, no greater a tyrant ever lived than was he to his scholars.

"So, Jemmy Sheepshanks!" cried he, as the first offender approached him with some backwardness; "prithee, what need hadst out of thy proper seat without any color of warrant, thou horribly abominable young caitiff?"

"An' it please you, master, I only——"

"Silence!" shouted the pedagogue in a voice that appeared to make the little culprit shake in his shoes.

"Art not ashamed to have accommodated thy worthlessness with the graces of my instruction for so long a time as thou hast, and never so much as brought me a single egg, much less a fine capon, such as worthy Dame Shakspeare, on her first coming, hath appurtenanced me with—and thy mother having such a prodigal store of poultry? By Jove, his searching thunders! thou art as barren of good fruit as a whipping-post. Prithee, hold me thy digital extremity."

"In good fay, master, I only went——"

"Thy hand, Jemmy Sheepshanks!" bawled Stripes, in a manner which brought forth a right dolorous wailing, and the tremulous projection of a palm of considerable dirtiness

a few inches before the offender's stomach. "Elevate it somewhat!" continued he, eyeing the shaking fingers as a vulture would the prey he was about to sweep down upon. "Somewhat more!" added he in a louder voice; and whack went the descending cane across the dirty little hand. "Ya!" screamed the boy, and thereupon he doubled himself up as if he had an inward pain of great fierceness, and then he shook his hand and rubbed it against his jerkin, and held it in the other, as though he had a hot cinder in it, and made such a yelling all the whilst as was pitiful to hear.

"And now thy sinister manus; for methinks it be very monstrous injustice one should 'scape, and the other not," observed the schoolmaster, getting his weapon in readiness.

"Nay, o' my life, good Master Stripes!" roared the urchin in a deprecating tone; but he was not let off so easily, for the left hand presently fared as badly as the right, and then, with a parting crack o' the crown for jerking his hand away, so that the pedagogue missed it more than once, Jemmy Sheepshanks in a terrible uproar was sent back to his seat. The rest of those who had been called up looked on as though they would have given all they were worth to have been a good hundred miles from the spot. The other boys were studying of their separate tasks with a seeming diligence that could never have been exceeded, and their new schoolfellow was thinking in his mind, from this first example he had had of school, it was no such brave place after all. Each of the offenders went through the same discipline, save the last, and was as well reminded as the first had been of certain remissness on his part in not having brought some nice thing or other for their worthy master.

"Ha, Mat Turnspit! thou art most superlatively offensive!" exclaimed the pedagogue, looking at the remaining one with the same savage aspect as had been the forerunner of the other's punishments. "I have cast up the sum of thy offences, the product whereof——"

"An' it please you, master, father killed a hog last night," cried out the boy sharply, yet not without some trepidation.

"Marry, what then? The particulars—the conclusion, I prithee!" cried his master.

"An' it please you," answered little Mat, "mother told me to say, an' your worship's stomach stood in any way affected towards pig's chitlings, she would send you as famous a dish of them as should delight the cockles of your heart mightily."

"Thy mother, I would wager to be as honest a woman as any of her inches," observed Stripes, his aspect of a sudden changing to an absolute graciousness. "And touching pig's chitlings, I would have thee communicate to her auditories, I consider them a savoury diet as any thing that can be eaten, and will accept of a dish with abundance of thanks. As for thyself, Mat Turnspit, I doubt not thou hadst excellent cause for being out of thy seat. Get thee back again straight, and be sure thy remembrance plays not the truant with the pig's chitlings."

After this, the first class were called up to their reading lesson, and putting up their copies, each holding of a book, presently stood in a half circle before their teacher, who, seated on his high stool, with his cane in his hand, and the lesson before him, never failed to apply the former to the palms of such as were amiss in their reading—constantly commenting on the exceeding properness of behavior shown by Dame Shakspeare and Dame Turnspit, in the matter of the fat capon and the pig's chitling's. All this while there was a famous thinking going on in the young mind of the new scholar, whose faith in the pleasantness of schools diminished with every blow he heard given, till at last he came to the conclusion, that it was the very horriblest bad place he had ever entered: nevertheless he applied himself to his lesson as earnestly as he might, with no greater interruption than what came from some little neighbor sliding up to him with a civil speech, intent upon being on the best terms with a schoolfellow so well recommended to their master.

As Stripes was very furious lecturing of a boy, about to undergo the customary discipline, the door behind him opened, and there appeared at it a strange looking object in the likeness of an overgrown boy. To all appearance, the schoolmaster looked as lean a dog as ever licked an empty trencher, but he was of a very corpulency in comparison with the walking bunch of bones known throughout the town as Skinney Dickon, the schoolmaster's boy, that now entered the school-room. His face had the projecting jaws of a ravenous crocodile, with the complexion of a kite's foot, and his rusty hair straggled over his skull like a mop worn to the very stump—this was supported on a long thin neck bare of all clothing to the shoulder blade, where a leather jerkin, made for a boy half his size, was buttoned tight with a small skewer (for lack of buttons, which had all been worn off), whereof the sleeves came only to his elbows, show-

ing his naked arms, like the picked drumsticks of some huge fowl, with the claw left on. A pair of greasy gaskins, that seemed as though they had been made for a grass-hopper, encased the lower part of his body to his knees, below which two bare legs, as barren of calf as an andiron, descended till they were partly lost sight of in two old shoes, whereof the wide gaping of the upper leathers told plainly of the whereabouts of the owner's ten toes.

"How now, Dickon!" exclaimed his master, as soon as he became aware of the other's vicinity.

"An' it pul-pul-pul-pul, please your worship, the kick-kick-kick-kick cat's run off with the kick-kick-kick-kick capon." Scarce had the words got loose from the chopping teeth of his stuttering boy, ere Stripes jumped from his stool with a ludicrous astounded look, and brushing by his intelligencer with such furiousness as to lay him his length on the floor, sought the thief, swearing all sorts of horrible oaths and direful imprecations; after running frantically to and fro, the enraged school-master spied puss on a shelf in an outhouse, tearing up the flesh of the fowl after a fashion as evinced her appreciation of its goodness. She was an old, large, black animal, whose projecting ribs manifested the like relationship with famine as appeared in the master and boy; and made desperate by extreme hunger, she raised her back, glared with her green eyes, and commenced so brisk a spitting and swearing, as the schoolmaster, in a terrible tearing passion, began cutting at her with his cane—though at a respectful distance—as proved she would not be got to part with her prize without a tustle; and mayhap he would have been but badly off had she flown at him, the which she appeared monstrously inclined to do, but at this moment she spied Dickon hastening to the rescue with the stump of a broom, which caused her to make a movement as though she would carry off her booty—however, before she had got a firm hold of the fowl with her old teeth, Dickon gave her so sore a blow with his weapon as sent her flying off the shelf into an open water-butt that stood a yard or so off whereupon she was glad enough to save her nine lives the best way she could, as if capons had never been.

This occurred not without some stir in the school; but scarce had Stripes returned to his desk after placing of his heart's treasure in a place of safety, when his anatomy of a boy again made his appearance at the open door, at sight of whom he opened his

lanthorn jaws, quite aghast with surprise, thinking that the villainous cat had again made away with his dainty; but Dickon came only to announce the arrival of one Mother Flytrap on an errand of conjuring, which speedily allayed his master's alarm. Dismissing the class to their seats with a perilous threat kept they not as quiet as mice till his return, the pedagogue stalked, with an air of marvellous solemnity—little in accordance with his slovenly gaunt figure—into an inner chamber, meanly furnished with an old table and a chair or two, yet, having, in the shape of a globe in the window, a snake in a bottle over the chimney, and a curious hieroglyphic book spread out upon the table: various signs that it was in especial use for learned purposes. A little woman, whose shrivelled skin savored of some antiquity, stood in a corner of the chamber, in a grey cloak and peaked hat, leaning with both hands upon a stick she held before her.

"An' it please your worship," began she, parting the exceeding closeness of her nose and chin, and hobbling two steps forward as Stripes entered, "be it known to you, of all the days in the year, last Wednesday was a week, wanting of a spoon for a gossip of mine—as worthy a good soul as ever broke bread, for all it hath been said of her she taketh to her aquæ vitæ bottle more than is becoming an honest woman:—but Lord! Lord? who shall escape the bruit of slanderous tongues in this cantankerous age;—as I was a saying, over a sea-coal fire, at Dame Marigold's—who was making as famous a bowl of spiced ale, with a roasted crab, as ever passed mortal lips. Indeed, of all women I know, an' it please your worship, she excelleth in the brewing of such delicate liquor; and last sheep-shearing I did hear little Jack Maggot, of Maggot Mill—he that got his head broke at a bout at single stick with Job Styles, the hedger of our town—say he knew none of these parts that had such cunning in these preparations. Mercy o' my heart! I have known the time when Job Styles was better off than he is, by a good ten crowns a year. But we are all mortal."

"Hast lost a spoon?" enquired the schoolmaster, when his companion stopped to take breath.

"Ay, marry," replied Mother Flytrap, "as goodly a silver Evangelist as you shall find come of any god-father; and the only one of the four left. O' my word, it vexeth me to find the world groweth every day more dishonest; and no more heed is taken of so goodly a gift as an Evangelist spoon.

than of a dish of beans. Well—flesh is grass; so it's what we must all come to—more's the pity—more's the pity."

"When lost thou this spoon?" asked Stripes.

"Marry, an' it please your worship, I know not," replied his companion; "but last Wednesday was a week, as I have said, when it was getting nigh upon noon, I had made me a porridge fit for the Sophy, with good store of leeks in it, for my dinner, when who should enter at my door but Gammer Bavins, whose son went to the wars and died beyond seas; whereupon desiring of her to rest herself, as in all civility I was bound, seeing that her mother's cousin's great uncle and my grannum were cousins-german, I asked of her to have some of my famous porridge, to the which she cheerfully gave her consentings; and thinking 'twould be but respectful of me to allow of her having a silver spoon instead of a lattern one, the whilst she was telling of me an excellent famous story of what brave eating was in porridge such as she was wont to make for her gaffer when he came home from the woods—for your worship must know he had been a woodman, and of some repute in the craft—and how monstrously he took to it when she could chop in a handsome piece of bacon fat, with a pinch of mustard—though for mine own part methinks good hog's lard in some quantity, with a sprinkling of bay salt, giveth much the delicateser flavor——"

"So the spoon was missing?" here put in the schoolmaster.

"La you! what a wonderful conjuror is your worship!" exclaimed Mother Flytrap, lifting up her hands and eyes in amazement; "ay, was it: and though I have since searched high and low in every crack and cranny hole and corner from housetop to floor, if I have caught as much as a glimpse of it there is no hotness in ginger. Peradventure——"

"Thou hast come to learn of thy missing spoon?" said Stripes, knowing full well should he let her run on, there would be no stopping of her tongue.

"Odds codlings, yes, an' it please you," replied she: "well! never saw I your like at finding out things: as I live I said not a word of the sort. Mayhap your worship knoweth whom I suspect of stealing it; and by my troth I doubt not it shall be found without some grounds, for she hath the reputation of a horrible pilferer."

"Thy suspicions rest upon a woman!" answered Stripes with a very proper solemnity.

"A grace of God! your worship must needs have dealings with the old one!" cried his companion in a famous astonishment; "Marian Loosefish be as nigh to a woman as ever she will be, for she hath had two children and never a husband, and hath been thrice put into the stocks for misbecomingness. But we are all mortal. More's the pity—more's the pity!"

"And thou wouldst have me ascertain by virtue of my art, with what correctness thou dost suspect this woman?" added the schoolmaster.

"Ay, dear heart, out of all doubt, and I have brought your worship as exquisite nice a black-pudding as ever was made," answered the other, producing from under her cloak a large sausage of this sort, which her companion eased her of with marvellous alacrity; "and will, besides, give your worship a tester for your pains, provided you can put the stealing of it upon her with such certainty she shall never be able to deny it, and so I get back my spoon again."

"Prithee stay where thou art, and keep strict silence," said the schoolmaster, with a very earnest seriousness, as he took a long black wand out of a corner, and put on his head a strange looking conical cap of a blood-red color, which made his visage look all the more lean and ghastly; then gazed he with terrible severity on his book, turning over the leaves for some minutes, Mother Flytrap looking on with a fearful curiosity, as dumb as a stone.

"Mercury in the sixth house," muttered the conjurer as if to himself.

"I warrant you that is my house; for mine is just the sixth in the row as you enter the town," observed she.

"Silence, woman!" shouted Stripes, authoritatively, then presently added in an under tone—"Jupiter and Venus in conjunction, whereof the affinities in equilibrio being geometrical to their qualities, giveth sign of some heavy metal, of an express white color, and in shape of some narrowness, with a concavity at the determination. Ha! what meaneth this!—Diana under a cloud——"

"That's her an' it please you!" said Mother Flytrap, eagerly; "she hath been 'under a cloud' at sundry several times, which will be well known of many, for she is as absolute a——"

"Peace, I tell thee!" bawled the conjurer; "wouldst turpify my astrologicals? Prithee hold thy prate;" after which he continued without other interruption a deal more of similar heathenish words. "My art telleth me these three things," observed he to her at last, as grave as any judge;

"to wit—thy spoon hath been stolen, an' thou hast not mislaid it in some secret place;—provided a thief hath got it, there shall be no doubt it hath been stolen; and should it be found upon Marian Loosefish, beyond all contradicting she may be suspected of the theft."

"Wonderful!" cried the old woman, in a huge amazement; "of all conjuring never heard I of anything like unto this! I would have sworn it was her before your worship had told me a letter of her name; for I have all along suspected her and no other. I protest I am in so great an admiration of your worship's marvellous deep knowledge I scarce know what to be at. Odds codlings, what wonders the world hath!"

"At thy peril, speak another word till I tell thee!" exclaimed the reputed conjuror, in a formidable solemn voice, as if desirous of still more impressing his customer with his thorough knowledge of the occult science: "I charge thee make no manner of noise, else ill will befall thee. I would know more of this matter, and will have my familiar to acquaint me with the particularities." At this the old dame, dumb with extreme fright and curiosity, backed herself into a corner of the chamber, as Stripes, waving of his wand mysteriously, and repeating some unintelligible jargon, stalked round and round the table. All at once they heard a horrible strange sort of sound, like unto the deep grunting of an over-fed hog, which the conjuror, in ignorance of its cause, fancied to be something unnatural coming to punish him for his vain-glorious boast of intimacy with a familiar, and straightway stopped his conjurations; and Mother Flytrap, too frightened to speak, hearing the sounds, and observing the half-starved black cat at this moment push her way through the unclosed door,—her back raised and her eyes glaring as she caught sight of her master with the uplifted wand, supposing he was about to punish her for her dishonesty,—had no doubt she was a demon invoked by the schoolmaster, and thereupon striking out with her stick convulsively before her, she commenced crouching down into the corner, every time uttering of a scream so piercing it seemed as though she were about giving up the ghost.

Her outcry soon brought Skinny Dickon into the chamber, who, spying of the two in such a terrible monstrous fear, looked from one to the other with his jaws gaping like a hungry pike, till hearing of the strange unearthly sound, and seeing his master had been at his conjurations, a horrible suspicion seemed to come across him of a sudden;

and he dropped on his knees, as though he had been shot. Presently, some of the scholars came creeping towards the door, the back ones peeping over the forward ones shoulders, with aspects alarmed and anxious; and the old woman's screams continuing, sundry of the neighbors rushed in at another door by which she had herself entered, marvelling prodigiously to hear such a disturbance; and marvelling the more, to note what they beheld at their entrance.

"In God's name, neighbor, what meaneth this strange scene?" enquired a sober honest-looking artisan, in his leathern apron and cap, gazing from one to another of the group in famous astonishment.

"Ya!" screamed Mother Flytrap, again crouching down in the corner, and poking out her stick, with her eyes fixed upon the object of her exceeding terror, as though it held a spell over her.

"Mum-mum-mum-mum-Master's been—rer-rer-rer-raising the devil!" stuttered out Dickon, as plain as he could, for the fright he was in—

"Ya!" repeated the old woman, with the same look and gesture.

"He's there?" muttered the trembling schoolmaster, pointing to a closet whence the sounds seemed to proceed; whereupon there was an instant backward movement of his neighbors, save only the artizan; and the old woman screamed more lustily than ever, for she believed the cat was meant, as having her gaze fixed upon the animal, she had not seen where the frightened pedagogue had pointed.

"With the Lord's help, mayhap I will unkenel him, if there he be," observed the artisan, making a forward movement.

"Nay, 'o my life, David Hurdle, thou must be mad, sure!" exclaimed one; and others cried out against his seeking of such danger, and many were for holding him, to prevent his destruction, as they thought.

"Fear nought," said the artisan, breaking from his alarmed neighbors; "we are in the Lord's hands. He will not deliver his people into the power of the spoiler." Then walking boldly up to the closet, the door of which he fearlessly opened, he added, in a firm voice, "I charge thee, if thou art an unclean spirit, depart from the dwelling of this man."

The interior was too dark for any there to see into, therefore was nothing visible; but the terror-struck people noticed the instantaneous stoppage of that smothered grunting which sounded so unearthly; and could plainly enough distinguish a rustling

as of some one moving, which again caused an instant rush to the door.

"I charge thee begone!" cried David Hurdle, undauntedly.

"What dost charge me?" grumbled a deep thick voice from the closet. "Prithee, keep it on the score, and give us 'tother pot. Eh, Ticklebreech?"

"As I live 'tis Sir Nathaniel!" cried several voices at once, to the wonderful relief of the rest; and sure enough, Sir Nathaniel it was, who, after so absolute a carouse the previous night with his customary boon companions, his senses had completely left him, had returned home with the school-master, without whose knowledge he had thrust himself into the closet, where he had been snoring the whole morning, coiled up like a monstrous caterpillar; whereby he had put so sudden a stop on his friend's conjurations, and had nigh driven Mother Flytrap out of her five wits.

CHAPTER VII.

The mery lark, mesengere of the day
Saluteth in her song the morowe gray;
And fire Phebus ryseth up, so bright
That all the orient laugheth at the sight:
And with his stremis dryeth in the graves,
The silver dropis hanging in the leves.

CHAUCER.

For I am servant of the lawe,
Covetouse is myne owne felowe.

OLD MORALITY.

Out on you theefles, bouth two!
Eieh man maye see you be soe,
Alby your araaeye

Muffled in mantles none such I know,
I shall make you lowte full lowe,
Or I departe you free.

ANTICHRIST.

MASTER BUZZARD sat at a table eating of a pasty made of game birds, and ever and anon flinging a bone to one of the many dogs looking wistfully up at him. He was taking of his morning repast in the same hall of his, which hath before been described, at interims enjoying frequent and plentiful draughts at a tankard that stood close at his trencher; and then again, swearing lustily at such of the dogs who, in their impatience to have of the delicate victual, mayhap would leap to his lap, or remind him of their nearness by giving him a smart blow of the leg with one of their fore-paws. At a respectful distance, with his hat on his knees, and his stick beside it, sat the shrunk-up figure and parchment physi-

ognomy of Jemmy Catchpole, the town lawyer, seneschal, baliiff, attorney, and steward, as he was indifferently styled.

"All precepts have been served, an' it please you," observed Jemmy Catchpole; "we have him in fee simple with fine and recovery, but the defendant pleadeth extreme poverty, and prayeth in aid that the suit may be stopped from and after the determination of the last action, else shall he be forced to such shifts as shall put your honor's hand and seal to his ruin, and cut the entail from all remainders in perpetuity—in witness whereof he hath but now demised, granted, and to farm-let his desire to me that I might be a feodary in this act for such an intervalum as your honor may please to allow."

"An I wait another hour I'll be hanged!" rudely exclaimed Master Buzzard, thumping the table with his fist with such force as to startle some of the hawks. "If he hath not the means of paying his bond, strip him of what he hath. What! Shall I lend my money to a paltry burgess, and he do me ill offices, and then, when cometh time for payment, shall such a fellow think to get off by whining a dolorous plaint concerning of his poverty? 'Slife! when I let him, cut me into collops for my hounds."

"As your honor wills it," replied the lawyer; "then will I, without let or hindrance, plea or demurrer, make an extent upon his house and lands, immediately provided in that case he doth not give instant quittance for his obligation."

"Make him as barren as a rotten branch," cried the other, with a frowning indignant look that spoke as bitterly as his words. "At one swoop bear off his whole possessions. By God's body, an' thou leavest him as much as would keep his beggarly soul for a day, I will have nought to do with thee ever after."

"I am mortgaged to your honor's will," observed his companion very humbly, as he took his hat and stick in his hand, and rose from his seat. Not long after he had taken himself out of the hall, there entered Saul, booted and spurred, and soiled with dust, as though he had just come off a journey.

"Ha, Saul, art there!" cried his master, his sullen features brightening up abut at the sight of his man; "I expected thee not so soon. But how fareth my noble kinsman?"

"As comforthless as a hound covered with bots," replied Saul, putting on a grin at his conceit. "Down Towler! Away Bess! Back Ponto!" cried he, as sundry of the dogs came leaping up to him, in sign of his having staid from them some time. His honorable lordship walketh about like a dis-

turbed spirit ; his face has lost the humor of smiling, and carryeth the affectation of melancholy with as much intentness as a lean raven. He crosseth his arms, and paceth his chamber, and sigheth heavily, and seemeth to have parted with all enjoyment in this world ; were he papist now, I doubt not he would turn monk presently."

" 'Tis well," observed Master Buzzard, taking to his meal as if with a fresh appetite, at hearing such intelligence ; " I am infinitely glad matters go on there so bravely. Here, assay some of this pasty. Perchance, thou art a hungered after thy ride." Saul waited not for a second bidding, but with the familiarity of a long-tolerated villain, drew to the table, and helped himself without stint.

" What dost think, Saul ?" inquired his master, putting down his knife, and looking with a peculiar knowingness at his man, after they had been silently discussing the pasty for some few minutes.

" I'faith, I know not, master," replied the other, raising his eyes from his trencher.

" I have got that lewd rascal and poor knave in my toil at last," said Master Buzzard.

" What, John Shakspeare ?" asked his companion, as though in a sort of pleased surprise.

" No other," answered his master, evidently with a like devilish satisfaction. " He shall presently be turned upon this world as bare as a callow owlet. I have taken care he shall be stripped of all his substance, even to his Sunday jerkin, and sent adrift as complete a beggar as ever lived."

" O' my life, excellent !" exclaimed his man, chafing of his hands as if in great glee ; " body o' me, I have not heard such pleasant news this many a day. He will never fine me forty shillings again for breaking a man's head, I'll warrant, or coop me a whole day in the cage, on suspicion of being over civil to a comely woman, as his high balliffship hath done. Well an' I make not good sport of this, count my liver as white as a boiled chicken. But here's a goodly stock of patience to him, that he may bear this pitiful change of fortune as he best may !" And so saying, he lifted the tankard to his mouth, and took a hearty draught of it.

" He hath no John a Combe now to help him at his need," added Master Buzzard. " Methinks too I have carved out such work for that wight as will keep him like a rat to his hole : for I have at last taken such vengeance as will hurt him more than ever our

rapiers could, had we succeeded as I at first wished."

" Truly, he showed himself a very devil at his weapon," observed the other ; " and handled me so in the lane—a murrain on him ! I shall bear on my body the marks of his handwriting to my life's end : therefore, am I all the more glad you have given him his deserts."

" Now truss me with all speed," said his master, at the finishing of his repast, " for I am bound to Sir Thomas Lucy's, and must needs appear becomingly before his worship."

" Ay, marry," replied Saul, trussing his master's points. Shortly after which Master Buzzard mounted his horse, which had been got ready for him at the gate, and rode off in the direction of Fulbroke Park.

It was a fresh morning at the latter end of April, and great rains had fallen for some time, the young foliage was marked with such transparent green as was truly delicate to see—the hedges being fairly clothed all in their new liveries, save here and there a backward hawthorn, or a stump of an old oak the last frosts had taken a stout hold of, showed its unsightly bare branches. On the banks there was no lack of verdure, sprinkled in famous plentifulness with groups of primroses, cuckoo flowers, snap-jacks, daisies, cowslips, violets, and other sweet harbingers of the summer season. The small birds were making a brave chirruping in and out of the hedges—sparrows, linnets, finches, and tits, out of all number—anon, the traveler would disturb a blackbird or thrush feeding, who would fly off with some noise—close over the adjoining field of rye, high-soaring, was seen the lark, pouring from her throat such a gush of thrilling music as nought else in nature hath comparison with ; at openings in the hedge might be observed glimpses of the adjoining country, which looked very prettily—here, a pasture with numberless sheep on it all cleanly cropped from the late shearing, among which the young lambs were beheld making excellent sport with each other, or running with an innocent plaintive "ba" to the mother ewe, whose deeper voice ever and anon came in with a pleasant harmony—there, a field partly ploughed by a team of oxen, followed by a choice company of rooks, who came to make prey of the worms that were turned up in the furrows—and not a stone's throw from them was a man scattering of seed in the newly raised soil—whilst close at hand were sundry old people busily engaged at weeding a coming crop. Other fields, of various different tints, stretched themselves out far and

wide, till nought could be seen but the hedge rows; and the far off hills and woods, the greenness whereof seemed to vanish in the distance to a deep dark blue.

Nothing of all this brave sight was noticed by Master Buzzard, who rode on his horse with a tercel on his wrist, and a brach-hound at his horse's heels, careless of all things in nature save only his own selfish schemings and villanous plottings against the happiness of others. He was one for whom the beauties around him had no attractions at any time, unless, peradventure, it afforded him good sport in hawking or in such other pastimes as he took delight; in fact, from a riotous, headstrong youth, he had grown to be a man void of all principle, seeking his own pleasures, heedless of whatsoever might be in their way; and never hesitating to stoop to any villainy that promised employment to his bad passions, and advantage to himself. Such a one nature might look in the face, smiling in all her most exquisite comeliness, and he would take of her no more heed than would he the squalid lineaments of a beggar's callet. Indeed, the numberless moving graces of our inestimable kind mother, can only be sufficiently appreciated by those whose eyesight is free from sensual and selfish films, and whose deep hearted love helpeth their vision more admirably than can any glasses, however magnifying they may be.

Master Buzzard proceeded on his journey at a briskish amble, seemingly by the contraction of his brows, and unpleasing gravity of his aspect, to be meditating somewhat; but of what he was thinking I care not to tell; for it is a standing truth, a bad man's thoughts will do good to none. Sometimes he would start from his reflections to whistle to his hound, should the dog seem inclined to wander away upon the fresh trail of coney or hares; and then swear a lot of terrible oaths when she returned to his side; or he would walk his horse, to talk and trifle with his hawk; and then, tired of that, away he would bound again, through the deep lanes, and over the fields, to Charlcote, with his dog some little way behind, carrying of her nose close to the ground, or running on before with a sharp quick bark, constantly stopping and twirling of her head around to look back at her master; and away again, as though it was fine sport to her to be so early a roving. Thus they went till they came to a white gate, at the which Master Buzzard was forced to dismount to open it, and then rode on again through a pasture marked by sweeping undulations, dotted here and there with magnificent oaks and beeches, through which the sunshine came in glances, in a manner

as if desirous of having the best aspects of this sylvan scene.

Here the palfrey ambled his prettiest paces, for the close herbage was as velvet to his hoofs, and he stretched out his neck, and shook his mane, and pawed the ground as he went, in a marvellous fine fashion: but all at once he stopped of a sudden, for right across his path, a little in advance of him, there rushed a numerous troop of deer, and Master Buzzard had a great to do in shouting and whistling to call back his brach-hound, who at the first glance of them was for giving chase at the top of her speed. It was a famous sight to see them bounding across the wide valley, and then up the next acclivity, where they stopped,—perchance to note if they were pursued—the young fawns using their slender legs with exceeding swiftness; and amongst the rest might be seen a delicate white doe, made all the more manifest by the sleek backs of her dappled company. Farther on more of these were met with, and, if at any distance, the bucks would not stir; but with antlers erect, they would get together and examine the strangers with a marvellous bold front—anon a partridge would rise before the horse with a startling whirr; and other signs of a like nature met them as they went, which proved plain enough that they were in some goodly park or another. Peradventure, whilst Master Buzzard is making his way to Charlcote, the courteous reader will be right glad to be rid of his villanous company.

At this time Sir Thomas Lucy and his dame were taking a morning's walk in their garden and orchards—mayhap to see how looked the trees for fruit, and the ground for vegetables and flowers. These two were both of some age, that is to say, neither were short of fifty. The knight was somewhat older, of a middle size as regards length, yet his limbs were slim, and waist no great matter. His countenance was of the simple sort, yet merry withal, for he affected jest at times, and never failed to laugh at it the heartiest of any; but his constant affectation was of boasting what wild pranks he had done in his youth for all he was now a justice of peace; nevertheless when any offence was put upon him, he would take upon himself to be in as monstrous a rage as the greatest man in the shire. He wore a high-crowned hat a little on one side, and moved his head with a jaunty air, humming of a song he had learned when at college; and a short ruff surrounded his peaked grey beard. He wore a plum-colored doublet, with such boad stuffed breeches to his hose as had been lately in fashion, and carried his rapier as

daintily as any young gallant. As for his dame, she kept at his side with a dignity, as she imagined, becoming of her station; for as she fancied a justice of peace to be nigh upon the most worshipful of all offices, and her husband, Sir Thomas, to be the most famous justice that ever lived, anything in her behavior that might savor of levity she would have nought to do with—always expecting she would laugh a little at her husband's jests, as she believed in all obedience she was bound, though she never failed to cry out "fie—fie" as she did it, when they smacked of any naughtiness. In short, she was a simple honest-hearted creature as any that lived, ever ready to make up with kindness what she wanted in sense. She was dressed in an excellent stiff brocade, with a long stomacher and a notable ruff, plaited and set out in the best fashion, and wore high-heeled shoes, which gave her walk a gravity she could not have otherwise attained; and had her own hair partly concealed under a French hood.

It may be remembered that it was this very lady of whom Master Buzzard spoke so uncivilly at William Shakspeare's christening, touching a young child she had found in her walks abandoned of its parents, and had resolved to bring up tenderly; but in truth, all he said was a most lewd libel, as I doubt not will readily be believed of him, for she was too simple a woman to do anything unlawful, and the child was a true foundling, to whom she had shown from the first a very womanly charity and affection. Her greatest faults were her unreasonable partialities, which blinded her completely. She could see no wrong in ought that was done by her husband, Sir Thomas, who was not altogether blameless,—or her only son, a boy of at least fifteen years, and a very tyrant to the gentle Mabel, now grown to be a child of exquisite graces of disposition, and his junior by some five or six years.

It hath already been said that the knight and his dame were taking of a morning's walk together; but some way behind these was seen a fair girl, whose clustering light ringlets were caught up by every breeze that blew, setting off as admirable a mild, sweet countenance as the most innocent age of childhood ever exhibited. Behind her was a lubberly boy, dressed very daintily in doublet and hose like a young gentleman; and he was amusing himself by picking up small stones and flinging them at her, many of which hit her sore thumps; yet the only sign she showed of her dislike of such uncivil treatment, was to beg he would not hurt her so much. These two were the poor

foundling and the son of her benefactress—and this was a sample of the sort of treatment she had of him whenever he could get her away from the observation of those likely to check his rudeness; for he knew of old she would never complain of him, let his usage of her be ever so bad, and therefore he might continue it, as he thought, with perfect impunity.

"Pray you, sweet Master Thomas, hit me not so hard!" exclaimed the pretty Mabel, in such winning accents as one might have thought would have subdued a savage, as she strove unavailingly to save herself from the hard missiles with which she was pelted by putting up her little hands, and shrinking fearfully every time a stone was thrown.

"Tut, how can I hurt thee, thou little fool?" replied young Lucy, desisting not a moment from his unmannerly behavior.

"Indeed, you do exceedingly, else would I say nought of the matter," added she.

"Then thou shouldst have the wit to avoid my aim," said the boy with a rude laugh.—"But thou makest brave sport, Mabel. O' my life, I should like to have thee fixed to a stake as cocks are at a shrovetide, I warrant I'd give thee famous knocks."

"I would do you no such unkindness, believe me," answered his fair companion. "Nor would I wish to hurt any that live."

"The more fool thou," exclaimed her tormentor.

"I marvel you should use me so uncivilly," continued the poor girl, smarting with the pain from a fresh blow, "I am sure I have done nought that should give you any displeasure, and do all you require me at a moment's bidding, even though it may have in it a great distastefulness."

"Marry, what infinite goodness!" cried the boy in a jeering manner. "Why, of what use art, if not to afford me some sport for the lack of better? Dost know the difference betwixt a good-for-nothing, beggarly brat and a young gentleman of worship?—and what so fit, I prithee, as that the one should be the pastime of the other?"

"I would rather it should be in some other fashion, an' it please you," observed Mabel very humbly. "I will roll the ball that you should strike it, and then to my utmost speed to bring it back to you again—I will be your horse, your spaniel, your deer; nay, aught in this world you most approve of, and do all that in me lies to please you, so that you give me no more cruel blows with those uncivil stones."

"'Tis my humor, I tell thee," sharply replied the petty tyrant. "And why should I be balked in my humor by so mean a per-

son? Thou art ever a crying out about thy hurts, forsooth; and I doubt not at all thou art no more hurt than am I."

"Nay, and indeed, sweet Master Thomas—"

"Hold thy prate!" exclaimed he, picking up another missile, somewhat larger in size than what he had previously thrown, which he caught hold of because he would not wait to seek any smaller. "See, I have got me a stone of some bigness, and if thou art not nimble, 'tis like thy crown will stand some chance of being cracked." The poor child cowed down as she saw him fling; but the blow struck hard, for a slight scream escaped her involuntarily, as she hastily put up her hands to her head.

"Hang thee, why didst thou not take heed as I told thee!" cried the unfeeling boy, searching about as if for another stone; but it so happened that the cry of Mabel was heard by his parents, who turned back to see what caused it. The poor foundling was standing in exactly the same position as when she was struck.

"Ha! what aileth thee, Mabel?" shouted Sir Thomas, as he approached her. "Hast been stung by a bee? Well, 'tis but a small matter. But never knew I a woman yet that could not cry out lustily at trifles; nevertheless, received she any great damage that need not be told, she had the wit to hold her tongue, I warrant you."

"Fie, fie!" exclaimed the dame, as usual, joining in the knight's laugh; and then resuming her customary dignity swept forward to see if there was anything amiss.

"Thou shouldst not cry out, child, upon slight causes," added she, as she came close to the poor foundling. "Bees have stings, and as is exceeding natural they will use them when provoked to it, and perchance thou shalt be forced to bear the smart; but come thou with me, I have in my closet the sovereignest remedy——. Alack, what a sight is this!" cried the old lady in some amazement and alarm, as, in taking the child's arm, she noticed blood trickling through her fingers, and over her waving ringlets down to her back.

"O' my life, dame, methinks she hath sufficient cause for her crying," observed the knight. "But how came this about? Dost know aught of the matter, son Tom?" inquired he, as the boy came up to the spot.

"Troth, father, I was flinging at a bird, and mayhap struck her by chance," said his son, as he noticed the mischief he had done.

"Plague on't, why dost not take more heed?" exclaimed his father.

"I am not much hurt, I thank you," said

Mabel, but so faintly as proved she was nigh upon swooning; and, indeed, the blow had been so sharp it had stunned her for a time. "And Master Thomas meant not it should strike me."

"Thou shouldst not have got in his way, child!" observed Dame Lucy, very gravely. "But come with me—this wound must be looked to straight." And so saying, she led the fair child along to the house, making sage remarks all the way of the properness of little girls keeping away from places where any stones were being thrown.

"I marvel thou shouldst be so awkward, son Tom," said the knight, as he followed slowly behind the other two. "Now, when I was of thy age, none could match me at flinging at a mark. Many's the cock-sparrow I have knocked off his perch; nay, I have been so quick of eye as more than once, taking aim at a running leveret with a stone of less than an ounce weight, I have hit him between the ears, and tumbled him over as though he had been shot."

Thus this unmannerly boy escaped the punishment he deserved for his heartless mischief, and thus the four returned to the house, the dame intent upon dressing the child's wound, for she was famous in the knowledge of simples, and in small surgery, as all good huswives should be; and the knight rehearsing to his son what marvellous feats he had done in his boyhood with the flinging of stones. Close upon the entrance they were met by a serving man, announcing the arrival of Master Buzzard, come to see his worship on business.

"How fare you, Master Buzzard—how fare you," cried Sir Thomas, welcoming his visitor in the old hall, where he transacted justice business. "I must have your company to dinner, Master Buzzard, when my dame shall do you all proper courtesies." Then, unheeding aught he had to say on the matter, the old knight gave instant orders that the horse of his guest should be well tended, and preparations made for as famous a dinner as the cook could provide. "Ha! hast got a falcon?" continued he. "I doubt not 'tis a brave bird by the look of it, Master Buzzard. Indeed, in my time, I have been as cunning in falconry as the best man living. I remember me I had a hawk of my own training that was the admiration of all the country, and lords and bishops and great courtiers came to beg that bird of me, but I would part with her on no account; she went at her quarry as no bird ever did—and all of my own training. And how fareth your noble kinsman?"

"Bravely, I thank you, Sir Thomas," re-

plied Master Buzzard courteously; and then holding out the bird, added, "this hawk is accounted one of ten thousand, as I doubt not you shall find her on trial, so I pray you accept of her, Sir Thomas, for I have had her trained so that she should be worthy of belonging to so excellent fine a judge."

"Count me your debtor, Master Buzzard," said the knight, taking the gift very readily. "I shall be proud to do you any good service, believe me. By the mass, 'tis a brave bird! And so your noble kinsman is well," continued he, as they sat together under a raised dais at the top of the hall. "I wonder if he hath forgot his old acquaintance, Thomas Lucy—valiant Thomas Lucy, as he was wont to call me, because once I got my head broke by a tinker for kissing of his wife. I remember me now, his good lordship laughed when the fellow offered to solder it for me for a groat, and put his irons in the fire for the purpose. That was a good jest 'i' faith."

"My lord often speaketh kindly of you, Sir Thomas," replied his guest, though he had never heard his kinsman mention the knight's name.

"O' my heart, doth he now?" exclaimed Sir Thomas delightedly. "Well, we have been sad boys together that's a sure thing—such coney-catchers—such roysterers—such lads of metal were not to be found in all Oxford. We kept the college in a roar, that did we, with our tricks; and if any of the citizens so much as said us nay, we would out with our toasting-irons and show them how famously we could pass the montant, the punto, the reverse, and other signs of our cunning in fence, till they were glad enough to take to their heels with whole skins. We had not our match at the duello, I promise you, and my lord was as choice a man at his weapon as might be met with in those days. As for me, he would say I deserved to be fencer to the Czar of Muscovy, I was so quick at it, and that my nimbleness of motion made me as difficult to be hit as a flea with a cannon ball; odds my life, that was wittily said."

"In truth, a notable jest," said his guest, joining in the justice's laugh.

"And so he wears well, doth he, Master Buzzard?" inquired the knight. "I'm glad on't—heartily glad on't—for he was a true, jovial spirit as ever I have met with, and I have known some mad fellows in my time, I warrant you. 'Troth, you would marvel famously to hear of what terrible, wild doings I have been a party to in my younger days—a March hare was not so mad as was I—some called me Hector of Greece, because of my valor—others the King of the Swing-

bucklers, I was so ready to be a leader to the rest in any mischief. I was the terror of all the drawers round about, I would beat them so readily; and the constables of the watch have oft been heard to say they would as lief meddle with a savage bear as lay a hand on me when I was in any of my wild humors. 'That is a fair hound of yours,' continued he, all at once noticing the dog his guest had brought with him. "There are few so apt as am I in a proper knowledge of dogs. I can tell a good one on the instant. Indeed, I have been accounted as exquisite a judge in the breeding and breaking of them as could be found in the county; and I have had in my time such dogs as could not be seen elsewhere. A fallow greyhound had I of a most choice breed that beat all she run against. O' my life, I have won such wages on that dog's head as are clean incredible. But your's is a fair hound, Master Buzzard, take my word for't."

"'Tis at your service, Sir Thomas—I brought her here for no other intent," replied the other.

"Nay, I cannot rob you of so fair a hound, Master Buzzard," said the justice, patting and commending the dog as she crouched at her master's feet.

"You will do me wrong in denying me such a favor, Sir Thomas—so I pray you take her," answered his guest.

"Nay, I should be loth to do any man wrong!" exclaimed the knight with great earnestness. "Methinks a justice of peace should be no wrong-doer—so I will e'en accept of your hound, and thank you very heartily. Is there aught in which my poor ability may do you a service, Master Buzzard?"

"There is a matter I have come upon, to the which I should like to have your worship's countenance," began his companion with a famous hypocritical serious face.

"Count upon it, Master Buzzard!" cried the justice. "Believe me, I would strain a point for you with great willingness, that would I, as I will show at any time there is good warrant for it."

"I am much bound to you, Sir Thomas," replied the other; "then this is it. There is one John Shakspeare—"

"What, he of Stratford?" inquired the knight quickly. "A man of fair, round face, who married Arden's daughter. I have heard him well spoken of by divers of the burgesses as passing honest, and, at your instigation, Master Buzzard, I will countenance him against any man."

"You have been hugely deceived in him, Sir Thomas," observed his guest.

"Marry, would he seek to deceive a justice of peace!" exclaimed the other. "What monstrous villainy!"

"I have heard him speak most abominable slander of your worship," continued Master Buzzard.

"Oh, the horrid caitiff!" cried the offended justice. "Nay, but 'tis actionable, Master Buzzard; and I will have him cast in swinging damages. O' my life, never heard I so infamous a thing! I will straightway issue my warrant for his apprehension. I will teach him to slander Sir Thomas Lucy, knight o' the shire and justice o' the peace, I warrant you! 'Tis not fit such villains should live; and methinks 'twould be exceeding proper in the law could so heinous an offence be brought in hanging."

"As I live, I am of your worship's opinion!" said his guest. "But he is a very pestilent knave, this John Shakspeare, and one of no manner of honesty whatever, as I can presently prove; for sometime since, at his urgent pressing, believing him to be such creditable person as your worship thought, I lent him a hundred crowns on his bond, the which he hath not paid to this day, putting me off with all sorts of paltry excuses concerning of what losses he had had; but knowing, by certain intelligence, he was merely striving to get off payment, I have instructed Master Catchpole to proceed against him and seize what he hath for the payment of my just debt."

"I warrant you," observed the knight, "never heard I of such thorough dishonesty. What, borrow a hundred crowns at his need, and at a proper time be not able to pay it back! O' my life, 'tis clean villainy!"

"Perchance I should not have been so rigorous with him, had I not heard him give your worship such ill words," added Master Buzzard; "for I care not so much for losing of such a sum; but I could not allow of one who slandered so noble a gentleman going unpunished."

"By'r lady, Master Buzzard, I am greatly beholden to you!" exclaimed the justice; "but I will trounce him famously—ay, that will I!—and keep his unruly tongue from all such lewd behavior forever after."

"Nay, if it please you, Sir Thomas, I would he should not be attacked in this matter," said Master Buzzard. The burgesses might take it ill of me, he being one of the corporation, and of some influence amongst them, were I to seem to press him too hard. So I should take it kindly if you would make no stir in it; but keep you your eye upon him, and if he should be found transgressing, as it is very like he will,

then, if it so please you, I shall be well content you punish him as your wisdom may think fittest."

It is only necessary to add to what hath just been set down, that Master Buzzard stayed dinner with Sir Thomas Lucy, and was well entertained of him and his lady, ever laughing at the knight's jests and marvelling at his incredible narrations, but never failing to say something now and then which should strengthen the other's misliking of John Shakspeare, which failed not of its purpose; for the justice was so weak of conceit as to be easily enraged against any who seemed not to think of him so famously as was evident he thought of himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is decreed: and we must yield to fate,
Whose angry justice, though it threatens ruin,
Contempt and poverty, is all but trial
Of a weak woman's constancy in suffering.

FORD.

In felawship well could she laugh and carpe;
She was a worthy woman all hire live,
Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five.

CHAUCER.

I exact not from you
A fortitude insensible of calamity,
To which the saints themselves have bowed
and shown
They are made of flesh and blood; all that I
challenge
Is manly patience.

MASSINGER.

Hold out now,
And then thou art victorious.

FORD.

Two persons were standing in an empty chamber bare to the very boards. A painful seriousness was on the features of each: but there was no doubting each strove to conceal from the other the exact state of their feelings. They spoke low; their voices having that subdued sound which betokeneth great excitement of mind, with great efforts to keep it from other's knowledge. One, a man seeming to be of the middle age, and in the prime of manhood, leaned his elbow on the window sill, with his forehead resting on his palm; the other, a woman of an admirable matronly appearance, had her arm around his waist, and her fair cheek resting upon his shoulder. These were John Shakspeare and his wife. They spoke only at intervals, in the manner described; and, as

usual in all troubles, the woman appeared to be playing the part of the comforter.

"Take it not to heart, John, I pray you," said she, as she seemed to press him closer to her side. "We shall do bravely anon. We must put up with these buffets as we best may; and, for my own part, I can content myself wondrous well, be my condition ever so humble."

"I doubt it not, dame," replied her husband; "but canst content thyself with bare lying, naked walls, and an empty larder?"

"Ay, dear heart!" answered she very readily; "for a longer space than they are like to visit us. We may be considered as poor as any that live; but whilst I have for my yoke-fellow a good husband, a tender father, and one so industriously disposed withal, as you have oft shown yourself to be, I know of no poverty that could trouble me a jot."

"But the children, dame," observed John Shakspeare in a huskish sort of voice. "Alack! what shall become of them?"

"O they will do well enough, I warrant you!" replied his wife with a cheerfulness she was far from feeling. "They can endure some slight discomfort, or they are none of mine, more especially when they take heed of their loving father's brave exertions to keep up his heart and make head against this sudden adversity."

"I am bewildered what to set my hand to," said he, rising from his position with a countenance somewhat irresolute; but when I look upon my stripped dwelling, and remember how delicately thou hast been brought up——"

"Tut, tut, dear heart!" exclaimed his good dame, taking one of his hands in hers, and gazing affectionately in his face; "I should scorn myself could I not bear the ills that might visit my helpmate. Think not of me, I pray you, for there liveth not in the world one so hardy as am I in all such matters." John Shakspeare shook his head mournfully as he looked in her pale face, as though he had his doubts she was as strong as she said.

"I will essay all that a man can," said he at last, "in the express hope this change of fortune will do thee no hurt, for thou hast been an excellent good wife to me, dame; and 'twould go to my heart were any evil to happen to thee." At this commendation she said never a word; but all the woman was in her eyes presently, and she suddenly threw her arms around his neck, and laid her face on his bosom.

"Woe's me, what poor foolishness is

this?" cried she, rising from him a minute after, with an endeavor to look more cheerful; "but I am wonderful pleased you will try to be doing something, and I care not what it be, so that it keep sad thoughts from your head; nay, I am assured of it, you shall live prosperously the rest of your days, put you forth all your strength now to bear these troubles."

"That will I without fail, sweet heart," cried he. After a brief space he left the chamber.

Dame Shakspeare when alone, felt the whole weight of her misfortune, for she had given such great keeps of comfort to her husband, she had not a bit of ever such smallness remaining for herself. She leaned out of the empty casement, but of the spring flowers blooming in the garden saw she nothing; she beheld only her hapless partner and her poor innocent children lacking those comforts they had been used to, and she powerless as to helping them in their need. The wife and the mother was so moved at the picture she could not avoid drawing, as to feel a sort of choking, and such heaviness of heart, that at last she dropped her face upon her hands and there smothered her sobs. All at once she caught the sound of a very sweet singing, and listening with what attention she could, heard the following words.

A COMFORTABLE CAROL.

"Cheer thee, my heart! Thy life shall have a crowning

This poor appareling cannot beguile;
Phœbus himself hath worn as dark a frowning,
And lo! all heaven is radiant with his smile!

Bravely thy spirit bear,
Far from each coward fear;
What though some trouble come, is all joy banished?

Prithee a lesson read,
In ev'ry shivering weed,
That knows in winter's rage springs have not vanished.

Pleasure is born of thee, comfort is near thee,
Glory thy boon shall be—Cheer thee, O cheer thee!

Cheer thee, my heart! Heed not the present sorrow

Let future gladness flash in every thought;
Never a night so black but hath its morrow,
Whose splendor laughs all gloominess to nought.

Though thou shouldst feel the wound,
'Tis but to plough the ground—
Looks not the soil as barren in the furrow?

Yet o'er the sightless clods,
Countless great plenty nods,
When the rich harvest clothes the wide field through!

Pleasure is born of thee, comfort is near thee,
Glory thy boon shall be—Cheer thee, O cheer
thee!"

It was nurse Cicely singing to the children in an upper chamber, as was her wont. It had been noted, that however much given to singing was she, she never sang any such songs as were familiar to her hearers; but she would say when spoke to on the matter she had learned them in her youth, and knew not by whom they were writ. It was the marvel of many that they looked to be of a higher language than ordinary ballads, whereof the tunes were the delicatest sort ever heard. Dame Shakspeare felt exceeding comforted at hearing the foregoing verses, and rising from her leaning place, hastily brushed away a tear from her eyelids, as though it was some base rebel that would needs be in arms against her authority. As she did this she was suddenly aware of a great talking of voices in what had been the warehouse, and her chamber door being presently thrown open, she beheld the whole place thronged with her neighbors, mostly women and children, carrying spare tables and chairs, and other such conveniences as they thought she stood most in need of.

"This way, neighbors, this way!" exclaimed the merry Widow Pippins, who seemed to be the leader of the party.

"Ha! dame, how dost do?" inquired she, as she put an old arm chair by the side of her. So the villains have not left thee so much as a rush for thy floor? But mind it not, gossip, for they have given thee all the better cause for caring not a rush for the whole pack of them." Thereupon she had a hearty laugh, and then bustled herself about giving directions where to put things, which all did with great alacrity, that presently there seemed some sort of comfort in the chamber, albeit though no two chairs were alike. Mistress Malmsey and Mistress Dowlas were each at the side of Dame Shakspeare, for she was more overpowered by the kindness of her neighbors than ever she had been at the great reverse she had just experienced; and they two having got her seated, were pressing of her to take some wine the vintner's wife had brought with her, and were bestowing on her all sorts of friendly consolation.

"Now get you gone, all of you, and let us see which hath the best pair of heels," said the widow, in her cheerfulest humor, to the others. "Mayhap if you search thoroughly, you shall still find some odd thing or another serviceable to our good neighbor; and methinks 'twould be infamous of any

who have wherewithal to spare, to keep it from one who is in such need."

"Ay, that would it," said David Hurdle, who had run from his work on the news of John Shakspeare's misfortune, with a heavy oak table nigh as much as he could carry.

"Methinks I have a knife or two, and mayhap a spare trencher," observed Mother Flytrap. "But alack! what a monstrous shame was it to have been so hard upon so sweet a woman. Odds codlings! I could find it in my heart to do them a mischief for't."

"Use thy legs briskly, and thy tongue shall last the longer," exclaimed the Widow Pippins merrily.

"That will I, I warrant you!" replied the old woman, hobbling along with her stick at a rate she had not attempted for many a day.

"As I live the world groweth more villainous every hour!" cried Oliver Dumps, putting on one of his dolefullest faces. "What abominable uncivilness and horrible tyranny is this—what shameful usage and intolerable cruelty!"

"Fine words butter no parsnips, Master Constable," said the widow. "Hast brought any useful thing for our good neighbor?"

"Nay, I clean forgot," answered Oliver.

"Speed thee, then, and give handsomely," exclaimed she. "What dost come here for, with thy melancholy visage like that of a frog in a long drought? Get thee gone for a good dozen of trenchers, else if ever I draw thee a drop of my liquor again call me a horse. And, prithee," added the merry woman, as he was moving himself off, "strive if thou canst not find out a good store of wholesome victual to put in them; and count on for brimming measure from me the rest of thy life."

"How now sweetheart," cried she, when there were no others left with Dame Shakspeare save only herself, Mistress Malmsey, and Mistress Dowlas, "be not so downcast. By my patience, there is nought in this you should so much care for. Look at me, who have buried five husbands—seem I in any way woe-begone? O' my life, no! Perchance I should seem none the less satisfied had I buried a hundred, for there would still be plenty as good above ground, or I am hugely mistaken. Troth, care and I have never been bedfellows, that's a sure thing."

"An' it please you, dame, I will take the boy William to our house till things are more settled than they now are," observed the draper's wife.

"And I will move my Timothy to be a

mean for setting your good man on his legs again," said the other, as affectionately.

"I heartily thank you," was all Dame Shakspeare could say in reply.

"Prithee look a little more cheerful," cried the widow. "Smile a bit now—'twould do you wonderful good, I warrant; and a famous burst of laughing would be worth any money to you."

Their attention was, at this moment, attracted by some loud talking in the adjoining chamber or warehouse, which proved to be Master Buzzard's man, Saul, conducting of himself with intolerable insolency towards John Shakspeare, evidently with a view of provoking him to some breach of the peace.

"Humph!" exclaimed he carelessly beating of his boot with an ashen stick he had with him, as he stared about the naked chamber with exceeding impudence, "methinks thy wits must needs take to wool-gathering, to help thee to a new stock, else must thy customers lack serving, for here is as goodly a show of nothing as ever I saw."

"Get thee gone, fellow!" observed John Shakspeare, with that indifference an honest man ever feels at the insults of a low villain.

"Fellow!" cried Saul sharply, "who dost call fellow, I prithee? I have a few pounds, at least, stored up, with a something in my purse to spend; but thou art not worth a pinch of salt with all thou hast, is more than I can see any color of warrant for thinking. Marry, I marvel to hear beggars give their betters ill words."

"Wilt get thee gone?" cried the other in a louder key; "what dost want here? Say thy business, and be off."

"Business, quotha!" exclaimed the man, with a sneering laugh, "O' my life, this be a rare place for business. What hast got to sell, John Shakspeare—spider's webs? I'faith, 'tis like thou wilt drive a brave trade anon, provided thou canst keep up a fair demand for such merchandise."

"O' my word, if thou dost not take thyself quietly out of my dwelling in a presently, I will turn thee out," said John Shakspeare, determinedly.

"Ha, indeed," replied the fellow, twirling his stick about, and eyeing his companion superciliously from head to foot, "an' I be not hugely mistaken, 'twould take a somewhat better man than thou art, to do any such thing."

"Away, fellow! thou art contemptible," exclaimed the other, making great efforts to withhold his anger; "an' I were but half as vile a wretch as thou, I would take me

a rope and hang myself without another word."

"How darest thou call names, thou pitiful, beggarly wretch!" cried Saul, approaching his companion with a savage menacing look. "Dost think to play the high bailiff again? 'Slife! hear I any more of thy bouncing speech, I'll crack thy crown for thee."

"Wouldst!" exclaimed John Shakspeare, seizing the fellow so suddenly by the collar of his jerkin, that he had no time for putting of his threat in execution. "Wouldst, caitiff!" continued he, shaking him in his strong grasp till he appeared to have shook all his breath away. Then drawing him close to his breast, he thrust his insulter from him with such force, that he sent him reeling to the other end of the chamber, saying, "Get thee gone for a villain!"

As soon as the man got his footing he was for flying at the other in a horrible deadly rage, to do him some mischief, when he was stopped by the Widow Pippins, Mistress Malmsey, and Mistress Dowlas, rushing in before him from out of the adjoining chamber.

"Away, thou scurvy rogue!" exclaimed the widow.

"Get thee hence, thou pitiful rascal, or I will clout thy head off!" cried the vintner's wife, with no less earnestness.

"By my troth, an' thou stayest here another minute, I'll be as good as hanging to thee, thou intolerable villain!" added Mistress Dowlas, in as great a rage as either.

"Go to, thou art a drab!" said Saul, impudently, as he tried to push by them.

"Am I a drab, fellow?" exclaimed Mistress Malmsey, hitting of him a box on the ear with all the strength of her arm.

"Dost call me drab, villain!" cried the draper's wife, giving him so sore a one on the other side of his head that it nearly turned him round.

"I'll drab thee!" said the widow, lifting up her foot the next moment, and giving him a kick behind of such force it sent him some paces; and the three women followed him up with such vigor, that after standing a moment, quite bewildered with the quickness and fierceness of their blows, the fellow was fain to take to his heels; but not before the widow had given him a parting benediction with her foot, in the use of which she showed a marvellous cleverness, that gave him a good start to begin with.

"As I live that that was well done of us!" exclaimed the merry widow, as soon as Saul had disappeared, and laughing with

her usual free-heartedness; "never knew I so goodly a foot-ball, or ever played so famous a game. Indeed, 'twas exquisite sport. I would not have missed my share in it for another husband. O' my life, an' he findeth himself comfortable sitting for the next month, he must be rarely fashioned. He must needs forswear chairs, and rest as gingerly on a stool as would a cow upon broken bottles. P'faith, 'twas rare sport!"

The other two appeared to be nearly as well amused, as they returned to Dame Shakspeare, who had come as far as the door in some alarm, when her neighbors burst into the warehouse; but there were two others, who had observed Saul's insolence from the kitchen, and these were Maud and Humphrey, and were quite as much moved at it as any there. The former had been crying ever since the seizure, and the other had been endeavoring, with a vast show of awkward affectionateness, to give her some comfort.

"Humphrey!" cried she, suddenly jumping up from the ground where she had been sitting, at hearing of her master so insulted, and gazing on her companion with a very monstrous earnestness; "An' thou dost not go and cudgel that knave within an inch of his life, I'll forswear thy company. Ay," added she with a most moving emphasis; "though I die a maid for't!"

"By goles, thou shall never do so horrid a thing!" exclaimed Humphrey, hastily catching hold of a cudgel that had often done good service on himself, and darting out at the back door as Saul made his exit at the front. Now Humphrey was not much given to valor: indeed, to speak the exact truth, he could be terrible fearful upon occasions; but what will not love do? All at once Humphrey felt himself a hero; and to save his Maud from so unnatural a catastrophe as she had threatened, he would that moment have dared any danger, had it been ever so great. As he proceeded quickly along, he threw out his arms, jerked up his head, expanded his chest, and flourished his cudgel, with the air of a conqueror. No one knew Humphrey. I doubt hugely Humphrey knew himself, he was so changed.

Saul left John Shakspeare's house in a terrible bad humor, as may be supposed. His head seemed to spin like a parish top, and as for—but methinks the courteous reader needeth no retrospective allusions. Suffice it to say he was in a tearing passion, and went his way monstrous chap-fallen, muttering all sorts of imprecations, with his eyes on the ground as though in-

tent on studying every pebble he trod on. All at once some one ran against him with such force as nearly to send him off his legs.

"A murrain on thee! dost want thy fool's head broke?" shouted Saul.

"Ay, inarry, and why not, if thou canst do it!" replied Humphrey in a big voice that almost frightened himself. "Go and bite thy thumb at a stone wall, and be hanged to thee! My head be as good a fool's head as thine, I warrant; and I care not who knows it. I tell thee I take thee to be a scurvy villain; so have it in thy teeth thou coal-carrying knave!"

"Bravely said, Humphrey!" cried a neighbor, astonished at such a display in one so little noted for valor.

"Well done, my heart of oak!" exclaimed another, patting him on the back with the same commending spirit.

"Why, thou pitiful worsted knave!" bawled out Master Buzzard's man, recovering from his surprise at being so abused of so mean a person. "'Slife! an' do I not beat thee to shavings, I am a Jew."

"A ring, my masters—a ring!" bawled out another; and very speedily there was a circle of some twenty men and boys, formed round the two combatants. Never were two persons so badly matched. Saul was the best cudgel-player in the whole country; but all Humphrey's knowledge of it came of the blows he had had of his master, and not without deserving it; yet was Humphrey the favorite of the spectators beyond question, all of whom held the other in huge dislike, for very efficient causes, and Humphrey was so encouraged and commended of them, that although his feelings were somewhat of a dubious sort, for all the show he made, it kept up his valor famously. Presently the two began playing of their weapons very prettily; but Humphrey was in so monstrous an eagerness to pay his antagonist, he did nothing but strike away as hard as he could, in a manner that quite confused the practised cudgel-player. Saul was in a horrible passion, which in conjunction with other things, mayhap might have made his skill avail him so little; but when he found his head broke, and heard the shouts of triumph of those around him, he became like a mad beast, and struck out wherever he could at mere random. Certes Humphrey got no lack of thumps; but his head looked to be to the hardness of a bullet, and gave no sign of being touched, while Saul could scarce see out of his eyes for the blood running from his broken head.

As it was now a mere trial of endurance,

it was easy to see who would get the best of it, for Saul might have cudgelled a post with as much sign of success as he had with his present antagonist; and nothing could exceed the gratification of all present at the heartiness with which John Shakspeare's man gave it to the other. In short, Saul got such a drubbing as he had never had since he was born; and at last, when his strength was nearly exhausted, a sharp blow sent him to the ground like a stone. Then rose a shout of triumph such as Stratford had rarely heard, and Humphrey mounted on the shoulders of two butcher's apprentices, and followed by half the town hurraing him as he went—they were in such delight he had behaved himself so valorously, and punished as he deserved so notorious a knave—was carried like a hero to his master's dwelling.

"Maud!" cried the victor, as he entered the back door, with his heart swelling with exultation.

"Well, Humphrey," said she.

"I have given that varlet his deserts."

"Hast?" added she, approaching him closely, and looking earnestly into his face.

"By goles, I do think I have gone as nigh killing the knave as was possible."

"Hast?" repeated she with a smile breaking over her chubby cheeks. "Then here's at thee!" Thereupon she suddenly seized Humphrey by his two ears with her huge fists, and gave him as hearty a buss as ever man received of woman since the world commenced.

CHAPTER IX.

Mosca. There's nought impossible.

Volpone. Yes, to be learned, Mosca.

Mosca. O no; rich

Implies it. Hood an ass with reverend purple,
So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
And he shall pass for a cathedrel doctor.

BEN JONSON.

Of an old English gentleman who had an old estate,
And kept up his old mansion at a bountiful rate,
With an old porter to relieve the poor at his gate,
Like the Queen's old courtier, and a courtier of the Queen's.

OLD BALLAD.

It cannot be supposed William Shakspeare was well off in his schooling under so ill a master as Stripes, who, though he did not treat him uncivilly, in token of such

welcome gifts as his mother oftentimes brought, was of too ignorant pedantic a nature to have that heed which a young scholar of any promise requireth: nevertheless William took to his book very kindly, to the wonderful admiration of Dame Shakspeare and her gossips, and in especial of Nurse Cicely, which never failed to bring forth notable prophecies of his future greatness from her, whereof more than one person entertained them as exceeding credible. There was no wake, or lamb-ale, or other festival in the neighborhood the boy was not invited to with his mother, at which he was continually called upon to repeat such verses he had learned of his mother, or sing such ballads as his nurse had made him familiar with; and the goodly manner he would perform what was required, so won upon the hearts of the spectators, that praises out of all number, and other things more substantial in great plenty, were the sure consequences. As soon as he had learned to read, wonderful was the diligence with which he perused all manner of books—albeit he quickly exhausted the poor stock that could be had for his reading, for these merely consisted of a few volumes, chiefly poems of Dame Shakspeare's, and one or two here and there of some neighbor. Certes, no great matter of knowledge was to be gained of such books; but they served to excite the young mind, and keep it in a restless yearning for more delectable food; and therefore were not entirely unprofitable.

It is not to be imagined that a child so disposed took no delight in the proper pastimes of his age; for the entire contrary is nighest to the truth. Among all his school-fellows, who entered into any sport with such absolute zest as Will Shakspeare? He was the wildest of any. His free spirit made such play among them as soon gained for him the liking of the whole school. He grew up at last to be the chief leader in their games—the captain of their exploits, and the very heart and principal of all their revels. If Will was not of their company, doubtless were they as much at a loss as a live of bees without their queen; but when they were heard as merry as crickets by a winter's hearth, calling lustily to each other, crowding here and running there, sending the football bounding along the grass, or leaping over each other's backs as though they had wings, of a surety he was to be found amongst the very foremost. But it should be borne in mind that there were times, and many times too, when the day was in its freshest glory, and every one of his companions were enjoying themselves

to his heart's content, he would be in some out of the way corner, half sitting half reclining on the floor, leaning deeply studious over some old volume he had provided himself with; and the merry shoutings close at hand, or the pressing entreaties of those he most liked, had never power to draw him thence till he had gone through it every page.

More than once too, when they were out together a maying, or nutting in the woods, he would stray from the rest, perchance led away by the sweet singing of the birds, or the delicate beauty of the blossoms; and in some shady place would sit him down to rest, conning of a book the whilst, he had carried under his jerkin, till somehow or another he would fall asleep,—and O the exquisite pleasant dreams he had at that time! At the end he would suddenly start up, rubbing of his eyes and looking in every place for the great multitude of the fairy folk, who a moment since in their delicate finery seemed to be dancing so bravely before him, and singing to him such admirable choice ditties, and doing him all manner of delectable courtesies; but finding no sign of such searched he ever so, he would be in huge disappointment, till the shouting of his fellows woke him from his strange bewilderment; and he would then make what haste he could to join his company.

Of his disposition, it is not too much to say it savored of as much sweetness as ever lay in so little a compass. There was no aptness to sudden quarrel with him—no giving of ill words—no beating of lesser boys than himself—no tendency to mere rude mischief; neither selfishness, nor covetousness, nor any unmannerly quality whatsoever, such as are frequently in other boys; but he would give freely of what he had, and assist those in their tasks who were backward, and very cheerfully do any civil thing for another that was in his compass, and could not bear to see any cruelty, or unkind treatment of any sort let it be among big or little. From this it will readily be conceived, that for his master he had but small affection, even though Stripes used him with more civility than was his wont to others. This seeming partiality, however, lasted only as long as Dame Shakspeare's gifts; for when the family grew to be too poorly off to send him any, the schoolmaster showed his savage humor to him as much as to the rest.

At the complete poverty of his father by Master Buzzard's ruthless proceedings, it was thought William would be taken altogether from school to assist his parents in

such things as he could, for he was now grown to be of some bigness, and John Shakspeare had not wital to keep either Maud or Humphrey—who straightway made themselves of the pale of matrimony—and was striving as he best might to do a little trade as a glover, whereof his means, with his neighbors assistance, was only enough to accomplish; but it was resolved by the two alderman's wives, who were the prime movers of all things in his behalf, that it would be best, as he was getting so forward, William should keep school hours, and assist his father at other times; and in consequence, he continued to receive such instructions as Stripes could give in reading and writing, the science of simple arithmetic, and the study of the Latin grammar, for some time longer, wherein he got to be the very head of the school, despite of having so unworthy a teacher, and of the monstrous negligence and wanton insolency with which he was treated.

Now this fellow of a schoolmaster in the habit of using his boy Dickon, worse than any turnspit dog might be treated by a brutal scullion. What his wages were has never been known; and indeed, save in the way of blows, he had never had anything of the sort. He got such little victual, that it was supposed of some he would long since have taken to eating of himself, only he knew not where to find a mouthful. Truly flesh and blood could not stand such usage; indeed it appeared as though they had long had nought to do with the business, leaving skin and bone to manage everything between them. Dickon was reduced to such a strait, that if he caught sight of a cur looking for bones, he would take to his heels presently, with the full conviction the animal would make a grab at him an' he got in his way. In him, however, such leanness was but the natural result of poor living; but his master, though he eat and drank greedily whatever he could lay his hand on, looked not a jot more full of flesh than ordinary. Indeed, he starved both his boy and his cat, eating from them their share of victual, yet seemed to carry nigh upon as hungry a look with him as either. His tyrannical humor he often enough showed upon his scholars, but this was nothing to be compared with the savageness with which he was ever falling upon poor Dickon for any trifling faults; and it was his custom, when he fancied there was anything amiss in the poor boy's behavior, to drag him into the school-room, to be horsed by some of the biggest of his scholars; and then he would lay on him with a great rod with such fierceness as was

horrible to see, caring not a jot for his cries, or the entreaties of the whole school he should be let go.

These exhibitions of his master's cruelty were intolerable to William Shakspeare, and many of his schoolfellows; so one day, after such a sight, he got several of them together he had confidence in, and they being moved with wrath and indignation, resolved among themselves they would allow of it no longer, no matter what might follow; and the first class, which were the chiefest for strength, entered into a bond of mutual protection. Others of the greatest spirit were drawn into the confederacy, and in a little time the whole school was in a ferment upon the matter. The very smallest of the lot was seen to double up his little fist, with a look of vengeance that spoke volumes of meaning. All things, however, were left to the management of Will Shakspeare, and every one vowed to stand by him, though they were whacked to ribbons. The secret was well kept. Stripes had not the slightest knowledge of any such feeling against him, and the next day rushed into the school-room, hauling in Dickon by the ear, who was making of a pitiful lamentation, and cuffing him mercilessly by the way.

"Will Shakspeare!" shouted the schoolmaster; "horse me this villain straight." The boy moved not an inch.

"Will Shakspeare, I say!" thundered Stripes, with increased rage; "horse me this caitiff, I tell thee." Still his scholar kept the same unmovedness, and every one appeared studying of their tasks with more than ordinary diligence, nevertheless their little hearts were a beating famously.

"Why, thou villain, what dost mean by this?" exclaimed the pedagogue, furiously, letting go his hold of Dickon, and catching up his cane. "I'll make thee hear, I warrant." In the twinkling of an eye every boy was out of his form.

"Now, Tom Green!" cried one.

"Now, Jack Hemings!" shouted another.

"At him, Dick Burbage!" exclaimed a third.

"On him, Harry Condell!" bawled a fourth; and in an instant, there was a rush upon the astonished schoolmaster from all parts of the school.

"Ha! dost rebel?" screamed he, making furious efforts to cut them with his cane, with his cadaverous visage livid with passion. "Slight, I'll make thee rue it!"

But for all his terrible efforts he was speedily overpowered. The boys came upon him with all the spirit of ants disturbed in their nest; some clung to a leg, others to

an arm. They jumped upon his neck, and hung upon his jerkin in such numbers, that he could do nought in the world, but threaten them with the horriest imprecations. At this stage of the proceedings, Dickon, who had regarded this sudden movement out of his wits with sheer amazement, was called to hold his back to take his master on; and though at first he showed some sign of unwillingness, he was soon forced by the conspirators to do as they bade him.

"I'll have thee hanged, villains!" bawled the pedagogue, as he was being hoisted by the strongest of his scholars upon the back of the poor boy he had used so inhumanly, malgre all his strugglings and fumings. "I'll lash the skin off thy pestilent bones. I'll scourge every one of thee to death. Let me go, thou vile wretches!"

"Hold on, Dickon!" cried some.

"Keep him fast, my masters!" exclaimed others, and shouts of encouragement arose from all. Dickon did hold fast, doubtless in some slight pleasure, for all his seeming unwillingness, and he had no lack of helpers in his office; so that Stripes was very speedily prepared for that punishment he had with so little discretion inflicted upon others. As soon as he began to be aware of what was intended for him, he was like one in a phrenzy. Mad with fear, rage, and indignation, he redoubled his threats and his struggles, but all to small profit: for, whilst he was held down as firm as in a vice by some, others, one after another, laid into him with all their might, till he roared for mercy. These, then, taking the places of his holders, divers in their turn assisted in the tyrant's punishment, till not one of the whole school but had repaid him with interest the undeserved blows he had received at his hands. To describe the joy with which all this was done by the scholars, their uproarious shouts and cheers, or the horrible bad humor of their master, is clean out of the question. I doubt not it will be imagined of many. The end was, at a signal he was dropped on the floor, so completely tamed of his tyrannical humors, he would not have struck at a mouse,—where he was left to put himself to rights as he might,—and then the whole school took their leaves of him very orderly.

The next day they came to the school as usual, but all in a body; the bigger boys first, and the little ones coming after, and every one went to his place, and took to his studies, as if nothing had happened out of the ordinary. Doubtless, they had come to the resoluon to have at him again, showed he any more of his insufferable cruelties; but there was small need of any such thing,

for there never was so altered a man seen as was Stripes, the schoolmaster. He heard them their lessons with a sort of suavity that was marvellous beyond all things—praising of every one as though he had got for his scholars such prodigies of genius as could not be met with elsewhere—and taking no more thought of canes and rods, than if such things had never been in his experience. As for Dickon, he showed his master a fair pair of heels directly he had him off his back, and was shortly after taken into the service of an honest yeoman, father to one of the scholars.

It so happened, once on a time, as William Shakspeare and his chief companions were strolling together, they came upon the town crier giving note to the inhabitants, that my Lord of Leicester's players being in the town, would perform a play at a certain hour, to which the citizens were invited at a small charge. This put some of them in a monstrous desire to behold so goodly an entertainment—particularly William Shakspeare, who had beheld nought of the kind in all his life; but others, his elders, had seen plays more than once, and they gave him such moving accounts of what exquisite pleasant pastime was to be found in them, that he did nothing but wish he could get to a sight of such. Unluckily, he had no money of any kind, and his father's necessities were so great he knew none could be spared him. What to do he knew not; for though he could get standing room for a penny, no sign of a penny could he see anywhere. He knew that divers of his schoolfellows were intent upon going, and he would have been glad enough to have joined them, but he saw no hope of the kind, by reason of wanting the necessary price of admission. It however did so turn out, that the father of one of the boys was an especial acquaintance of the head of the players, by which means Richard Burbage not only got to see the play for nothing, but moved his father to allow of his schoolfellow, Will Shakspeare, having the like permission; which, to the latter's extreme comfort was granted.

The players gave their entertainment in the inn yard of the Widow Pippins, on a raised platform in front of the gallery. They were not troubled with scenery, and made no particular display of a wardrobe, but the merry interlude, called "Gammer Gurton's Needle," a huge favorite at that time, which was then and there played by them, required little such accompaniment. The spectators, at least the greater number, stood in the yard; but those who chose to pay more,

were accommodated with seats at the gallery and casements. William Shakspeare, by going early with his fellows, got a front place, and waited, in a marvellous eagerness, to see the interlude. Presently there was a movement made by his neighbors, which caused him to turn round like the rest, and he saw it was occasioned by the entrance into the gallery of Sir Thomas Lucy, his lady, and his son, who took the best places; elsewhere was seen Mistress Malmsey and Mistress Dowlas, in their choicest finery, pointing out their acquaintances to each other; and either up or down, half the good folks of Stratford might have been recognized, intent upon nothing so much as seeing the play.

At last the curtain was moved, and a beginning was made of the play by the appearance of Hodge and Deacon. The pitiful manner in which the one complains to the other of the bad state of his lower garment, and the right doleful way of his companion's condolences on the matter, were received by the audience with loud roars of laughter. Then, when Deacon acquaints Hodge of Gammer Gurton and her maid Tib having been by the ears together, making of the House a perfect Bedlam, and the other protests he was monstrous afraid something serious would happen, having taken note of the awful manner in which Tom Tankard's cow frisked her tail, there was no less mirthfulness. Upon Hodge proceeding homeward and meeting with Tib, and hearing that all this turmoil had been occasioned by the Gammer losing of her needle; when, upon spying of Gib, the cat, up to the ears in her milk-bowl, she let fall the breeches she was clouting with all diligence, the humor of the dialogue seemed equally well relished. But when it came to Gammer Gurton's terrible to do because of her loss, her monstrous anxiousness to recover it, her suspicions of the honesty of her neighbors, her intrigues and quarrels with them, and the interference of no less a person than the parson of the parish, Dr. Rat, to make peace again, there was a choice roaring I warrant you; and this was only exceeded when Hodge, upon sitting of himself down, discovered the lost needle, to his great smart, in consequence of its having been left sticking in his rent garment.

I doubt much whether the finest play ever writ, was so well relished of an audience as was this rude coarse interlude, by the simple burgesses of Stratford. Even Sir Thomas Lucy laughed as though he would never have done. As for William Shakspeare, it made such impression on him, never

having seen anything of the sort, that the next day, and very often after, he was to be seen, with his companions, Burbage, Green, Condell, and Hemings, making players of themselves in an out-of-the-way corner of the town, essaying to play that very interlude, by one taking one character and the rest others; and it was said by some who saw them at it, that the seeing these boys aping the players out of their own heads as they did, was nigh upon as rare a sight as seeing the players themselves. All these five were ever at it; and the playing of Gammer Gurton's Needle took the place of all other sports whatsoever. Suffice it to say, that the Earl of Leicester's company got such reception, they repeated their visits frequently; and young Burbage's father having shown some talent as a player, they took him to be of their company.

On one occasion, William Shakspeare was sent with some gloves to a certain Sir Marmaduke de Largesse, living at Wilnecott, at an excellent old mansion there, who delighted in keeping up the country sports and festivities, and was noted for miles round, what extreme pleasure he took in anything that smacked of antiquity. His hospitality was unbounded, and his table was ever loaded with the choicest of good victual, to which all might seat themselves according to their quality; and what was left was given to the poor by the porter at the gate. No one ever came there hungry that did not leave with as much as he liked to eat and drink, under his belt; and, if it was needed, a something in his purse to carry him along. In his cooking he was more careful there should be a good plenty of wholesome viands, than that any show of extreme niceness should be visible in the dishes; and as for what he gave to drink, it was chiefly honest ale, of his own brewing, of such fine flavor and strength as was not to be matched, go where you would.

Having passed through an avenue of lofty trees, which led up to the house, admiring, as he approached it, its fair appearance and antique character, on making known his errand he was ushered by a jolly-looking butler into a spacious stone-floored chamber, lighted with transome windows, the walls of which were garnished with a prodigal assortment of corslets and helmets arranged in rows, with coats of mail, military jerkins or shirts of leather, halberts, bucklers, pikes, bills, crossbows, and all manner of the like weapons and defences. An oak table that went the whole length of the chamber, was covered with smoking viands, brimming black jacks, and full trenchers. The upper

and lower messes being divided by a huge saltcellar,—all around was a busy company of friends and retainers, doing honor to the feast: and at the head of the table in a famous tall chair, sat a ruddy, stout, pleasant-faced gentleman, with hair and beard white and plentiful; a full ruff such as might have been in fashion some score of years since, and a serviceable doublet, with trunks and hose of a sober color. The hilt of his rapier came up to his breast, but he held it as carefully as if it had been an old friend, and I doubt not would sooner have gone without his napkin at his meals, than without so approved a companion. He kept discoursing cheerfully with those nearest him, ever and anon glancing his eyes round to see that the carver did his duty, and that all were well served. This was Sir Marmaduke de Largesse.

William Shakspeare had not entered the hall many minutes ere he was spied by the old knight, who in a kind voice bade him come near and state his business.

"Gloves, eh!" exclaimed he pleasantly, upon hearing of his errand. "Hie then to a seat at the table—get thee a good meal and a fair draught—after that if thou art in the humor come to me and I will attend thy business with all proper diligence."

There was such sweetness in the behavior of this old gentleman, that it was impossible for the boy hesitating to do what he was desired, even had he cared not to be of the feast, so he went with due deference below the salt, where place was cheerfully made for him, and every one of his neighbors commenced pressing of him to this and the other tempting dish with such cordiality, as soon put him quite at home with them. A trencher full of excellent fare, he quickly found smoking at his hand so enticingly, that he was fain to set to with exceeding good will, and it was a truly pleasant part of the entertainment to note the anxiousness of his neighbors, that he should have what he liked best, and as much of it as he could fancy. In all honesty he made a famous meal, and after drinking sparingly of the ale, he was ready to attend to his errand. Presently a most thankful grace was said by the chaplain, and in a few minutes the tables were cleared, and all had gone their several ways, save only some guests who kept their places, and continued conversing with their bountiful kind entertainer. William Shakspeare did not move, for he was waiting for some sign from the knight of his being at leisure.

"Prithee let me hear that ballad of William the Conqueror, thou wert speaking of,

Master Peregrine," said Sir Marmaduke to a curious sort of pantaloan-looking person, wearing a huge pair of spectacles, mounted on his peaked nose.

"O' my life, I doubt hugely I can say but a verse or two," replied Master Peregrine, in a thin small voice. I heard it when I was a boy, and never since, nor have I met it in print anywhere, though I have searched wherever there was likelihood of its being to be found. Indeed I would give something to know it thoroughly, for I doubt not 'tis exceeding ancient, and one of the very rarest ballads that ever were made."

"Let us hear what of it is in your remembrance, I pray you," exclaimed the chaplain, who was one with a venerable worthy aspect, and was then employed in brewing a cup of sack for the old knight and his guests, in the which he was esteemed famous.

"Well, said, Sir Johan," said a young gallant, a near kinsman to Sir Marmaduke. "I love an old ballad as well as any."

"Thou lovest a pretty woman better of the two, Sir Valentine, I'll warrant," cried a companion merrily.

"That doth he Sir Reginald, I'll be sworn, or he is none of my blood," replied the old knight in the same humor.

"Well, I care not to deny the impeachment," answered his kinsman with a smile. "Doubtless I can con either upon occasion, and get them by heart too if they be worthy."

"Marry, and very properly," cried Sir Marmaduke, and then with a famous arch look added, "I doubt though you would like to have your pretty woman as old as your ballad,—eh, nephew?"

"No, by St. Jeronimo!" exclaimed Sir Valentine with such emphasis, it raised a laugh all round.

"Well, give me an old ballad for my money," cried Master Peregrine with a marvellous complacency. "Methinks there is nothing like the delicate pleasure it affordeth, if so be you stick it on the wall with some of its fellows, and go to the perusal of it when you have a mind."

"There the ballad hath it hollow," observed Sir Johan gravely, yet with a twinkle in his eye that savored of some humor. "Being of the church, perchance I am not the fittest to speak on so light a matter, but in all my philosophy, I know not of ever a pretty woman who allowed herself to be stuck on the wall with her fellows, were it even for a single moment." This sally also occasioned great laughing, after which Master Peregrine was pressed for his ballad.

"It is of some length," said he; "and if I remember me right, is writ in three separate fyttes or divisions."

Then each of the company listened with courteous attention, Master Peregrine commenced repeating of the verses he had spoken of.

"I regret my memory faileth me in the rest of the verses, for I doubt not they would be found well worthy of a hearing," said the antiquary, suddenly coming to a halt.

"Think a while—mayhap they shall return to your remembrance," said the chaplain.

"Ay, do, Master Peregrine; for I should be loath to lose any part of so goodly a ballad," added the old knight, who, with the rest, appeared to take infinite interest in it.

"Nay, as I live, I know not a verse more," replied the other, seemingly in some vexation when he found his thinking was to no profit. "Indeed, I should be heartily glad could I meet with the other parts, for they are of a very singular curiousness."

"I'faith, I should be well pleased myself to hear the rest on't," remarked Sir Marmaduke, and his guests spoke much to the same purpose.

"An' it please your worship, methinks I can give you every line of it," said young William Shakspeare, who had fidgetted about sometime without daring to speak.

"Ha, Gloves! art there?" exclaimed the old knight, merrily; "in very truth I knew not of thy presence. Come hither, I prithee."

"Dost indeed know ought of it, young sir?" inquired Master Peregrine, looking at the boy earnestly through his spectacles, as he approached him.

"Every word, an' it please you," replied William.

"Let us hear of it then, and quickly," cried Sir Marmaduke, putting his hand kindly on the boy's head. William Shakspeare saw all eyes were fixed upon him; yet there was a friendliness in every aspect which gave him nought to fear. Standing where he was, with a graceful carriage of himself, and a wonderful pleasant delivery, he presently went on with the verses.

"Bravely spoken!" exclaimed the old knight, who had observed and listened to the boy manifestly with a more than ordinary satisfaction in his benevolent aspect. "Never heard I aught more properly delivered."

"Nor I, by'r Lady," said Master Peregrine, in a similar excellent humor. "Where didst learn this exquisite ballad, young sir?"

"An' it please you, my mother taught it me," replied William Shakspeare.

"Hast any more such in thy memory!" inquired the other.

"A score at least, an' it please you," answered the boy; "most moving ones of the doings of valiant knights; and sundry of a delicater sort, concerning of the love of fair ladies; besides which I have store of fairy roundelays, that I learned of Nurse Cicely, which smack most sweetly of the dainty blossoms."

"O' my life, thou art a treasure!" exclaimed Master Peregrine, in a most pleased astonishment.

"Stick him against the wall, I prithee!" cried Sir Reginald merrily.

"Marry, methinks he is a wall of himself, or at least as good as one that is ever so well covered with ballads," remarked Sir Valentine; "you could not have fallen into more choice company, Master Antiquarian."

"So thou art John Shakspeare's son, of Stratford," said Sir Marmaduke kindly to him, after he had made the boy say something of who he was; "we must be of better acquaintance. Come thou here as often as it pleaseth thee; and if thou art for books, I have some thou wouldst be glad to be reading of, I make no manner of doubt. I tell you what, my masters," added he, turning to his guests, "I have a pleasant device in my head, which perchance may be exceedingly profitable to us all; and it is no other than to take this good boy with us to Kenilworth, to see the queen's highness, and he shall entertain us on the road with some of those rare ballads he hath spoken of."

This suggestion was heartily received by the company, and after being well commended, and received bountiful tokens of good will from all, William Shakspeare returned home, bearing a message to his father to the effect just alluded to.

CHAPTER X.

See, she comes:
How sweet her innocence appears;
To Heaven itself, than any sacrifice
That can be offered to it.

MASSINGER.

I'll go hunt the badger by owl-light:
'Tis a deed of darkness.

WEBSTER.

THE next morning early there was a wonderful stir amongst the neighbors at noting a brave cavalcade enter Henry Street, and stop at John Shakspeare's door, and presently there came out the boy William, whom his mother had carefully dressed in his best apparel, grieving in her heart she

had no better to give him, and by his father was set upon an ambling palfrey, that appeared to have been brought for him. All of his acquaintance were grouped about, marvelling famously to see Will Shakspeare riding away in the midst of persons of worship with as great an air with him as he were a lord's son. They could scarce believe their eyes; but what sweet pleasure and pardonable pride were felt by the parents, who, after their respectful salutations to the good knight and his company, at their door watched their young son as long as ever they could hold him in sight, sitting his palfrey so gallantly, he was the admiration of all who saw him. P'faith! It was a thing to talk of for the rest of their days, and the good dame was never known to tire of it.

Away they went; Sir Marmaduke, his two kinsmen, Master Peregrine, Sir Johan the chaplain, and young William, and some half dozen of the knight's serving men, all on horses; and their passing along the town made the citizens come running out, and the dames were seen lifting up their babes that they might get a sight of good Sir Marmaduke. Nothing was like the respect shown him wherever he passed, and for all he had cordial greeting, and some kind word or another. Indeed, he was held in especial esteem wherever his name was known, and few there were in the whole country who knew it not, for the old knight was a gentleman of ancestry and blood, of exceeding ancient name, and of large possessions, whereof the greater part had been possessed by his family many generations. The De Largeses had also held high offices; had been famous soldiers, prelates, judges, and the like honorable persons, and had ever been known for a fair name and an open hand. The present possessor appeared to have inherited all the good qualities of his ancestors; and though he was called by no higher title than good Sir Marmaduke, I doubt hugely any prouder title could have become him better. He had never been known to be in a passion; and though ever inclined for a jest, his mirth had no offence in it at any time. There sat he as stout of limb as of heart, on a noble grey horse, sleek-coated and well limbed, ever and anon patting his graceful neck with some commendable speech, which the poor brute beast took as proudly as though he knew the value of such behavior from so respected a quarter.

On each side of him rode his kinsmen in all the bravery of the times. They had gone to the wars in their youth, and though still scarce upon manhood, Sir Valentine being but twenty, and his cousin Sir Regi-

nald five years his senior, had shown such valor against the enemy that they had received knighthood. The first was full of fine chivalrous notions, as became his soldiery; and would have dared all manner of great dangers to have gained the kind opinions of fair ladies, as became his manhood. Of the inestimable sweet pleasures of love could he think by the hour together; and when he took to his gittern, doubtless it was to breathe forth some soft lay learned of him in France of the gallants there. Yet of a most honorable heart was he, as became a true lover; and his rapier was ready to leap out of its scabbard at the bruit of any wrong done to any woman. He was of a clear transparent skin, whereon the delicate moustache had already come to some conspicuousness, and the sharp outline of each fair feature had such fineness as was exquisite to behold. Eyes had he in color like unto a bright sky in harvest time, and his hair was of a rich soft brown, that grew in waving folds over all his head and neck.

Sir Reginald was more manly-looking; darker in complexion, hair, and beard; less delicate in his notions; more free in his speech; and was as ready for loving any pretty woman, yet did so with an indiscriminateness which the other never affected. Both were strict friends, as they had proved in many a time of need in the hour of battle, and both were alike honorably disposed, and of unblemished reputations. These two young gentlemen rode their palfreys like gallants, putting them to their prettiest paces one against the other, and ever and anon turning round their handsome cheerful faces, with one hand holding the back of the saddle, and the other reigning up their gamesome steeds to see how their sport was relished by their kinsman, who it may well be believed took it very pleasantly, for he was ever an encourager of any innocent pastime that served to make more happy the passing hour.

Behind them, a little way, rode Sir Johan, the chaplain, who would sometimes jog on alongside of his good patron, discoursing very soberly concerning how bountiful Providence had been to the surrounding country, seasoning his speech with such learning as did not savor of pedantry. For all this he was not indifferent to a jest on any proper occasion. Right well could he laugh at one himself, and with as much aptness furnish one for his company. Indeed, he was one of those rare divines who take upon them to think that whatsoever good thing may be met with, is provided for our especial enjoyment, and that to dislike them argueth utter

ignorance, a wonderful lack of discretion, and a most unwarrantable and absolute ingratitude. Therefore Sir Johan was never seen with a long face and a miserable preaching. His orthodoxy was evidently of a most comfortable sort. It agreed with him exceedingly, and sat on his round cheeks after a fashion that must have been wonderfully enticing to all wretched fosterers of schism and heresy. Yet was he no Sir Nathaniel, but his very opposite. It is true he would eat and drink heartily at all reasonable hours; but then he never forgot to give as hearty thanks, and always conducted himself on such occasions with a creditable decency the other was far from showing. Nothing was like the vigor of his piety after he had enjoyed himself to his heart's content; and the eloquence, the learning, and the zealotness with which he would then dilate upon the marvellous goodness of Providence, carried conviction to all hearers. His scholarship would have become a bishop, though he was nothing but a poor master of arts; nevertheless, he was content with his station, and like a wise man enjoyed to the full whatever honest pleasures it brought within his reach.

By his side usually rode Master Peregrine, in an antique suit that might have belonged to his grandfather; in his figure an admirable contrast to the full proportions of the worthy chaplain; and he talked to the latter, or to the boy riding between them, when he could not get the other as a listener, as if he could never tire at it, of old books and ballads, their histories, contents, character, form and complexion. Indeed, he seemed familiar with everything that had been printed since the invention of the art. The very talk of a rare book would put him into a rapture, and a ballad that was not to be met with he would think more precious than gold. Then he would speak in such choice terms of Chaucer, and Gower, and Wyatt, and Surrey, and a many others, as though none could be of so great account; but when he got to the speaking of ballads, nought could exceed the delectable manner in which he dilated upon them, in especial of such as were of a by-gone age.

William Shakspeare, as he rode between these two last, learned more of books than he had known all his days before. Nothing could be so pleasant to him as such discourse. He listened with such earnestness as was the admiration of his companions, and asked questions so to the purpose, that they were never indisposed to answer him. More and more delighted was he to hear such famous books might be met with as

those notable classic authors, both Greeks and Latins, Sir Johan spoke so learnedly on, and those exquisite sweet poets and romancers Master Peregrine mentioned so lovingly; and he was quite in an ecstasy when they promised to make him better acquainted with their worth at such times as he chose to visit them at Sir Marmaduke's mansion. So rode he along in his neat suit of frolic green, as much at his ease as any of the company, till he was called upon to furnish their entertainment, as had been designed; and then unfolded his store of ballads, and Master Peregrine assisted him with such particulars of their history as had come to his knowledge, that all allowed so proper a companion for a journey they could never have met with.

On they proceeded in this orderly manner till they came to the town of Long Ichington, some seven miles distant, where my Lord of Leicester had erected a tent of such capaciousness and grandeur, never was seen the like; and here it was intended to give her Majesty a truly magnificent banquet, previous to her departure to his Lordship's famous Castle of Kenilworth she was coming to honor with a visit. Now it should be known to all, the Earl of Leicester was in especial favor of the Queen, his mistress. No man more so; and as her Majesty in one of her progresses at that time, had given him assurance she would do him such honor as to make his castle her residence for some little while, he had busied himself with prodigious expenses to make becoming preparations. This visit of the Queen engrossed the public talk, and as a knowledge of the splendor of its accompaniments got abroad, the inhabitants of the adjacent neighborhood became the more impatient to behold them. As for my Lord of Leicester, he was diversely reported; some asserting there was not his like for a prodigal disposition; and others, though they cautiously mentioned the matter, spoke of him as one who held no discipline over his passions, save before those who could punish him for his misdoings; and that he scrupled not to use his great power to the furthering of any great wickedness he had a mind to.

Be this as it may, our young traveller and his worshipful company, after seeing all at this town they could get a sight of, departed towards the evening, with her Majesty and an immense concourse of her royal subjects, to the Castle of Kenilworth. There, at her first entrance, was beheld a floating island on a pool, made bright with a many torches, whereon sat the lady of the lake with two nymphs, who, in very choice verse, gave her

Highness a famous account of the history of that building and its owners. Close by was a Triton riding on a mermaid, at least some eighteen feet in length, and also Arion on a dolphin. The Queen passed over a stately bridge, in the base court, on each side of which, upon tall columns, were placed a store of all manner of delectable gifts, supposed to come from the Gods, such as a cage of wild-fowl from Sylvanus, sundry sorts of fruits from Pomona, great heaps of corn from Ceres, vessels of choice wine from Bacchus, divers kinds of sea-fish from Neptune, warlike appointments from Mars, and instruments of music from Phœbus: which rare conceit was much relished of all, and shouts rent the air as her Highness took note of them.

All this afforded wonderful entertainment to William Shakspeare; but his marvel became the greater, when he beheld the infinite variety of such things which met him at every turn. He could never tire of admiring the rare beauty of that stately castle carved out of the hard quarry, the magnificence of such of the chambers as his companions got him access to; and the ravishing beauty of the garden, with its bowers, alleys, obelisks, spheres, white bears, with the ragged staff, the armorial bearings of the lordly owner, exquisite flowers, and delicious fruits, that met him go which way he would. Again was he in a great pleasure at sight of a cage of some twenty feet, the outside garnished with all manner of shining stones, the inside decked with fresh holly trees, and furnished with cavernous places, where a multitudinous collection of foreign birds of all parts had been collected; and, also, at beholding the grand fountain in fashion of a column made of two athelets, back to back, supporting a huge bowl, which by means of certain pipes, did distil continual streams of water running, where a plenty of lively fishes were disporting of themselves, along side of which were Neptune, with his trident and sea-horses; Thetis, in her chariot and dolphins; Triton, in company with his fishes; Proteus, herding of his sea bulls; and other of the like famous emblems, set in eight different compartments, with admirable sculpture of waves, shells, and huge monsters of the deep, with the ragged staff in fair white marble at top, and gates of massy silver for entrance.

But the sports that were then and there enacted for the Queen's pastime, none could have so relished as did he, especially the chase with the savage man, clad in ivy, and his company of satyrs; the bear-bait-

ings and the fire-works, the Italian tumblers the festival of the brideale, and the games of running at the quintain and morrice dancing. Beside which, to his great diversion, he witnessed the Coventry men playing the old play of Hock Tuesday, representing in a sort of tilting match, and in dumb show, the defeat of the Danes by the English, in the time of King Etheldred, the which so pleased her Majesty, that she bestowed on the players two bucks, to make good cheer with, and five marks in money, to garnish the feast; and after supper, the same evening, he was taken into the castle, to see a play of a higher sort played by men better approved in their art, that was then writ, and played for her Majesty's particular delectation; and though it lasted two long hours, he was so enamored of the manner in which it was set forth, he would have been glad enough to have stayed all night, had they not come to an ending.

All this, and wonderful deal more of splendor, pageantry, and pastime, was continued in infinite variety for nineteen days, with such prodigal feasting and rejoicing as none had previously been acquainted with; and the entire of it good Sir Marmaduke took care his young companion should see, during which he had him as well lodged, and as carefully provided, as if he had been his own son, he was so well pleased with him; and either he, Master Peregrine or Sir Johan, explained the character and purport of such things as he knew not of, so that he reaped both pleasure and profit wherever he went. Every thing was to him so new and strange, that he was kept in a continual state of pleasurable excitement he had never known all his life before—even the choice excellence of Gammer Gurton's Needle was eclipsed by the singular fine recreation he was then enjoying.

It did sometimes happen that although he strove all he could to keep with his company, they would get separated in the throng, and then he would have a great to do to find them again; and once after the old knight had promised he would take him to see her Majesty, of whom he had not as yet got a sight, because of the crowd of nobles that were ever around her, a sudden press of persons going in a contrary direction set them so far asunder, that in a few minutes the boy found himself in a place where there were many turnings, of which it was impossible to say which might be the one his friends had taken. Believing he was not like to gain the required knowledge by asking, where such a multitude of strange persons were assembled, he chose a path with

the determination of seeking all ways till he found the right one. He wandered up and down the green allies, greatly admiring the deliciously various trees, bedecked with apples, pears, and ripe cherries, the beds of blushing strawberries, and the plots of fragrant herbs and flowers, which cast beauty and sweetness wherever he walked, yet of his friends saw he not the slightest sign; indeed, he had gone so far he at last met with no person of any kind. Getting to be somewhat bewildered at searching so long with such small profit, upon turning round a corner he came suddenly upon a lady and gentleman, with a grand company at some distance behind. The gentleman was most gorgeously apparelled. Nothing could be so costly as the rich satin embroidered with gold and jewels that formed his cloak, save the delicate fabric of his doublet, wherein the same glorious magnificence was apparent. A massy gold chain of a curious fashion, hung over his breast—gems of price glittered on the handle of his dagger—his sword seemed wrought with the like preciousness—his hose were of the delicatest pink silk, woven with silver threads all over the upper part of the leg where they joined the trunks, which were of crimson and orange color prettily slashed and richly embroidered like the sleeves of the doublet. The rest of his appointments corresponded with what hath been already described, and being of a fine make and somewhat handsome countenance, they became him infinitely. He appeared to be playing the gallant to his fair companion, for there was an air of exceeding deep homage and admiration in the looks with which he regarded her.

The lady was attired in a full robe of white satin ornamented with rosettes in great number,—in the midst of which was a pearl in every one,—trimmed with the richest lace. A ruff of lace still more costly lay in folds upon her neck, surmounted by wings of stiffened lawn, set all round with pearls. Her hair was combed from the forehead, and pearls of a very large size set in it, with other pearls equally precious; but pearls appeared to be a favorite ornament, for besides what have been mentioned, they were in her ears,—they were round her neck, and upon her bosom,—a long string of them hung down to her stomacher,—and they were worked into the material of her dress wherever there was place for them. She was of a fair complexion, well featured, though she could not be called in her youth, of an agreeable aspect, and of an excellent stately deportment, and appeared to be lis-

tening with singular satisfaction to what fell from the gallant at her side.

"What ho, my young master, what seekest thou?" exclaimed she, upon noticing of William Shakspeare standing looking at the two, as if so dazzled with the brave show they made, he knew not at first whether to turn back or go on; but believing them to be persons of worship, had taken off his hat, and stood respectfully to let them pass.

"An' it please you I have lost my way," cried he. "I have been forced to part from my friends, by reason of the great crowd, and should I not overtake them soon, perchance I may miss seeing the Queen, the which famous sight they were proceeding to when I was forced away from them."

"Hast never seen the Queen?" inquired the lady seemingly charmed with the ingenuousness of the boy's manner.

"No, indeed, I have not, by reason of the throng about her," answered he. "But I should be right glad to see her, for never yet have I seen a Queen of any kind, and I have heard say our Queen Elizabeth is a most gracious lady." At hearing this the lady looked at her companion, and he at her with a peculiar smile, doubtless of some pleasant manner.

"And suppose I show thee Queen Elizabeth, my little master, what wouldst say to her?" asked she.

"Nay, I would say naught of mine own accord," said the other, "as methinks it might savor of a too great boldness in me; but asked she of me any question, I would with all proper courtesy answer as I best could,—and doubt not I would thank you heartily for affording me so brave a sight."

"By my troth, well said!" exclaimed the lady, as if in an excellent satisfaction. "What say you, my Lord of Leicester, shall we show this youngster, that speaks so prettily, what he has such huge desire to see?" added she, turning with an arch look to her gallant.

"O' my life, to my thinking he deserveth no less," replied the nobleman.

"An' it please you," said William Shakspeare respectfully, "it seemeth to me you must needs be the Queen herself!"

"Ha, young sir! and why dost fancy that?" exclaimed Queen Elizabeth, for as the reader may readily believe it was no other.

"Because you have so brave an appearance with you," answered he, "and look so gracious withal. Indeed, an' you are not her in truth, I should be well pleased and you were, for never saw I so excellent sweet a lady."

"Indeed! But thou playest the courtier betimes, my pretty master!" cried her majesty in an admirable good humor.

"And the varlet doth it so gracefully!" added my Lord of Leicester, who seemed to be as much taken with him as was his royal mistress.

"Here is a remembrance for thee," said the queen, giving him a gold piece out of her purse; "I do applaud thy wit in having made so notable a discovery; and doubt not, if thou goest on as well as thou hast commenced, thou and fortune will shake hands anon!"

Then calling to some of those her officers who were behind her, her majesty gave the boy to them with strict charge to seek out his friends, and deliver him to them safely; but it so happened he had not proceeded far in such custody, when he met them; and all were in some marvel to hear what strange adventure he had fallen into.

It was getting towards eve of the same day, when two persons stood close under the terrace that lay along the castle. One was closely muffled up, and endeavoring all he could to hide his face and person from observation, and he kept continually turning of his eyes in every direction to note if any were watching, whilst he spoke in a low voice to his companion. The other was also cloaked, but seemed more intent upon hearkening to the discourse of his associate than to any other matter.

"Art sure of her person?" asked the first in a low whisper.

"I marked her well, my lord," answered the other in the same subdued voice; "O' my life, never saw I so exquisite fair a creature!"

"Indeed she is of ravishing perfections—a very angel in the bud!" exclaimed his companion in a fervent ecstasy. "Fresh in youth and perfect in beauty! in brief, I have never seen her peer in all my experience. Do as I would have thee, thy fortune's made."

"Count upon her as your own, my good lord."

"But be cautious, on your life."

"Be assured, in subtlety I will beat the cunningest fox that ever robbed hen-roost."

"Away! I cannot stay another minute, or my absence will be marked." Whereupon both glided different ways in the shadow, and were no more visible.

Among the company the fame of these princely pleasures had attracted to Kenilworth, were Sir Thomas Lucy and his good dame, who had brought with them, as an attendant to the latter, no other than their

pretty foundling, the gentle Mabel, now grown to be that indefinable delicate example of feminine graces that lieth betwixt girlhood and womanhood. Under the careful instruction of her patroness, she had been well schooled in all such learning as was proper for a young person of such humble fortunes; but of her own natural well-disposedness she acquired such wisdom as would have fitted her had she come of the noblest families. Of her parents none knew a syllable; and Dame Lucy fancying none but mean persons could behave so meanly as to desert their child, had brought her up in such fashion as showed she considered her origin to be of the humblest, intending her for a servant, and ever attempting to impress on her mind a humility corresponding with one meant for so pitiful a condition. However, having resolved she should go to Kenilworth in their company the good Dame had taken care her attire should be of a better sort than what she usually wore, never failing the whilst she gave them for her wearing, to accompany them with a notable fine homily upon the wickedness of poor girls seeking to put on them such apparelling as was above their station.

Mabel was that evening standing between her elderly companions beholding the fireworks. There was a huge crowd a little way before her. A strange gallant very courteously directed the attention of the knight and his lady to what was worthiest of notice, and in a very friendly manner gave them intelligence of what was going to be done, at what cost it had been made, and by whose skilfulness it was constructed; to the which, Sir Thomas Lucy in especial, gave famous attention, entering cheerfully into the discourse, and striving to appear as familiar with the matter as his instructor.

"I warrant you!" exclaimed he; "methinks I ought to know something of such things. Ay, marry, I have been as familiar with them as am I with my hand."

"As I live, I took you to be some learned gentleman when I had first sight of you," cried the stranger, with an appearance of monstrous respect; "you have it in your face, sir; indeed your look savoreth so much of sagacity that none can mistake it. Doubtless you are some great Doctor?"

"O' my word, but a simple knight o' the shire, good sir," replied the other in a famous satisfaction.

"And a justice of peace, Sir Thomas," added Dame Lucy, anxious her husband's greatness should not be imperfectly known.

"I would have sworn it!" exclaimed their companion.

"By'r Lady now, is it so visible?" cried the other, as much astonished as gratified.

"But, as I was about saying, when I was at college I was wonderfully given to the study of chemicals and alchemy; ay, to such extreme that I make no manner of doubt I should have got at the philosopher's stone had I kept at my experiments long enough."

"Of that I am assured," observed the stranger.

"But my chief pleasure was in the making of strange fires that would burn of all colors," continued the knight. "These I learned of a famous clerk, who was studying chemicals, and was considered more apt at it than any of his time."

"A very Friar Bacon, doubtless, Sir Thomas," said his companion.

"Marry, yes, that was he," replied the justice.

"Now, I was ever a letting off my fires, to the terror of all simple people, who could not fancy they were of this world, and marvellous proper sport had I on such occasions; for, as I live, I was such a fellow at tricks I had not my match, go where I would."

"I would I had known you then; I was just such another," exclaimed the stranger, very merrily.

"Ay, it would have done your heart good to have seen the tricks I have played," continued Sir Thomas, laughing with exceeding heartiness. "I have been as wild a colt as ever broke his tether, I promise you."

"No, indeed, have you?" cried the other, joining in his companion's mirth to some excess.

"By cock and pye, yes; and among the bona robas too," added he, in a voice and manner meant to be still more facetious, as he gave his companion a sly nudge at the elbow.

"Odds my life, Sir Thomas!" exclaimed the stranger, apparently increasing the greatness of his humor, "you were a fit companion for the Sophy."

"I was as familiar with them all as though we had been cousins," added the knight, after the same fashion. "Indeed I was so partial to these pretty ones, that if any my fellows said, 'Yonder is a kirtle,' off would I start on the instant, though I had a mile to run."

"Fie, fie, Sir Thomas!" exclaimed Dame Lucy, good humoredly; then turning to the stranger with a monstrous innocent sort of countenance, added, "Think not so ill of him, good sir, I pray you, for I have known him this thirty year and more, and he hath never done ought of the kind, I'll warrant."

"I doubt it not, believe me," replied the

other, with more sincerity than he chose should be known. "But if it please you to come a little more to this side," said he, with exceeding courteousness, "You shall behold what is far beyond what you have already seen."

"We will, and thank you," answered Sir Thomas, eagerly, and he with Dame Lucy, presently moved in that direction.

In the meanwhile, another courteous gentleman was paying similar attentions to the fair Mabel, who received them in a thankful spirit, as she ever did any appearance of kindness from another. He told her the wonders of the castle—the great power and princely magnificence of the possessor—what famous noble lords and fair ladies were of the company, and the unparalleled preciousness of the jeweled silks and velvets that were of their wearing; and he took care to season all with some delicate flattery or another, well suited to win the ear of one of her youth and inexperience.

"Indeed these nobles have a fine time of it, methinks," said her companion. "They have everything that heart can wish for, at their command; and any fair creature who is so fortunate as to win the love of such, cannot help knowing that extreme happiness few have any notion of. Dost not think women so fortunate are greatly to be envied, sweetest?"

"Doubtless, honorable sir, if they be worthy," replied Mabel.

"Crowds of servants come at their command," continued the stranger, more earnestly. "Whatever they can fancy, let it be of ever such cost, is brought to them ere they can well say they want it—the exquisite sweet music fills the air around them day and night—all manner of ravishing perfumes of flowers and herbs and odoriferous gums, enrich the atmosphere they breathe; and he whose princely nature they have so bound in their chains as to hold him prisoner to their admirable lustrous eyes, is ever at their will, glorifying them with his praise, deifying them with his devotion, and making every hour of their lives redolent with the unutterable ecstasies of his sovereign and most absolute affections. Dost not think such women infinitely fortunate?"

"I know not how they could help being so, were they well disposed," answered the founding.

"Just so, sweetest one," observed the gallant. "Now, supposing such thing as this should happen;—some such noble person as I have described—the equal of the proudest—the master of the wealthiest, getting sight of your most absolute graces—"

"What, I?" exclaimed Mabel, in a famous astonishment.

"And straightway falling enamored of the bright perfections of your spotless nature," continued he; "his princely heart thrilling with the divinest sensations, should be in a feverish impatience to cast his greatness at your feet, and all out of love for such inestimable choice beauty of mind and feature, should be ready to fall out with life, if by chance you deny him the happiness he would find in your inestimable company."

"Surely, you are jesting, good sir," observed his fair companion. "I know not of such things as you speak of. Indeed, I am so humble a person, none such as you have said, would ever trouble themselves about me for a single moment; nevertheless I thank you kindly for your good opinion of me, and should be right glad to possess any merit that would make me deserve it better than I do."

"That cannot be, o' my life, excellent creature?" replied the gallant, with a seeming fervor. "'Tis your too great modesty that preventeth you from seeing your own notable divine excellencies."

"Indeed you think too well of me—I have no sign of any such thing," said Mabel; her truly unassuming nature shrinking from the flattery; then looking round, for the first time observed that Sir Thomas and Dame Lucy were nowhere near her.—"Alack! where can they have gone!" exclaimed she, in some to do. "They will be exceeding angry I took not better heed to keep close to them wherever they went, as they told me."

"Speak you of your friends, sweetest?" inquired the other, in an indifferent manner. "I saw them myself not a moment since, moving round this way. If you will allow of my protection, I will take care you join them so soon you shall not be missed at all."

"I should be loth to put you to such trouble on my account, I thank you heartily," answered his fair companion, "I will seek them myself the way you have kindly told me." Thereupon, she moved in that direction, the gallant keeping at her side, but not a sign of the knight or his good dame could they see.

"Woe is me, I have lost all sight of them!" cried Mabel, now in no little trouble of mind. "How heedless I must have been to have let them go away without my knowing it."

"Surely there they are yonder!" exclaimed the stranger, pointing to two figures dimly discerned at the top of one of the green alleys, walking slowly away.

"Indeed they have some likeness to them,"

she replied, yet seeming to hesitate about their identity.

"They cannot be any other, I would swear it," said the gallant, with monstrous earnestness; "see you not the knight's very doublet? nay, an' you do not make some speed, they will turn the corner, and mayhap you may lose sight of them altogether." Thereupon, Mabel, without another word, tripped lightly along the path—her companion still keeping close to her side—and when they got to the top they beheld the two persons they had seen turning round a corner into an alley beyond; at the sight of which the poor foundling started off again in great anxiety to overtake them, but with no better success; for however fast she ran, as she got to the end of one path, the figures were seen turning round at the end of another, and so it continued for such a time she would have given up the pursuit in despair, had not the gallant kept encouraging her to proceed. At last, when she was nigh exhausted with her exertions, and in extreme discomfort, because now she saw no appearance whatever of those she took to be the knight and his lady, on a sudden she heard a loud whistle behind her, that appeared to come from her companion—the which it did beyond all contradiction, for he had that moment put a whistle to his mouth—and ere she could think what was the meaning of such strange behavior, two or three stout fellows rushed from a grove of trees close at hand, and despite of a sharp scream she gave, threw a large cloak over her, in the which she was muffled up in a minute, and borne helplessly along.

"Never was hawk lured so cleverly," said the gallant, in evident gratification at the complete success of his villainous scheme.

"She is now hooded, and must to her mews with what speed we can. Slight!" here sharply exclaimed he, seemingly in a very absolute vexation; "what pestilent interruption is this? But they are but two, so haste, for your lives, we can give them work enough, prove they for meddling."

It so happened that Sir Valentine and his friend were together in an adjoining walk, when they heard the whistle, and the scream following close upon it; their rapiers were out in an instant, and they were just in time to see a female muffled up and borne away. This brought them to the spot presently.—Two of the villains carried Mabel, and were making off, whilst their companions were engaged with the young knights, who were using their weapons briskly with each an opponent; but suddenly coming to the rest

of Sir Valentine's party, led by Sir Marmaduke, who had plucked out his trusty rapier, the moment he heard the clashing of blades, his imposing appearance struck a panic amongst them. The two fellows dropped their burthen, without caring to make his acquaintance, and, with the rest, made off in different directions.

It was difficult to say which was most affected with the unusual loveliness of the gentle Mabel, Sir Valentine or Sir Reginald, as they disengaged her from her unwelcome covering, whilst the others assured her of her perfect safety. They were dumb with excess of admiration. Nothing they had seen or imagined came in any way like the exquisite innocence and faultless loveliness of her features. She seemed to them to be some fair spirit of a better world, such as ancient poets have described haunting clear streams and mossy caves, and the deep hollows of the emerald woods, by such names as sylphs, dryades, and the like. Woman she could scarce be styled, she looked so young, and yet each was loath she should be called any other name, believing nothing was so worthy of love and reverence. As for the poor foundling, she was in some confusion to be so gazed upon by strangers; she had not yet recovered from the surprise and fear she had been put to by the treachery of her late companion, and gazed about her, the prettiest picture of amazement that had ever been witnessed. Even the antiquarian stared through his spectacles at her so earnestly as he had at the ancientest ballad that had fallen into his hands; and William Shakspeare, boy as he was, appeared as though there was a power in her admirable beauty he felt all through his nature, yet with a confused sense of its particular meaning, that would take no definite interpretation. It is here only necessary to add that the young and graceful creature found every possible attention and respect from those in whose company she had so fortunately fallen. A search was quickly commenced for the knight and his lady, and after some trouble, taken of the young knights as the sweetest pleasure they had ever enjoyed, she was restored to them, but not without such thanks from her, as, for the gentle, sweet graciousness with which they were accompanied, never left their memories from that time forward. As for William Shakspeare, he returned to his loving parents, surprising them greatly with the goodly store of gifts he would needs pour into his mother's lap, which had been bestowed upon him by his friends; but putting them in a still greater wonder at his marvellous relations of what

strange adventures he had had, and famous sights he had beheld, since he had been away.

CHAPTER XI.

His browny locks did hang in crooked curls,
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls.
His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongued he was and therefore free.

SHAKSPEARE.

For him was lever han at his beddes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.

CHAUCER.

Oh, ye gods,
Give me a worthy patience! Have I stood
Naked, alone, the shock of many fortunes!
Have I seen mischiefs numberless and mighty
Grow like a sea upon me? Have I taken
Danger as stern as death into my bosom,
And laughed upon it, made it but a mirth,
And flung it by. * * * Do I
Bear all this bravely, and must sink at last
Under a woman's falsehood!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"NAY, I cannot abide these new-fangled novelties," observed Master Peregrine, who with the others of the squire's company, with William Shakspeare in the midst, appeared to be examining of certain shelves of books that were in an antique oak chamber in Sir Marmaduke's mansion. "They be but for the delighting of dainty ears, and such whose fantasies are only to be tickled with fine filed phrases. I like not the boy should have such poor reading."

"I assure you the *Mirror of Magistrates* is in excellent repute of all men," said Sir Reginald. "It is a very admirable fine poem, or series of legends, relating the falls of the unfortunate princes of this land, first originating with my Lord Sackville, and now carried on by divers authors of reputation."

"Nay, I have here one that he will more approve of," cried Sir Valentine, as he held a volume in his hand that looked quite new. "It is called the *Paradise of Daynty Devises*, aptly furnished with sundry pithie and learned inventions, devised and written for the most part by Master Edwards, sometime of her Majesties chappel; the rest by sundry learned gentlemen of honour and worshippe. It is full of delectable poems, I promise you, that are read and hugely admired by all persons of quality."

"I doubt not," said the chaplain, who had also a book in his hand. "But methinks I have something here far more fitting, of the ingenious Master Tuberville, being no other than the heroical epistles of the learned poet Publius Ovidius Naso, with Aulus Sabinus' answers to certaine of the same, a very famous and proper classic."

"What have we here?" cried the old knight, examining a volume he had just taken off the shelf. "A hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie, as I live, and very profitable reading doubtless."

"Pish, what wants he with books of such a sort?" inquired Master Peregrine impatiently, as he regarded with particular satisfaction a huge folio from the same place. "This is such as he will like most. O' my word, it is a treasure beyond all price. This great rarity is entitled, *A book of the noble Hystories of Kynge Arthur*, and of certeyn of his Knyghtes," and is from Caxton's own press, and bears the date anno 1485. O what a jewel!—O what a pearl of price!—In good fay, I can scarce take my eyes off such an inestimable rare volume."

William Shakspeare turned his intelligent eyes from one to another, as each recommended his particular book, almost puzzled which of these goodly volumes he should choose first, but in a wonderful impatience to be at one of them.

"Methinks, after all, 'twill be best to let him make his own choice," observed Sir Marmaduke. "What say you, young sir," said he to him. "Which of all these books think you the properest for your reading?"

"An' it please your worship," replied William, with much simplicity, "I must needs read them all before I can say which is best, with any justice."

"E'en do so, then, if it likes you," exclaimed the old knight, laughing heartily with the rest. "There are they—you are welcome to their perusal come when you will. But there is one volume I would have you take great note of, and that is called *The Gentleman's Academie*, or the *Booke of St. Albans*, writ by one Juliana Barnes, containing the choicest accounts of hawking, hunting, armorie, I have met with anywhere."

"Truly, 'tis a most ravishing work!" said Master Peregrine. "A notable rare specimen of the types of Wynkyn de Worde. But if you be for grave reading, choose you *The Seven Wise Masters*. If you are for mirth, pitch upon *The Hundred Merry Tales*—if for the reading of other light tales, nought will so well serve your turn as *The Palace of Pleasure*. Take you to romances.

you may find exquisite diversion in Amadis of Gaul, Palmerin of England, Huon of Bordeaux, Sir Bevis of Southampton, Sir Guy of Warwick, The Seven Champions, Valentyne and Orson, The Squire of Low Degree, The Knight of Courtesie, and the Lady Faguel, The Castle of Ladies, and a hundred others of equal great merit: but if you are for ballads, my young master, exquisite choice ballads and songs of old time, look you out for the Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, Queen Dido, Fortune my Foe, Pepper is Black, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Clouesly, Robin Hood and the Pindar of Wakefield, and others out of all number of every kind, subject, and quality, which are here ready for your reading."

"All such are well enough in their way," observed Sir Johan. "But if he take to reading of the classics, all other reading whatsoever advanceth him not a whit in his education. What can he learn of ancient history, save out of Herodotus, Thucydes, Zenophon, Titus Livius, Tacitus, and Cæsar; where in Philosophy can he have such guides as Aristotle, Socrates, Epicurus, Euclid, that famous master of figures; Pliny, that curious observer of nature, that profound expounder of surgicals. In poetry what is like unto the works of Homer, Pindar, Anacreon, Virgil, Horace, or Ovid? And in eloquence, what can come in any way near unto Demosthenes, or Cicero? Truly then the classics should be before all other books, for the study of any young person, and so it will be found in all colleges and schools throughout Christendom."

These advocates for modern and ancient learning, might have waxed warm in their dispute, had they been allowed, and the two young knights also took part in it in praise of chivalrous tales, Italian sonnets, and French lays and romances; but Sir Marmaduke good humoredly put an end to the argument by telling them the dinner bell was a ringing, which caused them to forget their books awhile, and look to their appetites.

Thus it will be seen that William Shakspeare was bountifully provided for in all manner of learning, and it may well be believed he was not long in availing himself of the treasures so liberally placed at his disposal. All spare time he could get was passed in the old knight's library, where he kept like a bird in a granary, feeding on the plenteous store in a most grateful spirit, and with no desire to move from such excellent neighborhood. But he was rarely left alone for any great period, for Sir Marmaduke and his friends were too well pleased with his quickness of apprehension and untiring in-

dustry, not to do all in their power to assist the studies of so promising a scholar; therefore he was sure to have with either the old knight himself, who would readily go over with him any creditable book of legends, or ancient customs and sports; or his chaplain, who took huge pains he should not be indifferent to the treasures of classic lore, never forgetting by the by to put in on an occasion, some most moving discourse on the goodness of Providence, and explain the chief points of all moral doctrine. Then came Master Perregrine ready to cuddle him with delight, should he find him intent upon some worm eaten black letter folio, or a bundle of old ballads, and he would not rest till he had made his pupil familiar with whatsoever concerning of them he thought worthy of knowing—and at another time he would be visited by the two young knights with whom he was in particular esteem, and they were ever striving to possess him with the notion that the gallantest accomplishments were the most worthy of study, especially of the Italian tongue, and that nought was like unto the sweetness of Petrarch, the pleasantry of Boccacio, or the grandeur of Dante, Tasso and Ariosto.

From this it is evident on the face of, that none could have a fairer schooling than our young scholar. Indeed, he now gained more knowledge in a day than he could have had of that pedantic, poor ignoramus, his schoolmaster, all his life; and it was the marvel of all to notice how famously he got on in his learning. There appeared to be nothing he could not give a reason for, or description of, for he took infinite trouble by asking questions of all sorts of people, as well as by conning of every book in Sir Marmaduke's library, to remain ignorant of as little as possible. Hour after hour hath he passed at a time over some pithy book, till his head would ache with the intentness with which he would give his mind to the matter of it—then away he went like a wild buck of the forest, broke loose from confinement, over the green fields and through the nutty woods, hither and thither everywhere, drinking within his nostrils, choked with the closeness of musty volumes, the sweet pure air freshened with the cool breeze—and at his aching eyes, tired of the sameness of so much paper and print, taking in with as greedy a draught the pleasant greenness of the teeming soil, and the delicate soft blue of the expanding heavens.

Some how or another it happened, that he often found himself thinking of the beautiful fair creature he had seen rescued by his friends, from the hands of villains, when he

was enjoying the princely pleasures of Kenilworth. In his solitary musings, whereof after any deep study, he had of late taken to, her radiant features would suddenly glide into his youthful mind, like as a sudden burst of sunshine pierceth the leafy branches of a young tree; and all his thoughts took a character of such brightness on the instant, as showed there was some power of brilliancy in her image that made resplendent its whole neighborhood. This to him was both new and strange. The forms of beauty of which he had had experience, and they were by no means few, had given him delight—but here was something presented to him of a totally different character—of a most singular admirable loveliness; and the pleasure he derived from its observation he felt to be of a far more exquisite sort than he had known heretofore. The varied dyes of the delicatest flowers peeping from their vernal coverts—the tall monarchs of the forests, bending their haughty heads to the rude wind—the soft mingling of field and wood, hill, stream and valley, bathed in their mellow tints, that made up the ravishing fair landscape—the glorious show of unsurpassed magnificence, visible at the sun's rising and going down, which clothed the skies, like an oriental conqueror, in a garment of purple and gold, and the more graceful splendor of the quiet night, when earth's unrivalled roof seems as though carved all about with the likeness of a goodly almond tree, as 'tis seen at eve, with its verdure deepening into a dark blue, spread over in every part with myriads of silvery blossoms—he could enjoy with such huge zest as hearts attuned to sympathy with the beautiful can alone have knowledge of; but in the outward lineaments of this novel sign of the presence of nature's unrivalled handiwork, there appeared such moving graces, that plainly showed the masterpiece confessed; and he had some glimpses, in the delicious raptures which an increasing familiarity with his mental perception of the beautiful promised him, of that marvellous deep meaning which lieth most manifestly in the choicest and perfectest shape in which our bountiful mother hath given it a dwelling.

Let none feel incredulous of what is here put down. Though still in years apparent, but of an unripe boyhood, the child had in him the greatness of the man in embryo. Take you the bud, examine it narrowly, you shall find in it a miniature-tree, perfect in all its parts; or the bean—as its sides have opened to show some promise of what it will be—and behold all the characters of the plant minutely visible to your close in-

spection! Nature never varyeth from her first original type. In all things that promise a profitable increase, the power is folded up in the germ, where, despite of disadvantages, it will gradually unfold itself, till the character she hath put forth upon it is perfectly developed to all men's eyes. Could we look into the immaturity of any of those great ones, whose mental fruits have been the nourishing diet of every age that hath passed since they flourished, be sure that we should find at such early period, the very appearances and manifestations of their after perfection, as are here imperfectly described concerning of William Shakspeare. As for beauty, it is the very sunshine of the soul, without which shall the seed of greatness lie dormant as in a perpetual frost; but directly it beginneth to make itself felt, out come stem, root, and leaflet, with such goodly vigor, that in a presently the brave plant putteth out its branches so lovingly, nought can resist its progress; and lo! in a little while, what numberless rare blossoms appear, manifesting in themselves the quality by which they were created.

But our young scholar was not the only one on whom the attractions of the gentle Mabel had made a powerful impression. Sir Valentine, and his friend, oft spoke of her to each other with exceeding admiration, to which if in his company, the boy would listen with a flushed cheek and a throbbing heart, seeming to be poring over his book—but this he had as clean lost sight of for the nonce as if it and he were a hundred miles apart.

"She is, indeed, a delectable creature!" exclaimed Sir Valentine, as they three were together in the library. "She seemed a being just stepped out of some French romance, one of the virtues perchance, or better, some incomparable damsel, possessed of them all in her own fair person, who was about falling into the hands of a powerful ogre, or other monstrous villain that is a foe to chastity, when we two knights going about to redress wrong and defend oppressed innocence, each for the honor of chivalry and his liege lady, stepped up to her rescue, and by the help of our valor, quickly delivered her from her enemies."

"A most moving picture," cried Sir Reginald, laughingly; "I would give something to see it done in tapestry."

"O' my word, 'twould be a fine subject," said his friend, with some earnestness; "I doubt not, too, of especial profit to the gazer; and I would have it worked in this sort. There should be yourself, and I, your approved friend and companion in arms, giving

two of the villains furious battle; and in a little way off our brave kinsman—another famous pillar of knighthood—shall be putting to flight the other two rascals away from their expected victim, who shall be lying prostrate under a tree, where she hath been left, in a very moving tribulation. A little way from this we will have a second picture, with the villains making off in the distance—the lady now in a pretty fright and bewilderment, looking about her with Master Chaplain, Master Antiquarian, and our young scholar, as country persons natural of those parts, gazing at her with exceeding curiousness, whilst her three valiant champions shall stand, leaning on their weapons, as though they were amazed at beholding such heavenly grace in so pagan a place.”

“Never heard I so brave a limner!” exclaimed the other, in the like pleasant humor; “Why thou wouldst beat the cunningest master of the art out of the field. O’ my life, in thy hand the painted cloth would be more moving than history; and we should speedily have all lovers of true valor, instead of seeking the enemy’s encampment, studying lessons of knighthood from thy arras.”

“Well I should be right glad to know what hath become of her,” said Sir Valentine. I like not parting so quickly with so rare an acquaintance, I promise you. Nevertheless methinks ’tis marvellous such a strange person as that Sir Thomas Lucy should have so exquisite a daughter. Had he been in any way civil I would have bestowed some pains to please him, shrivelled pippin as he looks to be; but he spoke so sharply to the gentle creature, and looked at us with so crabbed an expression, that I was in haste to be quit his company; therefore I have been in perfect ignorance up to this date where she is to be found.”

“I have at least discovered the old fellow’s residence,” said Sir Reginald.

“Ha, indeed!” cried Sir Valentine, in a famous exultation. “Perdie, that is excellent news. Where doth the pagan place so fair a jewel? Tell me, I prithe, for I would impawn my heart to get but another sight of her.”

“Marry, but I think ’tis impawned already, good cousin,” observed his friend with an arch smile. “Thou seemest so monstrous eager on the matter; but not to baulk thy exceeding curiousness, for my humor jumps with it, believe me,—know that this peerless damsel hath her bower at Charlote, where the knight of despite, her father, holdeth his court.”

“To horse, for Charlote ho!” exclaimed his young companion, rising from his seat

in a merry manner, as if impatient to be gone.

“But let me advise thee of sufficient caution,” said his kinsman with an admirable mock gravity; great dangers beset thy path. Ogres, giants, basilisks, and dragons await thee on every side. Horror will cross thy steps; despair dog thy heels; revenge cometh on thy right hand, and cruelty on thy left. By my valor, sir knight, methinks thou hadst best refrain from so perilous an adventure.”

“Amor vincit omnia!” replied the other after the same pleasant fashion; and thus jesting and bantering, the two friends a few minutes after, left our young scholar—who had drunk in every word of their discourse to pursue his studies in solitude. Little more of the book before him attempted he acquaintance with for some time before and long after their leaving him. He thought, and the more he thought the more thoughtful he grew; but his thoughts were as gossamer webs hovering over a field, that catch nought but other webs of a like sort; they appeared moreover to have no purport; they went in no direct path; but proceeded over and across, around and about, always returning to the starting point,—and what should that be but the same fair creature he had seen at Kenilworth, that the gay knights had talked of in such delicate terms.

In the meanwhile, at all proper intervals, he assisted his father as far as in him lay; at other times running of errands with an alacrity and cheerfulness none could help admiring. John Shakspeare strove all that honest man could to keep his family in comfort. He would seek to do a little in his old trade of wool, and also something as a glover; but though thrift and diligence were twin companions with him at all times, the expenses of a family would often run him down at heel. Perchance, however desirous he might be to pay as he went, and no man more so, it might happen when the baker called there was no money. Mortgaging a small property brought him by his wife carried him on a little; but this could not last forever, do what he would, and it became no uncommon thing when he was ready for his dinner, to have no dinner ready for him. His neighbors were ever ready to lend him a helping hand; but having experienced their friendly feeling in some measure, he liked not letting them know he required it again, fearing to exhaust their goodness. All that our young scholar gained by friendly gifts was presented to his parents as speedily as he could: and be sure he felt more exquisite gratification in so bestowing

it, than he experienced in any other thing whatsoever; but it sometimes happened when he was at Sir Marmaduke's, or other bountiful friends, before a goodly meal, the thought that his loving parents had at that time nothing of the sort to put before them, would so move him he could not touch a morsel of anything, however tempting it might be. And as for his good mother and father, they cared more their son should keep a decent appearance, so that he might do no discredit to his company, than they heeded their own comforts.

Methinks there cannot be in nature so truly pitiful, and yet a sight so noble withal, as an honest man struggling with adversity. Note how he labors to bear up his heart against the crushing weight of his stern necessities. See his nature—a proud nature, perchance, for there is no pride like that of honesty—reduced to the mean resorts of poverty's most absolute rule. Behold the fallacious smile and abortive cheerfulness under which he would strive to hide the iron entering his soul! Want winds her serpent folds around him, and eats into his vitals; Ruin hovers over him on vulture's wings to seize him for her prey; Disgrace points at him; Shame follows on his steps; and Fear seeks to disturb the pleasant shelter of his dreams; but the honest man holds up his head like a flag upon a wreck, and when that rude villain Death would take the wall of him, doffs his beaver with a natural dignity mere gallantry can have no example of.

Such it was with John Shakspeare. He did his best, but his best failed. He put forth all his strength, but all his strength was insufficient. The brand of poverty appeared to have marked him for her own; but worse than that to him, he saw his wife pining, and his children wanting nourishment. In such a state of things it might have been thought that he would have made application to some of the persons of worship in his neighborhood, whose characters were a guarantee it would not have been made in vain; but worthy persons when they fall to those poor shifts as render such an act necessary, are found monstrous loath to trouble the rich and powerful with their necessities. Sir Marmaduke doubtless would have very readily done him such service; but he had no intimation his assistance was required; William Shakspeare always making such an appearance, by means already spoken of, which prevented him from entertaining any suspicions his father was in any other but comfortable circumstances; and the poor

glover, however meanly off he might be, could never bring himself to hazard his son's prospects with so great a friend, by importuning of the latter with his own hapless condition.

At last, after a protracted struggle with himself on the matter, and things getting to wear a more serious aspect, he made up his mind he would venture to move his old friend John a Combe. Strange rumors had been afloat for some time concerning of this good gentleman. On a sudden he had been missed from Stratford, and after some years stay, had again returned—but oh, how altered a man! Those who saw him scarce knew him, and those whom he saw he seemed determined he would not know. It was said there were such marked lines in his pallid countenance, as though a thousand cares had ploughed their furrows in the flesh, and that when he walked abroad, which was something rare in him, he would mingle with none, greet none, be known of none—but move slowly along, with his body bent, and his eyes fixed sullenly on the ground, sometimes moving of his lips—though what fell from them none could say. It was also reported that he had become an usurer—lending of his money at exorbitant charges, and being exceeding strict in forcing the payment. Not a word of this would John Shakspeare believe. What, that noble heart become a selfish solitary, he had known of so social a spirit—or that generous nature debase itself with avarice, he had seen risking the horriest death out of pure philanthropy! It was clean impossible. They must most grossly belie him who reported of him any such meanness. So thought the poor glover of his old acquaintance, and with these thoughts he one morning took his staff in his hand and proceeded to his dwelling.

At his first entrance at the gate, John Shakspeare saw there was at least a notable change in the house once so familiar to him. Everything around and about it looked strange and desolate, and as opposite to the state in which it used to be kept, as any two things could chance to be. The fair garden that once was the pride of the place for its order and trimness, appeared now a mere heap of weeds, straggling bushes, and withered plants. The goodly trees that were wont to be so well trailed against the wall, had broke from their bindings, and lay with their straggling branches almost leafless, with the unchecked ravages of vermin and neglect. The dwelling seemed no less wretched. A broken casement, and a porch dirty and crumbling with decay, spoke how

little outward appearances were now cared for by the possessor. John Shakspeare shook his head at noting of these things. It then occurred to him that some fearful change must have taken place in John a Combe, else John a Combe's dwelling could never have come to so pitiful a condition.

The door was cautiously opened by a sour looking slovenly old dame, instead of a neat pretty handmaid, and active young serving man, that had used to have been so ready to show a visitor all proper courtesy, and after sharply interrogating him on his business, she led him through the hall—where everything spoke a similar story of indifference to all comfort and cleanliness, as did the ruined garden and delapidated porch—into a small back chamber choking with dust. Here before a heap of many papers and parchments, sat his worthy and esteemed friend Master Combe. John Shakspeare looked with greater intentness ere he would believe his own eyes. He saw before him a man he knew to be in the pride of manhood, with all the externals of decrepid age. The grey hair, the blanched cheek, and the sunken eye, could not be mistaken; but besides these unwelcome signs, there was in his aspect a mingled expression of agony and distrust, that was more moving than all. John Shakspeare's honest heart sunk within him, as he beheld this painful spectacle which exhibited the more wretchedness, by the mean habiliments in which it appeared,—for he who had used to dress in so becoming a fashion, he was admired of all, was now attired in coarse clothes and uncleanly linen, unworthy of a person even of the lowest quality.

Master Combe stared at his old friend without the slightest sign of cordiality, or even of recognition; and seemed as though he would have him say his errand without delay; whereupon his visitor though more distressed at such a moment at the condition of one he had known to be so good a man, than his own, presently gave an unvarnished tale of his losses and sufferings, and the stern necessity which had compelled him to ask a loan to afford him some present help. Master Combe sat the tale out with a stone-like indifference.

"What security hast got?" said he at last, rather sharply.

"None," replied his visitor, much pained at hearing of so unexpected a question.

"What, come to me seeking of money without security!" exclaimed Master Combe, as if in a monstrous surprise. "Dost not know I am an usurer, and dost not know usurers lend not, save on sure grounds and

profitable terms? I must have ten in the hundred, and I must have something to hold upon of such value as will ensure the safety of the loan."

"Alack, I have it not," answered John Shakspeare, marvelling the generous nature of his old companion should have taken so ill a turn. "I expected not you were so changed, else I would not have troubled you."

"Changed!" cried the other with a bitter emphasis. "Marry, yes, and a goodly change it must needs be. What, wouldst suppose I would remain all my days the generous confiding fool I have once been? Have I not given without stint—have I not endured without finching for the good of my fellows, and none ends else? Lived I not in the strong belief of the excellence of humanity, and sought all means to show I was myself a parcel of the whole? What good thing have I left undone that was in my power. Where have I failed in the exercise of an impartial benevolence? When gave I not every one his due, or kept myself back when one unjustly used required a defender?"

"Never, as I gladly testify," exclaimed his companion.

"And what hath been my profit?" inquired Master Combe, still more bitterly, as he rose from his seat in an increasing excitement; "hopes blighted, health ruined, and happiness destroyed! Look on me—see you one particle of what I was! Yet is the change without, in no comparison with that which is within. My whole nature is blasted, riven and torn up by the roots. Not a green leaf shall you find on it, search where you will. Not a sign of any goodness whatsoever. An earthquake hath trampled on me—a pestilence hath eaten up all the pure essence of my being—what is human of me is stifled, poisoned, crushed, and cast out of all likeness with humanity. I am a moving desolation—a living desert—a well that the scorching air hath left dry as a stone."

John Shakspeare looked on and listened, quite forgetful of his own wretchedness.

"See you that spider in the crack?" inquired Master Combe, suddenly taking the other by the arm.

"Ay, I see it plain," replied he, looking narrowly to the spot pointed out.

"He is spinning his web in the ruin around him," continued his companion, as if in some sort of exultation. "He means to make prey of all he can. John Shakspeare, I am intent upon a like thing," added he, sinking his voice to a mere whisper.

"Take heed of yourself, else you will find yourself in my snare. To the door with what speed you have."

John Shakspeare, so moved he scarce knew what he was about, took up his cap; but, finding it feel unusually heavy, looked in it with some narrowness, and there, to his great surprise, saw a purse of money.

"How came this here?" exclaimed he, taking it in his hand. "As I live, there was nought of the kind in my cap a moment since, when I laid it down."

"How should I know, i'faith?" cried Master Combe, sharply.

"It must needs belong to you, worthy sir, for it cannot be mine," said his companion, seeking to give him the purse.

"Marry, what new folly is this!" exclaimed the other, putting it away. "Dost think I would give thee such? Doth usurers part with their money after such fashion? Fanciest I would allow of thy spreading the rare intelligence amongst thy acquaintance, that John a Combe is as monstrous a fool as ever he was, and liketh nought so well as helping some one in his need? Go get thee gone, John Shakspeare," added he, pushing his companion to the door, "thou art honest, and must needs be a fool—thou hast no lack of virtue, therefore cannot escape being taken for a knave;" and in the next moment the door was closed upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
His battered shield, his uncontrolled crest,
And for mysake hath learned to sport and dance,
To coy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest.

SHAKSPEARE.

Take heed, sweet nymph, try not thy shaft,
Each little touch will pierce a heart;
Alas! thou know'st not Cupid's craft,
Revenge is joy, the end is smart.

DAVISON.

But what on earth can long abide in state?
Or who can him assure of happy day?
Sith morning fair may bring foul evening late,
And least mishap the most blessed alter may?
For thousand perils lie in close await,
About us daily to work our decay,
That none except a god, or God him guide,
May them avoid or remedy provide.

SPENSER.

"I THINK it exceeding improper of thee, Mabel!" exclaimed Dame Lucy, with a countenance of more than ordinary gravity, whilst she walked in the grounds appertain-

ing to her husband's mansion at Charlote, in all her pride of farthingale and headtire.

"What else could I do, I pray you, dear mistress?" said the fair creature in a deprecating tone, following of her closely. "These good gentlemen would needs speak with me, and surely there was no offence in their speech."

"O, monstrous offence! beyond all doubting," replied the dame. "Thou canst have no conception, child, what offence may be in speech without it being visible. There are meaning in words that are horrible to think of, albeit they appear of ever such innocency."

"I took it but as a mere greeting," added her companion, in some surprise at what had fallen from the other. "They were infinitely kind in their inquiries; and so courteous withal, it is hard to believe anything uncivil of them.

"Trust not to such kindness," said her mistress somewhat oracularly, "'tis a poor stale to catch woodcocks. I marvel what such fine fellows should want of so poor a person! No good, by my fay! Doubtless, would they seek to fill thee with foolish fantasies improper for thy humble station, and so turn it to their advantages. But methinks I have given them a right proper reception. I showed them such dignity of behavior as proved how little I thought of them and their fine words. They will not come here again, I'll warrant."

"Dost not think, dear mistress, 'twas marvellous good of them to rescue me from the hands of those rude persons who were for taking me away, I know not where, whilst we were at Kenilworth?"

"Nay, o' my life, I know not," replied the dame, "I cannot speak of that of which I have no certain knowledge. Perchance, if the truth should be come at, more mischief would be found in those who stayed thee, than in those who were for carrying thee off. I liked not their looks. They have a horrible suspicious appearance with them."

"I saw it not, believe me," said her young companion. "Indeed they did appear to me the noblest, kindest, honorablest young gentlemen, it hath ever been my good hap to meet."

"Tilly vally, stuff o'nonsense, child!" exclaimed Dame Lucy, with some sharpness. "Marry, how shouldst know aught concerning of honorable young gentlemen; and what dost want with such? Prithee hold thy silly prate. Thou wilt have enough to do to get thy bread with an honest name, without troubling thyself with any such improper matters. Honorable young gentle-

men, forsooth! The world must be clean topsy turvy when persons of thy quality take to such notions."

The poor foundling was silenced, and the two continued their walk without ever a word more; yet though her tongue was at rest, her thoughts were right busy. Obedient as she was, and yielding as was her nature, nothing of what her companion had said, had convinced her, the handsome gallants who had so bravely rescued her from she knew not what peril, and that, after so long a time—hearing where she lived, had gone on purpose to inquire how she had fared after her great alarm—had treated her with such extreme courteousness, were anything but truly noble gentlemen, who meant her well. Doubtless it was something new to her to be treated with delicate respect by persons of quality, as they appeared; for she was only regarded as a servant, and only associated with such, save at those times she was attending of her mistress; therefore the impression they made upon her might have been the more powerful than could have been produced under ordinary circumstances. Women in general, and especially of the younger sort, who have been used to be meanly thought of, are wonderfully grateful for any slight courtesy from a superior, and are ready to give all their hearts for such attentions, should they believe them to be sincere; and Mabel, whose gentle nature was overflowing with gratitude at any kindness, took, at the most liberal appreciation, the attentions of the two young knights.

Certes Mabel continued to think very kindly of Sir Valentine and his friend, and was famously glad she had met with them again; for ever since she had first formed their acquaintance, she had wished she might see them once more, and now she had a second time beheld them, she hoped it might chance they would again meet. She thought not one whit more of one than of the other; she felt she should desire to be well esteemed of both. In accordance with such feelings, whenever she could get away from the old dame for a walk by herself, she would direct her steps towards the spot where she had last met her brave deliverers. Mayhap it was chance which led her that way; but as it occurred every time she was for a stroll in the park, methinks it was of that order of chances which savor marvelously of design. But it so happened these walks of her's ended as they commenced. She met not those whose company she desired, and she began to think such great pleasure could never be hers again.

Some months after the interview to which

allusion hath just been made, she was returning homewards from her ordinary ramble, somewhat out of heart at her many disappointments, when, to her wonderful great exultation, she suddenly espied Sir Valentine wending his way towards her through the trees. The young knight made his greeting with all the courtesy of a true soldier, gazing with most admiring glances on the fair creature before him, who, to his thinking, had grown to be infinitely more beautiful even than when he had last had sight of her; but the truth was, she was now all smiles, gladness, and animation—happiness was beaming in her sunny glances, and pleasure basked in the soft hollows of her radiant cheek. Such sweet simplicity, such genuine truth,—so artless and unworldly a nature Sir Valentine had had no knowledge of; and he, whose truly chivalrous disposition was so ready to take on trust the admirable qualities of woman, could not fail to appreciate such excellences as he had now held in his personal acquaintance. He looked as though he could never tire of such exquisite company. His handsome smiling features spoke what absolute satisfaction he was then and there enjoying; and the longer he stayed in her bewitching presence, the less inclined appeared he to take himself away from it.

As for Mabel, nought in this world could equal the exceeding pleasantness she experienced in listening to her companion's soft mellow voice and polished delivery, describing to her such of the princely pleasures of Kenilworth she had not beheld. She entirely forgot she was a poor despised foundling, and in her fantasy accompanied her eloquent companion through all the glorious pageantries, noble banquets, and courtly recreations, that were enjoyed by the noble company at the castle, as though they had been her customary and most familiar pastimes, from the beginning of her earliest remembrances. I question she would have been as properly entertained with the reality of what she heard, as was she with their mere narration; but when the narrator digressed from his subject in any manner, to express, with winning civility, his great comfort at having been so fortunate as to have made her acquaintance—which he thought more of than could be a thousand Kenilworths—a thrill of exquisite rapture seemed to pass through her whole nature, and she would return her thanks for such estimation with a heartiness that showed clearly whence it proceeded. This continued as they remained strolling carelessly along under those shady trees, without taking the

slightest heed of time, till the thickening shadows gave them warning how long they had dallied with the hours. Then some sign of separation became manifest.

"Let me beg one favor at your hands, ere I depart from your sweet presence," said Sir Valentine, as he was still lingering by her side near the park gate.

"In truth, good sir, I would grant you anything in my poor power," answered his fair companion.

"It is but to know your name," added he.

"O' my word now, good sir, have you not known it all this time?" inquired she, as if in some little surprise. "Surely I am no other than Mabel, of whom all persons, methinks, have some knowledge."

"Mabel!" repeated the young knight, somewhat to himself as it were, yet all the time gazing on the ingenuous countenance of his fair partner, as though he was conning it for some pleasant task,—then added, with a deep expression in the words, "I will not forget it."

"But I pray you, give me knowledge of your name!" exclaimed Mabel, with a most pressing earnestness, "an' you think it not over bold in me to ask such a thing of you; for in very truth, I should be exceeding glad to know it."

"I am called Valentine de Largesse," replied he, charmed with the exquisite fashion in which the question had been put to him.

"How good a creature!" said the gentle girl to herself, as she was returning home after he had left her. "Valentine de Largesse? 'Tis a name that meaneth all honorableness and true valor, I will be bound for't."

How strange of Dame Lucy to think there could be evil intent in any such!

This was not the only meeting they had under those shady trees. Sir Valentine was too well pleased with his last interview not to desire to repeat his visit, and in consequence of his friend Sir Reginald being absent in a distant part of the country, he had such leisure as enabled him, when all other circumstances concurred, to realise his own wishes as often as he would. His behavior began imperceptibly to take upon it the character of that tender gallantry, with which it was customary among the more chivalrous sort of gentlemen, to address their sovereign lady. His homage knew no bounds—his respect was equally without limits, and his admiration, though the powerfulest of the three, was of that choice sort which is shown more in delicate actions than in a fair commodity of terms. These attentions gave the gentle Mabel a pride in herself she

had never experienced before, which increased as she grew more familiar with them. As it made progress did her simplicity diminish; and she presently took such things, albeit they had once been so new to her, as if they were what she looked for, and was properly entitled to receive.

Yet did this pride sit upon her as gracefully as it might upon the noblest lady in the land. When at her humble duties, she was no more to all appearance than a poor foundling; but after tiring of herself with such genuine taste as to make her poor apparel look more becomingly on her, than regal garments would on many others, she stood by the side of Sir Valentine receiving his devotions, with so courtly an air as made her seem quite another creature. Her step was firm, her brow erect, her carriage stately, and her look spoke of such proud happiness as a noble maiden might experience in attracting to herself the exclusive attentions of some princely gallant. At such times it was evident she had lost all knowledge of her humble fortunes. Indeed her behavior was of such a sort her companion not only had not the slightest suspicion she was of so low a station—but he more and more marvelled such unmannerly strange persons as Sir Thomas and Dame Lucy appeared to him—could have so noble a daughter. Mabel never gave the matter a thought, else, had she suspected any such thing, her ingenuous nature would have led her to undeceive him on the instant. She was gratified with his company out of all doubt, but she saw nothing beyond the present moment; and although these meetings were clandestine, and, as she had good reason for believing, against the consent of the old knight and his lady, as there appeared no offence in what she did, she could not see she had done any.

It was her good fortune during all this time to escape suspicion at home—for her well-disposedness was so familiar to them that her conduct was never inquired into, and as her great trouble and annoyance, young Lucy, was at college, she was in the enjoyment of more happiness than she had known her whole life long. Pity such felicity should be of such short endurance. But so is it ever.—Nothing is certain save uncertainty, which showeth its troublesomeness just at those times we are least prepared to put up with it. Often and often is it we see in the sweet spring-time of the year, a goodly tree almost hid beneath its innumerable fair blossoms, giving such prodigal promise of fruit as maketh the owner's heart leap with joy—a frost cometh in the

night, the blossoms are nipped, shrivelled, and cast off, and the tree remaineth with nothing but barren branches for all that season. Methinks the knowledge of this should keep the sanguine from too steadfast an expectation; but what availeth all knowledge against disposition?—a score of times shall such meet with the terriblest disappointments, and the next day shall find them hoping, trusting, and anticipating, with greater earnestness than ever. This, however, could not be said of Mabel, for she anticipated nothing; and, as hath been said, looked only upon the present moment. She was scarce of an age to trouble herself much about the future, and the extreme humility of her fortunes kept her from anything that savored of ambition. This innocency of her heart was her best buckler in this apparent lack of foresight. Proud she was it cannot be denied, but hers was the pure essence of pride, and not the dross.

As she was returning from her usual stroll, though without meeting with her usual gratification, she came upon a sight which fixed her attention so profoundly she could not stir from the place. It was in the pleasant twilight of the first month of autumn when the heated air fanned by the seasonable breeze was growing to a pleasant coolness, and the rustling groves were donning their embroidered livery. Over head was all of a clear grey save in the west a rich copper hue was visible at the verge, gradually fading till it took the color of the surrounding sky. The herbage was crisp and short, and the flowers had got to be of some rareness. Low upon the mossy lap of the venerablest oak in the whole grove, lay a youth in the most absolute perfection of youthful symmetry. Surely he might without any great stretch of fancy, have been taken for that lovely boy who playeth such vagaries with our humanity, as poets feign; and she, who crept to him on tiptoe with such a marvelling, pleased, and cautious look upon her exquisite fair features, would have made an admirable representative of that divine creature the spiritual Psyche of the same ideal world. He slept—one arm supporting his head from which the hat had fallen, the other holding an open book. And who could this be but the youthful Shakspeare wearied out with the long deep studiousness he now, more than ever indulged in. She however had no knowledge of who it was, but could not help gazing with a pleasant wonder upon the pale thoughtful brow, and delicately beautiful countenance of the young sleeper.

All at once the expression of her features

changed exceedingly. She now looked all fear and terrible anxiety. The cause of this was she beheld a hornet hovering over his face, seeming every moment as if it would alight on the half closed lips, whose luscious richness of color doubtless tempted it thereto. Mabel was in an agony of dread that the touch of the insect would cause the young student to start, and so he would get stung: and she dared not seek to wake him from a like fear. So there stood she, bending with extreme anxiousness, and anon shrinking back with horrible affright. This continued for some moments, with increasing alarm on her part, when with such a lively sense of joy as had visited her but seldom, she beheld the hornet take its departure without doing of any mischief. She lingered a moment longer, half inclined to wake the sleeper, and tell him of his danger, but as she could not bring upon herself to break such sweet slumbers as he appeared to enjoy, she presently turned away and continued her walk.

She knew not all this while that she was narrowly watched by two persons, who, creeping from tree to tree with such cautiousness as might prevent their approach being noticed, followed her closely as she went. "Tis her!" whispered one, drawing close to the other.

"Let her get to the next clump of trees, and then upon," answered the other, in the same low voice. They then separated again, and crept along as before till they had passed the sleeper some paces, and were rapidly but cautiously advancing upon the object of their so much regard, when Mabel turning round to take a last glance at the sleeping student, to her monstrous surprise and alarm, found two strange men close upon her foot-steps.

"I pray you come with us, sweet damsel," said one of them, whom she immediately recognized as her treacherous gallant at Kenilworth. "We will do you no sort of harm should you come quietly—for we are of your friends, anxious to lead you to such great good fortune as falleth to the lot of few. But if you show any unwillingness," added he, seizing her firmly by the wrist, seeing she evinced an evident reluctance to be of his company—"Or make any outcry, we shall be forced to use such means to compel you, as you would find of the roughest."

"Unhand me, sirrah!" cried Mabel, indignantly, striving to free her from his hold. "I have seen enough of you to wish for no farther acquaintance, and will go with you on no account."

"Then we must e'en take to making you, sweetest," replied he, catching her up in his arms, as though he would carry her away, which set her to screaming and struggling with all her might. At this moment, awakened by the scream, the youthful Shakspeare started from his sleep, and to his extreme consternation beheld the fair object of his most pleasant dream borne away from him, struggling in the arms of some rude villain.

"Hold, caitiff, on thy life!" shouted he, starting after them, with such speed of foot as soon brought them within his reach, but just as he had bravely seized the ravisher by the collar of his doublet, he was felled to the earth by a blow from a heavy riding whip the other villain had with him. The two then made what haste they could with their burthen, despite her cries and resistance, till they came to their horses under some adjoining trees. The gallant got on one holding Mabel before him, then when his companion was mounted, both rode across the country, at a pace which speedily took them out of sight of that neighborhood.

CHAPTER XIII.

O fortune, now my wounds redress,
And help me from my smart,
It cometh well of gentleness,
To ease a mourning hearte.

OLD SONG.

Away with these self-loving lads,
Whom with cupid's arrow never glads!
Away poor souls that sigh and weep
In love of those that lie asleep!
For Cupid is a merry god,
And forceth none to kiss the rod.

LORD BROOKE.

These strange and sudden injuries have fallen
So thick upon me, that I lose all sense
Of what they are. Methinks I am not wronged;
Nor is it aught, if from the censuring world
I can but hide it. Reputation!
Thou art a word, no more.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

On recovering consciousness, the youthful Shakspeare found himself lying stretched on the grass, with a confused sense of pain and sickness, which prevented him from forming any distinct idea of where he was. He could just discern divers black masses of sundry shapes, moving around and about him, whilst above, myriads of stars were twinkling upon the surface of the surrounding sky; a thick white haze floated over the grassy earth as far as he could see; and not a sound, save the rustling of the leaves,

—which at first came upon his ear with a most unnatural strangeness—could be heard. His earliest perception was that the ground was wet with the dews, and he almost immediately afterwards discovered that his clothes were saturated with the same moisture. This made him make an immediate attempt to rise, whereupon he felt that his limbs were stiff and aching. Sitting, supporting himself by one arm, he strove to ascertain where he was; but everything upon which he turned his eyes floated in such shadowy outline he could distinguish nothing; and so fearful a pain was in his head, he was forced to lean it upon his hand as he rested his elbow on his lap. He then found his brows covered with a clammy moisture, which stuck to his palm with a peculiar unpleasantness, and an overpowering sense of sickness prevented him from attempting to regain his feet. In this position, and with these sensations, he remained for some time.

Nature appeared in the rising dews beneath the starry canopy, like to some mighty empress lying in her shroud under a jeweled pall; but this awful magnificence was now lost upon him, who at any other time would have seen and felt it more thoroughly than could any other. In his present state she might have put on herself her proudest apprelling, and he would have paid no more heed to it than if he had had no foreknowledge of her visible existence; and for the time being, in his comprehension not only all this glorious garnishing in which he had oft taken such exquisite delight, was utterly done away with, but that absolute and unrivaled Beauty, whose infinite attractions so set off, had bound his spirit to her will, seemed to have suffered a perfect dissolution into the elements from which she sprung; and had at once become a darkness—a chaos—and a nothing. This, however, as must be manifest to all, was a mere fantasy. The chaos lay in the mind, and not in Nature; who, however funereally she may choose to array herself, hath a perpetual life, that cannot be made the property either of Time or Death. All the singular fine faculties and curious conceptions of the young student, in the state of half-consciousness in which he now existed, were as if they had never been; and in intelligence—alack that there should be so humiliating a truth,—a sudden visitation of physical pain had reduced the promising scholar below the level of the most unlettered hind.

At last he managed to raise himself upon his feet, and leaned against the trunk of a

tree close by which he had fallen. He looked around, and it appeared as though everything wore an unfamiliar and unfriendly countenance; helpless and faint with pain, he turned his appealing gaze to those fair ministers on high, who at such numberless occasions, had looked down so invitingly on his meditations; but they seemed at this present to regard him with a cold indifference which struck a chill to his heart. He felt weaker and weaker every moment; the mists appeared to be thickening around him so that he could scarce breathe; the tree passed away from his touch; the ground slipped from under his feet; and with a look of anguish that was a most deep reproach unto Nature for having so abandoned him in his extremity, he again fell out of all sign of existence.

At this moment, lights were seen in the distance, and a confused shouting of men and barking of dogs was plainly audible. Amid this the name of Mabel might be distinguished, called out by several different voices, and other cries, which proved that the party were in search of the poor foundling.

"Mabel!" shouted Sir Thomas Lucy, some yards off, as loud as he could for the wrapper his careful dame had put around his throat to protect him from the damp mist. "Murrain on the wench, what hath become of her I wonder."

"Hoy!" bawled out a stout old gamekeeper for the space of nigh half a minute, carrying of a lantern, which great cry of his brought on such a fit of coughing there seemed to be no end of it.

"Prithee when we return, good Sampson, ask some of my julep of me," said Dame Lucy, who prided herself hugely on her skill in medicaments, and was ever as anxious to lay hold of a patient as was any 'pothecary in the land; "'tis famous for the cure of all manner of coughs, asthmatics, quinsies, cold, hoarseness, and other diseases of the like sort,—so if thou wilt take it steadily it cannot help to be a sovereign remedy for thy asthma."

"Ay, mistress, an' it please you," replied Sampson, although he knew full well the virtues of that same julep, having had it put upon him for a good score years, let him have whatever complaint he might.

"A fig for such villainous stuff!" exclaimed Sir Thomas; "I'll cure thy asthmatics, I'll warrant! When I was at college, I was as famous for my studies in medicine as was any physician of them all. Indeed I got me the name of little Esculapius, I had acquired such great cunning in

it. There was no such cures ever heard of as I have made. But it led me so into the playing of tricks, that I was obliged to give it up or I should have been expelled for my many mischiefs. Oh, the love powders I have made that distressed damsels came to me for! Oh, the wonderful charmed philtres, and magical elixirs, I have given them for bringing back their stray lovers. By cock and pye, I tickled them so with my stuff, that if a man of any kind, whatever he might lack in handsomeness, did but show himself in the High Street, women of all ages, sorts, and conditions, rushed from every house with a monstrous uncontrollable eagerness, intent upon the having him whether he would or no."

"By'r lady, I never heard this before, Sir Thomas!" cried his dame, in some surprise, yet in the fullest conviction here was another wonderful proof of her husband's extraordinary rare wisdom. "Believe me, had I known of it, I would have asked your advice numberless times when I have not."

"Mabel!" shouted the knight again, and again Sampson set up a prolonged cry, and half choked himself in the midst of it, and two dogs they had with them recommenced barking, as if they thought their voices stood as good a chance of being recognized by their kind friend, the poor foundling, as any.

"Plague on't!" exclaimed Sir Thomas; "I am nigh hoarse with bawling; and despite of our mufflers and other covering, I doubt not we shall have terrible colds from wandering about here when the dew is so thick."

"Ay, Master Justice," observed the gamekeeper, scarce ceasing one minute to give evidence this coming out agreed not with his asthma.

"I marvel she should serve us this way," added the knight, after another call from him, another broken-winded cry from his man, and another famous howl from the two dogs, with as little success as had attended them all along; "I hope no harm hath come to her."

"By my troth a thought strikes me!" cried Dame Lucy, suddenly coming to a full stop in her walk, to the exceeding astonishment of the justice and his man.

"Marry, I hope 'twill strike thee hard enough to tell us what 'tis about, dame," said her husband merrily.

"Doubtless that pestilent fine fellow hath run away with her," added she, as if horror-struck at the idea.

"Ey, who? What fine fellow?" exclaimed the knight, rapidly; "run away

with a servant of a justice o' the peace! 'Slight! 'tis as heinous a matter as sheep-stealing! But who's the villain? 'Fore George; if he be a low person, he shall swing for't; and if he be one of any sort of quality, I'll make a Star-Chamber matter on't. I will be no rearer of coney for other men's catching, I promise you." And thereupon he thumped the ground with the end of his stick a most determined blow.

Nay, good heart, be not in so deadly a passion," cried the good dame, earnestly.

"Passion!" bawled the justice, in a louder voice, and seemingly in an increased rage. "Wounds! but methinks here is fine occasion for it. It is but fitting I should be in a passion—in a horrible, tearing passion, at such a villainous affront as this. O' my life, I should be monstrous glad now to do some deadly mischief." And at this he pulled his rapier a little out of the sheath, and then sent it back with a whang that sounded fearfully to his alarmed wife, and astonished game-keeper.

"I pray you, take not on so murderously, Sir Thomas," cried the good dame.

"Valor o' me! tell me this caitiff on the instant!" exclaimed the knight, in a voice that appeared to admit of no dallying.

"He was one of those who made themselves so busy with Mabel whilst we were at Kenilworth," replied the old lady, tremblingly; "but he cannot be a fit object for the receiving of your just indignation."

"Ha! Is it so?" cried Sir Thomas, in no way abating the terribleness of his anger. "O' my word, I did suspect them of no good. 'Twas a trick I'll wager my life on't—a cozening trick to get them into my good-will; but I go not so easily into a trap, I promise you. I saw the bait, and did imagine the mischief on the instant. How dost feel so certain one of them hath carried off our Mabel?" asked he, and at this the good dame up and told, how one day she was walking with Mabel in the park, and they were accosted by these same fine fellows with a marvellous show of delicate behavior; but she, giving them instant proof she was not to be deceived by their craftiness, they departed from her presence with more speed than they had come in it. Then the knight became more brave in his speech than ever, and was talking very largely how he would have driven them both out of his grounds at the very point of his rapier, had he been in her company at that time, when his attention was suddenly diverted from the subject in hand, by a strange barking of the dogs a little in advance of them. Sampson

made haste to the spot, with his lantern to see what it meant.

"Perchance the dogs have found her," observed Dame Lucy; and it may be she hath been taken with a fit, or sudden swooning, and so could get no further."

"Murder!" cried Sampson as loud as he could, upon catching a glance, by aid of the light he carried, of what appeared to be a dead body.

"Oh, the poor wench!" exclaimed the good dame in very doleful accents.

"What dost say, knave?" inquired the knight, in somewhat of a trepidation.

"Here's a horrid mangle!" bawled the serving-man, gazing with real terror on the blood-stained face of the youthful Shakspeare.

"Thou shalt not go, Sir Thomas!" cried his dame in a nervous apprehension, clinging tightly to his arm. "Perchance the murderers may not be far away. Keep down thy valor, dear heart, I prithee! Nay, sweet life, thou shalt go on no account! Thy brave spirit will lead thee to some hurt—thou hast no occasion to be so exceeding valiant. Remember, chuck! thou art getting to be old, and no fit match, for I know not how many monstrous horrible cut-throat villains who may be lurking about."

"Shall a justice o' the peace stand playing of mum-chance, when murder stalks abroad?" exclaimed Sir Thomas, who, believing that the supposed villains must by this have got them to some place of safety, had drawn his rapier, and was advancing with a marvellous show of resolution as fast as Dame Lucy would allow him. "Must Sir Thomas Lucy, knight of the shire, and late sheriff of the county, hide his valor, when deadly mischief is doiff on his own land? Dame! dame! I will not be hindered; I feel as full of fight as a drawn badger—my valor must spend itself. Where are the monstrous pitiful caitiffs that have done this mischief? 'Fore George! I will slay them every man!"

"Hodge! Anthony! David!" cried his dame urgently to divers of the serving-men and keepers who were at a little distance behind. "Help me hold thy master. Here is a foul murder done upon poor Mabel, and he is so moved, he must needs be attacking of all the murderers at once." The men came up in wonderful tribulation at hearing of the fate of the gentle foundling; and with pressing entreaties to their master he would not wilfully seek his own death. They sought to hold him fast; but the more he was held, the more boldly he threatened. At last they all arrived at the spot where Samp-

son and the dogs were examining with extreme curiosity the body of our young scholar.

"Ha! how is this?" exclaimed the knight in exceeding astonishment, as soon as he beheld the young Shakspeare, by the aid of the lanterns. "This is no Mabel; this is some boy or another."

"I warrant you, master, observed one of the men gladly, "our Mabel hath darker hair."

"And she wore not jerkins of any kind," said another.

"Nor trunks, that ever I saw," added a third.

"'Tis not our Mabel, out of all doubt!" cried Dame Lucy, gazing upon the motionless body with mingled feelings of awe and curiosity. "I never gave her to wear any such clothes as these; and such as she had of me for her apparelling were honest gowns of a sober color, with petticoats of a proper stuff, blue hose, and shoes of a fair strength, with a round hat, for every day; and then for Sundays——"

"Gog's wouns!—he lives, master!" hurriedly exclaimed Sampson, who had lifted up the head of the supposed corpse, and feeling him move, could not forbear crying out—the which completely put a stop to the dame's account of her handmaid's wardrobe.

"Mass! he breathes, sure enough," observed Hodge; "and that, as I have been told, be an excellent sign of life."

"Nay, as I live, he openeth his eyes!" cried Anthony.

"And now he be a moving of his fingers!" added David with a like marvelling; and then all watched with a famous interest the symptoms of returning consciousness in the wounded youth. The justice was somewhat puzzled what to do in so strange a case. Here was a murdered person coming to life, and no sign of Mabel was to be seen any where. He thought it was exceeding suspicious; and then believing he had given sufficient evidence of his valiant spirit, he sheathed his rapier, took his stick from one of the men who had picked it up on coming along, and leaning on it, kept considering how he should behave. In the meanwhile, William Shakspeare, with all the lanterns bearing upon his face, was looking upon those around him, greatly bewildered, yet beginning to have some confused ideas of where he was, and what brought him there. Nevertheless, the faces, as far as he could distinguish, were unfamiliar to him. He felt weak, and ever and anon gave a strong shudder, as though his blood was chilled by so long lying in the dew and the night air.

"Methinks he hath on him something of an ague," observed Dame Lucy. "Could we get him home with us, now, some of my julep would do him famous good service, I warrant you."

"Humph!" cried Sir Thomas, gazing upon the stranger with a terrible penetrating look, upon hearing of this hint of the good dame, backed by assurances of its efficacy from each of the serving-men.

"An' it please you, sweet lady," said the youthful Shakspeare, faintly addressing Dame Lucy, emboldened to it by the evidence he had just heard of her considerateness for him, "I beseech you tell me am I not still in the park of his good worship, Sir Thomas Lucy?"

"That are you, beyond all question," replied she very courteously, for she was well pleased with the civility with which the question had been put to her.

"Ay, you be just upon the very middle of Fairmead Grove, my young master," added one of the men.

"I thought I could not help being at the same place," observed the youth.

"But how didst come to that place, and what dost do at that place at so late an hour?" asked the justice, in a style that savored wondrously of a disposition in him to doubt the honesty of the person he questioned. Thereupon William Shakspeare, without acquainting any with the reason of his visit to the park, told the knight how he had been a witness to the carrying off of Mabel by two villains, and how when striving to stop one, he was felled to the earth by the other.

"So!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, looking with more severity than ever, "Thou hast got a fine story; but I doubt 'twill do thee any good at assize." Just as the knight had uttered this, the youth gave a sudden start upon noting for the first time his hands were covered with blood, which discovery, and the manner of his behavior at that moment, was well observed by the justice.—"Ha!" cried he, "How didst get thyself so dabbled? Dost tell that cozening tale to me when thy hands and face bear evidence thou hast murdered our Mabel!"

"Murdered her!" exclaimed William, in extreme astonishment. "Believe me I would much rather have died in her rescue."

"I believe thee fellow!" cried the justice, with extreme emphasis. "O' my life, I do believe thee to be a most notorious horrible villain! But how didst get thyself in so suspicious a way? answer me that. The truth, fellow, the truth."

"As for what I see on my hand," ob-

served the youth, "I am as much surprised at it as yourself can be: but on reflection, methinks 'tis easy to be accounted for."

"Is't, indeed?" replied the knight. "Marry, I doubt it hugely."

"Doubtless the blow I received hath made a wound," continued the other. "And holding my aching head awhile, hath brought my hand to the state you see."

"Heart o' me! here be a wound, indeed, master," cried Sampson, closely examining the head of the suspected person by the aid of his lantern.

"By'r lady, and so there is!" added Dame Lucy. "I would he were where I could apply to it some of my famous julep; 'tis the sovereignest thing on earth for a green wound."

With the friendly assistance of the serving men, with whom there was not a doubt remaining of his perfect innocency, William Shakspeare stood upon his feet, and presently missed the book he had been studying before he fell asleep under the tree. The justice, somewhat perplexed in his notions, stood regarding him with a most scrutinizing look.

"What dost want looking about so?" inquired he.

"A book, an' it please your worship," answered the other. "A book of sweet poems I was intent upon studying, before I beheld her you called Mabel being carried away, screaming in the arms of a villain."

"I did kick my foot against something not a moment since," said Dame Lucy; "Perchance that may be it." Hearing this, the serving men and keepers looked carefully about with their lanterns.

"Thou saidst nought about her screaming just now," observed the justice sternly, upon whom this addition came with a very marvellous suspiciousness. "But tell us who thou art—they name, fellow—they name?"

"My name is William Shakspeare," answered the youth.

"What, John Shakspeare's son, of Stratford?" asked Sir Thomas quickly.

"The same, an' it please your worship."

"Then 'tis clear—'tis manifest—'tis most absolute and undeniable, fellow!" exclaimed the justice, with a severity greater than all he had yet shown. "Mass, I thought I could not suspect thee without warrantable assurance. Thy name proves it. If thou hast not committed this foul murder, I will be sworn an ass all the rest of my days. Thou hast a most discreditable name, fellow. I know not a name of such ill repute that can be found anywhere. 'Tis a bad name; and being a bad name must needs be an ill name;

and being an ill name cannot help being a name that a man shall chance to go to the hangman with."

"Here's the book, sure enough," cried one of the serving-men.

"Book me no books," said the knight sharply, whose remembrance of what had been told him by Master Buzzard, made him careless of this new proof of the youth's innocence. "Take him away! I will look into this matter with more strictness. God's precious, so notorious a name no man ever had! But let me examine the same book of which he hath spoken so confidently." Having got it in his hand, the justice had a lantern held to him and scrutinized it very narrowly.

"Ha! O' my life I thought as much!" added he, looking from the book to the supposed murderer. "Thou hast stolen it. Here is in it the name of Sir Marmaduke de Larresse."

"He lent it me, as he hath done many other," replied William Shakspeare.

"He lend thee, fellow!" cried the knight disdainfully. "A person of his quality lend books to so horrible low a person as the son of John Shakspeare. How dost dare put so impudent an assertion on a justice o' the peace! Mass, 'tis manifest thou art a most thorough villain by thy name—'tis as clear thou hast stolen this book, and doubtless many others by thy professions—and there is no doubt thou hast done a foul murder by thy being in the neighborhood at the time the wench was missing, and found here under such suspicious circumstances. Bring him along, Sampson. Thou art my close prisoner. I charge thee escape on thy peril."

Our young student, to his exceeding astonishment, found himself taken into custody; but to be accused of destroying that exquisite fair creature who had so long been the exclusive subject of his sweetest meditations, appeared to him so unnatural a thing, he could scarce believe it possible it could be thought of for a single moment. Confused as he was by the effects of the blow, and still more bewildered by the behavior of Sir Thomas Lucy, his apprehensions for the safety of the gentle Mabel completely thrust aside everything like fear for himself, and all the way to the house he did nothing but think of the possible dangers she might be exposed to in the hands of those desperate villains he had beheld carrying of her off. When he arrived at the mansion, he was led up stairs into a room where there was no possibility of escaping; and Dame Lucy presently came and washed his wound, applied to it some of her famous julep, and put

on it a clean bandage, for although, as a wife, she would not for a moment doubt of the correctness of her husband's opinion, she could not allow such an opinion, bad as it was, to interfere with the wounded youth's receiving the advantage of her skill in remedies.

It was a small chamber, with a standing bed in it, whereon was a fair coverlet of the dame's needle work. A little table, with materials for washing, stood close at hand, which had evidently been in use; and beside them were sundry towels, pieces of cloth for bandage, bottles, scissors, and the like necessary sort of things for the dressing of a wound. The dame sat, with a famous serious aspect, in an arm chair, at the side of the table, fastening the bandage on the head of her patient, who knelt down at her feet. Close by the suspected murderer, holding a candle, stood a comely little damsel, whose bright eyes had gradually lost that fearfulness with which she at first regarded the wicked wretch she had been told he was.

Watching these, at a little distance, stood two simple looking fellows—the one with a long sheepish face, surrounded with straggling lanky locks, which was Hodge; and the other, with a head as round as an apple, of which the countenance was marked out of all contradiction, for it would have rivalled any old buckler in the number of dents it had; and he was David. Each was leaning on a formidable looking harquebus, and beside which they were armed with sword and dagger.

"Dost feel any more comfort now?" inquired the good dame, as her patient stood up before her, immediately the dressing of his wound was finished.

"Wonderful, I thank you very heartily," exclaimed the youth, leaning of himself against a chair—for he felt exceeding weak.

"I'm glad on't," added his physician, carefully pouring into a cup some of her famous julep; then giving the bottle to the black-eyed Kate, with an injunction to be mindful and put it down safely, she offered the cup and its contents to her patient. "Drink this, I prithee," said she, "and be assured 'twill do thee as much efficacy taken as an inward medicine, as thou hast already found when used as a lotion for a wound." William Shakspeare again thanked her with a like sincerity, and cheerfully swallowed the draught to the last drop. His behavior had already pleased her, and the alacrity with which he drank what she had given him, delighted her still more. She rose from her seat, ordering the handmaid to clear the

table, and get a bowl of milk and a manchet for the youth's supper; and then telling the two men Sir Thomas desired they left not the room on any account, nor once took their eyes off of their prisoner, she seemed as if about to take her departure. Yet still she lingered.

"I marvel thou dost not confess thy wickedness," said she, at last, to her young patient, manifestly more in sorrow than in anger. "Prithee say what thou hast done with the body; for methinks the least thou canst do is to let her have Christian burial."

"Whose body, dear lady?" inquired he.

"Why, poor Mabel, whom thou hast so foully murdered, answered the dame. "Alack! 'tis a grievous thing one so young—and so well behaved too—should do so horrible a thing." Kate stood still a moment, and regarded the suspected murderer with a wonderful searching glance.

"I beseech you, think of me not so vilely!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, with great earnestness. "By all things most sacred, I do assure you, I got this blow in endeavoring to stay the villains who carried her off." Kate returned to her work with a look of infinite satisfaction.

"Didst not hear what Sir Thomas said?" inquired the old lady, very gravely; "and dost really imagine that one of thy years can know better of a thing than a justice o' the peace, and a knight o' the shire, who owneth lands in five counties?" Thereupon the good dame shook her head with a wonderful solemnity, and walked, in her stately manner, out of the chamber.

"Prithee, Kate, bring us a jug of small ale!" exclaimed the man with the indented face, as he threw himself into a chair, directly his mistress had closed the door. "I'm horrible thirsty after all this fruitless searching for poor Mabel."

"Body o' me, so am I, David!" said he with the sheepish countenance, following the other's example. "I feel as though I had lived on pickled herrings for a whole month of fast days, I be so uncommon dry. Come Kate, bring us a tankard."

"Wait till thy betters be served, Hodge," replied the girl, quickly. David looked hard at Hodge, and Hodge looked hard at David; and then both looked very hard at their prisoner.

"I pray you, good sir, to seat yourself," said Kate to the latter, who still stood leaning against the back of a chair, looking faint and pale; and thereupon she moved the chair round for him, convenient for his sitting. "Methinks you must want rest exceedingly."

"I thank you," replied he, taking her proffered kindness very courteously; I am indeed somewhat weary."

"O' my life I am monstrous sorry," observed she, regarding him with an evident sympathy; "but I will make what speed I can with your supper, so that you shall to bed quickly and get you a good sleep, for which I doubt not you shall be much the better."

"I have no stomach for anything, I thank you all the same," said the patient faintly.

"Nay, but you go not to bed supperless, I promise you," exclaimed Kate, with one of her pleasantest smiles; "such light victual must needs be what would do you most good; and I will take care it shall be greatly to your liking." As soon as she had left the room, Hodge again looked at David and David looked at Hodge, and both looked at their prisoner harder than before. After which the former laid his piece carefully on his lap, and the other did the same immediately; then he of the well-marked countenance, stooped forward, poking out his chin and his lips towards his companion, making a sort of half-stifled whistling, and the owner of the sheep-face lost no time in following his example.

"I beseech you tell me," said William Shakspeare, "if there exists any evidence other than what I have stated for supposing the gentle Mabel hath come to any hurt?" At hearing of this question the two men looked at each other a little harder, and whistled a little louder than they had previously done.

"I would gladly hear any intelligence of her safety," added he, upon finding he got no answer; but these words merely produced an accompaniment to the whistling in the shape of the drumming of three fingers of each of his guard upon the table before them. Observing they did not choose to speak, he desisted of his questions till the entrance of the pretty handmaid with his supper, of whom he inquired in a like manner, telling her also he could get no answer of any kind from the persons she had left with him.

"Why so churlish, I prithee!" exclaimed Kate as she placed close to the wounded youth a bowl of hot milk spiced with nutmeg and cinnamon, and a fair white loaf, knife and spoon, on a tray covered with a cloth that seemed to rival the milk in whiteness. "Methinks 'twill do you no great harm to open your mouths a bit, the which you are ready enough to do over a full trencher."

"The justice hath commanded that we

have no communications with the prisoner," observed David with extreme seriousness.

"And moreover hath desired that we speak to him at our peril," added Hodge.

"A fig's end for the justice!" cried their pretty companion, to the infinite astonishment of the serving men; "art so weak of conceit as to suspect this good youth of so improbable a thing as the killing of our Mabel? Why thou hast no more brains than a blighted apple." Then turning to the supposed murderer with an increased kindness of manner, assured him that nothing was known concerning of the missing person but what he had himself told, and pressed him urgently to partake of what she brought, so that he could not refuse; and when she had again taken herself out of the room David and Hodge looked at each other and then at their prisoner so terrible hard, their eyes must have ached for some minutes after. William Shakspeare took no notice of them, although they were watching of him narrowly. All at once the two men snatched up their harquebusses as if they would have them in readiness for immediate use, and put all the valor they possessed into their looks. They had observed he had taken a knife into his hand, as they thought with no other purpose than to stab them and then make his escape; but he merely used it for the cutting of a slice off the loaf to sop in his milk. This did not assure them. They kept their gaze on his every motion with extreme seriousness, save when he happened by chance to raise his eyes from the supper he was languidly tasting, when on a sudden they would be diligently examining one or the other of their legs they were swinging to and fro on the chair, with as complete a carelessness as if they were thinking of nothing.

Presently Kate returned again, bearing a brimming tankard, which she put down between the two serving men.

"I doubt hugely thou dost deserve anything of the sort," said she to them; "thou showest such uncivil behavior towards this good youth. I would wager my life on't he knoweth no more of the murder than a child unborn."

"But his worship declareth he *doth* know of it, Kate," observed David with more than ordinary solemnness.

"And moreover hath determined 'twas done by this person and no other," added Hodge after the like fashion.

"I care not for fifty worships," replied she flashing her dark eyes very prettily; "or for what they say, or for what they do, when they show such marvellous injustice. Is't

reasonable—is't natural—is't credible, one of his years, with a countenance too as innocent as is a lambkin—should take to such villainous courses? Why, what shallow-witted poor creatures must they be who would entertain such intolerable notions."

The rough-featured serving-man, as she turned her back to approach the prisoner, shook his head with a very wonderful solemnity; and then, not knowing what better to be at, put his mouth to the tankard, and whilst he drank, kept his watchful eyes squinting over the rim in the direction of the supposed murderer. After a time had elapsed, which his companion thought was considerable longer than it ought to have been, he handed his sheep-faced companion the tankard, wiping of his mouth with the cuff of his jerkin at the same moment, and looking such volumes of hidden meaning as it is utterly impossible to express, to which the other responded by giving a hasty glance at the roof and then a prodigious long one into the tankard, to which his jaws appeared to be fixed with such firmness there was no getting of them apart.

"Now a fair good night to you;" exclaimed the smiling little creature finding, with all her kind persuading, she could not get him to eat more of his supper. "You can go to bed as soon as you have a mind; and I hope you will enjoy an excellent sweet rest. Good night," repeated she, and gave with it so soft a glance as if she intended to have subdued all the manhood in his nature.

"Good night!" replied William Shakspeare earnestly; and a million of thanks for your great kindness."

Directly Kate had departed, David threw himself back in the chair in the fullest conviction, from what he had observed, that she entertained a design for the prisoner's escape; and doubtless the same conclusions were come at by Hodge, for he put on his countenance much the same sort of expression, and, seeing the supposed murderer rising from his seat, both his guards grasped their arms firmly on the instant, and started to their feet, manifestly suspecting he was about to rush upon them. This movement of his, however, was merely made for the purpose of throwing himself on the bed, which he soon did with the clothes on, for with a delicacy suitable to his years, he liked not undressing of himself before strangers. In truth, he was thoroughly exhausted by pain, anxiety, and weariness, and in a few minutes was in as deep a sleep as ever he had enjoyed in his whole life.

The two serving men had returned to their

seats. Both gazed upon the young student, and then at each other, as if they had huge doubts he had any intention of sleeping. In a short time all was as silent you might have heard a pin drop, which silence seemed exceeding irksome to the guard. Each looked to see his weapons were in good order—each snuffed the candle—and each buried his nose in the tankard; but the prisoner remained motionless, and the silence grew all the greater. It was evident from a number of fidgetty ways they were continually exhibiting, that they could not longer remain without some talking.

"Methinks Sampson's niece groweth horribly bold, Hodge;" observed David at last in a low voice.

"Ay, that does she," answered Hodge in a whisper. "I never heard of such extreme impudency in any wench."

"Heart o' me!" said the other; "I did myself hear her cry out, 'a fig for the justice!' which seemeth to me to smack abominably of a wilful rebelling against these in authority."

"Ay, David," added his companion; "and as I remember, she had the infamously to assert she cared not for fifty worships."

"My hair stood on an end at hearing it," said David. "But I doubt not 'twill bring down on her some awful judgment."

"It cannot help doing so," replied Hodge.

"Nevertheless, we must not say aught against her of what we have heard," observed he of the marks. "For she has some lusty fellows of her acquaintance, who, perchance, might not take it civil of us."

"Ah, that she hath!" quoth the sheepish looking one with a famous seriousness. "One of whom broke my head at the last May games, because I laughed when she slipped down, and showed somewhat more of her arcle than is customary."

"At least, we will take good heed she shall not assist the prisoner to escape;" observed David.

"I warrant you," said Hodge. Again there was so dead a silence it seemed to make their flesh creep; and they looked on the sleeping youth in such a manner as proved they would have liked any other company. They turned over in their minds the possibility of his suddenly rising and making some desperate effort at their destruction, with the expectation of saving his own life by it; and the more they thought of it, the more convinced they were it would be done ere they could be aware. This state of apprehension at last became insupportable, and both made a movement at the same moment to turn their attention to another

matter. David raised the tankard to his mouth to drown his fears in a full draught; and Hodge snatched up the snuffers, desperately intent on lessening the wick of the candle, which he had been screwing up his courage to do for the last half hour. Alack, the trepidation he was in, caused him to snuff it out; and then they were in total darkness. To be in company with an unfettered murderer was bad enough of all conscience, but to be left in the dark with him was more than mortal courage would allow of. David trembled so he could not hold the tankard, so down it went, and the noise it made so frightened him and his associate, that they dropped their arquebusses, and making for the door, rushed down stairs at the top of their speed, crying out, "murder!" as loud as they could bawl.

About five minutes afterwards a most formidable armament composed of every male in the house armed to the teeth, some half dressed, and here and there a nightcap to show they had been disturbed from their sleep, crept cautiously up the stairs. They gained the landing—the justice having placed himself in the centre of his household, in a night-gown and slippers, a velvet cap on his head, a drawn sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other. Before him were Sampson the gamekeeper and two of his sons—all stout fellows, in foresters frocks, carrying loaded pieces—then came Anthony, David and Hodge, with drawn rapiers—the knight next, and after him the grooms and scullions with lights in one hand and some goodly weapon in the other. Besides which, from open doors were seen divers of the women in their night dress, taking a peep at what was going on, with a scarce repressible inclination for a good scream. When the men got near the door, upon David and Hodge reminding them that the murderer had with him two loaded arquebusses, no one seemed inclined to go in before his fellows.

"How know you not he may be this very moment behind the door," said David in a terrible frightened way, that carried conviction to most of his hearers. "Nay, I do believe I hear him now levelling of his piece!" This occasioned a sudden backing of the armed party, and a famous scream from the women. The knight said nothing—for an indisputable reason—he had nothing to say—but he felt that he had known the murderer had been so terrible a fellow, he would have been hanged ere he would have meddled with him. The dispute among the leaders still raged high. Every one seemed desirous of giving his neighbor the honor of going first; but not one of all that

body but modestly declined having to do with any such greatness. At last the argument was put a stop to by the sudden appearance of Kate with a lighted candle in her hand.

"What dost want, Kate?"

"What dost want, Uncle?" was said at the same moment by the stout Sampson and his pretty niece.

"The murderer is seeking to escape us;" replied Anthony.

"Prithee get thee hence, or thou wilt be shot," exclaimed one of her cousins.

"I marvel there should be such foolishness!" observed Kate; and the next moment, to the infinite horror and astonishment of the whole party, walked deliberately into the formidable chamber.

"I prithee come here, uncle Sampson, if thou hast not lost thy wits as completely as the rest," added she from the interior. "Thou shalt see a sight as little akin to violence as can be seen anywhere." Sampson crept cautiously—his sons followed their father with the like heed—the serving men trod in the steps of the gamekeepers, Sir Thomas Lucy and the rest of his dependants, half curiousness and fear, pushed forward in the like direction, and the women with what they had hastily put on, came to take a peep where they could. To the great marvelling of all, there lay the supposed murderer as fast asleep as ever he could be; and there lay the broken tankard; and there lay the fallen arquebusses. Now who was so valorous as the justice; he seemed as though he would have cut his cowardly serving-men into ribbons for having woke up the whole household with so fabulous a tale as they had told of the sudden and outrageous attack upon them of their prisoner; however, he contented himself with ordering them to stay where they were and keep better watch; and then he, with the rest, presently retraced their steps to their several beds.

In the morning William Shakespeare woke up, marvellously refreshed by his night's rest, and the first objects that met his sight were his guards sound asleep, snoring loud enough to wake anybody. Inconceivable was the consternation of David and Hodge, upon opening their eyes, to find so dreadful a person close upon them, but taking of them no more heed than if they had been a couple of drowned puppies left in a dry pond. Each cautiously sought to gain possession of his fire-arms, which stood at a little distance from them upon neighboring chairs, and to their great joy this they succeeded in doing. Our young student, in his turn, was in a considerable astonishment,

when, upon turning round, with his face dripping with water, to get to the towel, he encountered the fixed fearful gaze of his guards, whom a moment since he had beheld in so perfect a state of somnolency. He could not avoid standing looking at them for a few moments, there was so strange an expression in their countenances; and they gazed as though he had such power in his eyes they could not turn their own aside. However, directly he went to the towel, and was rubbing himself with it, the two stared at each other more intently than they had ever done.

He had just got himself in his cleanest trim, and feeling wonderfully comfortable, when his pretty little friend the gamekeeper's niece, made her appearance with his breakfast, in a kinder mood than ever; and he was sufficiently improved to do justice to her catering, even had it not been garnished with such winning entreaties and smiling looks as accompanied it. He had scarce made a finish of his meal when Dame Lucy entered, bottle in hand, and finding him so much better, she again washed his wound with her infallible julep, and then made him swallow a cup of the same, with a very visible satisfaction, especially when he gratefully ascribed his better health to her wonderful medicine. The old dame could not forbear sighing at the thought of losing so goodly a patient, and in her own mind thought it monstrous pitiful one so tractable in the taking of medicine, should be turned over to so disreputable a physician as the hangman.

About an hour after this, closely escorted by his guards, the prisoner entered the justice's room. Sir Thomas sat in a high-backed cushioned chair, with a screen at his back to keep off the wind, and a table before him to hold such papers, books, and utensils of writing as he needed. Jemmy Catchpole sat at the end of the table mending of a pen, for he was sure to be sent for on all knotty cases, to advise with the justice, and see that the law was properly administered. There were several persons—farmers and yeomen they looked to be—setting on a long settle at the farther end of the chamber, perchance on some business with his worship, gnawing their sticks, fiddling their hats, and staring about them, as men do who are kept waiting in a strange place, when they would rather be elsewhere. Sampson, the stout gamekeeper, and his two stout sons, with Anthony, a bull-headed, pig's-eyed serving-man, having remarkable thin legs, very much after the fashion of a pair of nut-crackers, and two or three stupid

blubberly fellows of clowns, carrying staves in token of their being constables, stood in a half circle at a yard or so from the table. Justice leaned back in his chair, looking awfully solemn at Jemmy, Catchpole, the lawyer leaned forward on his stool, gazing with equal solemnity at his worship; and the constables, gamekeepers, and serving-men, stared from the ground to the ceiling, and from the ceiling to the ground, with a solemnness more awful than either. This was the moment of the prisoner's appearance.

"Call William Shakespeare!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, as soon as he noticed that there was no occasion to do anything of the sort.

"Call William 'Shakespeare,'" repeated the lawyer to one of the constables.

"Will'm Shuk—spur!" hoarsely bawled out a short, thick, bandy-legged man, with a face that would have out-blushed a poppy.

The youth was just before him, and answered readily to his name.

"William Shakespeare!" said the justice, in his gravest voice; "you are brought before me, her Majesty's justice o' the peace, on a charge—that is to say, you are here before me accused of—yes, accused of and charged with—charged with divers horrible offences—that is to say, criminally charged with, or I might say, accused of, all manner of misdemeanors, and with perpetrating and committing divers horrible offences against the peace of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth; whereof the first against you is no less a crime than to be accused of, or otherwise charged with, the horrible offence of stealing—against the peace of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, as aforesaid."

Having made so imposing a display of his judicial oratory, his worship cried out—"Call Anthony Gosling!" Jemmy Catchpole repeated the command to the hoarse man with the bandy legs.

"Ant'n'y Gos—lin!" bawled the constable.

"Here!" replied a voice from the bull-headed serving man, and the thin legs made two steps out of the half circle towards the table.

"Swear him!" exclaimed the justice, and the lawyer, laying hold of a little book, mumbled a few sentences in a quick low tone, at the conclusion of which Anthony made a bob with his head towards the book, and then held up his head again very stiff, and looked very desperate. Just as this was done, an interruption appeared in the person of the pretty gamekeeper's niece who presented a letter to the justice, the sight of which set him making of another

famous speech, accusing the prisoner of stealing sundry books belonging to Sir Marmaduke de Largesse ; and then putting forth the letter as one just received from Sir Marmaduke in answer to a communication sent that morning by himself, concerning of the charges against William Shakspeare, he bade Jemmy Catchpole read it, as it doubtless contained decisive evidence of the prisoner's guilt. Jemmy Catchpole read it very carefully, and the farther he read the more astonished was the justice, for it not only contained a clear acknowledgment that the book had been lent by the writer to the prisoner, but spoke in the highest terms of eulogy of this identical William Shakspeare as a youth of admirable character, whom he had long known and respected, and begging Sir Thomas Lucy, as a particular favor, to treat that person honorably, to let him retain the book which he had falsely been accused of stealing, and allow him to return to his house immediately, on a horse he had sent by one of his serving-men.

Sir Thomas would not believe his ears, and could scarce believe his eyes, even when he had himself closely examined the hand-writing and the seal ; but he could not so easily be brought to part with his prisoner. There was the charge of murder yet to be entered into ; and he was proceeding in his usual rambling manner to state the accusation, when one of the yeomen on the settle started up on a sudden, and stated he had seen, when returning from work the night before, the said Mabel carried in the arms of a strange gallant, accompanied by a companion, and both were riding at so great a pace, they were quickly lost sight of. No sooner did his worship hear this statement, than sharply ordering Jemmy Catchpole to return the book to the prisoner and dismiss him, he stalked indignantly out of the chamber, and could not be brought to do any more justice business all that day.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ah, my swete swetyng !
 My lytyl prety swetyng,
 My swetyng wyl I love wherever I go ;
 She is so proper and pure,
 Full stedfast, stabill and demure,
 There is none such ye may be sure,
 As my swete swetyng.

OLD SONG.

MABEL awoke in a feverish uneasy state the morning after her abduction, and found

herself in a strange bed, having to it hangings of the costliest description. By degrees, the adventures of the preceding night came upon her memory. She could distinctly remember the treacherous gallant of her former acquaintance, and the forbidding features of his servile companion ; and then she had some faint remembrance of a courteous lady, who had assured her of her safety, and after a wondrous show of kindness and protection, had made her take such refreshment as she needed, and then conducted her, as she said, to her own chamber, that she might sleep with a full sense of security. Sometime passed whilst the poor foundling endeavored to collect her scattered thoughts, to find out the reason she had been forcibly taken from her home.

After wandering from one topic to another with no other result than to get more bewildered than she was at first, she resolved to dress herself forthwith, believing it to be far beyond her usual hour for so doing ; but when she sought her clothes, not a vestige was to be seen in any part of the chamber. This seemed stranger than all. She remembered the kind lady helping her to undress with manifold assurances of her perfect safety ; and she recollected also placing of her things upon a chair that stood within a few paces of the bed ; but there was the chair with its tapestry cushion uncovered by so much as a single thread. As she was marvelling at so unaccountable a disappearance, the door of her chamber opened, and there entered a lady of considerable attractions, both in form and figure, yet a close observer might have detected, despite the artful bloom on her cheek, that she had passed her youth. Her head was dressed in the latest Venetian tire ; an open collar of the newest fashion disclosed the whiteness of her neck, and a dress of orange tawney silk, fairly trimmed with the whitest lace, set off the proportions of her figure to the completest advantage. She was followed by a female, who seemed by her dress to be a servant, carrying on her arm what appeared to be sundry articles of wearing apparel.

Doubtless the first of these two was the kind lady of whom Mabel had been thinking, for she came smiling to the bedside, kissed the fair foundling with an amazing affectionateness, asked a thousand questions in a breath how she had fared, how she had slept, whether she would rise, and what she would choose to break her fast with ; and then scarce allowing the other opportunity to give a single answer, she informed her she had brought her servant to tire her in such apparelling as she had considered fittest for her wear,

as the things her young friend wore were of far too mean a sort for a person she loved so dearly. Mabel was not suffered to make any objection. The rich beauty of her new attire was temptingly displayed before her admiring eyes, and jewels of the fairest water lay dazzlingly beside it. She thought them a rare sight indeed; but 'twas all in vain she declared them to be much too fine for her wearing, the kind lady would hear nothing of the sort, stopped her mouth with all sorts of endearing expressions, and fairly pulled her from the bed, entreating she would allow her sweet lovely person to be attired without a word more.

As she was being dressed, she could not help observing the exquisite work in the arras that surrounded the chamber, upon which was depicted, in the most glowing colors the loves of Venus and Adonis. Nothing could be so beautiful she thought, save the carved corners of the bedstead, each of which represented a naked Cupid, figured to the life, grasping the stem of a palm tree with one arm, holding back the silken curtains with the other, and looking under them with an expression that seemed to say there was in the bed something beyond conception admirable. At each corner of the chamber were fair statues of marble, the very loveliest and loveliest objects that had ever been produced by the sculptor's art, and there was scarce any one thing about her that did not bear on it such forms of beauty as are most enticing to the young and imaginative mind. Certes, for all such cunning was displayed in these figures, whereon whatever art could do in fashioning what was most graceful had been essayed, a piece of nature's more perfect handiwork there present outstripped them all.

"O' my life, sweetest creature! how exceeding beautiful thou art!" exclaimed the lady, gazing on Mabel, as if in absolute wonder.

"Dost think so, indeed!" replied the half-dressed beauty, blushing somewhat, to the great heightening of her most moving graces.

"Think so? O, thou dear rogue!" said the lady in an arch way; "wouldst have me believe thou knowest nothing of the matter! Hast never looked on those unrivalled features? Hast never beheld those exquisite limbs? Fie! fie! Thou canst help knowing it better than any, and thinking of it too."

"Believe me, I have thought of it but little," answered the pretty foundingling.

"Nay I will believe nothing of the sort," responded the other: "there was never a

woman yet that knew not her own attractiveness, and it is said some do occasionally see and think more of it than other folks; but that there should exist in this world a creature of the most ravishing loveliness ever beheld, who knoweth, and thinketh but little of her own rare perfections, is clean out of all credibility."

"I assure you, it is as I have said," observed Mabel.

"Heaven forgive thee!" exclaimed the lady, shaking her head, and laughing very prettily; "never met I so undeniable a story teller, and yet coming from so fair a source, no truth could appear half so winningly. Prithce, take my word then, since thou hast such lack of proper acquaintance with the subject; and be assured, one more semely featured, and gracefully limbed withal, is not to be met with, search the whole kingdom through." Then turning to the tirewoman, whose large eyes and full round face, expressed somewhat of wantonness, she added, "What dost think of it, Abigail?"

"An' it please you, my Lady Comfit, methinks there needs no questioning," replied the tirewoman, then on the floor fitting on an embroidered shoe, seemingly of the smallest size, as Mabel sat on a chair with the lady leaning over her. "Touching the face, if ever any man gazed on features so moving, beauty hath gone out of my knowledge; and as for the person—who hath ever looked on so neat a foot, so delicate an ankle—or so exquisite a leg as there are here?" Mabel blushing deeper than ever, because of there being at that moment a greater display of her symmetry of limb than she thought becoming, drew away her foot hastily, and rose from her seat.

"Oh, the pretty rogue, how rosilily she blushes!" exclaimed Lady Comfit, laughingly drawing the abashed maiden towards a large mirror. "Now, if thou wilt not believe other evidence, deny thyself if thou canst." And thereupon her companion pointed to the reflection. Mabel saw before her a form and figure such as hath been described, arrayed with all the choiceness which skill in dress could give to them, for she wore a velvet suit of a plum color, worn low, and delicately powdered with gold and pearl, her fair neck embraced with a necklace of blushing rubies, and jewels of greater rarity in her hair, ears, and stomacher. The poor foundingling could hardly believe she was the admirable creature she saw in all that bravery, and Lady Comfit and Abigail looked at each other, as if they mightily enjoyed her astonishment.

"Methinks I have never appeared so

comely in all my life before," observed the simple girl.

"Thou art right I doubt not," replied the lady, with a smile; "but thou shalt no longer hide so bright a light. Come along, I prithee, my sweet creature. Such rare attractions should be rarely appreciated, or huge wrong would be done thee. Thou shalt have choice worshipping. This way, dear sweet rogue, and I will tell thee more anon." So saying, with her arm round the waist of the gentle Mabel, Lady Comfit entered an adjoining chamber.

If the humble foundling had been dazzled by the costly furnishing of the bed-chamber, how much more reason had she to be similarly influenced, when she beheld the great splendor of the chamber she had just entered. The arras was more gorgeous, and on it was depicted, in the very richest coloring, the loves of Jupiter, and others of the heathen deities. In one place was Danae, yielding her enamored nature to the golden shower—a type of that species of affectionateness still met with in woman, that can be easily procured by the like means. There, Leda caressing of the stately swan, whose graceful movements and fair appareling, had so won upon her admiration—symbolical of that sort of loving amongst the sex, which hath no better origin than mere outward appearances; and elsewhere, Europa, borne over the yielding waves by the bull, whose lustiness of limb had provoked her to such hardihood as lost her to her company—a right true picture of that sort of feeling in women occasionally met with, miscalled love, which doth so conspicuously savor of the mere animal. Besides these, were subjects out of all number of a like description, so movingly delineated, that it was scarce possible for any that gazed on them, not to find their dispositions softened into a similar tendency.

But every object in both chambers seemed studiously fashioned so as to breathe of love—not that love which is the pure offspring of the affections, and can only live in the rare atmosphere of intellectual beauty; but that more gorgeous blossom often mistaken for the modest flower of the same name,—that springs from rank rich soils, and thrives best in the stifling air of luxurious indulgence. Both apparently are warmed by the same sun, so are the rose and the poppy—and oft appear of the same glowing complexion, as shall be found in the flower and the weed just named; but the one hath in it so sweet an essence, that ever so small a particle delighteth the senses by its exquisiteness, and can do harm to none—whilst

the other secretes deadly intoxicating juices, which give an unnatural stimulus to those who take it for their enjoyment, fevers the blood, poisons the nature, and kills the soul.

Lady Comfit allowed the simple girl to admire as much as she would, without interruption, the costly and subduing beauty of the several ornaments of the chamber, and then led her to a table prodigally garnished with all manner of spicy viands and stimulating wines. Meats and pasties, divided the space with glass bottles filled with the products of the choicest vineyards, rich silver cups and platters, china dishes, and embroidered napery. Mabel who had all her life eat her simple meal of cold meat and bread, off a wooden trencher, accompanied with a draught of small ale from a horn cup, looked in some amazement at such store of tempting delicacies displayed in vessels of such extreme value as here presented themselves for her accommodation. Lady Comfit pressed her to name her choice, and she seemed so sore puzzled that the lady kindly recommended such dishes as she herself most approved of, portions of which the poor foundling thankfully accepted, and found of a marvellous delectable flavor.

"And now what wine dost prefer, sweetest?" inquired the lady lovingly.

"An' it please you I would rather a cup of small ale," replied Mabel, at which the lady and her tirewoman laughed very pleasantly.

"Small ale, dear heart!" exclaimed Lady Comfit. "Such drink is never for ladies—'tis fit only for serving men, and such low persons."

"Then perchance, a draught of spring water might be had readily?" asked her companion, at which the other two laughed more pleasantly than before.

"Water!" cried the lady at last. "I faith I should be much to blame were I to let thee swallow such unwholesome stuff. Here is wine for thee, and plenty—the choicest withal that ever came of the grape."

"But I am monstrous thirsty," observed Mabel, "and wine is of too great a strength for one so unused to it as am I, to quench their thirst with."

"Tush, my sweet creature," replied Lady Comfit; "this wine is not so strong as small ale, be assured of it. Is it, Abigail?" asked she of her attendant.

"'Tis made expressly for ladies' drinking, an' it please you, my lady," answered Abigail, very readily. "A child might drink a bottle of it with as much innocence as though it was mere water."

"Without doubt," added his mistress, taking one of the bottles and pouring part of its rich contents into a silver goblet. "I will myself show thee how harmless a beverage it is." So saying she raised the brimming vessel to her lips and swallowed it at a draught. Assured by this that there could be no harm in it, the unsuspecting Mabel allowed herself to take a moderate draught, seeing which her companions looked at each other with a peculiar smile, and presently, as she found the spicy nature of what she had eat so plentifully, made her mouth hot and dry, after the same pressing entreaties and earnest assurances, she repeated it. At last finding the simple girl could not be persuaded to eat or drink a mouthful more, the attendant cleared away the things, and Mabel was left alone with the lady.

Directly they were alone the latter drew her chair close to that of her companion, and with an irresistible air of sincerity and friendliness, took one of the poor foundling's hands in her own.

"What a happy woman thou art!" exclaimed Lady Comfit, with wonderful emphasis, and observing Mabel looked as though she could not comprehend what should make her so very happy, added with increasing earnestness, "What a proud woman thou art!" This exclamation appeared to be less understood than the preceding. "At least thou *shouldst* be," added the lady, in a marked manner. "I doubt not there are thousands of women would give all they are worth in the world to have thy good fortune."

"Indeed!" cried Mabel, in a famous astonishment.

"Ay, that would they, my sweet creature," cried her companion, pressing her hand very affectionately. "But who of them all hath thy desert? Art thou not formed to be loved as no woman was ever loved before?" At hearing this the poor foundling appeared to marvel too greatly to say anything.

"O' my word, thou art like to become the envy of all women," continued Lady Comfit. "Methinks 'twould be a most pitiful shame to allow of such perfections as thou hast, to be shut up in an obscure place where they can be seen of none who would hold them in proper appreciation, whilst the powerfulest noble in the land is sighing of his heart away with a sweet hoping so fair a creature might be esteemed of him, cherished by him, and caressed by him in such fashion as she is most worthy of. But I will wager my life on't thou hast too noble a spirit to be of such poor commodity; and art of too kindly a disposedness to let a

princely gentleman, anxious to gratify thy every wish, linger out his days in hopeless misery, for lack of that happiness thou alone art capable of bestowing."

"I?" exclaimed Mabel, incredulously. "Believe me, I know of no such person; have seen no such person. Surely there is some huge mistake in this."

"Never did truer thing occur," replied the lady. "It matters not that thou shouldst never have beheld him—be assured he hath seen thee, and, as it could not help being, at the first sight of so much ravishing beauty, his noble heart was taken close prisoner, and he hath ever since been in a passionate phrenzy of impatience for the gaining of thy dear love."

"Methinks 'tis a strange way of showing such, to tear me from my friends," observed the poor foundling.

"'Tis the way of these great ones, sweetest," answered her companion. "But 'tis done out of no disrespect, be assured; for he hath ordered thou shalt be treated with as much honor as though thou wert a crowned queen."

"'Tis exceeding strange!" said Mabel, marvelling the more, the more she heard.

"Thou wilt see him anon," added the other. "And doubt not he will love thee with so deep a fondness, he will leave thee no cause for one moment's disquietude. Thou wilt be made happy straight—and such happiness shalt thou enjoy as thou hast never had experience of. All that divinest love and boundless magnificence can effect, shall crown thy wishes—never ending pleasures shall entice thy inclinations the whole day long—the splendid pageant-ries of state—the homage bestowed on absolute power—the observances and ceremonials of highest rank shall be for thy particular honor on all occasions; and wherever thou art inclined to turn thy steps, thou shalt meet with some new delight of infinite exquisiteness provided for no other end than to assist in making perpetual thy inconceivable felicity."

"Indeed I know not what to say on such a matter," observed her young companion, somewhat bewildered at so magnificent a perspective. "I am so very humble a person, I cannot think myself fit to be raised to so proud a station; and in all sincerity I say it, I would rather back to my friends, to give place to some one more worthy."

"I will never allow of thy doing so foolish a thing," exclaimed Lady Comfit, in some seeming astonishment. "Thou must needs be the worst possible judge of the matter that exists; and I am thy friend,

sweetest, and therefore the very properest to advise thee in such a case." And thereupon the lady squeezed the foundling's hand, and gazed on her more affectionately than ever.

"I should feel extremely bounded to you, would you counsel me what to do," said the simple girl. "In very truth, my humbleness seemeth to me utterly inconsistent with such grandeur as you have spoken of.

"Nay, 'tis thy modesty maketh thee think so," replied the other. "None can be so fit as thou art. Didst not note how famously thou didst become these costly vestments? Just so admirably wilt thou become the love of that princely gentleman who commanded them for thy wearing. Trouble thyself nothing concerning of thine own thoughts. Thou art too young, sweetheart, to see these things in the properest light. Let it suffice, that the proud noble who loveth thee with such infiniteness, in his heart alloweth of none being so exalted; and to convince thee how great is his respect, hath required me, Lady Arabella Comfit, an earl's daughter, to be thy companion and friend, and show thee such prodigal kindness as I would show to no other living."

The poor foundling could scarce express her estimation of being treated with such handsomeness as to have an earl's daughter for her companion, and the latter having at last managed to allay her doubts and excite her curioseness, bade her amuse herself as she chose for a short time; and then caressing her with extreme affectionateness, left the chamber. Mabel felt in a strange state of excitement. Not a thought of extreme unsuspectingness which exists only in perfect innocency and genuine truthfulness—a nature which, like a clear mirror in the fair sunshine, is made to throw o'er what it looks on, the light shining upon itself.

In the meanwhile the Lady Arabella proceeded to a distant chamber, with an expression on her countenance very unlike what she had put on before the gentle Mabel, and as soon as she had opened the door, she gave way to a most unequivocal satirical sort of laugh. There was no one present but a gallant of a middle age, dressed in the foppery of the times, who had the look of confirmed dissoluteness which a long course of prodigal living usually bestows, and he was idling the time away by picking of his teeth, with the remnants of his recent meal before him. The room was nothing like so choicely furnished as those the lady had left, yet it had sufficient comfort in it to content any ordinary person.

"Ha! how flyeth the game, Moll?" exclaimed the gallant, on noticing the entrance of his visitor. "Doth she take the lure bravely? Cometh she fairly into the decoy? But I see by thy laughing she hath been so prettily mewed, that she careth not to ruffle her feathers against the golden wires of her cage."

"O, my life, thou hast hit it," replied the lady, as she threw herself into a chair. "The pretty fool is in such conceit of her splendid prison, she seemeth well content to stay in it all her days."

"She hath more wit than I have seen in her, if she can get it to last beyond a month or so," observed her companion; "then she may fly where she lists. But hast taken care to fill her sufficiently with my lord?" inquired he.

"To the very throat," answered the other. "Indeed, I have so crammed her with him, that it must needs take some hours ere she can require another meal."

"Nay, keep up her stomach, I prithee, Moll," cried the gallant, laughingly. "When my lord comes she may carve for herself. I shall start off on the instant, to acquaint him with the joyful intelligence, and ride like a post all the way; and I hope he will bountifully remember my monstrous pains to provide him with so dainty a leman; for in sober truth, my long ill luck at the cards, a murrain on them! hath left me as near bare of coin as a pig's tail is of feathers." So saying, with a laugh half stifled with a yawn, he rose from his seat, stretching his arms out to the near bursting of his doublet.

"As I live, I do look for some famous reward myself, or I would not be so intent upon the matter!" observed the lady; "and yet I marvel he should get so desperately enamored of a raw chit, that hath scarce sense enough to know that she walks upon two legs."

"Methinks he had better have taken to thee, Moll, eh?" inquired he, somewhat in a sarcastic manner, "Mass! there is exceeding little of the raw chit about thee, I'll warrant; and as for knowing, I would wager a dozen marks thou couldst spare a goodly share of thy knowledge, and yet be all the better for't."

"For which I have to thank thee, thou thrice accursed villain!" fiercely exclaimed his companion, starting into a sudden rage at the taunt. "I was well enough ere I listened to thy beguiling."

"Doubtless," coolly replied the other; "well enough for one that is no better. And as for beguiling, thou took it so readily, it

was clear 'twas an exceeding familiar acquaintance with thee."

"Thou lvest, thou paltry cozening knave!" cried the lady, looking monstrous black at him. "There could not be one more virtuous in this world ere I had such ill hap as to meet with thee."

"Marry, but I have huge doubts of that, Moll," said the gallant, quietly putting on his hat; "virtuousness such as thine must needs have been wonderfully cheap to the haver, for, as I well remember, I did but give thee a few pretty trinkets, a few pretty words, and a few pretty caresses, and thy virtue went to pieces, like a rotten apple under a cart-wheel."

"Why thou infamous pitiful wretch, how dost dare say such things of me!" exclaimed the Lady Arabella, looking as terribly indignant, and as horribly enraged, as a bad woman could, who is taunted with her infamy. "Thou hast had the villainy to plot my undoing—thou hast sought me, flattered, fondled, and betrayed me to ruin—day after day thou hast sworn thy honorableness and thy undying affection into my deluded ears, and I believing—poor fond fool!—thy prodigal oaths and protestations, left a worthy gentleman who loved me as his life—left home, friends, all things that were most worthy of my caring for, to cling to such baseness as I have here before me!"

"Well said, Moll, o' my life well said!" he observed, as if applauding her to the echo. "I read the same notable speech, word for word, in a book of jests I had t'other day of one of my lord's players. I should not have credited thy memory was so good."

"Get thee gone, thou pestilent jackal, to the lion thy master," cried his companion, with no little bitterness; "thy riotous ill-living hath brought thee to such a pass, that thou art a disgrace to thy family, and a shame to thy friends, and can only continue thy discreditable existence by coney-catching for some more prodigal villain than thyself." At hearing this the other took to whistling, yet he did it with so ill a grace, 'twas evident he was in no humor for music. "Out on thee, thou cozening rascal!" continued she, with increasing emphasis; "away, thou contemptible cheat! What new trick hast learned to take gulls by? Art not in a brave humor for stealing? Wouldst cut a purse—wouldst cog—wouldst foist—wouldst forswear thyself a thousand times? Go get thee a rope for thine own hanging, and thou wilt save the constables the trouble of carrying thee to the gallows!"

"Hold thy cursed prate, thou foul-mouth-

ed ronyon!" said the gallant, in that deep sort of voice which usually heralds a monstrous passion.

"Thou art a scurvy knave that would willingly do such dirty work as other men would scorn," replied the lady with infinite disgust.

"Away, thou callet!" exclaimed the other contemptuously. "Thou wouldst needs pass for a lady, forsooth, and hast a monstrous hankering after gentility. Fine o' my life! Moll Crupper a lady! Alack, for good manners! The saddler's daughter transformed into Lady Arabella Comfit. Here's goodly coney-catching! A fine morning to you, an' it please you, my lady! I commend myself very heartily to your ladyship's excellent consideration. Believe me I am infinitely bound to you for your ladyship's exquisite sweet condescension, and very humbly take my leave of your ladyship's most absolute and very admirable noble nature."

So saying her companion, with a profusion of mock respect, was making his way towards the door, when Moll Crupper, who liked so little to be minded of her bad disposedness, evidently liked less to be told of her low origin, for she darted from her chair with a violent execration, and sprung upon her accuser with the fury of a tigress, pulling him by the hair with one hand, whilst she curried his face famously with the other. But this was borne with anything save patience by the gallant. No lack of coarse abuse mingled with the commonest oaths accompanied her endeavors to do him hurt, till after twisting her wrists till she desisted of her attack, and cried out with the pain, he pushed her away from him with such force, that she fell on the floor as if every sign of life had fled. This put the gallant in some sort of fear, for he had many reasons for at that moment no great harm should happen to her, so he ran and lifted her up with an extraordinary show of affection. But the pretended lady was far from being dead. She knew what was going forward, and was disposed to take advantage of it, for she was well aware she could not exist without the assistance of her companion. She remained motionless as a stone, till her associate in villainy had exhausted every epithet of affection upon her and every species of execration upon himself. And then she gradually opened her eyes, gradually employed her limbs, and gradually found the use of her tongue, as she had been in the habit of doing during a long series of similar conflicts.

"What a wretch have I been to use thee

so uncivilly, my sweet life," said he, with all a lover's fondness, as she rose from the floor, half reclining in his arms, drawing her hands over her face with a look that bespoke a perfect unconsciousness of what had been going forward. "I know not what devilish spirit possesseth me. "'Slight, I could go and beat out my brains against a post, I feel such hatred of myself; for never truer woman lived than thou art, my dear Moll, and so exquisite a creature to love, I shall never meet anywhere."

"Nay, nay, I have been to blame, sweet heart," replied the fictitious Lady Arabella very kindly. "I had no need to have angered thee, for thou hast ever been a monstrous deal more good to me than I have deserved."

"Say not so, my wanton," exclaimed her companion with increased affectionateness. "Thy deserts are beyond all reckoning, and I hold thee in such absolute love as cannot cease unless my life be extinguished."

"Dear heart, how I love thee for saying that," cried she, in a perfect ecstasy. "Thou art a noble, bountiful, brave gentleman as ever breathed, and I care not a rush for the finest fellow that wears a head, for he can be nought in comparison with thy inestimable sweet goodness."

What followed may be readily imagined. Each of these two worthies, who a moment since joined so soundly in mutual abuse, and were desperate to do some mischief, now held up each other's qualities, as beyond all parallel, and would have gone through all manner of dangers to have saved the other from hurt. But these sort of scenes had been common with them for a long time past. They caressed, abused, and drubbed one another with infinite heartiness—and the next moment caressed, abused, and drubbed, and with more heartiness than ever. But it so happened on this occasion, having gone through the regular series, they left off at the first stage of the next, in consequence of the gallant being forced to take his departure without further delay.

CHAPTER XV.

*And then THE LOVER,
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress's eyebrow.*

SHAKESPEARE.

He coude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and
write.

So hote he loved that by nightertale
He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,
And carf before his fader at the table.

CHAUCER.

If I had wytt for to endyte
Off my lady both fayre and free,
Of her goodnesse then wolde I write—
Shall no man know her name for me.

OLD SONG.

SIR MARMADUKE DE LARGESSE, his worthy chaplain, and his old acquaintance the Antiquary, were sitting round a table in the library seemingly wonderfully intent upon something. The good old knight sat back in his seat with one hand upon the handle of his rapier, and the other resting upon the arm of his high-backed chair, his benevolent cheerful countenance impressed with a sort of curious pleasure, and his white beard and hair looking more silvery than ever they had. At a little distance from him sat Sir Johan, getting to be almost as lustily limbed as his patron, his plump sleek features proving he had as much reason to be as prodigally grateful to Providence as he had been at any time; and also exhibiting in his countenance a pleasant mingling of curiosity and satisfaction. Both of these gazed upon Master Peregrine, who, with as much of the pantaloon in his appearance as ever, sat forward leaning of his elbows on a large book open upon the table, his hands holding a paper, and his eyes peering through his spectacles with a marvellous gratification, sometimes at his companions, and anon at what he held in his hands.

"Never read I anything so sweetly fashioned!" exclaimed he. "I remember with what singular exquisite satisfaction I first read the most choice ballads of Fair Margaret and Sweet William, Lord Thomas and Fair Eleanor, and Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard, but the pleasure was nought in comparison with what I felt on perusing this most rare writing."

"Marry, give me Cherry Chace, or the Battle of Otterborne!" cried Sir Marmaduke. "I never hear a verse of either but it stirreth me like a very trumpet."

"I deny nothing of their excellence," observed the chaplain; "but who could for a

moment compare them with the inestimable sublimity of Pindar, the luscious sweetness of Anacreon, or the moving melodiousness of Musæus? I do assure you, that among the Greeks—to say nought of the Romans—there is such brave store of odes, songs, and elegies of the very choicest sort, as doth exceed all possible comprehension.”

“Tut, tut!” replied the antiquary, impatiently; “wouldst make me believe there hath ever been anything writ, or thought of, more gallant than Havelok the Dane, more pastoral than Harpalus, or more touching than Lady Greensleeves?”

“Beyond the possibility of doubting, worthy sir,” answered Sir Johan;—“there shall easily be found in Homer things more martial, in Theocritus things more natural, and in Sappho things more tender.”

“Passion o’ my heart! what hath become of thy wits, I wonder!” exclaimed Master Peregrine, in a manner between astonishment and indignation; “I marvel that thou shouldst essay to prove thyself such an addle brain.

“Nay, if any brains be addled, Master Peregrine, it must needs be your own,” replied the chaplain; for ’tis out of all sense and reason to slight the infinite choicer beauties of classic song for a parcel of silly old ditties.”

“Silly old ditties!” echoed the enraged antiquary, looking over his spectacles, as though he had a mind to do Sir Johan some grievous harm. “Is ‘Lustely, lustely let us saile forthe!’ a silly old ditty? Is ‘Kytt hath the lost hur key,’ a silly old ditty? Is ‘Jolly good Ale!’ a silly old ditty? Is Guy of Colbronde, or Sir Tristrem, or John Dory, or a thousand others of the like unmatched perfectness, silly old ditties? thou shallow-witted, ignorant, poor goose, thou!”

“I cry you mercy, my masters,” exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, good-humoredly, as he had oft done on many similar occasions. “When you get to talk of these matters, you are like unto two lusty bulls, who cannot enter the same pasture without going to loggerheads. Surely, in advocating the excellency of a thing, there is no argument in squabbling.”

“Silly old ditties!” repeated Master Peregrine, with considerable emphasis.

“For mine own part,” continued the knight, “though I will in no way seek to lessen the estimableness of the ancient writers, either Greek or Latin, some how or other these same old ballads afford me that rare pleasure I have never found in songs of a more classic sort.”

“Perchance, I am somewhat to blame, in

having expressed myself so slightly of such things,” observed Sir Johan, whose orthodoxy never led him to oppose his patron’s opinion; “I meant no offence, believe me. Indeed, I do opine some of these excellent fine ballads, so liked of my esteemed friend here, are of a wonderful delicate conception; but Providence, who is ever so exceeding bountiful, hath wisely ordained us different tastes, that one liking one thing, and another liking something different, no one thing should exist without being held in some estimation.”

“Silly old ditties!” Master Peregrine would have said again, but his better nature prevailed, and he swallowed the muttered words; yet, with an air of triumph, as if he thought himself on a par with one of his beloved heroes of the Round table.

“And now for that sweet song you have promised us,” exclaimed Sir Marmaduke; you have spoken of it so fairly I am all impatient to be hearing it.”

“O’ my word and so am I,” replied his chaplain, eagerly; “and as Master Peregrine hath such famous judgment in these matters, I doubt not he hath a rare treat in store for us.” At this compliment to his judgment, all trace of displeasure vanished from the features of the antiquary; and he said some civil speech, in modest denial of having more judgment than so learned a person as Sir Johan, took off his spectacles, wiped them carefully, replaced them, hemmed some twice or thrice, brought the paper somewhat closer to his nose, and with an appropriate serious manner read what is here set down:

THE POET’S SONG OF HIS SECRET LOVE.

“Upon the dainty grass I lay me down

When tired of labor on mine eyelids rest,

And then such glad solace I make my own,
As none can know, for none can be so
blessed.

For then my sweetening comes so gallantlie,
I cannot but conceive she loveth me.

I prythee tell me not of such bright fires

As burn by day or night in yon fair skies;

For when I bring her to my chaste desires

Sun, moon, and stars are shining in her eyes.

For then my sweetening, so well-favoredlie,
With Heaven-like gaze declares she loveth me!

The tender blossoms blush upon their bowers,

The luscious fruit hangs trembling by the
leaf:

But her rose-tinted cheek out-glowes all flowers,

Her cherry lips of fruits I prize the chief.

For then my sweetening so delightsomelie,
Doth take her oath upon’t, she loveth me!

Alack, what pity 'tis, such moving sight
Should cheat my heart within an idle dream!
'Tis fantasy that brings such loving light—
The fruit I never taste—but only seem:
Oh, would my sweeting in all honestie,
Vouchsafe to give some sign she loveth me!

I take no pleasure now in pleasant sports,
I find no profit in books old or new;
I hie me where my life's fair queen resorts,
For she's my pastime and my study too:
And of my sweeting, say I urgentlie—
What would I give to know she loveth me!

Yet though my heart with her so long hath
been,
I know not she takes heed of my behoof,
I gaze on her, yet care not to be seen—
I long to speak, and yet I keep aloof.
And whilst my sweeting fills my thoughts—
Perdie!
How oft I think—*perchance* she loveth me.

Wh'er I turn methinks I see her face,
If any lovely thing can there be found;
The air I breathe is haunted with her grace,
And with her looks the flowers peep from the
ground.
I pray my sweeting, very earnestlie,
She may incline to say she loveth me.

But when from all fair things I travel far,
Enwrapped within the shroud of darkest
night;
She rises through the shadows like a star,
And with her beauty maketh the place bright.
And of my sweeting breathe I tenderlie,
Fortune be kind, and prove she loveth me!"

"Indeed, 'tis a sweet ballad and a simple!"
exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, who had listened
with a famous attentiveness.

"And of a most chaste and delicate fancy,"
added his chaplain, who seemed not a whit
less pleased. "O' my word, it is long since
I have heard verses writ with so natural a
grace, or of so truly dainty a conceit. It
remindeth me of those exquisite simple,
tender poems, that are to be found here and
there scattered amongst productions of the
minor Greek poets."

"Dost not know by whom it is written,
Master Peregrine," inquired the old knight,
seemingly to prevent the scornful reply the
antiquary was about making to Sir Johan's
allusion to the superiority of the classic
writers.

"No, nor can I guess," answered Master
Peregrine; "I have never seen nor heard of
it before, and I am in some doubt as to its
exact age, yet I could venture to make a
guess from certain marks it hath, that it
cannot be later than the time of Henry the
Eighth."

"'Tis like enough," observed Sir Marmaduke. "Perchance, it may be one of those
same ballads our young scholar hath learned
of his mother, and hath copied for your
express delectation, left it in the book, and so
forgot it."

"Nay, that can scarce be," replied the
antiquary; for he hath oft times told me he
knew of no more than such as he had already
given."

Just at this moment, the conversation was
stopped by a knocking at the door, and the
entrance of the very person they were speak-
ing of, who received a hearty welcome from
all, but particularly from the good old knight.
William Shakspeare glanced around as if in
search of some one, but evidently by his
looks, he saw not the one he wanted.

"What, hast had a bout at cudgel play?"
exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, merrily, as he
noticed the bandage that still remained upon
William Shakspeare's wounded head. There-
upon, he presently told how he had got it,
which seemed to set them marvelling great-
ly, and the old knight was much moved at
hearing that the fair creature he had helped
to save from villains at Kenilworth was now
completely in their power. He kept asking
of questions about which way they went,
and what sort of persons were they, inter-
mingled with expressions of grief for the
fate of the pretty damsel, and of hostility
against her betrayers. He got, however,
but indifferent answers, for in truth the youth
knew a very little more than himself. Mas-
ter Peregrine, whose appreciation of ballads
was much higher than that of women, man-
ifested no inconsiderable impatience at this
turn in the conversation.

"Will Shakspeare!" cried he, at last;
"Prithce come here; I want thee awhile."
The young student left Sir Marmaduke, and
approached close to the antiquary. "Thou
wilt do me a service, if thou wilt tell me
where gottest thou this ballad." William
Shakspeare glanced his eye at the paper,
and on the instant, a very perceptible blush
mantled his fair features. "Where didst
have it from?"

"I wrote it, an' it please you, worthy sir,"
answered the young student, somewhat fal-
teringly.

"Ay, 'tis in thy hand, I see; but whence
came it?" inquired the other, more urgently.

"By'r lady, I do suspect the young rogue
hath made it of his own invention," exclaim-
ed the old knight.

"So think I," added the chaplain.

"Ey; dost mean to say these delicate
verses are out of thine own head?" cried
the antiquary, in exceeding astonishment.

"Indeed, they are truly of my poor inditing," replied the young poet, modestly. Scarce were the words well out of his mouth when Master Peregrine, in an ecstasy of admiration, threw his arms round his neck, and hugged him as though he were a prodigal son returned to his old father after a long absence.

"Why thou delectable sweet rogue!" exclaimed he, "where didst get such admirable choice ideas?"

"Methinks 'tis plain enough whence they proceeded," observed Sir Johan, with marvellous satisfaction. "I have taken huge pains for some length of time our young friend should have a proper acquaintance with the treasures of classic song, both Greek and 'tis an easy matter to see how much my scholar hath profited by my instruction: for, as I said when I first heard those verses, they do remind me powerfully of some specimens of the minor Greek poets."

"Remind thee of a fig's end!" exclaimed Master Peregrine, contemptuously. "Cannot any one see with half an eye—save those ignorant poor coxcombs who are blind as bats—that this is a true ballad of the choice old school; and it is not well known what extreme pains-taking I have had with this my scholar from the first, that he should be well-grounded in ballad lore; and lo! here is my reward—which in very truth, exceedeth my most sanguine expectations."

"Nay, I will be bound by his answer," said the chaplain, not at all disposed to give up the honor of having produced so creditable a scholar. "Prithee declare, my excellent young friend, whether I have not, at all convenient times, bespoke thy commendation of all that was most admirable in classic song?"

"That have you, honored sir, and I thank you very heartily," replied the youthful Shakspeare. Sir Johan looked satisfied.

"And tell me this, my king of nightingales," cried Master Peregrine, too confident of his own right to allow of being deprived of them. "Have I not taken opportunity by the hand with thee, to make thee familiar with the rarest ballads that ever were writ?"

"Indeed you have, worthy sir, and I shall feel beholden to you all my life long," answered the young poet. Sir Guy never looked so triumphant as did our antiquary.

"I will maintain, those verses are of the true lyric fashion," observed Sir Johan, "and therefore they cannot help being the result of an acquaintance with their classic prototype."

"Classic pudding!" exclaimed Master Peregrine, getting to be somewhat in a rage.

"If any will prove to me these verses are Greek verses, or Latin verses either, then will I allow they came of such teaching; but since it is plain to common sense, that what I here hold is a ballad, and, moreover, an English ballad of the true, simple, graceful, chaste style of English ballad writing, methinks it shall want no conjuror to say it had its origin in that inimitable famous school, and oweth not one jot to Greek or Latin, or any such pitiful, poor, weak, dull, shallow, unprofitable rubbish."

"Rubbish!" cried the chaplain, astonished and indignant in no small measure; and he would doubtless have expressed himself with some force to that effect, had not Sir Marmaduke at that moment stopped him, by asking William Shakspeare if he had written anything of the sort before. To which he replied it was his first attempt; and to further questions answered, he had been reading of some choice love songs, and all at once he had a great desire to essay something of a like kind. Thereupon he got paper, and with a pen wrote those lines, which, not thinking much of, he had left in the book, intending to try and do something better at another time. This made all marvel greatly.

Certes, it was far out of ordinary things to find one, still a boy as it might be said, wooing of the Muses in such proper style. Yet, though none saw it, there had been gradual preparation of this for some time. The youthful poet had held communion with the philosophy of nature for years past, through that spirit of intelligence which breathes o'er all which belongeth to the beautiful and the good. He had laid down to dream of it; he had woke up to worship it. Wherever he went he beheld its presence. In all seasons he had felt its influence. The voices of the murmuring river called to him in his solitude—the shadows of the deep dark woods fell upon his thoughts—the opening glade, the far-off hills, and the fair skies, in all their glorious pageantry, haunted his hours of rest—the silent night rung with the echoes of a thousand songs tuned by the rarest band of forest choristers, and even in the chilliest winter, when the trees bear naught but icicles, and the hard ground is smothered with frost and snow, where'er he walked the choicest flowers bloomed in their most fragrant robes—the sun smiled lovingly before his eyes; and verdure, sweetness, and beauty, made for him, all around, a garden of the very exquisitest delight.

But of late he had felt a something more than this; all the lovingest things of nature

he had made of his familiar acquaintance, and had found in them such wisdom as nature never hath bestowed elsewhere; but to comprehend this wisdom in its fullest meaning required the assistance of an interpreter. This interpreter was Love. This Love though, let it be known, as yet he was content with knowing at a distance. He had seen of him but little, just enough to know him by, and liked not appearing too bold a visitor, but rather a respectful acquaintance or humble poor friend, that would be glad of some help, but dare not, out of reverence, attempt any such familiarity as the acquainting him with his wants. Nevertheless he had managed in this slight companionship to acquire at his hands some small portion of that power which argueth a knowledge of all 'natural wisdom—and that was poetry. It had made its appearance like a fresh pure spring trickling in the delicatest, clearest drops down a fair hill covered with verdure and studded with all manner of sweet blossoms; and now having it at its source, all that is to be done is to trace the progress of the stream, till it rushed a mighty river into the great ocean of immortality.

Finding that Sir Valentine had gone to join a hunting party some miles off, the young poet bent his steps homewards in great trouble of mind, because he knew not what to do regarding the poor foundling. As he was crossing the field, so lost in his musings as to be perfectly regardless of all other things, on a sudden a pair of hands from some one behind caught him round the head and blindfolded him, and a loud laugh burst from several voices, after that fashion used by boys when they have succeeded in playing off any famous drollery.

"Now Will!" cried one, "use thy wits, I prithee, and tell us who hath hold of thee?"

"Nay, let me hear the voice," replied William Shakspeare, taking their pleasantry in very good part, though he felt not in the humor to join in it as heartily as he was wont.

"Odds codlings, that thou shalt, I'll warrant," answered a trembling old woman's voice close behind him; "for as I was a saying no later than the week before last Martlemas, over a brave fire in the chimney corner of Neighbor Bavins —"

"Why, Mother Flytrap!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, who had listened in exceeding astonishment, "how didst get so close to me and I not know it?" At this the laugh was louder than before.

"Here is a vile world!" cried some one in the dismalest tones ever heard; "here is

a monstrous villainy! How darest thou to do such intolerable wickedness as to play the infamous game of hot-cockles in so holy a place as the church-yard?"

"I, Oliver Dumps!" exclaimed the blinded youth in huge consternation: "believe me, I have not played at hot-cockles this many a day." Whereupon the young rogues appeared as though they would have rolled themselves in the grass they enjoyed themselves to such excess.

"An' it pul-pul-pul-pul please you," stutted another familiar voice, "mum-mum-mum-mum master says, he wer-wer-wer-wer wants you to send him word—wer-wer-wer-wer what sixpenny gloves are a pair!"

"Why, sixpence, to be sure, Dickon," replied the other. "But I have a monstrous suspicion thou hast been sent on a fool's errand." Upon this all laughed so long and loudly, it looked as if there would be no end to their mirth.

"O' my life, now here is Tom Greene at his tricks again!" said William Shakspeare all at once, for the other had betrayed himself by vainly attempting to stifle his laughter, and at this the hands were taken off his eyes amidst the uproarious shouting of the whole party, and turning round, he beheld his old schoolfellows, Greene, Burbage, Condell, and Hemings, staggering about with all sorts of strange motions, and filling the air with peal after peal of laughing.

"I was thinking of another matter, Tom," said the youthful Shakspeare, "else should I have found thee out much sooner, for all thou art so famous a mimic."

"Was ever so rare a jest played!" exclaimed one with a handsome cheerful countenance. "No hungry luce ever took a hooked gudgeon more unsuspectingly than did Will Tom's well-managed baits. Mother Flytrap, Oliver Dumps, and stuttering Dickon, he would have sworn were behind him with as little remorse as a pig eats chesnuts; yet I will forswear pippins and marchpane if any other spoke save Tom Greene."

"I'faith! the cheat was well managed, Dick, I will allow," answered young Will; "but Tom is so Proteus a varlet, 'tis an easy matter for him to play the old woman, or perchance make such a wittol of himself as Dickon, or even take off the melancholy constable till such time as the melancholy constable may choose to take off him."

"What, wouldst have me in the stocks, thou rogue!" exclaimed Tom very merrily. "Marry! I like not such hose to my legs. But come, let us play a play, Will; we have not had that pleasant pastime of ours for weeks past"

"A play, Will—a play, I prithee!" cried Dick Burbage. "We have been looking for thee far and near, for I have got me a right mirthful interlude which my father ha'th left behind him, and if thou wilt take a part, we will do it in brave style, I warrant."

"Nay, let us have Gammer Gurton again!" said a stout sturdy little fellow, rather urgently.

"Thou art ever for playing Gammer Gurton, Condell," observed a tall, sharp-looking boy. "Let us have that goodly play of the Four P's. Will Shakspeare can do the Poticary, Dick Burbage the Pedlar, Tom Greene the Pardoner, and I the Palmer."

"And prithee, what shall I do in it, Hemings?" asked Condell.

"As I live, thou shalt have enough to do!" replied his companion; "for thou shalt play the part of all the spectators." At hearing this there was another good laugh amongst them.

"At present I have neither time nor humor for playing," answered William Shakspeare; "nor can I tarry a moment longer, for pressing matters hurry me away." This answer was evidently but little relished by any of the party, and they tried no lack of entreaties and persuasion to get him to join in their sports. Nevertheless they could not prevail in any way, and finding such to be the case, they parted with him at the top of Henley-street, and straightway made for a field called Salisbury-piece to have a play by themselves.

John Shakspeare had been enquiring of the neighbors the whole morning long; but getting no intelligence of his son, he had returned with a little misgiving to his anxious wife. With her he found the Widow Pippins, in as merry a mood as ever, and Mistress Malmsey and Mistress Dowlas looking with such kindness and comeliness as if they never intended to lessen the pleasantness of their features or behavior; and they had stepped in, hearing that William was not to be found, to offer their advice and sympathy, and hopes for the best, to their somewhat desponding neighbor. The widow had just described an exquisite jest she had played upon a drunken falconer, by abstracting the game from his bag, and putting therein a litter of kittens she had drowned the day before, and the aldermen's wives were laughing heartily to induce their sad hearted gossip to follow their goodly example. At this moment returned John Shakspeare from his fruitless errand, who was assailed by a whole succession of questions from all the women, to which his answers appeared in no way satisfactory, for

though they spoke very forcible their convictions, he was in this place or in that, beyond all contradiction, they marvelled exceedingly where he could have got to.

"It is so little like him to play the truant with us," observed Dame Shakspeare, striving to appear more satisfied with the matter than she was. "Indeed, he giveth me but small cause of blame, save that he will sometimes be poring over a book when he should be taking of his proper rest."

"Well, it doth puzzle me famously to know what some folks see in books," said the merry widow. "For mine own part, I care not for the best that ever was writ, unless it be a book of jests or riddles, and then I must have some one to read them, for reading never took to me, and therefore 'tis natural I never took to reading. By my troth, now I do remember a fine jest as ever was played upon Sir Nathaniel, with a certain book of riddles that was left at my house by a strolling minstrel."

The widow Pippins had scarce commenced her narrative, when the door opened, and he whom they had been in such travail about, made his appearance. All manner of exclamations saluted his entrance; some began to scold, and some to question, but he took no heed of them till he had received his mother's caresses, and then very readily made them acquainted with all that had happened to him. Here was famous matter for marvelling, and none of the gossips allowed it to lie idle on their hands. The aldermen's wives, who knew every body and everything, entered into a famous history of Mabel. As for the forcible abduction, some considered it done by the parents to recover their child secretly, others suspected it was a scheme of Tom Lucy, assisted by some of his college companions as wild as himself, with no honest intention, but the widow stuck out it was nothing more than a jest of Sir Thomas' to afford himself a new subject for boasting of his marvellous cleverness in the playing of tricks.

Having exhausted all they had to say upon the subject, the gossips took their departure, and John Shakspeare was left to the society of his wife and children. Of him it may be necessary here to say, he had gone on struggling, but the same reverses met all his exertions. He could scarce get a living even in the humblest manner, and he was often reduced to the saddest shifts that poverty can endure, but he went on with the same resolution, making no complaint to any, and striving to appear as contented as the rest. As for John a Combe, he proceeded much in the same way—unsocial, uncharita-

ble, careless of his own comforts, and heedless of that of others—never opening his mouth to any person, save in the way of business, unless to breathe such bitterness of heart as showed the fearful change that had come over his once noble and generous nature. But what had worked this fearful change none knew. The effects were terribly conspicuous. Every one beheld them and grieved at them; and put up with his uncivility out of respect for the honorableness of his behavior at an earlier time. Yet of the cause the most knowing of the gossips of the town knew nothing whatever. They marvelled more and more every day, till its commonness took off the edge of their wonder.

CHAPTER XVI.

The subject of all verse
Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother.

BEN JONSON.

Give place, ye lovers, here before
That spent your boasts and brags in vain;
My lady's beauty passeth more
The best of yours, I dare well faine,
Than doth the sun the candle light,
Or brightest day the darkest night,

LORD SURREY.

Art thou my son, that miracle of wit,
Who once, within these three months, wert esteemed

A wonder of thine age throughout Bononia?
How did the university applaud
Thy government, behavior, learning, speech,
Sweetness, and all that could make up a man!"

FORD.

Both flowers and weeds spring when the sun is warm,

And great men do great good or else great harm.

WEBSTER.

In an ante-room adjoining of the Queen's presence-chamber, in her highness's palace of Nonsuch, there was a famous company of lords and ladies in different groups. Here would be a famous party of gallants paying of their court to the fairest of the throng, whereof the greater number were exceeding fair, and she was no other than Lady Rich, usually styled "The beautiful Lady Rich," and well she deserved so admirable a title, for nought could exceed the sweet exquisiteness with which the lily and the rose united their choicest graces to deck her delicate cheek; or the soft subduing light that shone so delightfully within the fountains of her radiant looks. All her features were of the

same unrivalled perfectness, and over them the spirit of beauty breathed so wooingly, that such as gazed upon the temple were irresistibly drawn there to pay their devotions. Foremost in the circle of her admirers was one who, by the choiceness of his dress, the neatness of his speech, and the studied courtliness of his manner, was manifestly born only to shine in the atmosphere of a court. Every thing about him spoke the desire to please, and the ready smile that accompanied the delicate flattery, appeared to prove how aptly he could receive pleasure of another. This was Sir Christopher Hatton, the very mirror of courtesy and text-book of compliment, and the most finished courtier of his day. His apparel was not more dainty than his phrases, and his behavior was of a kind fittest to accord with both. He moved as though he thought himself under the eyes of the graces, having every gesture so properly produced, it went not a hair's breadth from the most graceful position that could be accomplished under the circumstances. His features were so fashioned as to make all fair weather in his calendar. The sun shone every day in the week. There was no winter, no clouds, no eclipses. He would as soon have hanged himself as frowned.—He would sooner have thrown himself into the Thames river than allowed an uncivil word to escape him. What was his age it would be difficult to guess with any exactness, for as he had been heard to say he considered age to be an exceeding vulgar fellow with whom he would hold no acquaintance, it is possible he disguised himself as much as he could to prevent his being known by so rude a person.

But Sir Christopher was not without possessing something of other talent beside the courtly accomplishments of fencing, dancing, and compliment, nevertheless his whole ambition was to apply such gift as part of the necessary appliances of a courtier, and he never made use of it, save only to help him at a pinch to exhibit his continual desire to please. About him were divers gallants and young gentlemen of the palace, who looked up to him as their model, and framed their speech, their apparel, and their behavior as nigh as might be to their great original. His last phrase by their means travelled quickly to all persons choice in their speech; and it was by the same assistance the last new step of his came into use amongst such as wished to be considered the very fashionablest dancers of the time.

In the recess of a window that looked out upon the grounds were another group, the

cyonure of which appeared to be a lady of a most delectable presence, whose ample delicate forehead and intelligent gaze, gave token of as rare a mind as ever was worthy of the choicest and beautifullest framing.—She was a notable instance of woman's perfectness—whose moving graces created the exquisitest thoughts in the minds of those gifted ones who came within their influence; but the poetry of her own nature was full as exquisite as any that she called into being. Her voice breathed its very atmosphere—and her eyes were such bright casements, within which it hath ever loved to find its home. It is no marvel then she should be so much the admiration of all true lovers of excellence—that her good opinion should be so much coveted of such as sought after praise that is the most valuable, or that her smiles made wherever she went a midsummer garden of the mind's unfading flowers. Methinks 'tis scarce necessary to add that her perfect modesty kept worthy companionship with her noble mind, for it may be taken as an indisputable truth that high intelligence doth ever signify the presence of moral feelings equally exalted. Be sure that where the mind displays itself in its most sterling character, there is no alloy of any baseness. It is clean impossible it can be otherwise, for however it may sometimes seem, nature alloweth of no such unnatural alliances. Signs of great intellect may appear where want of goodness is equally manifest, but the former of these signs on close scrutiny, turn out to be not so admirable as they look—in fact, instead of being the sterling gold in its native purity, they are only such ores as require so much cleansing to put them into use, as will hardly repay the labor. It may perchance have been found, that this preciousness hath had a bad look with it, but it only followeth of the rubs it may get of such base things as it may come in contact with. It is still as sterling as ever, despite appearances; and fair usage will keep it in that brightness it ought always to wear.

Leaning affectionately over the countess's chair, was a young gallant of a like noble brow, and of an aspect somewhat similar in its intelligent expression. There was something more of gravity, and there was something less of sweetness in the countenance, yet there were the same highmindedness beaming out of the sparkling eyes, and a similar thoughtful eloquence smiling around the corners of the delicate mouth. It was easy to be seen by this likeness and by the tender familiarity with which one behaved to the other, that they stood in some relationship.

They were brother and sister. Such a brother and sister as the world sees not in many ages,—perchance, may never see again, for they were not more alike in the admirableness of their outward lineaments, than they were in all manner of moral and mental qualities.

Where shall we meet with another Countess of Pembroke,—the ready patroness of merit, yet outshining all merit with her own—ever ready to pay her homage to virtue, yet in herself possessing such virtue as exceeded all other examples? And where shall we look for another Sir Philip Sydney—the soul of honor, the spirit of chivalry, the courtliest among the courtly, and the bravest among the brave—though scarcely in the full dawning of his manhood, his wisdom went beyond that of the most experienced counsellors, and though formed by the choicest gifts of nature to fill the proudest seats in the chiefest places of greatness, his ambition never went beyond the performing of valiant and generous deeds, writing worthily on honorable subjects, living with a proper respect, and dying with a becoming nobleness. In him knighthood possessed its last and rarest ornament, and manhood one of its most admirable examples. Genius acknowledged him as her son, and honor claimed him as her champion; and every virtue that could grace humanity, where all in him that was human was of so gracious a nature, might justly have put forth a boast, that in him they showed to the world how well they could adorn a man.

It may readily be imagined that this truly gallant gentleman was the love, the model, and the admiration of all the gallant hearts of his age. Indeed, by such as possessed the genuine chivalrous spirit, he was regarded as a sort of deity. They considered no station so great as to be of his acquaintance, and no honor so estimable as to have his praise. It therefore followeth very naturally that Sir Reginald and Sir Valentine should have eagerly sought his friendship, the which their valor and honorable conduct had gained for them; and this known, it is in no way surprising the former of these young knights should now be standing at his elbow, joining in the conversation with Master Arthur Gorges, a young gallant of great worthiness,—my Lord Buckhurst, a nobleman favorably known to the muses, and divers other knights and nobles, whose love of song went hand in hand with their admiration of true valor.

Besides these there were a great crowd of nobles, knights, and ladies, gallants, courtiers, officers of the queen's household, com-

manders by sea and land, learned judges, grave prelates, and others of her highness's loving subjects of different ranks and conditions, intent upon paying of their court to their sovereign, as soon as she concluded her audience with certain ambassadors with whom she was now closeted. There was a great variety in the colors of the different rich stuffs, but with the exception of some few in their robes, every gallant wore the same fashioned doublet, trunks, hose, and shoe-roses, and every lady the same long-stomached dress with a stiff poking-out farthingale. Some were whiling the time by admiring the figures on the cloth of tissue. The commanders were conversing of the famous good fortune of Sir Francis Drake, in his last voyage. The ministers were speculating on the probability of the queen's marriage with the Duke of Anjou. The courtiers amused themselves with tales concerning of the differences between my Lord of Leicester and the Earl of Sussex. The gallants were putting off their last learned graces of behavior on such of the fair dames they could get to heed them. The ladies were conversing either of the newest Venetian fashion, or the latest jest of Master Tarleton, her highness's jester. And the judges and prelates were lamenting together the intolerable evils of witchcraft and papistry; but the circle around the Countess of Pembroke and Sir Philip Sydney were bewiling the hour in a manner more profitable to themselves than did any of the others, as I will here endeavor to show.

"Touching the capabilities of our nature," observed that illustrious scholar, "I am inclined to believe there is no greatness it may not aim at. But there can be no true greatness independent of the affections, for these are the springs that do refresh the ground, and make it bear the noblest and choicest plants at all proper seasons."

"I cannot help thinking the same thing," added his sister. "Perchance there have been philosophers to whom all such feeling as love appeared utterly unknown; they might have scoffed at it in themselves and ridiculed it in others; but such examples should be looked upon as the result of unnatural circumstances—like unto flowers that lose their color by growing in the dark—or fruits that part with their flavor by being planted in an improper climate. That is sure to be the truest wisdom that cometh of the most benevolent mind, for it embraces the whole world with some everlasting truth which hath universal happiness for its object; whilst the philosophy of such as have no such feeling in their hearts can be born only

of books; they are mere scholars that have no better object in view than raising themselves above their fellows, instead of striving to raise themselves up to them. Such a philosopher attains celebrity only by feeding on those who went before him:—his cunning is of a like kind with that of the serpent of Moses, which swallowed up all the rest."

"Just so," said Sir Philip Sydney; "for if we notice how love works upon the mind, we shall readily come at the philosophy of the affections. Taking the two examples of this feeling in ordinary acceptance, to wit, the lover and the philanthropist, we immediately see how generous love hath made them in their notions,—the one is ready to undertake any danger in the conviction of his mistress's superiority to all her sex; the other would make any sacrifice to benefit those who required his assistance, in the express belief of the worthiness of the whole human race. The valor of love is equal to its generosity; and methinks these twins of comeliness will be found together in every example of a true knight and complete gentleman. Nothing can be so valiant as love, which makes so undeniable the Latin adage which declareth that love conquereth all things,—for love hath achieved the brightest deeds that are the glory of chivalry. But as love granteth whatever is most admirable to the object of its regard, it seeketh by all honorable means to make itself of a like perfectness; and is thus by degrees led to the attainment of the noblest offices, and to the possession of the most honorable accomplishments that can be acquired."

"So I have thought, though, as must needs be not in so excellent a fashion!" observed Sir Reginald.

"But surely there is a vast distinction between what is called gallantry and genuine affection?" exclaimed Lord Buckhurst. "There are hundreds of fine popinjays to be met with, protesting a monstrous affectionateness for every woman they meet, and I never saw in them any of the virtues of which you spoke."

"So there are hundreds that affect great religiousness," observed Sir Philip Sydney, "which is done not out of any true reverence, but merely because it is the fashion. But genuine gallantry is of an exceeding different nature. It is of a kin with that ancient worship that honored all deities alike. Nevertheless, even in these instances there will be found a niche in the temple of the heart dedicated to the service of some unknown god; and throughout the whole nature there exists a continual anxiousness to have that place worthily supplied. In

good time such desire is accomplished; and be assured, the idol there placed hath more worship than all the rest together."

"The true worship of love is goodness," added the Countess; "and it is a sign by which genuine affection may always be distinguished from mere profession. True love is purity, honesty, truth, honor, courtesy, and bravery confessed in action. Where there is any meanness, where there is any selfishness, where there is ought of falsehood, immodesty, uncivility, cowardice, or villainy, love never abideth. Doubtless some may assert this sweetener of life hath been found with some such base accompaniments as I have just named; but out of all doubt the latter is entirely different, and should be avoided for its unwholesomeness. It is like unto such honey as divers sorts of wild bees have been known to make from poisonous flowers."

"But how rarely shall we find this love in all its perfectness and purity!" exclaimed Lord Buckhurst.

"Nay, my good lord, it is none so rare!" replied Sir Reginald, with some earnestness. "Wherever woman hath a fair field for the development of her infinite perfections, such love will follow, as naturally as light springs from the sun; and to a knowledge of these absolute graces originated that proud sense of honor, and true nobleness of feeling in man, which hath done such famous achievements throughout Christendom, under the estimable name of chivalry."

"True, Sir Reginald," observed Sir Philip Sydney, with a glance of approbation at his young friend. "There are two states of society, in all outward appearance as far asunder as are the poles—where true love is ever to be met with. The one is the courtly empire of knights and ladies, which produceth the gallantest deeds and the honorablest behavior—the other is the simple republic of shepherds and shepherdesses, where innocence is crowned with a garland of the freshest flowers of the field, and honesty jogs merrily along, enjoying the pleasant minstrelsy of the pipe and tabour."

"Which think you, is the happiest state?" inquired Master Arthur Gorges.

"That in which the wants are the fewest, and the desires of easiest attainment," replied the other. "It is doubtful to which we ought to give the preference. Happiness may exist indifferently in either state; but according to what we know of Arcadian manners, these same swains and nymphs must have enjoyed the most blameless sweet life ever heard of. I cannot imagine any more moving picture than a choice company of such, tending of their woolly

flocks in the fresh pastures—or in the cool eventide dancing away the joyous hours, with their sweet music; whilst in some green arbor nigh at hand, the enamored Colin whispers a love tale to his blushing Daphne, and the seniors of the village sit under the shadow of the friendly trees, quaffing the rich juices of their vineyards, and telling of marvellous stories and merry jests."

"Ha! cousin Philip, art there again!" exclaimed the Earl of Leicester in a pleasant manner, as he entered the circle, clothed with such gorgeousness as far exceeded all the tiring around. "Why thy moving descriptions of Arcadian life will presently make all persons of worship in a frenzy to attain the like happiness. My Lord Burghley sweareth he hath serious thoughts of retiring from court, and keeping sheep at Theobalds. Sir Christopher Hatton hath been heard, for hours together, practising on a small pipe, in hopes of getting the queen's ladies to dance to his piping in the true rural style; and as for myself, I have been looking for weeks past for a crook and a shepherdess, that I may in the very properest manner sit me down in some enamelled plain, and there happily live out the remainder of my days, dividing of my cares betwixt my lambs and my love."

"Methinks, my lord, you would soon pine for the pleasant pageantries you had left behind," observed the countess, with a smile.

"The gentle shepherd would be ever a sighing to be once again the most accomplished knight in the tourney," added Sir Philip Sydney with a like pleasantness. "He would be right glad to change his seat on the enamelled plain for the saddle of his good steed—his crook for a spear—his flock for a company of valiant knights—and his faithful shepherdess for as many fair ladies as he could get to witness his admirable matchless prowess."

"Nay, prithee try me ere I am condemned," answered the earl, laughingly. "I doubt hugely I should be so easily tired. For is there not a famous variety of amusements? Could I not delight myself by carving of my true love's name wherever I could, till there should be found more Chloes on a tree than acorns? and then would I not sing such songs against the rival swains of her unmatchable rare beauties, that they should be dumb ever after; and play on my pipe till the feathered choristers of the grove would hold themselves silent to learn of my wondrous skill."

"Perchance it may be so, my good lord," said the countess in the same good humor;

"but take it not as a want of courtesy in me, if I doubt the possibility of so great a marvel."

"Now, without flattery, never met I so perfect a disbeliever," exclaimed Leicester, gallantly. "I would the fates had so ordered it as to have made the Countess of Pembroke an Arcadian shepherdess, and I her scarce worthy, yet too happy swain. Methinks so enviable a lot exceedeth all honor of chivalry; and whether in the valley or the grove, at the dance, or tending of my flock, believe me the enjoyment of such rare happiness would put out of mind, as things only to be despised, such poor pleasures and distinctions as I have now in my possession."

"I am bound to you, my lord, for entertaining of such thoughts," replied his accomplished companion, courteously; "yet am I still of opinion, the noble place you now occupy would content you more than the most perfect state of shepherd life that is to be found. For as it is, you have in your power infinite opportunities of doing good, by affording your counsel and assistance to all such worthy objects as may require it; whilst by your prominence in the public eye, you can, by acting as becomes your dignity, be an example of honor that ever honorable nature would be glad to copy."

"Such I will strive to be with all my heart," exclaimed the Earl, with a seeming great sincerity. "Indeed the most pleasurable part of the high station in which fortune, rather than my poor ability, hath placed me, I find to consist in the benefits I am enabled to confer on deserving persons. Nothing delighteth me more than to honor merit as it deserves; and I would gladly go out of my way any distance to meet with some worthy creature whom I could make happy."

Every one was famously pleased at hearing of so proper a speech from the Queen's favorite; but such was his usual manner, and such his customary words.

"Finding you, my good lord, in this happy mood," observed Sir Philip Sydney, "I would crave your countenance in behalf of a worthy friend of mine, who would be right proud of possessing it."

"Say who he is, and be assured of his merits receiving proper attention at my hands," said Leicester.

"His name is Edmund Spenser," replied the other; "and I look upon him to be as true a poet as ever wrote verse."

"Prithee bring him to me whenever it suits you," said the Earl, in his most winning manner. "I am all impatient to be

acquainted with one who hath acquired such high honor as to be so lauded of Sir Philip Sydney."

"Believe me, my brother hath said no more than the worthiness of Master Spenser gives him title to," added the Countess. "As far as I am capable of judging, he is one whom future ages will delight to reverence."

"I'faith, this Master Spenser hath great good fortune, methinks, to have his merits so approved by two such absolute judges," cried Leicester. "O' me life, I shall not be content till he number me among his friends. But though I am exceeding loth to leave such delectable society, I must fain hie me hence."

He had scarce uttered these words when he felt a nudge at his elbow, and, looking round, his eyes evidently met a familiar face, for, with a cheerful countenance, he called out, "Ha! Tarleton, what news?" The person he had so addressed, had a merry eye and a ruddy countenance; and in figure stood rather under the middle size—the which was neatly garmented in a suit of Lincoln green. This was no other than Tarleton the player, who was in such esteem of the Queen for his many witty jests, that it was thought of some he had as much influence with her as any man living. Being so great a favorite, he was allowed to do much as he pleased; and if his wit smacked of some sharpness, few were so unwise as outwardly to take offence at it. Then he had with him so odd a way of saying his drolleries, that he forced many to laugh who liked not being trifled with.

"News, quotha!" replied the jester, after his comicallest manner; "ay, great news, I warrant. An honest intelligencer of my acquaintance told me, my Lord of Leicester was about going on an embassy to Prester John, with a suit of motley for his wear, and a case of toothpicks to hide in his beard."

"Marry, that is news indeed," answered Leicester, somewhat seriously; "and peradventure it came of the same honest intelligencer who assured me that one Tarleton, a player, stood in great likelihood of being committed to Bridewell for allowing of his wit to run foul of his discretion."

"Nay, o' my life, that is no news!" exclaimed the undaunted jester, "I have heard it this ten year; and the last time it was said in my hearing, there was added to it that my Lord of Leicester might have taken offence at the merry player, only the generosity of his nature put him above such ungraciousness."

"I tell thee what, Master Tarleton," said the Earl, taking the other's humor very pleasantly, "there seemeth to be what learned mediciners call sympathy, in the effects of thy wit—for the weapon that makes the wound can as readily perform the cure."

"O' my life, yes, an' it please you, my lord," replied the jester, making of a mock doleful face exceeding ludicrous. "But my curing hath in it more of the cook than the chirurgeon—for it seemeth to be ever a getting me into a famous pickle." Thereupon there was a manifest sign of laughing in every face that stood within ear-shot.

"Peradventure that accounteth for the attic saltness of thy jests," observed Sir Philip Sydney.

"Ay, and if he selleth his wit he must needs be a salt-cellar," added Lord Buckhurst.

"Troth, then, let those who are below the salt look to their manners," said Master Tarleton. "But touching this conceit of the salt, if it is so, I shall be forced to keep me a respectful distance, else will every lewd fellow be taking a pinch of me with which to savor his porridge."

"Then will he have more wit in his porridge than ever he had in his head," said Leicester, good humoredly. "Take such pinches as lovingly as thou canst, Master Jester, for methinks 'tis this very saltness which keepeth thy wit so long good."

"I promise you," replied Master Tarleton. "But peradventure too much of that savor is like to get me the reputation of a dry wit."

"Nay, before thou canst be properly dried, thou must stand a good hanging," rejoined the Earl, with a laugh in which all joined.

"O' my life, I would as soon be put to the rack at once," said the Jester, "and, in truth, I protest against being used so pigginshly."

"Truly, thou art hard to please!" rejoined the Earl, and then graciously taking his farewell of the Countess and her party, he sauntered along on his way to the Queen's chamber. The courtiers thronged to pay their respects, and commanders, prelates, judges, and other dignitaries, seemed all alike anxious to gain his attention. Some were petitioners for his influence, others came to thank him for some favor conferred, and to all he was alike courteous;—listening patiently and answering graciously; and as he went, took with him the good wishes of those he left behind. Spying the beautiful Lady Rich, encircled by her usual throng of admirers, he quickly made his way to her side, and soon proved himself the most

accomplished gallant of them all. The compliments of others were insipid, in comparison with such as he offered, and the lovely object of them appeared to appreciate the distinction, for he received her most winning smiles.

"Many take me to be of some wealth," observed he to her, in that resistless sweet passion he was so famed for; "but when I make comparisons, I cannot help thinking myself in a very monstrous poverty. It is long since I have beheld the poorness of my state, and envied some their greater fortune; yet I can say, in all honesty, were I Rich now, I should be rich indeed."

"Truly, I know not who should thank you most for that pretty speech of yours, my lord or myself," replied the beautiful creature, with one of her exquisite looks.

"I protest 'tis a very delicate choice conceit," said Sir Christopher Hatton, with his customary elegance of manner, as he raised a gold pouncet box to his nose; "infinitely worthy of my Lord of Leicester, his extreme sufficiency of wit; and absolutely corresponding with my Lady Rich, her rare prodigality of merit." Whilst the young gallants around were endeavoring to impress this fine sentence on their memories, Tarleton the jester approached, and spying of Sir Christopher Hatton, he suddenly turned round and advanced backwards towards him, with every sign of a most serious courtesy, making a profusion of becks to a half blind old courtier in the distance, whereof the consequence was he presently stumbled against Sir Christopher, and trod on his toes. Now if anything would ruffle a man's temper, methinks it should be when he is essaying to make himself excessively agreeable to the loveliest woman of her age, one should drive against him awkwardly, and tread with some heaviness on his feet. All expected Sir Christopher would have been famously ruffled; but the accomplished courtier smiled upon the Queen's jester,—as Tarleton turned round with a grave indifferent face, on the instant he had done what there is but small doubt he intended—and with a most winning graciousness apologised for having been in his way.

"Nay, I hope I have not hurt you, sweet Sir Christopher!" exclaimed the merry player; "I was but of paying a proper courtesy to my Lord Bumble, and could not guess your worship was so nigh."

"I return you a bountiful load of thankfulness for the wonderful friendliness of your inquiries, worthy Master Tarleton," replied the text-book of compliment; "I will entomb such preciousness in my heart. Let

your excess of goodness be gratified in the conviction that I am in no way hurt."

"O' my life, I did think I trod on your toes somewhat heavily," said the jester, with extreme seriousness.

"Toes, worthy Master Tarleton," added the mirror of courtesy with one of his blandest smiles, "belong only to vulgar persons. A gentleman hath no such pedal appurtenances. It may be said of such a one that he hath a handsome foot," continued he, looking at, and moving one of his feet into the gracefulest positions; "but to say he hath feet, is no sort of phrase for the politer sort; and toes are altogether banished from courtly language."

"Nay, if you are for depriving me of my toes, I must e'en take to my heels," answered the other, and thereupon made off from the circle with all speed.

In the meantime the Earl of Leicester had whispered a quick succession of the delicate flatteries into the ear of the smiling beauty he was addressing, which she seemed to receive, more as a homage long usage had accustomed her to, than from any particular excess of vanity in her nature. Thence he went to other lovely dames, where it was evident he was no less welcome; and finally departed to the Queen's chamber, beyond all contradiction the most admired, the most courted, and the most honored of all the gallant company assembled in that goodly chamber.

It was evening of the same day, when in a thick grove, at a bow-shot from the palace, a gallant, in a large horseman's cloak and a broad slouched hat, which completely concealed him from observation, was seen walking from tree to tree, backwards and forwards; sometimes whistling, sometimes humming a tune, but continually looking in one particular direction, as if he was in expectation of some person coming that way. Anon, he would grow impatient, and utter something that smacked of an oath; then he would wrap his cloak closer round him, lean against a tree, and amuse himself awhile by digging of his heels into the soil. In these pursuits he had been engaged for some length of time, when he became aware of the approach of some person, disguised after a like fashion as himself. It was evident, these were the same two persons that had stood together under the shadow upon the terrace of Kenilworth Castle. They exhibited a similar caution, and they behaved with a like mystery.

"What news?" inquired the new comer, in a low voice; "hast secured the prize?"

Hast not let her slip through thy fingers a second time?"

"Never was prize so secure, my lord," answered the other.

"Good! Exceeding good!" exclaimed the noble, as if with a wonderful excess of gratification.

"The former plot failed not from any lack of cunning in the planning," added his companion; "I was balked of my success, just when I had made secure of it—a murrain on the pitiful fools who were so meddling! But, in this instance, fortune hath been more kind; and, though not without exceeding painstaking, I have been free from all possibility of any such pestilent interference."

"Then make sure, fortune shall be thy friend from this time forward," replied the one addressed as my lord. "But art sure none know into whose hands she hath fallen!"

"They could not have the slightest guess of it, I have managed matters so well," answered the other. "None saw her taken, none know where she is gone; and I have given her in charge to one, who is too perfect in her lesson, to allow of her prisoner's having knowledge of at whose suit she hath been arrested."

"I approve thy discretion infinitely," observed the nobleman; "I would not be known in the business, on any account, either to her or any other. But how doth she look, and how takes she her sudden removal from her friends?"

"'Tis beyond all art of mine to express her looks, my lord," replied his associate; "nought but your own eyes can do her exquisite perfections justice. Beautiful as she was, she hath made such progress in comeliness, that her present appearance putteth clean out of memory the graces she was then possessed of."

"O' my life, then she must be of a most rare creature," exclaimed the other delightfully.

"Truly, she is, my lord, and were I in any way richer than I am, I would wager a dozen marks you will readily acknowledge on beholding here, there lives not her peer in this world."

"Well, here is something for thy diligence," said his companion, giving him a well filled purse, which he took very readily. "But 'tis only a token of what shall follow, find I the original to come up to thy liking."

"Would I were as sure of all other things," exclaimed the other. "But I pray you take good speed in your coming, for she

hath been made so curious about you, that if you come not straight, I know not what her impatience may lead her to."

"Be sure the first moment I can without suspicion absent myself from court, I will fly like a hawk," replied the noble. "But in the meanwhile let her lack nothing by way of amusement to make her content with her condition. The players may be had to entertain her, or any other pastime she is likely to take pleasure in. Spare neither expense nor trouble. Have ever ready such variety of enjoyments that she can get tired of none; and so possess no time to reflect on any other matter, save the bountifulness of the provider."

"It shall be done, my lord, without delay."

"And mark me," continued his companion.

"Ay, my lord," answered the other.

"Let Mistress Crupper take proper heed that this sweet angel of mine firmly believeth herself to be amongst persons of worship. Let her manners be in accordance with her assumed station, at the same time that in every point she behaveth with the most delicate respect to her fair prisoner."

"I have already so ordered it," replied his associate; "and Moll knoweth her own interests too well to mar them by any misbehaving. I do assure you, my lord, she playeth her part in the choicest fashion—never a lady in the land could do it better."

"Provided that be the case, she shall have a suitable reward," said the nobleman. "But I must be gone. Haste back, and keep her in continual impatience of my coming. But above all things be cautious my name be not dropped on any consideration, nor ought done which might in any manner point to me as holding the slightest share in such proceedings."

"Rely on it, my lord," answered his companion, and so saying both departed their several ways, the one chuckling at the weight of the purse, which had rewarded his infamous proceedings, and the other congratulating himself on the apparent success of his villainous agent.

CHAPTER XVII.

I have been readie at you hand
To grant whatever you might crave,
I have both waged life and land
Your love and good will for to have.
I bought thee kerchers to thy head
That were wrought fine and gallantly,
I kept thee booth at board and bed,
Which cost my purse well favoredly.
I bought thee peticotes of the best,
The cloth as fine as might be;
I gave thee jewels for thy chest,
And all this cost I spent on thee.

BALLAD OF LADY GREENSLEEVES.

Thou art a shameless villain!

A thing out of the overcharge of nature;
Sent like a thick cloud to disperse a plague
Upon weak catching woman! Such a tyrant
That for his lust would sell away his subjects,
Ay, all his heaven hereafter.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

MABEL was left in as bad hands as it could be possible for her to fall into. It is a question whether so vile a pair could elsewhere have been met with—a matter of huge congratulation to all virtuous minds. These two were thoroughly heartless, because thoroughly selfish—lost to all sense of shame from being deaf to every murmur of conscience—careless of report, knowing they had no character to lose, and wishing only to live, out of extreme disinclination to die. They had been in companionship with each other for years, believing such villainy as they possessed would only be tolerated by those who were most familiar with it; but their bad passions were ever breaking forth, and it appeared as if they were allowed to live, the better to remind each other of the monstrous baseness of their behavior.

All that such wretches could do, aided by the most consummate hypocrisy, and with every help unbounded wealth could procure, was essayed to render the pure mind of the poor foundling accessible to the villainy that had been devised against her. Turn where she would her eyes met images of voluptuousness—and at all times her ears were invaded with meanings of opposition to all honorable notions; but the extreme craft of this, overthrew itself. The mind of the gentle Mabel was so essentially pure, that although it would admit readily every image of beauty, such characters came there completely divested of ought of an objectionable shape, and her nature was so perfectly innocent, that indelicacy of any sort was to her a foreign language, which she heard but could not understand. Whereof the conse-

quence was she remained despite of all this great expenditure of subtlety, as chaste in heart as the day she first entered those polluted walls.

If anything could lead a woman from her own integrity, the incense which was continually being offered to her vanity, in artful praises of her person, and in the constantly varying costliness of its decorations, might have sufficed; but the vanity of the poor foundling seemed so remotely seated, that this precious artillery never touched it.—She took the flattery as said out of goodness; and wore the apparel as sent out of kindness.

Many days had passed and Mabel still remained unconscious of her danger, and in less anxiousness concerning of the old knight and the good dame, than she was at first, because her assumed friend, the fictitious Lady Comfit, had assured her she had informed them of her safety and comfort. Her only desire was that the youthful sleeper, who had got himself so roughly used for her sake, might not have been much hurt, and that she should be allowed some early opportunity of thanking him for his extreme readiness to help her in her need. She was rarely left alone, and scarce a moment was allowed her for reflection: and the conversation of her crafty companion kept her in a constant state of marvel, admiration, and curiosity concerning of the princely gentleman who had, as she thought, taken such strange means to show his love for her. One day, as it were by accident, she had been left by herself, and naturally fell to musing on the mystery of those transactions in which she had been made so prominent a feature. She sat clothed in all the splendor of Venice and Milan—and it might be truly said her beauty more became her tiring than her tiring improved her beauty—her arm rested on the side of the richly carved chair, with the full sleeve falling back disclosing its perfect whiteness and symmetry, clasped by a bracelet of purest gold and jewels, and her fair face was supported by her hand, of which the delicate fingers were half lost in the meshes of her glossy hair. Her radiant eyes were fixed upon the fresh rushes at her feet, but their long silk^{en} lashes gave so soft an expression to the deep sweet thoughtfulness of her exquisite countenance, that it is doubtful their full gaze could have appeared more admirable.

Thus she thought over the recent events, bewildered with their strangeness, and perplexed as to their purport, till she was suddenly startled from her reverie.

“Heavens! how exquisitely beautiful!”

exclaimed a deep-toned voice; and, looking up to her exceeding astonishment, she observed a tall person, enveloped in a huge cloak, and his head covered with a broad beaver hat, consequently she could see of him nothing but his face, which seemed nobly featured, and the eyes lustrous with a very passionate adoration. She had scarce had a moment for thinking who this stranger could be, and what he wanted, when the cloak and hat fell at his feet, and she beheld a stately figure, clad in such magnificence as she had had no imagination of. The delicatest white silk, daintily embroidered with gold, formed his hose; and his doublet was of a light pink, fancifully ornamented with the choicest pearls, having the sleeves quaintly trimmed and slashed with amber satin, like unto the round full part of his trunks. His ribbon garters and shoe roses were of a corresponding costliness; and as some sign of his nobility, he wore the order of the garter round his leg, and a St. George gold chain, of the costliest character, pendant from his neck.

It might be imagined that before such excessive splendor the poor foundling would have been somewhat abashed, and that her gentle nature would have sunk before the ardor of his gaze; but this was far from the case. The look, the manner, the appearance of the stranger, convinced her that he was no other than her princely lover, of whom she had heard so much; and the only sign she gave of his presence was rising from her seat the moment his nobility stood confessed. No royal queen could ever have received the homage of her courtiers with a truer majesty, than did the gentle Mabel stand before the enamored glances of this magnificent noble.

“Nay, I beseech thee, do not stir!” murmured he in a most passionate gallant manner, as he took her hand, and pressed it tenderly in his own. “I regret having disturbed such a miracle of loveliness, and yet I could not, had I strove ever so, have refrained from expressing in some measure the intenseness of my admiration. Much as I had heard of thy marvellous beauty, and deeply as I had been impressed with the glimpse I had of it in the garden of Kenilworth, I was totally unprepared for such ravishing perfections as I beheld when, unnoticed, I softly entered this chamber. He who held the apple when the three goddesses disclosed their rival graces to his admiring eye, could have seen, in all their moving loveliness, nought half so worthy of pre-eminence as then met my wondering and most enamored gaze.”

"My lord, for such I believe you are styled," replied Mabel, with a simple courtesy that became her better than all art of compliment; "you are pleased to say this, as you have been pleased to show me other signs of a like civility in you; and for these, believe me, I am as truly grateful as ever heart was."

"O my life, it delighteth me infinitely to hear thee express thyself so well disposed towards me," answered her companion rapturously kissing of her fair hand. "But what I have done is nought to what the greatness of my love shall lead me to. But prithee tell me the happy subject of thy deep study."

"Indeed it was no other than yourself, my lord," answered the poor foundling very readily.

"How proud am I of having so rare a student!" exclaimed the other, looking fondly in her face, and pressing her hands with a similar affectionateness. "How dost like the volume? wilt get it by heart?"

"In my then thinking, I was seeking the cause for my having been put by you in this place," answered Mabel.

"The cause, my sweet life!" cried the gallant, as if in some extreme astonishment; "why, what else cause can there be than thy most exquisite self? Look on those lustrous eyes, observe that delicate cheek, regard that eloquent and delicious mouth, or take the perfectness of those matchless features and peerless shape combined, and note if they contain not such prodigal cause of love as might warrant any such behavior in a lover, as that I have been forced to take advantage of."

"Methinks, my lord, love might be better shown," observed the gentle foundling.

"In some cases, doubtless," replied her companion; "but not where the lover is so circumstanced as am I. I have essayed in all manner of things thou shouldst meet such respect as true love delighteth to show. Thy tiring is of the noblest, thy lodging the most sumptuous that could be had, and thy fare the delicatest that wealth and skill could unite in producing. Thou hast been waited on as became the guest of a prince; and so gallantly entertained as might be shown to an enthroned queen!"

"Truly I have, and I thank you right heartily, my lord—yet—"

"Dost lack anything? Hast any desire? Hast aught proper been forgotten?" continued the noble, with increasing earnestness.

"Indeed no, I have store of things of every sort,—but—"

"Dost not like the dwelling? thou shalt be removed to a palace," added her companion without allowing her to finish her sentence. "Dost not approve of thy tiring, all Italy shall be searched for costlier stuffs? Hast fault to find with thy attendants, thou shalt have such honorable persons as thou cannot help approving of? Or is anything amiss with thy fare, the skilfullest cooks, and the daintiest cates shall be fetched from all parts of Christendom, to give thee better entertainment?"

"Truly there is no need," she replied; "methinks I should be wondrous discontent seemed I not satisfied with the bountiful great splendor with which I am surrounded; still there is one thing I would have you do, which surely you cannot avoid doing, if you have for me the exceeding love you have just expressed."

"Name it," said her companion, in an impassioned manner. "If it taketh up my whole fortune—which is considered to be in some excess—or requireth all my influence—which is said to be second to none in the kingdom—whatever thou dost require shall be done on the instant."

"Return me to my friends," answered Mabel.

"What!" exclaimed the gallant, evidently having expected from her something very different, "wouldst have me, ere I have scarce had an hour's acquaintance with so inestimable a treasure, to send it away where perchance I may never see it again?"

"I doubt not you could see me at all proper times, with worthy Sir Thomas Lucy's permission," said the poor foundling.

"Believe me, my dear life, there is no possibility of such a thing, else should I have preferred doing so," observed her companion, with a famous earnestness. "There is such absolute reason for what has been done, as would convince any, were I allowed to say it; but at the present I must needs be dumb on the matter. Give me but fair trial, and if, after some time, thou shouldst desire again to see thy friends, thou shalt go, and willingly."

"I thank you for that assurance, my lord," replied Mabel, somewhat comforted. "In very truth I am most anxious to return home, with as little tarrying as possible, and you will make me more bound to you, by helping me in my wish, than could you by detaining me, though you furnished my stay with the honorablest entertainment in your power."

"I beseech thee, my fair queen, move me not to it at this present," continued her noble gallant, very passionately. "Thou

knowest not what great travail hath been mine for thy sweet sake, since I first had glimpse of thy enchanting graces. Allow me some solace after my so long trouble; believe me night or day hath been one continual darkness with me, in which my hopes would appear like stars, in bright assurance the sunrise of my happiness was nigh at hand; and yet it came not, till my heart was nigh upon being weary with so much longing. Nought but the remembrance of those dazzling beauties, as they came upon me, like a sudden flash of heaven to a poor heathen, kept me in countenance with myself; for that remembrance brought with it such good warrant of gentle treatment, of excellent kind sympathy, and of generous sweet affection, as a nature well disposed to reward the infinite sufferings of unbounded love, is ever possessed of. Let it not be I have rested on a broken reed."

"I should be loath to deal harshly with you, my lord," replied the simple foundling; "nor am I in any way so given towards any one. Yet I see not I could give you any relief stayed I here ever so."

"Be assured, sweetest, nothing is so easy," observed her companion, gazing on her as enamoredly as though he had put his whole heart and soul into a glance. "Let those entrancing eyes discourse with mine the true language they were made to express, till volumes of loving meaning beam in every look; twine those delicate arms around me as I would use mine own, till heart throb fondly against heart in natural unison, and every nerve throughout our enamored natures thrill with the same soft ecstasy—and bring me hither those delicious lips that make the ruby pale, and look more tempting than the ripest ruddiest cherry, to refresh my thirsty soul with the precious rapturous, exquisite sweet balm with which they are bedewed."

"Indeed, my lord, I——"

"Behold me here thy poor petitioner," continued the enamored nobleman, kneeling on one knee at the feet of the gentle Mabel, with such a look and with such a manner few women could have resisted. "Note to how mean a strait my greatness is reduced—see the equal of princes, the very humblest of slaves. Dear, excellent fair creature! My whole being is bound up in the gaining of thy choice affections. Show me some sign—a smile, a word, a look—my case is not entirely desperate and I will fill the air thou makest holy with thy presence, with my unceasing love and very earnest thankfulness."

Thus proceeded this accomplished gallant

with the innocent gentle Mabel—now appealing to her sympathies,—now endeavoring to awaken her pride a moment after striving with equal earnestness to excite her vanity, and anon straining every nerve to move her ambition; and thus he continued with the most passionate assiduity for several days, breathing into her ear the most delicate flattery, and exhausting every source of entertainment likely to dazzle or captivate an inexperienced tender woman. Save with her sympathies he scarce made any advance, which made him marvel infinitely, for he was the most irresistible lover that ever sought a fair lady's affections, and had achieved more triumphs over the sex than had any half dozen of his acquaintance. There was not a turn of their hearts with which he seemed not familiar, and he appeared to know the cunningest baits to draw up their desires. But this exceeding knowledge was derived from the court circles, or those who took after them in manner, where such gifts as he possessed could scarce fail of having a most absolute influence. The mere fine ladies, or those eager to be thought so, readily gave way to his many fascinations, but the poor foundling was of a very different sort. There was in her nature a marvellous combination of simplicity and pride—the one kept her ignorant of the treachery of her companion—the other received his delusive attentions as though they were her just right and title. Something of this she had shown when in company with Sir Valentine, when the modesty of her apparel seemed out of place with the air of graceful dignity and easy self-possession with which she shared in the court-like converse of the young knight;—but now, clothed in all the delicate splendor of the times, she listened to the dangerous homage of her princely gallant, with a manner so noble as must have convinced any spectator she took them more as proper respect than as a matter for gratification.

Her noble lover's ecstasies availed him nothing—the fondness of his behavior and discourse made as little impression—but his unceasing efforts to afford her by the most lavish expenditure, signs of the unbounded estimation in which she was held by him, were accepted with gratitude; and the seeming terribleness of his sufferings when her behavior put him into a despairing mood, were regarded with a natural sympathy. Here she was in some danger, for there is no such nigh relations to love as gratitude and pity.

In the meanwhile William Shakspeare having at last met with Sir Valentine, instant proceedings were taken to endeavor to

trace out the place to which the gentle Mabel had been carried. Nothing could exceed the manner in which the young knight was moved at the relation of his fair mistress's abduction. All the chivalry of his nature was up in arms in a moment, and he was for chasing the villains to the uttermost corners of the earth. With the feelings with which he had regarded her many moving graces, so that she had become to him the sovereign of his heart's wishes, he felt bound by every principle of knighthood to peril life and limb in her service, and mounting his palfrey he rode in every direction to find some traces of her flight. He was at last so fortunate as to meet with the man elsewhere spoken of, who had seen her borne past him, and had watched her direction, whilst he could keep her in sight; and with this intelligence he sat off as soon as he could from his kinsman's house, accompanied only by his favorite companion, the youthful Shakspeare, riding of a grey gelding, who was quite as eager as himself to go on such an errand.

The feelings of these two were as different as their different natures could make them. The young knight in the fresh bloom of his manhood, saw beauty only as it was expected a soldier should see it—as something worthy of being honored by the honorablest achievements. The young student in the first soft glow of youth, saw beauty only as in such cases it might be seen of a student—as something to worship at a humble distance with the purest and noblest thoughts. The one believing it to be his duty, would have boldly proclaimed the name of Mabel as first in his esteem wherever he went,—the other feeling it to be his nature, would have thought it sacrilege to have mentioned her name in idle company, although his estimation of her was not a whit less than was that of his companion.

They proceeded on in the course directed, at all reasonable opportunities Sir Valentine entertaining of his young associate with a very gallant discourse concerning the doings of certain famous knights in love with notable fair ladies, and ever and anon, seasoning it with divers pretty passages out of Petrarcha, his sonnets of love, to which the youthful poet would seriously incline his ear, get explained to him whatever he knew not the meaning of, and observe, question, and reply upon all he heard, with such sprightliness of wit and ingenuity of learning, as both astonished and delighted his fellow traveller.

They passed all manner of pleasant mansions, with excellent parks of deer, and beheld the country round showing a thousand signs

of the decay of summer, yet still possessing so much of greenness as gave it a semely aspect. Occasionally, they would meet with a brave company going a hawking, each with a favorite bird on the wrist, and riding on an ambling palfrey, accompanied by attendants carrying of other hawks together, perched in a circle, all hooded in their fairest gesses and Milan bells, ready to be cast off at a moment's notice. Anon, they would hear the loud "Soho!" of some eager huntsman, and they would rein in their steeds awhile to see the goodly sight of the hounds in full chase, and the gallant assemblage of men and horses speeding after them over hedge and ditch, hill and hollow, with some a tumbling in this place, others leaping in that, here a steed galloping without his rider, and there a rider running to catch his steed: and a little way further, they would come upon divers honest anglers, pursuing of their delicate sport by the sedgy margin of the brook, to the manifest catching of sundry luce, greyling, perch, bream, and dace, then uselessly flapping of their tails in the angler's basket.

The partridges hid their heads among the stubble—the snipe lurked unseen in the water-courses—the wild-ducks floated in flocks over the broad ponds and marshy lakes, and the great heron lay in her haunt, amid the thick reeds of the same waters. On a branch of a withered old tree upon the banks, the gaudy kingfisher was making a choice repast, and in his hole deep in the sandy soil beneath, the greedy otter was busying himself with a like occupation. Great companies of small birds seemed pursuing of each other over the open fields, and far over head the noisy rooks gathered their black bands to ravage the distant country. As the travelers skirted a wood, they observed the nimble conies running into their holes, or a stray leveret rushing hither and thither, without knowing where, scared by the sound of the horses feet. Presently, a young pigeon was noticed plying of her wings with the desperate eagerness of despair, as she left the wood for the open country; but a murderous hawk followed in her track, and as she sank panting with agony behind a tree, he swept down upon her swifter than the wind, and in the same minute fixed his sharp talons in her heart.

Having from many of the laboring country-people continued, as they proceeded, to gain such intelligence as still led them on, they had gone a famous distance, but full of ardor to accomplish their adventure, they pushed forward, regardless of all else, save the rescue of the gentle Mabel. It so happened, that at last, to their constant inqui-

ries, nothing profitable was gained. No one had seen any such persons as were described to them. Finding this to be the case, they retraced their steps towards the place where they obtained the latest information, with the idea, that if any house lay convenient, it was probable there she had been carried. They now rode slowly, and took close scrutiny of the neighborhood. After so doing for some time, they spied a fair house down in a hollow, almost hid up with trees, and completely surrounded with a high wall. Within less than a quarter of a mile of it was a small village, of some half-dozen houses, most distinguishable of which was the open smithy, the little inn, and a shop for the sale of all manner of things needed in such a place. It was thought advisable to make for this village at once, as being the likeliest spot to gain the necessary intelligence, and where they could get refreshments for themselves and beasts, whilst they made their inquiries.

As they rode into the yard, William Shakspeare caught a glimpse of a man, in whose unpleasing features he immediately recognized the villain who had struck him when he seized his companion. The fellow saw not who had observed him, for he was busy playing at bowls under a shed with divers other persons. The youthful poet resolved on saying nothing of this discovery till a more fitting opportunity presented itself, therefore quietly followed the example of the young knight, in dismounting, giving his palfrey in charge to the landlord, and entering the inn. Upon sitting himself in a chamber to which he and Sir Valentine were shown, he observed a decent sort of a man, of a middle age, seated on a settle, with a book in his hand, and a jug of ale on the table before him. As William Shakspeare took himself to make a hearty meal of what was set before him, he gave another glance at the person with the book, and another after that, and he still thought, as he had imagined when he first came into the room, that the countenance was familiar to him. Sir Valentine, finding a stranger with them, was pondering with himself whether he should abstain from seeming curious, which might perchance defeat his object, or attempt cautiously to make the necessary inquiries of this very person. However, it so fell out, that the stranger raised his eyes from the book, on which he seemed as intent as though he were the most scholarly person that had ever lived, and thereupon encountered the somewhat earnest gaze of the youthful Shakspeare.

"Why, surely!" exclaimed the stranger,

in a pleased surprise—"yes, it must be. O my life, 'tis either Will Shakspeare or his ghost."

"'Tis myself, worthy Master Burbage," replied the young poet, proceeding quickly to take the proffered hand of the father of his friend and school-fellow.

"Glad to see thee, by'r lady!" said the other, giving his young acquaintance a hearty shake of the hand.

"And how do thy excellent parents—and how is Dick, my son—and how are all my honest friends at Stratford?" The youthful Shakspeare quickly gave him the intelligence he required; Sir Valentine remaining silent, yet glad they were known to each other.

"But what hath brought you here, worthy Master Burbage?" inquired the young poet at last.

"Ey, what, indeed!" replied the player, somewhat dolefully. "'Sprecious! I would I had never come nigh the place. Methinks I cannot help getting myself into a famous trouble on account of it, which may spoil my fortune ever after."

"Alack, that is woeful news!" observed William Shakspeare. "But, I pray you, tell me how that is so like to be?"

"Why, this is it," answered Master Burbage: "I have been sent down with my company to play stage plays and interludes of the entertainment of some ladies living in a house hard by."

"I pray you, tell me if the fellow in green, now playing at bowls, belongeth to that house?" inquired the young poet, very earnestly.

"Out of all doubt, he doth," replied the player. "He is the serving-man of my Lady Arabella Comfit."

"The house hath an ancient look with it, and lieth hid among trees somewhat to the left of this?" observed his youthful friend; and at hearing this, Sir Valentine listened with a very singular curiosity.

"Ay, that is the place," said Master Burbage, a little impatiently. "Now, we have been ordered to get ourselves perfect in a new play by the next day after to-morrow at noon, to play before this noble lady and her friends, at her own house; and as we are all intent upon studying our parts, a certain boy of our company who playeth principal woman, hath the ill hap to be taken with a desperate illness; and we know not what to do on account of it, for we cannot play without him; and it is impossible for him to assist us in any manner, he is in so bad a state."

William Shakspeare mused on their in-

telligence for some minutes, then asked sundry questions concerning the part the sick boy was to have played, which Master Burbage showed him by the book he had in his hand; and afterwards, both to the surprise of Sir Valentine and the other, offered, on condition Master Burbage should pass off himself and his companion as of his company, he would himself diligently essay the playing of the part the sick boy ought to have played. Drowning men catch at straws; and just so eagerly did Master Burbage avail himself of this offer—promised what was required, and, moreover, offered to give the volunteer such instructions in the playing of the part as might be necessary for him to know. Upon the first opportunity, William Shakspeare told Sir Valentine his reasons for having done as he had; with the which the latter was so greatly satisfied, that he became a player on the sudden, with as much willingness as he would have entered a battle field.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Come, I'll be out of this ague,

For to live thus is not indeed to live;
It is a mockery and abuse of life;
I will not henceforth save myself by halves;
Loose all or nothing.

WEBSTER.

Paul. Thou shall not go in liberty to thy grave,

For one night a sultana is my slave.

Mustapha. A terrible little tyranness.

MASSINGER.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,

Yet in the brest of hire virginitee

There was enclosed sad and ripe corage.

CHAUCER.

MASTER BURBAGE was delighted at a rehearsal at finding not only how well his young friend became his petticoats, but how truly and gracefully he enacted the different scenes in which he was to play. Certes William Shakspeare was not a player for the first time, as witness his early playing of Gammer Gurton's Needle, and divers other interludes with his schoolfellows Green, Burbage, Hemings, Condell; but he felt there was a monstrous difference betwixt doing of such things in the manner of school-boys, for their own amusement only, and attempting it in the fashion of real players for the entertainment of a gallant company. But by the aid of Master Burbage he got over much of the difficulty.

The play appeared cunningly writ with

no other end than to lead to the undoing of the gentle Mabel. At least so thought Sir Valentine and his youthful friend; and it was agreed between them the young knight should play one of the minor characters in the which there was little to say or do, but excellent opportunity of Sir Valentine's noting who were of the company, and if such persons as they expected should be among them, it afforded a mean for her recognizing him, and so knowing friends were near. This was done in case she should not know again the features of William Shakspeare, as he thought it possible she might not. There was another incident in the plot, but this the young player kept to himself.

The time arrived, and the players were ready. Master Burbage was encouraging his youthful companion with great store of praise, who, dressed in feminine apparel, was to personate a young country girl. In the first scene a noble lover appears, acquainting his confidant how he had seen such perfection in womanhood, as he must sigh his heart away for, was he not allowed her sweet society to ease his pain, whereupon in pity of his lord's dolorous moan, the other is made to offer to carry her off on the instant, to the which, seeing no other way of having her, the passionate lover gives his reluctant consent. Then followed an attempt to carry off the damsel, with her rescue by the interference of her friends. Here the young player came upon the stage, which was one end of a large chamber, the players coming in by a door at each side. At the other end he observed four persons sitting, but to his amazement they were all masked, as persons of quality often were. The first near him was a lady of a most graceful figure, dressed in as great magnificence as he had seen Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth. The next was a gallant, in apparel equally gorgeous, who occasionally turned from the lady to speak to another gallant less nobly clad, sitting on the other side of him, and beyond him was another lady very richly garmented, but in no comparison with the first.

Whether the lady so bountifully attired was the fair creature of whom they were in search he had no means of knowing, for she gave no sign of recognition at his appearance. When Sir Valentine came on the stage she started somewhat, and asked some questions of her companion, and appeared to take greater interest in the play. Then was enacted her being carried off from her home, to the house of a kinswoman to the noble gallant's confidant. Here the country maid was seen clothed in the richest

stuffs and jewels, and paid all manner of honorable attention. At the sight of Sir Valentine, again the youthful lady gazed on him with more earnestness than she did before, and her interest in the play evidently grew deeper and deeper. After this the princely lover entered, and with the fondest rhetoric implored the love of the seeming Mabel, till he so moved her, as it appeared, she was content to promise him all manner of happiness, to his infinite contentation. To end all, there was to be a soliloquy to be spoken by the heroine, in which she was to applaud herself to the echo for her generosity in behalf of a gentleman who had shown towards her such extreme honor, and vow to be his true love, and his alone ever after, till death should put asunder their mutual loving hearts.

This the players considered the difficultest passage of the whole, to be done with proper effect. As yet their new companion had conducted himself beyond their expectations; but this long soliloquy was a difficult part for the ablest; and fears were entertained he might lose himself in it, and so break down. To prevent this as much as possible, Master Burbage stationed himself at one of the open doors, so as not to be in sight of the audience, to prompt him in case he was at a loss. There was the fictitious Mabel, in all the splendor of her supposed greatness, and there stood the anxious prompter with book in hand, hoping with all his might the play would end as well as it had proceeded. The prompter gave the cue, but to his extreme astonishment the young player spoke words clean different. The prompter in an agony of dread that all would be marred, gave out the cue again somewhat louder, but still the young player proceeded with a speech as opposite to that he ought to have said as two different things could be. Horror-struck, the poor player cast down his book, and began pulling of his hair, kicking the ground, and muttering imprecations against the author of his ruin, as he imagined the youthful Shakspeare to be, that all the players came marvelling to see what had produced such strange effects.

But if Master Burbage was so moved, not less so was the lady highest to the stage. Her three companions were engaged in earnest converse, without paying the slightest attention to what was passing elsewhere. The inteness of the three to the subject of their converse, did not escape the notice of the young player; and though he suspected the fair deity of his dreams was the lady who paid such unceasing attention to the play, he essayed to have some certain

knowledge of it by a device of his own. Therefore instead of speaking the proper soliloquy, he spoke the following passage, which he had written to say in its place, if circumstances served:—

“ Now with my heart let me hold conference.
This lord, he speaks me fair, he clothes me fine,
He entertains me honorably and well;
But how know I his purport in all this?
Is it in honesty, is it in respect?
Doth it mean well or ill, or good or bad?
His words are cups that brim all o'er with love,
But is there sign of wedding in this cheer?
Perchance the love he proffers comes to me
In some polluted vessel, that hath been
Lipped by dishonored maids in wantonness,
Or drained by thoughtless women in their
shame?

These gaudy trappings, are they meant to be
The tire of marriage sent by honest love,
Or the more tawdry livery of guilt?
And all this splendor, all this bounteous state,
This worship, travail, reverence, and respect—
'Tis prodigal, 'tis admirable, 'tis rare,
Most choice, most noble, delicate, and sweet—
But doth it cover any meaner thing?
A thing so base, so vile, so infamous,
It doth require to be thus thickly gilt
'To make the metal take a sterling shape?
I'll think of this.”

The lady appeared somewhat agitated during the delivery of these passages, and leaned forward in her chair, drinking in every word, evidently with the most intense interest. The young player noticing these signs, and observing too that her companions were still paying no heed to him, proceeded with these words:—

“ Alack, I cannot doubt
These words mean villainy, these garments
shame,
This entertainment mischiefs of the worst.
Methinks the very air I breathe, feels thick
With craft and malice, treachery and crime!
And I am here alone—far from all help—
Close watched, well guarded, providently kept.
But hush! there needs great caution. Not a
word,
A sound, a gesture, dare I give to show
I look suspiciously upon these schemes.
And yet there might be present even here
Friends who would strain their hearts for my
escape,
Showed I some sign I would assay their aid.
At least I'll let them see I wear a face
That needs no mask—for I can truly swear
As yet it holds no intercourse with shame.”

In an instant the mask was taken off the lady so deeply interested in the play, and, as the youthful Shakspeare had for some minutes anticipated, he beheld the guileless, beautiful countenance of the gentle Mabel,

flushed with excitement, and gazed upon him with so imploring anxious a look, it was plain she had felt every word he had uttered. The face was again masked, quite unobserved by her companions. The young player made a sign of recognition, and concluded with these lines:—

“These friends I'll trust, I know they may be found

Out by the gate that ends the garden wall.
There will I seek them with what speed I may;
Having assurance, by their means to 'scape
The living hell that holds me round about;
And back return to innocence and peace,
An honored dwelling, and a spotless name.”

“Come, sweetest, the play is ended,” whispered her noble gallant. Mabel mechanically rose, and accompanied her to his own chamber. Her feelings were in such a state of tumult she dared not speak. She retreated by herself the lines—

“I know they may be found

Out by the gate that ends the garden wall,”

as if she would impress them so firmly on her memory, there could be no chance of her forgetting them: she also remembered the hint that had been given her to be cautious, but she had been so little accustomed to disguise, that here she somewhat feared for herself. The revulsion of feeling had been so deep, so strong, and so sudden from a sense of security and gratitude to a sense of disgust and abhorrence, that it left her for some minutes so greatly bewildered, she scarce knew what she was about. Presently, her lover and herself unmasked. The signs of a disturbed nature so visible in her, he seemed to expect as a natural consequence of his craftily-devised play, and he had not the slightest doubt it had produced all the effect he had desired. It was time now, he thought, to follow up his advantage before the simple girl could have opportunity for reflection, and he made himself ready, with the desperate earnestness of a determined profligate, to conclude the plot against her, as it had been settled by his companions in iniquity, during the delivery of the concluding soliloquy. He came close to her, and wound his arm fondly round her waist, as she was endeavoring to put her disordered thoughts into something resembling purpose, bringing his face as near to hers as he might, and gazing into her eyes with the most fond and passionate glances.

“My sweet life,” murmured he, in such soft and thrilling tones as he fancied would be most effective, “We dally with opportunity. The happiness I have so long coveted and so thoroughly strove to deserve, should

now, methinks, be my just reward. Love beckons us to mutual bliss. Hither with me awhile, upon those balmy lips to breathe new life, and taste such joy as the enamored soul alone can know. Prithee, come this way, my heart!—my queen!—my treasure!”—The gentle Mabel allowed herself to be borne unresistingly towards the next chamber—seemingly as if stupefied by the fascinating gaze of her licentious companion, who hung over her exquisite countenance as he drew her along, like a gloating serpent—but the noble pride of her nature at last made itself manifest, for as she came near the door, on a sudden she burst from his hold, and retreating back a pace or two, fixed on him a look of such utter scorn as would have crushed a meaner wretch to the earth.

“Thou shameless villain!” exclaimed she, her voice half choked with the fulness of her emotions. “Thou pitiful traitor to all true love and honesty! Dost call this nobleness? Dost style this honor? How darest thou attempt to pass off such baseness for the behavior of a princely person?”

“Why, how now?” cried the gallant in real astonishment. “What meaneth this unworthy language and these terrible indignant looks?”

“What mean they?” replied the poor foundling, her lustrous eyes flashing with scorn, and her whole countenance, as he had justly observed, looking terribly indignant. “They mean that thou hast been hugely mistaken in me, as hitherto have I been in thee. I am not of such worthless stuff as thou hast supposed. I did believe thee all thou didst assume, and therefore, felt no fear. Thou didst seem honorable. I thought thee so.”

“Prithee, let us have no more of this,” observed the gallant, impatiently. “I marvel thou shouldst get into so famous a passion about nothing, after having enjoyed at my expense such bounteous entertainment.”

“I needed it not—I asked it not,” answered Mabel. “It was forced on me under color of honorable intents; but now I know the baseness of its ends, I will not be a partaker of it another minute of my life.”

“Not so fast, my pretty tyrantess!” exclaimed her companion. “I cannot part with thee so soon, or lessen the splendor of which thou hast so liberally partaken.—Nor can I believe thou wouldst play so ill a part as this thou art about. Come, come, sweetest! this humor becomes thee not at all.”

“Away—I am not to be beguiled!” cried the fair foundling, eluding his approaches.

“Nay, 'tis too hard a thing—I cannot think

of it," replied the other, standing before the door she sought to make her exit out of. "I must not see my full great pains and cost all come to nought—'tis out of justice and against all right. Marry, wouldst take thy pleasure and not pay the price!"

"I tell thee once again, I took it, thinking it was honorably given," said Mabel. "Thou didst not mention price, thou talked of honor! Didst think that I would barter away my own respect to lie in costly lodging and be clothed in delicate attire? Take back thy pitiful bribes," continued she, as she tore from her person her jewels, her chains of gold, and sparkling rings, and dashed them at his feet. "I loathe all I have had of thee—I loathe still more the villain who could put them to so base a purpose."

"Ha, dost, indeed!" exclaimed her gallant, his face now assuming some anger.—"O' my life, I will not be so easily thrust aside. I have done what ought to satisfy any reasonable woman. Indeed, I have had more cost and pains taken with thee than with any half dozen others I have fancied; but if fair words will not do with thee, foul deeds shall. Thou art so completely in my power that resistance is useless. 'Tis vain struggling. Thou must needs submit."

"Oh, I beseech thee, have some pity!" cried the poor foundling, falling on her knees at his feet with a look so moving, the savagest beast must have been tamed at the sight of it. "Surely, thou meanest not such evil as thou speakest; I cannot think so ill of thee. Thou art, indeed, that princely person I once thought, and knowest and feelest in thy inmost heart, it is no part of nobleness to wrong a poor maid. Let me go in honor from thy house, I'll pray for thee all my days. I'll hold thee ever after a true good friend—a bountiful sweet lord, the very noblest gentleman that breathes. My lord—my worthy lord—my honorable, good lord—as God shall pity thee, so pity my poor state."

She might have implored a stone. The licentious noble, with his looks burning with his dishonest passions, drew her in his arms towards the adjoining chamber, though she clung to his limbs with desperate grasp, and continued with straining eyeballs and hoarse-thick voice, to pray his mercy. As he held her before him, her hands, clutching him wildly as she was borne along, at one time fell upon the jewelled pommel of his dagger. In a moment the blade was out of its sheath—in the next she had twisted herself free of his grasp, and stood at some distance from him, with one hand striving to stay the throbbing of her heart, and the other, holding out the weapon threateningly before her. The

beauty of her countenance was now absolutely sublime. There was in it a lofty grandeur of expression that can scarce be conceived. Her eyes seemed fountains of living lightning, and her beautiful lips appeared to curl with an unutterable sense of outraged majesty no language can give the remotest idea of.

"Touch me at thy peril!" exclaimed she, as audible as her perturbed state would allow. Her companion seemed so completely taken by astonishment, that for a moment he stared at her as if uncertain what to be about. At last he made a movement as if he would approach her, and on the instant, her left arm was pointed towards him as stiffly as though it had been iron, whilst her right clutched the dagger a little behind her.—She elevated herself to her full height, and threw her head somewhat back, with a look and a manner that showed a stern determination.

"I warn thee!" muttered the poor foundling, in a terrible earnestness; "if thou dost but come within arm's length of me to follow up thy villainous intentions, as Jesu shall save my soul, I'll cleave thy heart in twain!"

The profligate drew back. He dared not battle with the fierce storm he had raised; so, saying he would send to her those who would soon have her out of her tragedy humor, he turned on his heel to seek the assistance of his vile associates. Mabel, in the same attitude, and with the same look, followed him step by step to the door. When she heard his departing foot, she looked to the fastenings, there were none inside the chamber—she dropped her dagger and clasped her hands in despair. On a sudden, a thought struck her. She ran to the casement and threw it open. It looked into the garden, above which it stood some ten feet.

Without a moment's hesitation she leaped out, and finding herself safe when she came to the ground, flew down the garden like an escaped bird. Keeping the wall in view, she came, out of breath, to a door at its extremity. It was partly open. She dashed through it, staggered forward, and fell, with a wild hysterical laugh, into the ready arms of Sir Valentine.

CHAPTER XIX.

Forth goeth all the court, both most and lest,
To fetch the floures fresh, and branch and blome,
And namely hauthorn brought both page and
grome

And then rejoysen in their great delite :
Eke ech at other throw the floures bright,
The primrose, the violete, and the gold,
With fresh garlants party blew and white.

CHAUCER.

There's not a budding boy or girl, this day
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
A deale of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with white-thorn laden home.

HERRICK.

In this our spacious isle I think there is not one,
But he hath heard some talk of him and eke of
Little John,

Of Tuck the merry friar, which many a sermon
made [trade,
In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws, and their
And of his mistress dear, his loved Marian.

DRAYTON.

Shall the hobby horse be forgot then ?
The hopeful hobby horse, shall he lie foundered ?
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

THE feeling with which the youthful poet regarded the fair object of his recent adventure, if it should be called love, was very different from the passion which goeth under that name. In fact, it was more a sentiment than a passion—rather the offspring of the intellect than of the affections. It was the first rosy hues of light which ushereth in the sunshine of the soul, producing the fairest glimpses of heaven, before the atmosphere hath heat enough to warm the blood. Love it was beyond all doubt, but it was that peculiar species which is found only to visit the very young and very imaginative. It is true it hath a natural source, but it is equally undeniable, it dwelleth in the fairy regions of the ideal. Where there is early sign of great intellect, there will also be found a like early sign of deep feeling. The one is supported by the other, fostered, encouraged, and fed by it. Beauty is indeed the air it breathes, but imagination is the soil from which it draws its nourishment. The boy genius is ever the boy lover, and having found some gentle being worthy to be enshrined in the sanctuary of his hopes, he proceeds not only to invest her image with all loveable attributes, but with such loveable behavior as seemeth most proper for the entertainment of his fantasy.

He finds a spirit rising over his thoughts, which gives them a sort of softened halo, that at some favorable opportunity taketh the shape of song or sonnet delicately fashioned

—a sensible adoration—an inspiration beginning and ending in a spiritual heaven of its own. Ideas take to themselves wings, and fly east and west, and north and south, bringing back the riches, rarities, and perfections of the whole globe with which to deck this favored deity. He ransacks the deepest hollows of the sea—he snatches glory from the shining stars—he makes the enamelled earth show all her bravest tapestry that he may choose the daintiest piece of all—and far above, beneath, around, and about, where splendor shines, or modest beauty hides, he bears away their gifts, as offerings worthiest of so pure a shrine.

Truly, as hath just been said, this is the love of the cool morning of life, that differeth as much in its nature from the blushing sunrise of youth, as from the noon-tide heats of manhood; and like unto that early season of the day, it soon glides into a warmer atmosphere. Love, such as this, will always be found to have no purpose, save the deification of its object, which it loves to worship, rather than worships to love. This way it goeth on, like the silkworm in its cocoon, only known by the pleasing mantle it weaves around itself; and having at last spent all its energies, it comes forth, some brief space after its labors, as different in character and appearance as any two things can be.

This love, though, let it be remembered, made William Shakspeare a poet, some sign of which, albeit, it must be thought of all judges, one of no particular greatness, may be seen in the simple ballad found by the antiquary in the book of songs, which did so much delight the good old knight and his companions; but it should also be borne in mind, such are ever first efforts. The materials of poetry may lie in prodigal heaps within the brain, but the fashioning them into the properest shape comes but after many trials. The soliloquy the young poet spoke in the place of the one intended to end the play, deserveth praise only for the readiness with which it was written, and aptness for the occasion which wrought it into existence. It cannot be expected the finish of an experienced writer, or the sufficiency of a mature genius should be found in such things. They should be taken merely for what they appear. Nevertheless, if it be thought the poet was but in his pot-hooks, I doubt not in good time to show such craft of penmanship in him, as shall be all men's admiration unto the end of time.

Still was he as diligent a student as ever; and never could scholar have more careful teachers than William Shakspeare had in

Master Peregrine, the antiquary, and Sir Johan, the chaplain. Ever since the affair of the ballad, each of these two watched till they could find the young student alone, and then they would strive as never they strove before he should profit by their instructions, in full belief all the whilst, that from his teaching alone, the youth had gained all the knowledge he possessed. By their means he obtained such an acquaintance with what was worthiest of note in ancient English literature, and Greek and Latin classic lore, as it was scarce possible he could have obtained by any other means. But about this time he began more to observe than he had hitherto done. He made comparisons—he judged—he looked into the meanings of things—he commenced studying the application of words, and he analyzed and weighed, and sifted what he read, and what he saw, till he could point out where lay the good and where the bad—how they might be distinguished, and what was the difference between any two particular matters that looked to be alike. This study was not confined to books: he pursued it wherever he went, and found no lack of subjects in the common phenomena of nature. Even a drop of rain was some object for speculation—the shooting of a star, the fructification of a plant, and the falling of a leaf seemed as worthy of inquiry. A storm never rolled over him but the lightning flashed some new meaning into his mind—and he never witnessed the rising of the sun, but with it came some fresh light into his thoughts. As he saw the emmets crowding to and fro among the grass, he would say, “Wherefore is this?” and whilst he watched the builders of the grove making their delicate dwellings in the forked branches of the tree, he would exclaim, “How is this done?” High or low he sent his curious mind seeking intelligence. Nothing escaped him, and to his eager questionings, all things in nature gave him ready answers.

The gentle Mabel he saw not again all this time. He frequented her favorite haunts, but she was nowhere visible. Day after day found him stealing among the trees where he had so oft watched her graceful progress, but his anxious gaze was never blessed with the slightest sign of her presence. He changed the time. He took the early morning by the hand and roamed the park before the hind had left his bed of rushes; but though nature rose wooingly to meet his glance, he looked upon her graces only as a sort of faint cold picturing of those he desired to meet in all their living freshness in a much fairer original. He made himself

familiar with the moon, and still did nature court him with her loveliest looks, and still did she receive such attentions as proved she was merely regarded as the ambassador of the fair sovereign of his thoughts. And he lingered out the hours with twilight, till she was lost in the embraces of the shadowy eve, but with no other result than had accompanied his earlier seeking. Thus passed the winter, till the frost was gone, the hearth-side tales forgotten, the Christmas sports but faintly remembered, and everything around was full of green promise and blooming expectation.

The chief companions of his own age had long been the four schoolfellows before described—of whom Tom Greene was such a compound of oddness and drollery as was not to be met with elsewhere. None like him could play the Hobby-horse in Friar Tuck, or the Fool in the May Games, or the Lord of Misrule in a Twelfth Night revel, or the Vice of a Moral Play. At plough Monday none was so much in request, and not less so was he at Candlemas eve, or Shrove-tide, or Hocktide, or at Witsun-ales, at a sheep-shearing, or a harvest home. Dick Burbage was more for the playing of ingenious tricks, which he carried off with such a careless happy impudence, that its pleasantries often took away all offence. Hemings had none of this humor, though he could enjoy it in others; yet when he joined his companions, he chose to play a courtly part, if such could be had. As for Condell he was ready enough to do whatever the others did. He would play with them at shuffle board, or shove-groat, in a mumming, or an interlude, as eagerly as he would join them in running at the quintain, or assist them in the threshing of a shrove-tide hen. In fact he seemed to care not what it was, so he was one of the party, but if he might be allowed a preference he would gladly stand out for the playing of Gammer Gurton's Needle.

During the time his thoughts were so busy feeding of his fantasy for the fair maid of Charlote, William Shakspeare had joined his companions but seldom. In very truth he somewhat shrunk from their boisterous mirth, for he liked best to be alone; but seeing nought of Mabel, his mind for want of that necessary nourishment, relaxed something in the earnestness of its worship. At such an age and with such a nature this ideal idolatry requireth at least the frequent presence of the object, before it can take upon itself that warmer devotion which alone is lasting and natural; and without sight of the idol, the mere imaginative existence of

this boyish love soon becomes manifest. Gradually the thoughts relax in their searching after admirable things with which to tire their gentle deity. They go not so far—they stay not so long—they bring home less and less every day; and thus it goeth on, the circuit of their visits lessening by degrees, and their labor becoming correspondingly unprofitable, till at last they cease altogether going on any such errands. Now it may be considered the idolatry is at an end, though some faint vestige of it may linger about the mind; but it is a bygone superstition belonging to an ideal world, that will only be remembered by some beautiful presence in nature with which it was wont to be accompanied, as some will still believe they see the dryad in the tree and the nymph in the fountain. This was the time for entertaining that deeper worship to which allusion has just been made, and the young poet was not long without meeting with a suitable deity willing to excite and to receive it.

Hemings' friends lived at Shottery, a village at a little distance from Stratford, to which William Shakspeare and others of his companions occasionally resorted, and one pleasant afternoon as the young poet was returning from a visit he had been paying to his schoolfellow, he was aroused from his customary meditations when alone, by a sweet voice singing these words:—

THE SPINSTER'S SONG.

“Damon came a praising me,
Vowing that he loved me too—
None like I so fair could be,
None like him could be so true.
I meant to chide, but spoke no sound—
And still my wheel went round and round.

“Damon, somewhat bolder grown,
In his hand mine fondly placed,
Pressed it gently in his own,
Then his arm twined round my waist.
Somehow I smiled instead of frowned,
And still my wheel went round and round.

“Damon brought his face nigh mine,
Though he knows I kisses hate;
I would baulk his base design—
But, the wretch, he did it straight!
And then again!—and still I found
That still my wheel went round and round.”

During the singing of these verses, the young poet was engaged in observing the singer. At a little distance from the road, running between Shottery and Stratford, was a neat cottage, trailed all over with a goodly pear tree, then in full blossom, with a grass

plat before it. It was not one of the common sort of cottages, for it possessed an appearance of comfort and respectability which showed it belonged to some person at least of the rank of a yeoman. There was in one place a famous brood of poultry, and in another a good fat sow, with a litter of pigs, wandering about at their will. A fair garden and orchard stood beyond the house, and in a neat paddock at the side were a cow and a favorite pony. At the open door, through which might be seen notable signs of the solid comfort that prevailed within, some two or three very young children were taking of their supper of porridge in wooden bowls, occasionally throwing a spoonful to the fowls, to the monstrous gratification of both parties; whilst farther off a boy, of some eight or ten years was amusing himself with a tame rabbit. The singer, however, was none of these. At a spinning wheel, placed close to the house at a few yards from the door, there sat a blooming girl, attired with that sort of daintiness with which such fair creatures do love to set off their comeliness. She was the singer. There was a laughing careless air with her as she sung the words, that, in the eyes of the spectator, much heightened the provocation of her pouting lips, and large, soft, languishing eyes, her rich dark complexion, and the budding fullness of her figure.

William Shakspeare had crept unseen behind a large walnut tree that stood in front of the cottage, where he stood like one spell-bound, drinking in at his eyes such intoxicating draughts of beauty, that they put him into a steep forgetfulness of all other matters in a presently; and here doubtless he would have stood, I know not how long, had not the singer made some sign she was aware of his vicinity—perchance she knew it all the time—however, spying of a handsome youth gazing on her in a manner she could not misinterpret, she rose from her seat in a seeming great surprise, and as she did so the young poet, in voluntary homage to the power he had so well inclined to honor, uncovered his head. There they stood, noticing of nothing but each other, and neither saying a word. All at once the little children dropped their bowls, and with infantile exclamations of delight ran as fast as they could to a tall, honest-looking, manly sort of a man, who with a keg slung across his shoulders, and in a working dress, seemed as if he had just come from his labor in the fields. The young poet turned and beheld this person close behind him, with the children clinging to his legs with every appearance of exquisite sweet pleasure.

"Hollo, young sir! what dost want?" inquired he, eyeing the youthful Shakspeare with some curiousness.

"Truly, I want nothing," replied the latter, a little taken by surprise, as it were; "I was but attracted here by some sweet singing, and did not imagine I was doing of any wrong by listening."

"Humph!" exclaimed the elder, perfectly conscious that this was the truth; for he, having been behind the youth from the first, had witnessed the whole affair. "What's thy name?" added he.

"William Shakspeare," was the answer.

"Thought so, give's thee hand," said the other frankly, and in the next moment the young poet found his palm grasped by his new acquaintance with a friendliness that quite astonished him. "Thy father and I are old friends from boys. Ask of him if he know not John Hathaway. Many a time hath he been in my house, and as oft have I been in his; and famous sport have we had together, I'll warrant. But some how I have seen nought of him of late. As for thyself, I have heard very creditable report of thee, and therefore say, with all heartiness, I am glad to see thee here—so thou must needs come in and take a bit of supper with us."

William Shakspeare was in no mood for refusing of such a request; he accepted the invitation as freely as it was given, and both entered the cottage together. There the rack filled with bacon—the logs blazing comfortably in the deep chimney, with the gun hanging above, and the store of platters, bowls, trenchers, and other household things that surrounded him on every side, were most convincing proof to the visitor that the owner lived in no sort of want.

"Here, Anne, take these things, and draw us a jug of ale," cried John Hathaway, putting down on the table what he had carried on his shoulder, as the singer hastened towards him, and would have a kiss with the rest—a proceeding by the way, which his guest regarded with something of envy. "Then put these young ones to their beds, and afterwards cut us a delicate rasher, with such other things as thou hast for eating; for here is the son of an honest friend of mine who meaneth to sup with us."

"You shall have a most dainty supper anon, father," replied his daughter, busying herself without delay to do as she was required. In the meanwhile the youthful Shakspeare was making friends with the children, and by the kind affectionateness of his manner quickly won their little hearts.

"Come, draw up thy chair, friend Will, and take a drink," said his host, seating

himself in the chimney corner, where there were seats on each side. William Shakspeare did as he was bid, nothing loath, and presently the two fell into conversing about ordinary matters, and from these to other topics of more interest. The young visitor appeared desirous of making a favorable impression upon his host, for he endeavored to make all his talk turn upon what the other was most familiar with, and spoke so learnedly upon the state of the crops, the best system of tillage, the prospects of the lambing season, and the breed of live stock, that he not only won the honest yeoman's heart, but he astonished him monstrously into the bargain. All the whilst he failed not to give an occasional admiring glance at the movements of his new friend's buxom daughter, who for her part seemed to give back his looks with some interest.

"How dost like our Anne's singing?" inquired John Hathaway, when his daughter had left the chamber to put the children to their beds.

"Very exceedingly I do assure you," replied the youth, with a notable sincerity.

"Humph!" exclaimed the father, as though he were a thinking of something he cared not to give speech to. "Indeed she hath a sweet throat." Nothing more was said on that head at that moment; and they again talked of country matters, till his host could not any longer contain his great wondering at his guest's marvellous insight into such things, and inquired how he acquired it; whereupon the other truly answered he got it questioning of those whose business it was. In good time the yeoman's blooming daughter returned, and busied herself with preparations for supper, taking care whenever she could to have her share in the discourse which she did with a pretty sprightliness exceedingly agreeable to her young admirer. Seeing her attempting to move the great table nearer to the fire, he must needs jump up, and with a graceful officiousness, seek to do it himself, the which she appeared to object to in some manner, and there was a little arguing of the matter betwixt them—the father looking on with a glimmering smile, as if he could see in it something exceeding pleasant. The end was, that the two young people carried the table together, manifestly to their extreme satisfaction.

This John Hathaway was one of the most industrious yeomen in the country, and had been sometime a widower. He was of a famous pleasant temper, but was far from making a boisterous show of it. He delighted greatly to assist in the honest pleasures of

any other, yet few could guess from his manner on such occasions, that he took the interest in it he did. Indeed he was somewhat of a sly humor, and liked none to know when he was most pleased. His honest, well-embrowned countenance, set off with hair and beard, getting to be grey, never ventured on such occasions beyond a lurking smile, and even then he seemed to take care the parties who had excited it, should not see. Doubtless he was in a rare humor with his new acquaintance, but though he lacked nothing in hospitality, he appeared to hear him and regard him with so staid an aspect, it was difficult for the latter to know whether he was satisfied with him or otherwise. Still the youth continued seeking to entertain his host with his converse, having sufficient reward in the approving glances of the other's sprightly daughter, who was well enough acquainted with such things to take a singular pleasure in observing the skill with which her young admirer spoke of them.

In due time the rashers were done, and with a store of other wholesome victual, were put on a fair white cloth, that covered the table, and William Shakspeare was pressed with blunt courtesy by the father, and a more winning persuasiveness by the daughter, to partake of the fare set before him. This he essayed to do with a notable good will. After this the blooming Anne brewed a goodly posset, and whilst they were enjoying it, her father called on her to sing him a song, the which she seemed a little,—a very little to hesitate upon, with a sort of pretty coyness time out of mind customary under similar circumstances, but after the handsome youth had pressed her with an excellent show of rhetoric, she sung a dainty ditty, then popular, concerning of "The little pretty Nightingale," and at least one of the listeners thought it most exquisite sweet singing. Then John Hathaway would needs have a son of his guest, to the which his daughter added her entreaties so prettily, the youthful Shakspeare found it impossible to resist, whereupon he commenced the singing of a favorite love-song of the time, beginning "If I had wytt for to endyte." The words were of a pleasant conceit which gained considerably in admirableness by the manner of his singing, and the tune, by means of his rich, clear voice, came upon the air a very river of melody. Whether the yeomen liked the song could only be told by the pleasure lurking in the corners of his mouth, and shining quaintly in his half-closed eye-lids, which might be interpreted he saw more in it than the singer imagined—however, that

his daughter relished it there could be no questioning, for her smiles were full as evident as her praises.

"Now friend Will, thee must be a going," exclaimed John Hathaway at last, in his usual plain countryman sort of manner. "'Tis my custom to go to bed with the lamb, and rise with the lark—an excellent good custom I'll warrant—so I'll e'en bid thee a fair good night—nevertheless I will add to it I shall be happy to see thee at all times—and if I be not at home, perchance Anne will be as happy to see thee as myself." He said this with a look of humor that shone through all the staidness of his aspect, and shaking his visitor heartily by the hand, he opened the door for his exit. His daughter denied not a word of what her father had said. Indeed, her glances, as she bade the youth good night, as plainly said—"Come again," as ever was expressed by a pair of bright eyes since the world began.

William Shakspeare returned home with his feelings in a sort of delicious pleasure, perfectly new to him. Be sure he would have hastened to the cottage next day, only he was forced to be at Sir Marmaduke's according to promise. The old knight took huge delight in having all festivals and holidays kept with due ceremony at his mansion. He would not have omitted the slightest things savored of the old times. Knowing this, the antiquary called his young scholar to his counsels, for the express purpose of getting up the festival of the May in such a manner as should outdo all former things of the like sort, and the youth had been commissioned to press into his service whoever he thought could afford him proper assistance. These he had to make familiar with their duties. But if he did not visit the fair singer that day, be sure he did the day following, invested with extraordinary powers by his friend Master Peregrine, with which he acquainted his new acquaintance John Hathaway, and to his exceeding satisfaction found they were favorably entertained of him: the purport of which will be seen anon.

Scarce had the last day of April closed, when, by the sweet moonlight, William Shakspeare, with a famous company of both sexes—friends, tenants, servants, and others, started to a neighboring wood, where they searched about for all manner of flowers then in season, which they gathered into nose-gays and garlands; and broke down blossoming boughs of trees, chiefly of birch, green sycamore, and hawthorn, to carry home with them to deck the doors and porches withal, and make a goodly Maypole. Famous sport had they all the while, laughing

and shouting, frolicking in the grass, and wandering about dispersedly, making the whole country ring with their mirth. About sunrise they again joined company—men, women, and children—each laden with the spoil of the Spring. A tall elm had been cut down, and a straight and taper pole fitted to the end of it, and painted in spiral lines of yellow and black. It was then prodigally adorned with garlands of fresh flowers and new ribbon of the gayest colors. Some forty yoke of oxen belonging to Sir Marmaduke, with each a sweet posey at the tip of his horns had then to draw it home, accompanied on its slow march with the whole of the company, bearing their green boughs, savory herbs, and odorous blossoms,—singing, leaping, and dancing, as if nothing could exceed their pleasure.

The Maypole having been drawn to an open place in the park, convenient to the house, was raised up on high with a great shouting and glee; and it was a right dainty sight to note the streamers dancing merrily in the breeze, and the various colors of the delicate blossoms. Having done this, the principals of the festival had other preparations to make, which they set about with a proper earnestness. All the armor in the old hall was presently hid under boughs and flowers, and the like decorations were prodigally bestowed in every direction about the house. On the floor the long tables were spread with cakes and other choice cates for whoever chose to come. The whole neighborhood looked like a fairy bower, and crowds of persons in strange garments came thronging in and out, looking as joyful as ever they had been in their days.

After this, wholesome viands, and ale of the best might be had in different bowers made of branches of trees in the park; and at dinner there was a most prodigal banquet of everything for to eat and to drink that could be procured. Here was a gammon of bacon-pie, there a lamb dressed whole—in one place a venison pasty, in another a great fish, a shield of brawn with mustard, a chine of beef roasted, baked chewets, a kid with a pudding in the belly, and all manner of poultry, made but a small stock of the wonderful load of victual under which the table groaned. Even the lower messes had most handsome entertainment, and every place bore sign of most sumptuous feasting. The great variety of dresses then worn, and the happy joyous faces there visible, made the whole scene as pleasant a one as could be imagined; but the goodliest feature of it all was old Sir Marmaduke in his customary place at the top of the table, regarding every

one with the same graciousness, and only looking around him to see that all present were as happy as he thought they ought to be. Of the jests that flew about, or of the tricks that were played, I can make scarce any mention. The strangeness, however, of some groups, methinks should not escape notice;—for in one place St. George and the dragon, forgetful of their deadly enmity, were shaking hands introductory to drinking each other's health; in another, Robin Hood and little John, as regardless of their mutual love, were seeking which could lay fastest hold of a tankard each had got a hand upon; here the fool was cunningly emptying of Friar Tuck's full trencher into his own empty one, whilst the other was turning a moment on one side in amorous gossip with his acquaintance, maid Marian; and then the hobby-horse was knocking together the heads of Will Stukely and Much, the miller's son, who were leaning over each other, laughingly regarding the proceedings of their friend in motley.

After this, by the great exertions of young Shakspeare, this goodly company returned to the park in the following order:—first, went one playing on the bagpipes, and another on the tabor, making as much noise as they could; then followed the Morris-dancers, with their faces blackened, their coats of white spangled fustian, with scarfs, ribbons, and laces flying from every part, holding rich handkerchiefs in their hands, and wearing purses at their girdles, garters to their knees, with some thirty or forty little bells attached to them, and feathers at their hats, with other bells at their wrists and elbows. They danced as they went, and faunted their handkerchiefs very bravely. Then came six comely damsels, dressed in blue kirtles, and wearing garlands of primroses. After them, as many foresters in tunics, hoods, and hose, all of grass green, and each of them with a bugle at his side, a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bent bow in his hand.

After them walked William Shakspeare, equipped as Robin Hood, in a bright grass green tunic, fringed with gold; his hood and hose part-colored blue and white; his handsome head was crowned with a garland of rose-buds; he bore a bow in his hand, a sheaf of arrows in his girdle, and a bugle-horn suspended from a baldrick of light blue tarantine, embroidered with silver, worn from his shoulder. A handsome sword and dagger formed also part of his equipments. On one side of him walked Hemings, as Little John; on the other Condell, as Will Stukely; and divers others of the merry outlaw's

companions followed, two by two, all in their suits of green, and each with a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bent bow in his hand. Then came two fair damsels, in orange colored kirtles, with white court-pies or vests, preceding Anne Hathaway, as Maid Marian, attired in a watchet-colored tunic reaching to the ground, with a white linen rochet, with loose sleeves fringed with silver, and neatly plaited, worn over it, her girdle of silver baudeken fastened with a double row on the left side; her long silken hair, divided in many ringlets, flowed down upon her fair shoulders; the top of her head ornamented with a net-work caul of gold with a garland of silver, decked with fresh blue violets above: truly as tempting a Maid Marian as ever seduced outlaw to the merry green wood. After her came a company of her maidens: some in sky-colored rochets girt with crimson girdles, with garlands of blue and white violets; and others with green court-pies, with garlands of violets and cowslips.

Then came Sir Marmaduke's fat butler, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter staff on his shoulder; and with him Oliver Dumps, the constable, as Much, the miller's son, bearing a long pole with an inflated bladder attached to one end of it. Who should come next but Tom Green, as the hobby-horse, frisking up and down, galloping, curvetting, ambling and trotting after so moving a style, it naturally forced a horse-laugh from a great portion of the spectators. It should be remembered, that this ancient feature in a May-day festival, was a horse of pasteboard, having false legs for the rider outside, whilst the real legs stood on the ground, concealed from the spectators by the saddle-cloth which enveloped the hobby-horse all around; and great art was required to make a proper exhibition of horsemanship, by the person appearing to be its rider. Then came our old acquaintance Humphrey, in the form of a dragon,—hissing, yelling and shaking his wings in a most horrid manner; and after him Dick Burbage, as St. George, in full armor, ever and anon, giving his enemy a poke behind, with his wooden spear, that made him roar again. Following these were a motley assemblage of villagers and guests, and Sir Marmaduke, with his chaplain, in the midst.

When they came to that open part of the park before described, the sports recommenced with the spirit they had not known all the day before. The foresters shot at the target, and Robin and his Maid Marian were of course the chiefest of all for skill. Some danced round the Maypole; but the

dragon, who had drank more of the knight's good ale than became any dragon of gentility, must needs be after kissing divers of the maidens—married man though he was, and this got him some whacks from Much, the miller's son, besides a decent cudgelling from Will Stukely and Little John. Master Robin, Sir Marmaduke's fat butler, made a most jolly Friar Tuck; for with an irresistible droll humor in his roguish eyes, he would walk among the people propping of his heavy quarter-staff upon their toes, whereupon if any cried out, he would very gravely preach them a famous sermon on patience under pain and affliction; and bidding them count their beads and say their paternosters, he would go his way.

Many persons had come to see these sports from the neighboring villages, and these formed a crowd nearly all round the place. Sir Marmaduke and his guests had placed themselves on a piece of rising ground in front of the house, some lying of their lengths on the grass, some leaning against trees, some sitting, and some standing. Sir Johan kept by the side of his patron with a pleasant gravity, making a most admirable choice thanksgiving for the bounties all had received that day. Sir Reginald, who had only returned to the mansion the same morning, was with his friend Sir Valentine, gallantly attending upon a bevy of fair ladies who had come to witness the sports; and Master Peregrine was bustling about in a sort of fidgetty delight, explaining to every listener he could lay hold of, the history and antiquity of every part of the festival. It so happened that whilst St. George was stalking round the place, armed with spear and buckler, striving to look as heroic as ever could have done that renowned champion, he spied the dragon playing at bo-peep among the Morris-dancers, and almost at the same instant the dragon spied him. At which the latter commenced advancing into the middle of the open space betwixt the Maypole and the guests, shaking of his wings, yelling, and hissing enough to frighten all the champions in Christendom.

St. George, however, was after him with long strides, till they met in a very choice place for fighting, when he addressed him in these words:—

"Hullo, thou pitiful villain, art thou for turning tail?"

Stay here, I prithee, a moment, and I will make thee wail!"

Whereupon the dragon answered in a monstrous fustian voice—

"Out on thee, Jack Pudding! or if thou needs must stay,

I'll swallow thee—bones and all—and leave the rest for another day."

Then exclaimed the champion very valiantly, as became him—

"Peace, knave! have done with thy humming and hawing."

And thereupon the monster replied, in an equally tearing humor—

"Gogs zounds, if thou comest anigh me I'll give thee a famous clawing!"

After a little more such brave language, in which each got famously abused by the other, they seemed intent upon a desperate combat of life and death. The dragon made more noise than ever he had; and came upon his adversary with his claws extended, and his mouth wide open, as though he meant to make of him but a mere mouthful: but St. George seemed quite up to his tricks, for he presently clenched his spear and braced his buckler, and gave the monster so sore a poke, he yelled till the place echoed with him. Then cried he out very lustily—

"Wounds! thou catiff vile! thou hast broken a joint of my tail—

I die! I'm dead! Oh for a drop of small ale!"

At this moment up comes Much, the miller's son with his pole and bladder, exclaiming to the deceased monster:—

"What ho, Sir Dragon! hast indeed ceased thy snubbing?"

Mayhap thou wouldst be the better for a decent drubbing."

Upon which he began to lay upon the monster with his bladder with such force the other started to life roaring like a town bull, crying out, as he rubbed himself, very pitifully—

"Go, hang for a knave, and thy thumping cease, Canst not let a poor dragon die in peace?"

But as the miller's son evidently had no bowels for the monster, the dragon would not stay any longer to be drubbed, and rose to take himself off with what speed he might; but just at this moment up came the hobby-horse, capering away in the most delicate fashion, and he thus addressed the other:—

"List, lordlings list! I am here in my best graces With my ambles, my trots, and my Canterbury paces.

Is not my tail fresh frizzled, and my mane new shorn,

And my bells and my plumes are they not bravely worn?"

Stand up Sir Dragon, and swear me sans remorse There never was seen so rare a hobby horse."

Upon saying which he neighed like a young filly, and cantered and careered round the

monster, so that he could not move in any way. Others of the characters came up, and they all had some droll thing or another to say; and it ended with the whole party joining hands for a dance round a Maypole, which seeing, Master Peregrine, who had for the last hour fidgetted about as if he knew not what to do with himself, suddenly started from his place at the top of his speed, and in the next minute had got the dragon by one hand and the hobby-horse by the other, dancing round the Maypole, to the infinite delight of the spectators, with as prodigal signs of glee as though he were the merriest of the lot.

The youthful Shakspeare played the part of king of the festival, and in princely sort he did it too: for it was remarked of many, so choice a Robin Hood and Maid Marian they had never seen. Doubtless he had famous opportunities for increasing his acquaintance with the blooming daughter of John Hathaway, and there is every reason for supposing he turned them to good account. In due time the sports ended, and he walked home with her and her father—who with his family had purposely enjoyed a holiday, induced to it by the representations of his new acquaintance—if not perfectly in love, as nigh to it as was possible for him to be.

It was late in the evening of the same day when Sir Reginald, for the first time, found himself alone with his friend Sir Valentine, he having managed to draw the latter to walk with him in the park, convenient to the house. The sounds of revelry had ceased, and both actors and spectators had retired to their homes. The two young knights strolled together silently in the shadow of the trees, Sir Valentine thinking it would be a favorable opportunity for him to acquaint his friend with what had taken place betwixt him and the sovereign of his heart's affections, and ask his advice and assistance to carry on his suit to her to an honorable conclusion.

"Dost remember that exquisite sweet creature we rescued from villains at Kenilworth?" inquired Sir Reginald.

"Indeed do I, marvellously well," replied Sir Valentine, somewhat wondering his friend should begin to speak of the very subject of his own thoughts.

"I tell thee, Sir Valentine," continued the other, with exceeding earnestness, "all the whilst I was at court, even amongst the choicest damsels of the chiefest families of the kingdom, I could think of none other but her; for each did but remind me of her infinite superiority in all loveable delectable

graces." His young companion walked on, listening with a pale cheek and a throbbing heart. "The first thing I did on approaching this neighborhood," continued the other, "was to hie me to Charlote, in the hope of delighting mine eyes with a glimpse of her fair beauty once again. I was so fortunate as to meet with her. She appeared lovelier than ever, and a sort of sadness was manifest in her dainty fair countenance, that made its attractiveness infinitely more touching. She seemed glad to see me. I assure thee I lingered in her delightful society, utterly incapable of tearing myself away. Never met I a maiden of such moving graces, or of such delicate behavior. In brief, I love her—as absolutely as ever fond heart can." Sir Valentine felt as though he could scarce breathe.

"I have sought thee here to tell thee of this," added Sir Reginald, "knowing thou art the truest friend that ever knight had. And I would make such trial of thy friendship as I would of none other living. My entire happiness is in the keeping of this most divine creature; and I would give worlds could I sigh at her feet, or bask in her smiles as often as I desire. But I have plighted my word to my honorable good friend, that notable brave gentleman, Sir Philip Sydney, to accompany him in a certain expedition he is preparing for, and therefore it must needs be I can have but small occasion for carrying on my suit. Being in this strait, and knowing of thy extreme trust-worthiness, and exceeding love for me, I would obtain at thy hands such true service, as for thee to seek out my soul's idol on all warrantable occasions, and with such affectionate rhetoric as thou canst master for so loving a purpose, urge her on my behalf. Give her no cause to mark my absence. Press her with passionate importunities. Let thy talk be ever of my devotion to her, and thy manner of such a sort as should convince her of its earnestness."

Sir Valentine essayed to speak, but the words died unuttered in his throat.

"Can I have such important service rendered me?" inquired Sir Reginald. "But I am assured I cannot appeal to so true a friend unprofitably. I know enough of that honorable worthy nature to convince me nothing will be left undone that these circumstances require."

Sir Valentine managed at last to utter his consent to do what was required of him; and then fearful he should betray his own feelings if he stopped where he was, he made an excuse for hurrying away, wrung his friend's hand more affectionately than ever

he had done, though at that moment his own heart was more forcibly wrung by the fierce trial he was undergoing, and left him to school his nature into the doing of what he had undertaken.

CHAPTER XX.

Come, my Celia, let us prove,
 Whilst we can the joys of love!
 Time will not be ours forever:
 He at length our good will sever.
 Spend not then his gifts in vain
 Suns that set may rise again;
 But if once we lose this light,
 'Tis with us perpetual night.

BEN JONSON.

Oh with that
 I wish to breathe my last; upon thy lips
 Those equal twins of comeliness, I seal
 The testament of honorable vows.
 Whoever be that man that shall unkind
 The sacred print next, may he prove more thrifty
 In this world's just applause, not more deservful.
 FORD.

THE behavior of the youthful Shakspeare to the yeoman's blooming daughter, might, perchance, be to the marvel of some who have it in their remembrance the infinite delicacy and retiringness of his conduct towards the beautiful foundling at Charlote, but these things are to be considered—to wit, that he had in a manner outlived that age of boyish shyness which so manifestly appeared in him, and with it that mere ideal adoration with which it was accompanied. His love for Mabel was but a sentiment, born in the mind and dying there, yet heralding the coming of another love, partaking more of passion than of sentiment, engrossing both the heart and the mind in all their entireness, and showing such a vigorous existence as plainly proved how firm a hold it had on the powerfulest energies of life. Anne Hathaway was altogether different from the foundling. Her rich rosy complexion—her careless free glance, and her eloquent soft smiles expressed quite another character. Her manners were equally opposite—being of that heedless enticing sort, which draweth all eyes admiringly, and soon suns them into a social delightful warmth. But this was nothing more than the outward display of a natural fond temperament, where the heart was overflowing with generous sweet feelings, and was anxious for an object on whom to display its exceeding bountifulness. Such a one, clothed with such resistless fascinations, was sure to

produce an extraordinary impression on the ardent nature of the young poet. Her approving glance—her seductive smile—or her slightest touch, filled him with a sense of joyousness no language could express.

These were unequivocal signs of love in its riper stage. At this period of youth the imprisoned affections burst from their womb, and start into life with impulses that will allow of no controlling. Everything wear-eth a new aspect. A rosier light shines through the atmosphere. A warmer breath is felt upon the breeze. A multitude of new feelings seem struggling in the breast to have free development, and in fact the whole humanity appeareth to take on itself a character perfectly distinct from that which it had previously worn. Nature now whispereth in the ear a secret unthought of hitherto; and all the man riseth at the intelligence, filled with a mysterious influence—a sense of happiness and power—and a knowledge of that sweet philosophy whose right use maketh a very Eden of delight to the Adams and Eves of every passing generation.

Anne Hathaway received the advances of her youthful lover so welcomingly, that he lacked nothing of inducement to proceed. Indeed, hers was not a disposition to withstand the passionate ardor of so prepossessing a wooer, and from the first hour of their meeting, she had regarded him with most favorable sentiments. It was sometime after the May-day festival that the blooming Anne, as was customary with her, sat plying of her wheel in her old place, whilst her youthful lover, as was usual with him, had drawn a seat close to hers, having his arm resting on the back of her chair. Some exquisite speeches and passionate admiring looks from him, were followed by a sufficiency of sprightly answers and bright provoking glances from her. Thus had their mutual passion advanced and no further, but it was soon to show more endearing signs.

"Canst affect verses, Anne?" inquired the young poet.

"Ay, a sweet love song, of all things," replied the village beauty, in her ordinary free-hearted way.

"Wouldst approve of them any the more if thou wert their subject?" asked he.

"Should I not?" answered she, archly. "Marry, I must needs think them the finest sweetest verses ever writ."

"I have essayed the writing of some," continued her youthful lover in a more tender manner. "But I am rather out of heart I have not produced a poem more worthy of thy exceeding merit."

"Hast, indeed, written something of me?" exclaimed the yeoman's buxom daughter, glancing at him a look of infinite curiosity and pleasure. "O' my word, now, I should be right glad to see it."

"If thou wilt promise to pardon my too great boldness, I will here read these, my poor verses," said the young poet. His companion was too eager to know what *could* he have written about her, to care much what she promised: so, whilst she sent her wheel round very diligently, her youthful lover drew a paper from beneath his doublet, and soon, with an exquisite impassioned manner, and soft mellow voice—somewhat tremulous here and there—he commenced reading what is here set down.

LOVE'S ARGOSIE.

"Awhile ago I passed an idle life

Like as a leaf that's borne upon the breeze;
Thoughtless of love as lambkin of the knife,
Or the young bird of hawk, among the trees.
I knew not, thought not, cared not for the morrow,
And took unblessed my daily joy or sorrow.

I saw the bounteous hand of Nature fling
Her princely largess over each green place;
I saw the blushes of the tender Spring
Hiding within the summer's warm embrace;
I saw the burthened Autumn fast expiring,
And Winter, in the year's grave, make a cheerful firing.

"Yet all the time was I as blind as mole
Who digs his habitation in the dark,
Though light there was, it fell not on my soul,
A fire burned bravely that showed me no spark;
Whilst all owned Nature's spells, I saw no charming,
And still kept cold whilst others were a warming.

"When suddenly my eyes threw ope their doors
And sunny looks flashed in their fond desires;
The chambers of my heart found glowing floors
For there each hearth blazed with continual fires:
I saw the magic, felt the bliss 'twas bringing,
And knew the source whence these delights were springing.

"For then it was indifference met its death,
And my new life new climates seemed to seek;
The sweet south flung its odors from thy breath,
And the warm East came blushing o'er thy cheek.

Thysmiles were endless Summer's rosy dances,
And the soft zone shone in thy torrid glances,

"And as thy wondrous beauty I beheld,

A thousand unknown raptures on me came ;
The flood of life by some strange power im-
pelled,

Rushed through its channels, turned to liquid
flame ;

And then with me there seemed such blooming
weather,

As though all seasons showered their flowers
together.

" And as I basked in thy subduing gaze,
And caught the thrilling spirit of thy smile ;
I marvelled I had lived so many days

So blind, so cold, so ignorant the while ;

' Certes,' quoth I, ' I've been in far off places,
Else had I sooner known such moving graces.

" Ay—in strange latitudes and unknown waves,
Having no compass, aid of chart denied,
There rose before me mountains, plains, and
caves,

And a new world my curious vision spied :
And then it was that fair country, thy beauty,
Brought me to anchor—a most welcome duty.

" To turn discovery to best account,
I studied every feature of the land ;
I scanned where'er the highest fruit could
mount,

I touched the tender produce of thy hand ;
And every where such heaps of sweets were
growing,

No place on earth could be so worth the know-
ing.

" Then having this bright world so newly found,
And learned its fitness for an honest home,
Must I be now on a fresh voyage bound,
Again in unknown latitudes to roam ?

Oh might I name it, hold it, own it, rather,
And from its spoil a matchless fortune gather !

" Dear heart ! sweet life ! most admirable fair
saint !

To thee my soul its fond devotion brings,
Like a poor pilgrim weary, worn, and faint

To taste the comfort which thy beauty brings :
Hear how thy praise all excellence excellet !
Hear how my prayer within my worship dwel-
leth !

" Believe me the fond charm thou dost possess,
Is not a gift meant to be idly used,

But a kind solace that should come to bless
That heart whose blessings thou hast not re-
fused.

I see it in a promise and a token
Of flowery bands that never can be broken.

" And now like those bold mariners of ships,
That from all ports do take their merchan-
dize

My bark would I unlaid upon thy lips,

Which awhile since I freighted at thine eyes,
Yet e'er from such kind port my sails are fad-
ing,

Doubt not I bear away a richer lading.

" Bring here the ivory of thy fair arms,
And lustrous jewels which thine eyelids
hold,

Bring here the crowning of thy store of charms,
The silky treasures which thy brows enfold ;
Bring here the luscious fruits thy soft cheek
beareth,

And those rare pearls and rubies thy mouth
weareth !

" But that which doth them all in rareness
beat—

The choicest traffic brought from loving
isles—

Bring me the dainty balm and odorous sweet,
That fills thy tempting treasury of smiles :
That whilst I'm filled with beauty's precious
blisses,

Thou makest me—an argosie of kisses !"

It was scarce possible to have met with a prettier sight than the yeoman's blooming daughter listening with her eyes sparkling unutterable pleasure, as the young poet read to her her tuneful praises. The wheel went round, but she spoke not a word. Indeed she would not hazard so much as a syllable, fearful she might by it lose some part of those, to her, exquisite verses. At the conclusion, wherein his voice sunk to a tremulous soft murmur, he lifted his gaze from the paper to the flushed countenance of his fair companion, and received a glance he could not fail to understand. Upon a sudden, his arm fell from the back of her chair, and encircled her girdle, and—and—and the wheel stopped for a full minute.

" Humph !" exclaimed a familiar voice, close at hand, and starting from their affectionate embrace, they beheld John Hathaway with that peculiar expression peeping from the corners of his eyes and mouth, which marked the more than ordinary pleasure he took in anything. In a moment the blushing Anne was diligently looking on the ground for something she had never lost ; and her youthful lover, in quite as rosy a confusion, was gallantly assisting her to find it. To the father's sly question the daughter answered a little from the purpose ; and as for the young poet he all at once remembered some pressing duty that called him thence, took a hurried leave of his friend the yeoman, who was evidently laughing in his sleeve the whilst, and with a quick fond glance, repaid with interest, to

his fair mistress—whose sprightliness had somehow forsaken her—he wended his way back to Stratford.

In very truth, he was in far too happy a state to have stayed where he was, and a third person by. His feelings were in a complete tumult; his thoughts in a delicious confusion. He felt as if he could have taken the whole world in his arms, he was on such friendly terms with every one. He experienced the delightful consciousness of being loved—to him a new and rare enjoyment—and his was a disposition fitted to receive it with a sense of such extreme pleasure as humanity hath seldom known. What were his thoughts when he could get to any reasonable thinking—or his feelings, when he returned to his ordinary sensations, I cannot take upon me to say; but all pointed to one subject, and rose from one subject; and whether he regarded himself or the world around him, it came to the same matter. To him everything was Anne Hathaway; but especially all wisdom, goodness, beauty, and delight, took from her their existence, and gave to her their qualities. She was, in brief, the sun round which the rest of creation must needs take its course. In this excitement of mind and heart he proceeded on his path, only brought to a more sober state as he neared home. It so happened, at the outskirts of the town, his attention was forcibly attracted by the riotous shouting of a crowd round the horse pond.

“Prithee tell me, what meaneth this huge disturbance?” inquired he of one of the knot of old women, who beating the end of her stick furiously on the ground, knocked together her pointed nose, and chin, as she poked her head towards one, and then towards another, with all the thorough earnestness of a confirmed gossip.

“Meaneth it?” replied Mother Flytrap, in her cracked treble, as she rested her two hands upon her stick, and thrust her ancient visage close to the face of the querist. “By my fackings, it meaneth the very horriest, infamousness that ever was seen in this mortal world. But it’s what we must all come to.”

“Ay, marry—flesh is grass!” said another old beldame.

“But I have my doubts—I have my doubts, gossip,” mumbled out another of the tribe; “it hath been credibly said strange lights and unchristian noises have appeared in her cottage; and I did myself see, standing at her door, the very broom some do say she flies through the air upon.”

“Odds codlings, hast though, indeed!” in-

quired Mother Flytrap, with something like horror muffled up in the hues of her parchment skin. “Well, if she be a witch, she must either drown or swim—that’s one comfort.”

“Who’s a witch?” asked William Shakspeare, who had turned from one to the other of his companions, in a vain hope of getting the intelligence he required.

“God’s precious! who but Nurse Cicely, that hath bewitched Farmer Clodpole’s cows,” replied one of the women; and scarce were the words out of her mouth, when the young poet, with an infinite small show of gallantry, pushed his way through them, and rushed with all his force into the crowd. The outcries he heard seemed to him the yells of savage beasts eager for blood. Shouts of “In with her!”—“Drown the old witch!” and all sorts of oaths and ribald expressions came to his ears, with the half-choked screaming of their victim. He thrust himself forward, pushing the crowd to the right and to the left, till he stood upon the brink of the pond; and just beheld his faithful old nurse emerging from the water, gasping for breath, while some dozen or so of rude ploughboys, butchers, and the like characters, kept encouraging one another in helping to drown the poor creature. Without a word said, William Shakspeare sprang upon the busiest of the lot, and tumbled him into the pond, evidently to the exceeding pleasure of the majority of the spectators. Perchance, his companions would have resented this, but directly young Shakspeare made his appearance, a throng of his old associates hurried from all parts of the crowd, and made a simultaneous rush upon the tormentors of the poor nurse, by which help, divers of them were presently sent floundering alongside of their fellow, the which the lookers on seemed to enjoy above all things.

Whilst Humphrey, now growing to be monstrous valiant, Green, Burbage, Hemmings, and Condell were, with others of a like spirit, putting to flight such of the lewd villains as seemed inclined to stand out upon the matter, William Shakspeare carefully drew Nurse Cicely out of the pond, untied her bonds, and bore her, all dripping as she was, to her own cottage, where, with the assistance of some humane neighbors, he at last succeeded in rescuing her from the death with which she had been threatened. The gratitude of the poor creature was beyond all conceiving; and at last the object of it felt obliged to take himself out of hear-

ing of her earnest prodigal thankfulness and praise.

Among the observers of the scene just described, regarding the chief personage in it with more intentness than any there, was a somewhat crabbed-looking man, meanly clad, who, from beside a tree a little above the pond, had witnessed the whole transaction. When the woman was rescued, he followed her deliverer at some distance, accosting none, and replying to such as were hardy enough to speak to him, in so rough unmannerly a manner few sought acquaintance with him. Whilst William Shakspeare was in the cottage, this person loitered at a little way from it, occasionally leaning on his staff, with his eyes fixed on the ground—then glancing at the cottage-door, and strolling leisurely about without losing sight of it.

As the young poet was hastening from his old nurse's dwelling, in a famous pleasure with the result of his exertions, he heard some one close at his heels. Presently, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and turning round, he beheld John a Combe, the usurer. He had long been familiar with his person, having met with him before frequently, and had imbibed a respect for his character from the favorable opinions of him expressed by his parents. Such portion of his history as was known he had been made acquainted with from many sources, but the mystery which had enveloped him since his extraordinary change, he never had acquired any more knowledge of than the rest of his townfolk.

"Dost shrink from me, boy?" inquired John a Combe, in a sharp thick voice, as he noticed a sudden start of surprise in the youth when he recognized the usurer. "Art ashamed of being seen with Old Ten in the Hundred? Wouldst desire no acquaintance with one whose heart clingeth to his gold, and shutteth his soul against all sympathy with humanity?"

"I think not of you in that way, Master Combe, believe me," replied his young companion, with his usual gentle courtesy.

"Then thou art a fool, Will Shakspeare!" gruffly exclaimed the other; heed thou the general voice. Ask of whomsoever thou wilt concerning of John a Combe, the usurer. Will they not tell thee he is a very heartless tyrant, who liveth upon the widow's sighs and the orphan's tears,—who grinds the poor man's bones, and drinks the prodigal's blood? Do they not swear in the very movingest execrations he is a persecuting relentless enemy to all his race, who careth only to set baits for their carcases, and when he hath got them in his toils, showeth

them no more mercy than a hungry wolf?"

"I never heard of such things," replied William Shakspeare. "Indeed, I have known divers speak of you as having shown such honorable good qualities as entitled you to the love of all honest men."

"Then were they greater fools than thou art," sharply exclaimed John a Combe, "I tell thee I am such a one. I find my happiness in the misery of others. I live when my fellows die. My heart is but a pedestal that carryeth a golden image, at which I force all the children of want to bow themselves down, and then trample on their necks to make me sport."

"In very truth, I can believe nothing of it, worthy sir," observed his young companion. "Methinks too, what you have said is so opposite to what I have heard from the credible testimony you have done, that it is too unnatural to be true. Was it not Master Combe, who spent his substance freely to better the condition of his poorer neighbors? Was it not Master Combe, who held his life as at a pin's fee, to guard his fellow creatures from the destroying pestilence?"

"Ay, I was once of that monstrous folly," said the usurer with great bitterness; "I carried wine in a sieve—only to be spilled upon barren ground. What have I learned by this prodigal expenditure and silly painstaking? The notable discovery that men are knaves and women wantons—that friendship is a farce and love a cheat—that honesty is a fool and honor a bubble—and that the whole world hath but one particular influence on which its existence holds—and that is utter villainy."

"As far as I have seen, everything of which you have spoken hath an entire difference," said the other. "That there may be bad men amongst the good I cannot take upon me to deny; but that this should condemn all mankind for vileness, seemeth exceeding unjust. According to what I have learned, man in favorable circumstances will generally be found possessed of the best qualities of manhood; and such is the natural excellence of his nature that even under most unfit occasions the proper graces of humanity will flourish in him as bravely as though they had the most tender culture."

"Tut!" cried John a Combe, impatiently: "'tis the opinion of such as have gained their knowledge in closets. They take for granted what is told them, and their poor pride will not allow of their crediting anything that is to the prejudice of their own natures."

"And as for woman," continued the young poet more earnestly, "'tis hard to say one word against a creature so excellently gifted.

Methinks she would make praise a beggar, by her worthiness taking all he hath!"

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed the usurer in a sort of scornful laugh. "Why, boy, thy nature is in a rare humor to be cozened. Didst ever hear of any particular villainy out-viling all things, that did not come of a woman? Who was it that first held fellowship with a serpent for man's undoing,—on which occasion she showed how near her disposition was to the crawling crafty venom of her chosen associate. But she soon outdid the reptile in his own vocation; and now her craft would laugh the fox to scorn, and her guile cheat the serpent to his face."

"I should be loath to think so ill of her, having had most convincing proofs of her different character," said the youthful Shakspeare, with a very pleasurable remembrance of one at least of that sex. "For mine own part I conceive there is no telling all her goodness; but I do remember some sentences in which it doth appear to me her true nature is most admirably painted, and they are these:—'of her excellence I would content myself with asking—what virtue is like to a woman's? What honesty is like to a woman's?—What love—what courage—what truth—what generousness—what self-denial—what patience under affliction, and forgiveness for every wrong, come at all nigh unto such as a woman showeth? Believe me, the man who cannot honor so truly divine a creature, is an ignorant poor fellow, whom it would be a compliment to style a fool,—or an ungrateful mean wretch, whom charity preventeth me from calling a villain!' Said you not these words, Master Combe, for I have been told they were of your own speaking?"

"Doubtless!" exclaimed John a Combe with a sarcastic emphasis. "I was, when I uttered such words, as thou art now—moved by a strong belief in the existence of qualities with which my wishes were more familiar than my vision. Appearances looked fair, and I took for granted all things were what they seemed. But of most choice matters woman seemed infinitely the rarest. There is nought I would not have said, there is nought I would not have done, to prove how far above ordinary merit I thought her exceeding excellence. I was a fool—a poor, ignorant, weak fool, who will readily take brass well gilt for the sterling metal. I had to learn my lesson, and in good time it was thoroughly taught me. Experience rubbed off the external show of worth that had cheated mine eyes into admiration and my heart into respect; and the base stuff in all its baseness stood manifestly confessed before

me. Woman!" added he with increasing bitterness, "go search the stagnant ditch that fills the air with petilential poison—where toads and snakes fester among rotting weeds, and make a reeking mass of slime and filth around them,—I tell thee, boy, nothing of all that vileness approacheth to the baseness of her disposition. Woman! She is an outrage upon nature, and a libel upon humanity.—A fair temptation that endeth in most foul disappointment.—The very apples on the shores of the dead sea, that are all blooming without and all rottenness within—a thing that hath never been truly described save under those shapes believed in a past religion, whose features were human, and whose person bestial. Woman! She is the mother of infamy, ready to play the wanton with all the vices, and fill the world with a fruitful progeny of crimes. She is the cozenor of honesty—the mockery of goodness—a substantial deceit—a living lie!"

"I pray you pardon me," said his young companion; "these are most intolerable accusations, and no warrant for them as I can see."

"Warrant!" cried the usurer, now with his whole frame trembling with excitement; "I have had such warrant—such damnable warrant, as leaveth me not the shadow of a doubt on the matter. I have heard—I have seen—I have felt!" continued he grasping the shoulder of the youth convulsively, then seeming to make a mighty effort to conquer his emotions, which for a moment appeared almost to choke him, he added in a calmer voice—"But it matters not. Perchance thou wilt have the wit to discover all that I would have said. I am in no mind to let the gossips of the town meddle with my secrets. I like not they should say 'poor John a Combe!' for I care not to have their pity. Say not to any thou hast spoke to me on such a subject, and when thou hast a mind to pass an hour with Ten in the Hundred come to my dwelling; I should be glad to see thee, which I would say of no other person. Thou art the son of an honest man, and I have seen signs in thee that prove thou art worthy of thy father." Saying these words, John a Combe hastily took his departure down a turning in the street, leaving William Shakspeare marvelling hugely at what had passed between them.

CHAPTER XXI.

Follow a shadow, it still flies you,
 Seek to fly, it will pursue ;
 Lo court a mistress, she denies you,
 Let her alone she will court you.

BEN JONSON.

"And now I dare say," said Sir Robert, "that Sir Launcelot, though there thou liest, thou wert never matched of none earthly knight's hands. And thou wert the curtiest knight that ever beare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrod horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever stroke with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among prosse of knights. And thou wert the meekest and the gentlest that ever eat in hall among ladies."

A book of the noble histories of Kings Arthur, and of certeyn of his knightes.

SIR VALENTINE found he had undertaken a most hard duty. The more he essayed to struggle with his own inclinations, the more strongly they rose against such usage. He tried to preach himself into a cheerful acquiescence with the obligation imposed upon him, from every text of honor, friendship, and chivalry, with which he was acquainted, but he found nature rather an unwilling convert, as she is at all time when her faith already resteth upon the religion of love. Nevertheless, he determined to do Sir Reginald the promised service, however difficult of accomplishment it might be. In very truth he was one of those rare instances of friendship that act up to the character they profess. In numberless cases there are persons calling themselves friends, who are friends only to themselves. They are ready enough to take the name, but shrink from a proper performance of the character. Friendship in its honorablest state is a continual self-sacrifice on the altar of social feeling, combined with a devotion which ever inclineth to exalt the object of its regard above all humanity. A true friend alloweth himself as it were to be the shadow of another's merit, attending on all his wants, hopes, and pleasures, and ever keeping of himself in the back ground when he is like to interfere with his happiness. And yet there have been such despicable mean spirits who would hide their contemptibleness under so fair a cloak. They profess friendship but they act selfishness. Nay, to such a pitch do they debase themselves, that they would behold unfeelingly him they call their friend pining away his heart for some long expected happiness, and basely rob him of it when it required but

their assistance to insure it to his glad possession.

The young knight was of a far different sort. Even with so powerful a competitor as love, he would give himself entirely to friendship. He knew that the assistance he had promised to render his friend would cost him his own happiness, but he could not for a moment tolerate the idea of building his enjoyment with the materials of his friend's felicity. He believed that if Sir Reginald knew what were his feelings towards the object of their mutual affection, he would on the instant resign his pretensions, that his friend's hopes might not be disappointed ; and therefore the young knight was the more resolute in fulfilling the wishes of his faithful companion, and as an important step towards the consummation, kept the secret of his own love locked up closely in his breast. He heard Sir Reginald again express his desires, and again did he declare his readiness to assist in their realization. He saw his friend depart to join Sir Philip Sydney, and experienced an exquisite satisfaction in knowing that the other had left him without the slightest suspicion of his own true feelings.

Time passed on, and Sir Valentine strove to perform his task. He had seen but little of Mabel for a long time past, for she scarce ever ventured alone any distance from the house, fearing she might be again carried off as she had been before ; and this accounted for her not having been seen for so long a period by the youthful Shakspeare. At last the young knight contrived to speak with her, and his entreaties for her private company, to acquaint her with a matter of some importance it was necessary she should know, she named a spot in the park where she would meet him that evening after dusk. And there she attended true to her appointment. Sir Valentine as he gazed upon her admirable beauty, felt that he had much to perform, but he tried all he could to stifle his feelings, and think of no other thing save the advancement of his friend's wishes. Alack ! he was setting about a most perilous task. To play the suitor of an exquisite fair creature as proxy for another, methinks for one of his youth and disposition was great temptation ; but having already loved her with all the ardor of a first fond affection, now to woo her merely as the representative of his friend, looks to be a thing out of the course of nature.

"Methinks this friend of yours must need have taken entire possession of your thoughts," observed Mabel, with a smile, upon finding that at a very interview the young

knight could say nought but praise of Sir Reginald. "I cannot get you to talk of any other thing."

"Indeed, so gallant a gentleman and so perfect a knight doth not exist," replied Sir Valentine. "I have seen him, lady, in the thickest of the field, bearing himself so bravely as was the marvel of both foes and friends."

"And were you in that battle?" inquired she, with a singular curiousness; "I pray you tell me how it was fought. I should like much to hear what share you had in it. I doubt not you behaved very gallantly."

"I kept in the press as nigh to Sir Reginald as I could," continued the young knight; "for I knew that much honor was only to be reaped where he led the way. Truly he is a knight of most approved valor."

"I cannot doubt it, since you have so said," replied Mabel, impatiently. "But I beseech you leave all speech of him, and take to telling me of your own knightly achievements."

"By this light, lady, I am nought in comparison with Sir Reginald," said his friend, earnestly: "never met I a gentleman so worthy of the love of woman. Indeed I know he is kindly esteemed of many noble dames; yet in his estimation all such have been but indifferently thought of, since his knowledge of your so much brighter perfections."

"Surely, he doth great wrong to those noble dames by thinking at all of me," observed the fair foundling.

"He doth consider you so pre-eminent in excellence, language cannot express his admiration," added Sir Valentine.

"I feel bound to him for his good opinion," said Mabel. "Yet I should have been glad had he shown more discretion than in bestowing it so prodigally."

"The love of so noble a knight ought to be regarded as a most costly jewel," continued the young knight. "I cannot think so proud a gift is to be met with."

"Perchance not," replied his companion, coldly. "Yet I cannot say it hath any particular attractions in my eyes."

Here was a new difficulty to be overcome. The lovely object of his friend's attachment cared not to be loved by him. This he had not calculated upon. Sir Reginald's happiness appeared farther from his possession than Sir Valentine could have imagined. Nevertheless, the latter was not to be daunted by such an appearance.

Mabel had by this time met Sir Valentine many times, almost with as much confi-

dence as she had known at their first interviews, for she had neither seen nor heard of her noble gallant and the villains his associates, since her escape. The young knight, at his earliest convenience, had rode to the house for the express purpose of punishing the traitor for his intended villainy, when he found the place shut up close and deserted, and none could tell him where its late inmates had gone; from which it was argued they had left that part of the country out of fear their offences had been discovered. Nevertheless, it was not till recently the poor foundling could hazard herself by walking in the park, as she had used; though, to make her venturing as secure as possible, Sir Valentine, from a neighboring eminence, watched, on a fleet steed, her coming and returning. In truth, the chiefest pleasure she had was meeting this gallant gentleman; and she could think of no evil when she found him leading of his palfrey by the bridle, walking at her side in some retired part of the grounds; or having tied the animal to a branch, standing by her under the shelter of a neighboring tree, entertaining of her with his choice discourse. Still did she listen with manifest disrelish to whatever the young knight reported of his friend, and the more admired the honorableness of the speaker, without caring a whit for the object of his eulogy. She had noticed that of late such tender gallantries as he had been accustomed to exhibit, he had altogether withdrawn, and this she regarded with especial uneasiness. He was always repeating his friend's opinion of her, and ceased to say one word of his own thoughts on that subject; and this behavior in him pleased her not at all. She often considered the matter very intently, and upon coming to the conclusion she had become indifferent to him, it put her into a great discomfort. It hath already been said she had some pride in her—pride in its gracefullest shape—and at such instigation it was like to be called into action; but if it did show itself, it came so garmented in humility, that none would have known it for what it was, save those nobler natures with whom such appearances are familiar.

"I am much grieved at noticing of this change in you," said Mabel to her companion, on one occasion. "If you think of me unworthily, methinks it would more become your gallant disposition to tell me in what I am amiss, or go seek the company of some more proper person. Should I have lost your esteem I cannot be fit for your society."

"O' my life, I do esteem you above all creatures!" exclaimed the young knight,

ferently, and then, as if recollecting of himself, added, "for one that is so highly esteemed of my noble friend, cannot but be worthy of my highest estimation."

"Truly, I would rather you rated me at your own judgment, than followed the appreciation of any other," observed the beautiful foundling, in something like a tone of disappointment.

"Then, be assured, I rate you at a value immeasurably beyond all other estimation!" earnestly exclaimed Sir Valentine.

"Indeed!" murmured the delighted Mabel.

"I mean—I would so esteem you, were I the worthy Sir Reginald," added the young knight, quickly.

"Ah, me! it is ever Sir Reginald with you!" cried his fair companion, in evident dejectedness. "Against Sir Reginald's worthiness I could not say one word, because you have affirmed it; but I do declare to you, for the hundredth time, I heed it no more than if I never heard of it!"

"But surely you will not allow his honorable regard of you to come to an unprofitable ending?" said Sir Valentine, in a famous moving manner. "O' my life, he deserveth not his fortunes should be of such desperate issue. I beseech you, think better of his princely qualities. I pray you, have proper consideration of his noble character."

"'Tis impossible that I can regard him as he is desirous I should," observed the other.

"And why not?" inquired the young knight. "Allow me at least the privilege of asking your reason for leaving to intolerable wretchedness, one who would devote his heart to your service?"

"Tell him," said Mabel—sinking of her voice almost to a whisper—"tell him I regard another so entirely, no one else can have footing in my thoughts."

"Alack! what ill news for him!" exclaimed Sir Valentine. "But think me not over bold at asking of you, is he so worthy—is he so noble—is he so valiant a knight, and so true a gentleman, as my poor friend?"

"Ay, that is he, I am assured!" cried the poor foundling, with an earnestness that came from the heart.

"Truly, I thought not such another existed," replied the young knight. "Indeed, I would willingly go any distance to meet with so estimable a person."

"Methinks you need not go far to find him," murmured Mabel, as she bent her looks so upon the ground her long eye-lashes appeared perfectly closed. Sir Valentine was silent for some few minutes. He could not mistake the meaning of her words. At

first the gratification they gave him was beyond conception exquisite; but then followed the reflection, how poorly he would be playing the part he had undertaken, did he attempt in any way to take advantage of the confession she had just made.

"In all honesty, I must say, this person you so honor hath not a tithe of the merit of Sir Reginald," said the young knight, in a voice that faltered somewhat. "Neither in the suitable accomplishments of a knight, nor in the honorable gifts of a man, can he for a moment be compared with my gallant friend. I beseech you, let not one so little worthy of your regard, receive of you the estimation which should only belong to one so truly deserving of it as the noble Sir Reginald."

"I see! I see!" exclaimed the poor foundling, exceedingly moved by this speech of her companion. "You cannot disguise it from me, strive you ever so. I have fallen from your esteem. I have lost your respect. Fare you well, sweet sir. This must be our last meeting. I hold your noble qualities too deeply in my reverence to allow of their standing hazard of debasement by their association with any unworthiness."

In vain the young knight gave her all manner of assurances she was the highest in his esteem—in vain he sought the help of entreaties and persuasions she would stay and hear the reason of his so behaving, she seemed bent on leaving him that moment, with a full determination never to see him more. At last, however, she yielded so far as to promise to meet him the next evening at the same place, for the last time, and then returned home in a greater sadness than she had ever known. From that hour to the hour appointed for this final interview, Sir Valentine passed in considering what course he should adopt under these trying circumstances. On one side was the happiness of his absent friend entrusted to his custody—on the other, the affections of a most beautiful sweet creature he had obtained by seeking of her society. Honor demanded of him he should not do his friend disadvantage, and love entreated he would not abandon his mistress now that he had completely won her heart. The more he thought the less easy seemed his duty, for he saw that in each case if he attended to the claim of one, it would destroy every hope of the other.

Mabel was true to her appointment. Sir Valentine rode up to her, and as usual tied his horse to a branch. The customary greetings passed, and the young knight observed that his fair companion looked wondrous pale and agitated.

"What hath so moved you?" inquired he, courteously.

"Hitherto I have thought myself safe from further molestation from the villains into whose power I once fell," replied Mabel. "But I have just discovered that they are again pursuing of their treacherous intentions."

"I pray you tell me where I may find them," said Sir Valentine, with a most earnest eagerness. "I promise you they shall molest you no longer."

"I thank you with all my heart!" exclaimed the poor foundling fervently; "yet your interference can be of no avail at this time. The very traitor who bore me forcibly from this park, and from whose base grasp you previously rescued me in the gardens of Kenilworth, is now being entertained by Sir Thomas Lucy."

"Surely Sir Thomas when he is told of his baseness, will drive him from his house!" observed the young knight.

"He will hear of nothing against him—nor will Dame Lucy," answered Mabel. "They say I am mistaken, though I could swear to him among a thousand. They will have it he is a person of worship, whom they have known many years; yet I am convinced he is as paltry a wretch as ever disgraced this world."

"By this light, dear Mabel, I will go and make him confess his villainy!" cried Sir Valentine, moving, as if he would to the house on the instant.

"I beseech you, do not, sweet sir," implored his fair companion, as she caught hold of him by the arm. "Ever since my escape I have lived a most unhappy life, though never made I any complaint,—for both the justice and the dame will have it I must have been greatly to blame, else none would have laid a hand on me; and say what I would, I could not persuade them of my innocence. Of all persons living, they look on you with greatest suspicion, though I am certain you have given them not a shadow of cause, and your appearance at this or any time would do me more mischief than you can imagine."

"But it cannot be that you are to be left to this uncivil treatment," exclaimed the other urgently. "I will not allow of a thing so monstrous. Never heard I such unjust, unnatural usage. It must not be suffered."

"Indeed it must—for there is no honest way of escaping from it as I can see," answered the poor foundling. "There is some scheme afoot, I feel assured, else why is the catiff there—and that evil is intended me

by it, I have had more than sufficient proofs or I should not have known him to be the villain he is; but as yet I know not in what shape it will come. I am in terrible apprehension of the worst, yet I see not how I can avoid it if it visit me."

"There is one way," said Sir Valentine, whose feelings had been put into such extreme excitement, he could think of nothing but the safety of the fair creature who seemed now so completely thrown on him for protection. "There is but one way, dearest Mabel," repeated he, in a fonder tone than he had allowed himself to use a long while. "If you have that regard for me you have expressed, and will not be moved to favor my friend's suit, I beseech you honor me to that extent as would lead you to trust your happiness to my keeping; and I promise you by the word of a true knight, I will carry you from the evils with which you are threatened, to the sure refuge of my kinsman's house, where without delay I will give myself that firm title to be your protector which can only be gained from the honorable bonds of marriage."

"Marriage?" repeated Mabel, with a more unhappy aspect than she had yet shown. "Surely, you have been all this time in a strange ignorance: and I too—methinks I have been in a dream. That word hath fully wakened me. I see now, for the first time, how I have been dressing up my heart in shadows. Oh, how great hath been my folly! I have sought what I thought an innocent pleasure from sources as far above my reach as are the stars.—Alas, what extreme thoughtlessness! what marvellous self-delusion!"

"What meaneth this?" inquired the young knight, full of wonder at this sudden change in her.

"Know you not, honorable sir, I am only a poor foundling?" asked Mabel earnestly. "Have you not heard I am a poor friendless creature, picked up by chance, and fostered by charity?"

"In very truth, I have not," replied Sir Valentine, surprised at hearing such intelligence.

"Then such I am," said the poor foundling. "Nay, I am so poorly off, that even the very name I bear is a stranger's gift.—Mother or father have I never known; and such is my mean estate that I cannot claim kindred with any of ever so humble a sort. Oh, would you had known of this before. I am much to blame for not telling you of it sooner; but in all honesty, sweet sir, it never entered my thoughts."

"That I have remained ignorant of what

you have just told me, is mine own fault only," replied her companion. "But I cannot think of drawing back from my engagements at such a discovery. Rich or poor, noble or simple, you are the same admirable fair creature I have so long loved, and that hath honored me with her regard, therefore if you will trust yourself to my care, doubt not of obtaining at least the respect my poor name can bestow upon you."

"It cannot be!" exclaimed the other determinedly. "I could never do you so notable a wrong as to thrust my meanness into your honorable family. I could not bear you to be ashamed of me, and such it must needs come to when any put questions to you of your wife's lineage. Oh, I now see more and more how ill I have acted in seeking of your society. I enjoyed the present moment, totally regardless of the bar between us, that divided our fortunes an impassable distance. I beseech you to forgive me, honorable sir. As quickly as you can, forget that one of such humble fortunes as your unhappy Mabel ever existed. I would not I should give you a moment's uneasiness. As for myself, whatever may be my wretched fate, or however degraded my condition, I shall have a happiness in my thoughts which will ever rank me with the most worthy, for I can remember I have attained to such proud elevation as to be the love of the noblest, truest, and most perfect gentleman fond heart ever loved."

"Dearest! sweetest life!" cried Sir Valentine, passionately clasping her in his embraces. Mabel for a few moments allowed herself to receive his endearments, then suddenly tore herself from his arms, looking more pale and sad than before.

"This must not be," exclaimed she, with a desperate effort, as she motioned him back. "If you will not break my heart, I pray you,—I beseech you, honorable sir, grant me one request."

"Willingly," replied the young knight, for tears were on her eyelids, and she looked on him so movingly, he could have refused her nothing.

"Never approach me again," said the hapless Mabel, in a voice almost stifled by her feelings. "Nay," exclaimed she, with more firmness, as she noticed he appeared about to speak, "if you hold me in any respect—if I am not the abject thing in your eyes, I am with the rest of the world, seek not to hinder me in my resolution. I must see you no more. I cannot—will not allow of another meeting. On reflection, your own honorable nature will assure you that this is as much for my welfare as your own. May

the sweetest happiness that should crown such nobleness as yours wait upon all your doings. Again, and for the last time, honorable sir!—fare you well!"

"Mabel! dear, sweet Mabel! I beseech you leave me not thus! I will not live without you! I cannot love another!"

"Truly, this is playing a friend's part, Sir Valentine!" cried Sir Reginald, rudely grasping the young knight by the arm, as he seemed about to follow the retreating Mabel. "Why, thou pitiful traitor! thou shame to knighthood—thou dishonor to friendship! What demon hath tempted thee to such villainous doings? By my troth, now, had I not seen this with mine own eyes, I would never have believed it."

Sir Valentine was a little confounded at the unexpected appearance of his friend; and knowing the circumstances in which he had been found, he was sensible they gave color to Sir Reginald's accusation he might find it difficult to remove. "Indeed, I am but little to blame, Sir Reginald," replied he; "and I doubt not you will acknowledge it readily, when you have heard all I have to say to you."

"Doubtless," observed the other, in a manner somewhat sarcastic; "I go on a distant journey, placing such confidence in thy seeming honorableness as to entrust thee with the furthering of my suit to my mistress during my absence; and I return to find thee basely seeking to rob me of my happiness, by proffering her thine own affections! Truly, thou art but little to blame!"

"I do assure you, Sir Reginald——"

"Fie, sir!" exclaimed his companion, roughly. "Thou hast a rapier—methinks thou shouldst know the use of it. Leave thy tongue, and take to a fitter weapon." And so saying, he drew his own from its scabbard.

"By all that's honorable in knighthood——"

"What!" exclaimed the other, fiercely interrupting him; "wouldst play the coward as well as the villain! wouldst do me such foul wrong as thou hast been about, and then shrink from the punishment thou hast so justly deserved? O' my conscience, I thought not so mean a wretch was not to be found. Draw, caitiff, without a word more, or I will beat thee like a dog."

"As Heaven is my witness, I entertain this quarrel most reluctantly," said Sir Valentine, drawing out his rapier. "I cannot see that I have wronged you in any way; and I am convinced you would be the first to say so, knew you all that hath happened."

"To thy defence, sirrah!" replied Sir Reginald, angrily. "I am not to be cozened out of a proper vengeance." And at this he began very furiously to thrust at his companion, who sought only to defend himself, which he did with such skill, that his opponent got more enraged every moment, and gave him all manner of ill words; but still Sir Valentine kept on his defence, and would not so much as make a single pass at his friend. This continued till Sir Reginald, pressing on with desperate haste, fell on his opponent's rapier with his whole force.

"Alack, what have I done!" exclaimed the young knight, as he beheld his faithful companion in arms drop bleeding to the ground. "Oh, I have slain the noblest knight that ever wielded spear, and the truest friend that ever was sincere to man. O' my life, I meant to do you no hurt, and I can say with the same honesty, I have done you no offence. Finding he got no answer, he knelt beside his wounded friend, and took his hand, and entreated him very movingly he would not die at enmity with him, if he was as dangerously hurt as he seemed.—Still he received no reply, which put him almost in a frenzy by assuring him he had killed him. Finding, however, that Sir Reginald breathed, he very carefully took him in his arms, and placed him so that he might recline against the broad stem of a neighboring tree, and then leaping on his steed, he started off at the top of his speed to get the necessary assistance.

CHAPTER XXII.

How that foolish man,

That reads the story of a woman's face,
And dies believing it, is lost for ever:
How all the good you have is but a shadow,
I' the morning with you, and at night behind
you,

Past and forgotten. How your vows are frosts
Fast for a night, and with the next sun gone:
How you are, being taken all together,
A mere confusion, and so dead a chaos,
That love cannot distinguish.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

I washed an Ethiop, who, for recompense,
Sully'd my name. And must I then be forced
To walk, to live, thus black! Must! must!
Fie!

He that can bear with "must," he cannot die.

MARSTON.

THE love of the youthful Shakspeare for the yeoman's blooming daughter flourished

the more, the more it was fed by her sunny glances, and in these, he basked as often as he could find opportunity; but, at this period, his visits to the cottage were mostly late at night, when her father and the children were asleep in their beds. This arose from a cause which must here be described. He was now growing towards man's estate, and it often occurred to him, when he was in his own little chamber, fitted by himself with his own two or three books on a shelf—a chair for sitting—a little table for writing on—and a truckle bed for his lying,—that he ought to be doing of something for himself, and to save his poor parents the burthen of his provision. Such reflections would come upon him, when he had been wearing away the deep midnight with anxious study; and so one morning, having come to a resolution, he dressed himself with all neatness, and bent his steps towards Jemmy Catchpole's, whom he had heard was in want of some one, to copy papers and parchment and such things. He saw the little lawyer, after waiting a monstrous time in a low narrow chamber, whereof it was difficult to say whether the boards or the ceiling were in the dirtiest state, who, hearing of his errand, made him write as he dictated, at which he looked very intently, and though it was as fair a specimen of penmanship as might be seen any where, he found wonderful fault with it. However, the end of it was, Jemmy Catchpole offered to employ the youth, and for his services give him a knowledge of the law for the first year or so; and after that, should he have made any reasonable progress in his studies, he would pay him a handsome wage. This offer was gladly accepted, for although he could gain no present profit by it, his sanguine nature saw in it a most bountiful prospect.

Behold him now, in that den of a place just alluded to, surrounded by musty parchments and mouldering papers, with scarce ever any other company than the rats and the spiders, sitting on a tottering stool at a worm-eaten desk, writing from the early morning till late into the evening, save at such times as he was allowed to get his meals, or to go of errands for his employer. It was about this time that he began to take especial note of the humors of men, wherever he could get sight of them; marking in his mind that distinctiveness in the individual, which made him differ from his fellows; and observing, with quite as much minuteness, the manner in which the professions of his acquaintances were in accordance or in opposition to their ways of living. By this peculiar curiousness of his, he took

characters as a limner taketh portraits, having each feature so set down from the original, that he could carry such about with him wherever he went. This he had certain facilities of doing in his new occupation, as, finding him exceeding apt, the lawyer soon employed him as his assistant wherever he went, which brought him into every sort of company; for Jemmy Catchpole had every body's business on his hands, or, at least, he made many think so, and he bustled about from place to place, as if the world must needs stand still unless he gave it his help.

Such occasions, and the observations he drew from them, afforded the youthful Shakspeare some little amusement in the dullness of his present life. What books the lawyer had, related only to his own particular vocation. The papers and parchments were the driest stuff that ever was read or written: even the very atmosphere of the chamber seemed to breathe of law; and as for Jemmy Catchpole, his talk was a mere patchwork of law phrases, that required considerable familiarity with legal instruments to make the slightest sense of. In fact, the little lawyer had so used himself to such a style in his writings and readings, that it was impossible for him to talk, think, or write, in any other. The tediousness of this was sometimes almost insupportable to the young poet, and he only made it tolerable by the occasional writing of some sweet ballad of his fair mistress, when he should be engrossing a sheet of parchment for his busy master.

But then, after all this weary labor, how famously did he enjoy his midnight meetings with the sprightly Anne Hathaway. There would they stand together, under the friendly shadow of the walnut-tree before the cottage, in such loving fashion as I never can sufficiently describe, till the stars disappeared, and the sun's crimson pennon began to peep above the eastern hills. Nothing in imagination can come at all nigh to the passionate earnestness of his manner at these times. It came to the ear of the enraptured maiden, in a resistless torrent of eloquence that swept down all denyings. There appeared a breathing fire in his words that made the air all around to glow with a delicious warmth; and his looks beamed with such exceeding brilliance, that to the enamored damsel they made his beautiful clear countenance like unto the picture of some saint, clothed with a continual halo. It was not possible for the most scrupulous discreet creature to have resisted so earnest a wooer, therefore it cannot be considered in any way strange, that the fond nature of the blooming Anne should

have acknowledged his complete influence. It so happened, that after passing the hours in such delicate pleasure as such a lover was likely to produce, on his taking leave of her, he sung the following words to a pleasant tune that had long been a favorite of his. The song was thus styled in a copy he gave to her soon after:—

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE'S GOOD NIGHT TO HIS SOUL'S MISTRESS.

"Good night, sweet life! yet, dearest, say,
How can that night be good to me,
That drives me from my bliss away,
Whilst taking off mine eyes from thee?
Good night!—the hours so swiftly are fleeting,
We find no time to mark their flight;
And having known such joy in meeting,
'Tis hard to say—Good night! good night!
Good night, sweet life! ere daylight beams,
And sleep gives birth to hopes divine,
May I be present in thy dreams,
And blessed as thou shalt be in mine.
Good night! yet still I fondly linger;
I go, but do not leave thy sight:
Though morning shows her rosy finger,
I murmur still—Good night! good night!"

This was the song, simple though it may be; but his impassioned manner of singing it, which clothed every word with unutterable passion, I cannot give.

"I tell thee what it is, friend Will," exclaimed a familiar voice from an open casement above them, so much to the astonishment of the lovers that they started from the affectionately closeness of their position on a sudden; "if thou wilt not come a wooing at decent hours, or dost again wake me out of my sleep with the singing of love-songs, I'll have none of thy company. And I tell thee what it is, Mistress Anne,—if thou allowest of such loud kissing, thou wilt alarm the whole country within a mile of thee!"

"Heart o' me, father how you talk!" cried the blushing criminal. John Hathaway closed the casement and returned to his bed, chuckling like one who had just succeeded in playing off some exquisite pleasant jest.

About this period the youthful Shakspeare was ever meeting John a Combe. Although he could scarce be got to speak to any other person in the town, save on business, John a Combe never failed to accost the young poet whenever they met. It was evident each took pleasure in the other's society; for although Master Combe was marvellous bitter in his speech upon all occasions, he was ever betraying to the close observance of his companion, a kindness of nature which

the latter could well appreciate. He suspected that beneath this covering of gall and wormwood the sweet honey of humanity lay in exhaustless heaps; and knowing of his history, and his former greatness of soul, he was exceedingly curious to learn the secret cause that had made him apparently so changed a man. Once, when he met him, the usurer made him promise to call at his house immediately he had done his labors of the day, as he wished to see him on a matter of deep importance. William Shakspeare promised, and that evening, instead of going to his mistress, he was found seated in John a Combe's chamber, where one candle gave just sufficient light to make the cheerlessness of the place most conspicuous. The usurer sat before him, with that restless look and manner with which a man who has determined to do a thing which he likes not, prepares to set about it.

"I've heard thou art playing the lover—is't true?" inquired he, in his usual sharp voice.

"Most undeniable," replied the young poet with a smile.

"O' my life, I did not think thou hadst such marvellous lack of brains," observed the other. "Wouldst cater for thine own misery?—Wouldst build thy towering Babel to the skies, to end in the utter confusion of thy thoughts? Have more discretion."

"Indeed I find in it so sweet a happiness, I would not abandon it at any price," said his companion, with all the fervor of a true lover.

"Is not the poison sweetened to attract the fly!" exclaimed the usurer more earnestly. "I tell thee thou shouldst avoid the temptation as thou wouldst a pestilence. It will destroy thee, body and soul. It will madden thy brain and wither thy heart,—make thy blood a consuming fire, and thy life an intolerable wretchedness!"

"Truly I have no such fear," replied the youthful Shakspeare.

"When does youth fear when there is a fair prospect before it!" cried John a Combe. "What a desperate folly it is. Point out the gaping precipice within its path, it will go madly forward. Of a surety nature might well wear a robe of motley, for she presideth over a goodly company of fools. I tell thee, boy, there is no such danger as that thou seemest so enamored of; and if nothing else will turn thee from thy destruction, I will unfold to thee the story of mine own fearful experience of this blight upon humanity."

William Shakspeare listened in silence,

for, as hath been said, he had a strange curiosity to know what his companion had promised.

"I require of thee, first of all, that thou declarest to none one word of the secret I am about to entrust to thee." The young poet readily made his assurance he would not repeat a syllable; and presently the usurer continued his narration in these words:—

"Perchance thou has heard of one John a Combe, whose goodness of heart was the theme of all of his acquaintance. I was that John a Combe. I had such store of love in my breast that I scattered it far and wide, and yet it seemed to grow the greater the more it was so squandered. No matter what evil I might see, I regarded it only as the weeds in a corn field, surrounded by such bountiful provision of good that it was scarce worthy the observation of any person of a thankful nature. My youth was cherished with such pleasing feelings. My manhood flourished upon the same teeming soil. I sought to sow benefits broadcast wherever there was place and opportunity; and found, or fancied I found, the crop amply repay me for the labor. I made friends wherever I met faces. All men seemed to me my brothers; and every woman I looked upon as a domestic deity deserving honorable worship. At last I met one who regarded me as an enemy. I strove to win him to better feelings, and failed. He essayed to destroy me in honest battle—I disarmed him and went my way unhurt. He then tried to rob me of my life by treachery; but here he was both baffled and punished, whilst I remained as uninjured as at first. He was a demon—a fiend of hell, let loose on the earth.

"I had met with many women seeming in every way worthy of my love, and showing such signs as proved I should have no great difficulty in the winning of their affections: but my soul was somewhat curious in the pursuit of female excellence. It must needs have a phoenix. It would not be satisfied with what appeared good—it strove to procure possession of the best. I sought for such an object, for a long time unavailingly. At last in a neighboring town I met with one who seemed all I required. She was of a poor family, the daughter of a man supporting himself and her by the profits of a humble trade. She was fair—young—of gentle manners, and of a winning modest innocency. What more could be wanted? On further acquaintance her merits rose in greater conspicuousness, and the perfect simplicity of

her disposition won on me more and more every day. Was not this a phoenix?—a phoenix that rose from the flames her brilliant beauty raised in my heart. I grew enamored: and she with an admirable delicacy retired from my advances. I persevered, and saw in her some faint signs I was making way in her esteem. Still there was such sweet air of purest chastity in her every action, it kept me a worshipper at so respectful a distance, I could not believe my success to be in any certainty.

“What did I do upon this. I determined to take every opportunity of studying her nature, with the hope of so moulding it to my ideas of womanly excellence, I should by possessing her, secure myself a life of such exceeding happiness the most blessed could have but little notion of. To say I loved her, methinks is scarce to say enough, yet of the mere outward show of passion I afforded the world so little, none could have believed I had been so desperately enamored. It was that nice sense of delicacy in her, and modest shrinking from familiar praise, that took me captive. To win her love I strove with all the earnestness of manhood flushed with its proudest energies. But how to win it was the question. I would not purchase it by gifts, for that suited not my humor. I would only have it come as the price of her appreciation of my merit, for then I thought I could the better count on its sincerity and duration. With this fine fantasy of mine, I would not let her know I was in such good estate as I really was. I affected some humbleness of fortune, thinking by gaining her in such guise I should be sure that no alloy of selfishness could mingle with the pure sterling of her love.

“I took up my abode in her father’s house to have the fullest means of completing my honest purpose. She seemed to grow under my hand like a flower of my own planting. She began to regard me with a softer tenderness. I doubled my assiduity, and she gradually warmed into a graceful fondness; yet in all that she did or said there was so exquisite an artlessness, I was more charmed than had she been a thousand times more affectionate without such simple coloring. I loved more and more. At last the crowning of all my toil I gained from her the much longed-for confession—the treasure of her regard was mine and mine alone. I did not betray myself even then, delighted as I was beyond all measure; but I resolved the next day to leave the house, return in my true character as speedily as I might, and, before all her acquaintance, wed her with such honorable ceremony as worth like

hers deserved. I thought my bliss complete, and my gratitude to the author of it knew no bounds.

“I slept in a chamber directly under hers, and often as I lay in my bed have I enjoyed more exquisite sweet pleasure in hearing her gentle footsteps pass my door, and up the stairs to her sweet rest—to which, in consequence, as she told me, of her household labors, she was the last to retire of any in the house. That night thinking of my great happiness to come, I kept awake longer than had been customary with me; and all at once I marvelled I had not yet heard her light footfalls, for it was far beyond her usual time of coming up stairs. Another hour passed by and yet no sign of her coming. I began to get somewhat alarmed, as lovers will upon anything out of the ordinary in their mistress’s behavior. At last when I had nigh worked myself into a fever with imagining of all sorts of dangers that might have happened to her, to my infinite joy I heard her softly approach my door. Almost at the instant I heard other footsteps ascending with her. In the next moment I distinguished a slight whispering in a strange voice. Then two persons together proceeded past my door—together they ascended the stairs—together they entered her chamber—the door was locked—I could then distinctly hear above me, mingled with her light footfall and gentle voice, the full deep tones and heavy step of a man.

“At this discovery I started up as though I had been bit by an adder—the bed shook under the fierce trembling of my limbs—my heart beat in my breast as a madman rushes against his prison bars—my veins seemed filled with the flame, and my brain scorching with fire; and a hot blighting wind appeared so to fill the place around me, I breathed as though every breath would be my last. But this was but the beginning of my tortures. Had I possessed the power of moving I would have done a deed of just vengeance, which should have remained a monument of terror unto the end of time; but I was there like one chained, having no other senses but those of hearing and feeling. Talk of the sufferings of the damned, what were they to the agonies I endured. Lash me with scorpions—plunge me into everlasting fires—goad me with serpents stings—strain every nerve and artery with pulleys, racks and wheels—’tis but a mere ordinary aching in comparison. At last nature could hold out no longer, and all sensation left me.

“When I recovered consciousness, the sun was streaming in at my casement; but

it was no sun for me. I was no more the man I had been twelve hours before, than is a withered bud a blooming flower. A perpetual darkness took possession of mine eyes—my veins held a running poison—the sweet feelings of humanity had turned to a sourness that corroded their vessels—all my hopes were consumed to ashes, and scattered to the four winds; and all my belief in the existence of the worthiness of humanity burst like a bubble in the air, leaving no sign to tell that such a thing had ever appeared. Wherever I looked I spied the darkness of a sepulchre—wherever I moved I smelt the filth of a charnel. Villainy was branded on every face. Craft made its dwelling in every habitation. I saw the world intent on my destruction. I declared war against the whole human race.

“I took counsel with myself, and determined before I left that hateful place to discover one thing. I had dressed myself in readiness to set about the fulfilment of my resolution, when who should make her appearance but the object of my late care and regard—my phoenix! my best among the excellent! Towards me she came looking as simple, innocent, pure, and artless as she had looked from the beginning. I managed by a desperate effort to keep me a calmed countenance, though there raged so fierce a tempest within me as beggareth all description.

“She sat herself down as usual, and with her accustomed gentle kindness commenced asking concerning of my health. I calmly drew a chair next to hers, quietly seated myself as near to her as I could—quickly seized one of her wrists in each hand, and with my face close to her own, looked into her eyes as though I would read there the deepest secret of her soul. She shrunk from my scrutiny with every sign of conscious guilt. I then poured out on her the pent-up flood of contempt, indignation, and abhorrence; and she trembled in pallid shame. I saw she was humbled to the dust with fear, and rung from her reluctant lips the whole history of her infamy. It was a common case. An excess of vanity disguised by matchless craft, made her seek to become above her natural station. She sought to be the envy of her companions, by wearing of such ornament as they could not obtain. These she cared not to obtain honestly, though she employed an exhaustless stock of artifice to make it appear they were so acquired. The tempter was at hand, ready to take advantage of her evil-disposedness. A few trinkets and other pretty baubles, with a fair commodity of oaths and flatteries,

completed the bargain. The price paid, she sold herself, body and soul. Still I stopped not here. I insisted on the name of her companion in iniquity. After a while she gave it. It was mine enemy.

“He had seen where I had stored up all my hopes—he had noticed my infinite pain-taking to make my happiness complete—he had watched—eagerly—delightedly watched the progress of the enamored game I was playing, till I had staked every thought and feeling on the issue; and then he came with his damnable base villainy, and so cheated me, I not only lost what I had staked, but lost myself as well. At the mention of his name I flung her from me like a toad: and as the fear-struck wretch lay prostrate before me, I heaped on her guilty soul the abundant measure of my honest execrations. She hid her face in her hands, and writhed like a bruised worm; but I left her not till I had exhausted every term of infamy and scorn I had at my will. Doubtless, though the next hour she went about wearing of the same simple, artless, innocent countenance as first attracted me; and as token of her worthiness, exhibited to her envious companions the letters and verses of my writing, wherein I bestowed on her that estimable rare clothing with which true love delighteth to attire its deity:—and, I make no manner of question, hath since palmed herself off on others, as she strove to do with me, as the purest, kindest and best among the most admirable of her sex.

“As for the villain that did me this intolerable wrong, I sought him in all places, but he managed to elude the strictness of my search. If there remain for me one glimpse of happiness in this world, it can only come when I shall toss his body to the ravens, and leave his bones a crumbling monument of matchless perfidy, to whiten in the blast. Bowed down, as I am, with the weight of those memories which crush my humanity to the dust, my arm seems nerved, and all my limbs clothed with a giant's power, whenever I see in my mind's eye the arrival of my day of vengeance. I know it will come. Nature hath been outraged beyond all previous example. The punishment shall be in proportion to the offence. The breath of life is kept within my miserable frame only by an unconquerable desire to execute this natural decree; and till that longed-for time shall come, the scorn, the detestation, the hatred, the contempt, the disgust, the loathing and abhorrence that bubbles from my heart, will fall, for want of being discharged upon its proper

object, upon those who have the ill hap to come within my influence.

"Boy!" exclaimed John a Combe, in a voice scarce audible from the greatness of his emotions, "when I think of what I might have become, and behold what I am, my heart feels as if it would shiver in my breast. There are many who may still remember me in my better days, but I doubt they knew the happiness I had then in myself and my doings. From philanthropy to usury is a huge step; yet I took it at a bound. Mayhap I am mad—I have had cause enough for it—but I can assert of a certainty, I am—most miserable."

William Shakspeare had listened to the preceding narration with exceeding interest; but the last few words were spoken with such a touching earnestness, he was more deeply moved than ever he had been in his life before. He saw this was no case for common consolations—he therefore attempted nothing of the sort.

"Never breathe to me a word of woman's honorableness," continued the usurer, with increased earnestness. "This creature that I had worshipped with so pure a spirit, whose worthiness I exalted above all virtue, and whose excellence I so honored, it out-topped every example of goodness, not only did me this inhuman wrong out of her own infinite baseness; but as soon as I had rid myself of her infamous society, she took to slandering me with the coarse, vile coloring of the blackest malice—thinking, by so doing, my testimony of her shame would not be believed. I alone had knowledge of her evil doing—the fear which guilt produces continually haunted her—and she strove to save her reputation by destroying mine. She gave out I had sought to use her dishonestly, so she would have none of me; and accused me of such horrible behaving as none but the degraded, debased thing she had made herself, could have conceived. Here, then, was I by my abundant love of virtue, and prodigal generosity, in seeking to make others happy, stripped hopeless—and then daubed with the pitch of infamy! I have said nought of this matter hitherto, believing I might escape the outstretched finger, and the reviling eye, of the unjust world, by a strict secrecy. My pride would not allow of my offering one word in my own defence, convinced that men's minds have such an inclination for villainy, they will readily entertain it, let it come in any shape. No where will there be found any sympathy for abused confidence, for the man that is deceived is looked upon as a poor weak fool, that should have had more

wit than to have suffered such cozening.

"I felt convinced that every one around me were striving to get to a knowledge of my secret, that they might enjoy the pleasure of thinking ill of me; so I was beforehand with them—abused all, and kept all from the slightest approach to that familiarity which they desired should lead to contempt. But what a life is this I am living! and when I behold thy fresh young nature pursuing the same course which mine hath gone, have I not reason to fear it will come to a like dreadful ending? Boy! look at me, and pause in thy career. I have been as thou art now—a worshipper of fair appearances. I loved the goodly garnishing of the bright world, and would have rushed against a thousand levelled spears in defence of its integrity. Thou seest me here decrepid in my prime, inwardly affected with a moral leprosy, that eateth my heart to the core—outwardly, one entire sore, that causeth me to shrink from the world as from a scorching fire. I am at strife with my fellows—I am at war with myself—the day bringeth no peace for me—the night no repose. Merciful God!" exclaimed the unhappy usurer, in his deep frenzy, clasping his hands together, with a wild look of agony and supplication. "Is there no peace for the guiltless?—Is there nought but perpetual torture for the doer of good? Tear not my heart-strings with so rude a grasp! I have wronged none. I have loved all. I have worshipped fervently each excellent evidence of thy perfect handiwork. Let not mine enemy prevail against me. He hath done me most intolerable injury. Pity for my undeserved sufferings! Justice against the villainy that produced them! Mercy! help! vengeance!"

Shouting these last words in the most piercing tones, John a Combe tottered forward a few steps, and before his young companion could reach the place where he was, fell exhausted upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Is this your manly service?
A devil scorns to do it.

MASSINGER.

Now whether it were providence, or luck,
Whether the keeper's or the stealer's buck,
There we had venison.

BISHOP CORBET.

"SEE that this plot of thine have a more profitable issue than thy preceding ones."

"It cannot fail, my lord, it is so cunningly devised."

"So thou saidst of the others, yet I reaped no advantage of them."

"That was owing to no fault of mine, believe me, but to circumstances which, as it was clean impossible they could be foreseen of the piercingest wit, it is plain they could not have been prevented."

Thus spoke two of whom the reader hath already some acquaintance—to wit, the licentious noble and his villainous assistant; and they were sitting together in a small, mean chamber of an obscure inn in the neighborhood of Charlccote—the former, as usual, so closely wrapped up, as if he feared being recognized; and the other in finer feather than he had ever been in before, as though he was intent in playing some exceeding gallant part.

"I marvel, my lord, you should waste so much labor on so poor an object," observed the meaner villain. "Methinks you might have won a nobler prize at half the pains. Indeed, I have been credibly informed this Mabel is nothing better than a very mean person,—a mere foundling—mayhap, the chance offspring of vulgar parents—that hath now become a sort of humble servant to the good dame by whom she was recovered."

"Dost tell me this story, fellow!" exclaimed his companion, rising from his seat with most haughty indignant glances. "Why, where hath flown thy wits, that thou couldst credit so shallow a tale?—Foundling! o' my life, I would gladly give a thousand crowns to pick up such a foundling but once or twice in my life. Vulgar parentage! By this hand, I have seen her wear so regal an air with her, as Elizabeth, in her proudest mood, never came up to. Servant! Hast noted her look and move, and speak with that unrivalled dignity she possesseth, and talk so idly? 'Slife, thy brains are addled."

The gallant looked all humbleness. He knew it would be somewhat unprofitable to him to differ in opinion with his employer on such a matter; so he made no more ado than to express his entire disbelief of the story he had been told, and avow he had never entertained it from the first.

"I must say this plot seemeth to me a famous good one for the purpose," observed the other, as he was making for the door.—"But, mark me, if that knave of thine lay but his sacrilegious finger on her, I'll cut him to shreds!"

"Be assured, my lord, everything shall be done according to your noble wishes,"

replied his associate. Soon afterwards both mounted their horses at the door, the noble then started off in one direction, and the other, accompanied by the same ill-looking fellow, that had dealt William Shakspeare so fierce a blow in the park, at Charlccote, took a different road. These two rode towards Sir Thomas Lucy's house in deep and earnest converse all the way; the former ever anon breaking off his discourse by muttering the words "fellow," and "so my brains are addled!" in a manner which showed he had taken huge offence at those expressions. In another hour they were seated with the justice in his favorite chamber, making famous cheer of his good ale; the gallant appearing to be a marvellous great person; and his fellow dressed in a falconer's suit of green, played the part of the honest, humble serving man, that his master, out of regard for his exceeding merit, sought to make happy. He spoke seldom, and then only to praise his good master, or say some respectful speech to his worship the justice. However, his companions left him but little opportunity for much talking, had he been so inclined; for what with his master's marvellous accounts of his influence at court, and the many noble persons he was held in such esteem of, they could refuse him nothing, and Sir Thomas's still more incredible accounts at his familiar acquaintance with these notable personages, in their youth, and the famous tricks he and they had played together, there was but little room for a third party to bring in a word.

We must, however, leave these worthies for the present, and accompany the courteous reader to another chamber, wherein the gentle Mabel was receiving a grave and somewhat severe lecture from Dame Lucy. The poor foundling looked pale and sad.—She was striving to resign herself to the humility of her fortunes, but there was something in her nature that would not be content.

"I beseech you, sweet mistress, let me hear no more of the marriage," said she at last, in a manner pitiful enough to have moved any person. "This man I know to be one of those who assisted to carry me off, and the other his master was the mainspring of the whole villainy."

"Did any ever hear of such presumption!" exclaimed the old dame, in a famous astonishment. "Doth not Sir Thomas declare that the gentleman hath been his good friend nigh upon this twenty year, and that the other, his falconer, he believes to be as honest a man as ever broke bread. Dost

pretend to know more than the justice? I marvel at thy horrible impudency!"

"I cannot be mistaken, for they have given me but too good cause to hold them firmly in my remembrance," added the poor foundling.

"Here's ingratitude!" cried her ancient companion, seeming to be getting a little out of temper! "Here's obstinacy! Here's disobedience, and undutifulness to thy proper advisers. Art not ashamed to be setting thyself in opposition to thy betters, who have clothed thee, and fed thee, and given thee lodging, and made of thee a Christian?—By my troth, I would not have believed such huge baseness was in the whole world."

"But I have no desire for marriage, an' it please you, good mistress," said Mabel; "methinks I am well enough as I am."

"How dost pretend to know anything of the sort," answered Dame Lucy, sharply.—"Is not the justice the better judge! Hath he not said thou art ill off, and dost dare, in the face of it, to say thou art well enough? But I see it plain. Thou art hankering after those fine fellows who met thee at Kenilworth; and would sooner be the leman of a gay gallant than the wife of an honest man. But I will put a stop to thy villainy straight. The justice hath declared thou art to marry, and to marry thou must speedily make up thy mind. I will see that thou art properly wedded with all convenient speed; and, as earnest of my intentions, I will send thee the honest man who is to be thy husband.—Prithee, take heed thou entertain him well."

Mabel saw her mistress leave the chamber, and sank into a seat with a mind nigh paralyzed with apprehension. She had suspected, for some time, some plot was hatching by which she was to suffer, and she now saw its villainous shape and purpose. She perceived it was planned with such extreme subtlety, that it afforded scarce any chance of escape. Her thoughts were sinking into a very desperate hopelessness, when the door opened, and there entered the chamber, with a half-respectful, half-familiar look, and in an awkward, clownish manner, the man that awhile since was making cheer with his master, and the justice. Mabel knew him at a glance, and, in a moment, sprung to her feet, eyeing him with a look of scorn and detestation that appeared to discompose him somewhat. There was scarce a bolder villain in existence, yet it was evident he felt not quite at his ease before the flashing glances of the poor foundling. He seated himself on a chair, holding his hat before him with his knees close together; and presently shifted his position, and

then again changed it. Neither had spoke by word of mouth; but the looks of Mabel seemed to have the searchingest language that ever was said or written, and the villain read it, understood it, and felt it. At last, he commenced speaking:—"His worship hath had such goodness as to—"

"Wretch!" exclaimed Mabel, interrupting him in a deep low voice, in which utter contempt seemed to breathe its most humiliating spirit; and then advancing towards him two or three steps in all the haughty dignity of virtue, continued with an eloquence of look and gesture which exceedeth all powers of description, to address him thus:—"The spawn of the toad hath a name, the slough of the adder may be called something; but what art thou, monster of baseness, for whom language hath no fit title. Art a man? Manhood spits at thee! Art a beast? The most bestial thing that crawls, knoweth nothing of the vile office thou hast undertaken. Avaunt, thou outrage upon nature! Away, thou shame on humanity! Go, hide thee, if hiding thou canst find; for if thou couldst crawl within the deepest bowels of the earth, the earth would sicken at thy touch, and cast thee up—the sea would raise her gorge at thee—the mountains heave at thy approach—and all the elements of matter shrink from thy neighborhood, as from an abomination too gross to be endured!"

The man winced under this address, as if every word of it had been a goad that touched him to the quick. His dark scowling eyes glanced restlessly about, he changed color several times, and looked in that peculiar expression of indecision that betokeneth a state of mind in which a person knoweth not what to do with himself, though he would be glad to be anywhere but where he was.

"What desperate demon put thee on this mischief," continued Mabel in the same force of language and manner. "Canst seek such detestable employment and live? Hast no sense of shame? No fear of punishment? No dread of an hereafter? Look at what thou art about to do. Hold it before thy gaze unshrinkingly, if thou canst. Doth not thy soul shrink in disgust at entering upon such loathsomeness? Man! If thou hast not parted with every tittle of the decent pride of nature, spurn the outrageous infamy thou wouldst thrust thyself into.—Get thee to thy employer, and tell him thou dost abhor such inhuman villainy, or thou wilt be hunted through the world like some foul fruit of monstrous practices, all nature riseth to destroy from very shame."

The villain evidently trembled, and the big drops starting on his wrinkled forehead, showed how deeply he was moved.

"Rememberest thou, thou hadst once a mother?" added the foundling in a deeper and more subduing tone: "think of her, friendless as I am. How wouldst thou regard the man who suffered himself to become the tool of a villainous base traitor, to secure his doing her such foul wrong as honesty stands aghast to contemplate?—Wouldst not be ready to tear his heart from his breast, and trample it in the highest dunghill, to rot with its kindred filth? Canst behold this vileness in another and not see it in thyself? Thou art the tool for compassing this mischief, and I the guiltless object at which 'tis aimed. If I have done thee any wrong I will do all possible reparation. If I have given thee any offence, I will endure any corresponding punishment. I charge thee say in what I have injured thee, that thou shouldst pursue me with so unnatural a hatred!"

"Nay, sweet mistress, I have never received ill at your hands," replied the man with a faltering voice, and a manner thoroughly ashamed. "And if I in any way assist in doing of you an injury, may I be hanged on the highest gibbet that can be found." So saying, he hurried out of the chamber so completely chap-fallen as no villain had ever been before. He immediately sought his master, and found him alone.

"Ask of me to stab, to poison, or to rob, and I care not to refuse," exclaimed he. "But if I am caught within looking or talking distance of that wench again, I will eat myself by handfuls. 'Slight! her words and glances have so scourged me, I would sooner have took the whipping-post the longest day o' the year, than have endured a tithe of such punishment."

"Why, thou ape, thou beast, thou fool, thou pestilent kuave and coward! what dost mean by this?" cried his master in as great rage as astonishment. "Wouldst spoil the goodliest plot that ever was devised; and mar the making of our fortunes when we are sure of success?"

"Truly, I care not if I do," said the man doggedly. "But I will be no mean for the doing of her any mischief. I will assist thee in any decent villainy, but if ever I meddle with her again, I'll forswear living."

It was in vain that the other tried by promises and then by threats to turn his companion's resolution; and the result was, Mabel was left at peace till some more willing agent could be found.

In the meanwhile the passion of the youth-

ful Shakspeare for the yeoman's blooming daughter continued to develop itself with increased fervor, despite of the usurer's warning; and John Hathaway with his own notions of the matter, at last on one of his usual evening visits, bluntly asked him how he should like his fair mistress for a wife; whereupon, as might be expected, the young lover answered nought in this world would make him so happy. Then the father gravely inquired into his means of supporting a wife, at which his companion looked the gravest of the two, and acknowledged that all he had was the wage he received from Master Catchpole, which scarce sufficed to keep him in shoe leather; and that the yeoman looked monstrous concerned, and began to preach a notable fine homily on the necessity of marrying with sufficient provision, to all of which the young poet had not a word of reply; but sat in a very desperate unhappiness, fully convinced every hope of gaining his dear mistress was at an end.

"I tell thee what it is, friend Will," said John Hathaway, after regarding his companion's doleful visage till he found he could no longer disguise the sly pleasure he was himself enjoying all the time, "Keep thy heart above thy girdle, I prithee. I and thy honest father settled the matter yester-eve, over a full tankard. Thou shalt be married at Lammas, and shalt lack nothing for thy particular comfort I can procure thee. A fair good night to thee, son Will." Before the delighted lover could recover from his exceeding astonishment at this welcome intelligence, his intended father-in-law, mayhap the most pleased of the two, had made his way to his bed-chamber.

Every hour of the intervening time went joyfully with the youthful Shakspeare.—Even the musty parchments and dull law writings took a pleasant countenance at this period, and he labored so diligently and so much to the satisfaction of his master, with whom he had become in famous esteem for his cleverness at his duties, that he hearing of his coming marriage, promised him a week's holidays previous to his wedding-day, that he might the better employ himself in the necessary preparations, and a week after his nuptials, that he might have sufficient space to enjoy himself to his heart's content.

But the little lawyer was a marvellous shrewd person. He suspected did he not get rid of his clerk at such a time, he would be marring of everything he put his hand to by thinking of other matters.

The week previous to the wedding had arrived, and the young lover was in such a state of happy expectation as lovers at such

a time only can know. His cheerful, free humor had made him an especial favorite of the young men of his own age, who could claim with him any sort of acquaintance, and now more than ever his heart was open to every appearance of sociality. His approaching marriage became known over the town, and this led many to ask him to partake with him a friendly draught, that they might wish him all manner of happiness, the which he could not without an unbecoming discourtesy refuse, consequently, when he was not in company with his dear mistress, of whom by reason of her being in almost constant occupation preparing for this great festival of her life, he saw only for a brief space each day, he was engaged in social revelling with his friends. Perchance some of these, being of an idle turn, and of somewhat unbridled inclinations, were not the very properest companions he should have chosen, but he knew of nought to their particular disadvantages, and their exceeding friendliness towards him, in his present humor, made him readily embrace any frolic they wished him to share in. They proposed that to make the wedding feast the more perfect, they should go together over night and kill a deer, and as this was regarded by persons of his condition at that period as a mere customary youthful frolic, he readily promised to be of the party.

It chanced to happen, that afternoon, as they were standing together at the inn door, who should come by but Oliver Dumps, the constable, having as his prisoners no less important personages than Sir Nathaniel, the curate, and Stripes, the schoolmaster.—The cause of which was, that these two had become such inveterate offenders in the way of drunkenness, and Oliver was so desirous of showing himself the Queen's proper officer, that he had at last come to the determination of putting them both in the stocks; and to the stocks, which lay convenient to the inn, in the market-place, the constable was bringing them, making the dolefullest lamentation, by the way, of the horrid wickedness of the world that had forced him to so exercise his authority. It was amusing enough of all conscience to the throng of children and idlers that so novel an incident had brought together, to note the manner in which the two offenders bore themselves as they were carried along. The schoolmaster hung his head as if he felt a little ashamed of his situation, but the curate assumed an air of dignity so monstrously ridiculous, none could look on it in any seriousness. Presently the board was opened, their legs placed in the holes, and having had it fas-

tened down on them with a strong padlock, they were left to their own reflections.

Sir Nathaniel, seated on a low stool, with his fat legs stuck fast in the board, seemed not at all comfortable; and Stripes, hanging of his head, with his thin shanks dangling through the holes, looked amazing sheepish. The curate glanced feelingly at the schoolmaster, and the schoolmaster turned a similar look of suffering at the curate.

"Hard lying,—ey, Ticklebreech?" exclaimed Sir Nathaniel, in a low voice.

"Monstrous!" replied Stripes, in as sad a tone as ever was heard. It was evident the curate was not well pleased with his seat, for he turned on one side and then on the other, and then supported himself with his hands behind, with a visage as woeful as drunken man ever wore.

"I would these pestilent stocks had been a thousand miles away, and be hanged to 'em!" cried the uncomfortable Sir Nathaniel, with an earnestness that bespoke his sincerity.

"I'faith so would I, an' it please your reverence!" answered the pedagogue, with more than ordinary fervor. As the minutes passed, neither appeared to grow a whit more satisfied with his situation. The crimson face of the one every moment took a deeper hue, and the lantern jaws of the other assumed an increasing elongation.

"Too much drinkin's a villainous bad thing, Pedagogue!" said the curate, with a notable emphasis that showed how convinced he was of the truth of his assertion.

"Horrible!" replied Stripes, evidently in a like assurance.

"I marvel a man should be so huge an ass as to be ever addling his brains with abominable filthy liquor," continued his companion. "For mine own part, I would such vile stuff was put clean out o' the land. I hate it. But 'tis all the fault of those base, thorough-going rogues of tapsters, who seduce one's innocence; and then, when the draughts have become in any number, straightway take to asking for payment. What infamous villainy!"

"Marvellous, o' my word!" exclaimed the other.

"Well, an' they catch me drinking any more of their abominable potations, I'll turn hermit," observed Sir Nathaniel, in a greater earnestness. "'Sprecious! there is no honesty in swallowing anything of the sort.—Ale is against all Christian doctrine, and wine is scarce fit for a Jew. Not a drop of such deceitful base wash shall pollute my throat. Wilt taste any more on't, Ticklebreech?"

"Never! an' it please your reverence," cried the schoolmaster monstrous determinedly. The whole of this little scene of reformation had been heard and witnessed by the youthful Shakspeare and his companions, to their exceeding amusement; and soon after, one of the former came before the toppers, carrying of an ale-can frothing over at the top.

"Thinking thou cannot help being thirsty sitting there so uncomfortably, I have brought thee a draught of right good liquor," said he, very carefully laying down the can within a short distance of them, and then returning to his companions.

"I thank thee, boy—I thank thee; my tongue cleaveth to my mouth, I am so dry," replied the curate, eagerly stretching out his arm towards the vessel; but it was beyond his reach: thereupon he earnestly moved his companion to bring it him; and Stripes, manifestly no less eagerly, stretched out his whole length of limb, but could only get within an inch of it.

"Now, Pedagogus!" cried his companion pushing the other with all his might over the stocks, "prithee, send thy hand a little farther. Stretch away, Ticklebreech! Thou hast it within a hair's breadth; now, give it a fair grasp and 'tis ours." But it was all labor in vain; Stripes stretched, and Sir Nathaniel pushed with equal desire; but all their united exertions only succeeded in bringing the schoolmaster's fingers to touch the tantalizing ale-can; and, at last, Stripes roared out he could endure no more squeezing, for his body was pressed against the edge of the board with a force that threatened to cut him in two. Whilst both were lamenting the hardness of their fortune, up came another of the young men, and pushed the can a little nearer and went his way.—The schoolmaster in a moment had it in his careful hold, but the other greedily snatched it out of his hand, claiming the first draught as due to his superiority, and quickly raised it to his lips. He had not swallowed more than a mouthful or two when he dashed down the can, spluttered out what he was swallowing, and made one of the most dissatisfied countenances ever seen, to the exceeding astonishment of his companion and the infinite delight of the spectators. The can, instead of "right good liquor," contained nothing better than a mess, of soap-suds, fetched by the merry knave who offered it, from a tub in which the maids of the inn were washing the household linen.

Whilst the enraged curate was making of all manner of strange, forbidding grimaces, and abusing those who had put so unpalatable

ble a jest on him in most outrageous choleric terms, there rode up to him a very sedate old gentleman, with others in his company, who regarded Sir Nathaniel and his companion with a singular severe scrutiny. In consequence of continued complaints made by divers of the worthy burghesses of Stratford, concerning of the unsemely behavior of their parson and schoolmaster, the bishop of that diocese had determined to look into their conduct, and had arrived in the town, with his retinue, where, after inquiring for the curate, he had been directed to the stocks. The result of this visit was both Sir Nathaniel and Stripes were a very short time after dismissed from their offices, and driven out of the place they had so long disgraced by their presence.

The moon was shining clearly in the starry sky, when William Shakspeare, armed with John Hathaway's gun, and accompanied by three or four of his associates, to help to carry the game, crept cautiously through the shrubberies that skirted the park, where he knew deer in plenty were to be found. Hitherto all his shooting had been directed against small birds and coney, but now he looked for nobler spoil. Having made a long circuit to avoid being noticed, he came to a grove of thick trees—his companions keeping a little behind him—where, after he had advanced stealthily along for about a hundred yards, he beheld a goodly company of fallow deer, some lying, some standing, and most of them cropping the herbage at the edge of the grove, where the open pasture sweeps up to the trees. Taking the wind in his face, the young deer-stealer crept from tree to tree, pausing behind each to mark if the game was disturbed, then proceeding noiselessly in the same direction. He never remembered having felt such excitement—he could scarce breathe, he was so moved. He had singled out the tallest buck of the herd, that stood like a sentinel, a little higher to him than the rest, seeming to sniff the air, and stamping with his foot as if he suspected some danger, and knew not whence it was coming. William Shakspeare crouched behind the trunk of a neighboring tree, as still as a stone, afraid that the very beating of his heart would betray him. His companions laid themselves down in the grass as soon as they caught sight of the deer. He peeped from behind his hiding place, and beheld the buck quietly cropping the herbage with his back towards him. He then looked at his gun, and saw everything was as it should be. His great anxiety now was to reach an old decayed stump—the ruin of what had

once been the finest of the whole grove—which lay between him and his game. He issued from his hiding place as if his life depended on the quietness of his footsteps, and to his wondrous satisfaction succeeded in gaining the desired place without being discovered. Yet it was manifest the buck was in some way alarmed, for the young deer stealer had scarce concealed himself when he turned sharply round, looking now in this direction and now in that, and stamping with more violence than before. The stump was completely open from the direction in which the youthful Shakspeare approached it; and inside were seats all round, for it was so large it would accommodate many; just under the bench a hole had been gnawed or broken away, and to this he cautiously raised his head as he lay his full length on the ground; then lifted he the barrel of his gun, and as the deer was glancing suspiciously in the direction of his concealment, he took a fair aim at his open breast and fired. The whole herd disappeared in a moment.

“Bravo, Will!” cried one of his companions, hastily running up to the spot, “thou has killed the delicatest bit of venison I have seen this many a day.”

Sure enough, the buck lay at a little distance from where he stood awhile since, shot through the heart; overjoyed at their success, they bound his four legs together, intending to carry him away on a long thick staff they had brought with them.

“Run! Will, run! Here be the keepers!” all at once shouted another of them; and on the instant, as if they had wings to their legs, every one ran in different directions. The young Shakspeare caught up his gun to follow their example, without loss of time, but he found himself in the grasp of two stout fellows, with whom he soon saw it was useless struggling. These were the two sons of Sampson, the gamekeeper, who with their father, had been watching from behind the trees the whole scene; and not caring to pursue the others, they pounced upon the unlucky deer-stealer in the very act of committing his offence. Sampson carried the slain deer and the gun, and his sons bore their prisoner to the lodge at Daisy Hill. They abused him somewhat at first, but he managed to gain on their good will as they proceeded; and when they arrived at the place where they intended confining him till they could take him before the justice at a proper hour in the morning, the father ordered a tankard of ale to refresh himself withal.

Who should bring it in but his fair ac-

quaintance, Kate, the gamekeeper's pretty niece, whom he had met many times since he first had sight of her when she waited on him at Sir Thomas Lucy's. She was famously surprised I doubt not, at beholding him there, and more so when she learned what occasion brought him; but she had the wit not so much as to recognize him before her uncle and cousins. As for the culprit, as he believed his punishment would be but trifling, the offence was generally considered so slight, he took the matter very pleasantly, and so amused his captors by his merry jests and his excellent famous singing, that they ordered jug after jug of ale, and sung their songs and made their jests, and swore he was the drollest knave they ever came anigh. Each of these men drank without stint, and Kate seemed to take care they should have as much as they could fancy; but their prisoner sipped sparingly, and the result was, in two or three hours after his capture, Sampson and his two sons were snoring in their chairs, and their prisoner was conveyed out of the chamber by his kind confederate.

I doubt though she would have shown him any such good service had she known he was to be married that very day, for she gave him no lack of signs she was more than ordinary fond of him. What passed between them the few minutes she detained him in the kitchen, hath never been correctly ascertained, therefore I cannot describe it to the courteous reader; but at the last moment of it she helped him to put the slain deer, there lying, to hang by his gun, over his shoulder; then she opened the door for him—and then he made the best of his way homewards.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Your master is to be married to-day?
Else all this rosemary is lost.

MIDDLETON.

Come strew apace. Lord! shall I never live
To walke to church on flowers? O' tis fine
To see a bride trip it to church so lightly,
As if her new choppines would scorn to brush
A silly flower.

BARRY.

“O' MY Christian conscience, the monstrousness of this world passeth belief!” exclaimed Oliver Dumps, in his miserablest manner, as he flung himself into a seat in the chimney corner of the widow Pippin's comfortable kitchen—a place he seemed

more partial to than any other in all Stratford.

"Why, what's i' the wind now, master constable?" inquired the laughing widow, as she brought her visitor his customary tankard, dressed more gaily than she had been seen for many years.

The melancholy Dumps looked up to her jolly features and sighed heavily; took a draught of the tankard and sighed again. "'Tis a villainous world, that's the truth on't," said he shaking his head very woefully.

"Villainous fiddlestick!" replied his merry companion. "By my fackings, the world be a right pleasant world, and is as full of delectable jests as world can be."

"Only think of young Will Shakspeare taking to deer stealing," observed the constable, gravely.

"Who? Will Shakspeare!" cried the widow, with a look of exceeding astonishment.

"Taken by the keepers in the very act," replied Oliver Dumps. "Conveyed by them to the lodge at Daisy Hill, for the night. Made his escape in a most unaccountable manner, carrying off the deer he had slain, and the gun he had done it with. Sir Thomas Lucy had issued a warrant for his apprehension, I have it to execute on him without delay; and hearing he is at John Hathaway's cottage, about to be married, am going there to carry him before his worship."

"Tilly vally! thou art jesting, master constable," exclaimed the other. "Will Shakspeare is not like to do anything of the sort, I will be bound for it."

The queen's proper officer looked into his pouch, took out a folded piece of paper, and gave into her hands.

"That's the warrant," said he.

"An honest neighbor, that is now in my parlor, shall read it to me, seeing I cannot read a word of it myself," answered the widow Pippins; "and as I am going to John Hathaway's as soon as I have got on my hat and muffler, if thou wilt wait a brief while, we will walk together." The constable promised to wait any reasonable time, for in truth he was well pleased to have her company, he, as many shrewdly imagined, having long been seeking to be her sixth husband; and thereupon the widow went to get the warrant explained to her.

A short time before this took place, a procession moved from the yeoman's cottage, in the direction of the church which, methinks, deserveth here to be set down. First rode an old churl, blowing of such a peal on his bagpipes as if he was determined to

expend his wind as quickly as he could, his long pipes and his cap decked with rosemary—then followed a merry company of lusty lads and bold bachelors of the neighborhood, two and two, in their holiday jerkins, every one clean trussed, with a blue buckram bride lace upon a branch of rosemary, upon his left arm, on horses of all sorts and colors; William Shakspeare, the bridegroom, riding at their head in a new suit of frolic green, gaily decked with ribbons, with a branch of rosemary at his cap, and a true love posey at his breast; and on each side rode a bridesman, in tawney worsted jackets, straw hats on their heads with a steeple crown, and harvest gloves on their hands, similarly appointed with ribbons, rosemary, and posies. All the way he went, the bridegroom pulled off his cap courteously to the spectators, who, seeing so gallant a youth, could not help loudly greeting him with their good wishes.

Then came a company of morris-dancers on foot, jingling it very prettily, with a most moving accompaniment of pipe and tabor. After them, six fair maidens in fair white court-pies and orange tawney kirtles, garlanded with wreaths of wheat, finely gilded, on their heads, and casting of flowers, by handfuls, out of small wicker baskets, gaily decked for the occasion. Then came the two bridesmaids, most daintily tired, carrying before them each a large spice cake, followed by the bride's brother, a fair boy, carrying himself very bravely, choicely apparelled, bearing the parcel-gilt bride-cup, full of sweet ippocras, with a goodly branch of rosemary gilded and hung about with ribbons of all colors streaming in the wind; next came Anne Hathaway, the blushing blooming bride—her apparelling of appropriate whiteness, rarely garnished with ribbons and flowers, her hair curiously combed and plaited, and crowned with a garland of white roses—answering very gracefully the hearty salutations of her neighbors. On each side of her walked a fair boy, with bride laces and rosemary tied about his silken sleeves. After these, several musicians, with flutes, sackbuts, and other delicate instruments, made excellent music. Then rode the father of the bride, between the father and mother of the bridegroom, in their holiday garments, with no lack of proper garnishing; and, lastly, came the friends invited to the bride-ale, also wearing of their best suits, decorated with bride laces and rosemary.

In this order they reached the church at a slow pace, where the priest soon did his office for them; the bride-cup was then

emptied by the company to the health and happiness of the new-married folks; and they returned in much the same fashion as they went, save that the bride rode on a pillion behind the bridegroom. John Hathaway's dwelling would scarce hold the guests; but they managed to accommodate themselves pretty well, for every room was thrown open, filled with a most bountiful provision of things for convenience and honest cheer, beside which there lay the orchard, the paddock, and the garden, for any that chose out of door pastime. The revels that followed exceed description—all sorts of games were going on in every direction—here a blind harper singing of ballads to a well-pleased audience, of all ages—there sundry young people, sitting in a circle with one in the midst, playing at hunt the slipper—another set at barley break—a third at a dance—the old, the young, the middle-aged, maidens and bachelors, husbands, wives, widows, and widowers, striving all they could to enjoy the pleasant humor of the hour.

Among the company were many of the courteous reader's old acquaintances; for in the principal chamber were Master Alderman Malmsey, and his neighbor Master Alderman Dowlas, like marvellous proper husbands as they were, attending on their still comely good-humored wives—there was the widow Pippins, with a famous laughing countenance, that seemed to savor of a jest—there was honest John Shakspeare and his matronly sweet wife, looking such satisfaction as 'tis impossible to describe—there was the manly yeoman, going about with his sly pleasantry, more manifest than ever, as he looked to see all were enjoying themselves to their heart's content—there was the blooming bride, and there the gallant bridegroom, in exquisite content with themselves and the whole world; and with these were also a many others, whose names I have forgotten. Still one more requireth my notice, and he was no other than Oliver Dumps, who sat in a corner, looking monstrous miserable, though each of the prettiest women was ever coming up to him with all manner of delicacies, pressing him to partake of them, and smiling on him as she smiled on no one else in the room. But the more good cheer he made the more miserable he looked. In fact he was not at all at his ease. He wished to prove himself the queen's proper officer, without favor of any person, and yet he liked not interrupting the mirth of so bountiful a company.

It appeared as if there was some conspiracy among the women—doubtless set on by the merry widow, who seemed very busy

amongst them, whispering, laughing, and pointing to the constable—for they would not allow him to remain by himself a moment, and kept insisting so winningly on his drinking the delicious draughts they brought, that he found he could do nothing, save, with a pitiful sighing, the performing of their requests. At last, with a sudden great effort, he broke from a circle of them and gravely walked up to the bridegroom. To the marvel of the greater number of the guests, he claimed William Shakspeare as his prisoner, and commanded him to accompany him on the instant to his worship the justice.

"Eh! what dost say?" exclaimed John Hathaway, advancing hurriedly, with divers others, there present, to know the meaning of such strange behavior.

"Deer stealing!" hiccuped the constable, evidently with his senses somewhat confused by the many draughts of strong wine he had been forced to swallow, yet holding himself up with what he considered to be the true dignity of the queen's proper officer.

"Nay, it cannot be, worthy Master Dumps," said Mistress Malmsey, coaxingly, on one side of him.

"'Tis a mistake, depend on't, sweet sir," added Mistress Dowlas, in an equally insinuating manner.

"Don't believe any thing of the sort, good Oliver," said one of the buxom bride-maids, pulling him affectionately by the arm.

"'Tis impossible so sensible a person as you are can give ear to so incredible a story," said another, taking a like pretty liberty with his other elbow. Oliver Dumps heard all these seducing expressions, and glanced from one to the other of the bewitching aspects of the speakers, with a monstrous struggling in his breast, and then with a becoming gravity, as he thought, took a paper from his pouch.

"Here's the warrant," answered he. John Hathaway received the paper from him, unfolded it, and commenced, in an exceeding droll manner, reading a ballad there printed, which was famous popular at the time, beginning—

"Alas, my love! you do me wrong,
To cast me off discourteously;
And I have loved you so long,
Delighting in your company.

Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my hart of gold,
And who but Lady Greensleeves?"

Oliver Dumps looked quite confounded, for he saw the jest that the merry widow had played upon him. The laughing and

joking of those around him he took as pleasantly as he could, which in sooth was rather of a miserable sort—for he liked not confessing how he had been tricked; and the end of it was, the queen's proper officer allowed himself to join in the festivity of the day as regardless of warrants and justices, as though he intended to play the constable no more. However, the affair of the deer stealing went not off so quietly. Sir Thomas Lucy when he heard of it was in a terrible rage, and when he found the offender was not brought before him, he waxed more wroth than before. Other warrants were issued, and other constables employed, and the next morning the young deer-stealer was dragged into the justice-room, followed by such of his friends who had gained knowledge of his capture. The news, however, soon spread, and occasioned a notable commotion.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of Jemmy Catchpole when he beheld his clerk brought before him in custody on such a charge; but being a shrewd man he did not so much as recognize him. The justice entered into the charge with much the same formalities as had been exhibited by him and his attendants on a previous occasion—abusing the prisoner with great bitterness, and allowing of none to say a word in his defence. The evidence of the keepers proved the offence beyond all contradiction, and when Sir Thomas demanded of the offender to give up the names of all those who were participating with him in the offence, and the latter would not tell the name of so much as one person, the justice broke out in such a passion, there never was the like. This the prisoner endured with a composure which exasperated the other the more, as it seemed so like holding him in contempt, and setting his authority at naught. He threatened him with the pillory, the whipping-post, and even the gibbet, but still William Shakspeare was not to be got to betray his companions. He smiled at the threats, and, with a fearless aspect, confessed he alone had committed the offence, and that he was ready to receive the punishment.

The constables, keepers, and serving-men, looked awe-struck at what they considered to be the prisoner's horrible impudency, in so behaving before so great a man as his worship; and the poor justice seemed scarce in his right senses, he spoke so fast, and in so tearing a passion—at last, swearing it was a pity he could not hang so abominable a villain, he got from the little lawyer the fullest punishment, provided by the statute of Elizabeth for such offences, which was

the infliction of a fine, treble the value of the venison, an imprisonment for three months in the county gaol, and security for good behavior, for seven years; to the which he presently sentenced the offender. The youthful Shakspeare cared only for the imprisoning part of his sentence, as he felt it hard to be separated from his wife, and he scarce married to her; but he could not allow himself to say anything in mitigation of punishment, although his father and father-in-law did so for him; and the latter offered to pay the fine, and the two aldermen, his father's old friends, came forward as his security: nevertheless, his worship, so far from according with what was required, abused the parties heartily for saying ought of the matter, and bade them out of his door straight, or they should all to prison together.

There were few presons who heard of the sentence, but were famously indignant a mere youthful frolick should meet with such heavy punishment, and many of the prisoner's companions swore he should never to prison if they could prevent it. Never had there been such a ferment in Stratford before. All abused Sir Thomas Lucy for his unwarrantable behavior, and unreasonable severity, and both men and women took it as monstrous so young a couple should be thrust asunder for so trifling a cause. For all this, the youthful Shakspeare, gyved like a felon, and guarded by two constables, was sent off to Warwick jail. No one seemed in any way surprised when intelligence was bruited abroad that they had scarce got a mile from Charlcote, when the constables were set upon and soundly cudgelled, and the prisoner carried off in triumph, by sundry unknown persons with blackened faces. Certes, such was the case. The young husband had been rescued by divers of his companions, relieved of his fetters, and brought back to his distressed wife.

It is not to be expected that a young man of any spirit would sit down and tamely suffer the insults that had been heaped upon him by this shallow-pated justice. William Shakspeare had committed the offence it is true. He never denied it, and was ready to endure any fitting punishment; but the abuse and the gyves were the gratuitous insolence of power, desirous of insulting the weak; and, smarting under a sense of wrong, the young poet penned a bitter ballad against the old knight, and a mad-cap companion fixed it on the justice's park gates. Sir Thomas was one of the first that spied it; and the excessive rage it put him into, was as ludicrous a thing as can be con-

ceived. He grew pale and red in a breath—stormed till he was hoarse, and called about him his little army of constables, game-keepers, and serving-men, questioned them as to who had dared to commit so unparalleled an indignity, and abused the horror-struck varlets all round because none could give him the slightest information on the subject. This ballad which among other offensive things, bore a burthen to it with a play upon his name, by no means the delicatest piece of jesting in the world, coming so quickly after the drubbing of his officers, to one of so tender a skin in such matters, seemed like enough to throw him into a fever.

His dignity, however, was fated to get still harder rubs. He issued warrant after warrant for the apprehension of the escaped deer-stealer, in a perfect phrenzy of passion to hear he was still at large; and sent constables with them in all directions, with strict orders to carry him to prison dead or alive; but flung himself into such desperate rages when he heard the fruitlessness of their travail, that the poor constables cared not to go near him. Oliver Dumps had received a significant hint from the merry widow, that if ever he laid a hand on Will Shakspeare she would have none of him for a sixth husband, therefore, it cannot be in any way strange he never could find the escaped prisoner searched he ever so. As for the other constables, one had incautiously made know his errand, and boasted at the blacksmith's that he would find Will Shakspeare before the day was over; and about an hour afterwards the unhappy officer found himself dragged through the horse-pond, with an intimation when allowed to get away half drowned, that if caught again under similar circumstances, he would not escape without hanging. This, together with the intemperate behavior of the justice, operated with wonderful effect upon the whole body, and they unanimously adopted the opinion the offender had left the country.

Some time after these occurrences his worship gained intelligence that young Shakspeare had been all the while residing at the cottage of his father-in-law, and moreover that he was the very infamous base catiff who had penned the bitter ballad that had been stuck upon his gates. This was adding fuel to the flame. The justice was in such a monstrous fire of indignation that he hardly knew what to set about. The unlucky constables were ordered to attend him instantly, and upon these he poured out the violent rage that was brimming over in him. They declared their conviction the escaped

prisoner had gone from those parts altogether—nay, one confidently asserted a brother of his had seen him in London selling oysters, and another was as ready to swear he had been met with by a cousin of his on a piebald horse, within a mile or so of Oxford. His worship was puzzled, and the more puzzled his worship appeared, the more confident did the constables become in their assertions. At last he ordered them to accompany him, and then started off in the midst of them, on the road to the yeoman's cottage.

William Shakspeare was busily engaged with a party of farm laborers in putting up a hay-rick in his father-in-law's paddock, when one of the children came running in all haste to say his worship was approaching the house with a great company of men—in an instant he was covered up in the hay as snugly as possible, and his companions, carelessly singing, continued their work lifting up the new hay to the top of the rick and there spreading it smooth and even. Presently the expected party made their appearance. Sir Thomas, in a terrible anxiety to find the culprit, and the constables quite as anxious he should be found.

"Dost know anything of one William Shakspeare, fellow?" inquired the knight authoritatively of a freckled-face knave lame of a leg. The latter gazed with open mouth for a few moments at his interrogator, and then turning round to his next neighbor, very gravely repeated the question—his fellow looked up very hard, and then looked down very hard, and then addressed another of his companions with the same question—and thus it went round the whole six of them with exactly the same result. His worship was horribly inclined to break out into a deadly passion.

"Wounds, I ha' got un!" exclaimed he of the freckled face, slapping his knee very sharply with his palm. "His worship no doubt, wants the blind piper that lives down yonder below the mill."

"I'll warrant, so he do," added another, with a like gravity.

"I tell thee no! I tell thee no!" bawled out the justice, as the haymakers were shouting their information into his ears, as if each was striving to be heard above the other; "I want no such person. I seek one William Shakspeare, a convicted deer-stealer, who married John Hathaway's daughter."

At this the lame one cast an exceeding long face, rubbed his knuckles against his eyes, and turned away very pitifully; and the others did just the same.

"What hath become of him, I say?" cried

the knight, more imperatively, not exactly knowing what to make of these demonstrations.

"An' it please your worship," cried freckled face, blubbering as if his heart was a breaking, "no man can help it. I would he had lived longer, perchance he might have been all the older for it."

"Is he dead indeed, now fellow?" inquired the old knight, looking somewhat confounded at this unexpected news.

"An' it please you, I heard he made so fine an end, it was better than a sermon at fast days," observed another, as woeful as his companion.

"Who's that laughing?" exclaimed Sir Thomas, very sharply; "there's some one behind the rick. Bring him here! Body o' me, I'll teach the unmannerly knave better behavior." The constables hurried behind the rick, but not the slightest sign of any one was there. This put his worship into a rage. He had certainly heard somebody, and felt a monstrous inclination to punish a person guilty of treating him with so little respect. One of the men thought it was an owl, another took it to be a bat, and a third assured his worship it was only the old sow, who, on an occasion, could grunt in a way marvellous like one laughing. The justice did not appear to be perfectly satisfied with these explanations; but, after questioning the men some short time longer, and getting from them no greater intelligence, he found himself forced to turn away no wiser than he came. Threatening them all with the terriblest punishments, if he discovered they had told him falsely, the old knight retraced his steps, resolving to see his intelligencer again, and examine him strictly on the correctness of his information, of the which he now entertained some doubts.

"Take heed of the dog, an' it please your worship," cried one of the hay-makers, doubtless with most benevolent intentions; but unfortunately, he gave the caution a moment too late, for as the justice was picking his way carefully along, a dog rushed out of a kennel close upon him, and gave him so smart a bite in the leg, that he roared again. The youthful Shakspeare peeped from his hiding place at hearing this noise, and had the satisfaction of seeing the old knight hopping along the yard at the top of his speed, furiously pursued by a flock of noisy geese and turkeys, who seemed quite as much inclined for a bite of his legs as the dog had been. His little army did not make their retreat in a much more orderly manner, for the house-dog flew at them as they passed his kennel, and the turkeys and geese

pursued them when they crossed the yard. His worship was more hurt by the shouts of laughter which followed his undignified exit, than he had been by the bite he had received, but oh, more unpalatable than all!—as he was returning home in a most horrible humor, what should he hear, but a parcel of little children singing the offensive ballad writ upon him, as loud as they could bawl it. His wrath was too great for utterance. He felt he could have hanged every little rogue of them all; but resolved to go to town, and complain to the privy council how infamously he had been used.

After well abusing the constables, and every one else that came within his reach, he sought the unhappy Mabel, and poured out the remainder of his rage upon her; swearing she should marry his friend's servant and no other, and bidding her prepare herself for doing so within a month at least, as he was determined it should then take place. The poor foundling too well knew the character of her companion to attempt to parley with him on the subject. It was manifest her villainous persecutors would not let her rest whilst there remained the slightest chance of their getting her into their power; and having the positive and unsuspecting knight, and his most obedient lady to assist them, they fully persuaded themselves their success was certain. The only bar seemed to lie in the disinclination of her affianced husband to be an agent in the business; but at last, the bribes he was offered appeared to stifle his conscience, and he promised to carry on the matter to its conclusion.

CHAPTER XXV.

Not a word spake he more than was nede,
And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short and quike, and full of high sentence.
Souning in moral virtue was his speche,
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teche.
CHAUCER.

Kath. What our destinies
Have ruled out in their books we must not search,
But kneel to.
War. Then to fear when hope is fruitless,
Were to be desperately miserable;
Which poverty our greatness does not dream of,
And, much more, scorns to stoop to; some few
minutes
Remain yet, let's be thrifty in our hopes.
FORD.

TIME passed on, and in due time the young husband was made a father. This occur-

rence gave his feelings a new impulse. A youth of nineteen, possessed of such deep sympathies, and so ready to indulge them on all natural objects as was the youthful Shakspeare, on such an occasion must needs experience a most choice and exquisite gratification. He felt he had got a stronger claim on his exertions than had he hitherto, and labored with higher aims than he had before known. Jemmy Catchpole, much as he inclined to do so, knowing of his worth, did not dare employ him; and when he was not assisting his father-in-law in farming, his chief occupation was teaching the sons of the neighboring farmers and yeomen such matters of schooling as it was customary for them to learn; and this he did so tenderly, and in so scholarlike a manner, that by the parents he soon got to be approved of before all teachers. During this time he failed not to continue his own studies in such fashion as he had been used to; and it was acknowledged, of every person of his acquaintance, that, for learning, they had never met with his peer.

Yet, all this while, he was far from being happy. The ardor of his passion for the yeoman's blooming daughter had blinded him to many faults he could not avoid perceiving in her on closer acquaintance. She had been spoiled by indulgence all her life. Her father had allowed her to do much as she pleased, which had put into her the notion that what she did must always be right, and she would not have it gainsayed of any.

The youthful Shakspeare discovered too late, his wife's deficiencies in the necessary qualities of mind. Indeed she was perfectly uneducated, and her ignorance made her unconscious of the mischief she was doing by her ungracious conduct. She was not naturally of an unamiable disposition; indeed, at times she was too prodigal in the display of her kinder feelings, but vanity had filled her with most preposterous prejudices; and if her husband opposed her, however slightly, in any matter, however reasonable on his part, she would regard it as using her exceeding ill, and get out of temper speedily, and say uncivil words, and show all manner of discourteous behavior. This made her youthful helpmate see into her character more, and more, and the more he saw the less he liked, and the less he liked the less he respected. The charm of her beauty gradually vanished away; and as she had nothing in her conversation to attract him, she had no sort of hold over him beyond that of being the mother of his child. Still he treated her as affectionately as ever he had done, considering himself the most

to blame for his too great precipitancy, allowing her no just cause of complaint—and striving whatever he could to bring her, by fair persuasions, to a more admirable way of behaving.

Every day he beheld stronger proofs of a vain disposition acting upon a weak mind. Fits of sullenness followed close upon the heels of outbreaks of temper—she neglected the proper duties of a wife and a mother, to enjoy any pastime that was within her reach—and by the lack of ordinary comfort to be had at home, she frequently drove her husband to seek his pleasure where he could. It was a grief that touched him where he could have little or no defence; for when he attempted to remonstrate, in order that he might fail in nothing to induce her to act more commendably, it was sure to end in such a scene of obstinacy, wounded self-love, and unamiable behaving, as plainly showed him there was marvellous slight hopes she would mend.

Again he became a father. On the first occasion his child was a girl, that he had had christened by the name of Susanna, and now his wife brought him twins, a boy and a girl, that were severally named Hamnet and Judith. For a time this made him regardless of the mother's deficiencies, and increased his kindnesses to her: besides which he entertained many anxious thoughts of the future. His own means were in no way adequate to his wants, and although John Hathaway took heed of these, so that he should feel them but lightly, he would rather, by many degrees, have satisfied them of his own labor. His old companions, Greene, Burbage, Condell, and Hemings, had one by one gone to join the players; and such reports of their well-doing had reached him, as made him marvellous desirous of following their example.

Unfortunately, his wife merely regarded this late increase in her family as a vast accession to her claims to have her will in everything that was most preposterous; and more than ever was inclined to behave herself as she pleased, and resent in every possible way, any attempt to thwart her inclinations. Consequently she daily made greater demands on her husband's patience, which sometimes forced from him well-meant arguments, the which she took very bitterly: and he finding her to grow so much the worse, so much the more he strove by kindness to make her better, at last made her to know he would leave her, did she not seek to lead him a pleasanter life. But this was far from making her alter her ungraciousness towards him, for she appeared to

take it as if she would as soon he went as staid. Still the young husband was reluctant to give her up. He would have been glad to have had any friend's advice, for he saw nought before him but an increasing wretchedness, remained he where he was; and to quit her and the children, although he was well aware her father would properly provide for them, he could not reconcile his conscience to; but he had no friend at this time fit to advise with him in such a strait. His friends at Sir Marmaduke's he had not seen sometime, for as he grew to manhood he felt he could not associate with persons so far above him as he had done whilst a boy, and went there less and less, till he refrained from such visits altogether; and he liked not going to John a Combe, remembering how urgently he had warned him against pursuing the very course of which he was now feeling the evil consequences.

After many long and comfortless reflections, he resolved on making a last effort. One fine May morning, a few months after the christening of the twins, he presented himself before her. They were alone. She was tiring of herself in all her choicest braveries, to attend some festival in the neighborhood. A sort of sprightly indifference was in her manner as she saw her husband approach; as he noticed this, and heard one of the children crying unheeded, in the next chamber, he had no great hope of success in his present undertaking—nevertheless he felt it to be his duty to proceed in it. He walked up and down the chamber with an aching heart, she humming of a tune the while, and decking herself in her finery as if in a perfect carelessness of everything save her own pleasure.

"Anne, I pray you look to the child, it cryeth most pitifully!" exclaimed he at last.

"Joan is there," replied she, carelessly.

"It seemeth that it requireth its mother, and will not be satisfied with Joan," observed her husband.

"Then it *must* be satisfied with her, for I cannot be ever with the children," answered his wife, with some pettishness.

"Methinks the gratifying the natural desires of a young babe should be held before all other things with its mother," said William Shakspeare. "She hath a sacred obligation imposed on her which she ought in no way to neglect for the furthering of her own immediate convenience."

"Tut! what should men know of such matters!" cried his companion. "Truly, a fine life of it a poor woman would lead who followed such old saws. I will do no such

folly, depend on't. I marvel you should interfere in things so out of your province; but 'tis done merely to prevent my taking my proper pleasure—nevertheless it seemeth to me good I enjoy it."

"I cannot have the slightest wish to debar you of your proper pleasures," replied her husband; "in very truth I would strive my utmost you should enjoy as much happiness as woman can."

"You don't!" exclaimed the other, sharply; "you are in a constant mood of finding fault with me—you will never do as I wish: and when I am for the pleasuring myself with my neighbors, you fail not to raise all manner of foolish improper objections."

"I cannot call any such proper pleasures, when your neighbors are looked to and your children neglected," observed he.

"Marry, I care not what you call them," she answered; "I will do as I list, take it as you may."

"Anne, I implore you to pause in this most unseemly behaving," said her companion, very urgently; "it doth cause me infinite unhappiness to see you so forget yourself. The ordinary duties of a fond good wife and mother are thrust aside and lost sight of, through utter carelessness. None could furnish my house so pleasantly as yourself, if it chose you to do so; but you seek to make it as wretched as you can by all manner of unbecomingness, unkindness, and neglect. I pray you change such a course for one more desirable to me and more creditable to yourself; and you shall find I do not lack gratitude."

"Gratitude!" echoed the spoiled woman, with considerable bitterness. "O' my word I have had enough of your gratitude. I have left divers rich suitors to take up with you, who had not so much as would buy me a day's meal. I have brought you every comfort you have in the way of lodging, clothing, and victual; and moreover three as fine children as an honest father could desire; and yet I am treated as though I had done nothing of all this. 'Tis a fine thing, truly, to treat one so ill who hath been so bountiful to you; but I will put up with no such treatment, I promise you. I will act as it seemeth best to my humor; and in no case will I be driven from my innocent pastime at the will of an ungrateful worthless husband."

"I have already told you I strive not to check you in anything innocent at a proper time," replied her husband; "but I cannot see you ruin your own happiness and mine by a wilful obstinacy in doing wrong."

"You're a base inhuman wretch!" exclaimed the yeoman's daughter.

"I have sought all occasions and all arguments to persuade you to act more becomingly," continued he, "and only brought on myself bitter taunts and ungenerous reflections."

"I wish I had never seen your face, you ungrateful vile caitiff!" added his companion.

"There now remaineth but one thing for me to do," said William Shakspeare, betraying by his voice the struggle in his nature; "as 'tis impossible we can live happily together, we must part!"

"Oh, you may go!" replied she, with a careless toss of her head; "and I care not how soon—and I shall not fret for your coming back, I promise you."

"I beseech you, as my last request, show such love to the dear children as their tender years entitle them to," said the youthful father, so moved he could scarce speak.

"I pray you despatch yourself, since you are for going," answered the thoughtless wife more bitterly than before; "and forget not to take with you all that you brought!" Her husband cast one look of reproach on the once object of his so great love—turned away almost choking with his overpowering sensations, and in the next moment had left the cottage,—the scene of a thousand exquisite pleasures—never to enter it again. He first bent his steps toward Henley Street, to take leave of his parents, and then left the town without speech of any other, for with his present feelings he cared not to be idly talked to and questioned. When he had gone some little distance he stopped to take a last look of his native place. There lay the steeple of the old church, towering above the surrounding houses and trees—the fair land-mark he had hailed returning from so many pleasant rambles; there lay his father's dwelling, hallowed in his recollection by a whole history of early studies, struggles, and pleasures; there lay the winding Avon, in whose sweet waters he had so often laved his limbs, or gathered from its banks continual store of blooming treasure; and there lay a hundred other spots equally well deserving of his remembrance, as the scene of some childish sport or youthful adventure.

He gazed in another direction, and if the yeoman's pretty cottage was not made out in the landscape, he had it in his eyes as clearly as when he first beheld it, attracted thereto by the cheerful singing of the blooming girl at her spinning-wheel. Then followed scene after scene of exquisite enjoyment. The evening meetings, where she

waited for him at the next style—their delicious salutations there—their gentle stroll together back to the old walnut tree, and all the goodly entertainment he had under its friendly shadows, till, after some dozen reluctant farewells, he forced himself away. And last of all came sullen looks and provoking words, and a crowd of attendant miseries, created by the unfeeling thoughtless carelessness of that weak vain woman. And now he saw himself a wanderer to go wheresoever he would, driven from his home by the very means that had brought such home to him, and deprived of happiness by having had the possession of what he had so long believed could alone secure it him forever. These remembrances took such painful hold of his heart, that the anguish he endured at that moment was beyond everything he had hitherto suffered.

"Thou shalt see better days anon, dear heart!" exclaimed a familiar voice, and turning round, he beheld Nurse Cicely. "Pleasure cometh after suffering as naturally as the green buds after the early rains. All things have their season. Thy time is now for sorrow; but bear up nobly, and be assured greatness shall come of it beyond thy brightest hopes. A fair journey to thee my sweeting!"—So saying, the old woman hobbled away, leaving the youthful Shakspeare in an especial marvel at her strange words. She had often addressed him in a like manner previously, but he had paid little attention to what she had said,—now, however, he pondered on it as he went along, and not without some particular satisfaction. He had not proceeded a quarter of a mile when he met John a Combe. He would have avoided him if he could, for he liked not his company at that moment; but the usurer came suddenly upon him from a lane which led into the road, along which William Shakspeare was passing.

"So!" cried John a Combe, in his usual bitter manner, "thou wouldst not be led by my advice, and art now smarting for't. Serves thee right. But every fool doth the same. Tell them where lies the mischief, they run into it on the instant,—suffer first and repent after. Prithee, what dost intend doing?"

"I am for making the best of my way to London, where I expect meeting with certain friends of mine," replied his young companion.

"Ay, boy, thou'lt meet fools enough there, I'll warrant," answered the usurer, sharply. "But 'tis a long journey, and requireth some expense on the way. How art off for means?"

"In truth not over well—but I must e'en do as I best may," said the other.

"Give me thy purse!" exclaimed John a Combe, and without more ado, he snatched it from his girdle, and then turned his back to him to see what was in it. "As I live, no more than a groat and a shilling!" continued he, in seeming monstrous astonishment. "Why, ere thou has got a good dozen mile thou will be forced to eat thyself for lack of victual. Here, let me put thy purse in thy girdle again." And then the usurer carefully replaced it. "Thou and thy wits have parted company, that's a sure thing."

"I would ask one favor of you, good Master Combe, before I leave you."

"Nay, I will lend thee no money!" quickly replied his companion. "It be not a likely thing a usurer should trust one who starteth on a long journey, with only a knobbed stick by way of weapon, with a bundle of linen at the end on't carried over his shoulder by way of luggage, and a shrovet-groat shilling, and a cracked groat in his purse, for store of money for spending."

"I do not require of you such a thing," replied William Shakspeare. "All I would of you is that if my dear parents need what you have to spare, you will do your good offices to them, and as soon as fortune favo'reth me somewhat, I will return whatever you are so generous as to furnish."

"Truly a fine story!" remarked John a Combe. "Though art sure to come to great wealth with so prodigious a beginning! It would be monstrous like a usurer, methinks, to lend on such poor security."

"An' you will not I cannot help it," said the other dejectedly.

"Nay, I said not I refused!" exclaimed the usurer. "So there is no great occasion thou shouldst look so woe-begone. Indeed, I care not to acquaint thee, for thy comfort, seeing though art not likely to come back and tell my neighbors of my infinite foolishness, I have been thy honest father's friend this many a year, and he not know it." His young companion seized his hand gratefully, and looked more thanks than he could have spoken had he twenty tongues. He knew that some secret person had for a considerable period of years been sending sums of money when his parents were in their greatest need, and now it came out it was Master Combe and no other.

"I cannot get out of my old folly, try how I will," continued he, more moved by the other's simple manifestation of his feelings than he chose to show. "Of the baseness of the world, methinks I have had proof

enough. O' my life! there cannot be found more convincing evidence than an honest worthy man suffering poverty in mean clothing and poor victual, while baseness in a fine doublet, taketh sauce with his capon, and hath money to spare."

"Doubtless the world containeth some unworthy persons," observed William Shakspeare. "It is scarce reasonable to expect it can be otherwise, when such countless multitudes are to be met with in each part of the globe. We shall find weeds in every field; but surely the field deserveth to be called a good field for all that. But why should we dwell on such things? There are flowers, peeping out from our very footsteps go where we will, and yet we will not see them, but care only to spy what is unsightly and unprofitable. In honest truth, worthy sir, methinks we do Nature a huge wrong by such behavior of ours. 'Tis manifest injustice to be so blind to merit, and to see only that which is not likely to call for our admiration."

"Nay, boy, 'tis the world that is blind to merit, not I," answered the usurer. "I behold thy honest parents struggling all they can to live with a fair credit though terribly pinched i' the ribs, and the world shutteth its Argus eyes and passeth by. I behold their worthy son showing signs of an honorable disposition, and talents deserving of as high estimation, yet the world doth appreciate him at so low a price, it will allow of his starting a long journey to London on a chance errand to fortune, with no greater provision than a shilling and a groat. All this while the world giveth to villains place and ceremony, and maketh a shallow-witted coxcomb with broad acres pass for a knight o' the shire, and justice o' the peace."

"But how know we this state of things will always continue?" said his young companion; "it may be, for such changes have happened before, that when Master Justice is feeding of the worms, my dear parents shall be enjoying of as much comfort as their hearts can desire; and I, whom he hath so often strove to play his poor spite upon, may leave to my children a better name out of such poor talents as I have, than could he, out of all his broad acres and fine house, serving-men and constables, his worship and knightship, and every other sign of greatness whereof he is used to make such famous boasting, into the bargain."

"See I this, I will believe it," said John a Combe; "yet, with the knowledge I have of the world's baseness, I expect no such welcome changes. Justice is painted blind, and blind she is beyond question."

"I have other thoughts of that," replied William Shakspeare. "I believe that it very rarely happens, when merit showeth itself in any conspicuousness, it is not kindly taken by the hand to be exalted above all meaner natures."

"Ay, boy, on the pillory or the gibbet," drily added the usurer; "but thou art past arguing. Just as I was at thy age art thou. I would allow none to convince me of any such thing as injustice in nature. Marry, I had such convincing at last, as left me without a doubt to stand upon. I would have thee grow wiser than thou art, but in mercy I would not wish thee any such resistless arguments as crushed my favorable opinions out of me. Get thee gone Will Shakspeare, and speed on thy errand as well as thou canst. If so be thou art not doing well, write to me without fail; but at any rate let me know how thou art proceeding."

"One thing more, worthy Master Combe," said his young companion urgently; "since you have been so good as to talk of writing, I would you would do me such kind service as to see my children as oft as may be convenient to you, and let me know how they get on in all things."

"And their mother?" added the usurer, with somewhat of sarcasm.

"If you know any thing concerning of her worthy to be told, acquaint me with it by all means; but if of another nature, I care not to hear of it."

"Ha!" exclaimed the usurer, sharply; "let it be even so. And now fare thee well, Will Shakspeare. I wish thee every manner of good, though I am in huge doubt anything of the sort is to be found."

"Truly, I cannot help seeing it in yourself, worthy Master Combe, despite your ungracious seeming," replied his young friend, parting with him in sincere regret. After going a few paces, he turned round to take another glance at his old acquaintance, and to his surprise, beheld him standing still, looking after him with an aspect of deeper feeling than ever he had observed in him before; but immediately he was noticed, he took on himself the same severe expression of countenance he was wont to wear, and then turning quickly away, paced onwards towards the town.

As William Shakspeare was thinking over the strangeness of his companion, his eyes suddenly lighted on his purse, which seemed to be much increased in size since he last had sight of it, he took it into his hand, and looking to its contents, to his prodigious marvelling, discovered as goodly a store of coin as he could need the whole length of his

journey. Here was a fresh instance of the unhappy usurer's secret manner of doing kindness where it was most needed, and the discovery of it had such effect on the sensitive nature of him he had so providently thought of, that it refreshed him with many sweet feelings, and sent him on his long journey with a more cheerful spirit than he had known a long time. He appeared now to have at his will the means of procuring what he most wished. For with such a sanguine disposition as he possessed, he believed that were he once in London, he should speedily get such employment as he desired, and then he had in him that conviction he would raise himself greatly, often attending upon the youthful and imaginative.

Filled with these considerations, and with manifold fine plans and excellent fair prospects, he trudged manfully along.

The day was well-favored a day to look on as ever appeared in that merry month; the hedges being all over covered with delicate May, and the banks as prodigally gifted with the dainty gifts of the season, which made the air so exquisite, nothing could exceed it in delectable sweetness; added to which, such crowds of small birds were tuning of their little pipes upon every tree and bush, as made most ravishing music all along the road. I doubt much the delightful aspect of Nature was as pleasantly regarded as it deserved to be by the youthful wanderer; for although he had but a few minutes since determined in his mind he would think no more of his unhappiness, the sight of the odoriferous flowery hedges brought to his memory that gay morning he went amaying with his then so deeply loved Anne Hathaway, and the unutterable gladness he enjoyed because of her sharing with him the excellent brave pastimes of that memorable day.

Whilst he was so deeply engaged with such thinking, he did not notice he had a companion, evidently striving to keep up with him, whom he had just passed. This person appeared to be, by his dress, a young boy of some gentle family; for he was clad very neatly in a suit of fine broadcloth, of a gay orange-tawney color, with good kersey hose, shoes with roses, a well appointed hat and feather on his head, and a light stick or staff in his hand. In person he was of an exceeding elegant shape; indeed such delicate symmetry of limbs is rarely to be met with; and in features he was of a fair handsomeness, yet of a complexion so wan and sickly, it looked as though he was fitter to be in his bed than to be a traveller. for ever

so short a distance. He looked fatigued, and it was manifest he could ill keep up with the manly strides of the youthful Shakspeare.

"I pray you, sweet sir, walk not so fast, for I should be wondrous glad of your honest company."

The other turned round somewhat surprised, not knowing any one was so nigh him, and was moved with extreme pity at the slight glance he took of the pallid suffering countenance of the young stranger. He lessened his pace on the instant.

"Go you far on this road, my young master?" inquired he courteously.

"Truly, I know not," replied his companion, in a manner somewhat hesitating; "but the farther I get from the place I have left, the more pleased I shall be."

"Yet you seem in no way fit to go on a journey," observed William Shakspeare, in some marvel at what he had just heard. "I doubt you are strong enough for much walking."

"I have been in a great sickness a long time, sweet sir," replied the other; "but as I recovered, I found such villainy approaching me, that I thought it better to trust to the chance of perishing on a strange road than remaining where I was." At hearing this his companion marvelled the more.

"Keep a good heart, I pray you!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, ready at a moment to sympathize with any unhappy person. "If it please you to let me bear you company, I will take such heed of you, you shall come to no hurt. But to what place are you bound?"

"To any, where I can live in proper honesty," replied the young stranger. "I will willingly essay my strength in such humble manner of living as I can get, with no higher end than the keeping me a worthy name."

William Shakspeare said nothing, but he thought in his mind his fellow-traveller had but a poor chance of a living, relied he only on his strength, and resolved at least, that, as he wanted a friend, a friend he should have. With the true delicacy of a noble mind, he refrained from asking him any questions which might seem to come of over curiousness, but began to talk cheerfully to him, telling him to hope for better times, and entertaining him with such pleasant discourse as he had at his commandment. And so these two proceeded together. The one in the full strength of early manhood, and, though bereft of his happiness, full of health and hope—the other, apparently in the fresh dawning of youth, and in as little comfort of body as of mind.

Methinks this chapter in no case ought to be brought to a conclusion, without requiring of the courteous reader especial notice of a matter therein treated; which, it is to be hoped, will be to his singular profit. In the development of this my story, there hath been made manifest how that kind of love, which is merely ideal, endeth in a complete nothingness, as far as its object is concerned, it being only a fair herald of a more natural passion; but in the later pages it is shown, that the affection which cometh but of the delight taken by the senses in personal comeliness, must meet with a still more unsatisfactory conclusion. It is true that Nature hath planted in the human heart a capacity for enjoying the beautiful, and a desire to obtain its possession; and the affections of the individual, like unto clear waters, do most perfectly bear in them the resemblance of whatsoever shape appeareth to them in most perfectness; but it should ever be borne in mind, that there are beauties of far sweeter and lasting value, than such as are wont to lie on the surface of things, and that these constitute the sole proper source of their admirableness. The flowers, the stars, and every form of matter, animate or inanimate, impressed with the configuration most pleasing to the sight, possess qualities which make them the love of the poet and the true philosophic sort of persons, exceedingly more so than their mere appearance. They exhibit signs of intelligence, by which they are known to be part of the universal good; and for the worth they show are worthily appreciated.

Such should it be with things that more intimately appertain to humanity. The agreeable face and graceful person are the unprofitable of objects, unless they carry with them the fairer signs of mind and feeling. They may be regarded as such fruit as come of plants imperfectly cultivated, that look tempting to the eye, but are intolerable to the taste; and save the pretty sort of way in which they do garnish their boughs, are of no goodness whatsoever. In this same goodness—which is nought else but another name for intelligence—lieth the real source and conclusion of all honest love. This is it that sows the seed—this is it that obtains infinite crops of exquisite sweet fruit. Where there is no moral excellence, there can never be any moral advantage. The youthful Shakspeare, therefore, in showing, as he did, a total indifference to aught else save the personal charms of the blooming daughter of John Hathaway, brought on himself the positive evil which proceedeth from insufficiency of good. But thus are

the marvellous lessons of Nature taught, and how oft are they placed before us in this very fashion! The youth of both sexes, full of the delicious sympathies so newly grown within their breasts, regard in the other, symmetry of limb and loveliness of feature, as vouchers, for whatsoever is properest and most desirable, and, at times, do get their several senses so intoxicated by allowing of their imaginations to be excited by the strong draughts proceeding from rosy smiling lips and lustrous enticing eyes, that they clean forget there is aught else in the world worthy of their having. The capacity for enjoyment satiated, quick on the heels of it followeth the ordinary ending of such foolishness.

At the age of eighteen years, it is inconsistent with experience to expect the human heart to be philosophical. Before that age, William Shakspeare found his whole nature thrilled with a passion for a female eight years his senior, and consequently, in the possession of every charm of mature womanhood. He revelled in the delusive gratification of an attachment placed on no surer foundation than personal beauty, and fixing his happiness there, on due time found it levelled to the dust. The result hath rendered him a homeless adventurer, banished from his domestic hearth to seek, amongst strangers, that comfort he had lost every hope of where he believed it to be most secure. Now must he work out the penalty of his offence, and, by his example, teach a great moral lesson unto all humanity, which, perchance, shall not be altogether lost sight of at this time, or at any other.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Example I fynde of Alesaunder Nexam as he wryteth, how there was sumtyme a knyght came from ferr cuntries woude seek aventures. So it fortunad to a forrest wher he herd a grete noyce of a beste crying.

HARLEIAN MSS. No. 2247.

The misery of us that are born great.
We are forced to woo, because none dare woo us;
And as a tyrant doubles with his words,
And fearfully equivocates, so we
Are forced to express our violent passions
In riddles and in dreams, and leave the path
Of simple virtue, which was never made
To seem the thing it is not.

WEBSTER.

"I FEAR me I cannot proceed further,"
said the younger of the two travellers, lean-

ing against a tree, with head drooping, and every sign in him of thorough exhaustion and faintness.

"I beseech you good Bertram, lean on me!" exclaimed William Shakspeare, urgently. "Let us get out of this wood as speedily as we may, for the sun hath set some time, and we are liked to get benighted in this strange place, stay we where we are much longer."

"I doubt my strength will hold sufficient, yet I will strive my utmost," replied his young companion, in a very feeble voice. Thereupon he leaned his head upon the other's shoulder, whilst the latter held him round the waist with his left arm, and thus they proceeded, at a slow pace, following a path which led through a thick wood on each side of them. The trees, principally hazel, were in their freshest leaves, save some that were only a budding, and those of the wild plum and cherry were clothed in all their delicate bloom. The roots of the larger trees were wrapt in a soft covering of dainty green moss, through which the lance-shaped leaves of the lily of the valley made their appearance in countless numbers—seemingly as far as the eye could see—mingled with a very prodigal display, not only of all manner of seasonable flowers of divers colors, but with numberless plants and herbs, some savory and others noxious, that thrust themselves out at every corner. Nothing was visible around but trees and underwood such as hath been described, save here and there, when they came to an open place where the wood had been thinned; and then they beheld some once goodly tree recently felled, stripped of its branches, barked, and lying on the ground a shapeless, naked trunk; and in other places were small logs for burning, piled up in heaps, with great store of hurdles, bavons, faggots, and other things belonging to the woodman's craft.

It was evident the men had left work—the whole place was so still—not a sound heard the young travellers when they ceased talking, but the monotonous note of the cuckoo. The path was not in any way a pleasant one, for it was in a hard, rough soil, with deep ruts on each side, formed by the passage of heavy carts when the ground was in a softer state, and led now up and now down—crossed occasionally by other paths of a like appearance, with some narrower and less worn, which appeared to be only for foot passengers, with room for but one at a time. Yet along this unpleasant way the two pursued their journey in the manner already mentioned; the more youthful one manifestly sinking at every step, despite of the other's tender charge of him,

and encouraging speech to help him along.

Truly, it was a sight well worthy to be looked on, these gentle persons travelling in so friendly a way, the handsome manly face of William Shakspeare beaming with a sweet benevolence, as with all the tender sympathy of his nature, he gazed upon the upturned pallid countenance of his more youthful associate; but although the latter strove, as forcibly as he could, to get along, it was easy to see, by the languid style in which he drew one leg after the other, and the quick paling of his lips, that he could continue even this sort of progress but a very little longer.

"Cheer thee, sweet sir!" exclaimed the elder of the two, in the kindest accents, "thou wilt be better anon. Put thy foot forward gallantly, we shall be out of this wood straight, and get us to a village where we can have fair lodging for the night."

"Alack! I feel sinking rapidly," replied the other, evidently in extreme faintness. "Bear me up strongly, I pray you—the ground seemeth to be falling."

"Prithee heed it not at all—'tis mere fantasy," said William Shakspeare, holding him as affectionately as a brother. "Courage, my young master, our journey will be at an end speedily—so we shall have brave resting, continue we to proceed. Woe is me, he hath swooned!" The speaker stopped in great anxiety and pitifulness, for he had noted the arm of his companion drop listlessly off his shoulder, and the head fall so droopingly, the youth must have gone to the ground had it not been for the care of his tender guardian. The first thought of the latter was to carry his now helpless fellow-traveller—as no time was to be lost in getting out of the wood before nightfall—and the next minute the young poet was proceeding, gallantly bearing the other in his arms, with all proper gentleness, till at last he was obliged to put him down to rest himself.

His anxiety of mind may be imagined when he beheld by the dim twilight, the countenance of his young companion set, as it were, in the pale complexion of death, with his limbs motionless, and his eyes closed. So sad a sight smote him to the very heart. What to do he knew not. The shadows of the night were gathering fast around him, and no habitation near, or sign of help at hand. To stay in the wood all night without succor were to make certain for his associate what already looked more than possible—his decease; and yet to get out of it he knew no means, for although he had gone a great way, still in which ever

way he looked, nought met his eye but impenetrable dark masses of trees and shrubs. As he made the seeming lifeless Bertram recline against his breast—supporting him with one arm to beguile the other of its weariness—whilst gazing on the pallid aspect, he was so moved by pity that he scarce knew what to be a doing. All at once, as he was making the saddest reflections on the poor prospect he had of saving him, he heard the faint barking of a dog, to which he gave on the instant, so huge a welcome as he had rarely given even to what had seemed to him the pleasantest of human voices. It afforded a most sweet assurance of present help, for, as it appeared to him, it was a sign of some dwelling nigh at hand, or of some person or persons in the wood, of whom he might have the assistance he required.

Presently he shouted as loud as he could to attract the attention of such people as were within hail, thinking it could not fail of drawing them to the spot where he was. He listened with extreme anxiousness, and a moment after again heard the barking. The sound seemed to come from some place considerably in advance of him, so taking up his burthen more tenderly than ever, he proceeded along the path, till he came to where another path crossed it, and here he shouted again, and listened with a like intense anxiety. It was true he heard the cry of the dog repeated, but he heard no answering shout—which was what he most desired; and this gave him some uneasiness. He turned the way, where he thought the animal and those he belonged to might be found, until somewhat weary of what he carried, he placed him on his feet as before; and then made the wood resound, he set up so main a cry. To his exceeding disappointment nought replied to him but the hound, and in not much louder tones than at first. At this, the idea struck him, that he might bring help to his fellow-traveller a famous deal more quickly than could he bring him where it might be found, so placing of Bertram upon a mossy bank about a foot or so above the path, with his back reclining against the broad trunk of a tree, behind which he flung his bundle and stick, he first of all made the piercingest halloo he could, and when he heard the same reply as hitherto, he started off at the top of his speed toward the place whence the cry of the dog came. By stopping at intervals and repeating his shouting, and marking the direction of the beast's bark, he soon found to his marvellous content it gradually became louder to his ear, till it was so distinct the animal could not be many yards from him,

—and yet he had heard no human voice, nor seen the slightest sign of habitation.

He had turned down all sorts of paths narrow and broad—sometimes forced to thrust his way through the crossing branches, the trees grew so close, and at others to pick his way with more care than speed, the path was so crooked and uneven; at last he came out of this thick wood into an open space and thought he perceived before him something resembling a thick volume of smoke. He approached it closely, and discovered that it proceeded from a monstrous black mass which he speedily recognized as one of those heaps of dry underwood that are usually kept burning slowly a day or two that they may be turned into charcoal. The yelping of the dog was now incessant and so close, there was no occasion for more shouting. Directly William Shakspeare passed the pile of charcoal he beheld both the animal and his master standing in the door-way of a mud cabin, in which a blazing fire of logs threw so great a light, the dingy forms of the charcoal-burner and his little four-footed companion as black as himself might be seen distinctly. The former appeared to be an old man of a very crabbed visage, short of stature, thick-limbed, and hump-backed. How he was attired it was not easy to say, for his garments seemed of a color with his skin—as though he had been charred all over—but there he stood idly at the door of his habitation, and doubtless there he had been standing the whilst he had heard the shouting of the young traveller; and yet he had never attempted to give him any answer, or move from the spot to show that help was at hand.

“Why dost make such a bawling, and be hanged to thee!” exclaimed the hunch-back surlily, as soon as he caught sight of the youth, the cur the whilst yelping with all his might.

“I pray you, come with me on the instant!” said William Shakspeare, with extreme earnestness. “I have a friend hard by like to be dying for the lack of assistance.”

“Sdeath! thou dost not take me to be so huge a fool surely,” replied the charcoal-burner, moving never a whit from his place. “Body o’ me, ’twould be a fine thing was I to take to running about the wood, at this late hour, at any body’s asking. Get thee gone straight, or may be the dog will give thee a sharp bite o’ the legs, or I a sharp crack o’ the crown.” At another time such a threat would have cost him dear; but the other was too wise not to know that violence would go no way towards the assisting of his fellow-traveller.

“I beseech you come to my poor friend’s help, and I will pay you handsomely!” exclaimed he, with more urgency, “and here is some earnest your kind labor shall not go unrewarded.” So saying, he took from his purse a couple of silver groats, which he placed in the old fellow’s hand. The sight of the purse and the touch of the money, as had been anticipated, had an instantaneous effect.

“Prithee tell me, good sir, where your friend may be found, and I will give him what help I can without fail,” answered the hunch-back, putting his foot forward very readily; and then cried out angrily to his yelping cur, to whom he gave a slight kick, “a murrain on thee—stay thy rude noise; how darest thou bark at so worthy a person!” Whereof the consequence was, that in a very few minutes the whole three were trudging amicably together in search of the helpless Bertram. Young Shakspeare soon became somewhat bewildered as to the path he should follow, he having in his speed taken no great note of the right one; so he went up one and down another, without exactly knowing he was going his proper way or not. Nevertheless, after proceeding a considerable distance with no profit, he began to have a suspicion he had come in a wrong direction, and hinted as much to the charcoal-burner, which brought them to a full stop, and a consultation as to what was best to be done.

“Didst heed nothing anigh the place you left your friend?” inquired the hunch-back. “Nothing notable in the tree, or in the place close upon it, by which you might distinguish it again?”

“As I remember there was something,” replied the other; “I perceived a number of different small animals—I know not of what sort, for I could not distinguish them—hanging from the tree’s branches.”

“Body o’ me!” exclaimed the charcoal-burner, in a sort of famous surprise, “that be the Tyburn oak, as we call it in these parts, for ’tis used by the keepers as a gibbet, upon which they do execution upon all manner of weasles, pole-cats, foxes, owls, shrikes, and other wild destructive things that are caught in traps, set in different parts of these woods; and it lies down in Dead Man’s Hollow, at least a full mile from this. Had you turned to the left instead of to the right, when starting from my cot, we had reached it long since.”

For this mistake there was no remedy but to retrace their steps, which they did with as much speed as they could,—William Shakspeare somewhat uneasy at having left

his young companion for so long a time, and his guide in an eager humor to be touching some more of the other's money. In due time they arrived at the tree, the same tree out of all contradiction from which the latter had started in pursuit of assistance for his friend; for there lay behind it the bundle and the stick he had thrown there, but of Bertram there was no sign. This put him in a fearful perplexity. He thought, perchance, on returning to consciousness, and finding himself, as he might think, abandoned, the youth had strayed away in hopes of discovering a path that led out of the wood; and this idea put him in huge discomfort; for, as it appeared to him, the young stranger was almost sure to be lost in the numberless different paths that led here and there in all directions. He presently fell to acquainting the hunch-back with his thoughts.

"I doubt that, master," replied the charcoal-burner; "an' he were in such a strait as you have said, methinks it must needs be he could have been in no case for further journeying. I am more apt to think he hath been moved by other persons."

"How can that be?" inquired the other. "I saw no one in the wood but ourselves."

"That might be, master," said the hunch-back; "but at this late hour, when the place seemeth to be deserted of every one, the Lord Urban, whose property it is, as well as great part of the surrounding country, wandereth alone in for hours together, and 'tis like enough my lord hath fallen on your friend in his rambles, and seeing how much he wanted immediate succor, as you have said, hath borne him to his own fair mansion, scarce half a mile from this place."

"It may be," observed the young traveller, considering the probability of what had just been advanced; "but who is this Lord Urban, for I should be glad to know if my friend is in safe hands?"

"Be assured he cannot be better off," answered the hunch-back, "and if you will with me, and share the shelter and the cheer of my cot, I will tell you whatever you may require concerning of him, and in the morning direct you the nighest way to his mansion."

Believing that nothing more desirable could be done, William Shakspeare assented cheerfully to the charcoal-burner's proposal, on condition that they should previously search about where they were, to see if the lost youth had lingered in the neighborhood. Finding nothing of him, they then bent their steps towards the mud cot, and in a few

minutes entered it together. The new comer found it the most primitive habitation he had ever been in, in all his days, there being no windows to it, the ground constituting the floor, in the centre of which was a large fire burning, which the hunch-back quickly replenished with fresh logs. The smoke had no other way of exit but through the open door, and therefore gave a most dingy coat to the whole interior. On the fire was a sort of kettle swung. A foot or two from it was a table and chair, at the other side a kind of bed, made of branches of green broom, with a log of wood by way of pillow, and in the corner a rude cupboard; beside which there were in other parts of this chamber divers woodman's tools, and spades, gins, and other instruments. Against one part of the wall was a hare hanging, and nearly opposite a leather jerkin.

The charcoal-burner wiped the chair for his visitor, who in honest truth was glad to find such resting, did the same office for the table, and presently placed on it, with trenchers, knives, latten spoons, and other necessaries, a smoking dish of stewed coney, that smelt so savory, the young traveller did not require much pressing to induce him to have at them; and his companion, making himself a stool out of a tall log, eat and drank with such extreme heartiness, it could not fail being a provocation of itself; but the edge of the other's appetite was sharp enough without such setting, in consequence of a long and tiresome journey, and he made as good a meal as he had done any day of his life before. The old fellow then gossiped about his lord sundry marvellous stories, till the other gave a hint he would be glad of getting some sleep.

"If you can bring yourself to accept of such poor lying as I have, 'tis at your commandment," replied the charcoal-burner, pointing to the bed of broom-branches at the other side of the fire.

"Truly, I think it as pleasant a couch, for one as weary as am I, as a king's bed," answered the other; "but how mean you to take your sleep? I like not depriving you of your customary comfort."

"Heed me not, master. I can sleep on a chair as fast as I can anywhere," said the old fellow. Whereupon, his young companion presently went, and threw himself upon the charcoal-burner's bed, and the other sat himself in the chair, and in a few minutes it appeared as if both were in as sound sleeping as they could well have. But as regards the hunch-back, his slumber was but feigned. He found he could get no rest

for thinking of the young stranger's purse, with a greedy longing to make it his own, and yet he could not resolve himself into attempting to deprive him of it. He was striving in his mind, to find some way by which he might do so in perfect security. If he took it privily as he slept, he might discover the loss on waking, and could not fail of suspecting the robber, and would straightway demand its restitution, or might speed to the Lord Urban's where he was bound as he said, and acquaint some of them there with his having been so plundered, by which speedy punishment was likely to follow. This suited the charcoal-burner not at all. Still, he was intent upon having the money—for the demon of covetousness had a fast hold on him—but hours passed without his coming to any determination. At last, an idea was started in him, that appeared to give him the purse, and provide against all dreaded consequences; yet, such was the character of this idea, that as soon as it was well conceived of him, he gazed stealthily round the chamber, to note if any were nigh enough to get note of it. Assured that none were within the cabin save the stranger, and that, as his breathing declared, he was in a deep sleep, the hunch-back quietly rose from his seat, and cautiously picking something from a corner, stole with the noiseless step of a cat, out of the place.

The youthful Shakspeare had got himself into a famous dream. He fancied he was in a fierce battle, in company with his once notable kind friends the two young knights, wherein, after much brave fighting on his part, he had been overthrown, and lay so sore wounded he could not move. He heard the battle raging around him—the clashing of the swords, the blows of the curtle-axes, the cries of the combatants, and the groans of the wounded, and these so nigh, it seemed plain he should be crushed to death in the melee, still he had no power of moving, strove he ever so; and this horrible dread so increased, that upon a sudden rush of the battle towards him so tumultuously it was manifest his doom was sealed, divers fell so heavily upon him, he started at the shock and awoke. He could still hear the clashing of the swords though his eyes were wide open; but gradually he became conscious, as he looked about him, he had been in a dream, and he remembered where he was lying. The fire in the centre of the hovel was now burning low, so as to throw an indistinct lurid light about the place—the dreamer looked for his host; but there was the table, with the supper things still uncleared away, and there the chair, in which

he had last seen the charcoal-burner, reposing himself for his last night's rest, bare of a tenant; nor did he appear to be anywhere in the cabin. At this discovery, the dreamer marvelled somewhat. As he listened more attentively, his quick sense of hearing could plainly distinguish, that what he had taken to be the noise of swords clashing together, was the sharpening of some weapon with a stone. Whereupon, he fell into a greater wonder than before. It seemed strange the hunch-back should want to be sharpening of anything at that hour. On a sudden he called to mind the covetous looks of the old fellow whenever he glanced at his purse, and then he had some suspicions the other meant him no good.

In a moment he reached down the old jerkin that was hanging on the wall, and with it covered the log of wood that had served for a stool, which he laid in the exact place in which he had been recently lying, keeping himself back in the deep shadow, for the purpose of watching to note whether his suspicions were well or ill-grounded. Presently, he beheld the charcoal-burner with a very devilish visage, as it appeared by the light of the fire cast upon it, enter the hovel, and stealthily approach his bed, with a woodman's bill in his hand, the edge of which he was feeling with his thumb, mayhap to note if it was sharp enough for his purpose. In the mind of the youthful Shakspeare, there now could not be a doubt of the old fellow's murderous intentions. Indeed the eager, cautious, fiend-like look he had as he crept along with his weapon, was sufficient evidence of the deadliness of his object. The supposed sleeper lay still as death close against the wall, and that portion of the chamber being farthest from the fire, it was so dark no object could be seen, and about the bed of broom, there was only so much light as to see forms without clearly distinguishing them.

The hunch-back approached the bed closely. He stopped as he got nigh to the top of it. At this, William Shakspeare was in some apprehension the other would spy the cheat, and was preparing himself for a desperate conflict, if such should be the case. However, presently, he beheld his treacherous host lift his weapon above his head, and the next moment it came down with such monstrous force, it cut through the jerkin, and stuck firm in the log beneath. Then the pretended sleeper sprung from his concealment, but not in time to secure the villain, who, the instant he heard the rustling of his intended victim as he rose from his hiding, saw clearly enough he had been

foiled in his murderous purpose, and with a muttered execration rushed from the hovel at the top of his speed, pursued by his dog, who had been a curious spectator of the whole scene. The other did not think it advisable to follow them into the intricacies of the wood at such a time, so he first pulled out the bill from the log, the which took all his strength to do, it was buried so deep in the wood, meaning to use it in his own defence should there be occasion; then made the fire burn bravely, resolving to wait where he was till daylight.

Finding himself in no way molested after some time, he went to the door and looked out. The heap of charcoal was still smoking. All around lay the spreading trees, and above, the cold grey sky, such as it appeareth in the early morning. The stillness was most profound; but this lasted only a brief while. Presently, the wind came sweeping among the leaves, sighing heavily as if in a great weariness, and making a notable trembling of all the tender green things it passed over, as if they liked not the approach of such a visitor. It died away, and all was still again. Again it rushed onward in its broad path with the like consequences, and anon, the whole wood was hushed into a deep sleep: and so it continued. After an hour or so of these changes, observed by the young poet with such pleasure as none but minds like his, so perfectly attuned to the sweet harmonies of nature, can be familiar with, on a sudden, he heard a slight chirping; then another in a different direction, and answering to that a third, and ere another minute had passed, there was so goodly a chorus of chirpings, whistling, warbling, and all manner of such choice singing, from the whole neighborhood, as was quite ravishing to hear. Then numberless small birds, of different hues, were seen busily whetting of their beaks against the tiny twigs, or hopping in and out amid the branches, or descending to the ground, feeding on such palatable things as they could find; and in noting of their different songs, their pretty ways, and their soft glossy plumage, the youthful Shakspeare forgot all thoughts of preparing himself against threatened murder. Indeed, he could not entertain any idea of violence amongst such pleasant happiness as now surrounded him. After enjoying of this fair scene for some time, and impressed with the conviction the charcoal-burner had no mind to return, fearing to be punished for his villainy, the young traveller once more took to his bundle and stick, and ventured out of the hovel, in the expectation of meeting some one or another

coming to his work, who would be his guide to the Lord Urban's mansion, in case he should not be able to find it by following the direction given by the murderous hunch-back the preceding night. He proceeded on his path, bent upon ascertaining as well as he could how his young friend had fared, and then continuing his journey as speedily as he might. He met nothing, save the proper denizens of the wood, coney, hares, and sundry different sorts of birds, who speedily took themselves elsewhere at his approach, till he turned the corner of the path; and then he stopped suddenly, for he beheld a scene, the like of which he had never witnessed before. Opposite him, leaning against a tree, stood a tall man, apparently of some fifty years or so, negligently clothed in handsome apparelling. His countenance was the most woe-begone he had ever seen, pale, haggard, and care-worn, with misery written in every line; notwithstanding which there was something so truly noble in his features, that the grief they expressed seemed as though exalted beyond the reach of ordinary sympathy. His arm resting against the tree afforded a support for his head, in which position he had placed himself, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and ever and anon, giving of such groans and deep sighs as were exceeding pitiful to hear. Presently he moved, clasped his hands forcibly together, and lifted up his eyes to the sky with a look so heart-rending, he who alone saw it could never forget it. Sorrow in any, appealeth to the heart of the spectator; but when the majesty of manhood putteth on its sad livery, there is no such moving sight in the whole world.

The stranger then took to walking two or three paces, to and fro, in the path with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his aspect bearing the signs of a consuming grief. Again he stopped—and the expression of his countenance changed greatly—it bore a terrible suspiciousness; and then anger, scorn, and hatred followed each other rapidly.

"Infamous wretch!" exclaimed he, in a voice so hollow and broken, it did not appear to belong to a living creature; "her punishment hath been as intolerable as her crime! 'Tis fit—'tis fit such guilt should be so visited. A most just judgment—a proper vengeance." At this he walked about as before, and soon returned to the more quiet sadness he had at first exhibited; and then he groaned, and smote his breast with his clenched fist, and shook his head most woe-fully, and muttered something which could not be heard. The youthful Shakspeare, with a natural delicacy, liking not to be seen

taking note of the stranger's actions, was turning away, when he was discovered.

"Ah, fellow, what dost here?" angrily cried the distracted gentleman, rushing upon him with the speed of a young deer; and then placing himself in his path, appeared to examine him with a severe scrutiny. A glance seemed to suffice, for the expression of his features changed instantly; and he spoke in a gentler voice, "Heed not anything you may have heard," said he, putting his hand on the youth's shoulder. "I am subject to strange fits—and I rave about I know not what. I pray you, think not hardly of me, if you have listened to aught to my disadvantage." And then he took the other tenderly by the hand as if he was an especial friend, and gazed in his face in such a manner as might one who would show in his looks his affectionate regard of a companion he talked with.

"Be assured I heard nothing I could place to your discredit," replied the young poet, much moved at the other's strange way of addressing him. "And what I did hear, I came on accidentally, and listened to from sympathy rather than curiousness."

"Ah! doubtless!" said the earl, hurriedly. "But how came you in this place so early?—it is not usual to be travelling at such an hour."

William Shakspeare then spoke of his last night's adventures; to which the other listened with singular curiousness acknowledging himself to be the Lord Urban, and that it was he who had removed the helpless Bertram, finding him in the case he was—asking many questions about him, and at last inviting his new acquaintance to see him at the house where he lay. To this the other gladly assenting, these two proceeded there together. The mansion was the largest and fairest to look at William Shakspeare had seen, save only Kenilworth Castle, and it lay in the centre of a noble park. As they approached it they came upon several parties of men—perchance going to their labor of the day—all of whom did the earl a notable reverence, that he acknowledged with a suitable graciousness; soon after which the young traveller followed his noble guide, by a private entrance, into the interior of that stately dwelling.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I was wery of wandering, and went me to rest,
Under a brode banke, by a bourne side,
And as I lay and lened, and loked on the water,
I slombered into a sleeping, it swyzed so mery.

THE VISION OF PIERCE PLOWMAN.

Clown. What hast here? ballads?
Mopsa. Pray now sing some! I love a ballad
in print, o' life,
For then we are sure they are true.
Auto. Will you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck my dear—a?

SHAKSPEARE.

Borach. Tush! I may as well say the fool's
the fool. But see'st thou not what a deformed
thief this fashion is?

Watch. I know that Deformed: he has been
a vile thief this seven year: he goes up and down
like a gentleman. I remember his name.

IBID.

WHEN William Shakspeare left his fellow traveller, it was with unfeigned regret to part with one for whom, as it seemed, he had conceived so great a liking; but it was also with a singular satisfaction on his part that the youth had fallen into such good hands. Bertram had resolved to stay where he was, partly from having been much pressed to do so by the Lord Urban, who had used him exceeding civilly; and in some measure, because he felt quite unable to attempt any further travel, he was in so helpless weak a state. Having received, from divers of the earl's serving men, the necessary directions for pursuing his way, and having not only refreshed himself famously, but been liberally provided with a prodigal store of choice eating and drinking for his comfort on the road, the young traveller trudged manfully on pursuing of his journey.

It chanced, after he had walked till he was getting to be tired, he came to a brook side which murmured very pleasantly, and sitting himself down on the grass, under an alder tree, he presently fell to making a meal of the victual he had; the which pleased him infinitely, for the meat was of the best, and though he had no sauce save his own hunger, that latter gave so sweet a relish no other was wanting; and then he drew a flask of wine from under his doublet, and took a fair draught of it, which also gave him wonderful content. Now, whether it was he had had but little sleep many nights, or whether it was the strength of the wine got into his head, or the murmuring of the brook made him drowsy, I know not; but after yawning several times most

unequivocally, and stretching his arms out, and showing other signs of oppressive weariness, presently he lay his strength on the grass, with the bundle under his head, and the stick in his hand, and in a few minutes was in the enjoyment of as sweet a slumber as he had known a long time.

But mayhap it was the pleasant dream which then visited him that gave his sleep such absolute pleasantness; for, truly, it was as delectable a dream as sleep ever produced—though it was made up of all manner of strange pageants and unheard of famous marvels. Sometimes it took the shape of a goodly theatre filled with a noble company, and he a player whose very presence made the whole place to resound with plaudits—anon he had writ a play to be played before the Queen's Majesty and the great lords and ladies of her court; and he received most bountiful commendation from such glorious audience:—and then he would be writing of poems that should be so liked of all persons of worship, there should scarce be anything in such esteem. And so the dream went on in divers other scenes of a like sort, as if there could be no end to the greatness they promised him; and, in the end, there danced before his eyes the same pretty company of fair dancers, singers, and revellers, as had used to haunt his slumbers in his younger days; and one more delicately apparelled than the rest, and of surpassing beauty, beckoned him onward as she flitted gracefully before him, singing of some words of exquisite hopeful meaning.

At this he woke suddenly, and the bright visions changed into a fair landscape—the sweet music was turned to the faint humming of the water; and the press of tiny shapes, in their rare bravery, changed to innumerable small insects that were skimming the surface of the brook. The sleeper started from his position, and after refreshing himself by laving of his face in the water, as he lay down on the bank, he shouldered his little burthen, and continued his journey in a gayer humor than he had been in since its commencement. He now more than ever took to the laying of plans and drawing out of schemes for his advancement; and the first and most notable of these was to make the best of his way to London, to find out the elder Burbage, who was the chief of a company of players there, and offer himself to be of his company; the which he doubted not would be allowed, Burbage having already knowledge of his fitness for to be a player, having witnessed his first essay when he so readily undertook to fill the post of the sick boy.

On entering a town on market day, and having passed long lines of pens for sheep and pigs, and droves of cattle—rude carts laden with sacks of grain, piles of cheese heaped up in the open place, along side of baskets of eggs, poultry, and butter, with here a show perchance of a wild Indian—there a famous doctor on a platform, offering to cure all diseases—in another spot the notablest conjuror and astrologer in the whole world, surrounded by gaping crowds of farmers, yeomen, and rustical sort of people—and elsewhere a harper singing of old ballads in a circle of well pleased listeners of both sexes, he was stopped by a throng of persons of all ages and conditions, who seemed to be laughing very merrily at the rivalry of two travelling chapmen, seeking by dint of volubleness of tongue and low humor to get off their wares. The one was an amazing red-nosed old fellow, with one eye, but there was in it so droll a twinkle, and it seemed so active withal, it was evident it grieved not for the loss of its partner. He had got with him a handful of ballads and broad sheets, and a bundle at his back, which he was striving all his craft of tongue to dispose of. The other was a pedlar—a rare rogue, of a most facetious vein, who whilst in serious commendation of his wares failed not to utter a sly jest at his rival. He had his pack opened before him, displaying all manner of ribbons and trinkets, which he showed as openly as he could, and praised as though nothing half so good could be had anywhere.

“Out with your pennies, my masters!” cried the ballad-monger. “Here is a choice time for spending. Delicate ballads! Rare ballads, new and old! Here is one of an amorous turnspit who got so madly in love with his master's daughter, he forgot his proper duty to that extreme, he basted himself instead of the meat. It was sworn before the mayor he never came to his right senses till the cook run a knife into him to see if he was done. No history so true. Here is another of a merry apprentice, who kissed all the women, beat all the watch, and hanged all the cats within five miles of him, and how he afterwards became the powerfulest merchant in the world. All writ down in an especial edifying manner for the instruction of young persons. Here is the dialogue of the Oxford scholar, and the tanner of Woodstock, concerning of woman, whether she be fish, flesh, or fowl. Full of most delectable fine argument and deep learning. Buy, my masters, buy! Never had I such prodigal penny-worths. Most true ballads—only happened t'other day was

a month. I sell no copper brooches for gold. Here are no glass beads to pass for fine stones. I seek not to cozen you with pewter for silver. These are ballads, my masters—none so good have been writ this hundred year—choice for singing—choice for reading, and choice for sticking against the cupboard door.”

“Here is Paris thread of the best,” said the pedlar. “Here are ribbons for holiday wear, that when given to a comely damsel, force her to be so desperate after the giver, he shall marry her in a week. Here are garters so exquisitely fashioned, they make a neat ankle of so ravishing a shape, not an eye shall gaze on it without being lost in love for the owner. Here are pins and needles warranted to prick none, save those they run into. Here are leather purses that have been charmed by a conjuror, so that they have the virtue to double whatever money they shall hold. Here is famous goldsmith’s work in wedding-rings of metal that cannot be matched for sterlingness, and are moreover known to keep all wives true to their husbands, and to hold them so obedient withal, they shall take a cudgelling or a kissing with a like good will. Here are locks for hair—brooches and ear-rings, garnished with stones beyond all price—necklaces and chains from beyond the seas, and all so marvellous cheap they should be a bargain at thrice what I will sell them for. All true lovers come to me, I will insure you your desires at a small cost. All generous good husbands now is your time to win your wives to honest affectionateness. I am no dealer in monstrous dull lies that would make a dead man stir in his grave the hear of such roguery. Here is no poor foolish stuff put into measure to cheat simple persons into a laugh. I have my eyes about me, and believe others not to be so blind as some that take but a half look at things do fancy. Judge for yourselves. Note how excellent are my wares. Whatever you lack you shall have of such fineness and at so cheap a rate as you can never have again. Girdles, belts, points, laces, gloves, kerchiefs, spoons, knives, spurs, scissors, thimbles, and all other things whatsoever, made so well and fast, they shall last till you die, and after that serve you as long as you may have use for them.”

In this strain the two continued, to the huge entertainment of the assembled rustics, who greedily bought of each, and laughed loudly at their sly allusions to the other’s efforts to cheat them. The young traveller passed on as soon as he could—somewhat amused at the droll roguery of those merry

knives, till he came to another crowd about the town-crier, who had just made the whole neighborhood resound with the clamor of his bell, causing persons to throng around him from all parts. William Shakspeare could only get near enough to hear a word or so that was bawled louder than the rest, so he asked of a staid simple-looking man at his elbow, what it meant.

“It meaneth that the Queen of Scots hath escaped,” replied he, “and hue and cry hath been made for her from town to town, and from tithing to tithing. And, moreover, that London hath been set on fire, and that the papists are rising in all parts, bidding of every man to get himself in armor, in readiness to do battle in defence of the Queen Elizabeth, and to search for and seize on the false Queen of Scots wherever she may be found.”

This intelligence surprised the young traveller exceedingly, and amongst the market people it caused a singular commotion, for presently they all broke up into little knots discoursing of no other matter—some alarmed—some valiant—some threatening, and every one talking or seeking to talk of the escaped queen, the fire, and the papists. William Shakspeare was proceeding on his way as speedily as he could, marvelling at what he had heard, when of a sudden he found himself seized firmly, and turning round beheld the person he just spoke to, with his face flushed as though in some extraordinary excitement, and his whole frame in such a tremble as if he was taken with a sudden ague.

“I charge you to surrender yourself peaceably,” exclaimed he to his astonished prisoner.

“For what cause I pray you?” inquired the latter.

“I arrest you as a false traitor and horrible malefactor against the queen’s highness, our sovereign lady, whose poor constable I am,” replied the other, seeming in terrible fear lest he should escape. “Ask of me no questions, but come straight before his worship the mayor—at your deadly peril.”

“I assure you I have done no offence—there must be some mistake in this,” said his companion.

“An’ you seek to breed a bate by any show of false words, I will call on true men to bear you along forcibly,” added the constable. Believing both resistance and arguments would be useless, the prisoner allowed himself to be led by the person who had detained him, followed by a throng of the curious, of whom many, especially the women,

grieved to see so handsome a youth in such custody. In a few minutes he found himself at the end of a long chamber, with a portly looking fellow, manifestly a miller by the flour with which his garments were covered, that could be seen under his mayor's gown—sitting at the top of a table, in close and earnest conversation with a butcher on one side of him, and a vintner on the other, and then dictating to a bull-headed sturdy knave in the common dress of a smith.

"Silence in the court!" cried the miller, the moment the constable opened his mouth to make his accusation, and the mayor spoke so commandingly, the other contented himself with keeping fast hold of his prisoner; and seeming in a wonderful anxiousness and solicitude. It appeared that these worthies were the chief officers of the corporation, and they were about sending of a letter to the queen's council concerning of the important intelligence of which the reader is acquainted, saying what they have done, and asking what further they should do. Everything was first debated betwixt the miller, the butcher, and the vintner, who appeared to be as thoroughly ignorant of proper forms of speech in which to express themselves, as any three persons could; and yet they spoke as confidently as if they considered themselves amongst the sages of the land.

"Now, Alderman Hobnail, read what hath been writ, and our memories shall hold it the better," said the mayor, whereupon the scribe took the paper in his hand, and slowly, as if he could make out his own writing with some difficulty, he read what follows:—

"An' it please you, right honorables, we have had a certain hue and cry arrive here, charging of us to make diligent searchings in all manner of our lanes and alleys, high-ways and byeways, for the Queen of Scots, who is fled; likewise of her majesty's city of London, by the enemies set on fire; whereby in great haste we have got ready our men and armor, with such artillery as we have, on pain of death, as by the precept we were commanded; and have charged divers of our constables to seek out and apprehend the said Queen of Scots, if so be she is lurking in our township; but as yet we have gained no intelligence she hath ventured herself into these parts—"

"Please your worships, the Queen of Scots is here in my safe custody!" exclaimed the constable, who found it utterly impossible to withhold any longer the intelligence of the important capture he imagined he had

made. At hearing this, the mayor and alderman started from their seats in such amazement as they had never shown before; but their surprise was far exceeded by that of the prisoner, who at last could not help laughing outright. "Please your worship the fact be manifest. This person came up to me, whilst the crier was giving out the intelligence of the Queen of Scots' escape, and not hearing what Master Giles said, he having a pestilent hoarseness, asked of me what he was saying; and on the instant I told him—her I should say—he—she I mean—took himself, or rather herself, off with the design of escape, as hastily as might be. Whereupon I felt assured he—she I should say—was no other than this escaped queen; for, as I remember, the Queen of Scots is said to be fair, so is this person—and in no way deformed, which tallies with this person to a hair—and of a well favored countenance, the which this person hath also; and in huge trouble and anxiousness lest he—she should escape, I made him—her I mean, my prisoner, and have herewith brought him—her I should say—into your worship's presence, to be further done with as your worships shall think fittest."

The whole assembly seemed in so monstrous a marvel, they appeared as if they could do nothing but stare at the supposed queen.

"Surely this person looketh but little like a woman," observed the mayor at last; at which the vintner very pithily remarked, there were divers of that sex who looked not what they passed for; and the butcher added, with a like shrewdness, it was well known of many women, that on an occasion they could enact the man so much to the life, their husbands could not do it half so well. Hearing these fine arguments, the miller looked somewhat puzzled, and again the constable put in sundry other reasons of his for coming to the conclusion he had—all which, with his singular confusion of he's and she's which marked his discourse, appeared to afford infinite diversion to the suspected Queen of Scots. Presently, being called upon to give an account of himself, the latter strove to convince the worthies of the corporation of the ridiculous blunder of the constable, by pointing to his mustache, saying as gravely as he could, he never knew that formed any part of the escaped queen's countenance; and then uncovered his head to show how different his hair was to a woman's; but this only led to a consultation of the mayor with his chief advisers, and hearing something about empaneling a jury of matrons, the young traveller

immediately tore open his doublet, and put beyond a doubt—to the horrible disappointment of the constable—that he was neither her highness of Scotland, nor woman of any kind. After which, he made such choice jests of the affair, that he set the whole corporation laughing right heartily, and was dismissed from custody, amid the merry congratulations of every one present, save only Master Constable, against whom, his doings of that day, furnished his acquaintance with a continual jest.

William Shakspeare got out of the town without further molestation; and, on the road, coming up to a heavily laden waggon, drawn by six horses, he made a bargain with the waggoner to take him to Oxford. On getting into the vehicle, he nearly placed himself in the lap of an old lady there seated, in consequence of his not seeing clearly, the interior was so dark; but he excused himself so gracefully, that he soon got to be on exceeding friendly terms with her. As soon as his eyes became more used to the darkness, he began to make out the figures of his fellow-travellers. First there was the old lady, a notable motherly sort of dame, going to London to visit her daughter. She was marvellous social, talking of her affairs as if each one present was her intimate dear friend and gossip of long standing, although she had seen none before she joined them in the waggon.

Next to her was a sickly looking boy, going with his mother, who seemed to hold him very tenderly, to get advice of the notable chururgions of London for his ailments. These spoke but little, and only in a few whispers one to another. Beside these were two young Oxford scholars, keeping up a continual arguing on all manner of subjects, as if they could not live a minute without showing of their skill in logic, yet neither could convert the other to his opinion, for each debated the more strongly, the more closely he was combated. There was but one more of the party, and he was a stout glover from Woodstock, who had been staying with some friends in Wales. He was a great devourer of news, and was no less desirous of playing the intelligencer himself, than he was to listen to the news of another. The young traveller was soon seized on by the old dame going to London, and the stout glover of Woodstock, as a listener for one, and an intelligencer for the other.

“By my troth, I shall be right glad to get to my journey’s end,” said the former; “as I told my maid Lettice the very morning I started; and she said she had a monstrous longing to be of my company, so that she

might see London streets paved with gold, and to get but a glimpse of the queen’s glorious majesty of whom she had heard such marvels; but my husband, who loveth a jest dearly, said that she was in no condition to have her longing gratified, and must first be married a decent time ere she should speak of such things. Indeed, my husband hath an exceeding merry humor; but he meaneth no harm by it to man, woman, or child, I promise you. I was but a girl when he took me to wife. I remember the day as well as though it were but yesterday; and in honest truth it will be just forty years come Candlemas. Ah! I little thought then I should ever be taking a long journey to see a daughter of mine own settled in Barbican, whose husband is so highly related he hath a brother, whose wife is first cousin to my lord Mayor! Ay, I thought no more of it than could an unborn babe. But none can foresee what great things shall come to pass.”

“Know you any news, good sir? inquired the glover, who had been waiting impatiently to put that question for some minutes. The young traveller acquainted him with what he had heard in the town he lately left, not forgetting the droll blunder of the constable in taking him to be the escaped Queen of Scots, to which his companion listened with prodigious interest, as no news could, in his conceit, be so credible as that which is given by the party who had been an actor in it.

“Ha!” exclaimed the Woodstock man, “there have been continual bruits of the Queen of Scots escaping, ever since she hath been a close prisoner. Perchance it is like enough to happen. I did myself hear of a horrible conspiracy she had entered into to let in the Spaniards and destroy all the protestants in the kingdom. Truly she is a most pestilent base woman. Yet know I for certain, that my Lord of Shrewsbury’s dealings with her have not been honest. Indeed, I could tell of a certain christening of which I have had the minutest particulars—secret though it was. But of such scandals about her there is so famous a plenty, that if but one half be true, it maketh the other half credible.”

“My husband, as I remember told me she was a horrible papist,” said the old dame; “and I heard worthy master curate declare, after service, the very Sunday before I left, she must needs be a most wicked wretch, else would she forswear all toleration of such villainy: and as fair a preacher is he as you shall find in any pulpit; and taketh his dinner with us some twice at least in the

week, and always commendeth my skill in cookery; and, as he hath himself told me, esteemeth my husband as the goodliest Christian-man he hath ever known; and myself as the notablest perfect housewife in the whole parish."

"Heard you any fresh matters in Scotland?" asked the glover. "Are the French busy there in any new intrigues, think you?"

"Really, I know not; for I have spoke with none capable of rightly informing me of such things," replied the youthful Shakspeare.

"Is it true, the unhappy news of the murder committed on the poor Prince of Orange?" inquired the other with huge earnestness. "And is there any intelligence to be relied on concerning of the embassy of Sir Philip Sydney to condole with the French king on the death of his dear brother, the Duke of Anjou?" A number of other questions of news followed these in quick succession, whereby it appeared that this greedy intelligencer, was seeking to get note of everything going forward in every part of the world; but his companion gave him such scanty answers, he was fain at last to give up all hope of turning him to any more profit—and the old dame having told the ages of her children and grand-children, with the fullest particulars of their several histories, also rested her tongue—so that he was left to attend to the dialogue of the Oxford students, who had hitherto heeded nothing but their own arguing.

"Nay, that cannot be, for Aristotle declareth the very reverse," said one, with prodigious earnestness.

"But what sayeth Socrates on that head?" replied the other somewhat triumphantly. "Ay, and Epicurus and others of the ancients. I doubt you can do away with such evidence. Methinks you must needs acknowledge yourself to be well beaten in this argument, for truly you are now at your last shifts."

"Nay, be not in such conceit of the matter," rejoined the first, in any manner rather than like one who suffereth defeat. "I never was so well off in my logic since the question was started. Now I will maintain, even at the stake, these my propositions, which I doubt not to make good with all proper weapons of rhetoric, and references of highest authority. First, the body hath a soul."

"Granted," said his companion.

"All souls are, therefore they exist."

"I let that pass."

"To exist, argueth to live, and to live requireth the proper sustenance of life."

"That hath to be proved," gravely remarked his opponent.

"Proved!" exclaimed the other, as if in a monstrous astonishment. "Is there anything that can live without victual? Have not all animals, whether of bird or beast, fish or insect, a natural commodity of mouth and stomach, whereby they are used to eat what pleaseth them?"

"There be sundry sorts of creatures who, it is credibly known, live without any manner of victual whatsoever," said his companion. "I pass over what is so notorious as the barnacle that is the fruit of a tree, therefore can require no feeding, yet is an animal with no deficiency of stomach or mouth; and the chameleon who is a beast, yet useth himself to no victual. I will say nought of the toad, that may live a hundred years shut up in the crevice of a rock. I will scarce so much as mention the salamander, the phoenix, the cockatrice, and other familiar animals, which divers famous philosophers maintain do support themselves after a like fashion. But I will at once to the stronghold of my argument, which is, that ghosts have never been known to eat and drink even of the delicatest things that came in their way."

"By our lady I have great doubt of that," exclaimed the other; "hast forgot the ghost of the drunken tapster, that used to haunt the very cellar in which his corpse was discovered; and what should a ghost want in such a place, think you, but to refresh himself with a draught of good wine of which he had used to be so fond? Dost not remember how the spirit of a certain ancient housekeeper was known to walk the pantry of her master's house, and for what reasonable purpose could that be. save to feast on the store of delicacies she knew was there to be found? But there is a fresher and more convincing instance that happened at our college only last vacation to Master Pipkin, the proctor. Now he and a certain lame doctor of divinity were sworn brothers. Dr. Polyglott was of an exceeding gravity, and as learned a scholar as Oxford could produce. It was said that he was at his books all day and all night, and that he liked nothing so well; but, in truth, he had a monstrous liking for roast pig with codling sauce, and this the proctor knew. So he asked the doctor to come and sup with him at an hour named, and he should have most choice feasting on this his favorite dish; and he having gladly assented, Master Pipkin got things in readiness. At the appointed time, the learned scholar hopped across the proctor's chamber towards the table much in the ordinary way, and feasted as he had never

feasted before ; but he looked graver even than he was wont to look, and spoke never a word the whole time he was engaged in devouring this delicate food. Nevertheless, this did not excite in his host any strange surmises, knowing his old friend to be given to fits of such deep thinking, he would not speak for hours, no matter what he might be about. But the strange greatness of his appetite did create a very singular marvelling in the proctor, for the learned scholar continued to fill his trencher, and to empty it with such frequency, that in the end the roast pig was picked to the bones, and the codling-sauce eat up to the last mouthful. As soon as this became manifest, Dr. Polyglott hopped out of the chamber as gravely as he had hopped into it. The next morning little Pipkin called on his old friend, to inquire whether he had slept well after so heavy a supper, when, to his extreme horror, he learned that the poor doctor had been dead since noon the preceding day. Now it followeth from this, that the worthy doctor of divinity evinced his wonderful fine wisdom, in taking the opportunity to banquet on his favorite dish to the last morsel as he did, knowing that such delicacies as roast-pig with codling sauce, the most fortunate of ghosts cannot hope to fall in with but rarely."

The youthful Shakspeare was somewhat amused at what he had heard, and presently he joined in the argument with as serious an earnestness as either, much to the marvel of the Oxford scholars, who thought it most wondrous, a plain countryman as he appeared, should talk so well and wisely. It was manifest he soon had the best of the argument. Indeed, he brought forth such convincing reasons, clothed in such brave language, that his opponents quickly got more into the humor of listening to his discourse than of offering any speech of their own.—Grave as he appeared, he was but entertaining of himself with their credulity.

"But concerning of ghosts, there is a thing that puzzleth me out of all telling," said he, in conclusion. "It cannot be for a moment supposed any person would be so heathenish ignorant, or so deplorable foolish as to think such things are not to be met with—yet there is a matter connected with them that methinks goeth a great way towards such thinking, an' it be not properly explained by those having most knowledge of the subject. This I will here proceed to lay open to you, as I should be infinitely glad to be instructed by your opinion. Now, as far as the wisest philosophers have written, a ghost is immaterial, of no sort of substance, being but the mere shadow, as it

were, of the body from which it hath been separated; and that none, save only man, who hath a soul, can come into the state that is commonly called being a ghost."

"Truly sir, there can be no disputing anything so clearly put," observed one of the scholars.

"Now mark you this, my masters," continued the young traveller, with a more profound gravity; "there never yet was an instance of a ghost who appeared without proper apparelling—none so abominably ill-behaved as to show himself deprived of clothing of every kind."

"Nay, so horrible improper a thing cannot be conceived of them," said the other.

"Indeed, I thought as much," added William Shakspeare. "Now there is a ghost of a person of worship seen, just as he used to be when he lived. How came he with a doublet? Garments have no souls as I have ever heard; and therefore neither hose nor trunks, nor cloaks, nor hats, nor apparel of any kind can be ghosts. And how can they be worn of a ghost being of substance as they must needs be, not being of the immaterial nature of a spirit? If the latter, as hath been credibly affirmed, can slide through the crack of a door with ease, there is no clothing of ever so fine a fabric but what cannot help staying behind at such a time; and so leave the poor ghost without a thread to cover him. And when a ghost standeth before any person, his garments being heavy, and he so exceeding light, they must needs fall to his heels for lack of proper support, to the horrible scandal of all decent spectators."

The Oxford scholars looked as perfectly puzzled as it was possible for any men to be; and evidently knew not what to say on so perplexing a matter, for they had wit enough to see there could be but two conclusions to such an argument, which were a sort of Scilla and Charybdis to the theory of ghosts—for if they would affirm ghosts went without clothing—seeing that none could be had of any material that would stay on a shadow for a single moment—they would put themselves against the best authorities that had writ or spoken on the subject, all of whom vouched for their being properly clad in ordinary tiring; and if they ventured to maintain garments might be of the same nature with ghosts, they by it expressed their conviction, that every article of apparel was possessed of a soul, which they knew to be a proposition so contrary to common sense, no sober person would allow of such a thing for a single instant. Doubtless, the young traveller felt famous satisfaction at

having brought these rare logicians to so complete a nonplus; for truly they seemed to have been struck with a sudden dumbness. At last one acknowledged that what had just been advanced, involved an argument the which had never been started before, and he was not then prepared to give it answer, as it required a monstrous deal of profound thinking, it was of so abstruse a nature; and the other followed with something to the same purpose; and presently they managed to turn the disputation into another channel.

In this way the whole party proceeded on their journey; the only variation being some of them would occasionally get out of the waggon and walk by the side of the waggoner, amongst whom the youthful Shakspeare might be found more frequently than any other, inquiring of him the names of the places they passed through, and of the fair mansions of persons of worship that lay within sight, for it was a most welcome relief to the former after having been thoroughly tired of the humors of his companions, to delight himself with observing the beauties of the surrounding country, and the appearance of the different classes of persons he met on the road. Every face bore to him signs of a certain character, no two of whom seemed to be alike; and from these he could, in his own mind, read the history, habits, and thoughts of all he gazed on.—Mayhap, a great portion of this was mere speculation—nevertheless, it served to beguile the time with a very fair entertainment.

“And what place come we to next, Master Giles?” inquired he of the waggoner.

“Oxford, an’ it please ye,” replied the man.

“Do we make any stay there?” asked the other.

“Ees, maister, we bide a whole night at comely Mistress D’Avenant’s, at the Crown Inn,” answered the waggoner, seemingly endeavoring to attend to his horses and his companion at the same time. “John D’Avenant hath just taken her to wife.—Coom, Bess! put the best leg foward—do now, I prithee—and I’se warrapt ye she’s as semely a host as ever drew spigot. Mather-away!”

“Doubtless, an hour or so with a pretty woman maketh your journey to be all the pleasanter,” observed the young traveller.

“Doant it thoa!” exclaimed the man, with a grin that displayed a pair of jaws of extraordinary capaciousness. “Gogs wouns, maister! When it be my good hap to get me alongside the shafts o’ so goodly sweet a

creature as Mistress D’Avenant, I feels my heart for to pull stronger nor the best beast o’ the whole team. Gee-wliut! get thee along, I tell thee!—and I takes it as daintily as a fore-horse going down hill. Body o’ me! when she bringeth me a pint o’ tickle-brain, and letteth her sloe-black eyes to rest upon me, whilst I be a fumbling o’ the monee out o’ my leathern purse, I feels so dizzy, and so strange, and so full o’ monstrous sweet pleasantness fro’ top to toe, I’ve no more heed o’ the waggon than the waggon has o’ me.”

“Methinks, by this, you must be in love with the good dame,” said his companion jestingly. “But surely you will not think of doing mine host of the Crown so ill a turn, as to be loving of his wife when you stop at his house?”

“Wouldn’t I, thoa?” cried Giles, with an inexpressible, sly wink of his somewhat roguish eyes, as he lifted his cap with his left hand and scratched his head, cou tryman fashion. “As far as I can guess, I doant take a waggoner to be any more free of temptation than any other man, but it any manner of man whatsoever can come within the glance of Mistress D’Avenant’s sloe-black peepers, and not think within himself how blessed would be his condition were he John D’Avenant, and John D’Avenant he— he must needs be such a mortal as be clean different from the ordinary sons of Adam.”

This, and other conversation to the same purpose, excited some faint curiosity in the young traveller to behold her whose charms had made so forcible an impression on the susceptible heart of Master Giles; and this curiosity of his in due time was indulged. At their entrance into Oxford, which was at dusk of the evening, the two scholars left the waggon, and it proceeded leisurely along till it stopped in the yard of the Crown Inn. It was too dark to distinguish objects very clearly, but as far as could be judged of it, the inn was a capacious building well accommodated for its purposes. Lights were streaming from many casements, and the burthen of a popular ballad came in full chorus from one of them. A door being open, figures could be seen moving about in the red glare of the kitchen-fire; and on a cry being raised of “the waggon! the waggon! Here be Master Giles come, mistress!” two or three persons came rushing out.

“John! prithee make all speed to help the travellers out!” cried a female, who was approaching with a lighted candle, which she shaded with her hand.

“Ay, sweetheart! I’ll be with thee on the

CHAPTER XXVIII.

instant," replied a young man coming after her, and then calling into the house, exclaimed—"Come Ralph! Come Robin! Will be all night a bringing of those steps?"

"Welcome to Oxford, good friends!" cried the first speaker, very pleasantly, as she appeared at the end of the waggon.

"Ha! Master Giles, how dost do?" said the other cordially greeting the driver as an old acquaintance.

"Bravely, Master D'Avenant, bravely!" replied he. "And your fair mistress. Body o' me, an' she doant look more bloomingly than ever!"

"Marry, Master Waggoner! when am I to come to my full bloom, think you?" said the first speaker with a pretty laugh, as she left him to pay attention to her new guests. William Shakspeare was assisting his fellow travellers to alight, but he could not help turning round to take note of this Mistress D'Avenant; and in honest truth he saw before him as delicious a face as any man need desire to see, with lustrous dark eyes, rich complexion, and a most bewitching mouth glowing as it were, under the light thrown upon them by the candle, and ornamented with a becoming head-tire.

"Take him down gently, I pray you, good sir, for he is exceeding weak," said the tender mother, as the young traveller was helping her sick son out of the waggon.

"Truly, he shall be as tenderly handled as if his own kind mother were a helping him," replied he; this gentle speech of his brought on him the notice of the pretty hostess, who looked with a pleased surprise at beholding of so handsome manly a youth. In due time all had alighted. The Woodstock man had already departed. The mother and child, with the old dame, led the way—the latter as usual, making herself wondrous gracious with the host; and the youthful Shakspeare walking last, by the side of his comely hostess, with whom he appeared already to be affording some pleasing entertainment, for she manifestly took his converse with infinite satisfaction. The waggoner stood behind, gazing after the last two as he scratched his head, with a look as though he had much rather Mistress D'Avenant had stayed where she was, or that her companion had come to any inn at Oxford save the Crown.

The trustiest, lovingest and gentlest boy
That ever master kept.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

The love of boys unto their lords is strange;
I have read of wonders of it. . . Yet this boy,
For my sake (if a man may judge by looks
And speech) would outdo story. I may see
A day to pay him for his loyalty.

IBID.

Ah! dere God! what mai this be
That alle thing weres and wasteth awai;
Frendschip is but a vantage
Unnethe hit dares all a day.

VERNON M. S.

Alas!

There are no more such masters; I may wander
From east to occident, cry out for service,
Try many, all good, serve truly, never
Find such another master.

SHAKSPEARE.

"WHAT dost think of my lord's new page?" inquired the grave old butler of the equally grave old housekeeper of the Lord Urban, as they sat together in a small chamber adjoining the buttery of the earl's mansion, taking of their morning repast.

"Truly a most well favored youth and a gentle," replied the old dame. "I be hugely mistaken in him, good Adam, an' he be not of a most kindly disposition. Never saw I youth so courteous, and yet so humble withal. He is ever ready to do all manner of friendly offices to whoever he cometh anigh; and yet of such humility as he seemeth, there is a look and behavior with him that is manifestly much above the service he hath put himself upon."

"Ay, Joyce, that hath struck me more than once," observed Adam. "But there is another thing which I have observed in this Bertram, in which he differs greatly from youths of his own age, as far as I have seen—and this is, his constant refraining from all kinds of pastime. Despite of his apparent cheerfulness I cannot help thinking he hath some secret sorrow which he alloweth to prey on his gentle nature. I have not lived these years without acquiring some cunning in observing of faces; and I do detect in his such signs as assure me he is in no way happy."

"Perchance that shall make him the better company for my lord," said Joyce. "Indeed, they are so like in their humors, methinks they cannot help taking to each other with a mutual good will. It is evident the page loveth his lord, he speaketh of him so fondly, and attendeth on him with so

affectionate a reverence; and as it appeareth to me, the earl is wonderfully partial to his young attendant, for he is never easy save when he is present."

"Truly I think so," added the old butler.

"I marvel he hath not come," observed the housekeeper.

"He tasteth nothing himself till his master hath sufficed himself," replied Adam; "and 'tis as pretty a sight as can well be seen, to note how, with what store of sweet persuasions, the page getteth his lord to partake of the dainties he setteth before him, till he hath made a fair meal. But here cometh his light footstep along the passage."

The next minute the youth who had been William Shakspeare's fellow traveller entered the chamber, clad like a page in the livery of the Lord Urban, with a sword and dagger, much improved in his looks, though still of a more delicate appearance than is common with one of his age. Courteously he saluted the two ancient domestics, in a manner as gentle as if they were his good parents rather than his fellow servants, and took his place beside them, accepting what they helped him to with abundance of thankfulness, and only regretting he should put them to such trouble. And this behavior of his so took the hearts of old Adam and his companion, that they appeared as if they could not do half enough to show how wondrously it pleased them.

"And how fareth our noble master, sweet sir?" inquired the housekeeper.

"He mends apace, good dame," replied the youth. "Indeed, I am now in hopes he may be got out altogether of his unhappy frenzies and terrible sad fits of melancholy. Alack! 'tis a most grievous thing so noble a gentleman should be in so sad a case as he is!"

"Ah! that is it," exclaimed Adam sorrowfully. "But dost know what great cause he hath had for such deep sadness?"

"Nay, not a word of it," answered Bertram; "nor am I in any way desirous to learn, unless my lord think it fit I should. I only know he is a most unhappy gentleman, and methinks that should be enough knowledge for me to strain my exertions to the utmost, to lead him into more pleasing feelings."

"I do famously approve of such discretion," said the old dame; and then, as was customary of her, recommenced pressing him to make a better meal. "Truly, never met I any person with such strange lack of appetite," she added, on finding her endeavors of no avail. "O' my word, you must not hope to attain any stoutness of flesh, go

you on with so poor a stomach. But mayhap there are other things you might more relish. There is a fair portion of a roast kid now, cooked but yesterday, that would make most delicate eating for your breakfast, that I will get for you, please you to say you could fancy it—or I will have for you a tender pullet broiled on the instant, an' you tell me you have a mind for so nice a dainty."

"Indeed I thank you very heartily, I am well content with the excellent bountiful meal I have made," replied the page. Thereupon the old butler entreated him to make a more prodigal use of the ale on the table, or allow of his fetching him a cup of choice malmsey or canary: but the youth courteously thanked him, yet could not be induced to taste a drop more beyond what he had drank. Immediately after this, one of the grooms of the chamber came to tell Bertram his lord wanted him; upon which he made what haste he could towards that part of the building where the earl had chose to lodge himself. Whilst the youth is making his way through the long passages and broad staircases of this goodly mansion, the reader shall at once be transported to the Lord Urban's chamber.

It was a gloomy apartment of some dimensions, lighted only by a window of stained glass. On one side of it was a large book-case, well stored with volumes of different sizes—the chimney-piece was carved all round with armorial bearings, in almost numberless different compartments—the chairs and couches were covered with the same dark tapestry as the panels, and the table in the centre bore a coverlet of some black stuff, ornamented with a deep border of the same color. At the end of the chamber opposite the book-case, on each side of the window, were two large portraits, in carved oak frames,—one a handsome young knight, in full armor, doubtless meant for the earl in his younger days: and the other was completely hid under a black cloth. There were two doors to this chamber, one of which was the entrance, and the other led into an ante-chamber where the page slept, and to the earl's bed-chamber which was beyond it. There was no sign of living thing near, save a fine grey-hound that was listlessly stretching himself by sliding his fore paws close together along the glossy flooring till they were thrust out their full length, and then he would make a faint sort of whining as he looked about and found himself alone.

Presently a noise like the turning of a key was heard, which made the dog somewhat more attentive, but instead of looking

towards either of the doors, his eyes were fixed in a different direction, and the next moment a concealed door was seen to open, and thereat with exceeding cautiousness, the Lord Urban made his appearance, clad in a suit of black velvet, and looking as if moved with so monstrous a sadness no heart could live under it. After closing the door as cautiously as he had opened it, the earl flung himself into a couch, and with an aspect of a most woful sort, he fixed his eyes on the black curtain that covered the picture. All this while it was evident his mind was in great trouble. His lips would move and curl into strange expressions, far from pleasing; his eyes seemed to strain as if after some object that was fading from their sight, and then he would start back. His breast heaved, and his face grew clouded. He would frown till the wrinkles on his forehead appeared to be so pressed and squeezed together they must needs crack—and draw in his lips so long and strongly, his mouth disappeared under the beard of the lower part of it. The greyhound looked as though he had again composed himself to sleep; yet would he open his eyes and fix them on his master with a curious interest, at every start or sudden exclamation the earl made.

"'Twas a rightful deed!" muttered the Lord Urban, in deep thick tones that spoke a far profounder meaning than the mere words conveyed. "'Twas a just vengeance! The greatly guilty should be greatly punished!" Presently a strong shuddering passed over him, and his aspect changed from a severe sternness to a painful melancholy. "'Twas a most infamous deed!" exclaimed the earl, in broken accents that were scarce audible; "a deed by which I have forfeited all reputation here, and hope hereafter. An unknighthly deed—a cowardly deed—a most horrible base murder! Ha!" screamed the unhappy man, when, on raising his eyes, he met those of his page, upon whom he hastily rushed, and seized by the throat as though he were about to strangle him. "Dost come prying and listening, fellow! Nay—nay—" he added, as suddenly letting go the youth as he had laid hold of him. "I mean thee no hurt, boy!—O' my life, I will not harm thee. But why didst enter without knocking?"

"I knocked many times, my lord, but you answered me not," replied Bertram, with more sympathy in his looks than fear. "And you having sent for me pressing, I made bold to enter without further delaying."

"Right, boy, right!" said his lord hurriedly. "I did send for thee I remember me

well, and doubtless I was too deeply engaged in mine own thoughts to take any heed of thy knocking. But didst hear me say any thing discreditable?—Ought to my disadvantage? Spoke I at all of —?" The earl seemed as though the word choked him, for he could not speak it, and wrung the hand of his young attendant, which he had affectionately seized when his humor changed from its sudden furiousness, and turned away.

"Alas, my lord, such I have heard too often to pay them any manner of heed," answered Bertram sorrowfully. "They are but the natural offspring of your phrenzy—that none, who know you, and love you, would take, save as evidence of your exceeding unhappiness."

"And dost not believe I have committed such wrongful act as I have declared?" inquired the Lord Urban, again taking his page kindly by the hand, and looking into his face with a countenance of sadness mingled with affection.

"How could I credit so intolerable a thing?" exclaimed the youth. "Methinks the generous treatment I have received at your hands would suffice to plant your nobleness firmly in my opinion, but what I have seen of your other actions is of the like honorable character; and surely these common acts are the properest evidence to judge you by—against which the idle sayings of your distempered fancy can weigh only as a feather in the balance."

"True, boy, true," cried the earl, a faint smile making itself visible on his noble features, as he more tenderly pressed the hand he held in his own. "Such things must need be of my mind's disorder. I cannot be so horrible base a wretch as I do sometimes think myself. I do assure thee I have been in wonderful reputation of the noblest persons, for all truly famous and noble qualities. Indeed, I have been from my youth ready to cast aside every one thing most valued, rather than the slightest blemish should rest upon my honor. Surely then it cannot be I should in a moment thrust away from me the fame I had labored so long and well to acquire, and do so cruel a deed all men that knew it would cry shame."

"It is too improbable to be considered a moment, my lord," replied his young companion.

"And yet thou knowest not the provocation that may lead to such things," added his lord, with a more touching earnestness. "It seemeth to me the very honorablest sort of man may be maddened by wrong into the showing of such notorious ill behavior. Thou art too young to judge of this. Thou

canst not yet enter into the feelings of a man who having attained the highest eminence of nobleness, in extreme confidence he shall so live and die, on a sudden findeth himself reduced to the lowest base abjectness, by one who was the last of all in his expectation to do him any evil."

"Truly, I never heard of so hapless a case," observed the page.

"Doubtless 'tis somewhat rare," said the earl. "But, prithee, get me a book and read. I would be amused out of this humor. Fetch the same goodly romance thou wert engaged upon yesterday." The page cheerfully did as he was required, believing, by so doing, he should beguile the earl of his unhappiness; and presently sitting himself in a chair with a huge volume in his lap, commenced reading of the marvellous adventures of certain famous knights. He soon got to be too much interested in the narrative to attend to his hearer, whom he fully believed to be as completely taken with the book as himself,—but such was far from being the case, for though the earl at first appeared attending to what was being read to him, in a few minutes it was evident from the changed expression of his countenance, his mind was engrossed by a very different matter. A hollow groan at last forced the page to desist awhile from his reading.

The noble features of the earl now appeared black and distorted, as though under the influence of a great agony—his eyes with a sad fixedness staring at vacancy, and his hands clenching fast the arms of the chair on which he sat—his head leaning forward, one leg under the seat and the other projecting stiffly before him—in brief, the whole attitude as strained as a mere effigy of stone.

"Murder!" muttered he in the most thrilling tones Bertram had ever heard. "Oh, infamous! Oh, most base deed! Oh, intolerable foul blot upon mine honor! Nought can erase the stain. Reputation! thou art lost to me forever! But who slandereth me? Who dare say ought to my discredit?" inquired he in a louder voice, and with a fierce frowning look. "Am I not Urban de la Pole? Urban the reproachless? 'Twas a just deed! Who dares proclaim it to be a murder?"

"My lord! my lord! I pray you out of this phrenzy!" exclaimed the page urgently, as he pushed his lord slightly on the shoulder to arouse him from his strange fancies. At this the latter started of a sudden, and grasped his young companion's arm with both his hands, staring upon him with a somewhat bewildered gaze.

"Ha! what dost say, boy?" hastily inquired he, just above his breath, as it were.

"I beseech you, my lord, not to allow of these violent terrible fits to get so much the better of you," replied Bertram, in a most earnest voice, and with a look of deepest sympathy. "Believe me, there is no one person anywhere nigh unto you, would breathe one word but to your well-deserved praise. It grieveth me to the heart to see so noble a gentleman so moved. I marvel such gloomy shadows, the mere cheats of a disordered mind, should have such power over your excellent sweet nature."

"I do believe thou lovest me, boy," said the earl, taking the other's hand in his wonted kind manner.

"Ay, that do I, right heartily, my lord!" exclaimed the youth, with a most convincing sincerity. "I love you for your truly noble character—such as I have heard from divers of your honest faithful servants—for the greatness of your heart and honorableness of your conduct—as shown in a long career of truly glorious deeds—for your bountiful generousness of disposition to every distressed poor person of whose wants you can gain intelligence;—and I love you for your noble behavior to myself—the very creature of your prodigal kindness—whom you have saved from the horriblemest evils humanity can endure. You found me with nought else to recommend me to your notice but the desperateness of my state. You took charge of me, attended me as a dear friend rather than a master; gave back to me the health which long suffering had deprived me of; and the home that villainy had forced me from; and yet, with the full confidence of a perfect honorable nature, up to this hour you have afforded me all the succor I needed, without asking me one word of the cause that brought me into such necessity. I might not be the thing I seemed—perchance, one quite unworthy of your smallest esteem; but out of your own abundant goodness, you found me such qualities as I most needed, and took me into your service, without trial, question, or doubt. Truly, my lord, methinks you have given me great cause to love you."

"I bless the hour I met thee in the wood," said the Lord de la Pole, with affectionate earnestness. "I have received more comfort of thy untiring heed of me than have I known, I scarce can say the day when, it seemeth so long since. I will prove anon how much I do esteem thy loving service."

"I care to have but one proof, an' it please you, my lord," said Bertram, "and

that is what I have been laboring for to gain all this time."

"Ay, indeed? Prithee say what it is?" asked the earl.

"It is but to have you return to the gallant activity and proper cheerfulness shown by you in times past," replied his young companion. At hearing this the Lord Urban shook his head mournfully.

"Ah, boy, that can never be!" said he, with a deep sad emphasis that went direct to the hearer's heart.

"Try, my lord, I beseech you," added the other imploringly. "Hie you to court, and doubt not the example of your nobleness would be of especial advantage to every gallant spirit that shall there be found. Take your proper place among the powerfulest lords of the realm, and be ever ready to afford them that counsel which your experience teacheth you—or be as you have so often been before, the valiant leader of the chivalry of England, bearing your resistless banner into the very heart of the battle."

"Ay, talk of these things, boy—talk of them as long as thou wilt!" exclaimed the earl, as a gleam of proud triumph seemed shining in his eyes. "I was not always as I am. There hath been many a hard fought field wherein my spear and curtle-axe have done notable service. Those were glorious days,—those were gallant scenes. The neighing of the war steed, as he rusheth to the conflict at the piercing cry of the trumpet, soundeth in my ears even now,—and the waving penons and the glittering lances, and the resistless rush of knights and men-at-arms, again return to mine eyes. I feel stirred in every vein. Methinks I could seek the enemy with all the valor of my early manhood, and raise the same resounding war cry that hath made the fiercest of the battle to rage around me wherever I passed."

"Ay, that could you, my lord, I would wager my life on it!" cried the page, delighted beyond measure to notice such a humor in the earl. "England hath still enemies to subdue—and there yet remain for her gallant defenders many hard fought fields to be won. Would you remain in inglorious ease when the foes of your country are striving for her overthrow, and give yourself up to a vain grief when the dangers that threaten the land require you to hasten to the rescue? I beseech you free yourself from the trammels of your sorrow—don your favorite armor—bestride your choicest steed—call to your standard the old companions of your valor, and speed wherever glory is to be gained or wrong redressed; and be assured that not only shall

the greatness of your fame exceed your former reputation, wherever your name can be heard, but that you shall enjoy such content, such marvellous comfort, and such wonderful sweet happiness, as have never visited you all your life before."

"Ah boy, thou knowest nothing of what I have endured," answered the Lord Urban, and to his companion's exceeding discontentation, manifestly in as complete a sadness as ever. "Thou speakest in entire ignorance, else wouldst thou have refrained from so perfect a mockery as speaking to me of happiness. Be sure, that were I not held to this spot by a chain, from which nought but the grave can release me, long ere this, I would have sought in the thickest of the enemy a death, by which my name might obtain that honor which hath been denied to my life. Comfort!" exclaimed he, in tones scarce articulate, as he let go the hand he had held so long. "Prithee, speak not to me such a word again;" and so saying, he rose from his seat, and slowly traced his way out of the chamber.

Bertram gazed after him, with eyes full of the tenderest solicitude, and remained for some moments after his lord had disappeared, in a deep reverie of thought.

It may be taken as an invariable truth, that a truly honorable mind is ever a confiding one, and taketh every fair appearance to be what it resembles. Doubt and suspicion belong only to the meaner sort. Those whose intentions are thoroughly honest put the fullest confidence in the dealings of their associates; and when once opinion getteth to be fixed in them of another's worthiness, a prejudicial thought finds such difficulty of entrance in their unsuspecting minds, that it requireth some extraordinary evidence before it will be entertained. Thus was it with this youth. Of his lord's nobility of character he had formed so strong a conviction, from what he had heard and seen of him, that such a thing as suspecting him of a dishonorable action, was utterly beyond the bounds of possibility; therefore, all the Earl's self accusations and dark allusions the other could only treat in the manner already described, as distempered fantasies arising from the gloomy melancholy in which he had indulged, as the page had heard, since the death of his Countess.

And thus it went on for many months, the faithful Bertram striving all he could to win the Earl from the terrible sorrow, with which, as it seemed to him, his lord was afflicted; and ever imagining he was succeeding in his endeavors, till some violent fit of frenzy would make its appearance in the object of

his grateful love, and prove how little he had gained by his affectionate painstaking. He had observed, with some marvelling, that when he had left the Earl for any length of time in the chamber that served for his library, on his return he was sure to find him, either gloomily abstracted, or in some violent excitement. Sometimes, long fits of dreadful self-reproach would follow, and at others, he would fiercely insist he had done a right thing. In the end he was sure to relapse into his customary sadness, from which it was with exceeding difficulty he was thoroughly roused. It chanced to hap, that wanting Lord de la Pole on one occasion, to acquaint him with something he had forgot, Bertram returned to the library, where he had left him a few minutes since, and not finding him there, there waited, believing the Earl had retired to his bed-chamber.

Finding his lord's stay was longer than he anticipated, he took up a book and sat himself down. He had not been long engaged in reading, when he heard a noise close to him, and glancing towards the spot whence it proceeded, to his exceeding wonder, beheld a portion of the book-case open like a door, and immediately after, the Earl enter the chamber by its means, and close it carefully after him. It was manifest the Lord Urban had no expectation of finding his page where he was at that time; for, on the instant he caught sight of him, he started with a sudden exclamation of surprise, and his look was angry, and his manner more severe towards Bertram than ever the youth had known it to be.

"How darest thou come here unbid?" exclaimed the Earl, as with folded arms he regarded his youthful companion with a stern scrutiny. "Dost seek to pry into my secret? Have I then all this time been but encouraging a pitiful spy, who laboreth to thrust his curiousness into my most hidden affairs, that he might betray me to the world?"

"My lord! my lord! believe me, I never entertained so base a thought," replied the page, much affected his lord should think so ill of him.

"Wilt promise never to divulge what thou hast seen?" inquired the Lord de la Pole, with increased earnestness.

"In very truth, my lord, I never should have mentioned it to any person living if I thought you so desired," said the other.

"Swear it!" cried the Earl, suddenly grasping his companion firmly by the wrist, seemingly violently agitated. "Down on thy knees and swear by all thy hopes of happiness here and hereafter, thou wilt hint to

none there is other entrance to this chamber save those with which all are acquainted." The page knelt as he was desired, and repeated, as his companion stood sternly over him, the form of the oath he was required to take.

"As Heaven is my witness, you need no oaths to bind me to your will," urgently exclaimed the youth.

The Earl appeared scarcely satisfied even by this solemn security he had exacted. He was still showing most undeniable signs he was terribly influenced by some dark passion, for anger flashed from his eyes, and distrust appeared in every feature of his countenance; his breathing was hard and loud, and at every gasp of breath his breast heaved as though it would force its fastenings.

"Be assured, my lord, I am your obedient poor servant, and would die rather than betray any secret you might entrust me with," continued the other. "But it grieveth me to the heart you should think so ill of me. I could bear anything rather than you should doubt of my entire allegiance. Other friend than you have I none in the wide world, and therefore what could induce me to play the traitor to your confidence. I beseech you, my lord, put away so ungracious a thought. As I trust in God's mercy, I have done nought to merit it."

"Well, well, boy, perchance I have been too hasty," replied the Earl, somewhat moved by the touching earnestness of the youth's speech. But never stay in this chamber, even for a minute, when I am not present. I should have told thee of this, my desire, sooner, but it never struck me there would be necessity for it."

The promise was cheerfully made, and the Lord Urban's customary kindness returning, all trace of unpleasantness speedily vanished from both.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Should we disdain our vines because they
 sprout
 Before their time? Or young men if they
 strove
 Beyond their reach? No; vines that bloom
 and spread
 Do promise fruit, and young men that are wild
 In age grow wise.

GREENE.

THE best room at the Crown Inn at Oxford was filled with noisy boisterous students,

most of whom were seated at a long table, covered with drinking vessels, at the top of which was no other person than William Shakspeare, for whom indeed all had assembled. The two scholars that had been his fellow travellers in the waggon, spread amongst their acquaintance of their different colleges, the fame of the young countryman who had so charmed them with his eloquent sweet rhetoric, and this presently brought whole companies of students to see this marvellous person. They were so delighted with his ready wit and admirable perfect knowledge of all manner of subjects, that they increased his reputation so over the university, the dwelling of John D'Avenant, large as it was, could scarce contain the wonderful great press of guests that flocked into it. Doubtless this made the cause of such famous custom to be in especial liking with mine host—but independent of these considerations, he could not help relishing his guest's society, it was so full of cheerful ease and pleasant humor; and as for mine hostess, if there existeth any language in a pair of lustrous dark eyes, she did discourse to him right eloquently of the favor in which he was held by her.

Doubtless these latter would gladly enough have kept their young guest where he was, but he had expressed his determination to start for London the following morning, and this becoming known, the scholars must needs give him a parting entertainment, and therefore were they crammed so thick in that chamber. Divers were thronging up to the head of the table, wine cup in hand, to pledge him, and there was a monstrous shaking of hands and shouting of good will; others were talking across the table, or leaning over others to claim the attention of a distant fellow student. Mistress D'Avenant was attending to her numerous guests as well as she could, now listening with pretty coquetry as one of the mad youths retained her by the hand, as he whispered something in her ear, which was sure to be followed by a box of his own from the comely woman, though not one that argued any great spitefulness, and the offender would laugh as if he had performed some excellent sweet mischief; and presently answering the numberless sweet compliments, which poured on her from every side, with some sprightly jesting speech, which appeared to put every bearer into a sudden ecstasy.

A party had got hold of her husband in a corner, and were trying him with all the forms of pleading used in a court of justice, and he appeared to take the jest very plea-

santly, defending himself with what wit he had, and leaving his case to the morciful consideration of his judges. Another party in another corner were dancing of a measure to their own singing. Such a curious hum of voices surely hath rarely been heard before. Sometimes the speeches were in Latin, and at others English. Here was shouted the rag end of a macaronic verse, there the well known burthen of a popular ballad; and this was mingled with a din of cries for more wine to the drawers; a knocking of cups and flasks to attract the attention of their companions, and peals of laughter so long and loud it would often out-drown every other noise.

"Will Shakspeare! Will Shakspeare!" bawled several of the revelers at the table.

"What wouldst, my hearts of oak?" replied their companion, almost hid amongst the throng of laughing riotous scholars, who had left their seats the better to enjoy his admirable jests.

"Prithee heed not those knaves of Baliol," said a round faced stout little fellow at his elbow, who made himself the noisiest and merriest of the whole party.

"'Knaves of Baliol,' thou Brazen-nose calf," exclaimed, from the other end of the table, a tall youth with long hair, and a nose that served his associates as a peg to hang their jests upon, it was of so unusual a length. "Away with thee, thou cinnamon rogue! What! because thou art a lord, shalt thou call names? Though thou lookest so merry, thou art but a sorry lord. I would carve a lord out of a piece of ginger, and he should give a nobler flavor to a bowl of toast and ale, than wouldst thou to a butt of malmsey."

"Out on thee," replied the young nobleman. "Truly thou art a famous carver, for thou hast carved thy nose to a fine point. I would I could say as much for thy wit: and thou hast monstrous need of ginger, for there shall be found more savor in a dry biscuit than can be got out of thee after such pressing."

"Nay, press him not too hard, I prithee," said another, whose face appeared as red as though it would have out-glowed the rising sun. "At so social a meeting I should not like to see any bones broke."

"What dost say thou salamander?" cried the scholar of Baliol somewhat incensed at this sly allusion to his poorness of flesh. "Go and cool thy red hot aspect in the river, it causeth the whole place to feel like an oven, it burneth so terribly."

"As I live he will make the place too hot to hold thee, anon," observed a companion,

mischievously. "If thou wouldst not have us all roasted alive, blow not on him good Martlemas."

"Pooh," exclaimed he of the red face. "The nose of such a bellows must needs carry too small a wind to inflame me."

"My nose in thy teeth, fellow!" cried Master Martlemas, in a rage.

"I thank thee very heartily, but I want not so delicate a toothpick," drily replied the other, to the infinite amusement of his companions.

"O my life, have I got amongst a party of cunning limners, my masters," here exclaimed William Shakspeare, good humoredly. "Never saw I such cleverness in taking off features." The laughter which followed this conceit, restored every one to an amiable pleasantness on the instant; but such choice spirits could never keep together a moment, without a trial of their young wits, and therefore no opportunities were allowed to pass in which one could aim his weapon at another.

"Sweet Mistress D'Avenant!" whispered a handsome youth, as he caught his hostess round the waist as she was passing him. "By those two lustrous stars of love, I swear I have a most infinite affection for thee. Contrive for me a private meeting, I will give thee good proof of it."

"Canary, did you say, my lord?" inquired the pretty woman aloud, with a provoking indifferent aspect, as she glided out of his embrace—much to the dissatisfaction of the enamored noble.

"Hither my delectable dainty, Hebe!" cried another close at hand. "Brew us another bottle of goodly Sack, and look thy sweetest the while—I warrant it shall want no sugar."

"O my word, I would it were so, Master Lamprey," said Mistress D'Avenant archly. "I could make conserves with little trouble and small expense; and who knows but in time I should attain to such exceeding skill in the producing of sweet subtleties, I might have an Oxford scholar or two done in sugar."

"Make choice of me, I prithee, for thy first experiment," murmured one at her elbow. "I would give thy tempting lips most delicious entertainment."

"Methinks you are sweet enough upon me as it is," replied the pretty hostess, in the same merry humor. "But I care not to make a trial of you provided you allow yourself—as it is necessary in such cases—to simmer over a good fire till you are reduced to a proper consistence, and I have scum off of you every portion of what grossness you have." This speech was followed by the

hearty laughing of all within hearing of it, for the person to whom it was addressed was far stouter of flesh than any in the room—indeed, he was of a singular corpulence for his years.

"Prisoner at the bar!" cried one, with a famous mock seriousness, who acted as judge in the little court who had been trying their host. "After a long and most impartial trial, you have been condemned by a jury of good men and true, on the testimony of divers most approved witnesses, whose evidence hath not been shaken one tittle by your defence to be a most notorious traitor and horrible offender against a certain very just and proper law, made and provided for the express comfort of this good city of Oxford—to wit, that all the comeliest damsels within a circuit of five miles more or less, are and ever must be wards of the very worshipful the scholar of the University, with whom can no man living contract a marriage, without first obtaining their privacy and consent. You John D'Avenant, have dared wickedly to seek after the true excellentest fairest creature that ever deserved to be in such covetable wardship, and with a most monstrous horrible villainy that all honest men must needs stand aghast at, you have taken her to wife against the law aforesaid, and against the inclinations of divers honorable members of the very worshipful gentlemen scholars, who desired her for their own particular delectation.

"Silence in the court there!" shouted the judge as if in a terrible seriousness, for many were taking the jest very merrily. "Master Attorney I am shocked to see you so behave yourself at so awful a moment."

"My lord, I humbly beg pardon," answered a merry varlet, who seemed to be doing all he could to keep in his laughing; but the jests and mirthful behavior of certain of the jury and his brother counsellors, were such as might provoke the mirth of a more serious man.

"Prisoner at the bar!" continued the judge, waxing more ludicrously solemn as he proceeded. "It becometh to be now my painful duty to pass on you your sentence. Hope not for mercy, for, methinks, guilt such as yours ought to expect none. I grieve to see so young a person, and one of otherwise good character, take to the doing of so insufferable an offence. But it is evident you have lacked good counsel abominably. Had you sought myself now, previous to your marriage with that exquisite sweet creature, I doubt not it would have been to both our contents. I would have paved the way for your obtaining your honest desires,

in such a manner that you should have done nothing unlawful.

"Master Attorney!" cried the judge, with a notable grave dignity, as a roar of laughter broke from that unlawyer-looking person, "see I any more of this unseemly conduct, I'll commit you for contempt."—Then he added, turning to the culprit, who strove all he could to keep a serious countenance, though with but an imperfect success. "John D'Avenant, it would be but a proper punishment of your horrible crime to pass on you the extreme sentence of the law, but in consideration of this being your first offence, and out of regard for your youth and inexperience, I make this your sentence—Your wife shall be kissed before your face, and you shall yourself appoint the person to execute that punishment. Officers, keep fast the doors."

In a moment some hastened to prevent Mistress D'Avenant's escape, and others crowded round her husband, recommending themselves as capital executioners who would do their office neatly, with as little pain as need be. The uproar of voices was greater than ever, and nothing but shouting and laughing prevailed all over the chamber. The young husband, who was rather of a more careless idle humor than was proper for one in his vocation, though he never took so much heed of his handsome wife as was necessary, liked not these wild scholars to be over familiar with her, and he would, if he could, have done away with the sentence; but he knew full well the sort of characters he had to deal with, and that there was nothing for it but to submit with a good grace. A thought suggested itself to him that it was better his wife should be caressed by a stranger who was not like to see her again, than by one who would remain in the neighborhood, and might perchance seek opportunities for obtaining a repetition of such pleasure—therefore, to the importunities of those by whom he was surrounded he presently named William Shakspeare as the person who should fulfil the sentence.

Amid all this din and very Babel-like confusion of tongues, the young traveller had been engaged in an interesting discussion with one or two kindred minds he had discovered amongst the mass, but when he was called on to do the duty assigned him, he rose nothing loath, and entered into the spirit of the jest very readily. In a very short time the busy laughing scholars cleared the table for to be the place of execution, and a certain divinity student there present, was appointed to be the prisoner's ghostly com-

forter, and to preach a sermon on the subject, for the edification of all present—at the conclusion of which the sentence was to be carried into effect.

"Truly, my masters, these are most sad doings," exclaimed Mistress D'Avenant, who was fast held by two young men, who took upon themselves the duty of constables. "I marvel you should behave so uncivilly against a poor woman who hath done no ill to any of you." Thereupon, the judge very gravely told her that the course of justice must not be perverted for the favoring of any individual; and the preacher commenced a famous lecture on the duty every person oweth to those put in authority over them. In this way she was brought to stand in the center of the table—her husband at a short distance, also held by two scholars, with the preacher at his elbow, bidding him repent of his sins for his time was come—William Shakspeare close by, gravely asking of his pardon, swearing he bore him no malice, but did his terrible office because he was bound by his duty so to do; and the judges, assisted by the sheriffs and constables that stood upon the stools round the table, were commanding silence from their riotous mad-cap companions on the floor.

Then the preacher began his sermon, and such a sermon as he then delivered had never been heard there or anywhere else. He started with endeavoring to prove the necessity there was for the furtherance of the public morals, that learned persons should possess and keep in their charge all comely maidens of a tender age,—for they being wiser than any other class, had alone the discretion necessary for the proper bringing up of such gentle creatures. No doctrine was ever considered half so orthodox; but the preacher seemed inclined to put it beyond the possibility of cavil, for he presently fell to quoting divers of the Fathers—brought forward long passages from the writings of the most famous theologians, and referred to what had been laid down on the subject by the Council of Trent, and in various bulls published by the most influential of the Romish pontiffs; and this was done with so earnest a seriousness, that many did imagine that such things had really been said and written.

"Oh, fine preacher!" cried one.

"Thou shalt be a bishop, Sir Topas!" exclaimed another.

"Marry, thou wouldst convert a dead Indian, thou speakest so movingly," added a third. Others compared him to Peter the Hermit, and some questioned him, how he stood affected towards martyrdom—he ap-

peared so fit for it. But the preacher went on as gravely as he could, and then alluded to the unhappy man who had fallen under the vengeance of offended justice, and begged the prayers of all good Christians in his behalf, seeing that he was about making amends for the wrong he had done, through punishment by the secular arm. Then he recommended the culprit to their charitable thoughts with such a monstrous earnestness—drawing so pitiful a picture of the terrible sufferings he was about to undergo—that the hearers fell to wailing and weeping most woefully.

"Alack, that any man should come to so miserable an end!" moaned Master Lamprey. "And one that sold such brave liquor too!" cried Master Martlemas, in still more doleful accents.

Then the preacher concluded with a famous exhortation to his auditory ever to bear in mind the notable example now set before them; and having gained from the culprit that he confessed the justice of his sentence, and was ready to meet his punishment, master sheriff called forward the executioner to do his duty without delay; whereupon William Shakspeare readily stepped up to Mistress D'Avenant, who looked as though she had not made up her mind whether to make a struggle or take the matter quietly.

"I pray you, most sweet hostess, to pardon this my compulsory duty," said the executioner, as seriously as any of them. "I assure you, were I not bound by a superior power, I would not do it—at least I would not do it so publicly—I would spare you all this painful exposure. I would, believe me."

"Away with you! O' my word, 'tis a shame you should play such a jest upon me," answered Mistress D'Avenant, as she made some show of struggling, but it was of so slight a sort that very little sufficed to overcome it, and the next minute every one had demonstrated the awful sentence of the law had been carried into effect. This was followed by shouts of triumph from some, and cries of condolence by others, to the now liberated husband and wife; and in a short time after, the whole party again found their places at the table, and were jesting, drinking, and laughing as famously as ever. Mistress D'Avenant scolded her partner right eloquently, for allowing of such scandalous behavior, and mine host assured her he would gladly have helped it if he could: but she did not seem to be quite comforted with such excuses—for all which, it was confidently believed by some, she was not the least pleased of the company.

All at once there was a great cry for William Shakspeare to sing them a song. This he had already done several times, to the delight of his hearers, that they seemed as though they could never have enough of such delicious minstrelsy; nevertheless they promised, would he favor them with one more, they would be content. After requesting their indulgence for a simple ditty—the only thing he could at the present moment call to his mind—he sang the following verses; the noisy scholars the whilst hushed to as complete a peace as if none were in the chamber:

A SONG OF FRIENDSHIP.

"Sweet friends! let Pleasure's social law,
Our souls to genial thoughts dispose,
For life's rich stream doth freely thaw,
And bloom and sun smile where it flows.
'Tis now with us the budding May,
From nature's bank let's freely borrow,
Around our Maypole dance to-day,
Our fates may make us pipe to-morrow.

"Dear friends! the rosy morn is ours
To sport away: the hunt is up!
But crown your game with twin-like flowers—
The brimming heart and brimming cup.
Now Phœbus glows through all the east;
And joy, our lord, hath banish'd sorrow;
Then haste to take his welcome feast—
Our fates may make us fast to-morrow.

"Brave friends! let Time no vantage gain,
Entrench your camp, your wants provide;
Whilst Youth and Love your fight sustain,
You may for years his siege abide.
As friendly looks shed round their light,
From star or moon you need not borrow;
Enjoy them while they shine to-night—
Our fates may quench their beams to-morrow.

Universal were the plaudits which followed the conclusion of William Shakspeare's singing, and well deserved were they too, out of all doubt; for in the belief that this was the last night he should see the friendly company around him, he put such expression into the words as could have been produced by no other. Perchance the greater portion of his new acquaintances saw in him only an exceeding pleasant person, but he was regarded in a much more brilliant light by some two or three present; whom, with that unerring sympathy which leadeth great minds to their fellows, he had singled out from their more noisy companions, to show to them somewhat of his true nature. As they listened to the thrilling eloquence of his language, and perceived how pregnant it was with new and profound

meanings, they did marvel exceedingly; and as the natural nobility of the man developed itself before their amazed glances, there entered into their hearts a loving reverence—the worship of true greatness among kindred natures—they had never felt during their whole lives. It was far into the evening before the party broke up, and it ended with abundance of good wishes from the thoughtless many; and earnest hopes of again meeting, from the discerning few.

When the young traveller rose in the morning to continue his journey, he found Mistress D'Avenant in a chamber by herself, putting his things together ready for his taking with him. She was a woman as far superior in mental as she was in personal endowments to persons in her sphere of life; for her natural strong mind had been carefully cultivated; and possessed of such gifts, she was the very sort of woman that would most appreciate a man so prodigally garnished with admirable qualities as was her youthful guest. Her marriage had not been one of affection, and her husband quickly proved himself a person whose weakness of character she could hold in no esteem. Her superior intellect soon exerted its proper influence, which he very readily acknowledged, leaving his affairs to her entire management, whilst he sought for nothing but the enjoyment of his thoughtless pleasures; but such conduct still more lessened her respect for him; and when she beheld the manly disposition of William Shakspeare, and caught glimpses of the marvellous noble mind with which it was accompanied, she could not help wishing Heaven had blessed her with so choice a husband. As for the young traveller, he could not avoid seeing and admiring the extraordinary capacity his beautiful hostess evinced in such converse as he had with her, and the extreme perfectness with which she fulfilled her household duties; and more than once he found himself making comparisons between such estimableness, and the neglectful and obstinate behaving of his vain and ignorant wife, whereby the latter's unworthiness was shown in most glaring colors. At the end, he would grieve he had not met with so excellent rare a partner as had John D'Avenant.

Having now been staying at the Crown several days, on a footing of the completest intimacy, he had ample opportunity for increasing the admiration he felt for his charming hostess; and she getting more knowledge of his notable excellences, laid herself out to please him as much as she could. It was a dangerous situation for two young persons, so admirably gifted in mind and person, and

so unhappily accommodated in marriage, to be placed in. Each could not help desiring to be well esteemed of the other, as the best token they could have of their own worthiness; and neither could avoid holding the other first in their esteem, their qualities were so much more estimable than those of any person of their acquaintance. Both had had but little sleep this last night through continual thinking of the approaching separation; and, earlier than usual, Mistress D'Avenant left her husband sleeping off the effects of his evening reveling, to prepare for the departure of her youthful guest. When the latter made his appearance before her, there was a tear upon the long lashes of her dark eyes, but she speedily commenced affecting her customary cheerfulness; and he too, merely addressed her with his ordinary gallantry; yet, in their hearts the while, there were feelings as different to their outward conduct, as is light to darkness.

For all this show of indifference, neither could conceal from the other the extent to which they were feigning. The trifling speech which kept so carefully to all manner of matters of little moment, as it had never done before, grew less and less, and then came to brief sentences, spoken with tremulousness, till, for a time, words would fail them altogether; and the careless manner of their behavior, gradually left them for an evident restlessness, and such listless doing of their occupations, as bore witness to the extreme confusion of their thoughts and feelings. Mistress D'Avenant was putting the last knot to the little bundle of things her companion had brought with him, and she was engaged upon it with so extraordinary a care, pulling it to a proper tightness, and smoothing the folds of the bundle, as though she could never satisfy herself with her work; and William Shakspeare close beside her, was putting on his left-hand glove, so deliberately, and with such prodigious heed that every finger should fit well into the leather, as if such a thing was an affair only to be attempted with the attentiveness of a matter of vital importance. As these things were doing, their hearts were beating high and wildly, and each felt the scarce endurable struggle of the power-fullest impulses of humanity laboring for a free existence. "Well, this must needs do," said Mistress D'Avenant, with a great effort, as she placed the little bundle near her guest.

"Oh, it will do exceeding well," gratefully replied he, giving it a hasty glance. He appeared to have got his glove on to his

liking, or rather, he thought like his fair companion, the time was now come for action. He held out his ungloved hand before her, and forced a faint smile into his handsome countenance.

"It is full time I should be on my journey," he added, hurriedly; "so now I must take my leave of you." She seized his hand, with a very desperate grasp, as it were, her own trembling all the while; and looked up into his eyes with a glance, whereof the expression baffled all my powers of description—it was so imporingly tender. He continued, "I cannot attempt to thank you for the very bountiful sweet kindness you have shown unto me, since it hath been my good hap to dwell beneath this roof: but, believe me, the memory of it cannot pass away, as long as my grateful nature beareth any token of thought, feeling and life."

"Oh, sir, methinks it scarce deserveth any mention, replied his beautiful hostess, with such emphasis, as words have only when they come direct from the heart. "Had I been a thousand times more attentive to your desires, I could not in mine own opinion, have done for you one half sufficient. But you are going. I just begin to learn how to appreciate your inestimable excellences, when you hurry yourself away; and, perchance, I may never have sight of you again."

"O my life, sweet Mistress D'Avenant, I will not allow that to be, for my own sake!" exclaimed her companion. "Be assured, I know the infinite worth of the treasure I leave behind me too well, to neglect it; and of whatever I most covet of Fortune, a speedy return to, and a long continuance of your generous behavior have the first place. My only fear is, my poor name may be too speedily forgotten."

"Never, Master Shakspeare!" cried the beautiful woman, earnestly, "truly I must be dead to every sense of goodness, when my memory faileth me on so goodly a subject. Believe me, in future times, I will look back upon the days I have known you as the very sunniest of my existence; and might I have any hope of such enjoyment again, I could endure my miserable state with a proper patience. Go, sweet sir, since it must needs be. I mistake you, hugely, if you can think ill of me at my now adding, you take with you all that I can deem of most sterling preciousness in this world."

"Dear Mistress D'Avenant! assure yourself I will essay all means to deserve such honorable opinion," replied he, much touched by this proof of confidence in his integrity; "what my feelings are for you I can-

not trust myself to express; and yet nothing is so true as that their whole tendency is to hold you as a pattern of everything that is noblest in woman."

Thus parted the youthful Shakspeare and the lovely Mistress D'Avenant; and soon after he was once more a traveller, trudging his way manfully along the high road with his little burthen on his shoulder—his thoughts looking towards Oxford and his steps directed in the way of London. Hitherto his journey had been productive of infinite profit to him in getting acquainted with the humors of men—his favorite study; but his stay at the great university had been prodigiously to his entertainment, for he visited every college, and examined every building, with an especial veneration for their learned character, and a particular delight in their historical associations. As he proceeded on his journey his mind dwelt delightedly on the events of the preceding days, till it, at last, fixed itself with a truly marvellous pleasure, on the handsome young hostess of the Crown Inn. He could not have avoided observing how unsuitable to such a woman was her husband; and it was too apparent to him that her situation was far from pleasing to her. To be as tenderly esteemed of so admirable a creature, as she had given him reason to believe he was, gave him with an inexpressible sweet pleasure, a peculiar pride in himself, for he—in the true spirit of nobleness which influences the high-minded man when he findeth himself beloved by a worthy woman—looked upon it as the chiefest honor his humanity could attain; and, beyond all doubting, there is nothing of which true manhood should be so proud; and when as in this instance, a woman, so unhappily circumstanced, showeth herself to be above all petty prejudices and selfish cares, and declareth her feelings in fullest confidence, believing their cause and their tendency to be too exalted to produce any base conclusions, the man must be a disgrace to the name he bears, if he do not feel himself as proud a creature as may be found in the whole world.

A being so well-disposed as was William Shakspeare, most assuredly would appreciate such conduct at a price beyond all telling. Now, filled as he was by the thrilling impulses of early manhood, when a sympathy for what is loveable stirs in every vein, he was peculiarly open to favorable impressions from the other sex, but his sense of good which so completely had the custody of affections, exerted over him a higher power, and were directed to better purposes, than could any mere admiration; and whilst it

threw open his mind and heart to chamber-worthily the excellence of beauty, it kept for them there a still more honorable lodging for the beauty of excellence. He felt, the whilst, a motive free from selfish considerations, for hitherto he had sought but for to raise himself and those belonging to him; but now he would seek his exaltation rather as a pedestal to place another's goodness at its summit. Mistress D'Avenant in her avowal, had exhibited that fearlessness, which those only know, who, whatever may be their situation, are under the noblest influences. A meaner nature so circumstanced would have sought to hide her feelings, and exhausted the artillery of feminine dissimulation ere she would have allowed them to be known; but in such a disposition, those feelings would have argued a weakness, and, perchance, have led to a crime, whilst in the other, they were an undeniable evidence of strength, and, more than any other thing, would have induced to virtue.

It is more than idle for any to assert that a married woman to love any man save her partner, is not to be tolerated under any circumstances, for where she is ill-matched, there cannot be so notable a way to keep her to the proper duties of good wifehood, than to place her affections in so honorable a quarter, she must needs know that only by the most excellent behavior can she be held in such esteem there as she desires—whereof the consequence must be, she will bear with the humors, of a bad husband, and show a cheerful endurance of her unhappy fate influenced by the gladdening hope of gaining what she most covets. Deprived of so comfortable a stimulus, the chances are the unhappy wife would sink into a miserable apathy, or, in disgust of her condition would easily become the prey of any dishonest artifices that might be directed against her by a pretended lover. Mayhap some may say such ennobling love so produced is rarely to be found, but I place my faith too strongly on the honorableness of woman, to doubt it would be familiar enough, were men to be met with of sufficient worthiness to call it into more frequent existence. At least, such was the affection with which Mistress D'Avenant regarded the youthful Shakspeare, and the latter entertained it as of such a sort, and fully resolved it should so continue, if its lasting depended on his efforts to deserve it.

His thoughts very profitably employed, the young traveller pursued his journey. The waggon had gone too far to be overtaken by his walking, and though he was passed, or came up to divers carriers laden with packages of all kinds, his expenses had already

so diminished his means, that he found himself unable to purchase a sitting in any of their carts, without leaving himself penniless ere his journey was finished. Indeed, as it was, by the time he reached Uxbridge, when he had paid his bill for lodging he started in the morning with his purse emptied of the last coin. This was a discovery that would have come exceeding unpleasantly to many in a like situation with himself, for he was still a good distance from his destination and nothing wherewith to get him bed or board when he there arrived; but with the eager hope of youth, he trudged along in high spirits, fully convinced he had but to show himself to the elder Burbage, and his old acquaintance would welcome him with all proper heartiness.

As he was trudging manfully along, and had got within a mile or so of Tyburn, he came up to three men dressed with some appearance of respectability, who seemed to be comporting of themselves very merrily. The one was a stout fellow with a bold swaggering and an impudent daring look with him, his face pimpled, and his nose of a somewhat prominent redness about the top of it. He was attired in an old plum-colored velvet doublet—stained down the front, as if with wine—his hose were scarlet, though the tint was fading through dirt and age; and his trunks had been of an orange tawney, but by this time they were nigher of a sad color. He wore roses in his shoes, but they looked as though they had grown in a chimney, and his hat was of that sort that are distinguished by a high crown, but a spectator might look as high as the skies and yet see no crown of any kind. His companions were garmented in no better fashion—one of whom, was a bleared youth, with a famous large mouth drawn on one side as though he had been in the habit of biting round a corner: and the other was chiefly noticeable, for a short, stiff, red beard, that stood out of his chin like a broken brick hanging over an old door-way.

"Ha, truly a good jest, Master Sugarsob,—a good jest o' my life," cried the first, seeming to be in a famous mood for laughing.

"Bots on't!" exclaimed he, with the wry mouth, "I see not the jest, Captain Sack, and if a jest it be, I like not the humor on't I promise you."

"By this hand, my Lord Cinnamon, I meant no offence in't!" exclaimed the owner of the red-beard, with prodigious earnestness.

"I like not the humor on't—I like not the humor on't," muttered he who had been styled Lord Cinnamon, twisting his mouth in

a manner as though he had a marvellous inclination to bite off the end of his left ear.

"I tell thee," 'tis a most exquisite jest," cried the one called Captain Sack, laughing out of all moderation. "What sayst Master Countryman?"

The young traveller felt somewhat surprised at being appealed to in a matter of which he was entirely ignorant, but he could not help feeling amused at the droll figures of the persons before him.

"I prithee tell me the jest, and I will say what I think of it," replied he.

"'Tis no more than this," said the pimple-faced gentleman, as he very impudently stared the other in the face, whilst he cut the youth's purse from his girdle, and on the same instant, the other two stood on each side of him, with their daggers' points at his throat. He saw at a glance resistance was useless.

"Ifaith, if that be all the jest, I see not much in it," observed William Shakspeare, who could not resist his natural tendency even at such a moment.

"Why, how now, and be hanged to thee!" exclaimed the disappointed thief, as he beheld the emptiness of the purse he had taken. "Dost put thy quips upon us? How darest to come abroad in such heathen fashion. 'Slight 'tis a jest with a vengeance!"

"I see not the humor on't—I see not the humor on't!" cried his wrymouthed companion, seemingly as if he enjoyed his associate's dissatisfaction.

"Nor I either, Jemmy," answered the cut-purse; "but at least here is better jesting." And thereupon he snatched away from the youth his little bundle of linen. At this moment, a string of pack-horses becoming visible in the road, the three thieves made off as fast as they could down a bye lane, leaving the young traveller to continue his journey not only without money of any kind, as he was before, but without a single thing for his wearing, save what he had on his back.

CHAPTER XXX.

Goe, little Booke! thyself present,
As child whose parent is unken,
To him that is the *President*
Of *Nobleness and Chivalrie*.
And if that envy bark at thee—
As sure it will—for succor flee
Under the shadow of his wing.

SPENSER.

METHINKS, it is now high time, the courteous reader should know something concern-

ing of the two young knights, kinsmen to Sir Marmaduke de Largesse, who were left in so sore a strait sometime since, Sir Reginald being badly wounded by one whom he had so unjustly regarded as a false friend, and Sir Valentine seeming to be still more hurt he had done his companion in arms such damage. Little time was lost in conveying the latter to his kinsman's residence, where his loving cousin night and day attended on him better than could have done the faithfulest nurse that ever was known. The wounded knight could not be indifferent to such loving service, and when he was told the exact history of his behavior to their mutual fair mistress, he loved him more than ever he had done, and on the instant, gave up all pretension to her in favor of his friend; but this the latter took no advantage of. He remembered the last words he had of the poor foundling, and the determination they evinced; and feeling also, that, could he succeed in getting her to change her mind, he could not with any satisfaction to himself enjoy the happiness whereof his friend was deprived, he resolved he would see her no more. As for her, it may be sufficient to say, she was where she fancied herself free from her vile persecutors, yet was she much nigher to danger than she imagined.

Sometime after this, the two friends joined their commander and tutor in chivalry, the noble Sir Philip Sidney, and accompanied him on his embassy, to condole with the French king, on the death of his dear brother, the Duke of Anjou. They made a most gallant figure at the court of France. Many fair ladies gave them excellent convincing proofs they were well esteemed of them, the which the elder received very readily, and lacked not a suitable return; for his disposition could accommodate itself to love—as he called it—as many as would allow of his passion; but the younger was not of this sort. He could give his affections to one only, and they were unalterably fixed on the gentle Mabel; and though he received the favors of the kind dames of France with the courtesy becoming a true knight, his heart was wandering through the groves of Charlote after that exquisite, yet most unhappy creature, who had the sole claim of its sovereignty.

They were now strolling together in the garden of the Queen's palace at Whitehall, whilst Sir Philip was with her Majesty, and divers of the great lords and officers, holding of a privy council, to deliberate on certain important matters affecting the national honor and safety. Of this council, methinks some description would here be in good place.

in a spacious chamber, richly hung with arras, the Queen's Highness sat in robes of state—with a small crown of gold on her head—on a raised throne covered with rich carving and embroidery. One arm rested on the arm of the seat, with her jewelled hand imbedded in a fair white handkerchief, very fine and delicately worked; the other elbow rested on the other arm of the chair, her hand supporting her head, and her body resting against the back of the seat. In this position she remained with a famous gravity in her features, listening to what was advanced by each speaker; but she rarely remained in it long, for if anything dropped that she liked not, she would take the orator up with some tartness; and when the speech met with her views, she would add to it something of her own, which showed how much it was to her satisfaction.

Before her in their robes of office sat the chief officers of the crown, save only the one who might be at that moment speaking, who stood up; and chiefest of these were the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, the Secretaries of State, Walsingham and Davison, the Earl of Leicester, the Earl of Sussex, Charles Howard of Effingham, the Lord High Admiral, Sir Nicholas Bacon, and Sir Philip Sydney. The subject under discussion related to the state of affairs in Flanders, and the necessity of there keeping a powerful force. It might be somewhat tedious to give the speeches of the different members of the council. Suffice it to say, as was usual the case when anything was to be done that required an outlay from the treasury, my Lord Treasurer strongly advised great caution, and argued, if peace could be procured, even at some sacrifice, 'twas infinitely better than the uncertainties of a war; and in his policy he was seconded by the two secretaries and Sir Nicholas Bacon. My Lord of Leicester, on the other side, was for carrying on preparations in that country worthy of England's greatness; and spoke of the important results which would follow by so doing. My Lord of Sussex was for a like dealing, only he differed with the last speaker as to the manner it should be done, and that too with an honest bluntness, that spoke more of the soldier than the courtier. Whereupon the other replied, defending his views with much apparent calmness and courtesy, which brought a sharp rejoinder from my Lord of Sussex; and, as was often the case at the council, here would have followed a very angry disputation, had not her Highness quickly put an end to the dispute by rebuking them both. These two powerful noblemen rarely met without having some words;

but my Lord of Leicester, by a famous command of temper, always made it appear he was in no way blameable; and my Lord of Sussex, who was usually rash enough to express what he thought, and manifestly thought no good of his opponent, was by many looked upon as the one in fault.

The other commanders there advocated the views of the Queen's favorite, save only Sir Philip Sydney, who had not yet expressed his opinions. At this her Highness, who held him in high esteem, commanded him to what he thought would be best in the handling of such a business, upon which he gave a most eloquent and elaborate view of the present state of Europe, particularly dwelling on the hostile designs of the King of Spain upon this country, as evinced in the immense warlike preparations he was making in all parts of his dominions; and showing in the clearest light what gain would accrue to England, by conducting her operations in Flanders with sufficient means and a proper spirit. It is utterly impossible to convey anything like unto an adequate idea of this notable speech; but it was put forward with amazing fineness of rhetoric, and with such excellence of language, that it was clear any who had the slightest comprehension of the matter, must be convinced of the propriety of what Sir Philip had advanced.

Then Queen Elizabeth spoke at some length, expressing how naturally averse she was to any proceedings likely to give hurt to her good subjects; but as war was forced upon her for the protection of the kingdom from Popish snares, and that to fight abroad was better for the people than to fight at home, it must needs be she could do no other than assist those who were combatting against her worst enemies, and so endeavor to keep the war from her own doors. Her speech was very spirited and full of sage quotations from Latin and other authors, to show her justice somewhat—to show her learning somewhat more. The end was, that she not only adopted the views of Sir Philip Sydney, but gave him the command of some forces that were to be sent into Flanders, to disembark at Flushing, of which place she appointed him governor. Other things were also to be done, but as these do not much affect our story, methinks there shall be no need of the relation. After this the council broke up, and Sir Philip returned on horseback with the two young knights to his own dwelling.

Shortly after, the three companions in arms joined the Countess of Pembroke in the library, a fair chamber well stocked with

all manner of books, especially of romances and poems both English and foreign. The countess seemed intent on a large manuscript; but this she put on one side at the entrance of her brother and his friends, whom she welcomed very gladly. Presently they fell to conversing as was their wont on such topics as were of the most intellectual character, for it was a custom with this truly famous woman to endeavor as much as possible to draw out the minds of her associates, and where she found them deficient, to show them glimpses of the knowledge they wanted in its most delightful aspect, and give them a zest to acquire it more fully. This made her so much the admiration of the learned of her time. In truth I have some reason for thinking she diffused the spirit of intelligence more widely by the fascinations of her eloquence, than did one half the colleges in the kingdom with all their notable efforts at teaching. A familiarity with the best classic writers was then the fashion—perchance set by her highness, who was no contemptible scholar—and to this there was frequently joined considerable knowledge of the Italian poets and the French romances. But with the countess, and with her equally gifted brother, the fashion made itself apparent, arrayed in those graces of humanity, which might make it most enchanting,—and to them flocked such scholars as wished to be thought of the fashion, and those more fashionable sort of persons who sought to be regarded as scholars. The two young knights were among the very sincerest admirers of the Countess of Pembroke:—but Sir Valentine regarded her with an enthusiastic reverence, which exceeded even the feeling of the same kind with which he looked on Sir Philip Sydney, and few of their numerous circle of friends were so well esteemed of these illustrious persons as were those gallant gentlemen.

"I have had notable rare company, brother, since the morning," said the countess.

"Truly, I cannot see how it could well be otherwise," answered Sir Reginald, with a very ready courtesy. "For even were you left alone, you must needs be in such excellent company as can nowhere else be met with."

"I' faith, Sir Reginald, methinks you are taking a leaf from the book of my kinsman, Leicester," observed my Lady Pembroke, with an exquisite smile.

"Nay, I think he hath been taking a lesson from the courtly Sir Christopher Hatton," observed her brother with a laugh.

"By this hand!" exclaimed the young knight earnestly, "the last lesson I took

of any man was from a better master than either."

"And who might that be?" inquired Sir Philip. "For surely he must be exceeding worthy—my kinsman being a very noble gentleman, and Sir Christopher, though a very courtier, is not without some good qualities."

"I doubt not I could make a shrewd guess at this right famous master of yours!" said the countess, with an approving glance.

"I cannot imagine one who knoweth his excellence so thoroughly, could name any other," replied the knight.

"Let us have his title, and quickly, Sir Reginald," cried Sir Philip. "For my memory is at fault."

"Assuredly it is one Sir Philip Sydney, well known of all men to be the best master of knights that can be met with in this our age," replied Sir Reginald.

"And with all proper pride I do acknowledge myself also to have profited by his right admirable lessons," added Sir Valentine, with a warmer enthusiasm.

"Well, although, as I take it, you do overrate the master hugely," replied the object of their eulogium, but not without a sensible satisfaction at its thorough honesty, "I must say this—I would every master were as honorably off for pupils. But who were of your company this morning, my dear sister?" inquired he, seeming anxious, as great minds ever are, by shifting of the conversation, to avoid his own praises.

"Truly, I have had so many, I scarce can remember one half of them," replied his accomplished relative. "First there came the merry Bishop of Bath and Wells, to introduce to me a certain learned scholar of his acquaintance, who was exceeding anxious to be known to me, with whom I had much choice discourse, made more pleasant by some droll sayings of my Lord Bishop."

"Methinks Dr. Still is somewhat of too jesting a nature for a grave prelate," observed her brother, good-humoredly. "His 'Gammar Gurton's Needle,' smacketh very little of the church, and his talk hath just as much of the sermon."

"My next comer was a certain Master John Lily," continued the countess. "He hath brought me a play of his, entitled 'Alexander and Campespe,' which though I find to lack something in plot and character, is not without some fair signs of merit."

"Ah, Master Lily, I know him well," said Sir Philip. "He hath left the college for the play-house, but I doubt his great fitness for either. He hath lately sought to set himself up as Master Grammarian, to

teach us a new style of English, but surely nothing so strained and unnatural was ever heard of!"

"Then I had with me the famous author of Jeronimo," added his sister.

"Ay, Master Kyd hath got himself into marvellous repute," observed the other. "He hath a most moving skill in the composition of his plays. His blank verse is exceeding spirited, and not without a proper touch of true poetry—nevertheless, he possesseth many faults of extravagance, it would be advisable in him to eschew."

"After him I had the knight of the smirched mantle."

"Ha! my very excellent good friend Sir Walter Raleigh!" exclaimed Sir Philip, with much earnestness and some pleasantry. "By this light his throwing his fine cloak into the puddle, hath put his acquaintance on so fair a footing with her highness, he is like to make a gallant stand at court. But in justice I must acknowledge he is a truly valiant young soldier, and hath in him the best gifts of the scholar and the gentleman to an extent greater than that of any of whom I have knowledge."

"At least so he hath seemed to me," said the Lady Pembroke, and then the two knights added their testimony of his worthiness, for he was of their particular approved friends—but more of his truly noble character anon gentle reader.

"After these there came persons of all kinds," continued the Countess of Pembroke. "I was like unto a besieged city sore pressed. Hither came gallants to idle their time—poets to read to me their verses—play writers to bespeak my presence at the play-house to see their play—booksellers to offer me the very newest works they had published, hoping for my commendation,—and many poor scholars seeking to be authors, who required only my poor influence, at least so they believed, as a stepping stone to fame. I did my best for all—and all appeared in excellent content with their visit."

After this the subject of their converse turned upon a certain work recently written by Sir Philip Sydney, since well known to every reader as the right famous Arcadia.

"Nay, dear brother, but the merit cannot be denied," exclaimed his fair relative, after the author had expressed a humble opinion of it. "I will not hear of your speaking of it slightly. It is a work just as I should have expected from you—a combination of chivalry and scholarship put into the most delectable apparelling."

"You must needs be too partial a judge to pass an honest sentence in this case, sweet

sister," said Sir Philip Sydney, good humorously.

"That I can in no way allow," cried Sir Reginald. "That my Lady Pembroke is a good judge, and a fair judge, methinks would be stoutly maintained by every one who hath the honor of her acquaintance; not only because she is in herself peculiarly good and fair, but because her opinions partake so largely of the like qualities; and though she cannot help regarding the writer of so notable a work with considerable partiality, because of his standing in such near relationship to her, it doth not follow she cannot properly appreciate its excellences. Indeed I am apt to think she would look more closely into the nature of any production from such a source, and therefore known its quality and character better than could any other."

"Surely there can be no doubt of this," added Sir Valentine, more earnestly. "Even were my Lady Pembroke less gifted than she is, it is scarcely possible her love for the writer could mislead her in her judgment of the book; for as all that most perfect wit could do would be to praise, her affections are surely not likely to stand in the way of so appropriate a duty. But surely, of all persons my lady ought to be the best qualified to be a judge in such case, else that nobleness of nature so many have found, can be but of small advantage to her."

"O' my word, you are all alike!" exclaimed Sir Philip, seeking to turn off the question as pleasantly as he could; then taking up a book which lay on the table before him, he added, "Want you now, a book deserving of your warmest encomium, here is one. It is no other than 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' written by my esteemed friend Master Edmund Spenser, who hath done me the honor of its dedication. It is a sort of rustic poem, or series of eclogues, wherein the poet, in the feigned name of Colin, expresseth very movingly his infinite griefs caused by the treachery of a false mistress, to whom he hath given the title of Rosalinde."

"I am apt to think this poem of Master Spenser's is not altogether a fiction," observed the countess. "There is a heartiness in it, a truth and vividness, which never come of the imagination alone."

"You are right," replied her brother. "I heard of Doctor Gabriel Harvey, to whom I am indebted for my introduction to the poet, that he had formed a deep attachment to some female, who, after seeking, by all manner of artifices, to ensnare his affections, when she found they were hers beyond recall, treated

him with unexampled perfidy, and soon after married some obscure person—doubtless as worthless as herself. The general cry on hearing of such instances is, ‘a good riddance:’ and this may be true enough to a certain extent; but men of Master Spenser’s stamp, when they do love, do so entwine the filaments of their hearts with the beloved object, that any disunion is to them the terriblest laceration that can be imagined, and leaveth a wound which afflicteth them with a continual agony.”

“Of all men living, such as are of the highest imaginations are most likely to meet with such a fate,” said his gifted sister. “None do so readily become the prey of an artful woman—for their love of the pure and beautiful which is the powerfulest impulse of their natures, leadeth them to put their faith, and heart, and soul, in fair appearances; and when a woman, under such guise, showeth signs of being favorably disposed to them, they enrich her with their sweetest thoughts and sympathies, and look to her, and to her alone, for the realization of their happiness. I doubt not, as it generally happens in such a case, the original of Master Spenser’s Rosalinde was an obscure person, who, assuming the qualities with which such a disposition as that of her gifted lover, is most apt to be taken, was honored with his regard; and then, merely out of selfish vanity to possess so proud a gallant, she made his confiding nature believe she truly loved him, till she had thoroughly enslaved his feelings, and forced his adoration to be subservient to advance sufficiently, her own pride. I regret to say such women are by no means rare. They are of the thoroughly heartless, who recklessly enter into a mischief for which they can never render adequate compensation, careless of ought save the gratification of their vanity. ’Tis lamentable that such base idols should receive such precious sacrifice.”

Both Sir Valentine and Sir Reginald, with their accustomed gallantry, were for asserting that women so treacherously disposed were not to be found; but the countess would not allow of statements so flattering. She honored them for their opinion; but her own deeper knowledge of the subject, and honesty of heart, made her refuse it as erroneous.

“It matters not,” observed her brother, interrupting the disputation. “There are spots on the sun, and if that we meet with similar blemishes in that wonderful fair luminary, woman, we ought to remember how many are her admirable qualities, and

how hapless would be our case without her shining light to warm and illumine our world.”

“I would grant all that very gladly,” replied the countess; “and right proud am I to hear my sex so considered. But this altereth not the case; there are, unfortunately, women of the sort I have alluded to; and, be they few or many, the evil they do is out of any calculation; for they single out for their victims the truest and noblest natures; and the mischief endeth not with them, for the misery of such must needs affect the wide circle who take in them the interest they deserve. In the particular instance of Master Spenser, I feel more moved than perchance I otherwise might be, knowing, as I do his good qualities so intimately. He is the gentlest creature I ever met, and a very child in simplicity and affectionateness—thoroughly ingenious, unobtrusive, unoffending, kind, and grateful. Gifted, too, as he is, with the highest powers of mind, it seemeth a marvel to me he should be otherwise looked on by any woman save with admiration and homage.”

“The worst feature in the case is the ingratitude of these false Rosalindes,” added Sir Philip. “The poet honoreth such a woman by attiring her in the exquisite fair livery of his genius, to the complete hiding of her natural poor apparelling; and then thus admirably garmented, she quitteth him to whom she is so greatly indebted, and, by means of his gifts, palmeth her worthlessness upon some other.”

“Now here is most excellent evidence of the noble qualities of our esteemed friend,” said his sister, putting her hand upon the manuscript before her. “It is the first part of a great poem in heroic verse, wherein he intendeth to represent all the moral virtues, assigning to each a knight, in whose conduct the operations of that virtue, whereof he is the acknowledged protector, are to be expressed, and by whom the vices and unruly appetites, that are opposed to it, are to be overthrown. Truly, a most comprehensive design; but the surprising richness of the imagery—the purely imaginative character of the language—the high and chivalrous feeling which pervades every part—and the perfectly original character of each conception, as far as I have read of it—are equally manifest.”

“Truly, ‘The Fairy Queen,’ promiseth to be a work of lasting fame,” added Sir Philip. “From the specimen entrusted to me, I hesitate not in saying, it cannot help proving to be a mine of the very richest ore.”

“But what most deserveth our eulogium

s the purifying and ennobling tendency of this poem," continued the countess. "The object appeareth to be to exalt humanity, and show to what heights it can climb; that those who may be ambitious of greatness, shall have proper guidance to the elevation they aim at. With this idea in view, the poet bringeth before the reader, man in all his nobleness, and woman in all her purity—everything that can make knighthood appear in such chivalrous character, as must be most worthy of female adoration; and all that can give to feminine beauty that perfection, which is the truest excitement of knightly achievements."

"Surely Master Spenser hath earned for himself the gratitude of every knight in Christendom!" exclaimed Sir Reginald.

"Ay, that has he," added Sir Valentine, with a like earnestness. "Indeed I know not how a great mind, such as his must needs be, could have found employment so profitable to virtuous feeling and honorable conduct." At this moment, the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a serving man, announcing the name of Master Spenser, and presently there entered a man of handsome mild features, somewhat touched by the spirit of melancholy, but not sufficiently so to render their gravity unpleasing. His eyes were clear, and beaming with the gentlest expressions; and his beard short, and rounded under the chin. He wore a suit of a sober cut, with a falling band round his neck, cut into points. In figure he was somewhat slim, and in behavior of a graceful courtesy. All rose to welcome him at his approach, and though the greeting of the others was exceedingly hearty, there was in that of the countess the tenderness of a sister. He received these tokens of their good-will with a modesty of demeanor, that bespoke the natural retiringness of his disposition.

The conversation soon returned to its former subject—the writings of Master Spenser. Sir Philip Sydney mingling with his praises some show of criticism; but his gifted sister was evidently in no mood for playing of the critic, for she spoke most eloquently in their commendation. The poet listened with looks of delight and gratitude, attending to the opinions they expressed with the deepest respect, knowing what oracles his judges were, and seeming to marvel anything of his invention could be so well thought of.

"I am greatly bound to you for such honorable mention of my poor performance," observed he, with an impressive sincerity; "I have merely trod in the footsteps, and,

as must needs be, at a humble distance of those illustrious masters of the epic art, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Dante and Tasso; and I will strive all I may to continue in so glorious a path. But I am come here with the hope of seeing justice done to a poet, who, as far as I can judge of the example of his powers that hath accidentally fallen into my hands, is like to overtop the ablest writers of his age."

This speech created exceeding surprise in those around him, and the speaker was quickly asked to what he alluded; whereupon he continued—

"I had just parted with my gallant and noble-hearted true friend, Sir Walter Raleigh, about an hour since, when, as I was passing by Dowgate, my attention was forcibly attracted by a decent-looking young countryman, struggling in the rude grasp of divers constables, who were hurrying him off to prison, for what offence I know not. Whilst observing him, I noticed a paper fall from his doublet, which all else about him were too busy with their prisoner to regard; I presently stepped forward and picked it up. I found it to be a poem, the which, with your gracious permission, I would gladly read to you."

Permission being very readily granted,—for every one appeared singularly curious on so strange a matter,—Master Spenser produced a paper, from which he read what is here set down:—

"THE POET OWNEETH HIS SUBMISSION TO THE SOVEREIGN BEAUTY."

"Lo! from the feathery foam I see thee rise
'Scaped from the arms of th' enamored billow,
A thousand balmy airs stoop from the skies,
And round about thee hold their pliant pillow;
The beach is gained—the oak, the elm, the willow,

With all their ancient heraldry appear,
Owning a brighter sunshine in thine eyes,
Streams laugh beneath thy looks; and far and near,
Doth the whole landscape thy rich livery wear.

"First-born of Nature! Queen of Life and Light;
Mother of Love! (whose power supports thy being)

Whose flames the quenchless lamps of night,
And flasheth where morn's burning car is fleeing,

Hither to me! My fettered thoughts be freeing;

And, as the obedient slaves their mistress own,
With thy divine apparel make them bright,
That men may see they're thine, and thine alone,
And where they go they may thy might make known.

"I call thee! I, thy fervent worshipper,
Whom thou hast gazed on from thy secret
places,
Seeking to be thy holy minister;
Enclasp my spirit in thy fond embraces!
Delight each feeling with thy gladd'ning
graces!
Teach every sympathy thy gentle lore!
Be for my hopes a ready messenger;
And all that's best of me instruct to soar,
Where thou hast garnered thy most precious
store.

"Ere I knew thee I was like some deep nook
O'ergrown with gnarled trunks and weeds
entangled,
Where smiling nature never deigned to look,
And wind and water wrestled as they wran-
gled;
I met thy gaze;—then all my verdure span-
gled
With countless myriads of refreshing dews;
The sullen flood turned to a sparkling brook,
And the hushed wind no more would show his
thews,
Where virgin buds betrayed their blushing hues.

"Then was I filled with store of sunny gleams,
As some rich pattern skilful hands are weav-
ing,
All shot about in threads with golden beams;
Or ears of grain the harvest lord is sheaving,
Ere the great ripener his hot couch is leaving.
And such hath been the magic of thy glance,
A change fell o'er my thoughts, my hopes,
my dreams,
And I became, through my allegiance,
A wilderness turned to a fair pleasaunce.

"I saw thee when thy mother Nature held
Thee in her lap before my marvelling glances,
When breeze and billow their rough music
quelled
To soothing lullabies and cheerful dances,
When all earth's chivalry of blades and lances
Leaped into motion over hill and dale,
And blooming youth and patriarchal eld
On bow'rs and banks, the rock, the wood, the
vale,
Donned in thy name their brightest coat of
mail!

"I knew thee by the soul-enthraling good
That threw its rosy halo round thy dwelling,
By banishment from thy pure neighborhood
Of things that show no token of excelling,
By tuneful praises, every voice was telling.
Of plumed courtier grateful for thy smile;
And the sweet incense, not to be withheld,
Shed by a thousand censers all that while
Swung to and fro beneath each forest aisle.

"I loved thee for the kind and open hand
Thou hast at all times held out at my greeting,
For lessons of the true, the rare, the grand,

That made my entertainment at our meeting;
For bounteous largess ever more repeating,
Of precious favors delicately choice;
And more than all for sky, and sea, and land,
Which, in thy braveries, thou madest rejoice
With graceful form and music-breathing voice.

"Seen, known, and loved of me so long and
well,
Methinks I hold such fond familiar footing,
That shouldst thou slumber in some moss-grown
cell,
Or ruin hoar where reverend owls are hooting,
Whilst time its strong foundations is uproot-
ing,
Unto thy private chamber I might hie,
On tiptoe, breathless, lest I break the spell
Which holds thine eyelids with so firm a tie,
And couched beside thee lovingly might lie.

"Therefore I call thee now, sweet lady, mine,
Come forth, my queen, from thy most glorious
palace!
Dear Priestess, leave thy star-enamelled shrine
That boasts its river font, and floral chalice,
To the storm's rage or cloud's most gloomy
malice,
And in my mind make thou thy present bower;
Shed there thy warmest, brightest, purest
shine,
And as 'tis nurtured by the genial power,
Each fresh idea shall show a rarer flower.

"As 'tis of thee that I essay to sing,
On me let thy immortal worth be grafted,
My nature then thy precious fruit would bring
Like odors on the summer zephyrs wafted;
Or some rude weapon gemmed and golden-
hafted,
To be a sign unto an after age,
That I had been thy knight, thy lord, thy
king,
Thy scholar, by thy teaching rendered sage,
Thy slave, whose labor brought a goodly wage.

"Ah me! perchance thou art not so inclined
And think'st it better to be gaily straying,
Giving thy tresses to the wanton wind
As thou dost wander up and down a maying;
Or art by clearest waters idly straying,
Lost in delight of thine own loveliness,
Mirrored within the wave—and there dost
bind
A delicate garland o'er each dainty tress,
And all thy charms doth tire in such brave
dress.

"Well, if 'tis so indeed—it needs must be,
I cannot give thee any such adorning,
Still shall all natural things witness for me
In courts where there hath never been sub-
orning,
That noon and twilight eve, eve and early
morning,
Only to gain thy love I cared to live;
But surely if 'tis vain to hope for thee,

Thou canst thy highest power and purpose give
To some befitting representative?

“And such a one know I, whose great desert
Giveth her comeliness its noblest garnish;
Her spirit, that makes envy fall inert,
Gleams like a blade that knows no soil or
tarnish,

Or painting shining in its freshest varnish;
Oh ne'er hath been such costly carcanet!—
A truth that none who live can controvert,
For in and out all stirling gifts are met,
And every gem of price therein is set.

“Doubtless so rare a being hath obtained
From thee the title of her rarity:
For from what other source could she have
gained

Her embassy of love and charity?
'Twixt ye there is such small disparity,
I oft have thought she was herself the queen,
Thou her,—and near her have remained,
Paying that rev'rence to her shape and mien
I would but give to thee hadst thou there been.

“And long may she such glorious office hold!
And long to me present her fair credentials
May in each word her embassy be told,
Each look convey the same divine essentials
Thy mightiness alone hath meaning for:
Then with a tribute richer far than gold
Will I do homage as thy servitor
And ever honor thy ambassador.

“Truly, I'll find her lodging of the best,
All furnished in a fashion most endearing,
To be its mistress rather than its guest;
And give such gallant vestment for her wear-
ing,
As shall the best become her noble bearing;
I'll have before her Fame's loud trumpet sound;
Upon her head I'll place a jewelled crest:
And wheresoe'er her footsteps shall be found,
My monuments shall glorify the ground.

“And thus my whole affections I subject,
Whilst o'er my cheek the hue of life is florid,
To use thy laws, thy rule, thy dialect,
Forswear all brutal hate and vengeance horrid,
From zone to zone, the frigid and the torrid
Whist of this world I am a denizen;
And ever show the loyalest respect
Where'er thy signet is apparent, when
Thou seekest dealings with my fellow men.”

A famous marvelling was exhibited by all present, at the reading of these verses, and much was said of the unknown author, for whom exceeding interest had been excited; and, at last, Sir Philip Sydney hurried Master Spenser away with him, that they might learn who he was, and where he might be found, with as little delay as possible.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This fool comes from the citizens,
Nay, prithee do not frown!
I know him as well as you
By his livery gown—
Of a rare horn-mad family.

ANON.

Tell Fortune of her blindness,
Tell Nature of decay,
'Tell Friendship of unkindness
Tell Justice of delay;
And if they dare reply,
Then give them both the lie.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

By dint of constant inquiries of carmen, pedlars and others, the youthful Shakspeare found his way to the Bankside, where, as he had heard, stood the playhouse whereof the elder Burbage was manager. He entered London by the Uxbridge road, in a strange wonder at the number of persons he met, as soon as he had got to the field called the Hay-market, near Charing, where the country people held a market of hay and straw, for the convenience of the Londoners. There, the abundance of splendid mansions he passed, and numberless houses of the citizens, the shops, the warehouses, the churches, the great din of traffic, that sounded along the streets, of itinerant chapmen bawling their wares—with the rolling of carts and waggons, and the goodly cavalcade of nobles and gallants riding their sprightly palfreys, astonished him exceedingly, whilst the more closely he approached the city, the path became more thronged with persons of all kinds and conditions, in such exceeding variety of appearance, that it seemed an endless puzzle to the young traveller to guess their several characters and vocations.

By the time he arrived at the Globe playhouse, he was weary with hunger and walking. A flag was flying at the roof, which denoted that the play had commenced, as he learned from a bystander; so he thought it would be most advisable to wait till it was over, before he presented himself to any of his old companions; therefore he strolled about the place amongst the venders of fruit, and crowds of idlers that stood nigh the building. As he was noting, with his accustomed curiosity, the manners of the sorts of persons in his neighborhood, on a sudden a horseman rode up, and alighting beside him, cried, “Here, fellow, hold my horse, and I'll give thee a groat at my return,” flung him the bridle and quickly vanished into the playhouse. William Shaks-

peare was taken somewhat by surprise at this occurrence, but remembering that his purse was penniless, and himself both tired and hungry, he was well enough disposed for the earning of any sum, even though it came of such humble employment as the holding of a horse: nevertheless, whilst he walked the animal up and down, his mind was wonderfully busy in forming all sorts of bright ambitious prospects, as completely at variance with his present poor shift, as any matter could be.

Thus he employed himself, till the people coming thronging out of the doors of the playhouse, told him that the play was done; and presently, up comes the gallant, whose horse he had in charge, gave him the promised groat, and rode away; but it so happened, while he was engaged with the latter, two young men, very fairly clad, who were passing near, when they caught sight of the young Shakspeare stopped of a sudden, and regarded him with a very curious and marvelling aspect.

"It must be him, Dick!" said one.

"Ay, marry, it is; but who bringeth him here, holding of horses, Tom?" added the other. The object of their attention, as soon as he had parted with the gallant, was for proceeding to the Globe, but he was stopped by these two persons making up to him, whom he had no great difficulty in recognizing as his old school-fellows, Tom Greene and Dick Burbage. Great was the joy of this meeting on both sides; and the young traveller soon told what brought him to London, and his adventures on the journey, even to the holding of the horse, which was received by his merry companions with some interest and more laughing. The latter seemed to be just the same careless, free-hearted fellows they had been when boys; and, I doubt not, were quite as ready to pass off an ingenious jest here in London, as ever they had been in merry Stratford.

"Where's thy father, Dick?" inquired Green.

"Methinks, he must now be intent upon the getting rid of his blackamoor's face," replied young Burbage.

"Come thou with us, Will," said the former to the youthful Shakspeare. "We will to Master Manager at once, and get him to give thee a place in our company--amongst whom thou wilt meet Hemings and Condell, thy once chosen associates--then, leave the rest to us, and if we lead thee not a right merry life, it cannot be other than thine own fault." Talking of their old pranks, in a famous humor at every allusion to them, the three proceeded together

into the playhouse, and after passing through some strange places--as the young traveller took them to be,--they arrived at a door;--William Shakspeare, in famous spirits and full of pleasant anticipation, for all his hunger and weariness.

"What, ho, Master Manager!" cried Tom Green, knocking loudly; "Give us entrance, I prithee! I bring thee aid--I bring thee strength--I bring thee comfort--I bring thee a marvel, a prodigy, a phœnix,--I bring thee present profit and future greatness."

"Come in, a God's name, Tom!" replied a voice from within, with prodigious earnestness. The young traveller had some difficulty in recognizing his old acquaintance, in the smut-faced personage half unclad that was pulling off his hose, in the meanly furnished chamber, in which the former now found himself.

"Heart o' me!" exclaimed Greene, laughingly, as the manager at the entrance of a stranger began hastily a drawing on his hose again. "Care not for thy legs; methinks they are well enough for a black fellow."

"Well enough!" echoed the manager glancing at his limbs with a very manifest pride. "Well enough for a black fellow, saidst thou? I tell thee what it is, Tom, black fellow or white fellow, or even a Greene fellow, for the matter of that, hath never been able to boast of such handsome things to stand on since the world began."

"Bravely said, Legs!" replied the other in the same merry humor. "But here I have brought with me a certain friend of mine whose great merit I can vouch for, who desireth to be a player, and of our company."

"'Tis Will Shakspeare, father, from Stratford," added his son.

"Away with him!" angrily cried the elder Burbage, to the extreme astonishment of every one else. "'Slight, I've had enough of Will Shakspeare to last me the rest of my days."

"Why, what hast had of him, I wonder!" exclaimed Greene.

"Had, quotha!" replied the manager; I've had of him what was like to get me a speedy hanging on the highest tree. Some six years since or more, I met him, when, with my company about to play at a noble lady's mansion in the country, and he got me to consent to his playing of a part in a new play that I had sent me to represent before her visitors--well, the varlet was not content with marring the end o't by saying of a parcel of stuff instead of what had been

put down for him; but scarce an hour after he mends the matter by assisting of a companion to run off with a young damsel there on a visit. It was well for me I showed my prudence by affecting a perfect ignorance of the whole proceedings, for had it come to my lord's ears I had shared in them in any way, I should have been ruined outright, clapped in a prison and ordered for execution without hope of reprieve."

William Shakspeare explained the circumstance just alluded to, but the more he explained the more enraged seemed the manager, that he should have been put in such jeopardy as he had been to assist in a scheme of which he was kept in entire ignorance, and not even the entreaties of Greene and his own son could induce him to alter his resolution to have none of Will Shakspeare for to be of his company. Dick Burbage got vexed at this look, but Greene, confined not his vexedness to looks. He spoke out warmly in behalf of his friend, and said such sharp words to the elder Burbage that he grew choleric, and there would have been a complete falling out betwixt them, had not the cause of it interposed, and implored them not to make him an occasion for quarrelling. The young traveller left the chamber with a much heavier heart than he had entered it. Here were all his proud hopes overthrown at a blow, and he, faint with hunger, and his long journey, without a place to lay his head in, or ought for his many necessities but the solitary groat he had received from the gallant for holding of his horse. He had only got a few steps from the playhouse when he was overtaken by Tom Greene.

"Care not for that old churl," said he, "Perchance thou wilt do as well elsewhere; so keep up thy heart, Will; and Dick and I will devise something for thy advantage. I have now an appointment which will take me an hour or so; in the meanwhile speed thee over London Bridge, and inquire thy way to the house of Mistress Colewort who selleth simples, and herbs, and such things, at the sign of the Phœnix, in Bucklersbury—there is my lodging; call for what thou wilt, and make thyself at home there, till I come." The kind-hearted player hurried away; and his old schoolfellow, full of grateful feelings retraced his steps the way he had come. He remembered Bucklersbury, having passed it going from Cheap to Lombard-Street, therefore, he never thought of questioning any as to his road, but proceeded on, thinking over his heavy disappointment so intently, he regarded nothing else. He had passed London Bridge, and

not being very heedful, had taken a wrong turning out Fish Street Hill. He had got some distance along sundry winding narrow streets, when all at once, he was brought to a stand still by some authoritative voice, and he quickly found himself surrounded by persons in long gowns trimmed with fur, that seemed some officers of the corporation, and others who, by their bills and appareling, he took to be constables of the watch.

"Stand, fellow, and give an account of yourself!" exclaimed one.

"What brought thee here? Whose varlet art thou?" inquired another.

"An' he be not a masterless man, Master Fleetwood, I know not one when I see him," observed a third.

"A very vagrom, I'll swear," cried an ancient constable, poking his grey beard into the young traveller's face. "I pray you, Master Recorder, to question him of his calling. I am in huge suspicion I have had in my custody some score of times already."

"What is thy name, caitiff?" demanded he who styled Master Fleetwood, in a very high and mighty sort of manner.

"First tell me, why I am thus rudely questioned and stopped, my masters?" said the youthful Shakspeare, who liked not being so handled.

"Oh, the villain!" exclaimed one of the constables, in a seeming amazement. "Here is monstrous behaving to his worship master Recorder, and so many honorable aldermen! Dost know no manners? Wilt show no respect of persons? Here are divers of the worshipful corporation going about taking up all manner of masterless men and houseless vagroms that infest the city; and if thou art one of them, thou art a most graceless fellow. Tell master Recorder thy name on the instant, or thou shall to Newgate in a presently."

"You have no business with me, or my name either," answered their prisoner, getting to be a little chafed at his treatment.

"Who is thy master, caitiff," inquired one of the aldermen.

"I have none," replied the youth, somewhat proudly.

"There, he confesses it, an' it please your worship," cried the constable. "I could have sworn he was a masterless man, he hath such a horrible vagrom look."

"To prison with him!" exclaimed Master Fleetwood, with some asperity. "This country gear of thine, I doubt not, is only worn as a blind. Thou hast a very dishonest visage; an exceeding cutpurse sort of countenance; and I feel assured that when thou

art hanged, there will be at least one rogue the less."

"And I feel assured," said William Shakspeare, "that when thou departest this life—no matter in what fashion—there will be at least one fool the less."

"Away with him, for a rude rascal!" cried the enraged recorder. The aldermen made similar exclamations, and five or six of the watch so held and hustled him, that, for all his struggles, which were very great, he was presently dragged like a felon, through the public streets with no lack of abuse and blows, till he was safely lodged in the prison of Newgate. Here he scarcely had opportunity for the noticing of anything till he found himself in a large yard, surrounded by amazing high walls, wherein there were several prisoners of different ages, most of whom looked to be necessitous poor fellows, who had most probably been driven into dishonest courses by the pressure of some fierce want; but there were others, whom, at a glance, it was easy to see, were downright villains—and some few whose appearance bespoke their only crime to have been their want of friends.

Some were amusing themselves at football, others at bowls—some at cards, others at dice; and these were generally of the villainous sort. Here and there might be seen one walking about in very woeful countenance, who joined in none of the sports; and these were of the friendless. As soon as he had entered the place, the young player was surrounded by several of his fellow-prisoners—some curious, some abusive, and all apparently thieves outright, for they presently snatched from him whatever they could lay a hand on, that had been spared in the examination of the constables and turnkeys; and this they did with such thorough artifice, he could not see by whom it was done. However, when they had discovered he had nothing more they could readily deprive him of, or saw better entertainment elsewhere, they left him to his own reflections, which, it may well be believed, were none of the comfortablest.

Tired of the noise and ribaldry of his companions—their fierce oaths, and coarse vulgar manners—the young traveller took to observing those who kept aloof. Some of these appeared to be of a much higher rank than the other; and with one he soon made acquaintance; for it was impossible for any well-disposed person to behold the countenance of William Shakspeare and not feel inclined to be on friendly terms with him; and from this person he quickly learned the names and characters of most of his fellow-

prisoners and in return was told how he came to be among them.

"Ah, worthy sir," said the stranger, "you have been placed here by the same meddling person as hath imprisoned me—to wit, Master Recorder Fleetwood, who seeketh by over-business, to pass with her highness's sage counsellors, for a famous, loyal, and notable zealous officer. I have been thrust here merely because he chose to suspect me of the high crime of being of the Catholic faith, and of attending to the rites and solemnities of such religion; and for no greater offence than this, divers worthy gentlemen who have been by him so ignominiously treated. Some sent to one prison—some to another; and all punished with heavy fines and grievous imprisonment."

"I marvel such outrage upon justice should be allowed," observed the youth, warmly.

"I grieve to say such things are grown too common to make marvels of," replied his companion. "Perchance the Queen and her chief ministers are not disposed to countenance such pestilent tyranny; indeed, I question they ever hear of it in any way like the truth; but such is the unhappy state of things in the city in consequence of the meddlesomeness of this same tyrannical recorder, that for a man to dare attend the service of the religion he conscientiously believeth to be the true one, he shall be accounted the worst of villains; and for one that cometh to any poverty and hath not a friend in the world, he is forthwith thrust into prison, to consort with felons and the vilest of characters. All this while, almost under the very noses of these zealous officers, are to be found houses where cutpurses may be met with by scores, teaching their art to young boys, and enjoying of their ill-got booty in every manner of drunkenness and riotous infamy, and they are left undisturbed to do as they list."

"And how long, think you, worthy sir, us poor victims of such intolerable wrong, shall be kept in this horrid place?" inquired the other.

"Truly, there is no knowing," answered his fellow-prisoner. "If you have a friend at court who will take up your cause, 'tis like enough you will soon get your liberty; but if you are not so provided, there is no saying of what length may be your imprisonment."

This was but sorry consolation for the young traveller, and it left him nothing but an endless prospect of bolts and bars, and stone walls. The time came for the prisoners to be locked up for the night in separate

cells, and a sullen fellow of a turnkey conducted William Shakspeare to a most dismal-looking narrow dungeon, furnished with nothing save a little straw, a jug of water, and a loaf of bread. Long as had been his fast, he felt no desire to break it; but the bed was welcome, and he flung himself on it with a heart overburthened with most unhappy feelings. A famous ending had his glorious anticipations come to! The visions of greatness that could awhile since scarce be spanned, save by imagination, were now cribbed within a cold narrow cell. All his fine hopes that a few days before looked to be heir apparent to the brightest honors of genius, now must needs put up with straw for lying, bread and water for victual, and bare stone walls for lodging. To say he was not cast down at such ill fortune, were to depart from the truth strangely, for in very honesty, he was in a desperate sadness—as will be found all very sanguine natures when they come to find their high expectations overthrown; and assuredly he had some reason, for when he should have his liberty was most uncertain, and to a free aspiring mind like his, confinement in such narrow limits was hardly to be endured.

But it soon struck him, that despondency would do him but small service, and the only way to get off the unpleasantness of his present strait, was to bear it patiently. He lay a thinking what he should do. He cared not how soon he got away from his present companions—for he had already had enough of them, and determined as the first thing to let his old schoolfellow, Tom Greene, know where he had been placed, that if by his means his liberation could be effected, it might be done with all convenient speed.—In this he overlooked the difficulty there was of his getting any communication conveyed from Newgate. Had he any sufficient bribe, there would be some chance of it, but in his penniless state, he was like enough to remain where he was till doomsday, ere his friends could know of his hapless case, through the assistance of his jailors. Fortunately, of this he was ignorant, for he presently fell to more agreeable thoughts, and as he was in fancy fondling his dear children—wary with trouble and exhausted by fatigue, he fell into a deep sleep.

Here, in this noisome dungeon, he was again visited by the glorious dreams of his early days. The place became a most fair landscape, beautifully garnished with ravishing sweet blossoms, and the whole neighborhood filled with a fairy company, as choicely appalled as beautifully featured, singing as delectably and dancing with as

delicate a grace as ever; and, as usual, brighter than them all shone her who seemed their queen, and she regarded him with a very marvellous kindness, led the others to do him all imaginable gentle courtesies, and in music of exquisite pleasantness sung him such comfortable words as appeared to fill him with greater hope than he had known his whole life long. But besides this, she addressed him with language of counsel, to the effect he would keep his nature unsullied by evil doings; pointing out the profit of honorable behavior, and assuring him of the notable truth, that he who seeks for fame never can hold it for any time, save with pure hands and a noble heart.

Then she bade him look in a certain direction, and there he beheld the figure of himself, done to the very life, seeming to be hungry, weary, and a prisoner as he was—anon the scene changed; he had his liberty, but he was struggling with manifold hardships, one following on another so closely there was no rest for them, and each pressing with exceeding severity it seemed a marvel how they could be tolerated; they lasted a long space, but gradually appearances looked more favorable; the prospect became brighter, the scenes changed rapidly from one delightful landscape to another, till it appeared as though a whole world of splendor and happiness lay open to his view. From one quarter the applause of assembled thousands were shouted in his ears; from another came the commendations of whole multitudes of the learned; here, in some humble hearth-side, resounded the honest praises of the poor and lowly; and elsewhere from the hall, the bower, the garden, and the grove, plaudits as fervent were breathed from gallant knights and honorable fair ladies.—Certes he would have been glad enough to have dreamt such a dream as this all his days: but a rough voice and a rude shake put it to a sudden ending, and starting up he found one of the turnkeys standing over him with a lanthorn, his ill-featured countenance forming a most revolting contrast to the sunny faces he had gazed on in his vision.

“A murrain on thee, wilt thou never wake?” exclaimed the jailor sharply.—“Why, thou sleepest as though thou hadst no hope of sleep again. “Marry, and thou takest such rest the morning thou art to be hanged, they must needs put thee to the rope in the midst of it.”

“What want you with me?” inquired the prisoner.

“Thou must along with me with all speed,” replied the man.

"For what purpose, I pray you?" asked the youth.

"Purpose, quotha, how should I know?" said the jailor. "Mayhap 'tis the pillory—mayhap the stocks—mayhap a goodly whipping; they be the only purposes that travel to Newgate, I'll warrant. But come along, I tell thee, I can allow of no tarrying."

Believing it useless to say anything more, William Shakspeare rose and followed his guide through numberless narrow passages, so dark he could scarce see his way along, even with the help of the lantern his companion carried before him, the jailor grumbling at every step, and his prisoner in a mood hardly more social, from having been disturbed in such pleasant dreaming. From all he could gather from the sulky turnkey, his being led to another part of the prison boded him no good; and he supposed it was to receive some degrading punishment or another, such as is commonly bestowed on persons whose chief crime happeneth to be their poverty.

In such manner the two arrived at a door in a distant part of the building, which the jailor opening, bade the other enter by himself. On gaining admission into the chamber, the latter found three persons seated together, whom he took to be his judges going to sentence him to the dreaded punishment. One was a very severe looking personage, from whose aspect he could gather but few hopes, and was clad somewhat in jailor fashion, with sundry large keys at his belt. The others had much of the gallant in their appearance, and possessed countenances that savored considerably more of humanity.

"An' it please you to leave his examination to me, I will have the truth from him speedily," said the first to his companions; and then turning sharply to the young prisoner, commenced questioning him after the following fashion, the other answering as follows:—

"Fellow! what's thy name?"

"William Shakspeare."

"Where dost come from?"

"Stratford on Avon, in Warwickshire."

"How long hast been in London?"

"Only a few hours."

"What brought thee here?"

"I came to be a player in the company of Master Burbage at the Bankside."

"Now Master Turnkey, this evidently proves him to be no vagrant," observed one of the gallants.

"I pray your worship stop awhile," replied the jailor. "These fellows have some famous fine story always at their command. O' my life, I do believe, were you to

examine the most notorious rogue under my hands, he would presently make himself out to be as honest a man as any in the city. Let me ask of him a few more questions." Then turning to his prisoner, he added—"How long hast been a player?"

"I cannot say I have ever been a player," answered the other.

"There, I said I would presently make him show himself for what he truly is—a masterless man, and no player!" exclaimed the turnkey, exultingly, to his companions, and then turning sharply to the prisoner, added—"Prithee have done with thy coney-catching; I am not to be so caught, my young master. Thou saidst but a moment since thou wert a player, and now thou hast the impudency to declare thou hast never been a player. What dost mean by that, fellow?"

"I mean just what I said," replied William Shakspeare, undauntedly; "I have many times played in plays; but as I have done it solely for my own amusement, I could not consider myself a player, who playeth only for his own living."

"Truly, a just distinction," said one of the gallants.

"A monstrous fine story, I'll warrant," exclaimed the turnkey. "But if there be any truth in what thou hast advanced, perchance thou wilt name some person of repute who will testify to thy honesty."

"Very readily," replied the prisoner; "Thomas Greene, a player at the Globe, who hath his lodging at the sign of the Phœnix, in Bucklersbury, where I was proceeding when I was taken hold of by the constables and conveyed here; he will vouch for me at any time, for he hath been my school-fellow; as have also the younger Burbage, Hemings, and Condell, other players at the Globe."

"Marry, players must make but sorry vouchers, for, methinks, they be little better than vagroms," observed the jailor.

"The persons named I know to be of a very fair character," replied the gallant who had before spoken. "William Shakspeare, allow me to ask you one question?"

"Any number, if it please you, sir," answered the prisoner, charmed with the courteous manner of his interrogator.

"Have you lost anything since your arrival in London?"

"I have lost all I had," replied the other. "The constables deprived me of what they could lay their hands on, and the prisoners here in Newgate took from me what was left. I should have cared the less, if they

had spared me certain writings I had about me."

"What sort of writings were they?"

"Verses chiefly."

"Were they your own composition?"

"They were."

"Is this one of them?" inquired his questioner, placing a paper in his hand.

"Indeed it is, and the one I last wrote of them all," replied the young poet, glancing at his own lines, as if glad to have them back.

"I am convinced of it," added the other. "It was picked up by my companion, Master Edmund Spenser, on the spot where you had been struggling with the constables."

"I deem myself wondrous fortunate in having been there at such a time," said Master Spenser, warmly. "And having read its worthy contents, I hurried to my noble and esteemed good friend here, Sir Philip Sydney, and succeeded, as I expected, knowing his truly generous disposition, in interesting him to seek you out, and deliver you from your undeserved imprisonment."

William Shakspeare was surprised and delighted beyond measure, at hearing of names he had for some time looked up to as the most honorable in the kingdom, and expressed himself very gratefully for the trouble they had been at on his account. But the matter rested not here. He presently walked out of Newgate, with his two famous new acquaintances, without hindrance from the jailor, for they had brought with them the Earl of Leicester's authority for his liberation, which none dared gainsay: and shortly after, to the infinite satisfaction of all parties, he found himself seated by the side of his early patrons, Sir Valentine and Sir Reginald, at the house of Sir Philip Sydney, by whom he was very kindly and liberally entertained.

CHAPTER XXXII.

To you I have unclasped my burthened soul,
Emptied the storehouse of my thoughts and heart,

Made myself poor of secrets; have not left
Another word untold which hath not spoke
All that I ever durst, or think, or know.

FORD.

Give me a key for this,
And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

SHAKSPEARE.

"Boy! can I trust thee?"

"Ay, my lord, with your heart's deepest

secret; and the grave itself shall not be more silent than your poor page."

"I do believe thee. I have tried thee long, and found thee the faithfullest honest creature master ever knew. That thou lovest me I am assured. I have had good proof on't. I thought there was not one heart in which I could meet the slightest sympathy, but in thee there are signs of such great abundance as make me amends for the unfeelingness of others. My spirit is weary of long-suffering. My health is broken. I cannot disguise from myself I am sinking fast. It therefore becometh necessary I should procure some one to perform for me those offices I shall soon be disabled from attempting. To do this I must betray a secret I have kept as jealously as if my whole life depended on its preservation; and in none can I put faith, save only thee. Thou canst serve me if thou wilt, as page never served his lord before; but if the duty should be distasteful to thee, as 'tis very like to be, I hold thee free to refuse; and if after what I am about to tell thee, thou canst look on me no more as one worthy to be thy master, I will honorably provide thee with all things necessary for thy living elsewhere."

"My lord, I am in heart and soul a creature of your own; and whatever service I can render necessary for your safety, depend on it, it shall be done faithfully and well, according to my poor ability."

This conversation took place between the Lord de la Pole and his page, after one of the fearullest of those fearful fits to which the unhappy Earl was generally subject, when he was left alone in the mourning chamber. It was evident, as he had said, that his health was fast declining, for his right noble countenance looked more haggard than it was wont; and his dark lustrous eyes appeared to be rapidly losing the fire which had so brightly lighted them. His raven hair too had been thinned of its luxuriance, and all about him bespoke that breaking up of the constitution, which long continued grief marks its victim for the grave. His youthful companion wore a similar melancholy, doubtless caused from constant observation of his lord's sufferings, and this gave a very touching expression to his handsome boyish features, which increased greatly whenever he chanced to turn his gaze upon the Earl. The latter, still in his mourning suit, sate in the library before mentioned; and Bertram, in vestments of the same color, seated himself at a short distance; where he remained in an attitude of the profoundest attention, and with an expression of the most intense in-

terest, whilst the Earl proceeded with the promised narration.

"Of my family, methinks I need say nothing," commenced he; "the greatness of the Suffolks, of which I am a branch, must be sufficiently known. but the fame of their power and nobleness so influenced my early life, I could not rest till I had done something worthy of the name I bore. My youth was spent in foreign wars, under the most famous leaders; and whenever I heard of any one celebrated for deeds of arms, I sought all ways to surpass him; nor would I be satisfied till my pre-eminence was acknowledged. But this was by no means the whole of what I did. I had been well instructed; and perchance, I may add, I was ever of a well-disposed nature, whereof the consequence was, I took especial heed my conduct elsewhere should be of a piece with my achievements in the field. Honor was my idol—honor I worshipped; in no case could I be prevailed on to meddle in any matter wherein honor was not clearly conspicuous to all men's eyes; and to the same extent that I strove carefully to attain every title honor could bestow, I was jealous that my right to it should have no questioning. None could be more desirous of good opinion. To hear myself well spoke of, was an infinite pleasure; but to have any one's ill word, to be ridiculed, slandered, or misused in speech, fretted me beyond measure. Mayhap this was a weakness; but whatever it was, it kept unslacked in me the impulse to exert myself to gain a lasting reputation, till the name of De la Pole stood, as I proudly believed, second to none in every commendable quality.

"I pass over my labors, to build me up this goodly reputation: suffice it to say, I returned to my native land in the full vigor of manhood, and at the court of her Highness Elizabeth was speedily recognized, as what I had sought so earnestly to be. Hitherto I had thought nothing of love; my career of honor left me no time for tender dalliance, or else I was indifferent to the charms of such fair creatures as I had seen; but amongst the queen's ladies there was one, whose youth, beauty, character and station, united to form, as I then thought, the noblest damsel in the realm. In her, fame had left no one part which envy might assail; and fortune had surrounded her with such prodigality of gifts, as if to show how delighted she was in having so worthy an object on whom to bestow them. Methinks 'tis almost needless to say she had suitors. She had broad lands; she was of one of the powerful families of the kingdom; and she

appeared as peerless in conduct as she was in person; and such attractions could not fail of bringing to her feet a sufficiency of wooers. I had heard much in her praise before I beheld her; but ere I had an hour's acquaintance, I doubted she had been done justice to. Still I kept aloof from the crowd by whom she was always surrounded, and satisfied myself with observing her at a distance. Every day I saw her she seemed to grow more admirable; and each relation I heard of her exceeded the preceding one, towards proving her wondrous well disposedness.

"A message from herself brought me at last to her side—a message so expressive of compliment, I attended her summons with more pleasure than ever I had known from similar commendations, gratifying as they had always been to me. Once there, it appeared as though I must there stay. At first she would scarce allow me to be anywhere else; but in a fair interval, I found myself under so strong a charm, nowhere else would I remain could I avoid it: in brief, I loved her. Some months afterwards, I gained from her, that long before she had seen me she had loved me for my reputation. After a delicious sufficiency of most exquisite courtship, my happiness seemed to be complete, when I received her in marriage. In a little while, I believed my real felicity had only commenced, so much did my enjoyment then exceed all that I had known before. Every day she evinced in her character some new and admirable feature; the more I saw of her, the more cause saw I to congratulate myself I had been blessed with so rare a partner. Her love for me looked to be mingled with an honorable pride, that made it all the more flattering to one of my disposition. None could seem so exceeding content—none could have appeared so truly affectionate. It may be easily imagined, my love of praise at this time partook largely of a desire of having my wife as famously commended; in fact it was the same identical feeling, for I looked on Lady Blanche as the best and dearest part of myself; and I wished to see her pre-eminence in every good quality universally acknowledged, because any contrary opinions might reflect unfavorably on the other portion of me.

"At this period to add to her other powerful claims upon my love, she promised to become a mother—an event I looked forward to with an interest which exceedeth all conceiving. Then it was there came on a visit to me a young kinsman of mine. I had heard rumors of his being of a wild reckless disposition; and that he bore him-

self more carelessly than became any one wishing to be honorably thought of. I liked not this. It grieved me that one in any way related to me should be so ill reported. One day I took him aside and told him what I had heard to his disadvantage, but he swore so solemnly he had not deserved what was said of him, that I could not help believing he had been maligned, as he declared, by false envious persons. I then counselled him to marry some worthy woman, which would put a stop to such slanders for the future, and pointed to the happiness I enjoyed as the best inducement to it he could have; but he answered somewhat confusedly, that some often considered themselves exceeding happy from ignorance of matters, which, when known, would make them the miserablest persons in the world. Thereupon I said such might be the case, but as regarded myself there could be no possibility of such a thing. He replied very earnestly, 'long may you think so,' and with a deep sigh left me to my own reflections.

"My kinsman had ever shown to me a marvellous frank and social spirit; but of late I had noticed that he had rather avoided me—gazed on me with a countenance full of pity, and when he talked, spoke with an ambiguous and mysterious fashion, of which I could make nothing, save a lamentation that villainy should be so fairly disguised. I marvelled, and not without an undefinable uneasiness, at such sort of speech, but though I pressed him to explain himself, he would only shake his head, and say it was a thing he had not the heart to do. Following close upon the heels of this, he would oft regret that so noble a gentleman as myself should be so grossly imposed upon; and that, out of extreme love for me, those who knew of the cheat should be forced to allow of its continuance. All these hints and innuendoes, and the mysterious manner in which they were uttered, in time produced in me a most fearful state of anxiousness and disquietude.

"It looked as though some extraordinary mischief was impending, known only by this kinsman, who liked not the office of breaking such ill news, but in what quarter it threatened, or in what shape it was to appear, I was completely at a loss; and what made the matter worse, so seemed likely to remain.

"At last he dropped something concerning of my dishonor. I fired at the word. My whole nature was stirred as if with a mighty earthquake. We were alone. I presently declared to him did he not tell me on the instant the cause of what he had said, I would slay him where he stood. He begged and

prayed most movingly I would let him off a task he so hugely disliked, but the more earnestly he strove to excuse himself, the more fiercely I insisted on his declaring to me whatever there might be to say. Then he added with extreme seriousness, that the consequences must rest with me—that I was hurrying on to meet my misery; but if I would force the secret from him, that I must give him my assurance to take no measures, or to show to any one a knowledge of it, till he had given such proofs of its correctness as he had at his disposal. This I solemnly promised. My ears drunk in with horror the tale he told me; it was that once being out late he had observed a gallant at the dead hour of the night ascending by a ladder of ropes to the Lady Blanche's chamber—so strange a sight made him marvel exceedingly, and he stopped to see what would follow. The gallant entered the chamber, and there remained upwards of an hour. When he again appeared at the window there was a female in his company, and they there embraced very fondly. Then he descended to the ground and made off, and the ladder was immediately drawn up into the chamber. I felt as if I could have torn my intelligencer limb from limb; for if angels had sworn matter of the like tendency, I would not have credited a word of it; but I dissembled so much of my passion as to ask him if he recognized the female he saw at the window. He said he did, for he had such view of her as could not mislead him. I bade him without fail confess to me who it was. He replied on no account could he do so, as it might lead to irreparable mischiefs: and added that he had gone to the same place at the same hour every night since, and had witnessed the same proceedings.

"But I would have the name; and by dint of threats, and repeated promises to behold the proofs he spoke of, I gained it from him. It was the countess. This I had anticipated from the foregoing; but on his confirming my suspicions, I contented myself for the present with determining in my own mind to bestow a proper punishment on so vile a traducer. However, I demanded of him to lead me to the spot where he had seen what he had related, fully convinced I should there disprove every particular of his relation. Till the hour appointed I kept myself as quiet as I could, though my restlessness must have been evident to all. I said to none what I had heard. The countess retired to her chamber somewhat earlier than usual, but this I ought to have looked for, knowing the state in which she was. Her manner was

in no way different from the ordinary, save she would have it I ailed something, asserting she had never seen me look so strangely, and imploring me to take heed of my health. To one, like myself, who placed such immense importance on honorable opinion, what had been told by my kinsman was like enough to produce very terrible consequences. Certes I would not allow of its possibility; yet, for all that, I was filled with apprehensions almost as unendurable as the most perfect conviction could have been.

"To my great relief, midnight arrived, and wrapping ourselves in large cloaks, my kinsman and I proceeded behind some trees, at a convenient distance from the Lady Blanche's chamber window. The night was somewhat dusky; but not as I thought, dark enough to prevent our seeing objects as far off as was required. There I stood with the full intention of punishing my companion's treachery as speedily as it might become manifest. Having waited a considerable time and seen nothing, I had just commenced denouncing, with the fiercest bitterness, his baseness in striving to impose on me with so improbable a tale, when he caught hold of me forcibly by the arm, crying 'hush!' and pointed in a certain direction. To my exceeding astonishment I then beheld a man, closely wrapped up, stealing, with extreme cautiousness, towards the house. My wonder became the greater when I observed him stop exactly underneath my wife's chamber window, and clap his hands thrice; and nought could exceed the strange amazement I was in when I noticed a female open the window and throw out a ladder of ropes, on which the gallant mounted rapidly—the two crested at the window with every sign of mutual fondness, and the next moment the ladder was drawn up, and they disappeared.

"I could not very plainly distinguish the features of the lady, but the figure was manifest beyond all mistaking. No one in the house was in the same state; and the dress, too, was equally evident. It was the countess. The horror, the shame, the rage, the indignation with which I was filled at this discovery, made me incapable of motion—nay, I stood breathless, as though I had been turned to stone. My senses were a complete whirlpool of furious passions. I knew not what to be about: all in me bespoke a confused, bewildered, desperate madness. My kinsman asking me what should be done, roused me to a proper consciousness. I bade him remain where he was, and if the gallant, whoever he might be, sought to escape by the window, to fall upon him and

hold him fast till I returned. At that he drew his sword, and swore very earnestly he should not escape alive. I then hastened into the house. All slept—or appeared to sleep. There was a deathlike quiet in every part of the mansion, that seemed in marvellous contrast to the wild riot in my breast. I gained the door of my wife's chamber. For the first time I had so found it, it was locked. This discovery added fuel to the fire. I strove with all my might to break it open. It was too strong to be so forced, but the violence of the shock I had given it brought my wife to it presently. She inquired, in some seeming alarm, 'who was there?' I answered, commanding her to open the door immediately. It was done.

"On my entrance she complained somewhat of my disturbing her rest so strangely. I gave a rapid survey of the chamber, and not finding him I sought for, I fixed a fierce look on my wife, who was gazing on me as it seemed, in the confusion of conscious guilt. At this moment I heard the clashing of swords, and running to the casement, observed my kinsman fighting furiously with the same person I had seen enter the countess's chamber. The ladder of ropes had been left attached to the window, and I was proceeding to descend by it, when my faithless wife caught hold of my arm, and implored me not to venture myself into any danger. I took this as a crafty design to assist the escape of her paramour, and with violent execrations rudely thrust her from me, and, as rapidly as I could, descended the ladder. Ere I had got to the bottom I beheld my kinsman fall and his opponent take to flight. I pursued, thirsting with the horrible vengeance, but at the distance of about a hundred yards, to my infinite rage and disappointment, I beheld him mount a fleet steed and ride off at a pace that left all pursuit hopeless.

"I returned to my kinsman, and found him bleeding, and from his manner, appearing to have been badly hurt. I assisted him into the house; but this took some time to do, for he complained at every step, that he could scarce endure the motion. I at last got him to his chamber. I found the house in the same quietness as it had been when I had entered it a short time previous; and its undisturbed state gave me a hope I might still conceal my dishonor from the world—a hope I eagerly caught at. I extracted from my wounded kinsman a solemn oath, that what he had known and seen should never pass his lips; then proceeded I to the chamber of a servant of mine, who had lived all his life in my family, and in whose fidelity

I could place implicit confidence. I called him up, and as briefly as I could, acquainted him with what had transpired. He readily enough promised to do whatever I might require at his hands. I then sent him to call up my kinsman's servant, whilst I proceeded to my lady's chamber. I found her lying on the floor senseless. I placed her in her bed. In a short time, she began to exhibit signs of consciousness, and with it gave me reason to believe she was about to become a mother. Thereupon I hastened to the stables, saddled me a horse, and rode at the top of his speed to the nearest midwife; and blindfolding her, and taking every possible precaution, that she should not know where she was going, I brought her back with me. She did her office. As soon as I became aware of the child's birth, I snatched it from her hand, and hurried with it to the next chamber, where my faithful Adam was waiting as I had desired, and to him I gave it, with strict commands that instant to drown it in the deepest part of the Avon, which he vowed to do in such a manner as should prevent the slightest clue to discovery. Then I hurried the midwife away with the same secrecy with which I had brought her.

"On my return, Adam acquainted me that he had fulfilled my intentions to the very letter, which gave me inexpressible satisfaction, for there was at least a riddance of one witness to my dishonor. To the false woman, its mother, I had resolved on satisfying my just vengeance by a punishment worse than death. None of the domestics were yet stirring, and I gave orders on no account should any be allowed to go to their lady's chamber, on the plea she was in so bad a state she was not expected to live. Thus I prevented her being seen by any of the domestics for several days, during which time my kinsman was confined to his own chamber by the hurt he had received, and therefore remained in as perfect ignorance of what was going on as the rest. In the meanwhile, with the assistance of my faithful Adam, every thing was privily being done as I desired. It was reported by him, that the countess was daily getting worse, and at last, to their infinite great grief and sorrowing, it was given out she was dead. A sumptuous funeral was prepared. I had every sign of mourning placed about the mansion; and those signs I have never allowed to be removed. But before the performance of the funeral obsequies, I had secretly removed the countess from her chamber to another part of the building, which had hitherto been scarcely ever used.

"Here was she shut up close from all knowledge, save Adam and myself. He hath never seen her from the date of her imprisonment till the present time, nor hath she since then been allowed to behold any human being but myself, her so deeply injured husband; for such was my intended punishment. All common necessaries she had, but her clothing was reduced to a coarse mourning habit. Thus I had secured my honor, but as I speedily found, at the expense of my peace of mind. Lady Blanche made but one attempt to turn me from my purpose, and that was at the birth of her offspring; but finding it needless, she never after sought to move my commiseration with a single word, and seemed to have resigned herself to the justice of her sentence. At first, I took a sensible satisfaction in showing myself to her, clad in the trappings of woe. I declared to her what I had done, and told her she was as dead to me as she was to the world; but in consideration of the virtues she had assumed, my mourning for her should only cease with my life. She bowed her head submissively, and replied, she was well content it should be so since I had so willed it; but before any very long time had passed, I began to have doubts that the manner in which I had endeavored to keep the secret of my dishonor, was less dishonorable than would have been its publicity. An act which vengeance had not allowed me to see in its proper colors, now stood before me in all its horrible injustice. I could easily reconcile my conscience to any punishment of a guilty wife, but the murder of an innocent poor babe seemed incapable of any justification.

"Nought in this world can exceed the fierce struggles I have had to satisfy myself with the deed; but conscience, instead of being overpowered by them, appeared to grow the stronger after every encounter. Previously, my dishonor, great as it might be, was occasioned by no fault of mine own, and by some, I doubted not, my reputation would have stood in no way affected by it; but so ruthless a murder as that I had planned and put in practice, I felt was a crime of the blackest die, the whole guilt of which was mine, and if it was made public, I believed I should be condemned and shunned of all men. Remorse pursued me wherever I went. Sleeping or waking the deed haunted me. I was perpetually goaded with the reflection that Urban de la Pole, who had won so many titles of pre-eminence, had now made himself irrevocably on a level with the basest and vilest in the land. Yet all this time I sought as urgently as ever to

excuse myself, by every manner of argument. Sometimes I succeeded, but only for a brief space; and again I was tortured by the same dreadful feelings of self-condemnation.

"Years passed on; but every year appeared to increase my sufferings, and time added to my misery, till it moved me like a madness. During this long space the countess bore her imprisonment without a murmur—she never once complained of her privations—she never once sought to reproach me for such stern usage of her—she never once by word, look, or sign intimated to me the slightest desire to change her way of life. Whenever I presented myself to her, she wore a contented submissive look; which through twenty years of rigorous confinement hath remained the same. I found out at last, that instead of punishing her I was punishing myself. My sufferings were becoming intolerable, whilst she did not seem to suffer in any manner. Still I at all times noticed in her an expression of countenance which I felt deeply, but I cannot describe. It seemed to appeal to me more strongly than the most conspicuous show of wretchedness could have done; and yet it was not one of wretchedness. It invariably made me, on my leaving her, ask of myself, why I continued to bury her in so merciless a manner? and then followed a raging storm of conflicting opinions for and against her, in which remorse for the murder I had perpetrated took its full share. But in the end, I felt that death alone had the power of affording her release.

"My kinsman, although he had got hurt entirely in his zeal for me, I could not bear the sight of. I know not why it was, but I looked on him as the cause of my misery. He it was who had first wakened me from the dream of happiness and honor in which I had been indulging; and I thanked him not for his painstaking. When he was well of his wound, I hastened his departure; and though he doth occasionally pay me visits, the only part of them that pleaseth me is when he turneth his back to be gone. Since thou hast been with me I have seen nothing of him, for which I am infinitely thankful; but I am in daily expectation of hearing of his arrival. His nature and mine can have no sort of assimilation. He never comes but he goads me into frenzy with his consolations and condolences, and a thousand foolish speeches that call to my mind my dishonor and my crime. Now I dread his presence worse than ever, for the fangs of remorse have worked in my heart such deep wounds, methinks such probing as his

must needs destroy me quite. It is with the knowledge of my growing weakness, and noting that my faithful Adam is getting old apace, and witnessing thy extreme affectionateness, that I came to the determination of putting such confidence in thee as to require thy attendance on the countess in place of myself.

"Thou hast not sought this secret of me. I have seen such vouchers for thy honorable nature that I could trust thee, as I now do, with the custody of my very soul. But remember, as I told thee, that if thy disposition revolteth at the idea of serving a murderer, I hold thee free to go at any time, and will take careful heed thy going shall do thee credit. As for myself I can only say, could a thousand years of severest suffering undo the deed, I would set about it with a cheerful spirit. Now tell me, I priethee, what thou art inclined to do. I offer thee no reward for staying, and doing me this great service, save my undivided love and most absolute gratitude; shouldst thou choose to go, I will enrich thee for life. Make thy choice."

"My lord you surely cannot doubt my choice," replied Bertram, in a most winning, affectionate manner. "I do as sorely lament the deed that hath been done as can you; but our lamentations will never lessen its enormity. Still from what I have just learned, I cannot help perceiving you have had monstrous provocation; but provocation that justified the crime I cannot say—for methinks there can be no justification where there is a crime—or no crime where a justification can be allowed. Nevertheless, I must surely be made of those base materials, were you twenty times as guilty as you are, were I to desert you after you have put such entire confidence in me. Believe me, my Lord, my love for you is of such a sort that I desire of all things to serve you in honesty and faithfulness my whole life through; and shall think my fortune desperate, indeed, when it cometh to me in such ill shape as my being forced to leave so kind a master."

The Earl gave no answer to this earnest and loving speech, unless it were replied by his looks; which, truly, appeared to be full of right eloquent expression. He presently continued:—

"Thou hast had opportunity for noticing that a portion of this book-case hath been ingeniously contrived to be a secret door, known only to myself and my faithful Adam. This opens into a passage, beyond which is a chamber, which is no other than the prison of my false Countess. There for

twenty years she, a daughter of one of the noblest families, hath endured such privations as the commonest menial scarce ever is forced to resort to. I would have thee now go to her and acquaint her with my desire thou shouldst attend to her wants in place of myself."

The page readily arose to fulfil his errand, and the secret door being opened he passed through it. Now he experienced most strange feelings—an infinite dread and dislike of appearing before this dangerous bad woman, who had done such terrible mischiefs. He could not tolerate the infamy she had brought on herself, knowing, as he did, the noble nature of the man she had so basely wronged, and therefore thought not her confinement to be too great a punishment for her crime. He therefore prepared himself to meet a woman whom he should thoroughly detest at the first glance—one whose attractions must have faded under the rigor of such long imprisonment, and whose state, the lack of ordinary attendance had made slovenly in attire and uncleanly in person. He pictured too, in his mind, her prison to be exceedingly dirty, cheerless, and neglectful. His surprise may be imagined, when he entered, where every thing was as comfortable, neat, and orderly as in the best apartment in the mansion. Nothing could be so cleanly as seemed every part of the chamber, and the only sign of cheerlessness it had was its being entirely covered up with black cloth.

If he was so greatly surprised with the prison, he was far more so with the prisoner. He beheld before him a lady of extreme beauty, looking to be in the very prime of life. She was dressed simply in a black robe, but the most splendid apparel could not have shown to more advantage her majestic figure, or give such admirable contrast to her noble countenance. She was sitting reading of a book at the entrance of the page; but as soon as she noticed him she started up in a great marvel. Her wonder was not without cause, for not having seen any human being save her lord for so long a space, she could not but be infinitely astonished at the presence of him she now beheld. Truly, at any place Bertram was no common sight, for by this time the haggard, sickly expression which long sickness and suffering had left on his features, when he first entered the house, was changed to one of health and comfort, wherein the softness of early youth was made more winning by the sweet and pensive melancholy with which his handsome features were

overcast. Now, with his intelligent eyes radiant with wonder as he gazed on the beautiful woman before him, he looked more handsome than ever he had been whilst in his present abode. His hair, in rich profusion, fell down even to the white falling bands spread open round his neck, which added much to the picturesque expression of his countenance, and his close-fitting suit was famously adapted to display to the most notable advantage the grace and symmetry of his limbs.

After having thus wondrously gazed on each other for many seconds, the Lady Blanche at last broke the strange silence by inquiring of the youth his errand. He spoke it with so gentle a courteousness that none could help being charmed with him, but the countess took his message in very sorrowful part.

"I pray you, tell me, young sir, for what cause is it my lord refuseth to see me?" inquired she in a most urgent manner.

"His health, lady, is getting to be in so decayed a state, it preventeth him," replied the page.

"Alack!" exclaimed the Lady Blanche. "I have marked his changed aspect a long time past. Whilst I was allowed sight of him I cared not for being shut out from the world, for from the first time I heard of his gallant name, he hath been all the world to me. But now I feel I am punished indeed. I beseech you, gentle sir, implore him for me that I may attend on him in his illness. No servant shall serve him more humbly or truly, than his once happy and honored Blanche. Ah, me! How wildly do I talk;" added the Countess, suddenly changing her ardent, impassioned manner, to one of strict patience and submissiveness. "Nay, if it is my lord's will, it must needs be. Tell him, gentle sir, I am ready to fulfil his wishes."

When Bertram left her, his lord's faithless wife, whom a short time before he had felt so disposed to detest from his heart, he found he could not bring himself to dislike her in any manner; nay, she had awakened in him feelings of a direct opposite tendency. He marvelled a guilty woman could bear such rigorous imprisonment so long a time and it have no evident effect on her, he marvelled more, with the knowledge of her infamous evil doing, she should wear so noble, bright a countenance; but all this could not erase from his mind the impression of his lord's narrative. He remembered the terribleness of the wrong she had wantonly done so noble a gentleman, and strove to

fortify his heart against the entrance of those feelings, her language, looks, and manner, had created in him; nevertheless, he found his thoughts taking to themselves the shape of this question—"Surely, this lady, is not so wicked as I thought her."

On returning to the earl, he told him every syllable the countess had uttered in his hearing, at which the former appeared exceedingly moved, asked divers questions, hurriedly and anxiously, as to how she spoke, and what she had said; and every answer manifestly did the more increase his uneasiness. For a while he seemed lost in thought—but it was easy to see from the changing expression of his aspect—his deep sighing, and violent hard breathing, that some such struggle as had been but too common with him, was going on in his nature. Bertram stood observing him with a sincere, sweet sympathy, expressed in every feature of his countenance; but saying never a word, knowing how useless was speech on such occasions. After a time the Earl recovered sufficiently to express what he would have done.

"Methinks, 'tis full time this punishment should cease," said he in a somewhat faltering voice. "I can endure it no longer. This marvellous sweet patience of hers subdues me. My vengeance is gone, of my honor I am careless. Go, tell her, she is free to go where she will, so long as I may never have sight of her again."

The page hastened to do his lord's bidding, his thoughts by the way, busy in the entertainment of every possible prejudice against that false bad woman who had brought such fearful sufferings upon her generous, noble-hearted husband. He determined to look on her as a very monster—an ungrateful, base creature, lost to every sense of womanly excellence; and expedite her removal from the mansion by all means in his power. He presented himself to the lady a second time, and despite of his recent stern determinations, delivered his message as gently as though he spoke to some person great in his respect. The Countess heard it in evident emotion. Her cheek grew pale and then red, of a sudden—her lips quivered somewhat—but in the end her whole countenance expressed a lofty pride and noble majesty, which made her young companion marvel more than ever.

"It cannot be;" replied she at last. "Were I again to appear in the public eye, perchance my lord's reputation would suffer; he, having for so long a period allowed it to be closed against me. If my character hath

gone, my death is no fiction. To what my lord hath sentenced me I patiently submit.—Unless I can be wholly restored to his affections, which, methinks, 'tis vain to hope, I wish here to live out my days, to the last his poor prisoner, and humble, loving wife: and I will pray for him very earnestly on the knees of my heart he may enjoy every manner of happiness that is most to his liking. I beseech you, gentle sir, tell him this much from me—that I will endure with all proper submissiveness, whatever he shall think of letting the world know of my existence: and the only favor I would ask of him is, that he will let me here remain till I have become the thing he hath feigned."

Again there was a change in the page's thoughts of his lord's faithless wife; his feelings were now in her favor as strong as admiration could make them. Her language, her look, her bearing, savored so marvellous little of guilty consciousness, that he could not help saying to himself on leaving her, "Surely this lady cannot have done the wickedness with which she is charged." He acquainted the Earl with what had passed in consequence of his message, whereupon, the unhappy man seemed more moved than before, for he presently broke out into a wonderful great passion of self accusations.

"Every word of hers cometh upon me like a scourge!" exclaimed he, when his frenzy had somewhat abated, "I have made a terrible mistake; I have been torturing of myself all this while, instead of punishing her. O reputation! reputation! what a poor idol of brass thou art!" And in this strain went he on, so much to the exceeding grief of his faithful Bertram, that he knew not what judgment to come to. He could not believe his lord had misstated to him anything, having had such manifold proofs of his extreme honorableness of nature, therefore he must needs consider the Countess to be the very basest wretch breathing; and yet he could not think ill of that lady, after having beheld in her as he had behavior so thoroughly opposed to an unworthy disposition. He considered much of the matter; his reflections suddenly turned into a new channel, and, as he left the chamber, he put this question to himself—"Surely, there is some huge villainy at the bottom of these woeful doings!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

This company were lightly the lewdest in the land—apt for pilfery, perjury, forgery, or any other villainy.

GREENE (*Groatsworth of Witte.*)

“Oh twine fresh roses round thy brow
And pledge the wine-cup high;
Leave fears and cares to misers' heirs,
Leave tears to those who sigh.
For is there neath heav'n a bliss so divine
As that which now beams in the sparkling
wine?

Brighter than gems
In kings' diadems,
And fragrant as buds upon odorous stems.
Then fill to the brim! Fill to the brim!
Fill whilst such joys on the green earth abound,
'Ere Pleasure grow pensive or Friendship
look dim,

Fill to the brim around!

“Oh twine fresh roses round thy brow,
And pledge me once again:
Till we have quaff'd the rosy draught
And warmed the heart and brain.
Our life is but short and our pleasures but few,
And time makes us old when our youth is but
new:—

Wine then alone,—
To all be it known,—

Can grant us new life and a world of our own.
Then fill to the brim! Fill to the brim!
Fill whilst such joys on the green earth abound,
'Ere Pleasure grows pensive or Friendship
looks dim,

Fill to the brim around!

“Bravo, Robin! O, my life, our sweet
Robin is a brave songster!”

“Excellent well sung, as I live, Master
Greene; and as Kit Marlowe most aptly
calleth thee, thou art our own delectable
sweet Robin.”

“Nay, Chettle, we will not have him so
mean a bird; he is a swan at the very least.”

“Ay, truly, Master Lodge, by this hand,
a good thought. A swan—a very swan!
What sayest, Peele? What sayest, Kyd?
What sayest, Nash? Is not Greene as right
famous a swan at singing, as though he
were the mighty Jove himself, going a bird-
ing after the delicate fashion told in the old
story?”

“Prithee keep to the Robin, good Kit!”
replied the singer, in the same merry humor
with his boisterous companions; methinks
the conceit of the swan is somewhat dan-
gerous, it being a bird so nigh in feather to
a goose.”

“Nay, nay, there is a huge difference in
the holding of the head,” cried Kit Mar-

lowe, laughingly; “so if it chance to be
thou art only but a goose, if thou wilt but
have thy neck stretched, thou shalt presently
be the braver bird, beyond all contradic-
tion?”

“Then is Tyburn a choice place for
swanhopping?” observed Lodge, amid the
uproarious mirth of his associates.

“More wine! more wine! tapster!”
bawled Chettle; “Slight! after such mov-
ing praise of thy liquor, thou shouldst empty
thy casks for us, and charge nothing.”

“Ay, by Bacchus, that thou shouldst, out
of sheer gratitude,” added Nash.

“Truly my masters; and for mine own
part, I care not,” said a miserable-looking,
threadbare knave, in a most abject manner,
“indeed, I care not in any sort of manner;
yet, as I cannot live unless I sell my liquor
at some profit, I humbly beseech your wor-
ships, pardon me, that I would rather live
and sell, than give away and be ruined.”

These were a party of play-writers, met
together round a rough table, in a mean
chamber of a common inn, near the Globe
playhouse, on the Bankside: they seemed to
be much alike as regarded their humors, be-
ing a set of as wild, licentious, unbridled
roysterers, as might be met with in any tave-
rn in Christendom. It was manifest on a
little stay with them, that they had more wit
than discretion, and less honesty than either;
for their talk was either of tricks they had
practised, when reduced to any shifts, or
abuse of certain players they misliked, or
slander of certain writers, whose success
they envied. Their dress smacked of a
tawdy gentility; in some instances showing
signs of shabbiness, that could not be hid, in
others of expense that could not be afforded;
for these worthies were of that unthinking
sort, who feast to-day and fast to-morrow;
carry their purses well lined on a Monday,
and ere the week hath half gone, have not a
groat. So improvident were they, that they
would have their canary for an hour or two's
enjoyment, though they should be reduced to
take their custom to the water-bearer, for a
month after; and of so little principle were
the greater number, that as long as they
could get such indulgences as they most af-
fected, which were often of an exceeding
disreputable sort, they cared not a jot whe-
ther they had or had not in their power the
means of paying. Nevertheless, divers of
them were men of approved talent in their
art; but this, methinks, should draw on them
greater censures; for when men have know-
ledge, and use it not honorably, they should
be accounted infinitely more blameable, than
such as offend through ignorance.

"Ha! ha! by this light a most admirably conceited jest, my dear boy," exclaimed Greene, who, by the way, was a marvellous different person from Tom Greene the player. "But what dost think of this for a goodly example of coney-catching. There hath been a certain publisher to me, who is known well enough to all here, requesting of me to write him something. I asked of him of what kind, and thereupon he spoke so movingly of the great good—to say nought of the great profits that come of pious writings, that on the instant I offered to compose a repentance of my monstrous sinful life, which should be so forcibly penned that the wickedest persons that live should take example of it, and straightway fall into godliness. At this surely no man was ever in such huge delight as was my saint-like seller of books; and he offered me such fair terms for a pamphlet of this tendency, that I closed with him presently. Since then, I have commenced my repentance; and I can say most truly few have ever repented them their sins with such profit as have I; but the jest of it lieth in this—that my gain by such labor must needs lead me into fresh outbreaks, which at my need will form goodly materials for another repentance, still more cunningly to be wrought out for the edification of strayed sheep, which will again enrich my exchequer for advancing me through a new career of revelry, to be followed of course by the most pitiful repentance of any. And in this manner mean I to live sinning and repenting, and repenting and sinning, till there shall be no good to be reaped by it, either for myself or any other."

Riotous shouts of laughter, and a famous store of sharp witty saying, not worthy of being written, accompanied this speech; and there was not one there present who did not appear to regard it as fine a jest as ever they heard.

"O' my word, but this is delicate coney-catching indeed!" cried Nash, joining heartily in the same humor. "When I am hard pushed I will not fail following such exquisite proper example; and I only hope I shall have grace sufficient to turn it to as notable great advantage."

"This showeth the utter foolishness of such matters," exclaimed Kit Marlowe—a noted infidel. "And proveth that if you bait your discourse sufficiently with religion, you may have in your power as many gulls as can get within reach of it. But hearken to the rare trick I played my hostess when I was reduced to such shifts for lodgings I scarce knew where I should find my lying for the next day. This woman was

coarse and fat, and a desperate shrew; and I being somewhat backward in paying her pestilent charges, she opened her battery on me at all hours, and at last swore very roundly I should to prison and out of her house, did I not settle what I owed by a certain day. Now it fortunately chanced so to hap, her villainous house had two doors, one front and one back, and she being usually in a front chamber, put me upon practising my wit in such a manner as should most punish her, and most enrich me. So I prevailed on a broker of my acquaintance to purchase of me all the goods in my lodging, on the condition that they should be removed when I desired. Having got the money the day before the day appointed for my paying the grasping old avarice my hostess, I went to her chamber, and told her I had come to settle with her, her charges, which put her into so rare a humor, that I kept her a full hour talking and jesting, with the money in my hand. Then thinking the broker had as I designed, removed the old dame's chattels by the back door and got clear off, I begged she would let me have of her some sort of memorandum of the cancelling of my debt, and quickly commenced counting of my money on the table. My request she thought so reasonable, she lost not a moment in seeking to gratify it; but the instant I heard her proceeding to an upper room where I knew she kept her pen and ink, I whipped up the money and was out of the front door ere I could draw breath. Truly, it must have been most absolute and irresistible sport, to have noted the visage of my chap-fallen hostess when she discovered not only the loss of her money she was so desperate about, but the departure of her lodger leaving of his lodging bare to the very walls."

This narrative was received with more riotous acclamations than the preceding, and divers others of the company told the like sort of tales, to the excessive mirth of the rest, who looked upon them as most admirable jests; and thus they kept drinking and showing of their several humors. After sometime they commenced talking of the players, and not one was named who in their thinking possessed the slightest share of merit. Greene was a mere ape—the elder Burbage a scare-crow—the younger a poor fellow that marred everything he spoke, for lack of sense to know the meaning on't, and Hemings and Condell very twins of stupidity, who could do nought but strut and fume, and blunder through such parts as they undertook to play; and so they proceeded with nigh upon all the players, accompanying their opinions with marvel-

lous lamentations their plays should be so ill handled.

"Hast marked this new player, my master?" inquired Greene.

"What, him they call Shakspeare?" asked Marlowe.

"Ay," answered his companion. "Didst ever note so senseless foolish a person? Marry, if there shall be found in him a greater commodity of brains than may serve him to truss his points withal, I have an infinite lack of penetration."

"Slight, my dog would make a better player!" exclaimed Marlowe contemptuously. "Didst ever see any finger-post hold itself so stiffly? Didst ever find a drunken tinker so splutter his words! He hath a little grace in his action as a costard-monger's jackass; and as for his aspect, I could get as much dignity out of a three-legged stool."

"Well, well, he cannot do us any great harm by his playing," observed Lodge. "He is only put into the very poorest parts that are written."

"Which he maketh a monstrous deal poorer by his wretched performance," added Greene.

"But who is this Shakspeare? inquired Nash.

"A very clown," replied Marlowe. "A fellow that hath left the plough's tail and his brother clods of the soil, in such utter conceit of himself as to imagine he shall become a famous player."

"He deserveth the whipping-post for his monstrous impudence," said Peele.

"Give him a cap and bells, and dress him in motley," added Kyd.

"Nay, I doubt he hath even wit enough to pass for a fool," cried Greene, amid the contemptuous laughter of his companions; and so went they on turning the edge of their wits upon the new player, till the door opening, there entered with young Burbage the very person they were so sharp upon. In an instant the whole company hailed "the poor fellow that marred everything he spoke, for lack of sense to know the meaning on't," as though none could be so well esteemed of them.

"Sit thee down, my prince of players!" cried Marlowe.

"Excellent Dick, I drink thy health," exclaimed Greene in the same extreme friendliness of manner.

"A pint of wine, tapster, for Master Burbage!" shouted Lodge, who had a new play in hand, and thought it good policy to be in a generous humor with the manager's son.

"Truly, a good thought," added Nash,

who was more famous for commending of another's generosity than of taking it as an example. "It would be a notable remissness in us, to one to whose admirable choice playing we stand so much indebted for the success of our play, were we not at all times to welcome him with open arms."

"Truly, I am beholden to you greatly," replied young Burbage, sitting down amongst them, by the side of his companion. "I shall be glad enough I warrant you, to do my best in your honorable service, in especial when it cometh to be followed by such fair wages. But your bountiful goodness hath emboldened me to ask a liberal welcome for my friend here, Will Shakspeare, whose true social qualities, perchance, will lead you, ere long, to thank me for his acquaintance." Thereupon every one of the company greeted the stranger with as absolute cordiality as ever was seen.

"O' my word, I have taken great note of you, Master Shakspeare," exclaimed Marlowe. "You promise well, sir; by this light you do! I have not seen a young player take to his art so readily since I first beheld a play."

"Indeed you have the requisites, young sir, of a complete master of playing," added Greene. "You will shine. You will be more famous than any of your day. You will show the whole world how far an English player can exceed all that hath been done of the ancients." The others followed in the same vein, as if one was striving to exceed the other in the extravagance of panegyric: to this the young player replied very modestly, as he at that moment believed them to be sincere. This modest manner of his seemed to convey to his new associates an idea that he was of a poor spirit, as well as vain enough to take to himself anything in the shape of compliment, so they commenced covertly making of him their butt, passing sly jests at his expense, and in pretended compliments seeking to be terribly satirical; all which he took in such a manner as seemed to strengthen them in their small opinion of him. Doubtless, this made them somewhat bolder with their wits.

"I pray you now, listen to me, Master Countryman," said Marlowe, as if with a monstrous show of affectionateness. "I will give you famous advice, I promise you. As to your walk, methinks 'tis well enough—it showeth at least you are inclined to put your best leg foremost, if you knew which it was; but methinks you are somewhat too long in making up your mind which should have precedence. As to your look, let it pass—it cannot be bettered—I defy any one

to show such a face for a player. Then for your arms—to make them swing like the sails of a windmill, is a new grace in motion, and, I doubt not will take exceedingly with the groundlings: but, perchance of the two styles you most affect, that in which you seemed you were holding of a plough, is the most delicately natural. I commend it wondrously, only I would have you turn out your elbows more than you do—it seemeth as if you determined to make for yourself elbow-room. Lastly, of your voice—O' my life, I never heard a carter with a better voice; and the way you deliver your speeches, as though you were talking to a horse, must be infinitely effective on a stage: but I would have you speak louder—let the apprentices in the topmost scaffold know you have lungs, and can use them to some purpose. To keep up a good bawling is highly commendable."

"Ay indeed, that is it," added Greene, after the same fashion: "some there are of the sock and buskin who play a feeble old man with the throat of a boatswain; but when you come on as a courtier, looking so much the sturdy hind, one fancieth every moment you will be feeding of hogs or thrashing of corn, which to my thinking is exceeding more wonderful."

Others of their companions went on in the same biting humor, the object of it all the whilst, to the marvelling of young Burbage, who saw the drift,—taking what they said with a show of notable simplicity, without offering a reply. At last when he thought they had exhausted their wit he spoke.

"I thank you heartily my masters, for your excellent counsel," replied he very gravely. "Believe me I do not undervalue it, knowing that the very meanest things that breathe may oft do a wondrous fine service—as witness the cackling of the geese that saved Rome. Some of you have been good enough in commending of my perfections, to speak famously of several of the notablest parts of my body; but divers qualities of them have been left untold: the which, for the lack of a better chronicler, I will now seek to give you some notion of. He who spoke so movingly of my legs, forgot to add that on an occasion, they could kick an impudent shallow coxcomb to his heart's content. Of my face it is as God made it. Perchance it would have been better gifted, had any of such persons as are here given the benefit of their greater skill, for I doubt not I could prove in a presently, some of you possess a very marvellous facility in the making of faces. As for my arms, doubtless they have a sort of swing with

them, I having in me so much of the sturdy hind; but though sometimes it is my hap to come where the hogs feed themselves, the thrashing part of my supposed duty I am ready enough to perform, as long as there is such necessity for it as there appeareth at present. And with regard to my voice, Master Marlowe, if I have in my speech at times past appeared, as though I were talking to a horse; surely, at this moment, there is in it a notable likelihood I am speaking to an ass."

No speech was ever received with such astonishment by any company, as the preceding. Every man of them seemed as much confounded as though they had raised a hornet; and, as the concluding sentences were so pointedly directed to the foremost of them in their sharp attack upon the so despised "Master Countryman," he was manifestly the most touched by it of them all.

"Fellow, dost address gentlemen in this style?" exclaimed he, as if half inclined to be in a rage.

"Truly I think not," was the cutting reply.

"Nay, 'tis all a jest of his, Master Marlowe," said young Burbage, endeavoring to keep the discomfited wits in something like good humor, "he is the very admirablest fellow at such things that can be found anywhere; and try him at it when you will, you shall find him so expert at his weapon, there is no getting the better of him."

"O' my word, I cannot say much about getting the better of me," observed William Shakspeare, laughingly. "But can I serve any of this worthy company, assuredly they shall have the best of what ability I have."

Such of the worthy company that had been in any way inclined for a quarrel, after sufficient note of "the sturdy hind," thought proper to look as if they were famously amused; and in honest truth, whether it was from his natural cheerful humor, or a desire to conciliate, the former so entertained them with his delectable choice wit, that presently the whole place was kept in a roar by him. In the midst of this the tapster came and whispered to Master Greene.

"Oh, let him up, let him up," replied he: then turning to the company, added, seeming in an exceeding pleasant mood, "Here is a certain well-known honest friend of mine, coming to join us, one Cutting Ball—he hath done me many services. Indeed, a right excellent good fellow is he, and a useful."

"I promise you," replied Marlowe, with a knowing wink, "Cutty standeth by you, out

of return for your standing by his fair sister."

"Let that be as it may," cried the other, joining in the general laugh, "but to Master Ball I owe much; for he is so vigilant a watch, that he alloweth not a pestilent bailiff to shew his nose within a mile of me; and if any should chance to come, seeking to make me their prisoner, Cutty and his fellows do so pay them my debts, that they are glad enough to 'scape with broken crowns, for lack of better coin."

These remarks were put an end to by the entrance of the object of them; but, to the surprise of all present, no sooner had he entered, than young Shakspeare jumped on his legs, stared at Cutting Ball, and Cutting Ball stared at him, though in a manner as if Cutty was somewhat confused.

"I greet you well, Captain Sack!" exclaimed the former at last; "I pray you tell me, how are your worthy, honorable companions, Master Sugarsop, and my Lord Cinnamon? Truly I should have been right glad had you brought them with you." Then addressing Greene, he continued in something of the same strain, evidently to the prodigious marvelling of the company, "Marry, Master Greene, but this same *honest friend* of yours, and I, are old acquaintance. Methinks if I could forget that stained velvet doublet, I could not put out of my memory a visage that hath so many marks to know it by. In brief, your honest friend, with two others of a like honesty, despoiled me a short distance from Loadon, on the Uxbridge Road; and I pray you, make your honest friend return me the things he robbed me of, else shall I be obliged to introduce your honest friend to one Master Constable, who, if your honest friend shall get his deserts, may chance to assist him in making the acquaintance of one Master Hangman."

At the hearing this, it was difficult to say which looked the most confounded, Master Greene or his honest friend; and as for the rest, few of them seemed to take the matter very pleasantly.

"Plague on't, Cutty, how couldst act so unworthily!" cried Marlowe, as if in a famous indignation.

"Slight man, 'tis monstrous!" exclaimed Nash, looking to be exceeding angered.

"O' my life! had I known thee to be so desperate a rogue, Cutty, I'd have been hanged ere I would have tolerated thy infamous company!" said Lodge, in a like fashion.

"S'blood! but you must give up what you have so basely taken, Master Ball,"

cried Kyd, "we will tolerate no such villainy. Restore your ill-got booty, fellow."

"Ay, truly," added Greene, as sternly as any of them. "Give Master Shakspeare his goods again, I prithee. O, my word! I am ashamed thou shouldst act with so thorough a disgracefulness. I insist that thou give back every tittle of what thou hast taken."

"Of course! of course!" shouted one and all.

"I do confess, I made bold with certain things belonging to this good gentleman," replied Cutty Ball, seeing there was no use in denying the robbery; "but had I known he was a friend, I would have despoiled myself rather than have touched ought that belonged to him."

"I thank you, Captain Sack, or Cutty Ball, or whatever your name may be," answered young Shakspeare; "but I should thank you inore would you be so good as give me back those same things; for truly I stand so much in need of them, I shall be forced to get them with the assistance of such persons as I just now promised to make you acquainted with, should you not return them speedily."

"Ay, without doubt, and I will see to it myself," exclaimed Marlowe and others of his companions, who appeared equally intent upon making the thief restore what he had stolen.

"P'faith, I should be right glad enough to do it, honorable sir, only in honest truth, I have them not," said the thief.

"By this hand, that shall never pass," exclaimed Marlowe.

"O' my life, I will have thee get back these goods, even if thou hast parted with them," cried Greene, with equal earnestness.

"Bots on't, so will I if I can!" replied Cutty, somewhat sharply, "although I have not the honest gentleman's things, methinks he shall not have to go far to find them; for I have good reason for knowing, Master Greene at this present hath on one of his shirts; and Master Marlowe a pair of his hose. Master Peele now weareth his falling bands; and Master Lodge had of me certain other articles of linen, which make up the whole of what I took."

Terrible was the confusion of these four worthies—who had been so forward in calling for restitution, at finding that they themselves possessed the plunder: nevertheless, with the best grace they could, they promised every thing should be restored to the lawful owner, protesting most vehemently, that when they accepted them, they believed

them to be honestly come by; all which their friend Cutty Ball heard with an easy impudency, that did in some manner belie their assertions; and the young player, though having penetration enough to spy into the real nature of the transaction, appeared to be satisfied. Soon after Master Burbage whispering to Lodge that the reading of his new play was fixed for twelve o' the clock, took his leave of the party, taking his friend with him.

"I thank thee, Will, for the very proper castigation of those fellows," exclaimed young Burbage, laughing heartily; "methinks they would now as lief meddle with a mad dog, as play their saucy humors on thee. Surely, never were a set of insolent biting jackanapes so quickly brought to their marrow-bones."

"Truly, they chafed me somewhat, or I would not have answered them so sharply," replied his companion.

It may here be proper to advertise the reader, that the young player had profited nothing by his introduction to Sir Philip Sydney, or by his falling in with his old friends, Sir Reginald and Sir Valentine, he not having informed them of his need before they left England for Flanders. Nor had his acquaintance with Master Spenser as yet availed him anything, for almost as soon as they became known to each other, that the right famous poet had been forced to go a voyage to Ireland. For his becoming a player, he was solely indebted to the exertions of his schoolfellows, who absolutely forced their manager to make him one of their company. This the elder Burbage did, and with an especial ill grace, for no man relisheth doing any thing against his will; but it was evident he had taken a huge dislike to the young player. He put him into playing only such poor characters as could gain him no reputation; and gave him for it so small a wage, that he could not so much as find himself a decent living. During all this while he had to bear all manner of privations, and hardships innumerable,—now at a loss for lodging—now for victual—and now for raiment; and yet making so little show of the great straits to which he was so often reduced, that his true friends knew it not unless by some accident it came to their knowledge.

This sort of life was a monstrous difference to what his golden anticipations had made out to him. But he bore his ill-fortune with a most cheerful spirit—still as sanguine as ever—believing he should yet raise for his dear children such a heritage as should enrich and ennoble them to the end

of time. As soon as he found himself in some way of settlement, he wrote to John a Combe, among other things, inquiring for his offspring with all the eloquence of a fond father, and of himself, merely saying there was likelihood he should do as well as he wished: in reply to which he received a very comfortable letter, marked with the caustic sharpness the writer so much affected, yet for all that, betraying such natural goodness of heart as was customary with him. As the young player expected from his knowledge of her character, it also informed him that his wife assumed the bearing of one horribly ill-used. This intelligence brought him to reflect on the amiable sweet qualities of the accomplished Mistress D'Avenant, whose letters to him—full of feminine purity and highmindedness—now formed the chiefest pleasure his poor fortunes set at his disposal.

At twelve o' the clock he was with the rest of the company, on the stage assembled to hear the reading of a new play written by Master Lodge. The elder Burbage sat in a chair, with the MS. in his hand; his brother players, the author and divers of his friends standing about him, or getting seats where they could. The whole place looked exceeding dismal and comfortless. Below the stage, where the groundlings were wont to stand, was an old woman, busy sweeping out the dirt, bitten apples, orange-peel and nut-shells, which had there been left. In the rooms above, were one or two other such remnants of humanity, engaged in scouring and cleaning. From one part of the stage the hammer of a carpenter was heard, noisily enough putting together the materials of a castle,—in another, a painter was brushing away in a great hurry, to make his canvas assume something of the resemblance of a deep forest—albeit it seemed the likeness did not promise to be very notable. Here was a fellow on his knees, polishing of a piece of rusty armor; and there a tailor, in his shirt-sleeves, stitching a way at a torn doublet. The light came in from the open roof, very brightly; but for all that the building had a monstrous miserable sort of look with it.

It was thus situated the Manager read the new play—which proved to be a singular admixture of talent and bombast—unnatural characters—extravagant scenes, and such a labyrinth of a plot nothing could be made of it: yet despite of these great blemishes, the play lacked not merit. There was force in the language, and occasionally beauty—and amid heaps of confused nonsense, there were a few clever touches of nature that appeared

the more admirable for being so surrounded; nevertheless, the chief players condemned it, and the elder Burbage spoke more against it than any.

"I think the play would do well enough were it altered somewhat;" observed William Shakspeare.

"A good jest, P'faith!" exclaimed the manager, sarcastically, "what dost *thou* know of plays, I wonder? Marry, but 'tis like thy impudency to give an opinion on such a matter!"

"Truly, I think he knoweth as much of the matter as any of us," said Tom Greene.

"Indeed does he!" cried old Burbage with a look of seeming great amazement; "perchance, Master Clevershakes, thou wilt *thyself* essay to make this play well enough?"

"I doubt not I could so make it;" replied the young player.

"What intolerable presumption!" exclaimed the manager. "O my life, Will Shakspeare, so vain a person as thou art, never met I in all my days. Thou art, as it were, new to the stage, and yet thou talkest of altering plays for the better, writ by one well used to such writing!"

"I beseech you, Master Manager, let him try his hand at it, if he will," said Master Lodge. "If I be not hugely mistaken, we shall have at least some sport in his alterations."

"Ay, let him have it, Burbage;" added Tom Greene; "Will must needs have a famous talent if he can mend such a play as this."

"Wilt take it in hand?" asked the manager.

"Gladly," replied young Shakspeare.

"Heaven help thee out of thy conceit!" cried old Burbage giving him the MS. as he rose from his seat. Some of the players laughed—the authors sneered, but William Shakspeare took the despised play to his lodgings full of confidence in his own resources—and then by altering, omitting, and adding, where he thought such was most needed, he after many days study, made it to his mind. Certes he was glad of such an opportunity to distinguish himself, and took marvellous pains he should do well what he had undertaken. At last he brought back the play, and it getting to be known what he had assayed, there came that day all the chiefest play-writers to have a laugh at his expense—even his old schoolfellows thought he had promised to do more than he could perform.

"I have brought you here the amended play of Master Lodge," said the young Shakspeare to the manager—offering him

the MS. back again. "Perchance you will now be so good as read it in its present state.

"Nay, an' you catch me reading your foolish stuff you are cleverer than I take you to be," replied the other, and at this the play-writers set up a loud laugh.

"Well, an' you will not do that, mayhap you will allow *my* reading it," added the young player, evidently in no way disconcerted.

"Read it or eat it—'tis all one to me," answered the manager; and again the wits had a laugh at the expense of "Master Countryman." With this permission William Shakspeare commenced reading the altered play. At first, the players were heedless, and the play-writers amused themselves by tittering at the style of the young player's reading; nevertheless, the latter read on. As soon as the alterations became evident, he had a much more attentive audience,—the players were surprised—the play-writers amazed, and the manager listened and stared, as though under an enchantment. He continued the play, the faultless delivery of which must of itself have been a sufficient treat to any one caring to hear an admirable reading: but the passages of exquisite sweet poetry—the bursts of passion, the powerful sketches of character, and the thrilling interest of the scenes which Master Lodge's play now possessed, appeared to all present something truly marvellous.

"Shall this play be played, my masters?" inquired young Shakspeare, something triumphantly by the way, as he noted the effect the perusal of it had made upon his audience.

"Played!" exclaimed Tom Greene, in a famous pleasure, "P'faith, we shall deserve to count for precious asses all our days, should we let so goodly a play escape us."

"By this light, 'tis the movingest, naturallest piece of writing I ever heard," cried young Burbage, in a like humor. His father said nothing; for he was one of those, who when they contract a prejudice against a person are exceeding slow in getting it removed; but he was too old a judge of such things not to know the nature of the performance as it stood. As for the play-writers, they looked at one another as if each was striving to exceed the other in the expression of his wonder; but as Master Lodge, seeing he could not help it, acknowledged his play had been greatly improved, they confessed it needs be so, as the author had said it. As all the players were of one mind as to its fitness for being played, the parts, were immediately given out, and a day for a first

rehearsal fixed. The most envious of the play-writers then went away, consoling of themselves with the hope it might be damned.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Some men with swords may reap the field
And plant fresh laurels where they kill ;
But their strong nerves at last must yield,
They tame but one another still.
Early or late
They stoop 'o fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, stoop to death.

SHIRLEY.

To set a lawe and kepe it nought,
There is no common profit sought ;
But above all, natheless,
The lawe which was made for pees,
Is good to kepe for the beste ;
For that sette all men in reste

GOWER (*Confessio Amantis*.)

The villainy you teach me I will execute,
and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

SHAKSPEARE.

I MUST ask of the courteous reader to wend awhile with me in the company of one, of whom the historian has said nothing ; but, as is ordinarily the case when he hath a proper object, he hath not said one half sufficient ; I allude to that accomplished gentleman, and truly valiant soldier, Sir Philip Sydney. He possessed the comprehensive mind that could only be fully developed in a wide field ; but, unfortunately it was contracted to suit the comparative subordinate parts he was called on to fill ; and it took refuge by idling itself in its leisure, in the fashioning of quaint conceits, that suited the age in which they were produced, but were not enough true to catch the favor of Time ; besides which he possessed that truly intellectual nature which exists entirely free from the clay of human selfishness. He had no absorbing passion, that suck all into self, till the soil becometh to be a mass of abomination, that polluteth what it touches. His humanity was as different to this as is sunshine to a cloud. There was at one time some talk of his being elected to the vacant throne of Poland ; but Queen Elizabeth would not have him leave her, she held him so high in her esteem. Would he had been a king ! what a glorious lesson he would have set the community of crowned heads ! and, in honest truth, as far as I have seen of them they do lack infinitely some such teaching.

It hath been already said, that during the

prosecution of the war in Flanders, Sir Philip was sent out as governor of Flushing, which was to the huge content of the magistrates and citizens. Here he stayed, well liked of all persons, his chiefest companions being Sir Reginald and Sir Valentine. Having by his wise rule and courteous behavior won the love of the whole town, he set off with the two young knights to join the army. Doubtless were all three sufficiently desirous of meeting the enemy in a fair field ; but the ardor of Sir Reginald and his young friend was very properly tempered with the prudence and circumspection of their more experienced associates. They at last came to the camp at Zutphen, where were assembled with the besieging forces the Earl of Leicester, as lord-lieutenant, with some of the valiantest of England's chivalry, among whom might be named the Lord Willoughby, the Lord Audley, the Earl of Essex, Sir John Norris, Sir William Stanley, and Sir William Russel ; but as soon as they knew he was amongst them, they thronged to do him honor, with as great show of love and reverence as though he were the commander of them all. The Earl of Leicester presently showed himself to be a better courtier than a general ; for he did little beyond displaying his magnificence.

The siege commenced on the fifteenth of September, and wherever there was any fighting there was sure to be Sir Philip Sydney and his two companions. As yet, neither had received hurt ; but what spare time he had Sir Philip would spend in his tent, putting his papers in order and writing his will : and by his sober discourse, showing he held himself in readiness should he fall in the coming battle. But like a careful master he took every possible opportunity of teaching his disciples a knowledge of their art. He showed to them how the entrenchments were made, explained to them the nature of the artillery, and made them familiar with the character and uses of the several fortifications. Indeed all that might be learned of the properest method of besieging a fortified town he taught them in the camp before Zutphen ; and he laid it down with such clear principles that nothing could be so manifest to the understanding, as was his teaching. A famous scene was it for all young knights.

Great rows of tents spread far and wide with the panoply of war conspicuous about them, from which officers at the head of their companies issued at divers times, some on foot and some on horse—some to forage for the army in the surrounding country—others to cut off the enemy's victual if any such could

be found. Then came the great guns and the ammunition waggons, with a strong guard for the forming of a battery—and parties of soldiers hastening to relieve those working in the trenches. Here and there would be seen the captains inspecting the different posts or hurrying to their commanders to acquaint them how matters stood. In the distance might be noticed the flames of some neighboring village where had been some skirmish; and in another spot a detachment driving cattle and grain to the encampment—whilst afar off to the verge of the horizon, the smiling country looked as though such a thing as war was as far from them as is Hell from Heaven.

The enemy were of exceeding force in the town, numbering many thousands, composed chiefly of Spaniards and Italians, with Albanos, both horse and foot, well equipped with all things necessary for fierce fighting; and they had made their works of a very notable strength, but they were somewhat distressed for provisions, which was well known to the besiegers, and gave them great hopes of overcoming the place. It was late one evening, about a week after the commencement of the siege, that Sir Philip Sydney and his two companions were proceeding round the lines to see that proper watch was set, and note if the enemy showed the disposition to do them any molestation. They were afoot and not in their armor. The night was somewhat clouded, but there was in the sky many signs it would soon turn to a clear starlight; nevertheless, in the distance everything lay in great obscurity, save at the moon's occasional escape from her shadowy canopy, when the chief features of the landscape became more conspicuous. Sir Philip was very eloquently discoursing to his young companions, concerning of the right famous battle of Azincour, when to their somewhat astonishment he came to a sudden break in his speech.

"What noise is that?" said he very earnestly, as he turned his gaze towards the open country.

"I hear nought but the flowing of the waters," replied Sir Valentine.

"Nay, but this is no such sound, my friend," added Sir Philip Sydney. "Mark you those moving objects indistinctly seen in the distance, creeping rapidly along by the side of yonder hedge?"

"I do see something moving," answered the other.

"Ah, there are many figures, and if I mistake not a multitude of carriages of some sort," added Sir Reginald, gazing hard towards the spot pointed out.

"True!" exclaimed their companion, "and those figures, my friends, you may now plain enough see to be a detachment of horse, and those carriages are some hundreds of waggons, doubtless, of victual and other necessaries for the relief of this town. They must be stayed, or we are like to lose our labor. See," continued he, as he turned his piercing glance towards the besieged town, on which the moon suddenly threw its brilliance. "There are numbers of persons bustling about very busily, nigh upon the church. Of a surety they have knowledge of their friends coming, and are preparing to help their approach. Speed you, Sir Valentine, to the tent of the lord general of the horse, the Earl of Essex, and tell what you have seen, that he may have his men in readiness; and you, Sir Reginald, to the tent of the Lord Willoughby, on a like errand. I will to his excellency, the Lord Lieutenant, my honorable kinsman, where you can say I am gone; then get you to horse, and I will join you anon."

The three knights, as rapidly as they could, returned to the camp, where they immediately spread the alarm, and the trumpet's shrill alarum presently called up the sleeping soldiery; and then there was a confusion of running hither and thither, for this and for that—the grooms getting ready the horses—the knights donning their armor—the ensign bearers running to their companies—the captains mustering their men, and the commanders hastening to the tent of the Earl of Leicester for to receive his orders, as turned the peaceful encampment that a minute or two since sounded of nought else but the measured tread or startling challenge of the guard, into a very Babel of confused noises and thronging multitudes. Sir Philip Sydney quickly awakened up his kinsman, but ere the latter was in readiness, the commanders came hastening in, desiring to be placed where they could reap the most glory; all talking—all pressing—all urgent to set out against the enemy without delay. Leaving these for awhile, I must here describe other matters that well deserve mention.

There was in the camp two notable brave gentlemen, to wit, Sir William Stanley and Sir John Norris, who a long time back had had a quarrel in Ireland, and had been at enmity ever since. It chanced so to hap Sir William was first ready with his company—some two or three hundred strong, which was of foot, and was sent to stand as a bescado, when, as he was on his way, Sir John Norris, who commanded among the horse, overtook him—being sent to the same

service. Then thus spoke these enemies one to another :—

“ There hath been,” said Sir John, “ some words of displeasure between you and me ; but let it all pass,—for this day we both are employed to serve her Majesty. Let us be friends ; and let us die together in her Majesty’s cause.” Then quoth the noble Sir William—

“ If you see me not this day, by God’s grace, serve my Prince with a valiant and faithful courage, account me forever a coward ; and if need be I will die by you in friendship.” Thereupon these brave soldiers embraced very lovingly, to the exceeding content of all present ; and as soon after as might be, Sir William Stanley marched with his footmen, intending to take up a position at a church in the suburbs, but this the enemy had entrenched before hand, and there lay to the number of more than two thousand muskets and eight hundred pikes. Before he could come to skirmish with them, the Lord Audley joined him with a hundred and fifty men—in desperate haste to be in the first conflict. The fight soon began with hot volleys of musket-shot. The English pressing upon their opponents at the push of the pike, till they drove them into their hold ; and then they retreated out of the range of the muskets, there to make a stand. At this the enemy issued in great strength of horse, mostly Spaniards and Italians, and at that moment there came up on the English side, the Lord General of the Horse, the Earl of Essex, the Lord Willoughby, Sir William Russel, and Sir John Norris, and other valiant officers of a like fame with their companies ; and these presently charged the enemy with such fury, that they were, after some hard fighting, fain to retreat to their pikes, leaving a famous number of dead and wounded, beside some twenty of their principal commanders who had been made prisoners.

In this charge Sir John Norris led with his wonted valor, but in discharging of his pistol it would not go off, which seeing, he stroke it at the head of his enemy and overthrew him. His associates used their lances till they broke ; then plied they their curtel-axes with such vigor of arm, that the enemy took them to be more of devils than men, they were so terrible.

“ For the honor of England, my fellows, follow me !” shouted the Earl of Essex, as he threw his lance in rest, and wherever he saw six or seven of the enemies together, he would separate their friendship with more speed than might be in any way comfortable to them. But surely of all these valo-

rous noble soldiers, none so behaved himself as did Sir Philip Sydney. His two companions kept close to him wherever he charged, and with lance and with curtel-axe so played their parts, that each was an honor to the other. Even in the great excitement of this hot conflict, Sir Valentine thought of his humble, yet noble hearted mistress ; and, inwardly resolved to do such feats for her at that time, as might any knight for the proudest lady that lived. Sir Reginald’s valor also was impelled by a fair lady whom he had left in England, and loved since he had last seen the gentle Mabel ; but the valor of Sir Philip was all for the honor of England. His war cry might be heard in the loudest uproar of the battle, rising amid the din of the artillery, and the shouts, groans, shrieks and cries of the wounded, and the fighting.

His lance had long since been shivered, and his curtel-axe seemed to have the power of Jove’s thunder-bolt, for nothing was like unto the dreadful destruction he spread around. None won so much admiration as did he, although every one appeared to be endeavoring to signalise himself above the bravest of those brave soldiers that were on his side. He charged the enemy thrice in one skirmish, spreading terror and death wherever he appeared ; at last, as he was in the very fury of the conflict, he fell to the ground, shot through the leg. His fall was quickly avenged, especially by Sir Valentine and Sir Reginald ; and when they had beaten back the enemy, they carefully conveyed their wounded friend to the tent of his kinsman. All his old associates were presently about him, in most anxious suspense, whilst the chirurgeon examined his wound ; and when it was pronounced to be mortal, there was most doleful visages in every one present.

“ O Philip, I am sorry for thy hurt !” exclaimed Leicester, as though he was deeply affected.

“ O ! my lord, this have I done to do your lordship and her majesty service,” replied that great ornament of his age. Then came to him Sir William Russel, who kissed his hand, and said with tears in his eyes,

“ O, noble Sir Philip ! there was never man attained hurt more honorably than you have done, nor any served like unto you.” And after him, others of that valiant company did testify their love and grief after much the same moving fashion ; but he answered them every one very cheerfully, and seemed as though he were the only contented person in the place. As speedily as was possible he was removed from the tent under

the especial guardianship of his sorrowing disciples—the two young knights—to a neighboring place called Arnam; and the skilfullest chirurgeons in the army were sent to him to see if anything might be done to save one whose true greatness could be so ill spared. But it was soon seen his hours were numbered. Then the priest was sent for, that he might have proper Christian consolation in his extremity.

There lay the dying Sir Philip Sydney on a couch, supported by pillows, with one hand clasping Sir Valentine,—the other laying as affectionate hold of Sir Reginald, as they knelt beside him in great tribulation—his old companions grouped about, looking on as though their hearts would break; and even the chirurgeons, seeming by their aspects to regard their honorable patient with exceeding sympathy. He had already explained his last desires, which he had done with such singular sweetness of humor and quietness of mind, that none, when they had in their remembrance the severity of his hurt, and the extreme painfulness which naturally come of it, could sufficiently marvel. He was now intent upon expressing his opinion on his approaching death, which he did with so much calmness of true philosophy that every one present appeared to listen in a perfect amazement. At this moment entered the priest. He had a venerable mild countenance, and his bearing was altogether that of a worthy minister of the Christian Church.

“Welcome, excellent sir!” exclaimed Sir Philip, with the same marvellous cheerfulness he had shown ever since he had received his deadly hurt, “I am heartily glad to see you, more especially, because, had you not come, I might never more have enjoyed the sweet comfort of your honorable society. Methinks there can be no discourse so precious, as, when the soul hovereth over its mortal dwelling, pluming its wings, as it were, for its last long flight, that which cometh of a religious friend. Then is the fittingest time of all for grave counsel;—for he that is departing, is like to a knight about setting upon a journey, he scarce knoweth where, and requireth some wiser mind to advise with him, exhort him to honorable valor, and acquaint him with those infinite delectable consolations that spring from a life well spent. Surely wickedness must be very foolishness; for he that is unjust, or doeth any manner of evil, putteth away from him every hope of contentation in his extremity—he can only procure for himself a disreputable living and a miserable end; but what absolute sweet solace

hath a good man when death claimeth his acquaintance! He looketh back to the bright vista of bygone years, and beholdeth so fair a landscape, it cannot help being the delight of his heart. There lie before his gaze charitable thoughts, chaste feelings, and noble achievements, blooming like flowers in Paradise, whose freshness and beauty know no fading; then when he seeketh to peer into the future, it spreadeth out for him such glorious store of starry hopes, that it seemeth as though the brightest Heavens were opening of their treasures to reward him for his desert.”

“Surely, I have no need here!” cried the priest, evidently in some wondering, as he stood by the couch of the dying soldier, witnessing his extreme patience.

“O my master! my father! Alack ’tis pitiful, most pitiful thou shouldst leave us!” exclaimed Sir Valentine, in a voice scarcely audible for the greatness of his emotion.

“His last hour is come,” whispered one of the chirurgeons to another; and this, the increasing paleness of his lips in some manner testified.

“Yet of all deaths for a Christian knight,” continued Sir Philip, with the same marvellous composure, “surely that is mostly to be coveted which cometh in defence of his country. To die in defending the rights of the oppressed orphan or wronged widow, is doubtless exceeding honorable; to fall whilst advancing the Christian banner against the approaches of villainous heathen Pagans, must also be a death to be envied; but the enemy’s of one’s country must needs be the oppressor of its orphans, the wronger of its widows, and the subverter of its religion; and he who falleth in his country’s defence, hath all the glory that can be gained in the combined cause of liberty and virtue. The Spaniard is the ruthless enemy of England; he seeketh her disgrace, he seeketh her dishonor; he would trample on her laws, violate her liberties, desecrate her altars, enslave, tyrannize, and bring to shame all her gallant men and admirable fair women, who could not endure his rule. Against such an enemy I have received my hurt. Surely then I ought to account myself infinitely fortunate; and you, my friends, instead of sorrowing for my loss, should rather envy me my proper ending.

“Sir Valentine, I know you to be a truly valiant knight, and a most honorable gentleman,” added he, turning his eyes affectionately towards his favorite pupil; “grieve not for me, I beseech you: so much faith have I in your well disposedness and gallant qualities, I feel convinced you will do fa-

mous credit to my instruction. Believe me, I experience exquisite comfort in knowing I leave behind me a young knight of such rare promise."

"Oh, noble Sir Philip," exclaimed Sir Valentine right piteously, "O my dear master! I cannot help but grieve with all my heart; I shall never behold so worthy a commander." Then the dying soldier addressed Sir Reginald and the other officers one after another, and every one he commended for such qualities as he had taken note of; and each he exhorted to continue in the like behavior. After this, he courteously and gravely talked with the priest on religious matters, and feeling his end drawing nigher, he asked to have his prayers. Thereupon the good man prayed by his couch very fervently, Sir Philip joining in such devotions with a placid countenance, his lips moving though he made no sound; and nothing else was audible in the chamber, save the half-suppressed sobs of those who could not conceal their grief. The prayer was finished, but the lips of the dying man still moved occasionally, with a sort of indistinct muttering; once only he spoke audibly, and then the words were, "For the honor of England," which plain enough told what lay next his heart; and these were the last words he was heard to utter. His eyes were rapidly getting to be more dim, and aspect of a more deathly paleness. At last, there was a sound heard in his throat, which set every one to hiding of his face; and the bravest commander there present did groan outright.

"In my life I have seen many deaths," said the priest, a few minutes after all was over, "but never saw I the dying of so estimable a man, or so Christian a soldier!"

And thus perished, in the very flower of life, one of the noblest examples of chivalry England hath produced; but numerous as may have been her heroes, never before or since hath she set up one so truly worthy of the title. In him there seemed to be ever manifest, manhood in its brightest attributes, the noblest properties of mind, and the purest influences of feeling. His valor was divested of that animal dross which is too generally found mingled with it, in the shape of cruelty, love of strife, outrageous violence, or coarse unfeelingness; and it arose out of one motive, the honor of England, which was in his nature a very Pactolus, enriched with golden sands. Of the sterlingness of his intellect, methinks he hath left good evidence; yet it cannot in any way be compared with what might have resulted from such a source, had he lived to disencumber himself of the affectations of his age. But

of his virtues, surely there cannot be such excellent witness,—for no knight ever died more lamented of the brave, the noble, the just, the true and the wise. Old and young rich and poor, and all sexes and conditions, received the intelligence of his decease with the deepest grief. Few men have been so loved—none so sore lamented. But from a scene so instructive as the death of so great a man, I must now hurry the reader to one, which, mayhap, hath also its lesson, though never could difference be so complete, as shall be found in their chief features. It is necessary to say, that the event about to be related followed upon the foregoing, after some lapse of time.

The noble, of whom the reader hath already some knowledge through his base attempts on the poor foundling, sat with his ordinary companion in iniquity, the gallant before described, in a chamber, which for the sumptuousness of its furnishing, might justly be styled regal. He no longer seemed as though he sought concealment, being attired in such gorgeousness as language can give but a faint idea of; his countenance, full of confidence, ever and anon brightened with a social sort of smile, as he listened to his dependant. The latter looked more the worn-out profligate than ever; but he was more bravely clad than was his wont; and appeared as though his infamous services earned him liberal wages. In what he spoke there was the triumphant villain, rejoicing in the success of some foul scheme just brought to a foul conclusion—with a manner half laughing, half sneering, in relation to the subject, yet as regarded his hearer, marked with a mingled assurance and security that sufficiently bespoke the nature of his service, and his dependance on his employer.

The table before them contained vessels of wine, with silver cups, and dishes of gold, filled with dried fruit, cakes, conserves, and other delicacies, as if they had been making good cheer. The chamber was of such dimensions and of so fair a structure, as made it evident it appertained to some princely castle, and the battlements and towers seen from the windows appeared as strong witnesses to the same purpose. The noble sat on a richly embroidered chair, in great state, resting of his feet on a cushion of costly stuff, beside the table, carelessly using of a diamond-hafted tooth-pick; and the gallant sat over against him on as proud a seat, telling the staple of his discourse, and making the whilst as famous cheer as he could.

"Twas well done, if no suspicion follow it

Sir Piers," observed the former, as if musing somewhat.

"Nay, suspicion is clean impossible, my lord," replied the other. "The man is dead, and I defy the searchingest pryers to discover how he came to his death. As for me, my disguise was so perfect, none could suspect who I was, and even could that be possible—believing me as I affected to be your bitter enemy, they would as lief suspect themselves of the deed as your honorable lordship."

"Did he make no outcry?" inquired the noble.

"Not a whisper," replied the gallant.

"Was there no fierce convulsions?" asked the former.

"Scarce a struggle!" answered his companion, "the poison is the most subtle I ever heard of. It seemed to have entered into his very marrow, ere you could say he had well taken it, and left the face unmarked by any blackening, or disfigurement, like one who dieth of a sudden, without apparent disease. Truly, 'tis a notable ridder of enemies, I knew not so invaluable a mixture could be had anywhere."

"I had it of an Italian woman who was reputed the skillfullest compounder of such things that ever lived," said his lord carelessly. "But this is not the first trial I have made of it. Thou hast managed the affair most cleverly I must confess. I would thou hadst succeeded as well in procuring me the beauteous Mabel."

"O my life, my lord, I did all that most extreme cunning could accomplish," replied his dependant very earnestly. "Some pestilent thing or another ever thwarted me when I thought myself to be secured; and her long interest came, a murrain on't! when I believed the devil himself could not have snatched her from my net."

"'Tis strange, Sir Piers, thou shouldst never have heard ought of her since," observed the noble.

"Nay, who could have supposed the wench would have given me the slip when the physicians said she was scarce able to leave her chamber," replied the gallant. "I have searched for her since then far and near, and my man hath penetrated into all sorts of places the whole country round where it was supposed she might have got shelter, but not so much as glimpse of her have either of us gained."

"She was a noble creature!" exclaimed his companion. "I have seen nought to compare with her either amongst our court beauties here in England, or the lovely dames I met during my stay abroad. I never have been so monstrously disappoint-

ed as in her escape. I would have given thousands to have prevented it."

"By this hand I was never so vexed all my days!" added the other with similar earnestness. After this there was a pause of a minute or so, in which the former seemed thinking of his loss, whilst the other replenished the cups with wine, and helped himself freely to the tempting cates before him.

"Does that follower of thine know anything of what thou hast lately done for me?" inquired the noble.

"Not a syllable," replied the gallant. "He is faithful enough I doubt not, but I would trust none in so dangerous a matter."

"Doth think he hath any suspicion of it?"

"Not the slightest."

"Nor any of the menial people about me?"

"'Tis utterly impossible, my lord, I have been so close."

"'Tis well," exclaimed the noble. "Thou hast managed this matter very delicately, Sir Piers. Thou hast proved thyself a true friend withal, and I assure thee I will reward thee fittingly."

"I thank you, my lord," replied his associate. "You have already bestowed on me many marks of your honorable favor, and methinks I cannot do enough to show my readiness to serve so bountiful a master."

"Depend on't what I have done is nought to what I intended doing," answered the other. "Thy knighthood is but a small honor to what I can now gain for thee. I am paramount in the council, and with her highness I have so fixed myself, I can do as I will. Go get thee, good Sir Piers, to my privy chamber—there is my George-collar I would have out of the jewel-case on the dressing-table. Bring it me straight, I prithee, and tell my grooms not to come to me unless I send to them."

"Readily, my lord," answered Sir Piers, and taking the key of the jewel-case from his patron, the newly made knight—surely never was knighthood so dishonored—proceeded out of the chamber. Directly the door closed on him, the noble sprang from his seat, and very carefully took a small paper packet from beneath the silken lining of his velvet doublet, and cautiously opening it, poured its contents into the silver cup of his dependant, and then briskly stirred up the wine with his jeweled dagger. The latter he first wiped on his handkerchief, and replaced in its sheath; and then sauntered to the window, gaily humming of a popular tune. Sir Piers presently returned with what he had been sent for, and took it

to the table, and his lord remained a minute or so at the window, as if intent on noting something in the base-court that had attracted his attention, and then sauntered back to his seat humming of his tune with the same careless manner as he had commenced it.

"You are merry, my lord!" exclaimed the knight, who had now regained his seat.

"Merry! ay, and why not, my friend?" replied the other very socially, as he put round his neck the magnificent chain he had sent for. "Methinks, I have right famous cause, Sir Piers. Everything conspireth to make me the greatest man in these realms. I have no peer, look where I will; and I have borne myself hitherto with such marvellous prudence, none can urge against me ought to my prejudice."

"Marry, then you have famous cause for singing," cried his dependant.

"Truly, have I, my faithful worthy friend," said his companion, taking the wine cup in his hand, with the look and manner of a true reveller. "Come, Sir Piers, prithee pledge me. As thou shalt share my fortunes, 'tis but fitting thou shouldst drink to my lasting prosperity."

"Most gladly will I," answered Sir Piers, quickly rising from his seat, and following his lord's example in grasping his wine cup.

"Now, mark me, and do thou likewise—or I will proclaim thee a sorry drinker!" and thereupon the noble drunk off at a draught the contents of his cup.

"Bravely done, my lord!" cried the other, very merrily; and I will now show how apt a scholar I am. My lord I drink to your continual prosperousness." And then Sir Piers finished his draught in as rapid a fashion as his lord had done.

"Thou art indeed an apt scholar!" replied the noble, manifestly with more than ordinary satisfaction, as he placed his empty cup on the table, and reseated himself—the knight at the same time doing the like thing; and then the former commenced humming of his tune again, and using of his toothpick, with as careless a look as if no person could be so content as was he. Sir Piers poured out more wine for himself, and continued eating of the dried fruit. All at once he smiled somewhat, and just at that moment his patron, taking a sudden glance at him, noticed it.

"Ha, are thy thoughts so pleasant, Sir Piers!" cried the other, and then went on humming of his tune.

"Exceeding pleasant, my lord," said his companion, and smiled more evidently than before. At this the noble looked at him very hard, saying never a word; and the

knight kept his eyes on those of his employer as if he cared not for such scrutiny, for his smile continued to become more palpable. The lord now looked surprised—then amazed—then distrustful—his tune ceased ere it had half ended—the tooth-pick fell from his hand, and laying convulsive hold of the arms of his chair, he leaned forward, fixing a stare of horror on his companion. The smile of the latter now had a sort of devilish derision in it, and his eyes glared on the other with a very fiendlike mockery. The noble now snatched at his dagger, holding himself up with the strength of the other arm, whilst the agony expressed in his face, whence the blood had all rushed, leaving it of a deadly paleness, and the strange manner in which he began twisting his body, bespoke in him some terrible suffering; but at this his companion laughed outright.

"Caught in thine own trap!" cried his triumphant partner in guilt. "O' my life, never was traitor so well served! What? After I had done at thy bidding all manner of villainies, a dog's death was to be my reward; and so thou get rid of every evidence of thy matchless infamy! Prithee, my lord, stop up thy key-hole whilst preparing to poison thy familiars, when thou hast sent them out of the way awhile, else they may do as I have done, spy thy intention, and on their return make so bold as change the drugged cup for another, and so the poisoner get the poison for himself."

Here the knight laughed again more scornfully than before. At this, his lord made a convulsive effort to rise—his horrible fierce looks distorted as if with the most racking intolerable pains—his eyes seeming to dilate to a wonderful bigness, and flashing forth most dreadful deadly malice—his teeth gnashing together, and his every limb starting and trembling with the mightiness of his agony; but as soon as he had got himself to stand upright, his eyes rolled in their sockets most frightfully; violent fierce spasms and convulsions shook him in every part—the uplifted dagger dropped from his nerveless grasp, and the next moment its lordly owner fell to the ground a corpse.

"So ends my Lord of Leicester!" exclaimed his villainous associate, as he approached the body. "Truly a very suitable ending. But it will scarce be proper to leave him here, else I may chance to follow him more quickly than I desire." Saying this, Sir Piers carefully placed the dead man leaning back in his seat as if he slept, and then hurried out of the chamber. Thus finished his career, the most accomplished villain of his age, who was so admirable a

master of duplicity, that his real character was suspected of but few; and so cautious in the doing of his villainies, that he rarely left the slightest ground for suspicion. At last, his over-anxiety to secure himself ended in his own destruction, as hath been related. Nevertheless, few knew him to be what he was; and by those few he was so thoroughly detested for his extraordinary craft and treachery, that amongst them he was usually called by the nickname of "The Gypsey." By the majority he hath been held in remembrance as "The Great Earl of Leicester;" but his title to such greatness as they would confer on him, was grounded on his magnificence, his unrivalled power in the kingdom, and the consummate policy of his endeavors to retain it. He was a brilliant character, but it was the brilliance that cometh of a base metal, where the art used to give it a shining appearance, out of all comparison exceedeth the value of the stuff on which it is exerted.

Many such men there are, who by their high position in the social fabric and wondrous subtlety in outwardly conforming with established opinions, pass for monuments worthy of admiration and reverence, whilst divers of the truly great, who have no other title than honesty, and little wealth beyond their daily crust, are passed over as of no account, and all that cometh of their noble aims as far as the world is concerned—is the oblivion of an unhonored grave. Nevertheless, be sure Nature taketh a proper heed of these last, and whenever that vile partial chronicler, History, braggeth most loudly of his proud lords and sanguinary conquerors, she whispers in the ears of all just men, the loving kindnesses, the generous self-denials, the true nobility, and imperishable worth of her own peerage. Thus, among the well-judging few, models of true greatness are ever to be found worthy of close copying, which, age after age, lead to the production of others of a like merit; and thus nature fulfilleth the mission of truth, and laugheth the mere brags of history in utter and everlasting scorn.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Behavior, what wert thou,
Till this man showed thee? and what art thou
now?

SHAKSPEARE.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE sat in a miserable garret which boasted of no better furniture

than an old table, on which were some books and papers, an old stool to match, whereon he was sitting, a truckle bed of a like humbleness, that served for his nightly rest; and a worm-eaten chest that played the part of cupboard, of press, and of book-case also. The casement was small and dirty, and the wainscot and ceiling crumbling in many places. I said amiss when I asserted there was no better furniture in the chamber, for there was in it its gifted tenant; and this made the poor place to be more richly furnished than could have been the stateliest hall throughout the kingdom. Mayhap he was studying of a part in some play, for he sat leaning his arms on the table, with his hands supporting his head immediately over a written paper; and so serious was he in this studying, that he heard not the opening of the door, and the entrance of a visitor.

"Ha! there thou art, by this hand!" exclaimed Master Greene, the play-writer, with as much seeming gladness as though the young player was his dearest friend; and thereupon he went hastily up to him, and shook him famously by the hand, inquired after his health, and making such bountiful show of friendship as was quite refreshing to see. Master Shakspeare was courteous as was his wont; but still he could not help marvelling what brought his visitor to him, for they had never been on any notable intimacy. After awhile, Master Greene sat himself on the end of the bed, for he would not accept of the stool, though it was pressed on him with some urgency. Then he talked of the Queen of Scots' execution, and the last conspiracy of the papists, and other matter of news, as glibly as an intelligencer; to which the other listened with the utmost civility, joining in the discourse when it seemed necessary, yet wondering exceedingly such a person should put himself to the trouble of calling on him merely to talk to him on subjects with which every one was familiar. At last the conversation gradually approached the subject of plays.

"That play of Lodge's went bravely," said he; "but I said it needs must succeed when I heard it read by you. Surely you must have made marvellous alterations. I detected them on the instant. I did, by this hand! Indeed they were filled with such exquisite beauty, it was clean impossible they should pass for the invention of Lodge, who, between ourselves, is exceeding shallow—a sorry scribbler, who hath written nought deserving of serious commendation."

"Nay, Master Lodge is not without merit," replied his companion.

"Merit he hath, it may be allowed," re-

sponded the other; "but be assured 'tis monstrous little. He could never write a play of any judgment, believe me. Mere bombast for passion, dullness for wit; and by way of dialogue, the most tedious poor stuff that ever was writ. A knowledge of this made me the more admire your wondrous excellent genius in fashioning so admirable fine a play out of such sorry materials."

"I did as well as my poor ability would allow," observed the young player. "But for mine own part, I think not so highly of it. I trust I may live to do much better things."

"Ay, that shall you, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed Master Greene, very earnestly. "And I will do all that in my power lieth to put you in the way of attaining the excellence you desire."

"I am much beholden to you, good sir," said William Shakspeare.

"Not at all, not at all—O' my life! my sweet friend, cried the play writer; "it is your merit commands it. I am right glad and happy to be of service to so estimable a gentleman. By the way, I prophesied from the moment I noted your first appearance on the stage, you would, ere long, distinguish yourself famously. I saw it in you; I did by this hand." Now, considering that the speaker was one of the bitterest of those who spoke so slightly of the young player at the tapster's, it was somewhat bold of him, and impudent withal, to venture such an assertion as this last, but his companion was not of a nature to treasure up slights, and he took what was told him as truly genuine kindness.

"It is scarce fitting of me to speak of my own works," continued Master Greene, in some manner that was meant to be hugely modest. "Methinks they should speak for themselves. There is my play of 'The History of Orlando Furioso,' which, as it hath taken so well of all judges, leaveth me nought to say of it. There is another of mine, 'A Looking-Glass for London and England,' the popularity of which is even greater than the preceding. Again, there is 'The honorable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' that hath been no less praised; and also, 'The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Arragon,' held in similar great liking: but surely my plays must be familiar enough to you, they having had such marvellous success."

"In most of them I have played," replied the other; "and as far as I could judge, they were amazingly relished of the audience."

"Indeed, I have no reason to be dissatisfied with my writings," added his compan-

ion; therefore, it seemeth to me that I should be an exceeding proper person to give you assistance in any such performances, design you, as you should, to essay further efforts at the writing of plays."

William Shakspeare remembered, that Master Greene was of some note for his learning, having taken degrees at both Oxford and Cambridge; and, being an experienced play-writer, seemed a very fit person to give instructions in whatever he might be deficient.

"Truly I shall be glad of your friendly advice, worthy sir," replied he; "and I thank you very heartily for being so kindly disposed toward me."

"Believe me, it all cometh of my love of your extreme worthiness, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the other, with a seeming wonderful sincerity. "O' my life, I would do anything within my compass for your advantage; and this affectionateness leadeth me now to offer to write a play with you as speedily as may be most to your liking, after the manner usual in such cases; that is to say, you shall write such a part of it, and I will write another part of it, on a design beforehand approved of us both."

"I care not how soon we set about it, Master Greene," answered his companion very readily.

"Then meet me at Paul's, after the play is over to-day, and we will talk the matter more at length," said the play-writer, rising to take his leave, with an aspect of considerable satisfaction. "But one thing before I leave you, my dear sweet friend—on no account mention what we are about doing to Kit Marlowe, or any other writer of plays. Between ourselves, Kit is a horrible slippery sort of a person, a desperate coney-catcher; and his companions Lodge, Peele, and Nash, are no better than he. You will do well in having nought to do with such."

The young player promised to say nothing of the matter; and soon after, with an abundance of friendliness, the visitor took his leave. He had not been gone many minutes, when a quick step was heard ascending the stairs, and presently in came Kit Marlowe, apparently in an exquisite good humor, full of boisterous greeting, and laughing and talking as though his young host and he had been boon companions a thousand years. He too sat himself at the bed's foot, and after the first great gladness of meeting was over, talked very freely all manner of gossip, intermixed with jests, or such as were intended to pass for such, and a continual accompaniment of laughing, which proved at least, he could relish his

own wit. He too, after a fit interval, led the discourse almost imperceptibly to plays, and when he got fairly hold of Master Lodge's production, he broke out into such praises of the amendments, as far exceeded what Master Greene had said.

"As for Lodge, I marvel he should attempt play-writing," added he; "there is more wit in a sour hedge crab, than in all he hath done, which showeth what sweet grafting he must have had, to have produced such goodly fruit as the last. Indeed, it hath a most luscious flavor; as different to that of the old stock as is honey to verjuice. But 'tis natural enough, that whatsoever forceth one to make a wry face, as have I scores of times, I warrant you, at Lodge's poor performances, must needs be of manifest unripeness."

"Surely, you hardly do him justice, Master Marlowe?" observed the young player.

"Justice, quotha!" exclaimed his companion, with a loud laugh; "by this light, had he justice, he would be badly off indeed. Nay, nay, Master Shakspeare, he is as barren as a whipping post; therefore am I better able to acknowledge the merit which is your due in altering of his play. You have transmuted his baseness into a most sterling commodity. But you must not rest here, my friend; you are let slip, and you must forward now like a true hound."

"Be assured, I would not throw away an opportunity for advancing myself, came it in my way," said William Shakspeare.

"I'faith, you would be notably to blame, were you to do so," added the other. "Now, you know I have written some few trifles; for instance, there is my 'Tamburlaine the Great;' there is my 'Doctor Faustus;' there is my 'Jew of Malta;' there is my 'Massacre of Paris;' and there are also one or two other similar affairs of my unworthy enditing; I think but poorly of them—but it hath pleased his worship the World to have a different opinion. Mayhap, his worship is an ass; but trust me, I will not quarrel with him, whilst he beareth me on his back as bravely as he doth. Nevertheless, be my plays well or ill, they take, which methinks is the main point; and it showeth I have some sort of skillfulness in knowing what will please."

"Doubtless!" replied his companion.

"Now my dear sweet friend," continued the other very cordially, "it is evident you are possessed of a like quality, else could not Lodge's play have the success it hath met with: therefore I have devised a plan, by which we may both profit exceedingly, and hold the field against all comers."

"Indeed!" exclaimed William Shakspeare, in some sort of surprise.

"Ay, my dear rogue, and this is my plan," replied Kit Marlowe, "we two will club our wits and write a play in conjunction. I will bring forth what gifts I have that have so long been wont to please the public, and you shall add to them the same inimitable choice talent you have already shown in your first efforts; and the result cannot help being such a play as the world hath never yet seen, and which shall at once place us far above the paltry bombastic scribblers who now thrust their worthless inventions on the stage. What sayest, Master Shakspeare? How dost affect this plan of mine my sweet friend?"

"In honest truth I like it well enough, Master Marlowe," replied his companion, holding in mind the other's reputation as a writer of plays, which at that time stood second to none. "If you think it will be attended with such famous results, we will commence it as soon as you please."

"Well said, my heart of oak!" cried the other, now rising with a notable pleased countenance, "I will call on you this time to-morrow to confer further on the matter. But I charge you, break not a word of it to Greene, or Peele, or Nash, or any of that set; and have no dealings with them on any account. There is neither conscience, truth, nor honesty in them. They are cozeners all; and that Greene, he is the very blackest sheep of the flock. Keep aloof from them, I beseech you, else you will suffer for it terribly; and I promise you, if you will allow of my true friendship, I will, ere any very long time hath passed, put you in such good case, you shall consider fortune and yourself are sworn brothers." So saying, and with as prodigal a show of affectionateness as Master Greene had exhibited in his leave taking, Kit Marlowe also departed.

The young player marvelled somewhat that persons of such reputation as were his two visitors, should come to one obscure as himself on such an errand; but he thought there might be advancement for him in availing himself of their offers, and therefore very gladly accepted them. Their abuse of each other, and of their companions, amused him, for he saw thoroughly into it. Whilst he was engaged in reflections upon these visits, another step on the stairs betokened another visitor, and in came Peele. He went through much the same sort of scene as his predecessors, exhibited the like extravagant joy at meeting—gossiped about similar indifferent subjects, till

he skilfully led the converse to plays—abused Lodge as heartily as the others had done, and spoke with the same liberality of commendation on the amendments of William Shakspeare, proposed to write a play conjointly with the young player—and after warning him against his brother play writers, more especially against Greene and Marlowe as notorious bad characters, he took his leave. He was followed by Chettle, Kyd, Nash, and others of the play writers, all of whom, in much the same sort of routine, either offered to write plays with him, or brought him plays they had already writ, to do as he liked by, or some they had commenced, to get him to finish as it pleased him best. And every one—albeit, forgetful how greatly they had previously abused him, came in such fashion as seemed most to approve their extraordinary love of him; and none departed without denouncing all of his companions, who had gone before, or were like to come after.

The young player answered them as well as he could—monstrously amused at the whole affair, for he had wit enough to see what they aimed at; but resolved, as far as he could, to make them subservient to his own particular advancement. In this methinks he showed his wisdom; for as affairs stood, it was not at all possible for him to make way either as a player, or a play writer without some such assistance. The manager was as inveterate against him as ever, because the success of the piece William Shakspeare had taken in hand, convicted him in the eyes of his associates of possessing a marvellous lack of judgment. He could plain enough see the great merit of the alterations, but his wounded self-love now made his prejudices all the stronger, and he seemed for it only the more disposed to keep the young player's talents as much in the back ground as he could. This unworthy treatment the latter bore with wonderful sweet patience and dignity; nevertheless it fretted his high aspiring mind exceedingly at times, and the bitter poverty in which it kept him, exposed him to such humiliations and sufferings as were scarce endurable.

His chiefest pleasures lay in hearing of his children, which he never failed to do with a famous regularity, by the kind assistance of John a Combe; and in the continuance of his correspondence with the lovely Mistress D'Avenant, who more and more developed to his quick perceptions the prodigal gifts of mind and heart of which she was possessed. It is to be expected that their correspondence should be marked with a tone of more endearing earnestness as they

made more familiar acquaintance with each other's manifold loving virtues. This insensibly took place as their intimacy proceeded. The language of passionate devotion mingled in greater portion with graver discourse. Intellect came warmed with a more endearing philosophy, and sympathy took on itself sweeter and deeper feeling. This change was first evident in Mistress D'Avenant, and indeed it continued most conspicuous in her correspondence. It seemed as though she could set no bounds to her affection for one of so truly loving a nature, and that it would scarce be justice if her admiration of his genius came not to the utmost extravagance of idolatry. Never did any woman show a more generous self-abandonment upon the altar of true devotion; but in this, as she imagined no ill, she believed no ill could exist. She felt herself ennobled by her feelings, and thought she could not sufficiently testify her gratitude to the honorable source whence they sprung.

Her frequent writing was of essential service, for she never failed to hold out to him the most brilliant hopes. Nothing seemed she to love so much as the picturing of his future greatness; and her appreciation of his worth was such, that these anticipations were beyond all things magnificent. She piled up a very pyramid of hopes to his honor, which she fondly believed should last unto eternity. This not only fired his ambition, but kept the flame burning with an increasing brightness—but it did more—the high opinion of his desert, which it evinced, awakened and kept alive in him a deep continual anxiousness to make his conduct accord with it as much as was possible. Perchance this occasioned that marvellous sweet patience he exhibited under the petty tyranny of the elder Burbage, and that freedom from every sort of discreditableness shown by him whilst suffering the fiercest pressure of poverty. It is here necessary to add that in his frequent letters to his affectionate sweet friend at Oxford he gave no intimation of the poorness of his estate, so that she was in complete ignorance of his sufferings and privations. This arose partly from a certain delicacy which kept him from acquainting her with such matters; and in some measure, from a peculiar pride which allowed him not to betray the immense difference of his case betwixt what she desired and what he endured. But to give the reader a proper understanding of her character, methinks it will be necessary to introduce here some specimen of the style and matter of her writing. Here followeth an extract from one of her letters:—

“Let me beseech of you to take sufficient heed of yourself, so that no hurt follow those deep studies to which, you tell me, you give all your leisure. Remember that this constant wear and tear of the mind is infinitely destructive of the body. I am fearful your extreme ardor to fulfil your glorious destiny may bring you to a halt ere half the journey hath been accomplished. Think of this. I pray you essay to curb in your impetuous spirits. He who would win a race starteth not off at the top of his strength, whereby he might soon spend his energies; but beginneth at a fair pace, which he can keep up without fear of exhaustion, and mayhap increase where there shall appear need of it. Ever bear in mind the greatness of the prize for which you are running; and never part with the conviction that it cannot help being yours, use you but common prudence in its attainment. I often find myself wishing I were with you, that I might see your health suffered nothing by your studiousness. I doubt not I should keep such excellent watch for your safety as should be an example to all vigilant officers; and surely this is the more fitting of me, knowing as I do, above all others, the exceeding covetable preciousness of such a charge.

“But as with you I cannot be, I hope you will allow of my desires exerting their salutary influence as my poor thoughts express them in this present writing. To live to see you so proudly circumstanced as your merit gives you fairest title to, is what I most fervently hope for. This, as it seemeth to me, can only be marred by your own want of proper care of yourself; and having marked how marvellous little of the selfish principle exists in your disposition, I cannot help, at times, dreading the consequence. Pardon me my importunity—I must again beseech you to be heedful. Let me at least have the exquisite consolation of knowing that my life hath been for some good purpose; for should it be my ill hap to behold you, from want of proper guardianship, fall short of my expectations, I should from that moment consider, and with strict justice, my existence to have been a blank. But what I am, or may be, must be of little moment in so important a matter. I would rather you should keep in mind the thousands and ten of thousands to whose delight your brilliant destiny calleth you to minister. In brief, do for yourself as I desire of you; and all people, all times, and all countries shall look to you as their chief debtor.

“I believe the amount of human happiness to be none so large in comparison with the countless numbers that would draw upon it;

and look upon such persons as yourself—Ah! where shall I find me such another!—as keepers of banks who are wont to issue their own coinage for to be circulated generally—to the vast increase of comfort in the whole community. Having this office, never forget for one single moment how great is your responsibility. Should any accident happen to prevent the proper fulfilment of your services, how much will the world lose of what is most sterling and necessary. Perchance for lack of such, all manner of baseness may be made to pass for the true coinage, and poverty become more general by reason of the spreading of such worthless counterfeits. I conjure you be regardful in this point. Take what recreation cometh to your hand. Meet you with disappointments or mishaps, look on them as the natural lets of life, and pass them by with the proper indifference that should belong to a philosophic mind. Envy you may meet with—slander you may meet with—which with injustice, insolence, and oppression, mayhap will seek to stop your way—for these are the common obstacles to greatness in its early development; but of such,—I know you will make of them mere straws that shall not hinder you a step. It is of yourself I fear. No one else can prove himself your real enemy. Take care then of yourself. Watch yourself narrowly. Strengthen yourself by all possible means; and by so doing, marvel not that you weaken the power of yourself to do your fortunes injury.

“I expect you to bear with me for my so constant repetition of this my request. My zeal will not allow of my stopping short in endeavors so paramount for the securing of your welfare. You are to me all wisdom, virtue, and excellence—all nobleness, all honor, all truth, charity, and love. In the spirit of the devout worshippers of old, I am not content with the conviction that the temple at which I pay my devotions is the worthiest in the whole world; I would lay such liberal offerings on the altar as should go far to make it so. I devote all my acquisitions to its use—such treasures as I have in my thoughts, feelings, hopes, blessings, and prayers, I give as jewels to enrich so admirable a shrine—and all I dare desire for myself for so doing, is that when the edifice hath attained its deserved celebrity,—and far and near come throngs of earnest worshippers,—in the innermost sanctuary there should be one little nook concealed from the vulgar eye, wherein should be entombed the heart of her whose deep affections helped to secure its fame.”

On a nature like that of William Shaks-

peare, it was not possible for such an intimacy so conducted, to exist without producing the best effect. There could not be a more different person than was he at this time to what he had been the first two years of his marriage. He was proud of being loved by so noble a woman. He felt there was in it an honor, which for real value the objects of his highest ambition could not exceed; and this raised him so far above the lowness of his condition that he was enabled to endure it as well as he did. It so happened that this last letter remained unanswered a long while, which made him write again; but he heard not of her any the more, which filled him with some uneasiness, for she was ordinarily most punctual in her writing. Not knowing whether his letters had miscarried, or that she had been taken with any sudden illness, he felt in some way perplexed as to what would be best for him to do. On the morning that the play-writers had shown towards him such exceeding friendliness, after he had got rid of the last some half hour or so, and believed he should have no more such visits, he heard another footstep which put him into no little discontent, for he was tired of such company. Nevertheless seeing he could not well do otherwise, he resigned himself to his fate, and when a knock was heard at his door, bade his new visitor enter. Thereupon the door opened, and to his exceeding wonder, who should appear at it but Mistress D'Avenant, and to his greater astonishment she was attired in the ordinary mourning of a widow.

The sort of greeting may be imagined between two such persons under such circumstances; but still there was something in it not likely to be conceived of any. It appeared that John D'Avenant had been attacked with a fierce disease, and all the time it lasted his wife attended him so closely day and night, she had not a moment to spare for any other purpose. It is true he had been any thing rather than a proper husband to her; and his own unworthiness had brought him to his present condition; but in her eyes these facts could be no bar to her showing of him in his extremity the proper duties of a wife: whereof the consequence was her unremitting kind nursing of him to the very moment of his death, so exhausted her, that she was fain to keep her bed for some weeks after. On her recovery she thought, instead of writing to the young player, she would be herself the bearer of the intelligence, and thereupon proceeded to London. At the play-house where she had been used to direct her letters, she learned

his address, and not long after that she arrived at his lodgings. Perchance, this behavior of hers may be thought monstrous irregular by many; but as she sought no evil, she took in no sort of consideration any one's opinion on the matter. In their meeting there seemed a mutual restraint—in her it seemed to arise from the overpowering influence of her feelings—in him it was the result of an embarrassing idea, that at once and for the first time presented itself to his mind.

During his stay at Oxford he had never alluded to his own marriage, perchance as much from dislike of the subject as from imagining such allusion to be unnecessary; and in his after correspondence the feeling which prevented him troubling her with his own particular griefs, kept him silent on the matter. Thus, his youth and his general conduct, might, he thought, have impressed her with the belief that he was unmarried; and his ardent affection for her which he had made too conspicuous to be mistaken, might now have brought her to London, with the conviction he would immediately make her his wife. There is no doubt nothing would have given him such true pleasure as the fulfilling of such expectations, had he the power of so doing, but knowing its utter impossibility, and the terrible disappointment the knowledge of it might create in a confiding loving woman, he was for some minutes perfectly bewildered as to what he should do for the best. However, being well convinced that to delay making her acquainted with his real situation, would but increase the likelihood of evil, he determined to break it to her as gently as he could without loss of time. Thereupon he took occasion as they conversed together, to speak of his children, doing it in such a manner as might gradually prepare her for the knowledge of his marriage; after which he informed her of the circumstances under which it had taken place, and without imputing blame to any save himself, gave her such insight into its unhappiness, as he thought necessary.

Perchance Mistress D'Avenant had entertained some notion of being made his wife, as she could not but be aware how dear she was to him, for on her perceiving the purport of his converse, her beautiful countenance suddenly took on it the paleness of death. There was a fixed unmeaning stare in her brilliant eyes, and a sort of quick swallowing at her throat; but these signs passed almost on the instant they made their appearance, and she presently listened to this unexpected intelligence with scarce more than

an ordinary interest. Doubtless the disappointment had been poignant enough; but she was of too noble a disposition to betray her real feelings, seeing it could only contribute to her lover's unhappiness; and heard him out without interruption.

"'Tis marvellous our fortunes should have been so much alike," observed she. "Like you I married too young to know what I was preparing for myself, and in perfect ignorance of the nature of the person to whom I was united. Like you I have been deceived by fair appearances, and after the discovery of the huge mistake I had made, lived a life of hopes overthrown, and cares which every day made less endurable. When I became honored with your acquaintance, a new light shone on my path. I felt I could endure a martyrdom but to seem worthy in your eyes. Although I quickly loved you with my every feeling, from the moment I coveted your affection, I bent my mind and my heart so to my duties as a wife, that the most exacting husband could have found in me no manner of fault—for I had in me the conviction, that one who was amiss as a wife, must needs be unworthy as a woman, and that such a woman had no shadow of title to the sympathy of a disposition so allied to excellence as your own."

The young player replied not to this; save only as he sat by her side, the hand he had hitherto held in his own, he fondly raised to his lips. She continued:—

"When I learned I was loved by you, it gave me a value in mine own eyes I knew not till then. I appeared as though I had attained the very noblest and most glorious dignity a woman could possess. How liberally you garnished my poor state with the wondrous magnificence of your genius, I have not power enough of language to state; but on every fresh occasion, you bound my nature to you with a chain more precious than gold, and more durable than adamant. Believe me I am grateful; but I despair of ever being grateful enough. In the after time, when I hear—as hear I must—the universal voice breathing your immortal praises over the land, methinks I cannot help being the proudest creature on the earth, for I can feed my heart with the exquisite sweet truth that I, a humble creature of no worldly rank or quality whatsoever, was singled out, esteemed, and loved of so truly honorable a person."

"Ay, dearest, truest, and best of all women!" exclaimed her lover as he rapturously pressed her to his breast. "But there is a truth that methinks would be still more satisfactory to you at such a time, and that is—

your desert alone made me enamored, and by the proper influence of the same admirable cause, I continued in the same fond feeling. Think you I have no call for gratitude? Surely I have far more need to show it than yourself? I doubt not at all, had it not been my inestimable good fortune to have found myself at such a time supported by your encouraging and ennobling hopes, I should have sunk under the harrassing vexatious toils and troubles which met me at every turn. Truly I am wondrously indebted to you; never was service so great as that which you have done me; and if ever I should rise to that lofty summit your affections have declared accessible, believe me I shall attribute—in nought but strict justice—the whole honor of it to her whose bountiful sweet goodness brought it within my compass. At present I have nought better to offer as a proof of the grateful sense I entertain of your most prodigal kindness, save the imperishable feelings it hath awakened. All of me which I believe to be worthy of commendation—every proper thought—every excellent sympathy—each sensation, impulse and sentiment that most deserves entertainment, do declare my love of you. If such love content you well, count on it for the lasting of my life. I am yours, and if, as you have afforded me such indisputable evidence, I may claim a loving property in your affections, I beseech you very earnestly, continue me in the inexpressible delicious comfort of believing you are mine."

"Ah, Master Shakspeare, methinks I lack not readiness to do that," exclaimed Mistress D'Avenant with marvellous impressive tenderness. "That I should be greatly condemned for my conduct is more than probable; but such condemnation frighteneth not me. It seemeth that my loving you is necessary to your happiness, and that your happiness cannot help but produce a very cornucopia of delights unto the many thousands that may come within your influence! The conviction of the universal good I may effect, maketh my love to know no bounds. I ask nothing—I wish for nothing but the enviable office of driving all discomforts from your neighborhood, and so securing for you a gladdening existence. That my merit is so little I regret, but if you hold me in such appreciation as you have oft made me imagine, I am here the creature of your love. If it be necessary for your welfare, here am I, ready to live for you in all lovingness, devoting the best energies of my nature to afford you the necessary facilities for fulfilling your glorious ministry, till you become what I would have you be—the

pride, the ornament, and the benefactor of all humanity."

How this loving speech was received it mattereth not to tell; but doubt not the nobleness it breathed was as nobly regarded. Perchance there shall be found many, who would spy in the conduct of Mistress D'Avenant something to take offence at, the which their own prejudices shall speedily distort into matter not to be tolerated; but such persons are of that close watching, magnifying sort, who, if they find a flea on a neighbor's jerkin, straightway hie them with a very microscopic malice, to show the world what a monster they can make of it. Such methinks are entitled to no manner of consideration.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

She stirs! Here's life!

Return fair soul from darkness and lead mine
Out of this sensible hell. She's warm; she
breathes!

Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart,
To store them with fresh color. Who's there?
Some cordial drink!

Her eye opes,
And Heaven in it seems to ope, that late was
shut
To take me up to mercy.

WEBSTER.

THE Page was alone, sitting in one of the unfrequented chambers of his Lord's mansion, where he had of late been wont to retire for the sake of more perfect privacy in the indulgence of his own thoughts. He had for some time been in an exceeding comfortless state of mind. Doubts of the Lady Blanche's guilt had grown stronger in him at each succeeding interview, and his huge dislike of her had turned to an affectionate sympathy, as deep and true as ever rose out of unmerited suffering. That the Earl was the dupe of some base villainy, of which his wife and child were made the victims, he could not help believing; and yet the story of her shame looked to be so proved against her, that he knew not at times whether to regard her conduct as the evidence of a sincere repentance, or of a consciousness of perfect innocence. To him there appeared something so truly beautiful in her uncomplaining endurance, that whatever she might have been, there could not be a doubt in his mind, she was of a most sweetly disposed nature; and this so won upon his own gentleness of character, he felt he would gladly lay down his life to

prove her guiltless of the horrible offences laid to her charge.

All this time the Lord Urban seemed to be fast sinking to the grave. He gave himself up more than ever to solitary rambles; and his fits of remorse became daily more terrible. The murder he had done appeared to be everlastingly in his thoughts; and the sufferings that came of it were of so moving a sort, the beholding of them must needs have softened the sternest heart in his favor. On one so affectionately inclined as was his youthful attendant, their effect may readily be conceived: Bertram did all that faithfulness and love could do, towards bringing his lord into a proper comfort; but the iron had entered too deep to be withdrawn by such gentle surgery. Often and often, when he found his efforts fruitless, had he stolen into this unfrequented chamber, and there bemoaned his uselessness, and strove to hit on some plan which might restore peace to this noble family. Alack! there seemed not the slightest hope of such a thing. He liked not questioning of the servants; and Adam, who alone knew the facts of the case, as he believed—though he was communicative enough on every other matter, from affection for the youth, never spoke on the subject.

At this time it was that the Earl's kinsman before alluded to, arrived with his serving man at the mansion. He came late at night, and Bertram knew not of his visit till the morning. The unhappy De la Pole, as soon as he had intelligence of his kinsman's arrival, rushed out of the house in a desperate frenzy, as if he could in no manner endure the sight of a person, who, whether his intentions had been good or otherwise, had been so instrumental to his long-continued, unspeakable misery; and his youthful attendant, scarce less sad at heart, retired to the privacy before mentioned, to consider with himself how he could best get rid of so unwelcome a person. Whilst he was so engaged, he heard footsteps approach the door, and with them voices he recognized on the instant. In an agony of dread he rushed behind the arras; and there concealed himself, just before two persons entered the chamber.

"Here we are safe," observed one, as he closed the door after him. "We need fear no spies. Now, as I take it, the surest and profitabest thing, is to put him out of the way without any further delaying; what sayest? Shall we live like persons of worship, or starve like contemptible poor villains?"

"Nay, I am for no starving, an it please you, master," replied the other; "I can have no sort of objections to such a course, see-

ing how many of the sort I have already had a hand in; but methinks, I have hitherto been looked over somewhat. Here are you, advanced to honor chiefly by my good help, and likely to be put in possession of abundant great wealth and broad lands, by the same seasonable aid, whilst I am kept to no better state than a humble, poor slave; and, as far as I can see, in such paltry case I may ever chance to continue."

"By God's body, that shall never be!" exclaimed his master, with wonderful earnestness; "serve me in this matter, which shall be the last aid I will seek at thy hands, I will make thee a gentleman, and settle on thee in lands or money at least two hundred pounds a year."

"That contenteth me well enough," answered his associate; "I want only to live in some sort of peace and comfort, for I am getting to be tired of the life I have led: but let us heed our courses. My lord hath store of powerful friends, and get we suspected, it must needs come to a speedy hanging with us."

"Tut! where didst pick up so silly a thought?" cried the other; "I have good reason for knowing, his death would be infinitely acceptable to persons in authority; for since I have been at court, I have noted how much the Poles are hunted after, because of their nearness to the royal blood, and though my Lord Urban is but a distant branch, he is of the family, and that is sufficient to make his destruction exceeding desirable in high places."

"I would he had died of his own accord," exclaimed his companion; "I'faith, I wonder he hath lived so long in such monstrous misery."

"Methinks we have waited for his dying long enough, of all conscience," said his master; "and as I am circumstanced at this present, his death is my only help."

"How desire you it shall be done?" asked the meaner villain.

"There is nought so easy," answered the other; "he is doubtless now wandering in the neighboring wood; there, whilst he is wrapped in his miserable humor, we can steal on him unseen, and despatch him with our daggers, ere he hath opportunity for defence. This achieved, nothing is so easy as preventing all suspicion falling on ourselves, and making it appear it was done by thieves, or other lewd characters: then our fortunes are made, and we shall live pleasantly the rest of our days."

"Prithee, let us about it at once, then; for I care not how soon it be over," added his companion.

The page at first marvelled how such villains as he knew them to be, got into the house, and feared only for himself; but when he heard the vile deed they were plotting, his senses seemed utterly confounded with horror. His fear was now entirely for his lord, and he dreaded every moment the violence of his excitement would betray him, and so he prevented from defeating the intended villainy. At last, having sufficiently matured their plan, the murderers left the chamber, to proceed to its instant execution; and the page emerged from his hiding place, with infinite terror and intense anxiousness.

"Haste you Adam to the wood, or my lord will be foully murdered!" exclaimed he, distractedly, as he passed through the hall, wherein were several of the domestics; "to the wood!" cried he; and stopping not to be questioned of the astonished serving men, he bent his steps as fleetly as he could towards the place he had named. Here he for some time continued running along every path where he had hope of falling in with the Earl, in a state of such alarm for his lord, as exceedeth all conceiving. Every minute lost might secure to the murderers the success of their horrible plot; yet many such minutes passed in fruitless hurrying from one part of the wood to another. Almost hopeless, breathless and exhausted, on a sudden turn he caught sight of those of whom he had been in search. At a distance was the Earl leaning abstractedly against a tree, as was his wont, his back being to the path, and his senses so entirely given up to his melancholy reflections, he could have no knowledge that at the distance of a few yards a man was creeping stealthily towards him armed with a dagger, closely followed by another, coming on with a like caution and a similar weapon; and these latter were too intent on their wicked object to note that, in a few seconds, they were being rapidly gained on by the quick light footsteps of their young pursuer.

Bertram, in a very agony of fear he should be too late, seeing how near the murderers were getting to their intended victim, pressed on with a noiseless pace. The villain who followed his companion was almost within the youth's touch, but the latter was fearful that whilst he attacked him, the other might strike the fatal blow, and so render his assistance of no service. At a bound he presently passed the fellow before him.

"To your defence, my lord!" cried he as loudly as he could, and in the same moment he sent the foremost villain reeling to the earth with a blow of his dagger. The earl

started from his reverie, gazed amazedly to find his kinsman standing a few paces from him with a drawn weapon—the kinsman's servant stretched on the ground, as though with a deep wound, and his page grasping a reeking dagger, facing his kinsman with looks of terrible determination. But the murderer waited not a moment of such facing, for directly he beheld his servant fall, and the youth's bloody weapon before him, he fled with such precipitancy into the thickest of the wood, that he was quickly lost sight of. Scarce had Bertram acquainted the Lord de la Pole of the meaning of what he had witnessed with such extreme astonishment, when old Adam came up in great haste and alarm, accompanied by divers of the serving-men well armed. No pursuit was made after the treacherous kinsman; and finding that the wounded man was not dead—though apparently no great way from it—he was carried to the mansion. Surely no one could be so happy as the page, in having saved his lord, and none so truly grateful as was the earl for such timely rescue at his hands; but with this service the former rested not satisfied. It seemed to Bertram something more might be done, and to the surprise of Adam, his companions, and their master, he went to the side of the couch whereon the wounded man was lying, and took him kindly by the hand. The dying villain opened his eyes; but as soon as he beheld the youth's features, he started in a strange amazement.

"Saul," said the page to him in an exceeding earnest and impressive manner, "you have long sought my destruction, and I never harmed you by word or thought. You have now fallen by my hand; but from no desire of vengeance for my own wrongs. As I hope for mercy hereafter, I never wished you hurt, till to prevent my lord's murder, I was forced to lift my weapon against your life. I have before this knocked at your heart, and found you not so great a villain as you seemed. I would think well of you if I could. I beseech you forget not that your wound is mortal; and that but a brief interval remains to allow of your crowning your bad life with an honest repentance. I implore you to do it. I am confident you can effect a great good by a free confession of certain deeds, whereof there remaineth no doubt in my mind you had the principal handling. I allude to the Lady Blanche. I charge you as you look for your soul's comfort, reveal the whole truth."

At this the man fell to a pitiful lamentation of his monstrous wickedness, and very readily confessed that the countess was in-

nocent of all that had been laid to her charge, and that his master, for certain designs of his own, had got one of the Lady Blanche's attendants to represent her mistress, after she was in bed and asleep,—and that he, Saul, was the cloaked person who had ascended the ladder of ropes, entered the chamber, and caressed the waiting woman, who was his leman, and that this woman was afterwards privily made away with to prevent her from declaring the part she had taken in the deception, which she seemed apt enough to do, believing it had caused the death of her mistress.

"God help me, I have murdered mine own child!" groaned the unhappy earl; and thereupon he fell into such a paroxysm of anguish as was fearful to look on.

"My lord! my lord! as I am a sinful man, that child received no hurt," exclaimed Adam.

"Speak that again," shouted his master, wildly catching the old man by the arm.—"Repeat it—assure me of it, and I will bless thee to my life's end."

"An' it please you, my lord, it is as I have said," replied Adam. "I liked not the deed, though I felt bound to do you whatever service you required of me. I took especial heed of the babe till morning, and soon as I thought 'twas fit time, I rode to a charitable lady's some miles off, and placed the newborn child so conspicuously, she could not fail seeing it on her going her morning's walk. I waited in concealment till she ventured out of her dwelling, as I knew she was wont to do; and I saw her take up the child and carry it within doors. I made you believe I had done as you desired, and having no doubt of my lady's guilt, I never thought it necessary to say the truth."

"But what name hath that place?" inquired his lord hurriedly, and with a wondrous eagerness. "To horse, my fellows! to horse! we must there on the instant."

"The place was called Charlcoate, and lyeth convenient to Stratford on the Avon," replied the old man.

"Look to the page—by heaven, he hath swooned!" exclaimed the earl, as he beheld his faithful attendant fall senseless to the ground.

"My lord!" murmured the dying man, as he raised himself a little on the couch, "let me at least make some lasting happiness where I have produced such dreadful misery. That is no page. That is Mabel, the foundling. To escape from the plots of Sir Piers Buzzard and myself, then set on by hopes of great reward, and striving all we could, to get her into the power of my Lord

of Leicester, who was enamored of her, she at last disguised herself and got away from Charlote, and hath hither fled. My lord, be assured of it, she is your daughter, and none other."

"Will my heart-strings crack!" exclaimed the bewildered happy parent, as he pressed the still senseless page within his arms, with such marvellous affection as none could see unmoved. "Help, I prithee, knaves—or my brain will turn at this sight. Open thy lids, my child, and behold that unnatural fierce father, who doomed thee to death; and to whom thou since played so loving a part—my faithful servant,—my brave preserver,—my gentle-hearted, true daughter! In mercy revive. Unworthy though I am, I do beseech thee afford me the exquisite comfort of thy full forgiveness. Ha! she stirs! My head swims with excess of joy. Oh, my dear sweet noble child, from what a hell of torment has this discovery relieved me!"

The feelings of the poor foundling, so suddenly raised to greatness and honor, passeth description. She whom no lowness of circumstance could render servile, and that the desperateness of danger turned from maiden gentleness to most fearless heroic valor, was not of a nature to meet such an event as hath just been described, without her whole being experiencing its influence; but during all the time, she poured out her heart's exquisite affections on the bosom of her father, there was one whom she was longing most ardently to join, whose love could alone make perfect the happiness she was enjoying: and waiting till the earl's transports became more calm, she whispered to him the words "my mother!" which in truth was all she could at that moment utter.

"How shall I appear before that most wronged of women?" replied he. "But justice commandeth it. We will to her on the instant." Then turning to the astonished domestics, and pointing to the funeral hangings that still covered the walls, he added, "Pluck down that mockery of woe.—Your mistress, for whom you have so long mourned, is still alive. Follow me, and you shall have sight of her." Thereupon, holding of his daughter by the hand, he led the way to the library, followed by his wondering household; and throwing open the secret door in the old book-case, they proceeded through the passage into the adjoining chamber, where, to their equal marvel and delight, they beheld their long lost lady.—Doubtless, she was the most amazed of all to see her husband coming to her with so great a company; but how much more was

she astonished to behold him kneel at her feet, and declare how deeply he had wronged her, then proceed to state the cause of her sufferings, and the manner in which he had discovered her innocence: and, in the page whose gentleness had so won on her affections, gave her back the child she had ever since its birth believed had suffered a cruel death. Mother and daughter in a moment were so fondly clasped, and there was such a prodigal sweet show of smiles, of tears, of caresses, and the like exquisite affectionateness, as did all hearts good to look on.

"Blanche!" exclaimed the suppliant, "I know not what amends to make you for the unjust treatment you have had of me. As for myself, I have had such punishment of it already, nothing I might be sentenced to could come in any way nigh. Truly never was punishment so merited. For a phantom of mine own creating—that fantastic idol, reputation, I hurried myself into deeds that were far more completely its enemies than either the deed I suspected, or the knowledge of it I so sought to prevent. My guilt is none the less because things have turned out as they are. I might have been the murderer of my own child—I have been a merciless tyrant to a faithful loving wife.—Your humiliation I kept secret; but I would have my own a spectacle for the whole world. Thus publicly I crave your pardon. Banish me from your presence—do with me according to my desert; but to my last hour I will hold your name in my heart as the gentlest, lovingest, and truest wife that ever suffered of an unworthy husband."

"My lord!" replied the countess, as she raised him very fondly to her embrace, with tears in her eyes and deepest love in every look, "I beseech you no more of this. You have been the dupe of your false treacherous kinsman, who poisoned your ear with villainous wicked perjuries, for his own base ends. I have suffered scarce any thing. I had always with me the conviction that your noble mind had been abused in some such manner; and that the day would come when my innocence would be proved to you:—therefore I waited in patience till such happy time should arrive. Although my return to your affections I expected, never expected I sight of my dear child again: methinks the happiness of that should counterbalance all offences. My lord, I ever was your fond obedient wife; this nothing can change.—And now, as there can be no hindrance to my leaving of this my prison,—seeing you have yourself made it known and are satisfied of my perfect loyalty—if it so please you, I will live differently; but let me live

as I may, if I exist not for the securing of your honor and happiness, be assured, in mine own opinion, I shall live exceeding ill."

Shortly after, this fair model of womanly patience and every other womanly virtue, departed out of that chamber, supported on one side by a daughter, in all respects worthy of such a mother; and on the other by a husband, saving some faults, worthy of such a wife—amid the honest boisterous joy of every member of the household. Mabel blessed the hour she thought of disguising herself in a left-off suit of young Lucy's, and friendless, penniless, and scarce able to proceed from long illness, trusted herself to the uncertain chance of fortune: but more fervently she blessed that exhaustion which led to her becoming an inmate with persons who, after exciting her powerfulest sympathies for months, till she loved them more dearly than her life, proved to be those who by nearness of blood and excellence of nature, were best entitled to hold such place in her affections. Here methinks 'tis but proper to add, that despite of her many anxieties and cares, she had oft thought and with exceeding gratefulness, of that honorable and gallant young gentleman, Sir Valentine, who had loved her, and desired to make her his wife, when she was a poor, despised foundling. But we must now leave her to the care of her good parents, whilst taking to matter more necessary here to be handled.

Sir Piers Buzzard fled from the scene of his intended murder, cursing of his unlucky stars with all the fervor of a baffled villain, and scarce knowing where to go or what to be about. Truly he would have been glad enough now to have remained Master Buzzard, roystering with Sir Nathaniel the curate, Stripes the schoolmaster, and others of his boon companions he was wont to carouse with at Stratford, before he set upon plotting against his kinsman's happiness, that it might cause him to die without issue, and so he profit by it—or even the life he led immediately afterwards when he gambled away his patrimony at the dice, and so being ready for any sort of service to retrieve his fortune, readily became an agent for my lord of Leicester, who never lacked such servants, or proper employment to set them upon. At last, he seemed in so desperate a strait, he thought it might have been better had he swallowed the poison his noble master had prepared as a reward for his services of a like sort upon others, the earl's enemies; for he had become a disgraced man, his character was known, and he knew not where to look for even so much as a bare subsistence.

In a mood of extreme desperation he came to a narrow causeway that led close by the mouth of a pit,—once worked for coal, but now filled with water,—of a famous depth and vastness. He saw an old man approaching him, nearly bent double, as if by infirmity, and advancing slowly with the aid of his staff. When they came to within a few yards of each other, the old man looked up. In an instant such a change was apparent in him as surely had never before been witnessed. All traces of age or weakness in him vanished as if they had never been. He stood up firm and erect, with eyes flashing and a look as fierce as human aspect could express.

"Mine enemy!" muttered he at last, between his teeth, as his staff fell from his hand, and his sword leaped from its scabbard.

"John a Combe, get thee hence quietly, or thou shalt dearly rue it!" said Sir Piers, drawing his weapon as quickly as he could.

"Hence, sayest!" shouted the usurer;—"have I lived for this hour to go at thy bidding? Expect not so idle a thing. I have an account to settle with thee of long standing;—intolerable foul wrongs cry for revenge—years of hopeless misery demand recompense. The time hath come at last. Prepare! Hell yawns for thee, thou matchless damnable villain!"

At this he leaped towards the man who had done him such unspeakable injury, and commenced with him most desperate battle. Sir Piers knew his enemy's cunning of fence of old, and took to his defence with such caution as the fear of death generally gives. He had hoped that age had weakened the usurer's arm, or loss of practice had lessened his skill; but never was hope so vain.—The old man, as he looked a moment since, plied his weapon with such briskness the eye could not follow its rapid movement;—and though his opponent was in the full vigor of manhood, and had of late years been in the constant practice of his weapon, John a Combe beat his defence aside as though he had been but a weak unskilful youth.—There seemed a supernatural fury in his attack. He breathed hard through his clenched teeth; and gazed on his enemy so wild deadly a glance, it might of itself have appalled the stoutest heart.

Sir Piers, for all he strove his best, presently found himself wounded. At the sight of his trickling blood the usurer set up a scream of exultation that setteth all description at defiance, and fell on his opponent with a fiercer hostility than ever, ever and anon reminding him of the treacherous foul

villainy he had perpetrated against his peace. Thrust followed thrust, and all craft in parrying was of no help in avoiding blows so hotly put. One wound soon succeeded another, till the efforts of the knight for his own defence, from loss of blood and despair of heart, became more like those of a reeling drunkard than of aught else. Still the relentless weapon of his enemy pressed upon him—pierced his flesh, and drew such streams from his veins that his path became slippery with his own gore. In the end, his rapier fell from his relaxed grasp, and tottering with a faint supplication for mercy, he lost his footing, and fell with many wounds to the ground.

"Mercy!" shouted John a Combe. "By God's passion thou shalt have the same mercy thou didst show to me."

"Spare my life! I beseech thee kill me not! good John a Combe! worthy Sir!"—

"Away with thee, thou abhorred and infamous villain!" cried the usurer; and despite of the other's struggles and abject pleadings, he took him in his grasp as though he were a child, and with a giant's strength hurled him into the pit. There chanced to grow just below the brink of this fearful chasm, a bush, a branch of which in his descent the knight caught hold of, and there he hung clinging to it with so powerful a hold, as if the terribleness of his danger had given him new strength. Below him lay the unfathomable depths of the mine, clothed with a thousand horrors, and nought prevented his being dashed to pieces against its rugged sides, and then swallowed in its pitchy waters, save the twig by which he swung above them. In this fearful situation he made the abyss echo with his piercing screams as he clung convulsively to his hold. John a Combe stretched himself on the ground, with his head leaning over the pit's mouth, and fierce as he was against his enemy, gazed in horror at beholding the terrible spectacle that met his eyes. Sir Piers looked up with an aspect so marked with terror and agony, that it savored more of a tortured demon than of a human being, his countenance was black and distorted frightfully, his eyes starting from their sockets—and he grasped the branch of the bush with such terrible force, that the blood oozed out of his finger nails. But the struggle, though horribly violent, was exceeding brief. It was manifest he was monstrous loath to die, or he would not so desperately have sought to prolong his existence.

Weak as he must have been from his recent wounds, and certain as was his destruction, he struggled and screamed to the last

moment in a manner awful to see or hear. As if to add to the extremeness of his despair, he felt the bough by which he hung giving way from the fierceness of his tugs. He saw it crack and peal—fibre after fibre snap—and the tough green substance of the branch was gradually breaking away. John a Combe, unable to bear so dreadful a scene, stretched out his arm with the hope of saving his enemy, but at that moment the branch was severed from the bush, and he beheld the screaming villain turning over and over as he fell into the yawning chasm, till a loud splash, followed by a death-like silence, told him that all was at an end.

And in the manner related in this present chapter, perished Master Buzzard and his man Saul—a pair of those pests of society which occasionally are allowed to run their career of crime—to do their vile mischiefs unchecked—nay, in divers instances to obtain honor and profit by effecting the misery of the noble and the good; and then, when they fancy themselves to be most secure in their villainy, are overtaken and overthrown, and by shameful and terrible ends, become monuments of avenging justice. And may all such manner of men meet such fit reward, till the world becometh to be purged of their baseness, and the everlasting heart of nature rejoice in the possession of a generous, loving, and honorable humanity.

John a Combe sheathed his own weapon, and flung that of his slain enemy into the pit; then kicking of his staff on one side as a thing no longer necessary, he went his way. Truly, there was little in him of the infirm old man now, for he walked as proud and erect as he had done in his best days. It seemed, that in the fulfillment of the vengeance he had so long and vainly sought, he had cast from him the load of suffering that had bowed him to the earth. The sense of intolerable wrong that had effected in him so fearful an alteration, appeared to have left him the instant his idea of justice had been accomplished, and with it had departed forever every sign of the change it had produced. His miseries had died with the cause of them, and his truly benevolent nature, that no wrong or suffering, however monstrous, could affect to any great extent, now returned to all its natural, healthy, and generous influence.

It must not be imagined, that it is in any way unnatural for a gentle-hearted liberal-minded man, as was Master Combe in his early manhood, to become so fierce and unrelenting as hath been shown; for it hath ever been found that such ardent trusting

dispositions do readily leap to violent extremes, at the sudden discovering of their happiness destroyed by such villainous means as were used by Master Buzzard. A ranking wound giveth sore pains, and wounds that come of over-confidence in honorable appearances, and deepest truest love outraged and put to shame, rankle most, and are the longest healing. This breedeth and keepeth alive a sense of wrong, which feeds on hopes of fitting vengeance, till long-suffering giveth to it so great a strength as to make it the moving impulse of existence. Methinks it followeth as a natural consequence, that one so fiercely used should be no less fierce in his resentment.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Thus far, with rough, and all unable pen
Our bending author hath pursued the story ;
In a little room confining mighty men,
Mangling by starts the full course of their
glory.
Small time, but in that small, most greatly lived,
This *Star of England*.

SHAKSPEARE.

Why do you dwell so long in clouds,
And smother your best graces.
'Tis time to cast away those shrouds,
And clear your manly faces.

SHIRLEY.

Now all is done ; bring home the bride again,
Bring home the triumph of our victory ;
Bring home with you the glory of her gain,
With joyance bring her and with jollity.
Never had man more joyous day than this,
Whom Heaven would heap with bliss.

SPENSER.

"I PRAY you tell me, Master Spenser, your honest opinion of this my play," said William Shakspeare to his friend, after as it seemed, reading a manuscript he had before him, as they sat together in his lodging.

"Truly, I scarce know what to say of it, Master Shakspeare," replied the other, with a look of as sincere delight as ever was seen. "Nothing I have met with either among ancient or modern writers cometh at all nigh to it for truth, beauty, or sweetness. Despite the sad unhappy deaths of these exquisite young lovers, Romeo and Juliet will live as long as the language, out of which you have carved their imperishable story, shall endure."

"Indeed, I am infinitely pleased to hear you say so," observed his companion ; "your acknowledged admirable taste and judgment making you the fittest person whose opinion

should have greatest weight with me, and your excellent friendliness creating in me a confidence you would give me your advice, saw you anything amiss in it."

"Believe me, it hath such abundance of merit as to put all faultiness out of the case," answered Edmund Spenser ; "I am enraptured beyond expression that I left Ireland at this time. I would not have missed the hearing of so choice a performance for a king's ransom. Oh, I would the noble Sir Philip Sydney were living at this time, what extreme pleasure he would have taken in its manifold rare beauties ! But I will shortly find means of making you known to a gallant gentleman of my acquaintance, who I take to be the only man in the world capable of filling the void left by my glorious departed friend."

"Be assured, I should be right glad of his countenance, if he is so worthy a person," observed the young player.

"He is no other than Sir Walter Raleigh," replied his celebrated brother poet. "As ripe a scholar as was Sir Philip, and no less perfect a gentleman. But how came you to hit on so truly charming a subject, and work it out with such inimitable delicacy ? Have you writ more such plays ?"

"I will tell you," answered William Shakspeare ; "for sometime past, I have taken to the altering of plays of divers play-writers, who, finding any of their performances in which I had a hand, went better with the public than those I had not meddled with, took care to employ me sufficiently. With some I wrote conjointly, and the plays of others I amended ; but all that I gained by so doing, the affair having in every case been kept secret betwixt us—was the denial I had done them any such service, with no lack of slander behind my back. This put me on attempting something on mine own account ; nevertheless, in consequence of the intrigues and enmity of my rivals, as I believe, though I have already produced more than one play of my own writing solely, I have not met that success which would be most to my liking. Certes, none of my performances have failed ; nor have they been as yet in any notable admiration of the public."

"I would wager my life, that is the effect of sheer malice of those paltry play-writers," observed his companion, warmly.

"So I have been told," answered the other ; "I have therefore been advised to act with some cautiousness. Meeting with the story of Romeo and Juliet, I saw its capability for the stage, and have written it as you see. This I mean to have read pri-

vately to the company, every one of whom, save the manager, I believe to be my true friends; and though old Burbage is churlish, I do not think him capable of caballing against me with my rivals. Afterwards it shall be got up with a great secrecy as to the author, and performed without their having suspicion of its relationship to one they manifestly dislike so hugely. I am apt to think, from what you have so handsomely expressed, it cannot fail of succeeding; and if I chance to meet such good fortune, methinks I shall have famous cause for laughing at the whole herd of play-writers from that time forth."

"Ay, that shall you, Master Shakspeare," said his gentle friend; "and, believe me, I am most earnest to aid you with what help I may, that they shall afford a sufficiency of sport. I will now take my leave of you for a brief space, having had such delectable conviction of your resources in expressing the beautiful and the true, that all my life long I shall have but one longing, which must needs be, that in after ages, the name of Edmund Spenser may be found in honorable companionship with that of his estimable rare brother in love, and associate in letters, William Shakspeare."

To this handsome speech, the young player replied in a like admirable manner, and these bright planets of their age separated in perfect mutual appreciation of each other's unrivalled genius. Nor could this be in any way extraordinary, for in many things were they marvellously alike. Each was possessed of that greatness of soul, which payeth ready homage to excellence wherever it may be found. The mind of either was embued with that lofty spirit, which emanates from the universal wisdom; and in their several hearts were those feelings of gentleness, of purity, of sweetness—of love of truth, and sympathy for wrong, which can exist only in such as are selected by nature to be the chief priests of her immacular temple. William Shakspeare had more studied the humors of men—Edmund Spenser had acquired greater acquaintance into the learning of books. The latter sought to purify mankind of unmanly impulses, by bringing before their eyes the noblest achievements of the most romantic chivalry; but the other was disposed to show the lights and shadows of the actual world—the virtues, merits, vices and follies that do commonly make for themselves homes, in every age and condition—and, embodying in their portraiture so palpable and imperishable a philosophy, that they shall afford most

estimable teaching unto all persons, unto the uttermost end of time.

I pass over the effect produced on his brother players, by the reading of that honey-sweet play; suffice it, that every one took to the studying of his part with such bountiful good will as he had never known before. Even the elder Burbage hoped great things of it; and, as some symptom his churlishness was giving way before an increasing knowledge of his young associate's manifold excellences of heart and mind, he insisted on drawing him out of his obscurity as a player, and pressed him to take the principal part in his new play. William Shakspeare gladly accepted this offer; for it was a character written after his own heart, and, to a great extent, the expression of his own feelings. The full strength of the company was employed in the performance; and every precaution taken to keep the authorship a secret.

The young player was in such excitement during the whole time it was in rehearsal, as he had never known on any other occasion. He knew that the life of hardship he had led for some years past, could only have an ending through the complete success of this, his recent and favorite production—he saw that there was no way to attain the greatness his ambition aimed at, save by giving to the world something of his which should be stamped by the seal of universal approval; and he felt that a failure was likely to give so rude a check to his proud aspirations, that it would go nigh to deprive him of that confidence in his own resources, without which no truly great work can be produced. In brief, he was well aware that his every hope depended on the manner in which his *Romeo and Juliet* should be received of the audience. He studied his part very carefully, and not without the belief, an imperfect personation of the lover might mar the whole performance; but the praises he received at the rehearsals assured him, and the more perfect he got, the more completely he abandoned himself to the true spirit of the character.

The day of the first representation of *Romeo and Juliet* arrived. In a state of monstrous anxiousness he was leaving his lodgings to proceed to the playhouse, when, who should he meet but his old tried friend John a Combe. Not a sign had he of the miserable crabbed usurer; but in dress and manner looked to be as true a gentleman as might be met with anywhere. He had come expressly to look after the young player, believing he was not advancing his fortunes

so rapidly as he desired. After most hearty greeting, the two bent their steps towards the Globe, at the Bankside, Master Combe relating all the news at Stratford, his own recent adventures, and the state in which he had left his companion's wife and children, parents and friends,—whereof the greater portion was exceeding comfortable to the hearer; and William Shakspeare in his turn acquainting the other with all he had been about of late, and the to him, important experiment he was now on the eve of trying; whereupon John a Combe swore very lustily he would not take bit or sup till this same play he had seen, and so encouraged the young player with his prophecies and praises, that he arrived at the playhouse in as marvellous pleasant content as though success was certain.

When he entered upon the stage, a scene disclosed itself, which more than any other thing was like to fill him with a proper encouragement. As far as his experience went, the audience used to be chiefly composed of idlers of different classes, with occasionally some person of note and credit drawn to the place by curiosity. The playhouse was rarely full in any part; for the sports of the bear-garden seemed much more approved of those persons of chiefest fashion and influence, who were wont to draw crowds after them wherever they go—but now, when his eye fell upon the space where the groundlings stand, it met a complete den of faces, crammed to very suffocation. The rooms above were filled with so brilliant a company as he had never seen before, composed principally of the noblest ladies and gallants of the court—and up to the topmost scaffold, every place was as full of spectators as close pressing could make it. This was in a great measure the result of the friendly exertions of the gentle Edmund Spenser, who so moved his friend Sir Walter Raleigh—then the Queen's especial favorite—with the infinite merits of the new play, and the surpassing genius of its author, that he presently took in its success such interest as though it had been his own, and prevailed on all his acquaintances to accompany him to witness its representation. Where the Queen's favorite went there hurried, of course, the courtiers; and where the court came, all persons of fashion were sure to follow—and where fashion appeared, all who were desirous of some claim to respectability, were right eager to make themselves of the party. It followeth from these premises, that Romeo and Juliet was like to have as fair and full an audience as playhouse ever held.

The young player could not help seeing, among the most prominent of the groundlings, Greene, Marlowe, Lodge and their companions, seemingly in a monstrous curiosity to see a play that none could name the author of. He saw these his envious rivals, of whose readiness to work him injury he had had sufficient experience; but his confidence gained by the sight of them. With such an audience before him, he felt that nothing was to be feared; and he entered into the playing of his part with a spirit which had never till then been seen upon the stage. It is scarce possible any could have been so fit to have personated the passionate lover, as he who drew him in such imperishable rosy coloring. William Shakspeare was possessed of all the graces of early manhood, an intellectual handsome countenance, that could take on itself the most eloquent enamored expression with exceeding readiness, and a figure, which for manly symmetry of limb and graceful motion in exercise, was not to be excelled search where you would; added to which, his voice was so rich, mellow, and sweet, and he delivered the exquisite poetry of his sentences with such ravishing expression, that with music so delicate and new, no ear had hitherto held acquaintance.

The young player soon forgot audience, rivals, and all other present matters, in the intensity with which he entered into the feelings he was expected to feign. Now it seemed he had before him the gentle fair foundling, whose exquisite beauty had won the secret adoration of his boyhood—anon, the yeoman's blooming daughter appeared in the most seductive charms of loving womanhood, to rouse in him the uncontrollable passionate impulses of his youth—and, lastly, the trusting, self-denying, noble-hearted Mistress D'Avenant, enriched with those sterling gifts of mind that afford a woman her truest title to divinity, seemed ready to pour out the treasures of her bountiful sweet affections, as if to call on him to meet her marvellous bounty by an immediate outpouring of every thought, feeling, hope and sentiment, that existed in his nature, as the proper inheritance of manhood. With such deep moving stimuli, his exertions may in some measure be imagined. As for the effects they produced, it looked as if every spectator was spell-bound. One would be seen in the pauses of the playing, gazing on another with such strange delight and marvelling as he could not find words to express. All the females from the noblest to the humblest, were so stirred by the thrilling language and the passionate manner of the

young lover, that their very hearts were bound up in the story, and ere he had half played his part he had both old and young at his devotion. Such unanimous hearty plaudits had never before resounded in a playhouse; but proud as he felt at them, he was not a whit less pleased at the honest prodigal pleasure of his old schoolfellows and brother players, with his worthy friend John a Combe, who every time he came off the stage, rivalled each other in their commendations, and sent him on again with fresh assurances and renewed happy spirits.

In brief, the whole performance was a triumph from the commencement; and so brilliant a one, perchance no player or playwright had ever enjoyed. His envious rivals were forced into the expression of the general voice; doubtless much against their several wills, but as they believed his share in the popular approbation proceeded solely from his skill in playing, they beheld not in it any particular injury to themselves. As for the play, never were men put in so strange a state by one. They saw how vain must be any effort of theirs to mar its success, and kept perplexing of themselves with fears of the author's topping them in the public eye; and wondering more and more who he was. At the end the curtain fell amid such an uproar of shouts and plaudits, as is beyond conceiving. Every man seemed to triumph in the triumph of the play; and every woman regarded the author's success as the cause of true love and honorable devotedness.

William Shakspeare, thoroughly exhausted by his wondrous exertions, was receiving the earnest congratulations of his friends in a chamber of the playhouse, when the manager rushed towards him, and pulling him by the arm, implored him to come with him on the instant, before the curtain, for the audience were making of such a terrible din and racket he expected he should have the whole house pulled about his ears, if the young player did not speed to pacify them. At this the latter made what haste he could—for, in truth, he heard such a disturbance as was enough to frighten the boldest manager that lived. As he came nearer the stage, he could, amid the universal uproar, plain enough distinguish his own name shouted by hundreds of voices. This was gratifying enough—but as soon as he made his appearance, the plaudits and shoutings recommenced with tenfold fury. The ladies and gallants stood up in the rooms; the former waving of their fair white handkerchiefs, and the latter clapping of their hands and crying out all manner

of praises. As for the groundlings and those in the scaffolds, such a storm of shouts and cries, and other boisterous noises, came from them as gave to no one the chance of a hearing. Some few appeared aware of who was the author, but by far the majority were as ignorant of it as the play-writers. The young player acknowledged the honor that was done him by the approval of the audience, with a graceful courtesy that lacked not a sufficiency of admirers; and so he waited to know their will, as he could not at first make out, among the confusion of sounds, what it was they were crying for. At last, one of famous strong lungs made himself heard above the rest by putting of the question, "Who wrote this play?" Whereupon the young player advanced nearer to the audience, which they taking as a sign he was about to tell them what they so much desired to know, and there was a silence in a presently. His rivals listened with all their ears.

"An' it please you, I wrote this play," replied William Shakspeare. In an instant the storm burst out more furiously than ever. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved by every hand, and a chorus of cheers and praises broke forth from every throat. The chief nobles and gallants left their company and got upon the stage, thronging publicly around the young player, to give him their countenance and commendation; and his gentle friend, Edmund Spenser, who appeared to enjoy his success as though it had been his own, made known to him as many as were of his acquaintance. William Shakspeare felt that all his hardships and sufferings were more than recompensed by the proud triumph of that hour. As for his envious rivals, never men wore such black visages as did they at hearing the young player acknowledge himself the author of that choice performance; and they slunk out of the playhouse as quickly as they could. It may here be necessary to say of them, that Greene died of great poverty, brought on by his own notorious ill living, after finishing his last "Repentance"—wherein, with a sufficiency of canting lamentation of his own vileness, he stoutly abused his quondam friends, and secretly slandered his fortunate rival; that his associate, the infamous Cutting Ball—whose sister he kept as his leman—was hanged at Tyburn for his many crimes and wicked dishonest courses—a fate he richly merited; and his chief companion, Kit Marlowe, in seeking to stab a dissolute associate with whom he had quarrelled at tables in a low

tavern at Deptford, was miserably slain by him on the spot, with a stroke of a dagger thrust through his eye. Of the others, though they lived and produced plays, little is known to their credit, either of them or their publications.

But the success of William Shakspeare's admirable performance appeared to increase every day it was repeated; crowds came to see it, who went away so charmed that it presently became the talk both of the court and of the citizens. This can be in no way surprising, when the monstrous difference is considered, that lies betwixt the graceful perfections of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the poor contemptible bombast of the *Jeronimos*, the *Tamberlaine the Greats*, and *Orlando Furiosos*, which had previously been favorites of the public. The appearance of a play in every way so amazingly superior, and so filled with the sweet graces of natural beauty, worked a prodigious change in favor of the playhouse. It shortly became the most popular as well as the most fashionable entertainment of the time; and the players, from being looked upon as little better than vagabonds, were now resorted to by the best company in the land. The throngs which the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* brought to the *Globe*, completely obliterated the manager's prejudices against the author; and when in consequence of the favor in which that production was viewed in high places, it was ordered that the company should be styled the *Queen's Players*, old Burbage, to show his gratitude to the one who had been of such important service, made him a shareholder in the property of the company. By this measure the young player found himself in the possession of a fair provision, and saw that nought was wanting but proper exertion on his part to lead him to fortune and greatness.

As soon as his circumstances allowed, he resolved on paying a visit to his native Stratford, fondly longing to see his dear children, and to make such arrangements for his parents, as would place them beyond the reach of those bitter necessities they had had such prolonged experience of; and taking John a Combe to be of his company, they started on their journey. The day before their departure from London, the latter in passing along one of the streets with his friend, was attracted by the appearance of a ragged filthy-looking woman, in a state of evident drunkenness, dragged along by a party of the city watch, who loaded her with such abuse, as if she had been the most notorious vile creature that lived, which, in

honest truth, she went nigh to be. Master Combe suddenly left his companion, and went close up to her, regarding her with a searching scrutiny; but directly she cast eyes on him she screamed fearfully, and tried to hide her face with her hands.

"'Tis she!" exclaimed her former lover, and left her, with an aspect of mingled horror and disgust. This woman was the pretended *Lady Arabella Comfit*, the leman of Master Buzzard, who was so conspicuous an agent in the vile attempt upon the foundling; and having gone through all the grades of infamy, was now in the hands of justice, about to answer for a whole catalogue of her wicked base offences.

William Shakspeare travelled very differently at this time from the manner in which he made his journey to London, for he rode a good horse, as did also his companion, whom he amused famously on the road by recounting his adventures and mishaps in his former travels. The country now was in no way like what it was. The poor *Queen of Scots* had long ceased to be made an engine for harassing the people with vain alarms; and wherever the travellers went, the inhabitants seemed mad with the recent triumph of England over the *Spanish Armada*. Bonfires were lit in every town, and divers of the worthy country people, if they might have had their will, would have made logs of such "wretched villainous papists" as were nighest at hand. Little of note occurred on the journey. The young player passed but one night at Oxford; but doubtless that visit was infinitely to his contentation. They were nearing their destination, when they approached a cavalcade of horsemen, who seemed going the same road. Among them William Shakspeare quickly recognized his former venerable benevolent patron, *Sir Marmaduke de Largesse*, and putting spurs to his steed he was soon by his side.

Great was the gratification on both sides at this meeting; the old knight acquainting his young companion, that after arming his vassals, and marching at their head to help guard the coast during the threatened invasion, he had disbanded them, and having then proceeded to court to attend upon her Highness, he was returning home, first intending to call in his way on an old acquaintance and brother-in-arms, who was about giving a grand tournament.

"Truly I should be glad to see it," replied the other.

"Well, wend with me to my Lord de la Pole's, and you shall have as good a sight of

it as any," said Sir Marmaduke; "besides which you shall behold his fair daughter, the Lady Mabel, whose history is so marvellous strange."

"De la Pole!—Mabel!" exclaimed William Shakspeare, in exceeding astonishment. "Surely that cannot be the exquisite sweet creature brought up as a foundling by Dame Lucy."

"The same, Master Shakspeare, the same, o' my life! I know the whole story," answered the old knight.

"Never heard I anything so wondrous," said the young player. "As I live, Sir Marmaduke, that very Mabel travelled with me, disguised in male apparel, from close upon Stratford to the neighborhood of the Lord Urban's mansion. Despite her garments, I recognized her ere I had been long in her company; but fancying she might feel some disquietude if she thought I knew who she was, I treated her for what she appeared to be. She gave me to understand she fled from some villainous intentions: and believing, when my Lord de la Pole benevolently took charge of her, taking her to be what she represented, that there was no likelihood of her being so safely disposed of elsewhere, I took my leave of her; but I have often thought of the gentle, graceful creature since then, and this present moment am journeying to my lord's mansion to make inquiries concerning of her fortunes."

At this Sir Marmaduke marvelled greatly, and not without a famous admiration of the honorableness of his young friend's delicate behavior to the distressed damsel. After some further talk on the subject, he spoke of his nephews: Sir Reginald had lately married; and Sir Valentine, after distinguished himself very notably, had promised in a few months to visit his kinsman.

"He might have had the most covetable matches in the kingdom," added the old knight; "but he seemeth in no way inclined to marry. Methinks the death of his noble friend, Sir Philip Sydney, hath so grieved him, he cannot be got to care to love any other person."

"Doth he know of this change in the foundling's fortunes?" inquired the young player.

"Not a word," replied the knight; "for I received not advice of it myself till I was on the point of starting from London—he being then with the court at Greenwich; and from what I have learned—my intelligence coming from no other than the happy father—that though the earl hath sent, far and near, invitations to his entertainment, he doth not

intend making any acquainted with the proper cause of it, till the whole company are assembled."

"I have had excellent evidence for knowing Sir Valentine loved the Lady Mabel," observed William Shakspeare, "and I doubt not at all his refusals of marriage were created from his affection being engrossed by the humble beauty at Charlcote whom he must long have lost sight of."

"I hope it may be the case with all my heart!" exclaimed his companion earnestly, "for doubt I not—to say nought of his own merit, which methinks should make its way anywhere—my old friendship with the earl will give no little help to my nephew's successful wooing of his daughter: and I should be right glad to see him happy, for he hath seemed in very woful case a long time past."

"Think you he will be at the tournament?" inquired the other.

"Surely, he cannot fail," replied Sir Marmaduke. "He taketh great delight in such things; and it is scarce possible he should not have intelligence of it. Nevertheless, if I find him not amongst the company, I will use all despatch in making him acquainted with whatsoever is most desirous he should know." Here the conversation was interrupted by the approach of Master Peregrine and Sir Johan, to whom John a Combe, in the meanwhile, had been relating his young friend's notable success.

"This cometh entirely of those proper studies we pursued together," gravely observed the chaplain, after a sufficiency of congratulation:—"be assured, young sir, there is nought so like to lead to greatness as deep study of the classic writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans."

"Ancient pudding!" exclaimed the antiquary, in a monstrous indignation. "Dost claim my admirable rare scholar of me on such weak pretences? Hast forgot the many hours I have passed in Sir Marmaduke's library teaching of this my pupil? Ancient Greeks! Ancient fig's ends! I tell thee all his fame proceeded from my extreme pains-taking he should be familiar with every one of those sweet repositories of delectable knowledge, the old ballads."

"Old fiddlesticks!" retorted Sir Johan, less inclined now than ever to lose the reputation of having instructed so worthy a scholar; and there was like to be again very desperate war between them on this point, had not the young player made such acknowledgments as went far towards the satisfying of both parties. For all which,

to the day of their deaths, each considered Master Shakspeare's infinite genius came exclusively of his teaching.

Before the latter could get sight of the Lady Mabel, she and her noble parents had been informed of his arrival by Sir Marmaduke, who took especial care aught he knew to his advantage should have a faithful intelligencer; and there could scarce be any persons who could so perfectly appreciate the conduct of his young friend as those to whom he spoke. The youthful student the poor foundling had beheld with such interest asleep under the tree, and who had rescued her so gallantly from the power of the licentious lord and his villainous assistants, and had moreover behaved so brotherly during her painful travelling after her escape from Charlote, was sure to be received by the high-born lady, with sincere welcome and gratitude. Indeed, the earl and the countess did vie with her how they could best show their respect to one to whom they considered themselves so deeply indebted; but her particular delight seemed to be to have him with her on every occasion, to hear him discourse, which on all matters he could right eloquently, but if there was one subject she preferred to others, doubt not it was his former companion and excellent gallant friend, Sir Valentine.

In honest truth, her thoughts had been in that channel far more than ever, since the discovery of her parentage; and, with a woman's gratitude, she longed for nothing so much as some opportunity to testify to the generous-hearted gentleman who would have taken her to wife though she was of such humble poor condition, that she lacked not a proper estimation of his true affection. Whilst preparations were going on for a grand chivalrous entertainment which the earl had decided on giving for purposes of his own, a little plot was got up by him and others—of whom was William Shakspeare—to assist in carrying it on to the conclusion all desired. On the day appointed, the principal nobles and gallants in the land came thronging to the lists, and a crowd of curious spectators, from far and near, assembled in the great park, to see them engage. Proper buildings had been there erected; and in a commanding situation the Countess and her daughter sat surrounded by the chief nobility of the country, to witness the proceedings. Among the knights present the Lady Mabel looked in vain for the one she most desired to see. She heard their titles, she beheld their cognizances, but all were strange to her; and she looked on with

a careless eye, and took no sort of interest in the scene. Her attention was now almost entirely devoted to Master Shakspeare, whom she had made sit close behind her. All at once a great shouting arose from the crowd, which made her look again upon the contending knights, and then she beheld one whom she had not seen before, and whose title she had not heard. He had entered the barriers when she was most deeply engaged in conversing with the young player, having arrived late. He was clothed in a complete suit of black armor, with his visor down. Noting that this knight overthrew all who opposed him, she asked who he was; thereupon Master Shakspeare gave her a very moving history of him, stating that he was called the black knight, and was an exceeding mysterious personage, of whom none knew anything, whereof the consequence was no person was so much talked of. Among other things, he said he had heard his aspect was so marvellously ill-favored that he rarely made it visible.

Nevertheless, of that press of chivalry none showed such skill as the Black Knight—ill favored as he might be—and he was publicly declared to be the chiefest of all for knightly accomplishments. When the tourney was over, the Lady Mabel left her seat, exceedingly dull at heart, her lover had not fulfilled her expectations by being one of the actors in the scene she had just witnessed. She was in one of the principal chambers in the mansion, in the midst of a most courtly company, in her attire rivaling the splendor of the noblest dame present, and in her beauty far surpassing the loveliest. The young player was beside her, seeming to be very intent on affording her some sort of amusement, by telling her strange tales of the Black Knight in which it was difficult to say whether the horrible or the ludicrous most predominated. Whilst he kept her attention engaged, there approached towards them the very object of their conversation, with his visor up, accompanied by the Earl and Sir Marmaduke. He stopped suddenly as he caught sight of her, and gazed in rapt astonishment on her exquisite fair countenance and majestic figure.

"Sir Knight," said the Earl, after he had allowed the other, as he thought, to marvel to an absolute sufficiency, "this is my daughter of whom I spoke. It grieveth me to the heart I cannot, after all I have said, get you to entertain the idea of becoming my son-in-law."

"Mabel!" rapturously exclaimed the Black Knight, and so audibly, the lady

turned her gaze upon him on the instant. The voice stirred her deepest affections; and one glance sufficed to call them into fullest action. The knight was Sir Valentine, who had worn black armor since the death of his lamented and valiant friend Sir Philip Sydney. All traces of the Earl's suffering had vanished, under the gladdening influence of those excellent ministers of good, whom he had treated with such monstrous injustice; and their happiness was now his sole care. He took care to make public the wrong he had done, that his story might be a lesson unto all such mere slaves of reputation, and their merit might be examples to every honest wife and affectionate daughter, as long as the world lasted. His efforts were crowned with a deserved success. The Countess, who was hailed by her friends as one risen from the grave, was in such content as she had never till then had knowledge of; and her daughter, in the fond devotion of Sir Valentine, enjoyed such extreme happiness, as was the fittest recompense for her many painful troubles. Of the spectators, not one so much enjoyed the spectacle of her felicity, as he whose boyish dreams she had made so radiant with her early beauty. He had entered heart and soul into the little plot that had been designed for the purpose of bringing the lovers together; and witnessed the mutual delicious pleasure of their recognition, with a heart as pregnant with true enjoyment as had either.

Having promised every one of that now happy family, to their united earnest pressing, he would be present at the nuptials of Sir Valentine and Lady Mabel, he once more pursued his journey, accompanied by the same party with whom he had visited the Earl's mansion. As he drew nigh the familiar places bordering on Stratford, every spot called up a thousand delightful associations. Far different were his feelings at approaching his native town, to what they had been when he last left it. Then, desperate unhappiness had banished him, friendless and obscure—but now, he returned full of pleasure in the present, and hope in the future, lacking neither store of friends, nor sufficiency of reputation; and having no sort of anxieties, save for those from whom he had been so long parted. Whilst his mind was filled with sweet loving thoughts of his dear children and parents, kindred and friends, he was accosted by a voice he could not fail of recognizing in a moment.

"Said I not so, my lambkin?" exclaimed Nurse Cicely, seeming to be overjoyed at beholding her foster-child returning to his

native town in so gallant a fashion. She stood in the very same spot where he had last seen her and he now remembered the fair hopes she had given him when he was in so despairing a humor. He gladly stopped and greeted the old affectionate creature in his kindest manner, and bid her be of good heart, for he would visit her anon, which put her in such garrulous contentation, she went off to her gossips, and would talk of nothing else. Everything seemed just as he had left it, and his old acquaintances appeared in no way altered,—save only Skinny Dickon, who had grown to be as stout a man as any in the town. As he rode by, there stood the Widow Pippins, leaning over the rail in her gallery, laughing with as notable a heartiness as ever, at no other than that still most miserable of constables, Oliver Dumps, upon whom it looked monstrous like as if she had been playing some of her jests.—There sat the two merry wives, Mistress Dowlas and Mistress Malnsey, gossiping at the latter's casement, whilst the worthy aldermen, their husbands, were standing at their several doors, shouting little matters of news across the street; there was Mother Flytrap and Dame Lambswool, Maud and her partner Humphrey, gaping with open mouths at the approaching cavalcade till the latter, recognizing his old master's son, threw up his cap in the air, and shouted his congratulations in so hearty a manner, the whole town were soon made acquainted with their visitor. All this was exquisite to William Shakspeare; but when, on entering Henly Street, he beheld his honest old father in his homely jerkin, standing at the door looking to see what made that sudden outcry, his feelings became so powerful, he put spurs to his horse, and rode up to the door as rapidly as he could; but the joyful cry to his dame of John Shakspeare, as he beheld his son, brought out the fond mother in a marvellous haste, and the young player was scarce free of his saddle when he found her loving arms around his neck. A few minutes after, his happiness was completed by holding in his tender embraces first one and then the other of his dear children; and this he did in such a manner as seemed to show he knew not which of the three he ought to love the most.

"Ah!" exclaimed the youthful father, in an impassioned burst of tenderness, as he pressed them in his fond embrace,—the others, with delighted aspects, noting his famous enjoyment, "Such sweet happiness never tasted I all my days! Who would not toil—who would not suffer—who would

not school his affections unto virtuous honest purposes through the bitterest pangs humanity hath knowledge of, to crown his labor with pleasure of so sterling a sort?—

Truly, methinks such glad occasions prove, with the choicest of argument, all else but goodness is utter folly, and as absolute desperate ignorance as ever existed."

HERE ENDETH THE STORY OF
THE YOUTH OF SHAKSPEARE.

NOTE.—The courteous reader, with a very bounteous kindness, and it is to be hoped, not without a fair entertainment, hath thus far proceeded with the moving history of this truly glorious character; yet if he loveth the subject as it deserves he should, he ought in no manner to be content here to stop; but proceed with a proper diligence to the perusal of what is set down concerning of his after brilliant career, and likewise of those master spirits of the age by whom he got to be surrounded, which, with other matters of a like enticing sort, to wit, most stirring adventures—most delicate love-scenes—most choice humors and exquisite witty jests, he may count on having famous store of (else sundry notable critics err hugely) in the company of "Shakspeare and his Friends."







SHAKSPEARE
AND
HIS FRIENDS,

OR,
The Golden Age of Merry England.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE YOUTH OF SHAKSPEARE."

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world,—"This was a man."
JULIUS CÆSAR.

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HERE BEGINNETH THE STORY

OF

SHAKSPEARE AND HIS FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
Why should a man whose blood is warm within
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
Sleep when he wakes!—and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish?

SHAKSPEARE.

— Soul of the age!

Th' applause, delight,—the wonder of our stage!
My Shakspeare, rise!

BEN JONSON.

I PRYTHEE have patience, courteous reader! the whilst I describe a certain chamber well worthy of most minute delineation—as thou wilt see anon—from its having been the retreat, or closet, or place retired from the public eye, in which the master spirit of his age, and the glory of all times to come, did first develop those right famous qualities from which the world hath received such infinite profit and delight. I will not trouble thee with a vain show of phrases architectural, which crabbed antiquarians do much affect; for I am not learned in the mystery of stone and timber; but what true heart and simple skill can do with language, will I essay, to give thee an accurate conception of a place that hath so many admirable recommendations to thy attention.

It was a room of no extraordinary dimensions, yet was it not stinted to space. The ceiling was of a moderate height, and the sides of the chamber were of oak, the panels of which were adorned with a goodly show of delicate tracery, like unto the folds of linen; and round the chimney-piece was a most liberal dis-

play of carving, in fruits and foliage. A large vase of living flowers, that filled the chamber with a ravishing sweetness, stood beside the fire-dogs. One broad casement, composed of many little panes let into pieces of lead, looked out upon the river, and the centre part of it being open like a door, at divers times might be heard the mellow “ye, ho!” of the bargeman working his oar, as he piloted his heavy craft toward the city wharves; or, mayhap, softened in the distance, the burden of a popular ballad, sung by a party of merry apprentices going a pleasuring on the water. At one end of the room there rested on the oak floor a large heavy press of dark walnut-tree wood, ornamented with rude carvings of Adam and Eve, and the tree of knowledge; and opposite stood an ancient bookcase, the shelves of which supported a number of famous black-letter volumes, folios and others, cased in parchment or roan bindings. On several narrow, high-backed chairs, of carved oak, might be seen different articles of apparel—a hat on one, a cloak on another, and mayhap, a rapier resting against a third. In one corner were sundry swords and a matchlock; in another, divers pieces of old armor. An empty tankard, and the remains of the morning repast, stood upon a large table in the centre of the chamber; and near the window, before a smaller table covered with papers, and in an antique arm-chair, sat its illustrious occupant.

Although his hose were ungartered, and his doublet had been left unbraced, his right noble countenance and worship-

ful bearing left not the spectator opportunity to notice the negligence of his attire. His face, which was of a manly age—two years short of thirty—had been most providentially fashioned,—with a forehead of marvellous capacity—eyes mild, yet lively withal—a mouth impressed with a very amatory eloquence—and a beard of a perfect gravity. Nor were his limbs of a less favorable mould. In fact, he was a man of multitudinous good graces. I would there were more such. Many such there never can be, for admirable as he was in person, he was still more estimable in mind; and the union of these excellences in a like liberal proportion is of such rarity, that peradventure the example will last out the world.

I am but a sorry limner; but had I the art of Master Holbein, of famous memory, I could not hope, in a portrait, to do him justice; nevertheless, as what the original hath done hath been so singularly well liked, I despair not that posterity will give him proper countenance. However, suffice it to say, he sat writing with a creditable diligence; ever and anon leaning against his seat, abstractedly as it were; and when he had sufficiently pondered on the matter with which he was in progress, his pen resumed its path along the paper with additional speed. Sometimes he would smile as he wrote, as if tickled with the creations of his own fancy; and once his humor seemed so touched with some palpable conceit, that he cast down the pen, and throwing himself back in his chair, did laugh right heartily. At other times, when he appeared to have written passages of a graver purport, which gave him more than passable satisfaction, he took the paper in his hand, and did read aloud, with a rich voice and a most felicitous expression; and of a verity, never was the air so filled with delectable thoughts. At this time there was heard a knocking at the door. "Come in!" exclaimed he; and thereupon entered one apparelled like a young gallant, with hat and feather of a goodly fashion, a delicate satin doublet, an excellent fine ruff, a cloak worn daintily on the shoulder, and a long rapier fastened to his side: trunks prettily cut and embroidered, with silk hose and ruffled boots.

"Ah, Dick!" said he in the chair, laughingly, as he recognised the good-humored features of his visiter, and scrutinizing his attire as he closed the door and was advancing into the room, "I'faith thou lookest as fine as a snake

that hath just cast its skin; and," added he, with more emphasis, "art as useful to any good purpose I'll be bound."

"Will! Will! thou hast a most malignant wit!" cried the other, as he approached his friend with mock gravity, and shook him earnestly by the hand. "But what thinkest thou of these braveries?" said he, standing as upright as he might, spreading out his cloak, and readjusting his hat. "I fancied that we, the queen's majesty's poor players, ought to dress as becomes the queen's majesty, and therefore have I robbed myself anew. What thinkest thou of the cock of this hat? 'Tis in admirable conceit, is it not?—and the feather—doth it not hang marvellously well? Doth not this cloak become me infinitely? and the slashing of this doublet, is it not of the most superlative fashion?"

"In truth, Dick," remarked his companion, drily, as he pushed back his chair to take a better view of his visiter, "I've seen many a jackdaw cut a finer figure?"

"A plague on thy pestilent jests!" exclaimed the other with assumed indignation.

"But as thou askest for my opinion," he resumed, "I will tell thee. Didst thou wish to attire thyself as becometh the queen's majesty, thou shouldst have had recourse to the queen's majesty's wardrobe: for in honest truth, Dick, I do not think thy present dress would become that illustrious princess in the smallest degree"

"Oh thou pernicious varlet!"

"As for the cock of thy hat, 'tis certainly in admirable conceit, or rather, the conceit is in it, for thy head is in it; and I do not flatter thee when I say there is no lack of conceit there."

"Perdition seize thy wit!"

"Thy feather doth hang marvellously well—I'faith I doubt much if thou wouldst hang better thyself."

"Enough, enough, Will," eagerly exclaimed his associate, putting his hands together, as if begging for mercy; "if thou hast any bowels of compassion, spare me."

"And if thou wert half as well slashed as thy doublet," continued his friend, inattentive to his remonstrance, "I think thou wouldst be in a much more superlative fashion than thou art now."

"O' my word, Will," said the other, laughing, as he took off his hat and flung himself into a chair, "thou art all points, like a hedgehog, or like the naughty girl

in the story-book, out of thy mouth there cometh nothing but venomous things."

"But what mercer art thou attempting to ruin?" inquired his companion.

"A fig for the mercer—'tis the mercer's daughter I seek!" replied his guest.

"Attempt to ruin a mercer's daughter!" exclaimed the other, half starting from his chair with affected surprise. "Fie on thee, for a reprobate! thou art enough to corrupt us all; thou wilt have the whole city up in arms against us, and we shall be obliged to fly from the Bank-side to escape the stocks."

"I meant not that, Will—I am a heathen if I meant that; but thou knowest my failing—I am always after the women. Oh, those exquisite, sweet creatures!"

"Thou shouldst have more ambition, Dick; precedency is man's natural right in such instances, but if thou art always after the women, thou canst never hope to get before them."

"Thou hast me again," cried his companion, as he threw himself back in his seat to give vent to his laughter; "I would as soon attempt to parry jests with thee as to eat thistles with a jackass; so take thy fill, and be hanged to thee. But I tell thee how it is, Will: This mercer's daughter is said to be the richest heiress in the city. I saw her at the Bear garden with the old hunks her father, whom she ruleth most filially; and observing that she had an eye like Venus!"

"Only one, Dick?" inquired his companion, innocently.

"Two, or I'm a sinner," replied he—"and a bust like Juno; ay, and every grace that all Olympus possessed. In brief, a beauty of such ravishing perfections, that immediately I found her gaze upon me, I felt as many of Cupid's arrows in my heart as there are pins in her huswife, and thereupon fell most continually in love."

"With her father's strong box, Dick?" asked the other.

"With her own sweet self, thou aggravating varlet. I presently made up to the father, and did enter into very sober discourse, till I found I had got hold of the daughter's ear, and then I pointed out the persons of distinction in the company, and seasoned my conversation with some delicate compliments, all which she did receive in very good fashion, rewarding me with such looks from her soft hazel eyes as warmed my veins like a stoup of canary. The old fellow courteously invited me to his house, and the

dear wench did repeat some most enticing words, which sent me to the mercer's in a presently. To please him, I ordered these fallals, and to please her, I wear them. I met her by appointment since then in Paul's Walk, and after that she gave me some delicious interviews alone in her father's dwelling, of which I made right profitable use. I tell thee, she is ready to melt in my arms."

"A wax doll would do the same, Dick," drily remarked the other, "if thou wert warm enough."

"Away with thy pestilent similes!" exclaimed his guest, starting up from his seat, as if in anger; then, resuming his place, continued: "She showed me yesterday a sonnet, or some other pernicious mischief of the kind, which had been written in commendation of her beauty—perhaps by some crazy engrosser of parchments. The plague of bad clients be upon him!—and asked me to try what I could do in that way. Now, unless I can produce some such verses—my malediction rest upon Apollo and all his generation!—I feel assured I may spare myself the trouble of venturing within the precincts of her tenement. Thou knowest I could as soon fly as rhyme. I have scratched my head till it ached, and looked up to the ceiling till my neck was as stiff as my ruff; but if ever I succeeded in making reason of my rhyme, or rhyme of my reason, I'm worse than a Jew. So I tell thee what, sweet Will, thou shalt help me in this strait with thine own unparalleled talents, and if I be not grateful, call me a dog."

"Dog, quotha!" cried the other, in seeming amazement; "art thou not the veriest dog that howls o' nights? What a face hast thou, thou impudent varlet, after having, with thy miserable breath, cursed Apollo and all his generation, to come, cap in hand, to one of the humblest of his followers! Go to, I'll ha' none o' thee! I abandon thee to the fury of the immortal gods."

"Nay, but, sweet Will."

"Ay, 'sweet Will' thou callest me now; yet a moment since I was likened to a jackass eating thistles. Hast thou no shame? Dost think, because thine own wretched hack will not stir a foot, that thou shalt ride on my Pegasus? I'm an oyster if I let thee."

"What! not assist thy old friend and comrade?" asked the other, in the same bantering tone he had used from the first; "how often have I done thee a good turn that way? Dost remember, in merry

Stratford, when we were both boys, yet with an intolerant inclination for the honors of manhood, how often I did lead Sir Thomas Lucy's gamekeeper in search of imaginary deer-stealers, whilst thou wert courting his niece in the shrubbery?"

"Ha! ha! thou hast me there, Dick," replied his friend, unable to refrain from laughing at the odd associations which came crowding to his memory; "thou hast me there of a surety. Ah, Kate! she was a delectable little gipsy, with a most enticing ankle, and a smile that would thaw a six weeks' frost. But dost forget thine own tricks, old memorandum? Hast forgot when thou wert laying siege to Barbara, the sexton's pretty daughter, behind the church, how I, with a sheet I had stolen for the nonce, and a turnip-lantern and candle, did stalk through the churchyard, to keep the folks from disturbing thee—to the horror of the whole neighborhood, and the near frightening to death of three ancient spinsters, two drunken ploughboys, and the parish constable?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the other, with an obstreperous fit of mirth, "'tis as true as life; I'm nothing better than a Turk, if every word isn't gospel. But," added he, gravely, "who could imagine Master William Shakspeare playing the ghost in a country churchyard?"

"Or Master Richard Burbage playing the lover to a sexton's daughter?"

And thereupon the two worthies did laugh till the tears ran down their cheeks, and for some time every word they added seemed to act as a provocative to their mirth.

"I'faith, after all's said and done," observed Master Shakspeare, when he had recovered his gravity, "'twas most exquisite fooling."

"I'faith it was," said Master Burbage. "But thou wilt let me have the verses?" he added, as he sauntered up to the table.

"Ay, marry will I, for old acquaintance sake," replied his friend, and immediately did search among his papers, from which he presently selected one. Scrutinizing it earnestly, he continued—"Ha! here is a string of idle rhymes that mayhap may suit thy purpose, and thy mercer's daughter also. I think of it indifferently; nay, I will acknowledge I fancy 'tis rather discreditable to me; but each has his own taste, and therefore it may stand a chance of pleasing thy inamorata. Listen, and I will read it to thee."

Master Burbage did lean his elbow on the table, having his body bent forward,

and supporting his head with his hand, and kept a profound attention whilst Master Shakspeare read the following lines:—

"The Time hath passed for godlike forms
To leave awhile their starry homes,
And throw, 'mid human clouds and storms,
Elysian joy on mortal domes.
The Time hath passed when Phœbus flung
His golden spells on laughing earth;
And ev'ry field and forest rung
With hymns of bliss, and shouts of mirth.
Chaste Dian's silv'ry voice is mute,
The Sea Nymphs dance not on the shore;
Silent is now the Dryad's flute,
And Pan's sweet reed is heard no more.
E'en Love hath folded up his wings,
And from his hand his bow hath cast;
Apollo's lyre hath lost its strings,
Its tune hath fled—THE TIME HATH PASSED"

"Gone are the glorious visitants
Who gave this world so bright a grace,
And Grief and Care—a thousand wants,
And endless crimes, are in their place;
Unhonored is the poet's lay
That once made all Olympus glad;
And Worth is left to beg its way,
Or perish with the mean and bad.
And I, who strove with heart and mind,
That famished souls might break their fast,
Discover now that Heaven is blind,
The world is dead—THE TIME HATH PASSED"

"Oh, no, the Time's restored again,
And with it all its gladdening shapes,
The whilst, from off the breast and brain,
The cloud in which they lay, escapes.
Phœbus in thy bright shape returns,
Thy word's chaste Dian's voice enslave,
For thee the Sea Nymphs' crystal urns,
When in the bath thy limbs must lave.
Love in thine eyes hath ta'en new ground,
And keeps his sharp artillery there;
The breeze Apollo's strings hath found,
And stirs them in thy golden hair;
And as for Pan's Arcadian reed,
Tuned with the Dryads' measured trips,
What blissful melodies exceed
The music breathing from thy lips?
Well cared for is the green earth still,
When round thee all Olympus glows;
Well honored is the poet's skill,
When worth like thine its praise bestows.
Then blessings be upon thy path,
And joy that no ill breath can blast
Be with thee—now the world's poor wrath
Can harm me not—THE TIME HATH PASSED!"

"Excellent good, i'faith!" exclaimed Master Burbage, delightedly. "Excellent good! If she be not satisfied with it, nothing less than another Iliad will gratify her cormorant fancy. Give me the paper, sweet Will! Dan Homer was a blind ballad-monger to thee, thou prince of rhymers."

"A vaunt, thou horrid flatterer!" cried Master Shakspeare, as he allowed his companion to conceal the verses in his purse. "But 'tis poor fishing with other folks' tackle, Dick," he added, in his own facetious way.

"Faith, I care not an' I have good sport: and I'll pay thee for thy tackle with a loose fish or two," replied the other, with a chuckle of inward satisfaction.

"I'll ha' none o' thy gudgeons," said his friend, with mock disdain. "When I fish I catch whales."

"Then hast thou a very blubberly taste," rejoined Master Burbage, "and when I want salve for a wound I'll come to thee; for thou must have a most infinite stock of spermaceti."

Thus they proceeded, bantering and laughing at one another, and indulging their humors with perfect satisfaction to themselves, when a knock was heard at the door, and admittance being granted, there entered a man of a pleasant aspect, and of spare figure, not so gayly garmented as Master Burbage, yet having much of the outward appearance of respectability.

"Welcome, good Lazarus Fletcher. Welcome!" cried Master Shakspeare.

"Hail to thee, Lazarus!" added Master Burbage, in his usual jocose manner. "Hast thou come to the rich man's table, Lazarus? Look for the crumbs, man! Look for the crumbs! and thou art not like to get anything else; for the table hath nothing better than a bare trencher and an empty tankard. Catch the crumbs that hath fallen then, for, in truth, thou lookest wofully like a right hungry Lazarus."

"If I look as hungry as Lazarus, thou lookest as fine as Dives," retorted Master Fletcher.

"What, be there no dogs to lick this Lazarus, that he seemeth so woundily sore?" said the other. "But I tell thee what, Lazarus, an' thou ever liest in Abraham's bosom, thou hadst best tuck up thine ankles, for thou must needs find there a plentiful lack of bed-room."

"Mind not the reprobate, worthy Fletcher," observed Master Shakspeare—yet unable to refrain from laughing.

"Marry, why should I mind him," replied the other, "he only showeth that he hath a spice of the ability of Samson: for he maketh a goodly use of the jawbone of an ass."

"Ha, ha!" shouted Master Shakspeare, chafing his hands in the intensity of his delight. "Spare him not, good Lazarus; an' thou loveth me, spare him not." Then looking toward his friend, he added, "I'faith, Dick, thou hast found thy match."

"Match!" exclaimed Master Burbage, turning sharp round from the casement out of which he had that moment been leaning, "ay, marry! and like other matches—all the good lieth in the brimstone. But tell us thy news, Master

Fletcher; for that there is something in the book is evident in the index—thou lookest as important as a tailor's wife threading her husband's needle."

"O' my troth, I have something worth the telling," replied he.

"Disburthen thyself then, and quickly, good Lazarus," observed Master Shakspeare.

"There hath a message come from the master of the Revels, worthy Master Edmond Tilney," said Master Fletcher, "to the intent that it be the design of the queen's majesty, with divers of her honorable court, to honor her poor players with a visit; and leaving Hemings and Condell and the rest to prepare for her reception, I posted off here, as Master Burbage had left word that he would be found at Master Shakspeare's lodgings."

"Hurrah!" shouted Master Burbage, snatching up his hat and waving it over his head, "we'll have a right worshipful audience. Heaven preserve her majesty, and enrich her servants, say I. Come along, good Lazarus!" he added, as he caught his brother actor by the arm, "we must to the playhouse."

"I will be with thee anon, Dick," said Master Shakspeare, as his visitors were proceeding to the door. "But I have a letter to write to my Lord Southampton, to thank him for yonder exquisite present of flowers he hath sent me from his own garden, and to acquaint him with our proceedings with the court of aldermen, touching our threatened liberties, at the Blackfriars."

"Success attend thee, Will, in all thy doings," exclaimed his friend, and putting on his hat he led his companion out of the chamber.

Master Shakspeare being left alone, did presently draw up his chair closer to the table on which he had been writing, and did recommence his labors with an admirable diligence. Mayhap he was engaged in the inditing of one of those right famous plays which did bring so much honor to his name; but know I not this for a surety; and as a trusty chronicler, I will only subscribe to that of which I have a perfect knowledge. However, it be certain that he had not been long so engaged, when a third knock was heard at the door, so gentle it was scarcely audible; and although he seemed at first somewhat impatient of interruption (for no man liketh to be much disturbed in his privacy), when, upon his giving permission to the person to enter, he observed his visiter, he gave him most cour-

teous welcome. He was a youth, aged seventeen, or thereabouts, tall, slim, and elegant, and though clad in homely russet, there was that in his graceful carriage, and in his mild yet thoughtful countenance, that did signify something of a far higher quality than such poor apparel did denote. But most remarkable was the exceeding modesty of his deportment. He opened and closed the door almost tremblingly, and respectfully taking off his hat, advanced into the room with downcast eyes, to the great marvel of our illustrious poet.

"I took the boldness, Master Shakspeare," said the youth falteringly, as he kept smoothing his hat with his hand where he stood in the middle of the chamber—"I took the boldness some time since to send you a tragedy of my poor contrivance; hoping, from what I had heard of your worthy disposition, that you would honor that humble attempt to such an extent as to give it your perusal; and peradventure if such an obscure individual be not thought altogether unworthy of attention from one so excellently gifted as yourself you will favor me so far as to grant me your opinion of its matter and management."

"That will I, worthy sir, without fail," replied Master Shakspeare, regarding his young visitor with a more than ordinary interest. "But you must first acquaint me with your name, and the title of the play you intrusted to my custody; for my reputation, however little deserved it may be, and my influence at the playhouse, which is thought to be greater than it is, are the causes of my being continually applied to for a similar purpose."

"The tragedy was called 'Hero Leander,' and I signed my name 'Francis,'" murmured the youth.

"Let me beg of you to be seated, worthy Master Francis," exclaimed the other, as he hastily handed him a chair. "I remember it well," he added, as he searched among his papers on the table, "by the token that it did contain many passages that exhibited no mean ability."

The melancholy aspect of the young stranger did brighten up marvellously at the hearing of this commendation, and his eyes looked abundance of thanks. He argued the most favorable conclusion from so promising a commencement, for it is the nature of youth to be sanguine upon very little occasion.

"I have it," said Master Shakspeare, as he laid hold of the manuscript; and,

opening it, sat himself down in the chair, as if to give it a careful examination: then added, "but in all honesty, I must acknowledge that it hath a total unfitness for representation." At this the youth's countenance became blanched with a sudden paleness. "It hath a lack of everything which is most necessary for a drama to have: to wit, action—interest—and character;—the which, if it have not, were it written by King Solomon himself, or the seven wise masters in conjunction, it would have no chance with our modern audiences. The time of mysteries and moralities hath gone by. People now will not listen to dialogues without an object, and plays without a plot. David hath ceased to abuse Goliath in a set speech an hour long, and Joseph lingereth no longer to preach a thrice tedious sermon to Potiphar's wife. If a play have not action it must needs have but little interest; for although something may occasionally be done in a narrative form, if the ball be not kept up—that is to say, if the *dramatis personæ* be doing of nothing—even if the sentences be proverbs of wisdom, then shall the play be a bad play. Again, if the characters who form the plot have no individuality or distinct features, in accordance with nature or probability, though they look like Alexanders and argue like Aristotles, shall the play be a bad play. Your tragedy, Master Francis, hath these particular defects, and I should be hugely deficient in candor, and in no way deserving the confidence you have been pleased to place in me, were I to refrain from telling you that it can not be acted with any profit either to yourself or others. There is another objection to it—the subject hath already been done by Kit Marlowe."

Master Shakspeare observing for the first time that the lips of his visitor had lost their accustomed ruddiness, and that he did look most despairing and woe-gone, with that sweet sympathy which maketh the generous so fearful of giving pain to another, instantly began to turn over the leaves of Master Francis his play, and resumed his discourse. "But let me not cause you to imagine that I think naught of your tragedy, Master Francis. Far be it from me to say so. I do consider the blank verse very musical and eloquent, and full of right admirable conceits. Here is a passage in which a lover, expostulating with his mistress, who doth affect inconstancy in no small measure, sayeth this much as argument to prove the unity of love:—

“Effect and cause—(the lover and the loved)
 Are consequence and origin of one
 Pure, single, and connective property—
 The proud desire of human happiness :
 Which leads one spirit to another one,
 One heart unto its fellow. This is love,
 Which, with an inclination natural,
 And fond and sweet, and generous and good,
 Ever inclineth one sex to the other
 To realize a mutual bliss. The two,
 In pairs, from other pairs apart, are joined
 In bonds of budding hopes and blushing joys :
 The whilst the Social Virtues hand in hand,
 Linked like the golden rings that form a chain
 Of precious, priceless worth, circle them round,
 And keep off from the temple of their bliss,
 Unholy thoughts, false gods, and evil deeds.’

“And again, in continuation of the same subject :—

“The forest tops
 Give voices to the wind, and there the dove
 Sits with her mate secure—with heart all joy—
 In inclination uncorrupt—in dreams
 That are reality : and still her breast
 With passionate ecstasy heaves tremblingly ;
 There is a stirring gladness in her eyes ;
 There is a thrilling music in her voice ;
 For she doth own a blessed tranquillity.
 No other winged one can seek that nest :
 They find a perfect pleasure in themselves ;
 Their lives are for each other ; and unknown
 Beyond the little sanctuary of their loves.
 Is any rapture which they there enjoy.

“If Nature then declare her law to be
 That one alone should unto one be fixed
 In sacred love and pure devotedness,
 Shall human-kind, of loving things the best,
 The noblest, wisest, and the most divine,
 Give that in partnership to more than one
 Which one alone can know in purity ?
 Divide this precious influence—’tis lost.
 The moment that in other hands ’tis placed
 Gone is the golden virtue it possessed.
 The sage’s wisdom is his own—the wand
 Of the magician doth forget its charm
 With one who hath no magic—strike the harp
 A moment since so eloquent with song
 Raised by the Poet’s skill, and nothing speaks
 But what is dull, and harsh, and dissonant.
 And why is this ?—Because in natural things,
 There is an ownership ; and Love, of all
 Our natural gifts most natural,
 Admits of no division of its worth.
 We can not set one gem in many rings.’

“I do opine, Master Francis,” continued our illustrious dramatist, with a look of kindness toward his young companion, who had been listening with delighted attention to Master Shakspeare’s faultless delivery of his lines—“I do opine that there is much admirable matter in these words ; and the same opinion holds good toward other passages in your play, of similar excellence ; which plainly prove to me that there is no lack of promise in you. But be not too hasty ; pluck not the fruit before it be ripe, else they who may chance to taste it will make wry mouths. If you would take the advice of one willing to do you all manner of good offices”—

“If I do not, I should be the most unworthy varlet that lives,” exclaimed Master Francis warmly.

“You will wait awhile before you offer any composition to the public eye,” said Master Shakspeare, affecting not to notice the interruption he had received, yet being much pleased thereat.—“You are young—your knowledge of the world must, therefore, be scanty ; and although I do perceive in your writings a comprehensive acquaintance with books, he who writeth tragedies should possess an equal knowledge of men ; therefore I do advise you, for some years to come, to study mankind, if you entertain any desire of taking your stand among our English dramatists. Moreover, you have as yet acquired no information as to the business of the stage—a matter of vast moment toward the success of even the best play. This you can only inform yourself of by noting what others have done. The most effective way for you to do this is to come to us at the playhouse, where you shall have free ingress and egress upon every fitting occasion : and I will forward your interest in all that my poor skill or influence can effect.”

The tone of kindness with which these last sentences were delivered, seemed to have a most powerful effect upon the listener ; indeed it had gone direct to his heart, and he sat for some seconds perfectly unable to utter a syllable.

“Is there anything more I can do for you ?” inquired Master Shakspeare, regarding the changing color and modest demeanor of his visitor with increasing interest. “Though I seek not to make a boast of it, I have some powerful friends, to whom, peradventure, my recommendation would do good service, if ventured in behalf of one of your excellent parts and disposition.”

“Oh, Master Shakspeare !” murmured the youth, looking up to him with eyes made humid by his grateful emotions, “I would I had language to thank you ; but my heart is too full.”

“Nay, nay, worthy Master Francis,” said the other, encouragingly, “if you love me you must not think of that. He who looks for thanks deserveth them not. Such a one am not I. I will acknowledge I feel a regard for you, and would wish to be your friend : and if you will intrust me with your confidence, rest assured it shall not be abused. Tell me, is your way of life agreeable to you ?”

“Indeed it is not,” replied his visitor, with a melancholy expression of countenance that completely attested the truth of the avowal. “But why should I take advantage of the goodness of your dispo-

sition? or why trouble you with my complaints? I have already taken up too much of your valuable time?" Then he added, as he rose from his chair to depart, "I thank you very heartily for your kindness, which, in all times to come, shall be the most delightful of my remembrances; and if it please you to give me my papers, I would gratefully take my leave."

"We part not thus," said Master Shakspeare, quickly, as he rose from his seat, and taking hold of Master Francis his shoulder, did affectionately push him back into his chair; then sitting carelessly on the edge of the table adjoining, with one hand of his visiter kindly pressed in his own, and with a most benevolently smiling countenance he proceeded. "We part not thus. Sit you down, Master Francis—sit you down: and let not the modesty of your disposition be a stumbling-block to the advancement of your fortunes. The world hath not used you well, or I mistake countenances hugely. Let me try to make amends for the unkindness of others. I have both the inclination and the power to serve; and it seemeth to me that I should do myself credit by any service I could render. Let me be your friend, Master Francis. I assure you, on the honor of a Christian gentleman, and an humble follower of the Muses, that you will do me a great wrong if you allow me not the satisfaction of befriending you."

"Indeed, Master Shakspeare, you are too good," exclaimed his visiter, warmly returning the pressure of the hand he had received. "I know not what to say—I lack words—I am quite overpowered."

"What a wittol am I, and one shamefully neglectful of the duties of hospitality!" said Master Shakspeare, suddenly, as he sprung from the table and, proceeding to a cupboard in a recess of the chamber, did presently return, bringing a flask and two drinking-horns.

"I would you would excuse me, worthy Master Shakspeare," said the youth, modestly, as soon as he observed the movement of his host.

"Excuse me no excuses," replied the other, with a smile, as he made room on the little table, and poured out the wine into the vessels. "What! shall it be said that Will Shakspeare denied a brother poet a draught of the fountain from which he hath so often drawn inspiration? Tell it not at the Mermaid. A cup of this excellent sherris will warm both our hearts."

"You have made my heart warm enough as it is," observed Master Francis, still hesitating to take the proffered cup.

"Tush, man!" replied Master Shakspeare, hospitably forcing the cup into his guest's almost reluctant hand, will you not drink to my health?"

"Ah, that will I, with all true earnestness," exclaimed the other, as he immediately raised the wine to his lips.

"And I most heartily wish, as all England must wish, that your life be long preserved to delight and enrich this island with your right excellent labors."

"Thank you, worthy Master Francis, thank you," said his host, shaking his companion cordially by the hand: "it is gratifying to be praised at all, but to be praised by those who can appreciate, is the most exquisite of flattery. And now let me pledge you to our better acquaintance," added he, as he poured out a brimming cup for himself, "and may success attend you equal to your deserts—which be of no common order."

"You are too liberal in your commendation—indeed you are," observed the youth, as a slight blush appeared upon his countenance.

"Not a whit, man, not a whit," replied his host, as he finished his draught. "There can be no harm in praising a modest man; for if the desert be not equal to the praise, he will not rest till he make it so. But your cup is empty."

"Nay, good Master Shakspeare," exclaimed the other, as he noticed his host refilling the cup—"if it please you, no more."

"But it does not please me, Master Francis," said his companion, jocosely.

"I am not used to drinking of wine of a morning, and it may chance get in my head."

"No vessel can be the worse for containing good wine, Master Francis. So you must e'en drink another cup."

"I thank you, but I would rather not," said Master Francis, falteringly, as the vessel was handed to him.

"What, hesitate to drink the queen's health?" exclaimed Master Shakspeare in seeming astonishment. "Why, how now? Surely loyalty hath gone out of the land, if the guest of one of her majesty's poor players refuse to join him in drinking the health of Queen Elizabeth."

"I thought not of that," remarked the other, quietly taking the wine, "I will join you gladly." Thereupon, with much sincerity of heart, these two did drink to

the queen's majesty. "But I must be going, or my uncle will be angered with me; and he is a man of a most ungracious humor," said Master Francis.

"A murrain on him!" cried Master Shakspeare. "And, if I may make so free as to ask, who is he?"

"He is Gregory Vellum, the scrivener, of St. Mary Axe," replied the youth; "and though report say that he abounds in riches, one would suppose that he hath not sufficient to furnish a beggar's wallet."

"Have you no father living?" asked his host.

"It is uncertain," responded Master Francis more seriously. "My mother's was a private marriage with a gentleman much above her in station, and as he said it would injure him in the estimation of his family if his union became known, she kept his quality a secret from all who knew her. He went to the wars a short time before she gave birth to me, and has never since been heard of; and my poor mother died in childbed, without leaving any other memorial of her husband than this miniature, which I always carry about with me."

Master Shakspeare silently examined the trinket, which was in a gold frame, that the youth wore round his neck. On one side was the likeness of a very lovely woman; the other had contained another miniature, mayhap, of a cavalier; but it was now empty.

"The initials E. V., on one side the frame, are for my mother Eleanor Vellum," continued the youth, "and the F. H., on the empty frame, are doubtless the initials of my father; of which one must be Francis, for so she always called him, as I have heard, and therefore by that name have I been christened; but what the other standeth for I know not, and perchance may never know till the day of judgment."

"Be of good heart, Master Francis," said his companion, encouragingly, "peradventure the secret may be discovered sooner than you look for. But what says your uncle?—knoweth he nothing?"

"Sometimes I am apt to think that he knows more than he is inclined to tell," replied Master Francis; "for in his unguarded moments, he hath dropped some mysterious hints which savor a little of the purpose. But he is so continually upbraiding me for the troubles and the charges I put him to—he so stints me in all sorts of necessaries, and so begrudges me the little pleasure I enjoy—that he

hath made my life a daily burthen, and I should be right glad to get from under his roof, to labor in any capacity for which I may be properly qualified."

"That shall not be long first, or my name be not Will Shakspeare," exclaimed his host, as he poured out another cup of wine for his guest.

"Nay, good Master Shakspeare," cried the youth, rising up and taking his hat, as he noticed the brimming vessel proceeding toward him, "pry thee let me go; I have drunk most bountifully, I thank you."

"One more cup, and it shall be the last."

"Indeed I would rather not."

"Now, look at this!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, in apparent wonder. "Here is a youth of some eighteen years or so, who confesses that he hath met with no fair damsel with soul-enkindling eyes and roseate cheeks, whose health he deems worthy of being drunk in a bumper of sherris."

"I said not that, Master Shakspeare," replied his young companion, hastily, as the color mounted to his cheek—"Believe me, I said not that."

"I believe you most heartily," said his host with a laugh, as he noticed the youth's increasing confusion. "I see conviction in your complexion. Her health, Master Francis."

"Well, I suppose I must," observed his guest, as if anxious to be quickly relieved from his embarrassment. "I thank you kindly. She is a right noble creature, and I should be the basest wretch alive were I to refuse to drink her health—considering—" Here the young poet stopped suddenly; his complexion acquired a warmer glow; and a shadow of deep melancholy overspread his features."

"Hath she no name, Master Francis?" inquired the other earnestly, and, if the truth must be told, somewhat mischievously.

"Indeed she hath," he replied. "It is a good name—a name of excellent credit—a—"

"I doubt it not," observed Master Shakspeare, with more than his usual gravity; "but to the point, man. Dost hesitate to tell it? Take my word for it, you are paying her no compliment if you do."

"Her name is Joanna," said the youth in a voice scarcely audible, and trying unsuccessfully to hide his confusion.

"Then drink I your Joanna's health in

a brimming cup, and with a most heart-felt wish that she may be worthy of you, and that you may be happy with her."

Master Francis said nothing, but hastened to drink the wine that had been placed in his hand.

"And now, Master Francis, here is your tragedy," said his companion, as he gave him the manuscript, with a benevolent countenance and a cordial shake of the hand; "and henceforth consider me your friend, for I wish to prove myself such. Something shall be done for you, rest assured, and that very shortly. Good day, Master Francis, good day," he continued, as he kindly led his visiter to the door, and opened it for him.

Master Francis could only look his thanks, and then threading the narrow staircase of the house, made the best of his way to St. Mary Axe.

CHAPTER II.

My heart allows
No gums, nor amber, but pure vows;
There's fire at breathing of your name,
And do not fear—
I have a tear
Of joy to curb any immodest flame.

SHIRLEY.

Oh, Sir, the wonder!

A beauty ripe as harvest,
Whose skin is whiter than a swan all over,
Than silver, snow, or lilies! A soft lip
Would tempt you to eternity of kissing,
And flesh that melteth in the touch to blood;
Bright as your gold, and lovely as your gold.

BEN JONSON.

"FRANCIS! FRANCIS!" screamed out a little old man, meanly apparelled, as he stumped about with his stick in a gloomy room, that appeared from its deficiency in all furniture, save a desk with a tall stool, and several papers and parchments tied up and placed on shelves about the fireplace, that it was an office. "Francis! Francis, I say! A murrain on thee for a lazy varlet! thou art sure to give me the slip as soon as my back is turned. Francis!" he shouted again, and then muttered to himself, "a wasteful, idle, good-for-naught, that be always consuming my substance or mispending my time; I would I were well rid of him. Francis, I say! Here have I been bawling about the house for the better part of an hour searching for him—the graceless vagrant. Francis!" Thus he went on, growling and grumbling, and poking into every hole and corner, with a physiognomy most unnaturally crabbed, and a voice feeble and shrewish. At last he sat him-

self down on the stool, laid aside his stick, and began examining the loose papers on the desk; first putting on a pair of cracked spectacles to assist his sight. Besides being short and old—that is, of some sixty years or more—he was of a marvellous spare body; and his sharp nose and pointed chin, small eyes and saturnine complexion, did not appear to more advantage, surrounded by a scanty beard that had become quite grizzled by age. His attire was of the homeliest—nay, it gave evidence of more than ordinary thrift—for his trunks were patched, and his hose were darned, and his shoes would have looked all the better had they been indebted to the craft of the cordwainer. As for his doublet, it was of a most ancient fashion, and though the cloth was originally a Lincoln green, it had become, by long use, and exposure to all sorts of weathers, more resembling the dingy hue of a smoked rafter.

As he scrutinized the papers, he broke out into such vehement ejaculations as these:—

"This account not finished! Here's a villainous neglect of my interests! Here's a shameful contempt of my authority! Here's flat contradiction and horrible ingratitude! Oh, the abominable and most pestilent knave! whilst he eats me out of house and home—costs me a world and all in tailoring and other charges—he leaveth my business to take care of itself. But what have we here?" he exclaimed, as he commenced examining a paper that had evidently been concealed among the others. "Verses, or I'm a heathen!" cried he in a tone of consternation. "Nay, if he takes to such evil courses, it must needs come to hanging."

While he was intent upon perusing with angry exclamations the contents of the object that had excited his displeasure, he suddenly felt a hand upon his shoulder, and turning round with no small degree of alarm impressed upon his unamiable features, he observed a young female—by her dress probably of the middle ranks. She wore on the back of her head a small velvet hat, from under which escaped several long dark tresses, that, parted in the front, set off to great advantage a right comely face, of a very rich complexion, which was made infinitely more attractive by a pair of delicate, dark hazel eyes, peculiarly seductive in their expression. Her age might be somewhat beyond twenty; for her form was fully rounded, and moulded into the most ex-

cellent proportions, which were admirably apparelled in a neat boddice and a dainty farthingale. In truth, she was a damsel possessed of all the perfections of womanhood.

"You sweet rogue, how you frightened me!" exclaimed the old man, the surprise and alarm he had exhibited in his countenance now giving place to pleasure and admiration, as he gazed upon the smiling beauty before him.

"But what hath so put your temper into vital jeopardy, good Gregory Vellum?" added she coaxingly, as she leaned over his shoulder, seemingly the better to observe the writing he held in his hand.

"Marry, matter enough, sweetest," replied he; "that undutiful and most hardened reprobate, my nephew—a plague on all parents that can not provide for their own offspring, say I—unmindful of the great expenses he hath put me to, not only leaves my business unattended, whenever I am not watching his movements, but passeth the times he should employ for my advantages in destroying my paper, pens, and ink, in scribbling a whole host of pernicious verses."

"Oh, the profligate!" cried the other, as if marvelling greatly; but still stretching out her pretty neck to see what was written on the paper.

"I am glad to see that you regard his atrocious wickedness with a proper detestation," repeated the other. "But that be not the worst of his villany. Only think of the pestilent varlet robbing me of these fine bits of candle, which in my search for him a moment since I found secreted away in his chamber." And thereupon, with a look of terrible indignation, he brought out of his vest, carefully wrapt up in an old rag, three candle-ends, each about an inch long.

"What wonderful iniquity!" exclaimed she, giving a hasty glance at the contents of the rag, and then again quickly fixing her gaze upon the paper.

"Ay, that is it with a vengeance," replied the old man. "Now, he stealeth these pieces of candle—a murrain on him for his abominable dishonesty—and burneth them when I, his too indulgent uncle, am fast asleep; and there he sits, wearing out the night in studying a most unprofitable lot of heathenish books. But take this trumpery and read it, Mistress Joanna, for he writes such an unnatural fine hand that my poor eyes ache with looking at it."

The fair Joanna took the paper some-

what eagerly, and without a second summons or a word of reply, stood before the old man, and, as he wiped his spectacles and put them away, and carefully folded up the candle-ends, she read what follows:—

A RIGHT EARNEST EXPOSTULATION:
ADDRESSED TO HER WHO WILL BEST UNDERSTAND IT

HAVING so oft and fondly sung thy praise,
I find I can not thy defects portray;
My pen is ready for most flatt'ring lays,
But censures not: it knoweth not the way.
Thou, to my heart, hast given deep offence,
Yet see I in thee naught but excellence.

'Tis passing strange—but pity 'tis too true!
Thy goodness toward me doth seem to halt;
Things manifold thou dost unkindly do
Which pain me much—yet know I not thy fault;
For ev'ry day thou heapest on me wrongs
Find'st thou a perfect creature in my songs.

Wherefore is this?—'Tis thus—no long time since
Each day, each hour, each moment found me blest;
All the fond love thy nature could evince,
All the sweet goodness of thy gentle breast.
Didst thou in pure devotion render mine,
To teach me what of earth was most divine.

As a rude heathen who to stock and stone
Prostrates his soul in worship—when he knows
THE TRUTH that reigns almighty and alone,
He evermore with the true worship bows;
My idols I cast down, and knelt and prayed
Where, I knew well, my hopes of Heaven were laid.

Then bountifully were thy blessings showered;
And I, the sole receptacle they sought,
Have known my grateful spirit overpowered
'Neath the delightful burthens thou hast brought,
Oft didst thou say thou couldst love none but me;
And much I strived to be worthy thee.

But now—unhappy chance that brought this turn!
Thou dost deny me with excuses weak
The fondnesses for which my soul doth yearn,
And dost within another's eye-balls seek
The charm, the spirit, and the joy that shone
In my rapt gaze reflected from thine own!

Nothing thou doest doth my eyes escape;
I know thy purposes—thy thoughts behold:
Alas, that they should often take a shape
Which multiplies my cares a thousand fold!
Alas, that thou art changed!—alas, indeed,
A plant so fair should bear such worthless seed!

But these stern words on thee must never fall;
'Tis my unlucky fortune that's to blame,
In my own heart I censure not at all;
For all thy goodnesses such footing claim,
That thy unkindnesses there find no place—
There is no room for things that seem so base.

Cease I to be of value in thy sight?
The worth I owned hath vanished utterly:
The pebbles upon which thy feet alight
To me more estimable seem than I;
For as the moon doth borrow all her shine,
My worthiness hath had its source in thine.

Fault none of mine is it that I am not
So precious as thy love hath made me seem;
Thou prized me then for worth I had not got;
And now thou dost my need too lowly deem.
Yet if thou thinkest me such sort as this,
Am I the very poorest thing that is.

I know not why that thou shouldst now prefer
Another to a heart so much thine own:
I'd say no more if it were worthier,
But doubt I much it love like mine hath known
Oh, would I could forget that thou wert kind,
Or thou wouldst act more truly to my mind!

Remember this—the threat'ning cataract

That loudest roars, is used for no man's hands ;
And 'mid thy minds best stores retain this fact—

The humblest waters may have golden sands :
Then scorn not thou the lowliest things that toll—
The treasures of the earth are in the soil.

“Flat disobedience and rank atheism!” exclaimed the old man, after he had listened with evident impatience to the perusal of the poem—“Didst ever hear of such heathenish notions? not to say that I understand it—I'd rather be hanged than understand any such villany. But what think you of it, Mistress Joanna? I see the horrible impiety of it hath quite discomposed you.”

In truth, what Gregory Vellum had stated, was nigh unto the fact; for Joanna had quickly discovered that the verses she was reading were written for her, and intended for her eye alone; and as the allusions they contained struck upon her mind, her changing color denoted how much she was moved by them. When she came to the end she was, for a few minutes, utterly disconcerted. She seemed lost in a maze of conflicting thoughts; her brow became dark, and her eyes fixed, and so completely had she given herself up to her own reflections, that she heard not the question that had been put to her.

“What say you, sweetheart?” said he familiarly, laying his hand upon her shoulder. “Doth not your hair stand on end to see how he misuseth me? Why, he costs me a matter of a groat a week for his diet—for he hath the appetite of two carriers—and then—the caiiiff! to be robbing me in this monstrous manner, when candles are threepence to the pound—and to be scribbling his preposterous atrocities when stationary is at so high a cost. By my troth he hath no more virtue than an addled egg! But what think you of the verses?”

“Sad stuff, Master Vellum,” she replied, having perfectly recovered from her confusion; “but be assured there is no harm in them. I think he ought not to be encouraged in these practices; so I will e'en take the paper with me, and tear it to pieces as I go along.”

“Ah, do, good Joanna! show upon it proper detestation of such thorough and most inconceivable villany,” said he, as he observed her take possession of the poem. “But I must turn the rogue out of doors; he will ruin me straight an I do not; and I would as lief live among savages as exist with a knave who plundereth me by wholesale of such estimable candles' ends, and destroys me so

many fair sheets of paper in inditing matters it would be a scandal to understand.”

“Nay, good Master Vellum,” observed his fair companion, “do not be so harsh with him. He is but young; and boys have a natural tendency for the perpetration of these offences. When he attaineth the becoming gravity of his uncle, he will give over all such primitive delinquencies.”

“Dost think so, sweetest?” inquired the old man eagerly, as, with a most preposterous leer, he thrust his ungraceful countenance close to her beautiful face. “You are a woman of admirable discretion, and of a truly excellent fancy. Dost despise these raw youths; and couldst affect a man of more mature years?”

“Ay, marry, and why not?” inquired she very innocently.

“You are a most excellent wench!” exclaimed he with unaffected delight, as he seemed to feast his eyes upon the graces of her countenance—“one of ten thousand. Think you, you could rest content with an old man—nay, one not so old either—who would never be gadding from you like your young gallants, none of whom are ever to be trusted out of sight, but would nourish you, and cherish you, and fondle you, and make much of you, and none but you; and make you mistress of all his gold, his house, and chattels?”

“Ay, marry, why should I not?” repeated she in the same tone.

“Then you shall have *me*, sweetheart!” cried the old man in an ecstasy; and seeming, by the unsteady movement of his hands, with great difficulty to refrain from throwing his arms round her neck. “I have loved you for some months, sweetest! and all the little gifts I have bestowed upon you, were to show you how enamored I was of your most blessed condition. And I will tell you a secret, my love! my dove! my angel!—my paragon of womanhood!” continued he fidgeting about, and gloating upon her with his lack-lustre eyes as if he were bewitched. “Although I seem so poor—yet am I richer than I seem. Ay, am I. I have store of gold—bright yellow gold! Hush, there's no one listening, is there?” he all at once exclaimed, as, fearing he had said too much, he gave a restless glance around the room.

“Not a soul,” replied Joanna, still retaining the same unmoved countenance.

“Yes, sweetheart,” he continued, every now and then giving a suspicious

glance about him, "I have saved, and scraped, and hoarded up a goodly store of wealth, the result of infinite painstaking, and exceeding self-denial; and you shall enjoy it; you, my life, my queen! Oh, how I long to hug you in my most fond embrace."

"Softly, softly, Gregory Vellum," exclaimed she, quietly disengaging his arms from her neck; for, unable any longer to resist his impatient wishes, he had endeavored, as our great dramatist hath it, to suit the action to the word. "Modest maids are not to be won in such boisterous fashion, and it little becometh the respectability of your deportment to exhibit such unseemly violence. As for your love, you must prove it by something besides words. You have professed for some time to be hugely taken with me; but all professions are naught when unaccompanied by that which proveth their value. You are right liberal in promises, but your performance, as yet, hath been but scanty. If you have such store of gold as you talk of"—

"Hush! hush! not so loud, I prythee, sweetheart," whispered the old man, going cautiously to the door, on tiptoe, opening, and looking out, and closing it carefully after him.

"Of a surety you would act more generously toward me than you have yet done," continued Joanna, without attending to the interruption; "your true lovers are always bountiful. Now there is a certain Venetian chain"—

"Ay, 'tis of gold, and of most admirable workmanship," exclaimed Gregory Vellum, "it cost me fifty crowns, or I'm a villanous Jew. I did promise it you, I remember well; but if it please you, sweetest," continued the old man, sidling up to her, and leering in her face, "it shall be yours for a kiss. Accept you the conditions?"

"For your sake, I will say yes, good Gregory Vellum," replied she, without hesitation.

"It shall be yours—it shall be yours," cried the old man, chafing his hands, and every limb of him shaking with excitement. "Now give me the kiss, my heart! my soul! my life! give me the kiss, I prythee."

"The chain first, Gregory Vellum," said the other quietly, as she retreated from his proffered caresses.

"Ay, but wait awhile—wait awhile, sweetheart, and I will fetch it," said he, hastening to the door, in an agony of impatience, and immediately returning to

her side, before he had got half way; "but when shall be the happy day?—name it, name it, excellent Joanna, for I do long for the time when we two shall be one."

"We will talk of that anon;—but, the chain," replied she.

"I fly, sweetest," cried the old man, shuffling off toward the door; but, just as he was about to open it, he came back hastily, with his eyes glistening, and his leaden countenance all of a glow, "we will spend all the yellow gold; we will live a right merry life. I'faith you shall have all that heart can desire, you shall, you shall, you shall, my queen of beauty!"

"The chain, worthy Gregory Vellum," repeated his fair companion, as she eluded his eager advances.

"I am gone," said he, again hastening off; but, before he opened the door, he turned round, clasped his skinny hands together, and turning up the whites of his eyes, exclaimed, "Indeed, I love thee infinitely."

"That for thy love," cried she spitting on the floor, with every mark of indignation and disgust, as soon as she heard him rapidly ascending the stairs—"that for thy love, thou most abhorred and infamous old dotard: but I will use thee. For the sake of one whose little finger is dearer to me than thy old moth-eaten carcase, I will make thee bring out thy long hoarded gold, and squander it right liberally." Then hearing a noise at the door which opened into the street, she looked to see who it was. The same modest youth entered to whom the reader hath been introduced, at Master Shakspeare his lodging, on the Bank Side.

"What, Joanna!" he exclaimed, hastening toward her, with a most smiling countenance—"nay, this is a pleasure I dreamt not of."

"'Tis I, Francis," she replied, allowing him to take her hand, which he passionately pressed to his lips; "but thy cheek is flushed, and thine eye unsteady. What ails thee?"

"Nothing, dearest," said he, "I have been detained, and I thought my uncle would be angered with me for stopping; for thou know'st how easy he is of provocation, so I ran all the way home."

"Thou hadst best make haste, and conceal thyself somewhere for the nonce," responded she, "for thy uncle hath just left me, meaning to return straight; and he is out of all temper with thee, for sundry offences which he saith thou hast committed. So go thy ways, and let me

see thee soon, for I have much to say to thee."

"I will do thy bidding lovingly; yet it is a most regretful thing to be obliged to leave thee," he said, as with reluctant steps, and slow, he made toward the door. Then, keeping his eyes upon her till the last moment, eloquent with a most impassioned tenderness, he left the room.

"Poor boy!" murmured she, as with a countenance full of melancholy interest, she watched his departure—"poor boy! he little knoweth how many distasteful things I do for his dear sake."

At this moment Gregory Vellum was heard upon the stairs. There was a marked difference betwixt his going and his returning; for, whereas, in the first instance, he had galloped like an ostrich, now he was heard descending, step by step, so slow that it would not be a great stretch of fancy to say, he might have fallen asleep between whiles. Presently he opened the door, and instead of hastening toward Joanna, with enamored looks and impatient gestures, as might have been expected from his previous behavior, he advanced, at a laggard's pace, with his eyes fixed upon a glittering chain of gold, that he kept turning about in his hand, and with a face in which the demon of avarice, had evidently got the better of the demon of sensuality.

"How now!" exclaimed his companion, as she noticed his approach, "you went out as quick of motion as a young colt—you creep in with the preposterous tediousness of a snail."

"It cost me fifty crowns!" remarked he, still keeping his eyes on the precious metal, as if there was a fascination in it he could not withstand.

"Well, and what then?" inquired Joanna; "that is nothing to the store of gold of which you mean to make such generous use, you know."

"Ay, said I so!" said he quickly, and with a monstrous serious look, "no, 'twas a mistake. Gold! I have no gold; where should I get gold? I am poor, miserably poor, as you see. 'Tis a most admirable chain, and of right delicate workmanship," he continued feasting his eyes upon it, as it glittered in his hand.

"I'faith your love is of a most miserly disposition," responded she, smiling most bewitchingly all the time, "it preferreth a sorry chain to the object of its pretended adoration. By my troth, if I marry you after this, I'll vex myself into fiddle-strings."

"Ah! talked you of marrying, sweetest?" asked the old man eagerly, as he raised his eyes to her face; and, immediately they rested upon her well-favored countenance, they again began to twinkle with delight. "Truly have you the softest and most insinuating looks, and your smile is most absolute and irresistible. Your eyes, sweetheart, are as bright as this Venetian gold—but it cost me fifty crowns; and the pouting ripeness of your lips hath as much temptation as the polish upon the links; and, in good truth, 'tis a most rare and costly trinket." And thereupon he continued, now fixing his eyes upon the chain, and gloating upon its brilliance; and anon raising them to the face of his fair companion, as if doating upon its beauty. It was evident that there was a struggle in his soul, about parting with his property. He longed for a caress from the seductive Joanna; but the Venetian trinket had wound itself round his heart so strongly, that he could not bring himself to part with it. Several times it appeared that her soft glances had subdued his selfish nature; but just as he was on the point of giving up the object of his miserly regard, a look at its glittering links would again awake his avarice, and he would hesitate about its disposal.

"Good morning to you, Gregory Vellum," said Joanna, as she turned upon her heel, with the intention of departing by the door that led into the street.

"Nay, nay sweetest!" exclaimed the old man, as he hastened after her, and held her by the arm, "you go not yet; I part not with you in this way. Shall I have the kiss you promised me?"

"By my troth you shall," replied she; "but why ask you? You love your paltry gold better than me, or you would seem less loath to part with it; so I'll e'en have none of you."

"There is the chain, sweetheart," said he, eagerly throwing it round her neck, "and now for the kiss—the kiss—the kiss—my angel upon earth!—the kiss, sweet mistress Joanna; throw your soft arms around me, and press me your delicate lips."

"There's my hand," quietly replied she, as all impatience and eagerness, spite of her retreating, he advanced toward her, intent upon having her in his embrace.

"Your hand!" he exclaimed, with some surprise, as he still strove to approach her more closely, "'tis your rosy mouth that I would have, sweetheart."

"Nay, nay; a bargain is a bargain," said she gravely; "you gave me a chain, and I promised you should have a kiss for it. There was nothing said about my lips; and I intend only, as a great favor, that you should kiss my hand; so, fulfil your contract:—here's my hand."

At this, nothing could exceed the change that took place in the old man's countenance. His delight and impatience forsook him of a sudden. From being exceeding restless in all his limbs, he stood as still as a stone, and he looked perfectly confounded, and unable to say a word.

"Well, if you will not, mayhap another time will suit you better," observed Mistress Joanna very courteously, as she proceeded toward the door. "I thank you for the chain very heartily; 'tis a gift worthy of the gravity of your affections; and I know not, if you go on making a show of such liberal behavior, to what extent you may be rewarded. You ought, however, to be aware, that a prudent woman granteth but small favors at first; she will not give largely, or she may be undone straight. I wish you an increasing generosity; and with this desire, worthy Gregory Vellum, I do most delightedly take my leave of you." And thereupon she made a courtesy to the ground, and with one of the sweetest of smiles, departed from the office.

"Fool! dolt! idiot! madman!" cried he vehemently, as he beat his head with his clenched fist, "to be tricked, cozened, and imposed upon, in this barefaced manner, by a woman. Oh! Gregory Vellum, Gregory Vellum, what a very ass thou art! My chain of Venice gold is lost irretrievably, that I took for a debt of fifty crowns, and for which Master Ingot, the goldsmith, would have given me forty at any time. Oh! fool, that can only cozen boys and folks afar off, thou art cheated past all redemption!" Then he went and sat upon the stool, and leaned his head upon his hand, apparently in a monstrous melancholy humor. "Fifty crowns gone for nothing. Oh!" exclaimed he frantically, beating his heels against the stool, and then wringing his hands; "what a poor, wretched, miserable lunatic am I, to think of courting at my time of day. Such a brilliant chain! Oh! most preposterous idiot! fifty crowns! Oh! thou incomprehensible blockhead! I could beat out my brains with a whisp of straw, out of very vexation." And thereupon he jumped off the stool, being perfectly restless, and unable to

contain himself, and did begin to shuffle up and down the room with his stick, flinging himself about, ejaculating all sorts of condemnations upon his folly and insanity, and looking with a physiognomy as woful and enraged as ever miser exhibited at the loss of a part of his gain.

Presently he stood still of a sudden; for a voice—a rich, clear, mellifluous voice,—was heard singing the following words:—

"I gave my Love a posie gay,
Of all the sweetest flowers of May,
And bade her, till their leaves might die,
Upon her breast to let them lie.

'I'faith,' quoth she,
'Are these for me!

Like thy sweet words, how sweet they be.

But if thy maid

Thy love should aid,

Oh! bring her gifts that never fade."

"A murrain on him! that's my pestilent nephew," exclaimed the old man, in high dudgeon; "but I marvel infinitely how he got in; or hath he been in the house all the time?" He stopped, for the singer proceeded.

"I gave my Love a riband rare
To tie around her silken hair.
'Sweetheart,' quoth I, 'long may it grace
So brave, so proud a resting place.'

'Ah me,' she cried,

And looked and sighed,

'In this bright garb thy looks I've spied;

But see! 'twill fray

And wear away—

Oh! bring me gifts that last for aye."

"A pernicious varlet, will he never have done with his coxcombical singing," cried Gregory Vellum: but the singer continued his song.

"I gave my Love a golden ring,
To prize above each meaner thing,
And on her finger bade it rest,
While truth had footing in her breast.

'Dear heart, I vow,

Thou hast me now,'

She said, all blushing to her brow;

'The sterling ore

Lasts evermore,

And binds fond hearts unbound before."

"Oh! the unwhipped rogue! he sings of love at his age," exclaimed the old miser, in seeming consternation. "Well, who can doubt the wickedness of the world after this! But I'll trounce him, I'll warrant me. Francis!" he bawled, as loud as he could, first opening the door, that he might be heard, and then muttering to himself, and crying out by turns, proceeded thus: "A young profligate, to think of singing love ditties at his time of life;—was ever such iniquity in this world? Francis!" again screamed he, with all the strength of his lungs. "An' I do not make him hear, I'll make him feel. Francis! Francis! Francis! I say."

"Did you call, uncle?" said the youth quietly, as he presented himself at the door.

"Call, sirrah!" replied the old man, shaking with rage—"Call, varlet! have I not been bawling, and squalling, and tearing my lungs piecemeal after thee for these two hours past?"

"I did not hear you till this moment, or I should have come down," observed the youth.

"Hear me!" exclaimed Master Vellum vehemently—"how couldst thou expect to hear me, thou reprobate! when thou wert making the place ring with thy amorous ballads! Be that proper matter to sing at an honest scrivener's! Why, the passengers will take the house for a bagnio. Fie upon thee! when I was of thy age I sung psalms and godly hymns—but I was noted as a youth of a most modest discretion. What art *thou* noted for, I wonder?—for impudency, disobedieny, and all manner of dishonesty."

"Dishonesty, uncle!" said Master Francis, with unaffected surprise.

"Ay, dishonesty, sirrah! Look here!" and he took from his vest the dirty rag that hath previously been described, and begun carefully to unfold it—"here be a foul robbery thou hast committed. How didst get these fine pieces of candle I found in thy room? Hast no shame? What! pilfer from thy poor, yet too liberal uncle, when candles stand me in fifty crowns to the pound!"

"Fifty crowns, uncle!" exclaimed his nephew, with increasing astonishment—"why, I bought them myself of Tobias Mottle, the chandler over the way, and then they had only rose to threepence for the pound, in consequence of the exceeding scarcity of kitchen stuff."

"Well, no matter, sirrah, no matter!" cried the old man, in no way abating his passion, "thou hast robbed me—that is manifest. Thou hast taken advantage of the natural generosity of my disposition, and art in the habit of consuming my substance without my privity. I tell thee it be infamous—I tell thee it be a felony—I tell thee it be hanging, whipping, and the pillory. What a monster of ingratitude thou art, to defraud me of such exquisite gold of Venice of which they are made."

"Gold of Venice, uncle!" exclaimed the youth, almost inclined to laugh at the idea; "nay, if they be not made of the most notorious tallow, I am a heathen."

"Tush! I forgot," replied Gregory

Vellum, striking his stick violently against the floor; "but it availeth thee nothing; thou art a thief."

"I am no thief, sir," said the youth, reddening in the face; "I do confess that I took what you have in your hand, that I might have light to assist me in my studies; but if the loss grieve you, they can not be worth more than a halfpenny, and you may either keep them, or I will pay you for them."

"Pay, pay! why, how now? who talks of paying? where dost get the money from, fellow?" rapidly inquired the old man, fixing on his nephew a searching and inquisitive look; "and how camest thou by those heathenish books of which thou hast such goodly store?"

"I had them from a friend," replied Master Francis; "and I am obliged to be indebted to the same quarter for such assistance as my necessities require—which are caused by those who should have taken care that I lack nothing."

"Lack!—what dost lack? thou ungrateful vagabond!" demanded his uncle angrily, yet not ill pleased that such things were not done at his cost; "do I not find thee a most comfortable home?—do I not keep thee in excellent wearing apparel?—and as for eating, didst thou not eat right heartily yesterday at dinner of a most princely dish of cabbage and bacon?"

"As for the home, uncle," said the youth, "your penuriousness and ill-temper make it anything but comfortable. For the clothing—when you have worn your doublet threadbare, you think it good enough for me. And as for my dinner yesterday, it consisted of a piece of rusty bacon, scarcely big enough for the baiting of a rat-trap, with about as much cabbage as might serve for a caterpillar's breakfast."

"Oh, thou unnatural prodigal!" exclaimed Master Vellum, lifting up his hands and eyes in amazement. "This comes of writing verses!—this comes of singing love-songs! O' my life, I have a monstrous inclination to beat thee."

"You had better not, uncle," said the other calmly.

"Nay, but I will, caitiff!" replied he, lifting up his stick and approaching his nephew threateningly.

"If you do," said Master Francis, his face now as pale as it a moment since was rubicund—"if you do, I'll give you such a shaking you never had since you were born."

"Hub—bub—boo!" exclaimed the old

man, starting back, stammering, several paces, as if the threat had taken his breath away: and there he stood, with stick uplifted and mouth open, looking the very picture of horror and surprise. In fact, the conduct of his nephew had come upon him with a most perfect astonishment; for the natural modesty of the youth's disposition had hitherto made him bear his uncle's ill humors with meekness; but possibly the wine he had drunk with Master Shakspeare had put a bolder spirit into his nature. There, however, did he stand, pale and melancholy, yet resolute, with arms folded, and eyes with an unmoved fixedness resting upon his terrified kinsman.

"Oh, the monstrosity of the age!" at last ejaculated Gregory Vellum, "Oh, the horrid villany! But thou shalt troop for it. I will get rid of thee straight. Thou shalt find other uncles to give thee house-room, and feed and clothe thee, thou pestilent varlet! for I'll have none of thee. Was it not enough that thou shouldst rob me of fifty crowns—tush! what was I a saying?—of so much excellent candle—but that thou shouldst threaten to give me a shaking of right exquisite Veneian workmanship—Alas! these villainies have undone me! I know not what I say." Then wildly knocking the palm of his hand against his forehead, the old man rushed out of the room, shouting "Oh, my fifty crowns! my fifty crowns!" leaving Master Francis in as great a wonder as Master Francis had a moment since put his miserly kinsman.

CHAPTER III.

"Love me not for comely grace,
For my pleasing eye or face,
Nor for any outward part,
Nor for my too constant heart.
For those may fail or turn to ill,
And thus our love shall sever;
Keep therefore a true woman's eye.
And love me still—yet know not why
So hast thou the same reason still
To dote upon me ever." WILBYE.

"A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man."
SHAKSPEARE.

It was in a private closet in the queen's palace of Whitehall, that two of her majesty's maids of honor were assisting each other in attiring, and were conversing with that confidence that denoteth perfect friendship. The one, the taller of the two, was of a most majestic shape, with

a countenance of exquisite softness, impressed with a touch of reflection, that at times made her seem somewhat of a reserved and melancholy disposition: but in truth she was a most handsome woman, and of an excellent fair complexion. The other appeared both shorter and younger; her face was dark, yet did the roses bloom in it most becomingly; an arched mouth she had, dimpled on one cheek, and as for her eyes, they were the most laughing, roguish, brilliant pair of twinklers that ever pretty wench was blessed withal. Of these fair damsels, the first was Elizabeth Throckmorton, and the latter, her cousin Alice.

"What dost sigh for, Bess?" suddenly inquired the youngest. "O' my troth, thou hast appeared very woful of late."

"Did I sigh, Alice?" asked the other dejectedly.

"Sigh, coz!" repeated Alice. "No old bellows with fifty holes in it ever breathed with so undone a sadness. This comes of being in love, Bess. Art'sighing for Sir Walter Raleigh? I see by thy blushing I have hit it. Well, Heaven help thy five wits, that can find matter for sadness in things that give me such infinite matter for mirth. And what be this same animal, called man? A thing to laugh at—a joke that goes upon two legs—a walking piece of provocation for women to break a jest upon. Is he not a most absurd creature? I'faith, us poor maids would have all died of melancholy long since, if the men had not kept us alive by affording us such exquisite subjects for sport. And then the airs they give themselves. Didst ever see a peacock in the sun? he spreads himself out just like your man animal; and struts about, and looks as preposterously fine and proud. Poor fool! a goose would look as well had it the same feathers. And, like the clown in the play, he taketh a world of pains to get well laughed at by his audience. Well, I think I lack not gratitude. I owe a bountiful load of thanks to these our estimable benefactors, and all that my poor wit can do to render them as ridiculous as they seek to be, they shall have. They call themselves lords of the creation too, when they have about as much omnipotence as a cockle shell. Whatever lords they may be of, they shall never be lords of my bed-chamber, I promise you; for, before I marry a man, I'll give my virginity to an owl."

"Alice, Alice! how thou dost run on," exclaimed Mistress Throckmorton.

"Ay, forsooth, had I no legs I could

run on with such a subject," replied her cousin, laughing merrily. "But how dost like the setting of this sleeve?"

"It is of a pretty fashion, and of most dainty fabric," said the other, with a careless glance at the dress.

"That all thou canst say about it?" responded her companion archly. "Had I asked thee concerning the captain of the queen's guard, wouldst thou have merely said, 'It is of a pretty fashion, and of a most dainty fabric?'" here the merry little creature mimicked her companion. "O' my word, no—I should never have heard the last of him. Thou wouldst have given me whole chapters upon every hair of his head."

"But is he not a wise and most noble gentleman?" asked her cousin earnestly.

"Wise, quotha!" exclaimed Alice, with a smile of peculiar meaning. "Wise man?—wise fiddlestick! In what is he wise? Doth he not talk admirably? So doth a parrot if it be well taught. Wise oyster! And there is but little difference betwixt your oyster and your man. Your oyster hath a beard, so hath your man;—so he need not brag so much on that account. But the difference be all in favor of your oyster; for your oyster is delicate eating, but your man is for no Christian stomach, cook him how you will. Wise calf! Why, there is more philosophy in a forked radish than ever you will find in your wise man."

"In truth, Alice, if I did not know thee to be a most kind-hearted wench and a merry, I should think thee very malicious," observed the eldest.

"I bear no malice against the poor creatures," replied the other, with pretended meekness. "It would be a right shameful return for the unceasing efforts they make to amuse me. Well, it be not their fault that they have not more sense; and considering how foolish they are by nature, I must do them the justice to say, that they do as well as they can."

"But I can not love thee, if thou wilt not love Walter," said Mistress Throckmorton, looking with much seriousness in the face of her witty relative.

"Love him, coz!" exclaimed Alice, affectionately kissing her forehead. "I will do anything to pleasure thee."

And thereupon the two cousins did caress one another with a lovingness that was most touching to behold.

"But if he make thee melancholy, I'll be hanged if I love him," continued she with much emphasis.

"It be not his fault, dear Alice," re-

plied her companion. "He is always good and kind and noble. I alone am to blame—I am very much to blame." And, saying this, she suddenly did throw herself upon the neck of her kinswoman, in an uncontrollable agony of hysterical sobs and tears; and wept outright.

"Bess! Bess! Cousin! Elizabeth!" cried the now alarmed and anxious Alice. "What meaneth this? Why are these tears—and for what art thou to blame? Nay, this is mere folly. If the queen find out that Sir Walter love thee, she may be wrath with him and thee for a time, but it will all blow over harmlessly, I'll be bound for it; and there is no occasion to fret thyself till it happen. Come, dry up thy tears, or I will not let thee see him for a month."

"I must see him this morning, dear Alice!" remarked her cousin earnestly. "Thou must contrive to let me have speech with him here; for it is of the utmost importance."

"Here, cousin!"

"Ay, here, Alice," replied she; "my life, all that is dear to me, depends upon it."

"Well, if that be the case, I'll strive whatever my love can do to bring it about," responded the other. "But see how monstrously thou hast rumbled my ruff. If the queen see it, she will swear I have been romping." At this they both strove to smooth the creases as well as they could. "And now let me help thee on with thy robe," she continued, as she assisted in attiring her. "Ah, love's a sad thing, and therefore I like it not, dear Bess; for I like merry things."

"Thou wilt change thy tune anon, depend on't," said the elder.

"Change my tune? I'll change my nature first," replied the other. "By my troth, if the sky were to rain lovers, I'd keep under shelter. Save in the way of sport, if ever I have anything to do with these man animals—why then pickle me. And what a set I have around me at this present! Noah's ark contained not such another. First, I have my Lord Burghley, who looks as virtuous as small beer, and is just as sour upon occasion. He taketh upon him to commend my beauty, when the lord treasurer desireth to make himself agreeable to the maid of honor; then sayeth he, with a very infinite gravity, 'Be chary of thy smile, mistress; butter melts i' the sun! butter melts i' the sun!'" And here she mimicked the voice and manner of that most worshipful and profound statesman, of glorious memory,

and then proceeded imitating, in the same ludicrous way, the different individuals she named. "Then comes young gravity, his son, Sir Robert Cecil, who hath a smile for every one, and—nothing else; and as he happens to be possessed of a person in no way flattering to the eye, he chooseth to make use of a tongue in every way flattering to the ear. 'Sweet Alice,' saith he, in a whisper if he happen to stand by me in the throng, 'indeed, I can not help but think thee the flower of the whole court.' After him we have Lord Henry Howard—or rather with him, for they generally hunt in couples, like hounds of better breed; and he is somewhat of a soldier—somewhat of a sailor—somewhat of a gallant, and a great deal of a courtier; and he kisseth my hand cavalierly, and looketh into my eye as if he saw something there he had lost—his own modesty, mayhap, if he ever had any—and sweareth me one of the newest oaths, saying, 'I could stand the enemy, but not those lustrous orbs!'"

"Alice, thy wit will be the ruin of thee."

"Then cometh my Lord Pembroke, the hopeful pupil of that marvellous scholar and exquisite specimen of chivalry, Sir Philip Sidney," continued the laughing girl. "And he readeth me an essay an hour long on the surpassing virtues of the dames of antiquity; and looking the very pink of courtesy, telleth me, 'Thou wouldst make an admirable Arcadian shepherdess, only the infinite roguery that lurks in the dimple of thy cheek would create a world of mischief among the swains.' Then comes my lord chamberlain, the bluff and martial Earl of Sussex, with guns and pistols in his looks, and cannon-balls in his conversation; and he salutes me most soldierly, with an 'Hullo, mistress! were I for kissing, I know the pair of lips I'd choose out of a thousand.' After him we have the proud and impetuous Essex—all splendor—all gallantry—all impulse—and all nothing; and he cometh to me alone with an irresistible air, protesting, 'By this hand, an' I love thee not I am a Turk.'"

"Alice! Alice!" exclaimed her cousin seriously, "if thou art heard saying this, thou art utterly undone."

"Then cometh the gallant, gay, the learned, witty, brave, and handsome—in fact, the very thing—Sir Walter Raleigh."

"Alice!" cried Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, reproachfully.

"Well, dear Bess, I will say nothing of him, since it doth not please thee," replied her companion. "And now, because thou art quite ready, and I have teased thee in some measure, I will go and seek the noble captain; for, if I mistake not, he must by this time be in attendance."

"There's a good wench!" exclaimed her cousin, kissing her affectionately. "But be cautious in thy proceeding, for if the queen know of his being with thee, Walter will be ruined and I undone."

"Be cautious! will I not?" replied the light-hearted creature, with a toss of her little head. "I'll be as sly as a cat stealing of cream; and if her majesty find me out, I'll e'en give her leave to box my ears, as she did those of the lovely Mistress Bridges, who was guilty of having had the presumption to be admired by the imperial Essex. But Bess," continued she, turning round with an arch look, as she reached the door, "'tis a burning shame thou shouldst be in love. I marvel at it hugely. Well, if ever thou catchest me possessed of any of thy melancholy humors, I'll give thee leave to shut me up in a mouse-trap." And with a laugh as shrill and musical as the alarum of a silver bell, did the pretty piece of mirth and mischief leave the room.

But her cousin was in no mood to join in her merriment; and immediately Alice was gone she sat herself down in a chair, and there stole over her fair countenance an expression of deep and right eloquent sadness. She sat with her arms crossed upon her lap, most dejectedly; and her soft eyes, swimming in tears, fixed upon the floor. And in that position did she continue for at least the fourth part of an hour, feeding reflection with the delicious food of memory, mingled with so many fearful forebodings as were sufficient, with their bitterness to spoil the sweetness of her thoughts. She wept not, neither did she smile; but it seemed as if in her admirable features there was going on a continual struggle between the most exquisite pleasure and the most direful apprehension, and the latter got such mastery as might suffice to give her lids as much moisture as they could carry, and impress on her well-favored aspect, a character of more than ordinary grief. Anon, her eyes becoming overcharged, there was cast down upon each cheek a tear-drop, and the light falling thereon from the window near which she sat, did make its brilliancy so apparent, that it

would have put to shame the brightest jewel that ever glittered in her stomach; and these gems of purest water, as if enamored of their fair-resting place, sought not to move from the spot where they had fallen; which gave to her the appearance of a most beautiful and moving Niobe.

Presently she heard a footstep in the corridor, and her heart thereupon began to beat with a more perceptible throbbing. The footstep approached, and the color mounted to her cheek—it stopped at the door, and the cheek became pale as marble. In a moment the door opened quickly, and was as quickly closed; and, as a cavalier of a most noble appearance entered the room, with a half-stifled cry of exultation, she rushed toward him, and sunk swooning upon his breast.

In truth, the cavalier was of a most valiant and commendable presence. His high and expansive forehead was partly concealed by his hat (in which was a little black feather, with a large ruby and pearl drop at the bottom of the sprig, in place of the button); yet sufficient of it was observable to denote the fine intellect that lay within. His eyes were large and intelligent—his nose somewhat long, yet not out of proportion—his lips delicately curved, with a fair mustache on the upper lip, and a beard of moderate growth, handsomely rounded under the chin beneath, encircled by a frilled ruff; and his complexion was somewhat browned, as if by exposure to foreign climates, or hard service in the wars. His stature was six feet full, with limbs elegantly yet strongly moulded. He was apparelled in a white satin pinked vest, close sleeved to the wrist, having over the body of it a brown doublet, finely flowered, and embroidered with pearls; with a belt of the same color and ornament, on the left side of which hung his sword, and on the other was seen the pommel of his dagger. His trunks, with his stockings and riband garters, were all of white, and fringed at the end; and his shoes were of buff, tied with white ribands. He might be somewhere between thirty and forty years of age; that is to say, in the very prime and vigor of his life. And a braver soldier, a handsomer man, or a more accomplished gentleman, the court of Elizabeth did not contain at that time.

"Bess! Bess! dear, sweet, exquisite Bess!" cried he flinging down his hat, and pressing her in his arms. "By Heaven! she hath swooned," he exclaim-

ed, as he observed her head droop, and her cheek quite pallid: then cautiously fastening the door, he bore his lovely burden to where stood an ewer of water, which he began presently to sprinkle on her face, all the while using most endearing expressions and caresses, and exhibiting a truly earnest solicitude.

"They have fastened thy boddice most infamously tight, dear Bess, and 'tis beyond my poor wit to loose it," said he earnestly, as he tried unavailingly to undo the fastenings of her robe. "'Sblood, I have a good mind to rip it up with my dagger; and if she recover not quickly, I will. Dear, dear Bess!" he continued, with more emphasis, as he began vigorously to chafe her hands. "Revive thee, girl—revive! 'Tis I—'tis Walter—*thy* Walter, dear Bess. There is nothing to fear, believe me. We have no one near, the queen's in the council chamber, and I have well excused my attendance. Come, Bess, I say—sweetest! dearest! best! my heart! my life!—Ha, she revives!" he cried joyfully, as he observed signs of returning animation in her countenance. "Indeed, I have a mind to scold thee—only I have no heart to do it."

"Walter! dear Walter!" murmured the beautiful woman, fixing upon him a look of most impassioned tenderness, directly she recovered sufficient consciousness of where and with whom she was; and then throwing her arms around his neck, and resting her head upon his shoulder, began to sob violently.

"Now, Bess, this is unkind of thee," said Sir Walter in rather a reproaching tone; but immediately added with a kinder voice, "but what aileth thee, sweetest?"

"Oh, I have undone thee—I have undone thee quite!" exclaimed she, as plainly as her sobs would allow.

"Not while I wear a sword, dear Bess, and am free to go where I will," he replied.

"The queen will know all, dear Walter—*she* must discover it soon."

"Why so, dear Bess?" inquired Sir Walter.

"Alas! I can not tell thee—no, indeed, I can not tell thee, dear Walter," said Mistress Elizabeth, sobbing more violently; "but I must leave this place. Do take me away. I can not stay here but a very short time longer without utter destruction to thy fortunes. Oh! take me away, Walter—take me away!"

"It shall be as thou desirest, sweetest," replied Raleigh, stooping down and kiss-

ing her cheek. "I have already arranged with thy father for a private marriage before I embark on a voyage, the good results of which I hope will win my pardon from the queen."

"Thanks, dear Walter," exclaimed she, looking gratefully upon him through her tears; "thou art always good, and noble, and generous; but I am fearful it will be thy utter undoing."

"Think not of it, Bess," said her lover kindly, "and then it can not fright thee. But the danger is none so imminent. I shall not let her majesty know of our marriage, if it can be helped. Thou shalt get away from here as if on a visit to thy father in Aldgate, and so excite no suspicions; in the meantime, I will increase my attentions to the queen, so that she shall have no reason to quarrel with my behavior; and when thou art secure in thy asylum, I shall start in my good ships for the voyage I intend."

"I would not have thee anger the queen for worlds," observed the other; "for it is in her power to make thy fortunes, or mar them. Elizabeth hath a very woman's heart in some things, though she be masculine enough in others; and she loveth the adulation of handsome men. She much regardeth thee, dear Walter, I know, and from that I am fearful that her knowledge of thy marriage will deeply affect thy prosperity. Indeed, I would rather die than that thou shouldst receive injury for my sake."

"O my life, thou art a most admirable creature," exclaimed Sir Walter, as he rapturously pressed her within his arms; "and I should be totally unworthy of possessing that rich argosie, thy affections, were I not to risk my life, and all that to it do belong, in endeavoring to secure thy peace of mind. I fear not consequences in such a case, dear Bess. As for the queen, I know that flattery is rarely unacceptable to her; and her name and thing being the same, I can easily quiet the scruples of my conscience, if they say aught against my insincerity, by imagining that it is to thee my homage is addressed."

"I care not, Walter, what thou sayest or what thou doest, as long as thou holdest thy proper quality and station in the court," replied the devoted woman; and then, with a sudden look of right earnest affection, continued—"thy proper quality, said I?—nay, if thou attainest that, by my troth, thou wouldst be king of them all."

"Oh, thou outrageous flatterer!" cried

Raleigh, sportively shaking his head at her.

"'Tis no flattery, dear Walter—'tis the very truth," said Mistress Elizabeth fondly. "And who can look on thy noble form, clad in these princely vestments, and not say the same? But above all, who can regard thy noble mind—that costly jewel in a rich case—and deny thy pre-eminence?"

"Bess! Bess! if thou goest on at this rate," replied Sir Walter, with an assumed gravity, "I shall be reduced to follow the obsolete custom of blushing, which will bear hardly upon me, seeing that I lack blushes most abominably."

At this moment a quick, light footstep was heard proceeding along the corridor, and Mistress Elizabeth, as soon as she recognised it, disengaged herself from the embraces of her lover, hastened to the door, which she immediately unfastened, and opening it, gave entrance to her cousin Alice.

"A plague on this love, say I," exclaimed she laughingly, as she bounced into the room nearly out of breath.

"What's the matter, Alice?" inquired her cousin anxiously.

"Ay, what's the matter, sweet coz!" added Sir Walter.

"Coz! coz, indeed!" cried Alice, somewhat disdainfully, yet with an arch glance of her eye, as she turned sharp round upon the last speaker—"I prythee keep thy coz-ening for those who will listen to thee. I'll have none on't."

"I'faith, Alice, if thy wit be always so sharp, thou wilt lead apes in the next world, depend on't," said Raleigh.

"I don't know, sweet sir, whether there be apes in the next world," said she, with a courtesy to the ground; "but o' my word there be nothing else to lead in this, as I can see."

At this Sir Walter good humoredly did laugh outright; in which he was heartily joined by his merry companion.

"But what brought thee into the room so post-haste, Alice?" inquired Mistress Elizabeth.

"Marry, matter enough," replied she—"there be the queen's majesty in her chamber inquiring most piteously for her captain of the guard, and sending the ushers and the grooms in all directions after the lost sheep. I being asked if I knew where he was to be found, did innocently answer, that having for some time past suspected him of the criminal intention of setting the Thames on fire, I did opine that he might be met with in the

buttery, begging the loan of a wax taper for the nonce."

"I'll give thee a beating for that," cried Sir Walter laughingly, as following her round the chamber with his glove he did whip her over the shoulder, while she, ducking her pretty head, cried out, and sought to avoid the blows.

"Help, good coz, help!" she cried to her cousin, who stood by, showing by her sweet, smiling countenance that she did mightily enjoy the scene. "Help! or this valiant Sir Walter Raleigh, who maketh war upon women, will get the better of me."

"Nay, Alice, I'll help thee not—for thou dost richly deserve all that thou receivest," said Mistress Elizabeth.

"Confess that thou hast slandered me, thou pretty mischief," exclaimed Raleigh, holding up her palms together, and threateningly, as she crouched down at his feet.

"I will confess, holy father," replied she, with an admirable mock seriousness, as she put her palms together, and turned up her brilliant eyes to his—all the while a smile playing about her dimpled cheek that gave to her face an expression of archness infinitely pleasant to look upon.

"In the first place, holy father, the queen is not in her chamber, because she is still with the lords of the council."

"Oh, thou abominable transgressor!" cried Sir Walter, with all the seriousness he could assume.

"In the second place, she hath not sent for thee, because she requireth thee not."

"Daughter! daughter! thy iniquity is palpable," said he with the same gravity.

"In the last place, I have just met with master secretary, who saith that the council is about to break up, and inquired if I had seen thee. Thereupon I sent him where I knew he would not find thee, and hastened to where I knew I should."

"Thou must do penance for this," observed Raleigh; then somewhat maliciously added, "therefore I do condemn thee to the scarcely endurable punishment of holding thy tongue for a whole hour."

"I' faith thou hast it this time, Alice!" exclaimed Mistress Elizabeth, with undisguised glee.

"And now, beauties, I must be under the painful necessity of hurrying my departure," said Sir Walter, taking up his hat, and gallantly bowing to the fair cousins; then smiling triumphantly on

the laughing Alice, who had remained on the floor where he had left her, wearing the most pitiful face that eye ever beheld, he was about to make his exit, when Mistress Elizabeth rushed before him.

"Stop, Walter," cried she, hastily, "till I see if the coast be clear for thee," as she opened the door, and looking out cautiously, immediately added, in a more subdued voice—" 'tis as it should be; and now, dear Walter, let me once more entreat of thee to keep on good terms with the queen."

"I will strive all I can, dear Bess," replied her lover, affectionately raising her hand to his lips, "and be sure that thou make proper and speedy preparations for thy departure from this place."

"I will not fail," said the beautiful woman; and, in the next moment, she was watching the noble form of her affianced husband retreating with hasty strides along the corridor.

Sir Walter Raleigh proceeded onward, passing several doors on each side of him, and various passages that led to divers parts of the palace, till he came to a staircase of fair proportions, the balustrades of which were finely carved, having at their extremities rampant lions, most ingeniously wrought out of the solid wood. At the bottom of this flight of steps he passed sundry of the yeomen of the guard, placed there upon duty, who gave him instant salutation; and still advancing, met with pages, grooms, and ushers, hastening on their business, who, with great show of respect, did do him reverence. With these were sometimes mingled the higher officers of the palace, and gentlemen and noblemen of the court, either intent upon their duties, or discoursing with one another, as they walked carelessly along, and with them he did exchange abundance of courtesies. As he was turning sharply round a corner, he came suddenly against a courtier of a very notable aspect, and of right commendable habiliments; his face was fair to look upon, and dressed with a constant smile. An observer might suppose him of an ingenuous nature, and of a remarkable honesty; gentle in his behavior, upright in his conduct, and chivalrous in his disposition: yet was he a thorough courtier, as will anon be made manifest to the reader. He was young; that is to say, of some thirty years or so; and being of a handsome figure and countenance, his apparel, though it lacked the splendor of Sir Walter Raleigh's, was evidently

worn to set them off to the best advantage.

"Odds pittikins, Sir Walter," exclaimed he, laughingly, as he recovered himself from the shock, "dost take me for a Spanish galleon, that thou runnest me down in this pitiless fashion?"

"Thy pardon, my good lord," replied Sir Walter, as he held out his hand, which the other shook with all the fervor of old friendship, "Lord Henry Howard hath so proved himself the queen's good soldier, as to make it impossible for any one to take him for a Spaniard."

"Nay, thou flatterest me there," said the Lord Howard, with an appearance of considerable modesty, "I did but follow the example of that worthy and approved good knight, Sir Walter Raleigh—and but at an humble distance, as all must who would tread in his valiant footsteps. But, confess—confess thee, man! wert thou not dreaming of another armada, and wert intent on boarding the biggest ship of them all, when thou didst beat down upon me with thy whole broadside so courageously?"

"Indeed, my lord, I was thinking of a different matter," replied his companion.

"I doubt thee hugely," responded the other, shaking his head, "for 'tis so much in thy fashion. Then wert thou busying thy most fruitful imagination in search of new discoveries, and, instead of steering into some delectable bay, full of all enticing prospects, thou of a sudden didst drop thy anchor upon my new doublet—was it not so?"

"Thou art again in the wrong, my lord," replied Sir Walter, smiling; "I was on no such voyage. I am bound to her majesty, where my attendance is required. If nothing better await thy pleasure, will it please thee walk with me, my lord?"

"I am infinitely gratified by thy courtesy," said Lord Henry, with a most courtier-like inclination of his head, as he proceeded alongside of his companion, "and will do myself that honor. The queen is expected in the presence chamber, on her return from the council; and I was but making a stroll in the meanwhile, when thou didst me the especial favor of nearly running me down. But what a superlative taste thou hast in thy appointments," suddenly exclaimed he, as he noticed the splendid attire of Sir Walter; "'tis most exquisitely fashioned, and of a very dainty conceit."

"Dost like it, my lord?" inquired Raleigh, carelessly.

"On mine honor, I admire it hugely," responded his lordship, with a vast show of admiration. "I marvel not thou shouldst be the very model of dress amongst us, for thou art truly delicate in the choice of thy fabrics, and infinitely curious in the manner in which they are to be worn. I do know a certain lord who would give his ears, had he thy apprehension of these things."

"Be his ears so long then, that he would get rid of them for so trifling a result?" asked his companion, with some affectation of seriousness.

"In truth thou hast hit it," exclaimed the Lord Howard, with a hearty laugh. "Between ourselves, he is marvellously apt to play Midas to thy Apollo."

"By what name goeth he?" inquired Sir Walter; "for as far as my penetration sufficeth, I know of none such."

"Dost not know the earl of Essex?" whispered the other.

"Most assuredly do I, for a gentleman of many noble qualities," replied Raleigh.

"I tell thee, out of friendship, he doth affect thee not at all," said his lordship, in the same low voice.

"Then hath some villain slandered me to him," observed his companion, quickly; "for, although he hath his faults—as who hath not?—I do believe him to be of a right honorable nature."

"I have ofttimes heard him speak slightly of thee, Sir Walter—by this hand have I," continued his lordship, with increased emphasis, yet still in a subdued tone.

"Thou must have mistaken his meaning, surely," responded the other, "I have done him no offence. But he may speak slightly of me without disparagement, my good lord, for possibly I may not have done sufficient to deserve his eulogy."

"I tell thee, in friendship and in secrecy, noble Raleigh—for it be dangerous to say anything against one so high in favor—that he hath disparaged thee villainously, ever since thy quarrel with that ruffianly follower of his, Sir Roger Williams."

"Ha!" exclaimed Sir Walter, turning round quickly, and looking his companion full in the face.

"Thou hast done *too much* to please him, noble Raleigh: thy gallant actions are ever before his eyes—thy well-deserved praises are continually ringing in his ears. He must make comparisons; and whenever he doth compare himself

with thee, either in appearance, in wisdom, or in honorable deeds, he findeth himself at a disadvantage; and that doth fret him hugely. Thou knowest he is proud—and that proud men are vain—and that vain men are apt to undervalue the qualities they do not themselves possess. Marvel not, therefore, that he doth not appreciate thee according to thy exceeding merits. I tell thee this, out of my infinite love for thee, wishing to put thee on thy guard."

"I am much beholden to thee for thy consideration," replied Sir Walter, as if musing upon what he had heard: "and yet he hath always been, to all appearance, most friendly disposed toward me."

"To all appearance, I grant," added his lordship, dwelling in a marked manner upon the words; "but thou mayest rely upon what I have stated. Use it as it pleaseth thee, noble Raleigh; but well convinced am I, that what I have said out of affection, thou wilt employ after such a fashion as may not be likely to do me an injury."

"Depend on it, thy interests shall be well cared for," responded Sir Walter.

The preceding conversation continued while the parties proceeded along sundry passages and through various suites of rooms magnificently furnished, and crowded with courtiers and others strolling about or discoursing of the news one with another. They at last advanced into a room adjoining the presence chamber—a noble apartment hung round with costly tapestry, and strewed with fresh rushes, into which came thronging the archbishops and bishops, ambassadors, nobles, counsellors of state, and others of the mighty of the land. Presently it was whispered that the queen was a-coming, and thereupon way was made for her majesty, just as the gentlemen pensioners with their gilt battle-axes and richly embroidered vests were observed approaching. After these went certain noblemen of the queen's household, knights of the garter, and the officers of her council walking in their costly robes bareheaded—among whom was the chancellor bearing the seals in a red silk purse—having on one side of him an officer of state carrying the royal sceptre, and on the other another of the like rank bearing the sword of state with the point upward, in a scabbard of crimson velvet plentifully studded with golden *fleurs-de-lis*.

Next came our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, very majestic in her deport-

ment, and although getting into the decline of life, still very pleasant to look upon; for her face if it was a little wrinkled was fair; her eyes small and lively; her nose somewhat aquiline; and her lips though thin were continually adorned with a gracious smile. She wore much false hair of a red hue—a color she greatly affected, and upon her head a small crown of a very precious gold richly worked. In her ears were rare pearls with pendants of exceeding value; and on her bosom, which, in consequence of her dress being worn low, was much exposed, was a necklace of jewels of an excellent fine water, with an oblong collar of gold and precious stones above; she was attired in white silk daintily bordered with pearls remarkable for their size and beauty, over which was a mantle of black silk shot with silver threads; having a train of marvellous length and of a corresponding costly material, borne by divers of the ladies of her court. As she advanced every head was uncovered, and those nearest to her did kneel on one knee, some of whom who had letters to deliver she raised and spoke to graciously, and as a mark of particular favor to one Bohemian baron, who had come to present certain credentials, she did pull off her glove and gave him her right hand to kiss, all sparkling with jewelled rings.

Thus she proceeded in all this beautiful magnificence, winning the hearts of her dutiful subjects by her very gracious condescension, and speaking to many foreigners with the same notable courtesy in French, Italian, Spanish, or Dutch, as it might happen, to their infinite wonder and delight; followed by a beautiful throng of the ladies of her court, each handsomely attired, though mostly in white, with the addition of some display of jewellery: and a guard of gentlemen pensioners like that which preceded them, till she entered the presence chamber to give audience to those ambassadors and ministers who had come on pressing business.

CHAPTER IV.

But if in living colors and right hue
Thyself thou covest to see pictured,
Who can it do more lively or more true
Than that sweet verse with nectar sprinkled;
In which a gracious servant pictured
His Cynthia, his Heaven's fairest light?
That with his melting sweetness ravished,

And with the wonder of her beames bright,
My senses lulled are in slumbers of delight.

SPENSER.

I marle what pleasure or felicity they have in taking this roguish tobacco. It's good for nothing but to choke a man, and fill him full of smoke and embers: there were four died out of one house last week with taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight; one of them they say will never scape it, he voided a bushel of soot yesterday upward and downward.

BEN JONSON.

THE queen of England having retired from the presence chamber, sat in her withdrawing-room on a well-carved chair, having cushions covered with crimson velvet, whereon the royal arms were embroidered in gold, resting her feet upon a footstool of a like material—and around her were the select companions of her privacy. Instead of her crown, she now wore a pyramidal head-dress built of wire, lace, ribands, and jewels. The chamber was of handsome proportions, hung with costly tapestry, on which was very fairly depicted the principal events in the Iliad, and besides such necessary furniture as chairs, tables, and cabinets elaborately chiselled into every kind of cunning device, the panels of the richly-decorated wainscot did contain full-length portraits of the late king's highness of glorious memory, Henry the Eighth, with his illustrious consort Anna Boleyn, in dark ebony frames, and done to the life with all the limner's skill.

The whole party seemed to be in an excellent good humor, especially her majesty, who led the example by laughing loud and long, as she sat before two open glass doors that looked into a garden daintily laid out in long shady walks, while leaning upon the edge of the door, almost outside of the room as it were, stood Sir Walter Raleigh, against whom, evidently, all the mirth was directed; who, with a grave countenance continually disturbed by the merriment of his associates, in which he ever and anon joined right heartily, kept smoking a long pipe, and watching the fumes as he puffed them into the air.

"Ah, thou hast small cause to look after the fumes, for thou wilt be in a fine fume thyself presently," said her majesty, and the courtiers and the ladies thereat did laugh more than ever.

"Please your majesty," replied Sir Walter, taking the pipe from his mouth, and laughing with the rest—"My fumes are perfumes; and if ever I exhibit any other fumes in your majesty's gracious presence, I should be deserving of banishment, which would make me in a fume indeed."

"Thou wilt lose thy wager, Sir Walter Raleigh—which will put thy pipe out, depend on't," added the queen—at which witty conceit the courtiers were again in raptures.

"My pipe will be out anon, please your majesty," responded Sir Walter in the same jocose spirit. "But I shall have the honor of winning a purse of gold of the most bountiful sovereign that subject ever had."

"Odds bodikins, man, thou art mad, sure!" exclaimed the queen good humoredly. "How canst expect to win such a mad wager—unless peradventure thou seekest to amuse thyself by playing upon us some trick—which if thou dost, by our halidom, thou shalt smoke for it in right earnest." Thereupon the laugh went round as before, and all in audible whispers did commend her majesty's wit most liberally.

"Nay, I should be unworthy to breathe in so estimable a presence were I to make so bold," replied Raleigh gravely. "And for fear that your majesty should misunderstand my meaning, I will recal the terms of the wager—in the doing of which this noble company will correct me if I say anything in error. Your majesty, out of your gracious condescension, hath wagered me a purse of gold against my Barbary courser, that from a certain quantity of this precious tobacco that I have before all these honorable persons weighed and put into my pipe to smoke, I shall not be able to tell the exact weight of the smoke that escapes."

"Why, thou foolish gull, how canst tell the weight of anything that escapes?" asked the queen with a merry, malicious glance, and to the infinite amusement of her circle. "Canst catch the smoke after it hath mingled with the air, and press it into thy scales! We did think that thou hadst more wit than to undertake such a thing, and when thou first spoke of it, fancying thou wert taking the traveller's privilege, we laid this wager with thee on purpose to have a laugh at thy expense. O' my faith thy Barbary courser is as good as lost; but though it be taking but a barbarous advantage of thee, we must e'en accept of it."

"Please your majesty, perhaps he hath the wonderful seven-league boots, and meaneth quickly to overtake his smoke," observed a very lovely young gentlewoman who stood by the side of the queen's chair.

"Nay, Lady Blanche Somerset," replied her majesty, joining in the general

laugh, "he must be a bird if he means to come up with it, for smoke hath the property to ascend, as thou seest."

"Methinks Sir Walter be nothing else but a bird," said Mistress Alice, with an exceeding grave face.

"Why so, child?" asked the queen.

"Doth not your majesty perceive he hath a very owl-like look?" added her attendant archly, to the manifest increase of the mirth of the company, the which Sir Walter regarded only as if he had more to laugh at than they.

"I do perceive something in this more than meets your majesty's eye," remarked a very old courtier, with an exquisitely solemn foolish physiognomy.

"Speak out, my Lord Bumble," cried her majesty.

"I hold it as most comfortable Christian doctrine, please your majesty," said his lordship, advancing a little way on his gold-headed cane—for he stooped much, "that the mouth was made for the accommodation of honest victuals; and though I have lived in the reigns of your majesty's father Henry VIII., of pious, chaste, and glorious memory, and of his most excellent highness Edward VI., who surely hath a throne in heaven; and of our late illustrious Queen Mary, who was of a most princely disposition, as it becometh a queen to have, and which your majesty doth possess to an extent far beyond that which was exhibited by your majesty's predecessors, I never saw a gentleman, and, to speak the exact truth, I may add, any person of any degree whatsoever, who used his throat to imbibe villanous smoke; and therefore I hold it as most comfortable Christian doctrine that the mouth was made for the accommodation of honest victuals. Moreover, I never heard of any one with whom it was customary to make a smoke-jack of himself, but one, and he did do it not from liking, but from necessity."

"And who was he, my lord?" inquired the queen.

"Please your majesty, it was no other than the devil—from whose machinations be your majesty ever carefully guarded."

"Amen, my lord," said the queen, gravely.

"Who, as the learned Dr. Thump-cushion hath stated," added Lord Bumble, "continually doth vomit smoke and brimstone—doubtless, much after the same fashion as yonder honorable gentleman, the captain of your majesty's guard—therefore I hold it as most comfortable Christian doctrine"—

"Never mind the doctrine, my lord"—here put in the queen rather impatiently, while Sir Walter, with much ado, endeavored to preserve a serious countenance—"Say at once what thou perceivest in this matter, that our poor wits are not master of."

"I will come to the point without further preamble, since it be your majesty's excellent pleasure," said the old courtier, "though I was going to say, that a thing which looketh so unnatural and so devilish, can be practised for no other end but to ensnare our souls and blind our eyes, that we may be the more easily caught and thrust into the bottomless pit, where it be the fashion of Satan and all his imps to smoke, and to teach others to smoke, like unto the manner of yonder estimable gentleman, Sir Walter Raleigh; therefore, I hold it as most comfortable Christian doctrine, that the mouth hath been made for the accommodation of honest victuals."

"We have heard that before, my lord, so if thou meanest to enlighten us no further on this matter, hold thy peace, and Heaven will reward thee for it."

"Yes, Heaven will reward me, certainly, as your majesty hath so piously remarked," continued Lord Bumble; who, in addition to other infirmities consequent on old age, was exceeding deaf—"I am much bound to your majesty for your majesty's gracious consideration of my long service, and if your majesty doth not, Heaven will reward me, certainly. But I must say, of all your majesty's glorious family, none have I served with half the infinite satisfaction I find in attending on your majesty—though his excellent highness, Henry VIII., whose page I was, did say that I was inestimable before bedtime."

"Ah, thou didst doubtless make a most admirable sleeping potion," observed her majesty.

"As your majesty is pleased to say, he did justly appreciate my devotion," proceeded his lordship. "But I am fearful I am somewhat wandering from the point."

"Thou has found that out at last—a plague on thy tediousness!" exclaimed his royal mistress, angrily; but in a low voice.

"I have already stated enough to satisfy any reasonable personage that smoking is but a devilish pastime, and therefore not to be tolerated—but there is more mischief in it yet. I say it be unlawful and infinitely dangerous. For let it be

observed that smoke is black—which is likewise the color the devil most affects—therefore to be avoided; that the accomplishment of smoking is an art—and the art being black, it standeth to reason it must be a black art—and I do uphold that the exercise of the black art in your majesty's presence is heathenish, treacherous, and abominable, and, consequently, that yonder noble gentleman, the captain of your majesty's guard, ought not to be allowed, as is evidently his intention, to bewitch your majesty and overthrow the state."

"Sir Walter Raleigh, dost hear that weighty accusation?" asked the queen, the frown of impatience upon her face now giving way to an undisguised smile; "Hast thou had the audacity to practise the black art before us? hast the presumption to attempt to bewitch us and overthrow the state?"

"Without attempting any defence, I will, at once throw myself upon your majesty's clemency, of which I have had such excellent experience," replied Sir Walter—refraining awhile from his pipe. "But perhaps I may be allowed to observe, that if I have attempted to bewitch your majesty, I have followed the example of one who, with her admirable qualities, hath bewitched all her loving subjects."

"There! he confesseth it, please your majesty," cried the old courtier, pressing close to the queen, "therefore I do hold it very comfortable Christian doctrine"——

"Peace, fool!" cried her majesty, in a voice that not only made Lord Bumble hear, but astonished him so, that it sent him staggering two or three paces backward upon the delicate toes of some of the maids of honor; who, not liking so impressive a salutation, with features expressive of pain and anger, pushed him rudely out of the way, till he found himself beyond the circle, scarcely able to breathe, and in a complete consternation.

"I do not believe that he practiseth the black art," here observed Mistress Alice, who was somewhat of a favorite with the queen, for her lively temper, and, more than all, because she never seemed desirous of attracting the admiration of the noblemen and gentlemen of the court; "Indeed, I will do him the justice to say that I think him no conjuror."

The queen laughed, and, as matter of course, the courtiers laughed also.

"Nay, be not so hard upon him, child," said her majesty, "remember he will

have to lose his Barbary courser, which will sufficiently punish him for endeavoring to cajole the queen of England."

"May it please your majesty," said Sir Walter Raleigh, coming into the room with his pipe in his hand, "I have smoked out the quantity of tobacco agreed upon."

"Haste thee and weigh the smoke, then," replied the queen, with a chuckle of delight, which was echoed by those around her.

"I will tell your majesty the weight of the smoke in a few seconds," responded Raleigh, taking in his hand a small pair of ivory scales which stood on an adjoining table.

"Thou wilt never get so much smoke into such tiny balances, Sir Walter Raleigh," observed her majesty with the same tone, "so thou mayest as well acknowledge that the wager is ours."

"Your majesty will be pleased to observe that the weight in this scale is the exact weight of the ashes left in the pipe," replied Sir Walter, showing the scales, in one of which he had put the ashes, at an even balance. "Now, if your majesty will graciously remember the weight of the unburnt tobacco upon which the experiment was made, by subtracting from it the weight of the ashes, which I have here ascertained, the sum produced will be the exact weight of the smoke."

Sir Walter Raleigh, with the scales still in his hand, wore on his noble features, at this moment, an expression of very evident satisfaction, as he turned round and looked down upon his audience—some of whom seemed incredulous, others wondering, the rest puzzled what to think; but all were waiting in silence the effect of his announcement upon their sovereign, whose abler understanding perceived at once the accuracy of the result, though it was so different from what she had expected, and felt as if she could not enough admire the simplicity of the method which had so easily proved what she thought had been impossible.

"The gold is thine, Sir Walter Raleigh," said she, rising from her chair with a dignity none knew better how to put on, as she placed a well-filled purse in his hand, "and fairly is it won. There have been many laborers in the fire whose vast undertaking have ended in smoke; but thou art the first whose smoke was ever turned into gold."

"Well, I did not think he was such a

superlative master of hocus pocus," exclaimed Mistress Alice, with a wonderful elevation of her eyebrows. "Please your majesty, if you let him go on at this profitable rate, every conjurer in your dominions will hang himself in despair."

"Indeed, 'tis a very pretty piece of conjuration," said Lady Blanche Somerset, opening her large blue eyes in a seeming astonishment; and all the rest, though they did in no way understand the matter, did rival each other in ready praise of Sir Walter Raleigh—except my Lord Bumble, who kept aloof, as if he had not yet recovered from his fright and surprise.

Sir Walter having put away the things he was using, placed his hand on his heart, and kneeling on one knee before her majesty, as she presented him the purse, said humbly, "I pray your majesty to pardon me, that the deep gratitude of my heart at this moment, at receiving such munificent and generous conduct from my sovereign, hath taken from my poor tongue all adequate expression. What Paris must have felt when he first beheld the beauteous Helen, I experience at witnessing such graces of behavior—with the like of which was no princess ever blessed—therefore, if I make not too bold, I would implore your majesty, out of your right royal and princely disposition, and most admirable wisdom, to frame, in my behalf, such excuse for my silence as your majesty may think appropriate."

"Rise, Sir Walter Raleigh," said the queen, graciously raising him from the ground: for, in truth, though waxing old, she did find exceeding delight in having such handsome gallants at her feet. "The wager was honorably won—therefore our bestowing it doth call for no gratitude. We are now disposed for a stroll through yonder pleasant walks, and require thy attendance." So saying, she led the way, with a becoming stateliness, through the glass doors, and stepped out into the garden, closely followed by her captain of the guard—the rest staying behind, as they had not been invited. After some little time passed in the queen's garden, her majesty proceeded through divers passages, and through the new gallery in the palace, till she reached St. James's Park.

"Hath Master Edmund Spenser, our poet laureate, of whom thou hast so oft spoke to us so fair, been well cared for, since at thy request we granted him an

interview?" inquired her majesty, as they walked along.

"I believe that my Lord Burghley never did anything for him, or paid him his salary, please your majesty," replied Sir Walter. "But I marvel not at that, seeing that my lord treasurer hath not seemed in any great degree affected toward the inestimable sweet delights of poetry and philosophy; and yet one would naturally suppose, that serving a mistress who hath so perfect a knowledge and so exquisite a taste in those divine enjoyments—the very Minerva of our thrice fortunate English land—he would have imbibed sufficient inclination toward them as to foster such as possess them most—for the true glorification of his illustrious sovereign, and to the great advancement of his own honor."

"Ah, my Lord Burghley is certainly somewhat deficient in such matters; nevertheless he is an excellent statesman and a faithful servant," observed the queen. "We will, however, not allow Master Spenser to think himself unesteemed of us, for we remember well he did read to us divers passages from a poem called 'The Fairy Queen,' of which we entertain a very favorable consideration."

"Your majesty playeth ever the part of the true judge of merit, and its most liberal patroness," exclaimed Raleigh, "and happy are those poetic spirits who were born to flourish under such excellent auspices. Surely they might aptly be addressed in the words of Lucan to his Pharsalia,

*Vos quoque, qui fortes animos belloque preemptos
Laudibus in longum, vates, diffunditis ovum,
Plurima securi fudistis carmina Bardis.*

It has been left for your majesty's right glorious reign to produce two such unrivalled geniuses as Master Edmund Spenser and Master William Shakspeare—the one as an epic poet, who writeth to advance the admiration of that which is chivalrous and noble, hath no peer; the other as an inventor of plays—the which in this country he may justly be said to be the originator—for judgment, wit, imagination, and knowledge of human nature, standeth above all in these realms. Master Spenser hath fellowship with such noble spirits as Homer and Virgil, and Master Shakspeare deserveth to stand on equal terms with Sophocles and Menander."

"We take great delight in the productions of this Shakspeare as exhibited at the playhouse," replied her majesty, "and

do intend this afternoon to partake of the same amusement."

"It is an entertainment worthy of your majesty's enjoyment," responded Sir Walter, "for I take it that players are a sort of looking-glasses, who show humanity under all its fashions, as it is made to appear by the dramatist, to whom these fashions are familiar; and they who essay to know the world, its conduct and apparelling, will find no more direct way than the playhouse, where Master Shakspeare and some few who travel in his footsteps are in requisition. Nor are your majesty's players undeserving of laudable mention; for, without tuition or previous example, they have raised the art, from little better than absolute vagrancy, to a profession honorable with the court, and in good esteem with the people."

"Ah—there is one Burbage, is there not, of notable excellence in this art?" inquired the queen. "We have marked him oft. He that playeth the crook-backed king."

"The same, please your majesty," said Raleigh, "which showeth your majesty's exquisite discrimination, for he beareth away the palm from them all; being of an exceeding ingenious nature, and of a very happy facility in taking upon himself the characters of others; which he showeth not only when appearing as Richard the Third, though it be a most superlative piece of acting, as your majesty hath justly conceived, but in divers other parts in which he hath exhibited a similar excellence."

They walked on for some two or three minutes without saying ever a word.

"Rememberest thou those lines of Virgil," asked her majesty, "beginning:—

Fortunate senex! hic inter flumina nota
Et fontes sacros?'

"How could I fail, please your majesty?" replied Sir Walter, seeing that they form one of the sweetest pieces of pastoral ever written by that truly famous poet, who hath for his epitaph:—

Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc
Parthenope, cecini pascua, rura, duces."

"If our judgment do not fail, they are most happily chosen," continued the queen. "How well he describeth the cool deliciousness of that pleasant place, out of the scorching heat of the sun, where the bees suck the dainty flowers, while the cooing of the dove and the plaint of the turtle are hushed, that the

sojourner therein might be wooed to repose."

"Indeed, it is a marvellous refreshing landscape, and your majesty doth show that inimitable appreciation of its excellence, which hath delighted me so oft when discoursing upon other of the ancient writers, either Greek or Latin."

"There is another picture, which maketh a fine contrast to the foregoing," said her majesty, who did mightily delight to show her learning, of which she was very bountifully gifted; and more especially took great pleasure in receiving the praises of so fine a scholar as her captain of the guard: "it is given in Theocritus his Idyls, and commenceth:—

Ἐν τε βαθειαις,
Ἀδείας σχίνιοι χαμενίσιν ἐκλίθηρες,
Ἐν τε νεοτμίτοισι γεγαυθότες οἰναρέοισι.

and so goeth on at considerable length."

"I remember me," replied Sir Walter, "where the poet describeth the luxurious indolence of reclining on the soft branches of the vine and the lentisk; while above, the foliage of poplars and elms spreads a most grateful shade, and the murmuring stream flowing below gives coolness to the air; shrill grasshoppers are chirping pleasantly in the green sward; the sweet honey-sucking bees are humming amid the fragrant blossoms; Philomel, pouring out her melancholy song, concealed in the grove; and the turtle-dove, cooing dulcetly, doth add a softer music to the tuneful pipe of the small birds; as, to charm the eye equally with the ear, the luscious fruits of summer and autumn are heaped all about, showing piles of rosy-cheeked apples and pears, and the branches of the velvet plum, overloaded, bending to the ground. In truth, 'tis a most enticing picture; and the reference to it is another instance of your majesty's unrivalled familiarity with the treasures of classic song, and of that miraculous fine taste which preferreth what is most admirable, that giveth me such frequent cause of infinite wonder and delight."

The queen did look exceeding pleased at this discourse, fanning herself all the time very prettily as she walked along, and regarding the noble form and handsome attire of the speaker with an eye of favor; till coming to a place where, beneath the shade of a wide-spreading beech, just where the walk, screened on the side by a thick fence of hawthorn, took a sudden turn that shut them out from view, a commodious seat was placed, and her majesty did rest herself

thereon. She then, more at leisure, did scan the rich habiliments of the gallant Sir Walter Raleigh, as he stood before her, which seemed to give her ample satisfaction, though she said never a word; he gazing upon her all the while with a wonderful show of respectful admiration, as much as to say, that if his tongue dared speak his thoughts, his heart would make them right eloquent.

"What sayest thou concerning the voyage thou wert speaking of?" at last she inquired in her most gracious tone.

Starting suddenly, as if recovering from a trance, he replied, "I humbly pray your majesty's pardon; for indeed 'tis a most notable truth, that none but the eagle can gaze on the sun without being dazzled."

Her majesty did infinitely relish such conceits; and her eyes twinkled with an evident pleasure as she observed her attendant suddenly let fall his looks to the ground, as if the gazing upon her were too much for his humanity.

"But of the voyage I will speak," continued he. "May it be known to your majesty, that there are certain of my former companions in arms, with other valiant gentlemen, who are desirous of serving your majesty, and of giving free scope to their courageous spirits by doing damage against the Spaniard, have clubbed with me divers large sums of money, for the purpose of procuring a sufficiency of well-appointed ships for an expedition against Panama, combined with an intention of intercepting the Plate fleet, the riches whereof is almost incredible. They have funds enough for thirteen ships-of-war, of the which, in consideration that I have sunk the whole of my private fortune in the scheme, and that they do—doubtless without proper judgment—acknowledge me to be the properest man among them for seamanship, acquaintance with the Spaniards, and knowledge of the art of war, seek me for to be their admiral, which, if it be the good pleasure of your majesty, whose poor soldier I am, I am in no wise unwilling to be: but to make the consequence we seek the more sure, I would humbly pray of your majesty such assistance in men, money, and ships, as would put all thought of misadventure out of the question, the granting of the which, I feel assured, would tend greatly to the complete crippling of your most notorious enemies, the addition of abundance of glory to your reign, and the vast enrichment of your exchequer."

"Thou speakest us fair, Sir Walter Raleigh," said the queen, who had paid very strict attention to what he had advanced; but however partial she might be upon occasion, she was rarely to be drawn away from a consideration of her own advantage. "Thou speakest us fair; and were we not as well acquainted with thee as we are, having recollection of services done by thee against the boasted armada, which, by God's good help, we utterly discomfited, and at other times against those empty praters and wretched villains the Spaniards—and remembering also thy skill in discovering strange lands, do put some confidence in thy assertions; nevertheless, it is necessary we be informed what share of the spoil shall be ours in case we afford such assistance as thou requirest?"

Sir Walter, in no way disconcerted at this, as he knew her majesty's disposition, answered, with a very becoming humility: "Far be it from me to endeavor to make a bargain with my sovereign; but your majesty's condescension is so great, and your liberality I have experienced in so bountiful a measure, I am emboldened to say, that according to the amount of the service rendered shall your majesty partake of the treasures gained."

"How many ships dost require?" asked the queen.

"As many as your majesty can generously assist us with," replied Sir Walter.

"If we allow thee half a dozen, properly equipped and provided for with all the munitions of war, we shall expect to share one half of the spoil."

"Your majesty's generosity exceeds my expectations," exclaimed Raleigh; though, if the truth be told, he did feel a little put out at the unfairness of the bargain.

"Then, if those conditions be accepted, we do appoint thee admiral of the fleet," continued the queen, "and will see that thou hast proper warrant for it, with power to officer thine own ships as it pleaseth thee—reserving to myself the right of appointing a vice-admiral, to officer our ships as we think proper."

"Never had servant so bounteous a mistress!" cried Sir Walter, as he knelt at the feet of the queen, seemingly in a transport of gratitude. "In truth, if I am not allowed to pour out the overflowings of my most grateful spirit, I must be dumb ever after. Oh, where shall the most passionate lover that ever sought to

do noble deeds in honor of her whom he served, find such absolute cause for the impelling of his valor as that which moveth me? Had Arthur and all his right famous Knights of the Round Table lived in these more fortunate days, to have beheld the peerless Elizabeth, what chivalrous doings would have been enacted, that are lost to the world! But then how much have I reason to congratulate myself that I, who am nothing except in the eyes of the divine Parthenia, whom it is my happiness to serve—the very sovereign of beauty and queen of my heart's best affections, should not only live in the time which her existence hath made glorious, but should be allowed to breathe in her presence and bask in the imperial sunshine of her eyes—nay, honor never to be too highly prized," continued he with more vehemence, taking her hand, as he observed that the stateliness of the queen was sinking before the vanity of the woman, "that out of her exceeding condescension and wonderful goodness, she sometimes enricheth my soul with her most moving smiles, and vouchsafest me the supreme happiness of pressing my lips upon her ivory hand."

"Nay, Sir Walter, thou wilt devour it sure!" exclaimed the queen, coyly attempting to withdraw her hand, which he then impressed with a hundred eager caresses: but she was too well pleased with the action, and too much delighted in seeing so noble a gentleman at her feet, to use any great degree of force, and the hand continued to be caressed as passionately as at first.

"Oh, might I but be allowed to ask one favor—one sweet—one precious favor!" said Raleigh, gazing in her face with as much apparent rapture as if she had been a young and blooming Hebe, instead of much nearer resembling a superannuated Diana of some sixty years or so. The queen kept her peace, looking very bashful, not knowing but something might be required of her it would be scarcely proper for her virgin modesty to grant; when Sir Walter continued—"When I am doing furious battle with the enemy, I know of nothing which would so much strengthen my resolution, and afford me consolation in all the delays I may meet with in my scarcely enduring absence from my absolute and incomparable Angelica, as a lock of that golden hair, which to me seemeth brighter than are the beams of Phæbus topping the eastern hills: deign, then, to satisfy your majesty's humble and truly devoted

slave, and pardon the deep yet most respectful adoration that doth seek so invaluable a gift."

"In very truth, Sir Walter, if thou seekest only so simple a thing of us, we see no harm in its disposal," replied her majesty very graciously. "Therefore set thy mind at ease. Thou shalt have it by a trusty messenger before thou leavest our shores."

"Ah!" exclaimed he with a passionate look, as he pressed the hand he held to his heart—"your majesty's unexampled goodness hath already made my poor heart bankrupt in thanks."

"Hush!" cried the queen, suddenly snatching away her hand and putting her finger to her lip. "Who are these that dare to intrude upon our privacy?"

Just at that moment footsteps were heard approaching along the walk on the other side of the fence, and voices of two persons in conversation were distinguished. They spoke low, but the words "Raleigh," "Elizabeth," and "intrigue," were distinctly audible.

"Now, by God's wounds, we'll not suffer this!" exclaimed the queen, starting up with a face crimsoned with rage. "Arrest them, Sir Walter Raleigh, whoever they be."

"Let me entreat of your majesty"—

"What, are we not obeyed?" cried the queen quickly, interrupting him, and casting on him a look of terrible menace when she observed that he hesitated to obey her command.

"On the knees of my heart, let a faithful servant"—

"Away, traitor!" fiercely exclaimed her majesty to her kneeling favorite, as she brushed by him; and with haughty steps strode toward the turning in the walk which would give her a view of the spot whence the sounds had proceeded: but behold! when she had there arrived, no person was visible—at which she marvelled greatly. She looked among the trees, but could see nothing; and much chafed thereat, returned to where she had left Sir Walter, as it may be said with considerable show of truth, trembling in his shoes at the imminent peril of his situation; but he knew the character of his mistress thoroughly, and his alarm soon giving way, set him upon putting forward a stroke of policy which should reawaken all the influence he had lost; so that when her majesty came back to the place she had left, sweeping along, frowning majestically, and with a mind filled with thoughts of inflicting the most complete

disgrace upon her captain of the guard, beheld a sight so piteous, that all the dread sovereign did give place to the sympathizing woman—for there knelt Sir Walter Raleigh exactly where he had before kneeled, as if he was chained unto the spot, gazing upon vacancy with a look so despairing and wo-begone, that it would have melted a heart of adamant. To her exceeding astonishment, he noticed not her appearance before him—albeit he saw her well enough—but continued with a fixed and glassy gaze to stare into the empty air, like unto one utterly bereft of reason; and being moved with pity to behold so gallant a man, and one withal who was the best dressed gentleman in all her court, in so sorry a plight, she presently went up to him and placed her hand upon his shoulder, saying kindly, “Sir Walter, what aileth thee?” whereupon, with a long-drawn sigh that seemed to come from the very bottom of his heart, he lifted up his eyes to her face, and then, as if struck with a sudden recollection, he sunk down his head, and did hide his face in his palms, with a groan so hollow and sepulchral, that her majesty thought he was about to give up the ghost.

“Nay, nay, take not on so, take not on so, Sir Walter; we mean thee no harm, be assured,” said the queen, now in a very trepidation; which assurance was comfortable enough to her forlorn captain of the guard; but who, nevertheless, with a most pitiful accent exclaimed—

“Let me die at your majesty’s feet, for I am unworthy to live, having angered so good a mistress.”

“Odds pittikins, man, think not of dying,” replied the queen in her most gracious tone.

“In sad truth, if I be deprived of the most delectable happiness of gazing on such exquisite perfection as hath so oft delighted mine eyes, I am utterly undone. I have no desire to live,” continued he very movingly. At which the queen was not a whit displeased, for it is out of all contradiction, she had vanity enough to believe that the deprivation of the beholding her charms would produce so fatal an effect.

“Despair not,—and if we find that thou still deservest our esteem, thou shalt have no cause for fear,” said her majesty in a manner she thought likely to put him into some hope. “Rise, Sir Walter Raleigh, and return with us to the palace—we will inquire into this matter.”

“I am rooted to the earth,” replied he,

in the most sorrowful voice that ever was heard. “The fear of your majesty’s displeasure hath fixed me to the ground. I have no power to move. How much would those wretched traitors rejoice, who, to get me into disgrace, envying me your majesty’s good opinion, that I prize as Jason did his Medea, and which, as she taught him to tame the brazen-footed bulls, and cast asleep the watchful dragon that guarded the golden fleece, hath inspired me to like honorable and famous deeds,—to witness the very piteous strait to which I am reduced by the effect of their contemptible trick to slander the most excellent, chaste, and beautiful princess that ever did adorn this sublunary world.”

“Dost think ’twas a trick?” inquired she earnestly.

“How could it be else, please your majesty?” replied Sir Walter, albeit he knew all the time, having, from a better sense of hearing, heard more than the queen, that the conversation alluded to his amour with Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, though he could not distinguish to whom the voices belonged; but seeing that her majesty fancied that it was in allusion to her, was resolved to take advantage of that mistake. “Is not your majesty well known, with all the superlative accomplishments of the nine immortal daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne, to unite with them the exquisite truth and modesty of the goddess Veritas and the Vestals—and how could those villanous traducers, whoever they be, give utterance to so notorious a calumny, unless it were that I should reap disadvantage thereby; but, relying on your majesty’s noble qualities and proper sense of what is due to your own dignity, I feel convinced that the paltry trick will be regarded with the contempt it doth deserve—only awaiting your majesty’s pardon, without which I am naught, to release me from this right painful and unhappy posture.”

“Rise, Sir Walter Raleigh—thy pardon is granted thee, and there is our hand upon it,” said the queen, in her most gracious manner giving him her hand, the which he did again press to his lips, but in a style more respectful than before. “We’ll think no more of these paltry tricksters—but will show them how little we can be affected by their villanous yet most contemptible slanders.” Then did she very kindly raise him from the ground, and return to the withdrawing-room conversing with him all the way

on matters relating to his projected voyage in a way, the friendliness whereof, he had rarely experienced.

CHAPTER V.

Ambition is a vulture vile

That feedeth on the heart of pride,
And finds no rest when all is tried;
For worlds can not confine the one,
The other lists and bounds hath none;
And both subvert the mind, the state,
Procure destruction, envy, hate.

DANIEL.

Against bad tongues goodness can not defend her
Those be most free from faults they least will spare,
But prate of them whom they have scantily known,
Judging their humors to be like their own.

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON.

"My Lord of Essex, you may account me your true friend in this business," said a dwarfish and ill favored person soberly clad, to a handsome and gorgeously-dressed gallant—having remarkable dark eyes, and a rich glossy beard very full at the bottom—as they sat over against each other in a chamber hung round with abundance of ancient armor.

"I think I may, Sir Robert Cecil," replied he, addressed as the Earl of Essex, looking moodily all the time, as if there was something that mightily vexed him. "She hath quarrelled with me at primero, only because I did drop something that to her appeared to call in question her skill with the cards; and she hath spoke to me never a word since. 'Sblood! one had need be a beggar's dog as put up with such humors."

"Nay, but the queen is a most bounteous mistress," observed the other in a tone of apology; "and though at times she be easily displeased, yet is she quickly moved to make amends if undeserved disadvantage come of it."

"But she is too prone to such capriciousness, and I'll stomach it no longer," exclaimed his companion, his brilliant eyes flashing very haughtily as he kept playing with the jewelled pommel of his dagger. "What! shall it be said that the Lord Essex is fit for nothing better than to play the pet falcon with, to be whistled to, and driven off, as it suiteth a woman's idle fantasies?"

"Fie on you, my lord!" cried Cecil, with an exceeding grave countenance. "I would not the queen should hear of this for as much as your earldom."

"Let her—I care not;" said the Lord Essex sharply.

"Now, look you there, was ever ob-

stinate man so bent on his own destruction?" exclaimed the other. "But I will do you a service as far as my poor ability goeth; for sure am I, that you have no friend so earnest to advance your interests as Robert Cecil, if you will only look upon him as such."

"I thank you heartily," replied his companion; but in no way relaxing the frown that had settled on his brows.

"Nay, I seek no thanks," rejoined Sir Robert, "for, inasmuch as my honored father hath been your guardian—to say naught of the noble qualities I do behold in you—have I ever felt disposed to do you a service. Believe me, I would do good for the good's sake. Now, my lord, in this matter, be advised by me; for though seek I in no way to push forth my judgment before one that is so ripe as your own, yet, as your lordship is somewhat apt to get heated at these things, being touched by them more nearly than another, I, having more coolness, which is the greatest help to reflection, may be considered better qualified to form an unbiased opinion; therefore, I do beseech you, in all true friendship, be advised of me."

"What counsel you, Sir Robert Cecil?" inquired his lordship.

"Mark you Sir Walter Raleigh?" asked the other.

"What hath he to do with it?" said my Lord Essex, very proudly.

"Truly he is a noble gentleman," replied his companion; "he is one that hath many commendable parts, being in outward show right manly to look upon; the which he doth put to great advantage, by apparelling himself very daintily. Indeed, though I be no judge of these things, I have heard it said by others, that for the fashioning of a doublet, he hath not his peer. For mine own part, I envy him not such an accomplishment, thinking that it more becometh a tailor than a gentleman. Nevertheless he is doubtless to be praised for it, seeing that it showeth his great anxiety to please her majesty, who, it is well known to him, taketh exceeding delight in beholding such braveries; the which he continually turneth to his profit. But he hath other gifts that do the more recommend him to the queen's favor; he hath held himself valiantly in the wars, and hath the reputation of the most experienced soldier in the queen's service; though I for one do think there be his betters not far off. Then—so it be said, though I know not how true it be,—his knowledge of sea-

manship is inferior to none; which hath not only enabled him to exhibit his valor against the enemy with great effect; but hath given him marvellous facilities in the discovery of strange lands. Besides which, they that take upon themselves to know this phoenix, do give out that he is a very Solomon for wisdom, and is wonderfully quick at penning a stanza."

"And what hath all this to do with the matter?" haughtily inquired my Lord Essex, who, though he could not help admiring the character of Sir Walter Raleigh, liked not to hear of his praises so conspicuously.

"Much more, my good lord, than it doth appear to you," replied Cecil, in a tone, and with a manner of great meaning. "Mark me! I do not blame this valiant gentleman for wishing to make the most of his qualifications, for it is natural for a man to advance his fortunes as well as he can; but if he, standing upon the opinion some have of him, which in all honesty seemeth to me strangely overrated, seek to gain the first place at court, and poison the queen's ear against the absent"—

At this moment my lord of Essex, who had exhibited signs of great impatience during the speech of his companion—with his handsome countenance hugely disturbed—leaped suddenly upon his feet, and exclaimed—

"By God's wrath, if he hath slandered me, I'll make him rue it."

"Nay, I said not that, my good lord," observed the crafty Cecil, with a show of sincerity. "Indeed, far be it from me to give you so ill an opinion of one who, beyond all dispute, hath signalized himself very honorably; but your absence doth throw great temptation in his way.—I pray you be seated, my lord:—and there are some men—such is the perversity of human nature—who think it no discredit to them to build their rise by working at the fall of their betters.—I would you would not stand, my lord:—not that I think Sir Walter Raleigh is of such kind, but being the captain of the guard, in constant attendance on the queen, where he hath many opportunities to drop hints to your disadvantage, which in charity I do not think he would:—I would say, *perhaps* he might, as the only way of dispossessing you of that high seat in the queen's grace you so worthily fill, be induced to increase her majesty's displeasure against you as much as lay in his power. But be seated, I pray you, my lord."

"If he attempt it, were he twenty Sir Walter Raleighs, he should have his deserts," said the proud noble, evidently much disturbed by what he had heard; then, smiling contemptuously, added—"but he dare not," and quickly resumed his seat.

"There are we of the same opinion," observed Cecil, who, with an unmoved countenance, had all the time kept a careful scrutiny of the features of his companion. "When I consider that he is nothing better than a simple knight, while you, my good lord, are known to be connected with the powerful families in the kingdom, and even stand in some relationship to the queen's majesty, I do conceive that he hath more wit than to attempt such a mad scheme as the driving you away from the court, that he might supply your place; nevertheless, speaking from the love I bear you, I do advise that you keep with the queen as much as may be possible; thereby shall you hinder all foolish speculations of the kind, that may be built upon your absence, and notice for yourself whether this Sir Walter Raleigh be inclined to push himself forward at your expense, as some say; though for mine own part, I do not think of his disposition so badly, having, in all my intercourse with him, found him to be a gentleman of very excellent integrity. Allow me also to hope, that what my zeal for you hath emboldened me to say, you will not take in ill part, assuring you that, of all men living, is there not one I hold in so much respect as yourself."

"I am greatly beholden to you, and will think of your advice," replied my Lord Essex, rising, with considerable assumption of dignity, from his chair, as he began putting on his embroidered gloves, "but where is my Lord Burghley?"

"My father hath not long returned from the council," said his companion: "he is greatly fatigued, and hath gone to rest, desiring not to be disturbed. I pray you, my good lord, excuse seeing him to-day."

"In truth I have no particular business with him," said his lordship, carelessly, as he arranged a costly silk cloak he wore upon his shoulder; "commend me to him, Sir Robert, and, if it be not displeasing to you, I will see you again on this matter at a fitting hour."

"I shall feel proud of the honor you will do me, my good lord," replied Cecil, as with much show of respect he followed his visiter out of the door, when he

had put on his hat, which was of a high crown, with a precious jewel in the front; and made the serving men, some of whom were straggling about the hall, hasten to open the gates, where he kept bowing to my Lord Essex very courteously, who received his salutations with a haughty inclination of the head, before he moved away from Exeter House, to cross to the river where he had left his barge; and then the other came back, seemingly in a very thoughtful mood, to the armory, and fastened himself in.

He had sat himself down therein scarcely a minute, when he was aware of a gentle tapping at the wainscot; which as soon as he heard; a smile of peculiar meaning passed over his grave features, and going directly to a place where hung a suit of Saracen mail, he did presently open a concealed door, and there entered thereat Lord Henry Howard.

"Hast any news?" asked Sir Robert, eagerly.

"Indeed have I," said my lord.

"Good news?" inquired Cecil.

"Excellent good news," replied his companion.

"From the Scottish king, eh, my good lord?" said the other, in a whisper.

"No, i'faith—it hath not travelled so far: 'tis English news;—news of our incomparable captain of the guard."

"Ha! what, doth he seem inclined to take the bait, and quarrel with Essex?" inquired the other.

"I doubt it much," responded his companion; "I moved him a little, but not sufficient to ground any such hopes upon."

"'Tis enough," exclaimed Cecil, "each is jealous of the other, and very small things will suffice to increase their mutual ill will. I have had Essex here, and have just succeeded in stirring up his ancient animosity against Raleigh, and I will take good heed it shall not go out for want of fuel. See you my object?"

"To ruin both in good time, I hope," said Lord Howard.

"True—but more immediately to play one against the other, that we may take advantage of their disunion; for were they strict friends, they would be too strong for us; or were either to be allowed to proceed in his course without molestation of a rival, he would soon have too firm a seat for us to shake him out. We will set them by the ears, and I doubt not we shall find our profit in it. But what news have you of Raleigh?"

"What think you of a dainty intrigue now with one of the maids of honor?"

"No!" cried the other, incredulously.

"Just ripe for a discovery—a private marriage about to take place, to hide the unwelcome consequences."

"To whom—where is she—what is her name?" hastily inquired Cecil, showing by the earnest expression of his countenance the interest he took in the intelligence.

"She is no other than the right modest daughter of old Sir Nicholas Throckmorton."

"The fool's ruined," exclaimed Sir Robert; "but how know you this—how can it be proved?"

"I was informed of it by my Lady Howard, of Walden," said the other. "Her ladyship, as it seemeth to me, having been slighted by this Raleigh—I know not why, for truly she is rather a dainty piece of goods to look upon—and suspecting from certain observations she had made, that he was the welcome lover of the virtuous Elizabeth, impelled by jealousy, did conceal herself in Mistress Throckmorton's chamber, and heard the whole of the precious secret; and now her indignant ladyship is burning to tell it to the queen."

"She must be stopped awhile—she will spoil all else," cried his companion, eagerly. "This is a delicate affair, my good lord, and requireth very careful handling, or else mischief will come of it."

"I thought it of consequence, and bade her stay the discovery till I had seen you on the subject, which she hath promised me. But the best of the jest is, while we were in earnest conversation on this very matter, along one of the walks in the park, the queen, who was on the other side of the fence near which we stood, without our knowledge of it, overheard us, as I suppose; for we presently recognised her voice very loud, calling upon Sir Walter Raleigh to arrest us; the which put us both in such a fright, that each of us did suddenly run for it as if our lives depended on our speed of foot. Never ran I half so fast in all my days; and as for my fair cousin—by this light, there never was such a racer. It would have done your heart good to have seen us, like two Spanish galeasses, cutting before the wind with all sail, to get out of the reach of an English frigate. Thanks to the fleetness of our heels, we escaped; but my Lady Howard hath got such a fright that she will scarce dare to open her

mouth before the queen for some time to come."

"So much the better," observed his companion, drily.

"I left her to calm herself at her leisure, and hastened through the private gate in the garden to seek you here by the secret way."

"You did right, my good lord," said Cecil, as he sat himself down, somewhat abstractedly, leaning his head upon his hand.

"And now, methinks, this fine fellow, who evidently liveth in the opinion that nothing is so good as that which he doeth, hath done for himself; and I shall not be sorry for one. I like not such whippersnappers—persons of no extraction—ignoble adventurers—who are ever thrusting themselves before their superiors, and winning from them such honors as they alone were born to possess. Indeed, this Raleigh is a most pestilent piece of conceit, and I dislike him hugely: I shall glory in his downfall; and I care not how low his pride is humbled. Besides, when he hath been put out of the way, there will be only the haughty Essex to cope with, who must easily be overthrown, for he hath not the cunning of the other."

"Tush, my lord," exclaimed Cecil, with some impatience; "see you not, that if Raleigh be quite removed, Essex will be paramount? 'Tis a business that must be managed with exceeding delicacy. Hark!" he cried, in a more subdued voice, rising quickly from his seat, and opening the secret door as the Lord Howard prepared to depart—"Here are visitors coming. Haste and tell my Lady Howard not to stir in this matter till I have seen her." Then closing it upon his retreating associate, and unfastening the other door, he was in a minute very busily employed upon some writings on a table before him, when there came a knock; and as soon as he had called out to them that they might have admittance, there entered Sir Walter Raleigh, with a very courtier-like looking gentleman, most daintily attired.

"Now I take this as exceeding kind of you, Sir Walter," exclaimed Cecil, in a manner marvellously friendly, as he recognised his visitors. "And my worthy brother-in-law, my Lord Cobham, too! I know not which to be thankful for most—the presence of yourself or your friend. I pray you be seated."

"Indeed I have but called to acquaint you that her majesty hath signified her

consent to my expedition," observed Raleigh.

"Of that I am very heartily glad, believe me," said Sir Robert, shaking Sir Walter by the hand with as much earnestness as if he had been the best friend he had in the world; "and knowing, as I do, your fitness to lead to a profitable and glorious issue all such armaments, in which, as far as I have heard of the best judges, is no man living your superior, I do build upon it great hopes of your advancement in the queen's favor; whereat none of all your friends will feel more infinite delight than myself. But sit, I pray you, and let us drink a bottle of Ippocras to your successful voyage."

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the Lord Cobham, cheerfully, as he flung himself carelessly into a chair, and did put aside his hat. "Such a proposition must be welcome for the sake of mine accomplished friend; but there is another consideration that claimeth to be taken into account—my throat is dry."

"A good consideration truly," remarked Cecil with a smile, as he rang a silver bell that lay upon the table.

"Nay, if you will have wine, I must leave you two to the enjoyment of it—my duties permitting me not to assist you in what would otherwise be mightily agreeable to me; for I must hurry to attend upon her majesty to the playhouse."

"Now sit you down," replied Sir Robert with great demonstration of friendship, preventing Sir Walter from leaving the room—"it wanteth, to my certain knowledge, a good half hour to the time when her majesty is like to be ready, so your haste need not be so immediate—besides I take it hugely unkind of you, seeing that while I, who am of so notorious a gravity, for the sake of one to whose admirable qualities I stand so well affected, am inclined to unbend to a becoming sociality, you, who are well known to be the most absolute prince of good fellows, on the poor excuse of press of time, do seek to play the churl with my well-disposedness."

"I'faith, Raleigh, there must surely be time for a glass or two with my worthy brother-in-law," said his friend, and then added very gravely, "and there is a very good reason why I think so."

"Out with your reason, my good lord," exclaimed Cecil, somewhat urgently—"out with your reason, if you love me, for I do truly hope it will be a convincing one."

"My throat is dry," sagely replied the Lord Cobham.

“O’ my life, there is no standing against so grave an argument,” said Sir Walter laughingly, as he uncovered and did sit himself down, “so I must e’en be indebted to your courtesy.”

At this instant a serving man entered, to whom orders were given for the bringing of the Ippocras; and Sir Water Raleigh noticing a peculiar suit of armor, Sir Robert Cecil then did acquaint him how his father, the Lord Burghley, took great delight in making a collection of offensive and defensive arms, of different times and countries, the which he had that room built on purpose to receive, in preference to keeping them at his magnificent mansion at Theobald’s, or at Burghley House; and when Sir Walter, being very learned in these things, did explain to him the age and nature of some, he listened with exceeding respect. In truth, although Cecil was the youngest of the three, he was the very craftiest man in all her majesty’s dominions. His appearance was in no wise prepossessing—being short of stature, and with a face not at all handsome, shrewd eyes, and a scanty beard; yet by falling into the humors of the great—affecting a wonderful sincerity, and seeming of a serious turn, he had advanced himself to her majesty’s confidence—nor was he inclined there to stop, for ambition was his ruling passion: and everything he schemed about, had for its object, without making enemies, to get as much power as was possible into his own hands. All this time my Lord Cobham was arranging his hair, and trifling with his beard before a very polished coat-of-mail, that served him as a mirror.

The wine now having been brought in and poured out by the serving man before he left the room, into three tall Venetian glasses, Sir Robert Cecil standing up with his glass in his hand, said, with an abundance of humility:—

“It ill becometh me, who am so little skilled in speech, to attempt what requireth such true eloquence as the praise of one who hath so distinguished himself in all manner of knightly and clerk-like accomplishments, as hath my most worthy and esteemed friend Sir Walter Raleigh; yet, as he knoweth full well that my deficiency proceedeth not from lack of love, but from lack of wit, he will, I doubt not, out of the generosity of his humor, be content with the assurance, that, as far as my humble judgment goeth, I do consider him an honor to this our age, and an example to the world, of

an able commander by land or sea, a ripe and perfect scholar, and a most honorable gentleman; and knowing that he is about to command an important expedition against the enemy, he will, I question not, also allow me, from the very sincerity of my love, to wish him all that infinite success to which his great merits do entitle him.”

“In every word of this I gladly concur, and drink success to him with all my heart,” added my Lord Cobham; and, both thereupon, quickly drank off their glasses.

“Sir Robert Cecil,” replied Sir Walter in a truly dignified and impressive manner, as he stood up to the table—“It would be but affectation in me were I to seem indifferent to applause; for, however it may be taken, I must acknowledge, that I love praise—because I love to deserve it: and if I have not merited it to the extent your goodness hath bestowed, believe me it was rather from want of ability than inclination: nevertheless I can not say how much beholden to you I am for your good opinion, and, though as it seemeth to me, the success I may have can not come up with your expectations, to prevent as much as lieth in my power your judgment from being called in question, I will, in all times to come, urge my poor qualifications to the utmost. I thank you for your good wishes—and my lord also—and in return drink to your prosperity.”

“Well said!” exclaimed the Lord Cobham, as his friend raised the wine to his lips, and each had reseated himself—“the speech is worthy of the wine, and the wine deserveth the speech—therefore are they capitally matched. I only wish my Lord Essex had tasted some of this truly delicious Ippocras before we met him just now at the river’s side—methinks he would have looked with a more pleasant countenance.”

“Saw you the Lord Essex as you came?” inquired Sir Robert, carelessly.

“We met somebody very like him,” replied the other, “only he did regard us with an aspect so Ethiopian, I had like to have taken him for a blackamoor.”

“Ah, my lord is doubtless a little out of humor,” observed Cecil, significantly.

“He is not in favor with the queen.”

“O’ my word, one would have thought he had fallen out with his own shadow for looking black at him, and resented it by looking the like at all he met,” said my Lord Cobham.

"Unfortunately, my good lord," replied the wily Cecil, "there are some men of such unhappy dispositions, that they can not bear to see superior merit taking the lead of them; and must therefore regard the object with a sullen and unfriendly gloominess."

"By this hand I thought so," exclaimed Cobham.

"Not that I would wish to insinuate aught against the noble lord," continued the other, "for he is doubtless of too honorable a nature to have evil intentions against those of whose rising power he may be jealous—though I have heard it said that he beareth no good will to our excellent friend, but of the truth of it can I say nothing. Indeed, in justice to him, I can fairly assert that he hath many estimable qualities, and showeth a very princely liberality—nevertheless, truth compelleth me to say—but your glasses are empty," said he, suddenly breaking off his discourse, and pouring out the wine.

"What were you about to advance, Sir Robert Cecil?" inquired Raleigh, very earnestly. "As far as I have had means of judging of Lord Essex, he is a brave and honorable gentleman, but if he hath said aught or done aught against me, I should be glad to know of it."

"I pray you excuse me there, Sir Walter," quickly replied the other. "Believe me, I am no maker of mischief. It would grieve me much to see two such notable good servants of her majesty at variance; and truly your high spirits are apt enough to quarrel without being set on. The Earl of Essex hath a bountiful disposition, as I have said, and if he inclineth at times to be envious of another's greater merit and better fortune, there be not one of us without our faults; and it is but Christian charity to look over such. How like you the wine?"

"'Tis of very curious flavor," responded Raleigh, yet, though he answered to the purpose, he did seem as if he was thinking of another matter.

"In truth, 'tis excellent good," said the Lord Cobham, looking at it through the delicate glass in which it sparkled beautifully, and then sipping it that the flavor might dwell upon his tongue, "very exquisite stuff, by this hand! I know not where I should meet with a better wine; indeed, with Ippocras of such admirable quality never came I acquainted. If it be not demanding too much of your courtesy, I pray you tell me of what vintner might you get such brave liquor?"

"Of mine own knowledge know I not,

my good lord," answered Cecil; "yet will I make it my business to inquire. Believe me, I am marvellously well pleased it hath taken your fancy, as it showeth its excellence: for, for a singular fine taste in wine, of all men living commend me to the Lord Cobham. Let me replenish your glass."

"I am infinitely bound to you—but in very honesty, Sir Robert, I am but an indifferent judge," said my lord with some humility, yet it was evident he was well pleased with the compliment.

"Your modesty maketh you undervalue yourself," replied Sir Robert: "I have heard your judgment approved of beyond all comparison."

"'Tis indifferent—'tis indifferent," responded the other carelessly.

"Nay, but I have stayed too long," exclaimed Sir Walter Raleigh, jumping up of a sudden from a sort of revelry, and making preparations to depart.

"Not a whit," responded Cecil, "there is ample time to get to Whitehall before the queen hath need of your attendance. Another glass, I pray you."

"There, then!" cried Raleigh, tossing off the wine as his friend was making ready, "and now we must tarry no longer. Come, my lord."

"Be advised of me, and think no more of what my foolish tongue hath let out concerning the Lord Essex," said the crafty Cecil in an under tone, with a face of much concern, as he walked by the side of Sir Walter toward the gates—the Lord Cobham following at some distance. "For your own sake, I would not have you quarrel. He hath great power of friends, and—not that I think so ill of that honorable lord as to imagine he would do aught dishonest against you—remember he is the late Lord Leicester's kinsman—like enough, may have been his pupil; and, as it may be known to you, 'the gypsy' did practise very devilish arts against those whom he misliked."

"If I mistake him not, he is of a nobler spirit than to follow so base an example," replied Sir Walter.

"So think I," added Cecil quickly—"yet appearances are oft deceitful, and, for mine own part, I do confess to you I put no great trust in him, he being so nearly allied to one who was so badly disposed. Pardon my zeal, if while I counsel you to keep on good terms with him, if it may be done without injury to your honor, I do earnestly advise you to be on your guard."

"I take your caution in exceeding good

part," responded Raleigh, "and will not fail to bear it in mind."

"I hope you will be worthily entertained of the players," said Sir Robert Cecil, as a few minutes afterward he stood at the gates with his two friends; "for though the gravity of my disposition inclineth not to such amusements, I am well pleased that others should enjoy them."

In a moment after, the Lord Cobham and Sir Walter Raleigh were making all haste to the water side, and the wily Cecil, with his mind filled with ambitious schemes and cunning plots, returned into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

O kiss! which doth those ruddy gems impart,
Or gems, or fruits, of new found paradise;
Breathing all bliss, and sweet'ning to the heart;
Teaching dumb lips a nobler exercise.

O kiss! which souls, ev'n souls, together ties
By links of love, and only nature's art;
How fain would I paint thee to all men's eyes;
Or of thy gifts, at least, shadoe out some part.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

My lady is unkind perdie,
"Alack, why is she so?"
She loveth another better than me,
And yet she will say no.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

WHEN Master Francis was left alone by his miserly uncle in the office, as hath previously been described, he presently began to turn over the papers on the desk like one in search of something; and, as if not finding what he sought, exclaiming, "Surely I did leave it here," he the more carefully recommenced his search; but evidently with no better success.

"It is gone!" cried he at last, with a countenance in which surprise seemed to mingle with regret; and then, in much perplexity, appeared to be considering the cause of the disappearance of what he had searched for.

"Possibly my uncle hath taken and destroyed it, for he hath a strange disinclination to my writing verses," said the youth—and then he did seem to think again—but, as was apparent, on another subject, for his fair brow became more troubled, and his clear and most intelligent eyes had an uneasy and suspicious look.

"If she doth affect that Ralph Goshawk?" he exclaimed in a sort of doubting yet inquiring tone, as if he knew not for certain, yet wanted to know some-

thing he feared would not be desirable to learn. Then having passed some minutes in profound yet anxious reflection, he suddenly started up, saying, "But she is too good to be deceitful," he seemed at once to dismiss all his uncomfortable thoughts, and set himself to writing out some account, with a very cheerful and delighted countenance. At this he continued diligently, but ever and anon exclaiming, "Oh, excellent Joanna!" or, with a like enthusiasm, "Dear—sweet—exquisite creature!" or, with a countenance that did witness for his sincerity, "Oh, I do love thee infinitely!" till there came a sudden turn in his humor, and with a more thoughtful look he put down his pen, and, folding his arms, asked himself the question—"But why doth she deny me the caresses which she hath so often granted?" after which he again grew uneasy (judging by the expression of his features), and it did seem as if his reflections were hurrying him to very unsatisfactory conclusions; for he looked not at all pleased.

"That Ralph Goshawk seemeth villainously familiar with her," said he at last, in rather a troubled voice; and for some minutes his cogitations appeared of a truly unhappy character: but the anxiety depicted upon his youthful features gradually began to disappear, a smile played about his delicate mouth, and seizing his pen again, exclaiming emphatically, "I'll be sworn she doth not countenance him!" he cheerfully resumed his labor. However, he had not been long so employed, before he started up in exceeding surprise and perturbation, crying out, "Here is a sad mistake!—alack, what have I written?" and he then read aloud from the account which he held in his hand—"To the drawing up a bond for the payment of 250 caresses of good and lawful money of our sovereign lady Queen Joanna!"—"Indeed," added he, taking a knife to scratch out the errors he had made, "it be well my uncle saw not this, or he would be wrath—and with good cause." He then proceeded to make the necessary erasures very carefully, only saying with great emphasis, as if wonderfully puzzled as to how such mistakes had happened, "what could I have been thinking about?"

He had but just done this when he was conscious of some one opening the door that led into the street, and looking round observed a very old-looking boy in a leathern jerkin and woollen cap, such as were worn by the common people, ad-

vancing into the office; desperately intent upon picking a bone. He was somewhat short of stature, with a pair of bandy legs, and his face—none of the cleanest—was fat and freckled, having a noticeable huge mouth, then upon the stretch—a pug nose, and eyes squinting abominably. Without saying a word, he marched toward one corner of the room, and sat himself down on the floor, picking his bone—the which employment he varied by giving an occasional bite—which made a mark that placed beyond dispute his mouth's capacity—in a thick hunk of bread he drew from under his jerkin.

Master Francis, who had regarded his visitor with considerable curiosity since his entrance, at last, seeing him with the utmost effrontery munching away without seeming to care for anything else, asked him his business.

"Be you called Master Francis?" inquired the boy, without removing his eyes from the bone.

"That is my name, certainly," replied the youth.

"Sure on't?" asked the other, taking a monstrous piece out of the hunk of bread.

"Of course I am," said Master Francis.

"Have ye any witnesses?" inquired the boy.

"If you don't choose to take my word for it, you must needs let it alone, and go about your business," observed the youth sharply, though too much amused to be much offended.

"Rather pepperish—do to play Hotspur," remarked his companion in an under tone, as he renewed his attack upon the bone. In a minute afterward he inquired, somewhat authoritatively, "Whose house be this?"

"It is my uncle's," replied Master Francis.

"Prythee tell me his name, if he hath one."

"Gregory Vellum."

"His calling?" inquired the boy, still keeping his teeth employed.

"'Tis that of a scrivener—but get you gone quickly, or you shall repent this intrusion, I promise you."

"Rather desperate—do to play Richard the Third," said the boy.

"Who are you, and what seek you here?" inquired Master Francis impatiently—"I have quite enough to plague me without your assistance."

"Rather melancholy—do to play Hamlet," said the other, stripping the bone

perfectly clean, and making the bread disappear rapidly.

"Nay, if you do not satisfy me for this impertinence, and speedily, I will have it out of your flesh!" exclaimed the youth angrily.

"Rather bloody-minded—do to play Shylock," answered the boy in the same quiet tone he had used from the commencement.

"I'faith but this is unbearable!" cried Master Francis, as he jumped off the stool with a thick stick in his hand belonging to his uncle that lay upon the desk, and ran to his visitor as if with a design to give him a drubbing. "Now tell me, you worthless varlet, what want you here, or your bones shall ache for it," said he, holding the stick threateningly over him.

"Why, I am Gib, the call-boy!" replied the boy, finishing his last mouthful, and eying the uplifted weapon with no small astonishment—"I hold the honorable office of call-boy to the Globe, on the Bankside, and earn me the handsome sum of a whole shilling a-week, and find myself out on't: but such a one for the business, the players are not like to find more than once in an age, I take it—and of this they are in no way ignorant; for Master Burbage hath said that my 'calling' did credit to me, and I did credit to my calling—and, as I remember me, Master Green said he could swear I was born with a caul, I was so apt at it. In fact, there be none like me. It was but the other day I paid a visit to the Rose to see *their* call-boy. Such a miserable caitiff! the varlet's got no mouth! unless an insignificant bit of a button-hole in his face, scarce big enough to admit a peascod, be called such; the natural consequence of which is, that he hath not voice enough to frighten a cricket. Now have I something like a mouth"—

"Something like half a dozen made into one!" said Master Francis, seeing that the boy extended his jaws to a compass beyond conception.

"And when I call," continued he, "my voice may be heard on t'other side of the river—by those who hear well enough. If it be your desire, I will favor you with a specimen of my talents."

"I thank you, but I would much rather that you would favor me with your business," replied the youth, who was too much amused to put his recent threats into execution.

"But besides being call-boy," added the other, unheeding what had just been

said, "I am oft times required to act parts—very important parts, too, I promise you."

"Indeed!" cried Master Francis, regarding with a smile the droll-looking object at his feet. "In what part could they possibly trust you upon the stage?"

"I play the cock in Hamlet," replied the boy very gravely—at which his companion laughed heartily—"and so much to the very life, that Master Taylor saith he shall be content to pick a *crow* with me every time he playeth the prince of Denmark. And Master Fletcher saith that that piece can never go off as it ought to do unless I have the cock-ing of it. Besides which I come on as one of Falstaff's regiment—make a very excellent courtier in the background—play one of the ghosts in Richard the Third's dream—and at all times make one of the army, of which there are at least some score of us, scene-shifters included. In fact, I should think myself greatly to be envied, were it not for one thing."

"Of what can you complain?" asked Master Francis.

"I am obliged to eat my meals where I can," replied the boy—"sometimes in Juliet's tomb—sometimes in Desdemona's bed—sometimes in Richard the Third's tent—one day near the forum at Rome—another close upon the Tower of London—nay, even this very day have I been forced to munch my dinner as I came along, because I was sent to you in a hurry with a letter from Master Shakspeare."

"A letter from Master Shakspeare to me!" cried Master Francis impatiently.

"Why gave you not it to me before?"

"Because you chose not to ask for it," said the other very quietly. "I was told to be sure and give it to the right person, so I thought I'd make proper inquiries."

"Well, give it me—make haste! make haste!" exclaimed the youth.

"It's like enough to be about offering to take you into the company," observed the boy, as he pulled off his cap leisurely, and gave the letter out of it, making a notable mark on each side with his greasy thumb and finger; "but my advice be, try what you can do in the female line. You be just the age and figure for it; and we want a new woman marvelously. Our Juliet's obliged to shave twice a day, and our Lady Macbeth, getting to be a man, hath threatened to throw up her engagement because they wont allow her to let her beard grow. I can put you up to a good deal about ma-

king your points, and dying gracefully, and walking in woman's fashion—for I've seen it done scores of times, I promise you—so don't lose heart on that account."

As Master Francis began reading the note, the call-boy got upon his legs, shook the crumbs from his jerkin, and sidled up to him.

"I pray you tell me what terms offer they?" asked he, trying to look over at the note, which he could not very well reach to do.

"No terms at all," replied the other, in too good humor to be offended at the freedom his companion was taking.

"Ah, you see it be not every one that can get a whole shilling a-week and find himself out on't," observed the boy with an air of much importance; "but talent will always get its price."

"I am glad to find that yours is so well appreciated," remarked Master Francis laughingly. "However, not to balk your inquisitiveness, which is somewhat of the greatest I must confess, this note is only to make an appointment at the playhouse to meet Master Shakspeare."

"Doubtless you will then be engaged," said the call-boy. "If you find any difficulty in getting admittance—for Will Peppercorn, who keeps the door, is not so social to strangers as am I—just ask you for Gib the call-boy, though some do call me Stentor, because, as I have heard, he was a famous call-boy in ancient times; and say you are a friend of mine, you will find your entrances and your exits as easy as throwing at cocks at Shrovetide."

"I thank you, Gib," replied Master Francis, scarcely able to keep a serious countenance, for the look of the boy was so comical, with his queer eyes and enormous mouth, and important swagger, that he had a great ado to refrain from laughing in his face.

"This seemeth a snuggish place—how much may you get a week here?" inquired the boy very earnestly, after a careful scrutiny of the office.

"That question I do not think it necessary to answer," responded the other as gravely as he could.

"Well—those that have gifts should make the best use of them," dryly observed Gib. "But don't despair—who knows but that *you* may be a call-boy some of these days—only I'm afraid you hav'n't got the very properest sort of mouth."

"That I regret not, believe me," re-

sponded Master Francis with a smile. "And now I should earnestly advise you to make the best of your way back to Master Shakspeare, and tell him I will not fail of the appointment."

"Ha!" replied Gib, turning on his heel and slowly proceeding to the door, tossing up the bone, with which he had not yet parted. "Now, remember you my advice—do the women, and you can not fail of getting on; and if you want to know how to look modest and like a dainty young gentlewoman, come you to me, I can instruct you in all that sort of thing, for I've got a monstrous deal of experience that way. Indeed, Master Burbage did say that I should get advanced into the woman's parts when I was old enough, and methinks it is high time I should attempt something of the kind. It's a genteel part of the profession, according to my thinking. Master Condell did tell me he thought I could play Ophelia ravishingly."

"Indeed!" exclaimed his companion, unable to refrain from laughing at the idea."

"For my own part, being of an exquisite melancholy humor, I doubt not I should shine in tragedy," continued the call-boy, taking a look at Master Francis so solemnly ludicrous that it instantly did set him into a roar. "Rather humorous!" cried the boy as he opened the door, "do to play the fool:" and thereupon his mouth did spread out into a grin so far beyond all human conceit, that the other laughed till the tears ran out of his eyes. "Well," continued Gib, "though I wish you a bountiful share of good luck, in honest truth I say it—expect not to get so handsome a wage as a whole shilling a-week, and find yourself out on't." And thereat he strutted out of the door, with such a villanous squint that it would have tickled the fancy of one at the point of death.

Master Francis, much amused at the oddity of the boy and his exceeding assurance, returned to his seat in monstrous good humor, to finish his account; but he had scarcely taken pen in hand, when, on hearing a noise, he turned round, and lo! there was Gib's bandy legs again marching in.

"Stick to the women, I pray you, and you shall find your advantage in it," exclaimed he, with a very earnest seriousness, and immediately disappeared.

"Away with you!" cried Master Francis, scarcely knowing whether to laugh or to be angry. Then he applied him-

self to his task, and did finish it without further interruption. Presently his uncle was heard stumping along the passage with his stick, and in a few seconds he entered, looking very crabbed and savage.

"Hast done that account?" inquired he sharply.

"Yes, uncle," replied the youth.

"Then take it to Master Ephraim Venture, the merchant in Thames street, nigh unto Castle Baynard," said the old man; "and be sure to press for payment—for it be said that he hath had losses, therefore must he be looked after. 'Sblood, an' he do not pay quickly, I'll make him smart for't! Tell him I must and will have my money."

"I will, uncle," responded the nephew, preparing with evident alacrity to start on his errand.

"And mind that thou tarry not," added he, "for I have business for thee at home."

"I will use all convenient speed," replied Master Francis, and in a minute after he was making the best of his way out of St. Mary Axe, right glad to get from the house, and as well pleased that the merchant's in Thames street lay in the very direction to which his inclination most tended. On he proceeded in his way, taking no heed of the sober citizens speeding on their business, or even of their daughters, proud of a new kirtle or a dainty coif, showing off their pretty coquetries to the gallants that came strolling along in their best braveries, maphap carelessly humming a tune, or whispering a well-devised compliment as they passed, at the which none were very hugely offended, I warrant you, for their brilliant eyes sparkled the more; and some smiled with exceeding pleasantness, and a few did take sly peeps over their shoulder to notice if they were followed; but giving himself up to the inconstant humor of his thoughts—now hoping, now despairing—now filled with the passion of love—now moved with the conceit of jealousy, he regarded nothing around him till he entered into Eastcheap. Then he was stirred up into a very proper consciousness of where he was—his heart began to beat most disturbedly—the paleness of his cheek made way for a flush of crimson, and his eye had gained a lustrousness that gave unto his gentle countenance a truly eloquent expression.

Passing by shops of divers kinds, and even taking no heed of the barber chirurgon's over the way, where his true

friend, Harry Daring, was apprenticed, he at last made for one that was a mercer's, where the owner, a somewhat lusty old man with a lively roguish look, and an excellent jolly face, stood recommending to a customer sundry ells of three-piled velvet that lay before him, whom, seeing engaged, he stopped not to gossip with, but went on, as if it was his wont, to a little room at the back, where finding no one, he opened a door, and proceeded up a little flight of stairs close upon it, at the top of which there was another door, whereat, with his heart in a greater flutter than ever, he did knock gently with his knuckles; and hearing a voice, the soft tones of which he recognised with a most infinite delight, he uncovered and entered the room.

The chamber was rather low, and of a no great size, having a wainscot and floor of oak, with rafters very solid, running across the ceiling, and a window stretching out into the street. The furniture was substantial rather than elegant—such as might be seen in the houses of the better sort of citizens—yet was there a considerable show of taste in many things, which spoke as plain as could any words, that a woman's graceful hand had had the ordering of them. There was no one therein but Joanna, who sat, or rather reclined, in an ample chair with arms, supporting her head by her hand; she wore an elegant dress of watchet color, laced down the front, with a girdle of silver baudekin, at the which was a little pocket on one side. Her silken hair was artfully disposed, falling in a love-lock on her delicate shoulder, and bound at the top in a network caul of gold. Her well-shaped feet, were cased in a pair of dainty white stockings and velvet slippers, projecting out of her petticoat, with the heel of one resting upon the instep of the other, to the manifest disclosure of a most exquisite ankle. In this position, the well-defined outline of the ripened beauties of her figure were seen to great advantage, especially as the low, tight boddice then in the fashion, did excellently well display the full bust, and truly admirable neck and shoulder, the delicateness whereof have I not the cunning to describe, therefore will I leave it to the imagination of the courteous reader. She had evidently been a thinking; but whether pleasurable or otherwise. I have no means of knowing except this be taken as a sign, that when Master Francis first beheld her at that time, there was a

severity in the loveliness of her countenance, tempered with a very touching melancholy.

"Joanna!" exclaimed the youth, hastening delightedly to her side, "I am here at thy desire, and truly to mine own most infinite gratification. But what aileth thee?" he inquired suddenly, in a tone of affectionate interest, as he noticed that the pleasurable expressed in his own features was not reflected in hers. At the question, she looked at him as with a careful scrutiny of his pale and thoughtful brow, but said never a word.

"Have I angered thee?" he asked, in a more subdued voice; and his gaze became as melancholy as her own. "Believe me I meant it not. In truth, I would rather die than anger thee."

"No!" replied she to his question, with impressive tones and eloquent emphasis. "Thou hast not angered me." And then the severity of her look much abating, added, with great stress on the words, "Thou hast never angered me."

"Indeed, I hope not," said Master Francis earnestly. "But who or what hath made thee look so unhappy?"

"Thou hast," she answered.

"I!" exclaimed the youth with extreme surprise and sorrow. "What a wretch am I to have done it! and yet I know not how it could be; for gratitude for thy never-tiring kindness doth prompt me at all times to do the very reverse. Tell me how it was, and instantly will I seek to undo the unsought-for mischief."

Joanna silently took from the little pocket at her girdle a paper that she gave into his hands—the which he instantly opened, designing to read it, as such seemed to him to be her wish; but to his exceeding astonishment he discovered it to be the very poem he had written and lost from off the desk in his uncle's office. He stood like one that is detected in wrong-doing, unable to say aught for himself; yet, though he saw that his expostulation had done him mischief, knew he not what offence there could be in it.

"What made thee think I had ceased to love thee?" asked she, in a voice by no means angry, after she had watched for a sufficient time, his downcast eyes and modest confusion of countenance, as he stood before her.

"It seemed to me that thou dost regard another," replied Master Francis, tremulously.

"Whom?" inquired Joanna, with

more earnestness, fixing on him a somewhat anxious and penetrating look.

"Ralph Goshawk," answered he.

She remained silent for some few seconds, but a faint smile might have been observed about the corners of her beautiful mouth.

"In truth, I marvel thou couldst have entertained such a conception," said she at last.

"Dost thou not love him indeed?" asked the youth, almost incredulously, as it were.

"Indeed, I love him not," she replied.

"And dost regard me as kindly as thou wert used?" he inquired more urgently, raising his eloquent eyes to her own.

"Methinks quite as kindly," answered she.

"Dear, dear Joanna!" exclaimed Master Francis as he kneeled on one knee, and taking in his the disengaged hand that lay upon her lap, bowed his head till his lips rested thereon, and in that position remained. The melancholy expression of Joanna's countenance still was altered not; but there was now a tender interest in her dark eyes as she gazed upon her youthful lover. Presently she raised herself in her position, and took his hand in both hers, very affectionately.

"Yet am I much hurt that thou shouldst doubt me," said she; "I thought I had proved beyond question, how much I regarded thee above all others—perhaps with more carelessness than did become me. But knowing the innocence of mine intentions, and trusting in the modesty of thy disposition, I was content. Alack! 'tis a sad world! we can not do right when we wish; and when we are satisfied of our conduct, there cometh some malicious tongue to slander our doings. None know the wickedness that exists—that poisons the air we breathe with a perpetual pestilence, and obliges us to do by craft what we can not do by honesty. I have to endure many things that make me unhappy—very unhappy—I needed not such verses as thou hast written."

As she concluded the sentence, he raised his head, and saw that she was wiping with her handkerchief a tear that did tremble on her eyelid.

"Indeed, they shall trouble thee no more," cried the youth, as he disengaged his hand, and tore the paper into numberless small fragments; "and very heartily am I vexed that I should have given thee a moment's uneasiness. For what won-

derful goodness, hast thou exhibited toward me—the like of which surely was never known! Truly I must have behaved most unnaturally to have vexed thee in this manner; and I'll never forgive myself, if thou wilt not forgive me." And then, most sorrowful in heart, he hid his face upon her lap.

"I have forgiven thee," said she, affectionately twining her fingers in the light curls of his chestnut hair; "but take not such fancies into thy head again; be content with the assurances thou art continually receiving of how much I regard thee, and think nothing of whatever else may seem of a different tendency. Nothing can be so sure as that, whilst thou art worthy, thou wilt be beloved." Master Francis was too much enraptured to reply; and in this position they remained for some minutes—she bending over him, with her dark hazel eyes softened into tenderness; and he impressed so deeply with the subduing spirit of the moment, that he would not, or cared not to move from where he was.

Joanna having at last taken away her hands to enclasp his, he raised his head, and looking into her face, very fondly, yet with a touch of regret, said—"But why hast thou denied me those most sweet caresses thou didst use to grant?"

"Truly I am not in the mood on all occasions," replied she, in rather a sad tone of voice; "there are remembrances I can not obliterate when I would, that come upon me at times, and make me regardless of all except the discomfort they bring. It would be but a mockery to caress thee under such circumstances; and indeed, though I may often seem gay-hearted—forgetting for a time the unpleasantness of the past, in the enjoyments of the present—yet, when awakened to recollection—which is no difficult matter—there lives not a creature on this earth so truly wretched as am I. Be content then with the pleasure I can grant when I may be in the humor, and seek not, when the time is not auspicious, to increase my disquietude by ill-timed importunity."

"I will not," replied he; "but wilt thou do so ever again?" he asked, as if almost afraid to put the question.

"I will," she answered, with apparent unaffectedness.

"Dear Joanna, but wilt thou do so soon?" he inquired, more impressively.

"I will," said she.

"Exquisite Joanna! but wilt thou do so now?" he asked, with still greater emphasis.

It would be unveiling the sweet mysteries of affection, to describe the endearments that blessed the reconciliation of these devoted lovers. There throbbeth not a heart in the wide world, that hath been touched by the generous influence of true love, but hath played its part in the same drama, and can, from the fond prompting of the memory, imagine the entrancing scene more vividly than could I describe the acting of it. Methinks, too, that the development of those delicious influences that make humanity angelic, should be kept sacred from the vulgar eye; else might the selfish and the profligate find matter in it for idle speculation, or licentious conjecture. Pity it is that there should be any in whom the better part of their natures hath vanished, like the sap of a decaying tree, and vanity making them believe all to be like unto themselves, in the green freshness of fairer plants, they can see naught but their own hollowness and worthlessness. I know that, by the generous and true-hearted, what I should relate would be rightly interpreted; but no writer is so fortunate as to meet with all readers of such a sort.

The affection which existed between Joanna and Master Francis, had in it this peculiar feature, that the former had so much the seniority of her lover, it invested her with an evident controlling power over him. She appeared as though uniting in her behavior the authority of a careful guardian with the fondness of a devoted woman, and sometimes it appeared as if some strange interest bound her to the youth, of so deep a tenderness, as was marvellously like unto that of a parent. In truth, it was a strange thing to behold a creature so exquisitely fashioned, having much the outward appearance of one existing only for, and in the enjoyment of the most passionate worship of the opposite sex, seeming, with a delicacy the purest nature could never have excelled, so virtuously to conduct herself, as proved all the sterling excellence of womanhood was manifest in her actions; while the enamored youth that knelt before her, dumb with excess of modesty, and overpowered with the intensity of his admiration, regarded her with such an enthusiasm in his delighted gaze, tempered with so profound a respect, as plainly showed he loved with the purity of heart, and earnestness of purpose, which belong only to that age and disposition that exist in the enjoyment of a perfect innocency.

"Dear heart," exclaimed he, after a long, yet very eloquent silence, "it seemeth to me exceeding strange that when I sit me down to write of thee, all admirable thoughts, like the bees hastening to the sweet blossoms, come crowding to be penned; but when with my lips I would essay to breathe into thine ear aught of what rare pleasure I experience from the continual influence of thy unbounded goodness, such words as I have at command are so little to the purpose, that I am forced to a seeming ungrateful silence; yet am I most gratefully bound to thee. Thou art my guardian angel, and in earnest truth, most exquisite Joanna, my heart ever yearneth to pour out its spirit in thanksgiving for thy unceasing kindness."

He received no reply, unless it was conveyed in a more evident pressure of the hands she held clasped in her own, or in a softer and more thrilling glance from the clear hazel of her lustrous eyes. He continued—

"My benefactress! my"—

"Hush!" she exclaimed, quickly interrupting him. "Have I not told thee never to allude to what I have done for thy good?"

He remained silent, as if conscious he had committed an error.

"And now, prythee, tell me how hast thou sped with thy tragedy?" she inquired.

"It will not do, dear Joanna," he replied.

"Despair not—thou wilt do better anon," she said, in an encouraging tone.

"But methinks I have found a friend," added Master Francis, more cheerfully.

"I am truly glad on't," said she.

"Hast heard of Master Shakspeare—whose plays so wonderfully do delight the town?" inquired the youth.

"Indeed have I," she replied. "My father hath often promised to take me to see the players do a play of his, but he liketh the sports of the Bear Garden best, therefore I have not been."

"I should like to take thee mightily," observed he. "For it is most delectable entertainment. But I must tell thee—Master Shakspeare, to whom I was directed to send my tragedy, though he did tell me very candidly of its faults, expressed himself right glad to do me a service; and as earnest of his sincerity, he hath but now sent for me to the play-house."

"Speed thee, then, Francis," she exclaimed, rising from her seat and raising

him from the ground. "It be not right of thee to lose the precious time when such a friend desireth to serve thee. But here," she added, as she took from around her neck the very gold chain she did receive of old Gregory Vellum, and threw it over her youthful lover. "Wear that for my sake—but let not thine uncle see it, or mayhap he may think thou hadst it not honestly, and question thee churlishly upon it; and I do not wish thee to say I gave it thee, nor do desire that thou shouldst say what is not true. And let me again request of thee in true kindness, that when thou watest aught that his miserly nature doth refuse, ask it of me, and thou shalt have it straight."

"Nay, dear Joanna," he replied, looking somewhat distressed. "Thou hast lavished upon me so many gifts already, that I am ashamed to accept of this, or to ask of thee anything; and, if thou wilt not be offended, I would sooner that thou shouldst continue to wear it. In truth, it is too good a thing for me to have."

"That it can not be," answered she, regarding him with a more perceptible fondness. "I would have thee wear it beneath thy doublet, and affix it to the miniature of thy mother. Now, no excuses! I will not hear of them. And be sure let me know when thou dost lack anything."

"Oh, thou art too kind!" exclaimed the youth, with all the expression that love and gratitude could give.

"Now haste thee to Master Shakspeare," said Joanna.

"Dare I ask of thee once again, to let me taste of those honey sweet delights thou didst bestow on me a brief while since," inquired he, looking into her eyes, as if his own were drawn thereunto by some marvellous magic. How she answered, methinks it be scarce necessary to state, when it cometh to be known, that in the next moment Master Francis was speeding on his uncle's errand with a heart as light as if he had not a care in the world.

Having delivered the account—more courteously than his miserly kinsman designed, he posted off to the playhouse on the Bankside, sometimes imagining what Master Shakspeare did want with him, and thereupon building many monstrous fine castles in the air, and then turning his thoughts to the contemplation of the exquisite excellences of Joanna, and feeding his mind with dreams of happiness she was to realize at some not-far-distant

day. In this mood he arrived at the playhouse, which he recognised by the flag flying at the top. It was thronged with people—some waiting to see the queen, and others the play; round about were boys and serving men holding horses, and here and there might be seen costard-mongers and others bawling out fruit. Making for a little door at which there was no crowd, he was entering thereat, when he was stopped by a surly looking fellow with a wooden leg and a red nose.

"Well, how now! what dost want?" he cried in a gruff voice.

"I am come to see Master Shakspeare," replied the youth.

"Won't do," said the other sharply, as he took up a position before him, as if to stop his proceeding further, and then scrutinized his appearance very closely. "The players be all a dressing, and can't be disturbed for every jackanapes that wants to see the play for nothing."

"But I have business with him," added Master Francis.

"Won't do," repeated the fellow, stumping closer to him, and looking more forbiddingly. "Dost thou not know that this be no hour for him to see runaway apprentices who seek to be players? So get thee gone."

"But he hath sent for me, and I *must* see him," said the youth more determinedly.

"Won't do, I tell thee!" shouted the man. "Nay, if thou dost not take thyself off, I'll set the dog on thee. Here, Pincher! Pincher! Pincher!" And immediately a savage-looking wiry-haired terrier came from under a chair barking and snapping at his heels. Master Francis, seeing that there was no remedy, was just about to turn back with a heavy heart, when, who should come into the place but the same wide-mouthed, squinting-eyed boy that had brought him the letter, bearing a tankard in his hand, as if he had come from a neighboring tavern. Gib seemed to understand the state of the case immediately.

"How now, Will Peppercorn!" he cried, in a voice that showed that the name of Stentor was not ill-applied. "This good youth is he whom I told thee Master Shakspeare did so much desire to see."

"How should I know that?" said the fellow sulkily; then drawing off his dog, returned to his chair.

"Follow me, and I will show you the way with a very absolute good will," added the call-boy; but before Master Fran-

cis had got but a few yards he turned round and inquired, "Why said you not you were my friend? He would not have dared serve thee so. But we must needs learn ere we get knowledge—so come on, and carefully." Master Francis found himself in a very dark place in which he could see neither to the right, nor to the left, nor yet straight on; and was directed solely by the voice of his companion, which ceased not a moment.

"Stick to the women, I pray you," he continued, "and you must needs be made a man of soon: but mind the thunder there!"

At this injunction the youth was sadly puzzled.

"If you have not the proper modesty, I will soon put you in the way of getting it, as I have said; therefore hesitate not, for such another opportunity is not like to happen. Here, mind you your footing, or you can not help falling upon the rain."

Master Francis looked about, expecting to find a pool of water near him; but nothing of the kind did he see.

"Now turn you sharp round the walls of Athens, and keep you on the left of Prospero's cell," said the other.

Unable quite to comprehend his meaning, the youth made a turn as he was desired, found his feet caught—laid hold of he knew not what, that his elbow struck against—this gave way, and down he came on his face upon something that seemed like a heap of canvas, bringing over him a pile of the same kind.

"There now!" exclaimed the call-boy, in a tone of apparent vexation—"you have tumbled smack upon the sea, and brought down upon you the palace of Antioch."

Frightful as this announcement might seem, it did not mean any great mischief after all.

Master Francis soon extricated himself from the fallen scenery, and without any more mishaps was conducted by his guide to the chamber in which Master Shakspeare was waiting for him.

CHAPTER VII.

Man's life's a tragedy: his mother's womb
From which he enters is his tiring-room;
This spacious earth the theatre, and the stage
That country which he lives in; Passions, Rage, &
Folly, and Vice, are actors: the first cry
The prologue to th' ensuing tragedy.
The former act consisteth in dumo shows;

The second, he to more perfection grows;
I' the third he is a man, and doth begin
To mature vice, and act the deeds of sin;
I' the fourth declines; i' the fifth diseases clog
And trouble him: then Death's his epilogue.
SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

ALL the players were assembled in a large room of rather mean appearance, having little furniture, save settles, some few chairs, an old table, on which lay sundry tankards and drinking vessels, and a long mirror hung up against the wainscot. The players were dressed in character for the play of Henry the Fourth, the second part; and divers young noblemen and gentlemen were among them. Some were sitting, some standing in groups, and others walking up and down—going out and coming in at intervals; while a voice, evidently from its loudness belonging to the "Stentor" of the company, kept bawling from without as the play proceeded—"Falstaff, on!" or "Shallow and Silence, on!" or "The Prince, on!" and then, others knowing that their turn would be next, got themselves ready to appear upon the stage. A merrier set there seemed not in all her majesty's dominions. It was evident that care had naught to do with such choice spirits—for the quick jest and the harmless jibe went round, and the loud laughter followed with them all; nor did there seem to be any distinction of rank among them and their associates; or if such might be, it was without doubt in favor of the players, for they appeared wonderfully independent and careless of what they said.

Master Shakspeare stood in one corner of the room pointing out to Master Francis the different persons around them; and occasionally returning the friendly salutation of the young gallants who came thronging in, and looked as if they were mightily well pleased to have speech of him; but none could have received more satisfaction than did the modest youth at his side, for to him it was quite a new world. He, who had seen nothing of society save the customers and associates of the scrivener, now found himself among the most famous authors and players of the time, with a fair sprinkling of noble lords, distinguished knights, and honorable gentlemen. He listened with exceeding attention to every word that was uttered by his gifted companion, and regarded each individual that his attention was drawn unto with an interest scarcely possible to be conceived.

"See you that most worshipful-looking personage talking to Taylor and Con-dell?" inquired Master Shakspeare of

his visiter, pointing out a very smartly-dressed gallant, evidently much older than he wished to appear.—“He that weareth so fine a satin cloak, and hath such gay rosettes in his shoes.” Master Francis easily perceived who was meant. “That is Sir Narcissus Wrinkles. He hath as many lines in his face as you may find in a chart of the new world, where-with Time hath written the sum total of his age, yet doth he imagine that he can find a way to disprove his arithmetic; and with a periwig of the newest fashion, and a beard dyed to match—a very fustian voice prodigal in strange oaths—a leering look—a swaggering gait—and an infinite affectation of the air and appareling of our youngest gallants, he seeketh to be thought as youthful as Ganymede, and as full of tricks as a kitten. See, now! he is telling his auditors some notable lie of the feats he did last week with the bottle, or the wonders performed yesterday eve at the Bordello; mayhap he digresses into some famous adventure with the constable of the watch, and then pathetically laments him, that his young blood should lead him into such scrapes. Hear how loudly he laughs at his own follies; and see with what a hearty smack of the shoulder he saluteth his next neighbor! But they who hear him know their man, and laugh, not *with* him, but *at* him.”

Master Shakspeare then directed his attention to another group.

“See you that sagacious looking youth,” said he, “that hath got Will Kempe in serious discourse, close unto where Anthony Wadson, Thomas Pope, and Nicholas Towley, are in such furious discussion? Notice the very gravity of his features—the demure combing of his hair—the antique cut of his beard. See how soberly he is clad—mark how stiffly he bears himself. He speaks slowly—as if he weighed every word that fell from his lips—and seemeth quite shocked at the boisterousness of manner of the group of gay young lords at his right. He goeth among us by the name of Young Antiquity—yet is he called by his proper name, Lord Wiseacre. I warrant you, he is entertaining my friend Will with a right woful lamentation upon the degeneracy of the age; and leaving him with a shake of the head worthy of a second Nestor, is now making the profound remark, ‘Alack! boys will be boys!’”

Master Francis could not help a smile, for the manner in which his companion spoke the last words, was marked with

such an exceeding drollery, that to look grave the while, was out of the question.

“A little way to the left of him, notice that neatly dressed old gallant, talking with so mysterious an air to a handsome young nobleman,” continued Master Shakspeare. “The one is my Lord Howard of Walden, who sweareth every man of his acquaintance to strict confidence, and then letteth out the famous secret to all whom he can get to listen, of some fair dame being in love with him. He will dilate upon every look he has received from her, and enumerate what wonderful signs she hath given him of her regard; and then he will assert his exceeding virtuousness, and the fear he is in that this affection of another woman for him should be noticed by my Lady Howard, whom he believed to be a very miracle of chastity—though there be others that have a different opinion; and will conjure his listener to be as secret as the grave, and straightway go and tell as many as he can the same story, the which, as may well be believed, hath no existence save in his own imagination, and thorough vanity. The person he hath hold of is my Lord Pembroke, as worthy, admirable, and generous a man as breathes; and desireth to be my excellent patron and friend.

“Now, behold you those two young lords that have got Hart by the ear, up in the corner?” continued he; “they are my Lords Simple and Dimple; they affect to be the Castor and Pollux of these our times, and are never seen apart. At no time have they been heard to differ on any one subject; they dress alike on all occasions—ay, to such a nearness, that if my Lord Simple hath thirty points to his hose, of a surety hath my Lord Dimple exactly the same. At meals they will be helped from the same dish, and have the same quantity to a nicety. If there be but one wing left of the pullet, it must needs be divided to the exactitude of a hair, or they will touch it not; and if the one hath a spoonful more gravy in his trencher than hath the other, then are both infinitely miserable till the balance be adjusted. This conceit they follow up in all things:—when Simple hath the toothache, Dimple tieth up his jaws; and if one be afflicted with the colic, the other rubbeth his bowels, and belloweth like a town bull. Yet with all this affectation of friendship, I warrant you Castor doth not care a fig’s end for Pollux—and Pollux would not cross the way

to save his Castor from the whipping-post."

Then Master Shakspeare, suddenly turning round, said to his young friend, "Hear you how Green maketh the people laugh?" And sure enough there was heard at that moment a very roar of laughter, which, at intervals, did continue, with boisterous clapping of hands and the like.

"Now turn your vision to where stands that tall slim gentleman, in close converse with Robert Armin," said he. "Saw you anything so spic and span? he looks as dainty as a bowl of whipped syllabub, and smelleth as nice as a dish of stewed prunes. Surely you will think so fine a personage was made only for Sundays; for he seemeth a marvellous deal too delectable for this every-day world. His speech too he maketh to match with his dress; for it be other folk's finery, cut and clipped in accordance with his own taste. Truly is he choice in his phrases, and putteth them to a very absolute good use. He will talk you upon the cracking of nuts in the tapestry style of Sir Philip Sydney his Arcadia; and describe the fashion of a garter in the heroic vein of the blank verse of my Lord Sackville. He is Master Aniseed: doubtless you suppose that his birth was as delicate as his behavior; and his bringing up as holyday-like as his apparelling. Yet was his mother a poor midwife, and his father a rat-catcher, and to the latter reputable vocation was he born and bred, and did practise with very notable success, after the demise of his worshipful parents, till a miserly uncle dying, whose heir he was, he straightway began very earnestly, with his new found gold, to purchase the necessaries of gentility; and now passeth he, as he doth imagine, for a truly creditable gentleman. 'Tis like you may fancy, by the pains he takes, that Master Aniseed preferreth his new mode of life wonderfully: but in that are you much deceived; for have I good grounds for saying, that, in secret, he doth sigh continually for the more exquisite pleasure he hath found in the catching of rats."

At that moment there entered at the door one of the players, dressed as King Henry IV., whom Master Shakspeare thus addressed:—

"Well, Lowing, and how goeth the play with her majesty?"

"Never went anything better," said he, very cheerfully; "her majesty hath shown from the beginning an admirable interest in the story; and Green hath

made her laugh till her crown tottered again;" and then he passed on.

"Here, observe you that portly man, with the red face and the black beard, talking familiarly to our Dame Quickly and Doll Tearsheet," continued Master Shakspeare to his young friend; "a turkey-cock looks not so valiant. Judging of him by the way he beareth himself, one might suppose that he had inherited the warlike spirits of all the heroes who have gone before him. He seemeth of so great a heart that he could have braved Cæsar, or pulled Alexander by the nose. Hear him talk, and to his, the deeds of the seven champions of Christendom are but as the feats of idle apprentices. There, see how he stalks across the room, holding by the scabbard his monstrous rapier, and looking about him as valiantly as if he cared not a rush for the whole company, and would fight them all round if any dared but wink at him. Yet is Captain Swagger not so dangerous as he looks;—indeed he hath done no great damage as yet, as I have heard; nor is he ever like to distinguish himself that way; for in his heart he hath a most Christian abhorrence of the shedding of blood; therefore, at all times, he taketh good care of his own skin. He will seem full of quarrel where there be no disposition shown to take offence; but if you look him bravely in the face the whilst, you may tread on his toes, and he will be in no hurry to take notice of it."

"Now is it the common opinion," added he, "that the players be confined to the playhouse; but I do maintain, and have described some of the characters in this room, to prove that I speak to the purpose, that there be better players off the stage than on. Moreover, if you look throughout the various busy scenes in the drama of life, you shall have good cause to admire the excellence with which some do play their parts—often to the complete delusion of the spectators into the belief that they are what they seem. By this art, how often doth the wanton pass for a creature virtuously given, and the mere cheater play the game of an honest man. This is it that makes the glib-tongued profligate so perfectly assume the character of the devoted lover; that teacheth the sanctimonious hypocrite how to be regarded as one of God's chosen; that gives to youth and assurance the name of candor and disinterestedness; and gravity and gray hairs invest with the air of wisdom and goodness. Truly,

Master Francis, if you look well to the world, you shall find that there be feigners that beat us poor players all to naught."

Master Francis had listened with marvellous attention to the discourse of his companion, without daring to hazard a word of reply, for fear of losing something he might say in the interim, at which his companion evidently was not ill pleased. In truth, it seemed that the more he beheld of the youth his modesty and discretion, the greater became his liking for him; and as he continued to point out the persons worthy of note, that were in the room, he looked as if his gratification therein increased with the increasing pleasure he afforded to his auditor.

"There is as goodly a group yonder as you will meet with in a playhouse," continued he; "it consisteth of young Ben Jonson, a veritable son of the muses, who promiseth to be better known than he is; my Lord Buckhurst, one who hath written a tragedy of some note, and loveth to spend his leisure upon players; Master Edmond Tilney, master of the queen's revels, a very proper gentleman, and a courteous, who hath the licensing of plays, and therefore cometh amongst us often; Dr. Thomas Lodge, and Dr. Thomas Legge, who have writ for our neighbor the Rose with a very fair success; and that pedantic and most conceited coxcomb Master John Lily, who hath invented many comedies, yet is like to get himself more laughed at than any of them. Ben Jonson—he that is standing up—seemeth to have the lion's share of the argument, as is his wont; for his tongue is a rattling famously; and I judge from that, the subject of dispute concerneth the ancients, for he prideth himself mightily upon his Greek and Latin. But here cometh my excellent good friend and patron Lord Southampton." At this he broke off, and his companion noticed a noble-looking gentleman, scarce older than himself, well attired, but not too fine in his appointments, who was advancing toward them with an easy courteousness, and a bland aspect.

"Well met, Master Shakspeare," said he, shaking hands with the other very cordially.

"I'faith, if your lordship be in as good health as am I," responded Master Shakspeare with a smile, "then are we 'well met,' indeed."

"Ever at it," exclaimed the Lord

Southampton laughingly. "Surely there never was thy match at quibbles and quirks! Indeed, thou art a very juggler with words, and at the mere touch of thy wit canst give them any meaning that suits thee."

"In truth, my good lord," replied the other, "my poor words when addressed to you, however little their meaning may be, must needs have a good meaning, for they mean you well at all times; and such can not help but *suit* me, seeing that I take abundance of care they are brought forth on a *fitting* occasion."

"There, again!" cried my lord, laughing again very merrily. "Sure, never was the like! But I have just left her majesty, and rarely have I seen her in a more commendable humor. She doth applaud Burbage to the very echo, and hath laughed at Green till her sides ached for it. I tell thee, if thou canst please the higher powers so well, hast thou no cause to fear those foolish pragmatics of the city. Let them do what they list. I have spoken on thy behalf to mine honorable and most esteemed good friend, Sir Thomas Egerton, who, for learning in the law, hath no superior; and he hath promised me to exert himself for thy advantage. Keep a good heart. Knowing that thou hast the protection of Master Attorney-General, and art in such absolute favor at court, the aldermen, even if they have the power, the which have I my doubts of, shall not dare drive thee from the Blackfriars. Nay, I should take it in very monstrous hard case indeed, were a few paltry citizens allowed to interfere with the pleasures of so many worshipful lords and gentlemen as find excellent entertainment at the playhouse. Be of good cheer, Master Shakspeare—thou shalt never receive disadvantage at their hands."

"I am infinitely beholden to you, my good lord," said Master Shakspeare. "It is adding another leaf to that volume of favors your lordship's bountiful spirit hath accorded me."

"Take not what I have done for thee as anything," replied my Lord Southampton, putting his hand in a friendly way on the other's shoulder. "For, in honest truth, I am ashamed I have as yet been to thee of such exceeding poor service. Fain would I show in more substantial fashion how honorably I regard the manifold excellencies of thy nature; and be assured I will not rest till I do something to the purpose. But I must needs be gone, for I have a party

waiting, with whom is sweet Mistress Varnon; therefore, fare thee well, Master Shakspeare, till we meet again."

"All good attend you, my lord!" replied Master Shakspeare with a very earnest sincerity, as he saw his patron leave the room; then turning to his young friend, who had not lost a syllable of the preceding discourse, he exclaimed, "There is a truly noble spirit! he is none of your mere lords who can claim nothing of distinction but the names of their fathers—he is enrolled in nature's own peerage; and carrieth his patent of nobility in his heart. Truly are such an honor to the land; and the more England hath of them, the better able will she be to cope with her enemies. Though he hath so youthful a look, he is of a most manly nature. He is ever intent upon honorable purposes—thinketh that of all worshipful things intellect hath the supremacy—and seemeth ever ready to put his vantage of rank into obedience out of respect to the gifts, such as they be, which God hath grafted into my being. Indeed it be the knowledge of such notable dispositions that maketh me in love with humanity. I know of but one other like him, and him you shall see anon."

At this instant there entered at the door, laughing as if they had naught else in the world to do but to be merry, two of the players; the one, of whom the reader hath already had acquaintance, to wit, Richard Burbage, was dressed as the Prince Henry; the other, with a look of infinite drollery, in a suit of russet, with huge swollen belly and legs, did represent Sir John Falstaff; and he coming in did freely accost Master Shakspeare with a very "hail fellow" slap on the back, exclaiming—"How now, Chanticleer? thou lookest as demure as an old maid that waketh in the night with a dream that she hath been kissed by a blackamoor."

"Go to—thou art Green!" replied Master Shakspeare in the same humor; "thou art Green by name and green by nature, therefore thy wit can not be ripe—and not being ripe must needs be sour. Go hang thyself on a sunshiny wall, and mayhap thou shalt in time become palatable."

"Away with thee, thou pestilent player upon words, and unprofitable player upon a stage," cried out the other, "dost think I'll hang at thy bidding? No—I'll be hanged if I do. Away! I am sick of thee."

"Then hast thou the Green sickness—which is marvellous to behold in one of

thy appearance," replied Master Shakspeare.

"Now whip me this knave!" said Master Green, turning to his companion, who seemed as if he could not well maintain his gravity. "Here be a sorry fellow for you, who hath as many jests to a name as there are patches in a Jew's gaberdine. See how he abuseth the license of speech! Was ever such poor practices known since talking came into fashion?"

"Let him have his way, I prythee," observed Master Burbage: "he is but simple; and peradventure had he not his usual pastime he might die from the lack of it."

"Nay, if I die not till I lack sport, I shall keep my breath as long as"—here Master Shakspeare paused a bit, and then added archly—"as long as this exquisite world provideth such sweet facetious rogues as they that now serve me to break a jest upon."

"Out upon thee!" exclaimed the representative of Sir John Falstaff, good humoredly, "thou wilt come to no good, depend on't."

"How can I, forsooth, when such evil things as thou art, stop my way?" asked the other.

"I'faith thou hadst best not meddle with him," gravely remarked Master Burbage. "He is like unto the great bear in Paris garden—he worrieth the dogs more than the dogs worry him: a murrain on him."

"Show not thy teeth then, good dogs," added the other, with a smile.

"A fico for thee and all thy kind!" cried Master Green, "I will show my teeth in spite of thee—ay, and use them too if it seemeth me good."

"Doubtless, when such be thy humor, thou wouldst succeed in making a green wound—in virtue of thy name," retorted Master Shakspeare.

"Nay, if hanging be not too good for thee, burn me for a schismatic!" laughingly exclaimed his antagonist.

"In good truth, I do not think thou wouldst burn, Tom," coolly observed the one.

"Why not, Will?" inquired the other.

"Seeing that green wood doth not catch fire very readily," replied the first.

"What green again!" cried his droll companion, "why what a master of colors art thou who useth but one."

"Wouldst have him take thee for a chameleon, who can change his complexion as it suiteth his fancy?" asked Master Burbage.

"For the matter of that, he changeth his hue very much like your chameleon," said Master Shakspeare; "for if you catch him at the tavern, doubt not to find him a bottle Green"—

"Ha! ha!" shouted both at the same time.

"If he ventureth on the salt ocean, assuredly he is a sea Green"—

"Good, o'my life!" exclaimed Master Burbage, laughing very lustily.

"That he be not a Kendal or a Lincoln Green, I can warrant, knowing that he cometh from Warwickshire; but when all that is now man of him be turned into mould, there can not be a question that he will make a very respectable grass Green."

"Oh, kill me that varlet straight!" cried Master Green, shaking his monstrous stomach with the violence of his mirth. "Kill him, Dick, if thou lov'st me—for he hath filled me full of most villanous vegetable conceits. I do begin to fancy some old grannum, coming for simples, catching me up for a goodly pennyworth, and boiling me, as a sovereign remedy for her rheumatics."

"Nay, Tom, thou shalt be put to no such ignoble use, believe me," said Master Shakspeare, now laughing in his turn. "Green thou art, it can not be denied, and it be equally certain that thou wilt be ever-Green; therefore, 't' pleaseth thee, when I seek the boys I will come to thee for as much as thou canst provide."

"Well said, bully rook!" replied the other, giving him another hearty slap on the back. "If thou dependest on me for thy laurels, thou shalt have good store of them—for I do believe that thou hast earned them well."

"So say I," added Master Burbage, with exceeding earnestness.

"But how goeth the play, my masters?" suddenly inquired Master Shakspeare, as if inclined to give a turn to the conversation.

"As well as anything can go that goeth upon legs," replied Master Green.

"But how doth a play go upon legs, Tom?" asked Burbage. "That conceit be out of all toleration."

"Not a whit, not a whit, Dick," answered the other—" 'tis as plain as the nose on thy face; and I will do thee the justice to acknowledge that thou hast very 'plain' features."

"Out, thou pudding!" cried Burbage, laughing heartily; and fetching his companion a sly poke in the midriff, he thereupon gave a quick jump away, and went

with a great bang against Master Aniseed, who coming strutting along in all his finery to ascertain what they were so merry upon, had got nigh upon Master Green, when he was sent by the suddenness of the concussion flying along as if he had been shot out of a culverin, knocking down Lords Dimple and Simple, scattering others to the right and to the left, and fetching Sir Narcissus Wrinkles with one of his outspread arms such a whack of the chaps, that it sent his periwig off unto the other end of the room. In an instant, half a dozen rapiers were drawn; and foremost of all, Sir Narcissus with his bald pate, and swearing in a monstrous passion, was advancing to where stood Master Aniseed, trying to catch his breath, and looking as if he knew not for a certainty whether he was on his head or on his heels. Others presently interposed to prevent bloodshed, but some would not be pacified so readily: and a good many were so provoked by the ridiculousness of the whole scene, that they could do nothing but laugh.

"Let me at him!" cried Sir Narcissus. "By Acheron and gloomy Styx, I'll teach him to play his tricks on me, I warrant you."

"'Sblood, I must kill him within the instant," shouted Captain Swagger, looking prodigiously fierce, and flourishing his rapier in a most sanguinary manner. "He hath given me a blow! nothing but his life can atone for't."

"By this light he dies, for he hath hurt my friend," exclaimed Lord Dimple, raising his head from the floor, and looking pathetically toward Lord Simple, who lay at his length a little distance off.

"Nay, I be not much damaged," replied the latter, slowly placing himself in a sitting position. "But if I trounce him not for the ill office he hath done thee, then is friendship but a name."

"Nay, Sir Narcissus, put up your weapon—it was but an accident," said Master Taylor.

"Ten thousand furies! let me at him, I say!" cried the enraged knight, vainly endeavoring to break from those who held him tight.

"Come, good captain, we must have no fighting here!" cried Master Lowing, who with others were trying to hold him back.

"Away, gentlemen!" bawled Captain Swagger. "He hath signed his own death warrant. He hath done me an offence. Hold me not, I pray you, for I must kill him."

"Who talks of killing?" cried Master Green, looking preposterously valiant and big, and coming in before Master Aniseed with a rapier of a tremendous length, which he had drawn from the scabbard at his side. "Is any man so weary of life as to stand before my invincible toasting iron?—then let him die now, and pray all the rest of his days. Am I not famed for the killing of giants, of griffins, dragons, and monsters horrid? Then pity be pitiless: puppies shall drown in pails, or I'll know the reason on't. My masters, before I let fly my valor and shave the world of its humanity, it seemeth to me good to say this much. So he that hath ears to hear, let him give me his ears—and if he be deaf, why, let him hold his tongue. Thus is it—Let it be known to you that the good youth who hath made all this turmoil, be in no way to blame, seeing that he was but an agent in the mischief of which he was the innocent cause; for thus stands the tale: I jumping back suddenly, not knowing such a person was so nigh at hand, came with all my force against him, and did force him, very unwillingly on his part, I will be bound for't, to do what hath excited your high displeasure. Now, mark this: it be an unquestionable truth, that no man is ever in a rage with the bullet that killeth him; but, doubtless, would be glad, if he could, to pay off the pestilent varlet who shot the bullet. Quarrel not, then, with the bullet in this business—but they whose indignations be unquenchable, let them at me—for I shot the bullet."

Shouts of laughter rose from all parts of the room during this discourse, but when the speaker, with his great, stuffed body and valiant looks, more laughable than terrible, began swinging his monstrous weapon about, jumping quickly here and there, and slashing on all sides with an abundance of ridiculous antics, they that were nighest to him made all haste to get out of his way; the rapiers were quickly sheathed, and such roars of laughter followed one another from all the company, that never was the like heard.

"I pray you, if you be good Christians, bury the dead quickly," observed Master Green, gravely putting up his weapon—at which every one laughed the more. "Indeed this be killing work," continued he, wiping his brows with his handkerchief, amid the shouts of all around him. "'Tis a thousand pities it be so fatiguing to the body, else would I slay as many

score as I have done now, every day i' the year, and find it a very pretty diversion."

"Prythee, sweet friend, tell me if thy hurt be great!" asked Lord Dimple, leaning upon the shoulder of his associate, very anxiously; though, when he saw the great weapon coming into play a minute since, he jumped out of the way without in the least looking after his friend.

"In truth, my elbow be somewhat bruised," replied Lord Simple, with a right dolorous look. "But how is it with thee?"

"By this hand I am also a little hurt in the elbow," said he, very tenderly feeling his arm at the joint. "But I am villanous sore where I sit me down."

"Alack! I have there the most pestilent soreness true friend ever endured," replied the other, and immediately he did begin rubbing himself behind with a countenance that would have softened a heart of stone.

"And now, Tom, to the proofs," said Burbage, after the laughter had abated, and things became in the room near what they were before Master Aniseed's mishap, "How doth a play go upon legs?"

"Doth not a play go upon the players?" inquired Master Green.

"Of a truth, it can not well go without," observed the other.

"And do not the players go upon legs?" asked he.

"Truly, they could not well go without," remarked Master Shakspeare, with all his gravity.

"Well, then, my masters, dost see the drift of my argument?" said Green. "If the play be supported by the players, and the players be supported by their legs, is it not as true as that chickens come out of egg-shells, that a play goeth upon legs?"

"I question not that if the play 'stand' at all, it shall have legs to stand upon," observed Master Shakspeare in the same humor; "but I doubt hugely, that the play and the players go together at all times: for it may chance that the players be 'damned,'—which is like enough of some of them that I know; but the damning of the play doth not follow—especially if it be one of mine."

"Out upon thee, thou intolerable piece of vanity and horrible calumniator!" cried Master Green, laughing all the time; "I will forswear thy company, and on the instant take myself off."

"Do so, Tom," replied Master Shak-

spare, as his friend was leaving him—"thou wilt save me an infinite world of trouble by it, for I have been taking thee off this many a day."

"I owe thee one for that!" emphatically exclaimed the other, turning round as he was going out at the door, and shaking his droll face at him very merrily; "and if I pay thee not, Will, thou shalt hold me in no more estimation than a soused gurnet."

"Away with thee! thou wilt never become half so dainty a piece of pickle!" retorted his companion.

When Green was gone Master Shakspeare did address Burbage in his usual playful manner, with—"Well, Dick, did the verses play the part thou wouldst have them?"

"Excellently well," replied he. "In truth, never verses had better reception. If she be not an exquisite judge of all the commodities of a good measure, then stand I on very indifferent footing with a pretty woman."

"I'faith, thy feet have but an indifferent appearance, Dick," said Master Shakspeare, gravely looking down upon the other's shoes.

"That must needs become a standing joke," observed his companion.

"It may, for I do not think it deserves to be set down."

"Go too!" exclaimed Master Burbage, jocularly. "But listen to me: I watched her the while she read thy poem, and believe me, her face be worth the looking at: and as she proceeded, she opened her pretty lips—a tempting pair, by this light!—and said, 'That is not ill'—and anon, 'brave words!' and presently, 'an excellent good conceit;' and thus went she till she came to the end—when she did acknowledge that they were of better stuff than she had expected of me."

"Then must she have had a marvelous bad opinion of thee," duly remarked his companion, "and evidently knew thy value to a fraction. But what didst get for them?"

"Dost think I kiss and tell?" said the other, in a seeming indignation. "But I tell thee how it is, Will—I have cut out him of the sonnet—he hath no more chance than a drowned kitten in Houndsditch. And our next assignation hath a very pretty conceit in it—for it is agreed between us that I shall come to her door; and to prevent mistakes, when she says 'Who's there?' at my knocking, I am to reply, 'It is I—Richard the Third.'"

"What, dost mean to play the tyrant

with her?" laughingly inquired Master Shakspeare. "But let not thy longings for her father's gold make thee too sanguine. Mayhap thou wilt find plenty of Richmonds in the field yet."

"I care not if there be—I am desperately in love; and if she is to be had, will have her in spite of them," replied Master Burbage. "But there is our Stentor, with his lungs o' leather, giving me a pretty loud hint that I am wanted—so I am off." Saying which, he hastily departed at the door.

"And how like you the players and their associates?" asked Master Shakspeare to his young companion.

"In truth, exceeding well," replied Master Francis, cheerfully; "never have I been so much amused as during the time I have been here. Methinks they must lead a right merry life."

"They are the very grasshoppers of the age," observed his friend: "a small matter of sunshine sufficeth to make them chirp; notwithstanding which they oft-times live in fear of being trodden under foot, or snapped up by such as think fit to devour them and their substance." Doubtless in this Master Shakspeare did allude to the efforts that had been made by the city authorities to deprive himself and his associates of performing plays within their jurisdiction.

After some time longer passed in the room, his friend did lead Master Francis out just as many of the players came in, denoting that the play was over; and after carefully picking his way along, he was brought before a large curtain, in the which there was a hole whereat Master Shakspeare took a peep, and desired his companion to do the same. He looked, and saw a throng of people of the respectable sort, standing up close together a little below him, while a vast number of rooms, all round about and above them, were filled with lords and ladies, and the like, very splendidly attired; and up higher, on "the scaffold," or gallery, were a crowd of the meaner kind, who could afford neither a shilling nor a sixpence, such as had been paid by "the groundlings," and those in the rooms, but came only as threepenny customers. All was open to the sky, and at the top was a great flag. But what struck him the most was the noise and hubbub of the people. Some were shouting "God save the queen!" others casting up their hats, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs; and turning his eyes to where the looks of the audience were directed, Master

Francis beheld, in the largest of the rooms, all daintily fitted up with curtains of satin and gold, her majesty, Queen Elizabeth, who, with a very queen-like dignity, had presented herself in front of her noble attendants, clad with princely magnificence, and continued most graciously to courtesy to her applauding subjects.

He had not been many minutes engaged in observing this interesting scene, from the attractions of which he could scarcely take off his eyes, when he felt himself touched on the shoulder, and turning round, saw a handsome and gallant looking gentleman approaching the place where he stood.

"I have been in constant expectation of seeing you, Sir Walter"—

"Speed thee, Master Shakspeare, and follow me," said the other, interrupting him quickly.

"I must first request your kind offices in favor of my young friend here, who is a youth of excellent parts and"—

"Let him come to me at Durham house to-morrow, at eleven o'clock," said he, "for, in truth, I have not a minute to lose now. Her majesty hath desired that thou shouldst be presented to her, and if we make not prodigious haste she will be gone."

"Be sure and go to Durham house, as Sir Walter Raleigh hath required, and thou wilt find thy advantage in it," whispered Master Shakspeare; and in a moment afterward Master Francis found himself alone. For a minute or two it seemed to him that all had passed as a dream. It appeared scarcely possible that he should have stood in the presence of the far-famed Sir Walter Raleigh—have been recommended to his patronage, and desired of him to call at his mansion: and it could not but be (so he thought) that the stately looking gentleman, so richly clad, who a moment since stood before him, was a mere delusion of the fancy. These reflections threw him into a profound reverie, in the which he was so completely lost, that he saw and heard nothing around him.

"Prythee tell me, what have they offered thee a week?" was asked him a third time before he noticed that the ill-favored and inquisitive knave, Gib the call-boy, with his enormous mouth upon the stretch, and his eyes squinting more abominably than ever, was at his elbow, wondering that he could get no answer.

"Hold thy prate—I know not," was the reply.

"Nay, if thou knowest not, thou canst not tell, of a surety," observed the call-boy. "But thou canst think without knowing, and therefore say, I prythee, what thou dost *think* they have offered thee?"

"What matters it to thee," replied the other, in spite of himself, amused at the coaxing, wheedling manner in which the bandy-legged urchin attempted to win the important secret from him.

"In honest truth, I am curious to know if they are inclined to give thee as much as a whole shilling a week and find thyself out on't," said the boy, holding up his head with such an affectation of conceit that the other could not help laughing in his face.

"Then, in honest truth, I believe they are not," responded Master Francis.

"I thought so," said Gib, with an air of satisfaction that increased the mirth of his companion—then added, in a tone of consolation, "Be not cast down at it. I do assure thee, that if thou wilt abide by my advice, and do the women, thou shalt get as much as that in good time; for truly thou art well fitted for playing in such parts, seeing that thou wilt have no call for a beard yet awhile, and when it doth appear in any sort of prodigality, I have an honest barber of my acquaintance who shall pluck each individual hair out by the roots, and charge thee little or nothing for it."

"I am obliged to thee infinitely," seriously observed the youth, who winced under the very idea of such torture. "I tell thee, once for all, I never had any desire of becoming a player, and all the service I require of thee, is to lead me out of this place as quickly as thou canst."

"Desirest thou not to become a player?" thundered out the astonished call-boy. "Well, here is a fortune thrown away! And I did hope thou wouldst have supplanted our Juliet, who, no later than yesterday, gave me a villanous kick i' the breech for offering to show him how to die more graceful than is his wont."

"And I will give thee another if thou dost not instantly lead me into the street," added Master Francis, looking as seriously as he could. At this the eyes of the call-boy seemed directed in every way at the same time; and without saying a word more, he began to shuffle his mis-shapen legs away as fast as he could,—closely followed by the other.

While those two were leaving the

playhouse, Sir Walter Raleigh was hurrying Master Shakspeare along, and they arrived at the queen's room just as her majesty was moving to depart, with all her noble train of lords and ladies around her.

"Please your majesty, here is Master William Shakspeare," said Sir Walter Raleigh, as he pushed through the throng.

"Let him enter," said the queen. Thereupon, Master Shakspeare advanced toward the queen and knelt before her; and her majesty and many of her courtiers—especially the ladies, did look upon him very curiously.

"Master Shakspeare," exclaimed the queen, "We do commend the excellence of your wit, whereof the application hath pleased us much, on more occasions than the present; and will take care you suffer no hinderance in your calling, so long as you continue as you have done, to attempt not to meddle with matters of state. Of all your performances, that fat knight hath delighted us in the greatest measure: and it seemeth that we should find an additional satisfaction could we see the rogue in love. Think of it, Master Shakspeare, and if your conceit jump that way, send word to the palace, and we will give you the first fitting opportunity to read to us whatever you may write upon the subject." Then graciously giving him her ungloved hand all brilliant with jewels, to which he respectfully bent his lips, her majesty passed him by, followed by her maids of honor, her officers in waiting, and others whose duty it was to attend upon her person, leaving Master Shakspeare kneeling, from which he presently rose, and in a few minutes heard the trumpets and kettle-drums, with the hurrahs of the mob outside, striking up as the queen left the playhouse in her caroch.

CHAPTER VIII.

Millions of yeares this old drivell Cupid lives;
While still more wretch, more wicked he doth
prove;

Till now at length that Jove an office gives,
(At Juno's suite who much did Argus love)

In this our world a hangman for to be

Of all those fooles that will have all they see.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

There are sort of men, whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a wilfull stillness entertain,
With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;

As who should say, I am Sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark.
SHAKSPEARE.

"COME, coz! coz! Prythee have done with this sighing and trembling," exclaimed Mistress Alice to her fair cousin, as they were together in their tiring-room, seemingly getting themselves ready to go upon a journey. "Why, thou makest as much fuss at being married as might I, for whom the idea of it hath but sorry recommendation indeed. Well, Heaven help them that can not help themselves, say I—and of all that need help, none are like your would-be wife; for of a truth, she must be in monstrous hard case, that desirerh so ridiculous a thing as a husband."

"He can not help being ruined," observed Mistress Throckmorton sorrowfully, and quite inattentive to the remarks of her merry kinswoman.

"Well, blame him not for it," said the other, in her pretty droll way. "For, if he can not help it, he should escape censure. But methinks there be no great cause for such apprehension, for when I showed thy father's letter to the queen requesting thy presence at Aldgate, on the pretence of his declining health; she had come from the play in so fine a humor, that it seemed as if she could have granted anything: therefore art thou to go, and I with thee: and if thy man animal fail thee not, thou wilt be made his yoke-fellow straight. Now have I very palpably in my mind's eye, the appearance of thyself and thy precious helpmate some two or three score of years hence. Thou wilt sit on one side of the chimney corner, and he on the other, like Darby and Joan: with, mayhap, the cat at thy feet, and the dog at his, and his worship lifting up his woollen nightcap to scratch his bald pate the whilst, shall say, in a monstrous thin voice, like a sucking beetle," here did she imitate an old man's querulous speech to the life—"Dame! it be woundy cold o' nights—hast never another pair o' hose to cover up my legs? And then thou shalt look at his shrunk shanks very pitifully over thy spectacles, and dividing thy nose and chin, which shall then be nigh unto kissing each other, shalt answer, 'Forsooth, my old man, 'tis but proper thou shouldst have another pair; for I know by the absolute shooting o' my corns, we shall have foul weather soon.'"

"Fie on thee, Alice!" exclaimed Mistress Elizabeth, yet scarcely able to refrain from joining in her companion's

merriment—for the little creature screwed her pretty face into so odd an expression—and made her voice sound so tremulous and droll, in accordance with the laughable scene she was describing, that it was impossible for any one to have looked on unmoved.

“And then being mightily skilful in the preparation of simples,” continued Alice very archly. “After having put him to bed and tucked him up, that the cold shall not visit his old bones too roughly—for I prythee remember, there shall be nothing of him but skin and bone—thou shalt make him a famous posset, with spice in it, to comfort his poor bowels—whereof, when he hath swallowed a sufficiency, thou shalt take the rest; then to bed with him—and a few minutes after which, thou shalt be heard snoring a fine treble as an accompaniment to his worship’s excellent bass.”

“Nay, I am ashamed of thee!” cried the other, although she could in no way help laughing at the conceit, in spite of the trouble she seemed to be in. “But haste thee, Alice, with our things, or my father will have to wait—which thou knowest he likes not. Ah, me—I would it were all over!”

“Ah, me—I would it were well over, or under either, so that it had a good ending,” said Alice, briskly. “By my troth, there must needs be something in this taking of a husband, by the to do which is made of it; though, methinks, it would require as great a conjuror as Dr. Dee, to find out where lieth the wonder. For mine own part, I can not but help believing, that these man animals are hugely flattered—seeing that we are inclined to make so great a fuss out of so small a matter.”

“He will be undone!” exclaimed Mistress Elizabeth sighing, and wringing her hands.

“A pudding undone!” cried Alice, her sparkling eyes flashing very merrily. “Why should he be undone, I prythee?—unless he undo himself; and then mayhap he shall get himself in a tanglement, like the fag-end of a ball of worsted in the paws of a kitten. I tell thee, Bess, he shall never be undone. There is that in him which will put up with no undoing. Think not of it. It can not be. Thou shalt find him like a very pretty skein of silk, as he is; and shalt wind him off clear to the end.”

“It was noble of him to offer to marry me,” said Mistress Throckmorton—some-what as it were to herself.

“Nay, I can not see it be so very noble either,” replied her laughing cousin; “truly thou art worthy to mate with as good as he—or better, if it come to that.”

“No, no, no!” cried Mistress Elizabeth, shaking her head in very woful fashion.

“But I say yes, yes, yes!” quickly exclaimed the other. “In all respects he hath got an excellent bargain, and the varlet knoweth it, or I be much deceived. Thou shouldst not hold thyself too cheap, Bess; a woman gets nothing by that, depend on’t. As for me, if there be any that would have me at mine own valuation, then shall they coin all the man’s flesh that may be met with above ground into rose nobles; and lack the greatest portion of what I would go for after all.”

“In truth, then, thou wouldst go at a price indeed,” remarked her cousin.

“Price, quotha! why should I not go at a price?” replied the merry Alice, tossing her little head very prettily. “Dost think I am but a pennyworth?—of so little account, that he that gets me might run a withy through my gills, and carry me home like a cheap mackerel?”

“Nay, I meant not that,” said Mistress Elizabeth, smiling at the exceeding oddity of her cousin’s humor.

“Thou art not held so poorly in my esteem, believe me; for thou hast ever been to me a very dear good creature,” and thereat she stooped and kissed her rosy dimpled cheek with an admirable affection.

“Ay, if I am to be bought, I’ll be a dear creature to him that buys me, depend on’t,” laughingly answered she, as she returned her cousin’s caress. “But hark—here comes a footstep!” Saying this, she hastened to the door, the which she opened as some one approached it, and noticing that it was one of the yeomen of the guard, she exclaimed, “Ha, Master Annesley, what news?”

“Please you, my lady,” replied he very respectfully, “there be certain of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton’s serving-men down below, who say that the barge is ready at the water-side for Mistress Elizabeth and yourself, to the which they wait to conduct you.”

“See that they be entertained; and say we will be with them anon, Master Annesley,” said Alice.

“I will, my lady,” answered he; and departed quickly to do her bidding.

“Bess! Bess! why how thou dost tremble!” exclaimed the other, when she had returned to her kinswoman. “Dost tremble at a man?—Psha! Fifty men should

not make me wag a hair of my head. Now on with thy mantle!"

"Alas! he will be ruined!" cried Mistress Elizabeth very piteously.

"Then the more goose he!" replied her cousin. "But I apprehend he hath more wit than to suffer it. Dost think I would be ruined?—Nay, I'd eat my head off first! Come, here is thy hat. Alack, thou lookst as pale as a Shrovetide pancake. Courage, sweetheart! If it were not that I have no inclination that way, I would marry all the bachelors between this and Muscovy, and not be frightened a whit. Nay, shake not so, I prythee, for thou wilt have shaking enough soon, I doubt not—seeing that when we get to London Bridge thou wilt have to mount on the pillion on uncle's brown Bess, whilst I must ride before Diggory on the gray mare; and then we shall go trot, trot, trot, to Aldgate, till neither of us have more bowels than a flea. And now thou art ready at last."

Then, after some few minutes employed in finishing her own attire—for her beautiful kinswoman seemed in such a strait that she could assist her none at all—she drew her arm through that of the other, cheering her all the time with many droll sayings; and they passed together out of the room in their travelling equipments, giving notice as they went to one of the yeomen that the men should meet them near the gates; thereat when they arrived, they found the serving-men in their best liveries (proper stout varlets, each with a goodly rapier at his girdle), and with abundance of respectful salutations from them, answered kindly and without haughtiness by their fair mistress, thus attended, they left the palace of Whitehall, and proceeded across the Queen's garden to the Privy bridge.

"Step in quick," said a voice that came from one muffled up close in a large cloak, who sat in the barge at the water-side.

"Father!" exclaimed Mistress Elizabeth.

"Uncle!" cried Alice in the same breath.

"Nay, there be no time for fathers or uncles either," replied Sir Nicholas, "I be not to speak nor disclose myself for fear of watchers and praters,—so in, wench, and quickly. And now, Diggory, push off from the shore, and help ply the oars well."

"That will I, your worship," replied one with a famous dull honest face and yellow beard, who with a long pole sought to

push the barge into deep water; "and as your worship desireth that your name shall not be mentioned, I will take care it pass not my lips. Truly 'twould be a shame were I not to do the bidding of so excellent a master as Sir Nicholas Throck—"

"Hang thee, villain, thou wouldst betray me upon the instant!" exclaimed the old knight. "Take to thy oar, and let thy tongue wag on thy peril."

"I am dumb, Sir Nichol—"

"Take that, for a prating varlet!" said his master, interrupting the mentioning of his name by a blow with an ashen stick he had under his cloak, that not only made Diggory wince mightily, but had the effect of silencing him without another word.

"Nay, father!"

"Hurt him not, good uncle!" cried the cousins quickly, as they saw the weapon descending.

"Sblood! one might as well be proclaimed at Paul's!" exclaimed Sir Nicholas impatiently. "I tell thee I am now neither thy father, nor thy uncle, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor anything that is thine."

They now glided slowly and in silence along the river, keeping pretty nigh unto the left bank—the serving men straining at the oars with all their strength—Mistress Elizabeth trembling exceedingly, and her beautiful countenance marked with a great paleness; and Alice with her arm round her waist, whispering excellent consolation, with now and then such droll conceits as entered into her head.

"Who be those getting into a pair of oars from the very spot where we took water?" inquired Sir Nicholas, pointing to two persons closely wrapped in large cloaks, who were then stepping into a boat.

"Methinks they are men of some sort," replied Diggory, with a monstrous gravity, who fancying the question had been addressed to him, had plucked up courage to answer it.

"Mine eyes can tell me that," said his master, drily.

"And wear they goodly coptanck hats, out of all question," continued the man.

"That also I can see without thy assistance," answered the old knight. "I hope they be not coming after us."

"They are pulling across the river," observed Alice.

"That is evident to me likewise," responded Sir Nicholas; and for some min-

utes not a word more was spoken, till he cried out,—“but see, they are creeping along the shore on the other side. Odds my life! but I think they be spies.”

“If it please you, shall we run across?” said Diggory, “and Peter and I will draw upon them, and spoil their spying straight.”

“Ay, that would we, with a vengeance, if it please you, master,” exclaimed another, whose patch on the forehead betokened him to be one in no way averse to a broil.

“Peace, knaves,” exclaimed the old knight;—“Dost think, if there be any need of drawing, I can not play my part?”

“For the matter of that,” observed Diggory, “I can affirm, with a safe conscience, there be no such a master at the weapon.”

“Indeed, for a swashing blow, of all valorous knights commend me to Sir Nicholas Throck—: Oh!” shouted Peter, before he had finished his sentence, on finding the aforesaid ashen stick descending on his pate, with the very swashing blow he was speaking of.

“Wilt never hold thy prate?” angrily cried his master: “nay, by God’s suffering, I’ll give thee a cudgeling all round, if I hear another word.” At this the men said no more, but pulled on, passing divers noble mansions that stood on the slope of the Thames, nigh unto the village of Charing, Sir Nicholas watching very earnestly the strange boat, that kept at a good distance on the other side of the river, till they approached Ivy Bridge; when he commanded Diggory to make for a small flight of stone steps, adjutting out of a magnificent mansion that stood there. As it was high water, the barge was easily brought to the stairs, and then the old knight, handing out his daughter and his niece, pointed to them an open door above the wall, against which the tide was a running, for them to go into, while he tarried a moment to give directions to his men.

“Courage, Bess! this is Durham house, and thou wilt soon be a wife now,” exclaimed Alice, as the other, seeming more dead than alive, leaned upon her, as they advanced through the little door, into a dark passage. “At least Sir Walter Raleigh hath one virtue—he hath a goodly house to live in.”

“To which he now welcomes his dear sweet wife and thee,” said a well-known voice; and Mistress Elizabeth found herself clasped in the arms of her affianced husband.

“Oh, Walter!” was all she could say.

“Alack, I had like to have been frightened,” exclaimed Alice; “but now I see who it be, I only wonder I took any alarm, for I am not easily frightened at so small a matter.”

“Another time, Alice, I will give it thee in good style for that,” said Sir Walter, laughingly; and then, turning to Mistress Elizabeth, added, “Come, Bess, to the chapel—all is ready; my chaplain waits, and there is no one with him but my friend Lord Cobham.”

“And here comes her old father, to see her honorably wedded to a truly excellent and gallant gentleman,” cried Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, a little way behind them.

“Welcome to Durham house, Sir Nicholas,” exclaimed Raleigh: and then the two knights shook hands in a very friendly manner.

“Thanks, Sir Walter,” replied the other; “I have brought Bess here, with strict attention to your directions; yet had I at one time misgivings we were watched.”

“Who could have thought of playing the spy upon you?” asked Raleigh.

“In truth it was a mistake of mine,” replied the old knight; “for the boat in which were the supposed watchers hath but now gone on, as I think, to the Bank-side.”

“I beseech you, follow me then to the chapel,” said Sir Walter; and then, with many kind and soothing words to her who hung so fondly on his arm, he led the way, closely followed by Alice and her uncle, through many courts and passages, till they came to a sort of oratory, dimly lighted, fitted up in very antique fashion as a place of worship; in the which stood, in his robes, at the altar, the chaplain, conversing with my Lord Cobham; and with a few hurried words of greeting betwixt that lord and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the ceremony was proceeded with: Mistress Elizabeth looking all the whilst, as some thought, fitter for a burial than a bridal, and trembling wonderfully; but she said the responses with a proper distinctness; and in a marvellous little time she did receive the congratulations of those around her. She answered not to what was said, save by turning toward her husband, and with her beautiful eyes swimming in their own soft light, regarded him with a look of such infinite thankfulness, that it sunk direct to his heart, and never, while he had life, was thence erased.

"And now, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton," said Sir Walter, advancing to him, with his arm fondly encircling his wife, "I consign this precious charge into your keeping for a while, which I hope will be but brief. I am going, as it may be known unto you, upon a voyage, whereof, the successful result will, I hope, win me the queen's pardon for this proceeding; and I know not where, with such excellent propriety and advantage, I could place in safety, during my absence, what I account so great a treasure, as with one from whom its value did proceed. I pray you look to her tenderly."

"That will I, Sir Walter, depend on't," replied the old knight, briskly. "A murrain on thee; what dost look so pale for?" added he to his daughter;—"when I married thy mother, her cheek outblushed the rose:—but there will come color enough by-and-by, or I'm hugely mistaken;" and then he gave a very merry chuckle, and did touch her playfully under the chin.

"It grieveth me that I should seem to play the niggard, Sir Nicholas," said Sir Walter; "but it must be known to you why it is so; and therefore do I trust you will excuse it."

"Odds my life, man, speak not of it," answered Sir Nicholas; "but if thou canst, come to us this eve at Aldgate, and we will have a merry night on't."

"I will strive to bring it about," replied Sir Walter.

"Art admiring my apparel, fair Alice?" asked my Lord Cobham, with a great show of gallantry, as he advanced toward the place where she, with her roguish eyes, seemed intently scrutinizing his dress.

"Indeed it hath to me a right handsome look," replied she, very innocently; "but methinks it be a thousand pities it should have so sorry a lining."

"'Tis a mad wench, 'tis a mad wench!" exclaimed the old knight, with a loud laugh, while my Lord Cobham appeared as if he knew not whether to be offended or amused; "she hath a lively wit, it can not be denied; and they do say she taketh after me."

"The truth of which I here do affirm," said the merry girl; "for having many a day helped yourself before me, it standeth to reason, uncle, that I must take after you."

"Ha, ha!" shouted her kinsman, who seemed as fond of a jest as herself, "that be a truth beyond all contradiction. Now, Sir Walter, you take the lead, else I

know not how I shall find my way back to the barge." Raleigh was whispering a few encouraging words to his beautiful wife, previous to his departure, when he was startled by a knocking at the chapel door.

"Now, Stephen, what news?" asked he, going to the door, yet without opening it.

"Please you, Sir Walter," replied the voice of an old man, "there is my Lord Burghley at the gate, who says he must have immediate speech with you on the queen's business."

"Get him into the library, good Stephen," said Raleigh, "and say that I am dressing, and will be with him in the instant."

"That will I, without fail," responded the other, and immediately he was heard hastening away.

"Now, Bess, my life," exclaimed Sir Walter, catching hold of her arm, "I must be so ungallant as to hurry thee from the house; for if the lord treasurer were to get but a hint of thy being here, it must needs come to the queen's ears, and then it would go hard for us both." So saying, he hastened with her—not without saying many endearing words by the way, which doubtless were mightily refreshing to her affectionate nature—to the little door that opened unto the river; at the which he parted with her, and her father, and Alice; who straightway proceeded into their barge, and continued their journey, while he hurried back; and after going through other passages, and up a flight of steps, joined his visiter in the library.

The Lord Burghley was at the time a man getting to be aged, and of some infirmities also. His beard was very silvery, and broad at the bottom; and his face much wrinkled, pale, and of an exceeding grave aspect; his head, which seemed to be scant of hair, was covered with a close cap of black velvet (whereof the points came down over his ears), on the top of which was a rounded hat, with a fair jewel set in the centre. Below his ruff his gown was fastened, having the royal arms embroidered on the right side; over which he wore a goodly chain of gold, and a broad sash, from the left shoulder to the right hip; and in his hand he carried a white wand. He had sat himself down in an easy-chair, the which a tall, thin, gray-headed old serving-man, who stooped much, had placed for his use; and seemed, with marvellous shrewd looks, to be scrutinizing ev-

everything in the room; and certes there was a multitude of things opposite in their natures, the close approximation of the which would have been a marvel to many: for above a vast heap of romances of love, and chivalry, and the like, was the model of a ship;—then, upon a pile of grave philosophers and ancient historians, there peeped out a portion of a quaint dress for a masque;—here lay a theorbo, and by it a small piece of ordnance;—there a silver tankard, wrought with the story of Bacchus and Ariadne. Ovid's *Art of Love* lay on a shelf, with a jewelled dagger in it to mark the page; and between the leaves of Plato his works, in the original Greek, was seen part of the gold case of a lady's miniature. In one corner were divers pikes and halberds, with a torn banner taken from the enemy; in the other, a mass of ore, brought from the country of Guiana by a Spaniard, and one or two large shells found on the American shore;—in this, a right handsome arabalast, the handle of which was of ivory, very daintily carved,—with a quiver full of arrows; and in that a lot of swords, pieces, and the like sanguinary weapons, resting upon a roll of madrigals, with a leaf exposed, having on it part of the words and music of that admirable composition of the truly melodious Master Dowland, "Awake, sweet Love." On parts of the carved wainscot, were framed and hung up certain views of the invincible armada being discomfited by the English fleet—charts of the Spanish main—drawings of the coast of Virginia—and a right exquisite portrait of Queen Elizabeth, looking wondrous handsome and majestic, riding upon horseback, as she appeared at Tilbury Fort. There was no lack of tables and chairs in the room, but most of them were covered with such a host of ancient books and weapons, with here and there a case of toothpicks, or a delicate pouncet box;—pistols and perfumes lying side by side, or a French trinket resting upon a Hebrew psalter, with a vast quantity of papers, as would be tedious to describe minutely.

"My master will be with you anon, an' it please you, my lord," said the old serving-man, very respectfully.

"Humph!" exclaimed the lord treasurer, drawing in his lips very tight, and still regarding everything about him with an unmoved countenance.

"He is but now a dressing, and bade me say that he would not lose an instant in the coming."

"Ho!" ejaculated my Lord Burghley, lowering his chin and throwing out his lips.

"And for a surety, he is always to be depended upon in his word, an' it please you, my lord," continued the other. "For though I have served him since he hath been but a boy as it were, never knew I him to fail in the keeping of it."

"Ha!" cried the old lord, nodding his head with a sort of complacency.

"And when he employeth himself on the business of the queen—to whom be all honor and glory in this world and the next," added Stephen reverentially, and proud to be allowed to have speech with the great Lord Burghley—"I have known him to be quite put out should there be any let which would delay him but a moment."

"Humph!" exclaimed my lord, still very gravely.

"Therefore, it be certain, out of all contradiction, he will be here straight; an' it please you, my lord."

"Ho!" said the lord treasurer.

"And, here he is," concluded the serving-man, as he heard his master's footsteps approaching the door.

"Ha!" cried my Lord Burghley. Thereupon, Stephen respectfully went out as Sir Walter Raleigh entered. The lord treasurer budged not an inch as the other approached him, nor spoke a word, nor altered he his countenance, nor took he off his hat.

"I have first to thank you, my good lord, for the honor you have done me—in paying my poor house a visit," said Sir Walter, drawing a chair close to his guest, and sitting himself therein. "For, truly, may it be said, that where the Lord Burghley cometh, he bringeth honor with him—for he bringeth the superlatively wisest statesman of his age, which I take to be the honorablest of all titles of honor."

"Humph!" exclaimed the lord treasurer.

"And, next," continued his host, "I must make my excuses for keeping you waiting—but I made not the stop any longer than I could help for mine own sake, believe me; for know I well, that every minute that keepeth me from such excellent good society, depriveth me of more true wisdom than a week's hard study could make up."

"Ho!" ejaculated the other.

"The queen, out of her own bountiful humor, hath given me expectation of your coming," added Sir Walter, "de-

siring me to put you in possession of certain matters touching my expedition to Panama, in the which I intend doing the villanous Spaniards great hurt, and coming back, fear not that I shall fail in despoiling them of the Plate fleet—to the exceeding enrichment of her majesty's exchequer."

"Ha!" cried Lord Burghley.

"The matter stands thus—the gentlemen adventurers who with me have subscribed the necessary moneys for this golden undertaking, with her majesty's high sanction, have promoted me to be their admiral: and I, desirous that its good effects should not fail for want of a sufficiency of means, did seek of her majesty, on profitable conditions, such assistance in men, ships, and warlike stores, as seemed unto me to be necessary."

"Humph!" exclaimed the lord treasurer.

"And her majesty, with exceeding liberality, as I take it, hath condescended to promise me six of her ships, well appointed in all respects, under the command of Sir John Burgh, who is to be our vice-admiral."

"Ho!" cried the old lord.

"For the which we are willing to allow her one half of the profits of the expedition, arising either from the plunder of the town, or the taking of ships—which, doubtless, will amount to a sum far exceeding that which has been gained by any similar adventure."

"Ha!" said my Lord Burghley.

Sir Walter Raleigh then, at considerable length, described the nature of the proposed undertaking, its manifest advantages,—the number of ships and men to be employed—the officers engaged, and all concerning the expedition to the minutest particular; to the which the lord treasurer not only listened with his gravity undisturbed; but drawing in his mouth tight, as if he were afraid something should drop out of it, he replied only with a "Humph!" a "Ho!" or a "Ha!" as the case might be. It be out of all manner of doubt that my Lord Burghley could speak right eloquently when he chose; but he was exceeding chary of his discourse when he fancied it was not necessary for him to open his lips. Thus did he preserve the wonderful taciturnity with which he was gifted, throughout the whole of the time; and looking very grave the whilst, as if he was taken up with some deep thinking, with a slight inclination of his head, he raised himself from the chair, and leaning on his host

for support, he walked to the gates, where he mounted his pony which a serving-man had in waiting for him, and immediately rode off.

CHAPTER IX.

Sir, you did take me up, when I was nothing;
And only yet am something by being yours,
You trusted me unknown; and that which
were apt

To construe a simple innocence in me
Perhaps, might have been craft; the cunning of
a boy

Hardened in lives and theft: yet ventured you
To part my miseries and me.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

To such a place our camp remove
As will no siege abide;

I hate a fool who starves her love
Only to feed her pride.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING.

MASTER FRANCIS was so well pleased with his visit to the playhouse, that when he returned to St. Mary Axe, he cared not a fig's end for the rating that the old man gave him for having tarried so long; and after he laid him down on his humble pallet of rushes, he could not sleep a wink for thinking of the gallant Sir Walter Raleigh and the noble Shakspeare; the brave sight he had of Queen Elizabeth, and all the fine lords and ladies, knights and gentlemen; and the droll things he had seen among the players; and then he sat about building of castles in the air, whereof he pleased himself mightily; for though of a modest disposition,—the which accorded well with the humbleness of his fortunes since he had recollection;—yet the mystery of his parentage sometimes inclining him to believe himself of notable descent, and at other times filling him with a dread that he was the deserted offspring of some wretched adventurer, made him irritable upon any slight, and more proud than seemed becoming to one of his state. His nature was very affectionate without doubt, yet was he exceeding sensitive of offence, and the excess of regard with which he looked on those who did him a kindness, disposed him the more readily to yield himself to impressions of an opposite tendency. I say thus much here, to put the courteous reader on his guard against expecting too much of him; for I am not one of those that bring on the picture such monstrous perfect creatures as do some, the like of which hath eye never seen in this world; for I put not finer feathers on the

bird than nature hath given him. If he hath faults, all the better,—for being of tender years, then is there the greater chance that he may mend. But, mayhap, this shall be seen in the upshot.

The cock had crowed more than once, yet still Master Francis continued at his airy speculations—this moment did he discover his unknown parent to be of great estate, and publicly was acknowledged to be his only son and heir, with the great rejoicing of a fine assembly—then, all daintily attired, he was a taking his leisure in a fair pleasnace, with his adored Joanna, very lovingly, having his true friend, Harry Daring, in the background, after he had been doing of a good office even unto his much misliked acquaintance, Ralph Goshawk—again he was with Master Shakspeare and the players, receiving their congratulations on the success of a tragedy they had brought out for him, which had taken hugely with the spectators—and now he was with Sir Walter Raleigh in some place of office at court, discoursing very prettily on matters of state, and bearing it among the gallants as bravely as the best of them. Thus passed he the time till he was stirred up by the shrill voice of his uncle from below stairs, abusing him soundly for a lie-a-bed; at the which he got up and employed himself at the necessary drudgery of his miserly kinsman, till it was nigh unto the hour he was desired to go to Durham House, when, seeking occasion to be sent of an errand, in the which he succeeded so far as to be required to importune one who lacked the will or the means of paying—a thing he was oft obliged to do, yet never had any heart for—he proceeded on his way.

He had passed beyond the Temple Bar before the anxiousness which he was in allowed him to notice much what happened as he went, or the notable places in his progress; but as he now thought of the necessity of looking out for the place he was in search of, he soon found himself passing Essex house, then Arundel house—goodly mansions both; and then Somerset house (a right handsome pile), and the palace of the Savoy: and keeping along the garden walls attached to Worcester house, he got to Salisbury house—and a very delicate sight it was to notice these and other fine buildings on the banks of the Thames, with famous gardens and grounds (intersected by running streams) that went down to the water's edge; then keeping Covent Garden

and the Strand Cross at his right, with the Maypole in the distance, he passed by the Ivy bridge, and presently stood before a truly noble structure, which the passengers and wayfarers he had questioned of his way told him was Durham house. In truth, it must needs be a notable fine building, having been an inn of the bishops of Durham, and latterly the residence of the once mighty John Dudley, earl of Northumberland.

On gaining admittance at the wicket, he was sharply questioned of several tall serving-men, clad in gay liveries, with silver badges on their left arms, who seemed loath to let one of his humble appearance have speech with their master.

“Ho, Roger! Timothy! Gabriel! Thomas! what now, I say!” called out old Stephen, as he slowly advanced toward the group, scanning them with a somewhat displeased aspect—“have ye so little respect for our master's house that ye loiter here gossiping together, while your duties stand unattended to? In with ye, idlers!”

“Here be a stranger, Stephen Shortcake, that seeketh our master,” cried Roger.

“And he will have it Sir Walter bade him come,” exclaimed Timothy.

“And he ventureth to say that he hath business with him,” said Gabriel.

“Worse than all, he will not budge till he hath had speech of him,” added Thomas.

“And who bade you be an hinderance to him?” asked Stephen sharply, after he had sufficiently scrutinized the modest demeanor of Master Francis. “Have I not told ye, many a time and oft, that when a stranger presented himself, seeking Sir Walter, and ye had doubts of his errand, ye were to call me? Away with ye, knaves, and attend to the wants of our master's guests.”

Then, as soon as the serving-men had disappeared into the house, which they did in marvellous quick time, the old man courteously addressed Master Francis thus: “I pray you, good youth, be not vexed at the churlishness of those varlets: follow me, if it please you, and I will take care that you shall have opportunity to speak with Sir Walter; but that can not be at present, for he hath with him a power of noble commanders, sea-captains, men of war, and the like, talking upon pressing matters. If your business be not too urgent, doubtless it may tarry awhile and no loss happen.”

"I would willingly wait Sir Walter Raleigh's leisure," replied the youth.

"Then come you with me and welcome," said Stephen. "But let me tell you, without meaning offence in it, that at the present there be no vacancy for a serving-man."

"I seek no such office," answered the youth, rather proudly; indeed, so little did his ambition relish the idea of being considered only worthy to be a serving-man, that he stopped of a sudden, and seemed inclined to turn back and give over all hope of advancement from that quarter.

"Nay, take it not ill of me, I pray you," exclaimed the old man, who saw, by the confusion in the youth's countenance, that which he had given utterance to had created some unpleasantness, "for all that you be not so bountifully garnished as many who come here on such a seeking, I could swear, at a glimpse, you are well worthy better hap. Come on, I entreat of you; and though I be but Stephen Shortcake, yet having served Sir Walter Raleigh a long service, and I trust, I may add a faithful, he hath of his excellent goodness thought proper to advance me to his confidence, and to the office of butler; I may without presumption say I have some influence with him; and if I could do ought for you, believe me I shall be well inclined to say a good word in your behalf."

"I am thankful for your kind offer," replied Master Francis; and then, with an effort to conquer the disagreeableness of his feelings, he advanced with his companion into the house. The old butler appeared to be vastly taken with the youth; but his quiet, pensive countenance and his tall and elegant figure, were enough to have made friends for him wherever he went.

"Come you with me, good sir," continued Stephen Shortcake, "I will see that your business be attended to at the first fitting time, and"—Here he brake off his speech at once, for coming to the door of the house as Sir Walter Raleigh and some friends were leaving it, he hastened to open the gates, and Master Francis drew aside to let the company pass.

"I will see that everything is got ready with proper speed," said a very valiant-looking gentleman, as he walked along.

"Thanks, Sir John Burgh," replied Sir Walter, "I have set my all upon this cast, and so many brave spirits have embarked with me in the adventure, with

large portions of their substance, that I am exceeding anxious nothing should be wanting to give us the end we look for."

"O' my life, Sir Walter, I long to have a hand in it," said another, of the like gallant nature.

"That wish I of all things, Sir Martin Frobisher," answered Raleigh, "for know I of an indisputable truth 'twould greatly be to our advantage could we count upon such profitable assistance." Then with many courtesies, which none knew better how to use, he saw them leave the gates.

"See I not he of whom mine esteemed friend Master Shakspeare spoke but yesterday?" inquired Sir Walter Raleigh, stopping before the youth and regarding him somewhat kindly, as well as with attention.

"If it please you, I am," replied Master Francis, now looking and feeling much abashed.

"Master Shakspeare hath given me good account of you," continued Sir Walter, "and I am well disposed in consequence thereof to do you what good office lieth in my ability. I am in want of a secretary. Think you you should like to venture yourself in that capacity?"

"I doubt much I am quite fit for it," answered the youth with a very sincere modesty.

"Of your sufficiency, from what hath been said in your behalf, I can have no question," said Raleigh, much pleased at the other's behavior, "therefore if it accord with your inclination, be sure of having liberal treatment. Are you content?"

"Indeed, I am delighted to such a measure"—

"Enough!" exclaimed Sir Walter, good-humoredly interrupting him, as he saw from his manner there was no doubt of his satisfaction; then turning to his butler, who stood respectfully at a little distance, added, "Stephen, see that Master Francis hath all things proper as my secretary."

"I will lose no time upon it, an't please you, Sir Walter," replied the old man cheerfully.

"I will myself instruct you in your duties," added his patron, "but at present you must go with Stephen, who will see you want for nothing." Having said this very encouragingly, he went into the house to join his guests.

"I congratulate you, sweet sir," exclaimed Stephen Shortcake, as soon as his master was gone. "Think not ill of me for fancying you driven to such ex-

treble shifts as what I spoke of. I did it out of no unkindness to you, or slight upon your merit, believe me. When you know me well enough, I doubt not you shall give me credit for better intentions."

"Indeed, I am in too pleasant a mood to think of it," replied Master Francis, who was as rejoiced at this favorable turn in his fortunes as may be conceived of him. It was just that sort of employment he had most inclination for, and that seemed to give his ambitious hope the most ground to build upon.

"I pray you, good sir, follow me," said the old butler, "I must about my master's bidding—so while he is engaged with the noble lords and the men of war, I will see that you have proper entertainment." Then entering the house (talking a fair part of the time) he led Master Francis through divers spacious rooms, furnished very costly, and along sundry passages, wherein were many serving-men, dressed like those before spoken of (some of whom he reprov'd sharply for not seeming sufficiently attentive to their duties), till he entered a chamber of more humble appearance.

"I would fain find you more honorable lodging," observed Stephen, "but this being my room, and one in which you are not like to meet intruders, methought 'twould be best. I pray you put up with it for the nonce—feel as content in it as you may, and when all proper provision be made for your residence with us, then shall you be more becomingly accommodated."

Master Francis found no dissatisfaction in the chamber, which in truth was well stored with comforts, so that when Stephen Shortcake left him with a courteous excuse for his absence, he flung himself in a convenient chair, and did make comparisons with it and the room he had at his uncle's, in the which the former gained prodigiously, as may be supposed. He then gave himself up to his own reflections, which were gratifying to him in a very prodigal measure. He felt like a prisoner that hath cast off his gyves, and is a free man, after a long and terrible imprisonment; for he had got away from his miserly old kinsman, who had led him a pretty life of it—so far as his remembrance might go. Then his thoughts reverted to his adored Joanna, and he for some time found very exquisite satisfaction in imagining how pleased she would be to know of his success. Here I must leave him for

awhile—for what may be thought more attractive matter.

It was about the afternoon of the same day that a gallant, well dressed, without affectation, of a free carriage and noble aspect—somewhat careless in his demeanor, yet evidently meaning no sort of offence—in fact, no other than Master Shakspeare himself—was seen walking up and down upon London bridge, now looking in at the shops, and sauntering about the houses there, with very much the look of one who is in waiting for another. He amused himself for some time with regarding the passengers, whether of foot or on horse, and speculating from their looks of what disposition they might be; but he seemed to tire of this at last—as who will not tire who is kept an unconscionable time waiting for one who delays coming? and after looking wistfully several times toward the city side of the bridge, as it seemed without avail, he was on the point of leaving the place with what philosophy he might, when all at once his look brightened up wonderfully, and with the pleasantest air possible, he made for a very pretty woman, well and daintily attired, who was approaching him. "Thanks, my sweet, for this coming!" exclaimed he gallantly, as he took his place by her side, and they walked together. "But in honest truth, I had like to have been out of patience."

"If you loved me but half as well as you have sworn you have," replied she, in an admirable soft voice, "you would have had patience enough to have tarried here till doomsday—and longer than that. But I was detained, gentle sir, or I would have been truer to mine appointment."

"I doubt it not," said Master Shakspeare; "and the delight I now enjoy in gazing on your perfections doth counterbalance whatever disquietude I found in your delay. Truly never hath true lover suffered as have I since that most endearing hour I chanced to meet you seeing the archery in Finsbury Fields. Methought the queen's company of liege bowmen showed marvellous skill—but it hath since been made known to me, that there was one nearer than they, whose archery beat them hollow."

"An excellent fine conceit, by my troth," exclaimed his fair companion, laughingly, "and cometh with marvellous good grace from one who out of all contradiction draweth 'the longbow' very prettily."

"O' my life I swear to you!"—

"Nay, swear not, good sir," cried the

other, interrupting him; "for that be somewhat more than is required of you. Would you not take oath upon it that mine eyes outflash the diamond—my lips be ruddier than the cherry—and that my cheek putteth to shame the blushing of the rose?"

"Doubtless would I," replied he, looking upon her features,—which in truth were exceeding comely.

"And think you I can find interest in that I have heard so oft?" inquired she. "Other gallants have I met with, who were of such bountiful disposition that they would put all nature into disgrace for allowing me to leave her excellences so far behind. Was not that liberal of them? But methinks it would have sounded better from their lips had their object been as generous as their words. They would have had me believe myself a deity forsooth; but had I granted their prayers, what a poor idol of clay I should quickly have been thought."

Master Shakspeare said nothing; but he marvelled greatly at the tone and manner of the speaker, the which, differing from his experience, made him the more inclined to a nearer intimacy. "Count me not as one of those, I pray you," he exclaimed at last. "I look upon you as a truly admirable woman—one withal no woman's son could look on without admiring, and could not admire without loving desperately. Then as for comparisons between your excellences and those of nature, I do assert, and hope to live and die in that opinion, that of all fair things that give beauty to this flowery earth, the loveliness of woman exceedeth them infinitely. Place side by side with those thrilling orbs the brightest stone that ever glistened in the sunbeam, and while the spectator admireth the latter only for its brilliance, he must find quickly he can not gaze upon the warmer and more glorious radiance of your eyes, without feeling the flood of life rushing through his veins like a mighty river breaking from its banks. The one hath no expression—the other hath a thousand. And let him who preferreth fruits and flowers, note the honey-sweet smile that playeth round those tempting lips, or press the eloquent softness of those blushing cheeks; and I will wager my life on it, he will presently leave the poor unloving things he hath so much admired, for the rich beauty of such delicate flesh and blood as it is now my happiness to behold."

"I'faith these are brave words," re-

plied his fair companion; "but I doubt not you would say as much to any other that taketh your fancy for the while."

"You much abuse me by that opinion," said Master Shakspeare.

"Yet will I acknowledge to you," added she, "that you have in some way pleased me. Your language and bearing differ from all I have had acquaintance with save one; and I live in hopes that you are of a better sort. 'Tis strange that you have never told me your name."

"Not more so can it be than that you have refrained from telling me yours," observed he.

"Mine is Joanna," added the other.

"Joanna!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, as if he had heard the name before, for in truth he had, but had forgot the occasion of it; "and what else?"

"No matter—that is enough to call me by," replied she. "And now, if it please you, yours?"

"Mine is William."

"William what?" inquired Joanna.

"No matter—that is enough to call me by," replied Master Shakspeare with a smile.

"You will not say?" she asked, as if she was curious to know. "Then must I take my leave of you, for I am in haste to return home."

"Let me at least see you to the street in which you dwell," said he, as he was standing with her at the end of the bridge. "I should hold myself but a sorry gallant to leave so fair a creature to find her way home unattended."

"Oh, if your name is such that it may not be told, the sooner we part company the better for me," observed Joanna, smiling in her turn.

"Nay, it is not so bad as that, believe me," answered the other. "In truth, I may say, it is a name in some repute. But it may just as well be told walking as standing." And at that she hesitated not to proceed onward. "Doth it not strike you," he continued, "that what is fair in one case is honest in another; for as you have given me but your Christian name, have I given you but mine: and yet are you not content?"

"Were you as well disposed toward me as you have asserted," observed his fair companion, who, as is usual, grew more inquisitive the longer her curiosity remained ungratified, "you would have made no question about the matter. I'faith it says but little for your regard. Methinks you must either have an ill name, or hold me of so little account, that

you think me undeserving of knowing you."

"Neither, o' my life!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare. "Never met I a pretty woman I so much desired to be well known unto—and as for my name, I do assure you it standeth well in the public estimation."

"By my troth, 'tis hard to credit," replied Joanna, though the more intent from what he said, of getting the knowledge she required. Just at that moment the Lord Southampton, the Lord Pembroke, and other noble gallants, to whom he was well known, came riding by very finely appalled, and pulled off their hats to him. "Know you those princely-looking gentlemen?" she inquired.

"It is mine excellent good friend the Lord Southampton and certain of his acquaintance," replied he: at which she became all the more curious, and as they arrived at the corner of Eastcheap, she said, "Here is the street in which I live, where I must leave you: but your name hath not yet been told to me."

"Nay, let me behold the dwelling in which lives so inestimable a creature," asked the other very pressingly. "And as for my name—it may be told in one street as well as in another," and they continued to walk together.

"What a place for traffic is this!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, "and how busy do the citizens seem in the different shops and warehouses! Methinks I can hear the chink of the money; or at least the ready laugh of the chapman at his customer's jest. These be they, fair Joanna! who are up early and late, laboring to the utmost every day of their lives that others may have the advantage of it—whose greatest pleasure consisteth in the counting their gains, and greatest consolation is the knowing that they are worth something more than their neighbors. These be they who are acquainted with no virtue unless it be in the possession of wealth; and believe there can not be any vice so abominable as poverty. In their idea, aldermen are on a footing with angels; and to be in the city compter is to be damned to all eternity. They will wink at one who defrauds the orphan and robs the widow of her right, if he hath done it to some tune; but at the necessitous wretch, who is driven to do any small villany, they shout, 'Oh, the horrid rogue!' and would have him hanged forthwith. A man who hath his thousands might turn his wife and children into the street, and live as sen-

usually as he pleased, and they would never wag a tongue at him; but if another, who liveth honestly with what little he gains, be but suspected of kissing a pretty wench on the sly, they would raise such a hubbub about his ears, and seem so shocked at his iniquity, that the poor fellow should be right glad to escape out of the city with a whole skin. These be they—but why stop you here?" he inquired suddenly, finding that his companion proceeded no further.

"This is the house in which I live," replied she, who had not been inattentive to what had passed. "But shame upon you for keeping me unanswered! you have not told me your name yet."

"O' my life I am exceeding tired, fair Joanna," said Master Shakspeare. "It would be but a charity to ask me in—and as for my name—why it may as well be told sitting as walking."

It is scarcely necessary to add that Master Shakspeare was ushered up stairs into the best room; in the which he quickly made himself at home, as may be believed. Indeed, Joanna found his conversation so agreeable, that for a time she quite forgot to ask his name of him; but in truth he gave her not the opportunity, for as soon as one subject seemed about to be exhausted, he launched out with another; and displayed such abundance of wit, genius, and knowledge of the world, that she appeared quite in a maze with wonder and admiration.

"Since you talk so well upon poetry," said she, when she found opportunity for speech, "I have some lines here of which I should like mightily to have your judgment." Then from a drawer she took a paper, which she brought toward him; and added, "they were writ by a worthy gentleman, who doth fancy, much after your own fashion, that he is in love with me, and pays me such fine compliments, as you will therein peruse. Perhaps you also write verses?"

"A little," replied Master Shakspeare with a smile; and, believing that he had a rival in the field, he opened the paper. His astonishment may in some degree be conceived when it is known that he began to read the very poem he had given to Master Burbage. He saw in an instant how the affair stood, and was in no small degree amused therat.

"What think you of them?" inquired Joanna.

"O' my life, I think of them very indifferently," answered he.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed with some

surprise, "I marvel at that—for they seem to me admirably ingenious. By my troth, between ourselves, I have my doubts that they were writ by him who brought them me; for he seemeth such a mad, hare-brained, wild, wilful gallant. I have given him but monstrous little encouragement, yet doth he go on at such a rate, one would think he was in so poor a case for the love of me, that he would be a knocking at death's door unless I smiled upon him."

"Oh, the exaggerating varlet!" cried the other, laughing exceedingly as he compared in his own mind Master Burbage's statement with what he had just heard.

"And when I told him I doubted his authorship," continued his fair companion, "he swore by Apollo and all the Nine that he wrote every line on't; and that it was the worst stuff he ever did."

"He said that, did he!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare.

"Ay, that he did," added Joanna; "and moreover, vowed to me most solemnly that he was considered such an exquisite fine hand at the making of verses, that his friend Will Shakspeare, among many others, was oft obliged to borrow a line of him when he came to a halt in his measure."

"Oh! Dick, Dick, Dick," cried he, in a more subdued voice.

"And when I asked of him his opinion of Master Shakspeare and his plays," continued the other, "he answered slightly,—"Why, a—to be sure, he was very well; but no one knows how much he hath been beholden to me for all his best verses."

"If he deserved not cudgeling for this, then am I no judge of merit," exclaimed Master Shakspeare; "but of course you know him, fair Joanna?"

"He hath told me that he was one of the queen's players," replied she; "but else I know of him as little as I do of you. Tell me, I pray you, of what name you are, for in truth I am near tired of asking."

"Hush!" cried he, "there cometh some one to the door;" for a knocking was heard at that moment.

"'Tis he," replied the mercer's daughter, "and till now I had forgot he promised to pay me a visit."

"Hist! hist! Joanna," cried a voice from the other side of the door, "'tis I, Richard the Third."

"'Tis Dick sure enough," thought Master Shakspeare: then whispering to his fair companion,—"Leave him to me, I

pray you," he advanced softly to the door.

"Hist! hist! adorable Joanna," exclaimed Master Burbage, through the keyhole, "'tis I, Richard the Third."

"Go, get thee hence, thou crook-backed tyrant," replied Master Shakspeare aloud; "knowest thou not that William the Conqueror reigned before Richard the Third."

"What, Will!" cried the other in the utmost astonishment; "what ill wind brought thee here? Oh! thou abhorred traitor, thou hast betrayed me."

"Nay, thou errest in that, Master Dick," responded his old associate, "for knew I not till this moment that the truly adorable Joanna was known to thee. But if I had taken advantage of thy confidence, it would have been but proper return for the most atrocious things thou hast said of me to this exquisite creature. So get thee gone, and quickly; for in truth thou hast interrupted the infinite gratification I have been receiving."

"Oh! most sweet Joanna," cried Master Burbage, in a marvellous moving voice,—"my heart's treasure!—my soul's idol!—my angel upon earth!—my everything!—I do implore you, through the keyhole (because the door is fast, and I can not get in), by that fathomless ocean of love I bear for your inconceivable excellences, get rid of that villain straight, for it be utter destruction to be seen in his pestilent company."

"Who is he?" asked she, laughingly; although she began to have some suspicion of who he was.

"The very notoriouslest villain that walks, adorable Joanna," replied he, outside; "he hath done such mischief among women as you would find it horrible to think on. Item, five-and-twenty maids utterly undone—fifty widows sent stark mad—and a hundred and odd wives made miserably for life. I do assure you, sweet Joanna, that through him there hath lately been such abundance of crowner's quests, that the like hath not been known since the memory of man. Indeed, it be beyond dispute, that half a dozen stout fellows are kept in constant employ fishing distracted damsels out of the conduit, such a traitor is he to your dear sex. And as for hanging, the citizens scarce dare leave a nail sticking in their wainscots, so many of their wives and daughters have of late been found suspended to them, with these melancholy words pinned upon their kirtles,—'Oh! cruel—cruel Shakspeare.'"

"Are you such a wretch as this, Master Shakspeare?" inquired Joanna, as seriously as she could.

"No, on my life," replied he, laughing very heartily.

"Believe him not, dear Joanna," exclaimed Master Burbage, "he hath a tongue that would undo the Gordian knot; therefore your undoing would be but an easy matter with such a thorough villain. Oh! incomparably sweet Joanna! here on my bended knees, outside the door (for lack of being in), I conjure you injure not your delicate reputation by talking to such a fellow. Listen not to what he hath to say, for truth and he are in no sort of acquaintance: he will swear you black's white, such a horrid reprobate is he; and then, on the instant, turn round and take oath it be crimson. I have preached to him by the hour, in hopes of getting him to repent of his villainies; but, I say it with tears in my eyes, adorable Joanna, he is incorrigible; and as clean past all good counsel as a chicken with the pip."

"Prythee go on, Dick," cried Master Shakspeare, very merrily—his fair companion evidently being in much the same mood; "I admire thy invention hugely."

"Out, traitor!" exclaimed the other.

"If I had not heard this, I should have doubted thou wert clever enough to say the witty things thou hast."

"Away, villain!"

"But since I have known thou art such an exquisite fine hand at making verses," continued Master Shakspeare, "that I, of many others, am oft obliged to borrow a line of thee when I happen to come to a halt in my measure; and remember how much I am beholden to thee for all my best scenes, I marvel not at all at thy present cleverness, and do promise to have a better opinion of thee than I have done."

"A fico for thy opinion," replied Master Burbage; "all stratagems are fair in love and war; and when I gave her thy verses"—

"What, wrote you not the poem?" quickly inquired Joanna, interrupting him; "did you not swear to me by Apollo and all the Nine, that you wrote every line on't, and that it was the worst stuff you ever did?"

"What a goose art thou for not keeping thine own counsel," said his friend; "for though thou hast used me very scurvily, I would not have betrayed thee for it."

"Let me in, I pray you, most exquisite

Joanna," exclaimed he through the key-hole, "and I will say such things to you that you shall be satisfied of my behavior."

"Nay, if you can put on me Master Shakspeare's lines as your own," said Joanna, "I doubt hugely you can be more sincere in other matters."

"Pardon me this one small fault," replied he, very movingly, "which I have been led into from exceeding love of your ravishing perfections, and send away that fellow, who, by this hand, is the errantest deceiver that lives; and let me see you more commodiously than through the chinks of the door, which in truth afford me but a mere glimpse of your infinite beauties; and if I do not love you for it, in such a sort as will make amends for my transgression, then banish me for ever."

"Dost take me for thy friend, Dick?" inquired Master Shakspeare, leaning against the door.

"Open the door, and get thee gone, and then thou shalt be held a friend indeed," replied Master Burbage.

"Well—my bowels yearn toward thee exceedingly," continued the other.

"Ah! do they so? Thou wert ever a true friend," said he on the outside: "do open the door—there's a sweet Will."

"But am I the very notorious villain that walks, Dick?"

"By this light thou art a very angel! Excellent Will, open the door."

"And have I really undone so many women as thou hast said?"

"Nay, on my life, thou hast so good a heart, thou wouldst not undo a mouse. Open the door, sweet Will, I prythee."

"Well, Dick"—

"What sayest, old friend?"

"For thy consolation in this extremity"—

"Ah!"

"Dost listen, Dick?"

"With all my ears, excellent Will."

"I do assure thee—*she is—a most—delicious creature.*"

"Out on thee, thou aggravating—tantalizing—abominable catiff!" cried Master Burbage, impatiently; for Master Shakspeare had said the preceding sentence so slowly, and with so much emphasis on the last words; and the sentence was so different from what he had expected, that he seemed terribly put out at it. "I do forswear thy acquaintance from this. Nay, I will not remain another moment in thy villainous neighborhood;" and whilst Master Shakspeare

and the beautiful Joanna were laughing heartily, Master Burbage made all haste to get out of the house.

CHAPTER X.

I am as I am, and so will I be ;
But how that I am none knoweth truly :
Be it ill, be it well, be I bond, be I free,
I am as I am, and so will I be .

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Fraud showed in comely clothes a lovely look,
An humble cast of eye, a sober pace ;
And so sweet speech, a man might her have took
For him that said, " Hail, Mary, full of grace !"
But all the rest deformedly did look ;
As full of filthiness and foul disgrace ;
Hid under long, large garments that she wore,
Under the which a poisoned knife she bore.

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH did find exceeding difficulty in the setting out upon his expedition, for Queen Elizabeth, in no way prodigal of her means where there might be doubt of advantage to her, readily enough listened to the misgivings of Lord Burghley, who was famous for keeping a tight hold upon the treasury ; and the six goodly ships she had promised, dwindled to two. She delayed his starting from time to time, upon some insufficient pretext ; and even seemed inclined, from things that his enemies gave out to his disadvantage, the instant he had left the court, to take from him the command and give it to another ; but such a proceeding his associates in the adventure would not hear of, as she knew. At last he sailed with a fleet of fifteen sail, whereof two—the Garland and the Foresight—under the command of Sir John Burgh, were those of her majesty's providing ; and the rest, with the provision of all things necessary, had been furnished by himself, Sir John Hawkins, and others his good friends—the captains, soldiers, and sailors therein, being men of notable resolution, and of sufficient experience in such matters ; but contrary winds obliging him to put back, and these continuing to blow for a long time, he was forced to keep harbor till he could proceed with better hope of success.

In the meantime, there were not wanting those who made the opposition of the elements assume the appearance of culpable neglect in Sir Walter Raleigh, in consequence of which he had barely put to sea again when he was overtaken by Sir Martin Frobisher in a pinnace of my lord admiral's, called the Disdain, bring-

ing her majesty's letters of recall, with a command to leave his charge in the hands of her officers. This, it may well be believed, he liked not to do—seeing that he had been in so much trouble and expense (amounting to a third of the whole cost) for the originating and fitting out of the expedition, and was in a manner constrained not to abandon the interests of his fellow-adventurers, who had put all their trust in his valor and skilfulness ; so, fancying he could well excuse himself on his return, he would in no case relinquish his command : but held on his course. Speaking with a vessel from the Azores, he learned that Philip of Spain, getting notice of his expedition, had sent express orders to all the ports of the West India islands, and in Terra Firma, to lay no treasure abroad that year : therefore there could be small hope of getting the Plate fleet : but he turned not back till he met with a dreadful storm athwart Cape Finisterre that sunk some of his boats and pinnaces. Then giving such orders as he thought necessary for their future conduct, he put about ship ; still in hope, but exceeding vexed.

It may well be believed that his beautiful young wife liked not his venturing himself on a voyage at that time, and parted not with him without infinite regret, and some fears of the issue ; for Dame Elizabeth was in continual dread that the marriage would be discovered of the queen, whose temper she had much experience of ; and doubted not that when she came to know of it, she would be wrath, beyond all hope of forgiveness, against her husband. Therefore went she in constant alarm. Never loved woman more devotedly than she loved Sir Walter Raleigh ; and as she could scarcely be brought to allow him to peril his fortunes for her safety—so entire and unselfish was her regard for him—she could do nothing but blame her own affectionateness for having brought him into such a strait. Her chiefest care was to deny her own marriage, which, she knew not how, had got bruited about ; and she made Sir Walter promise, not only to deny it, were he questioned, but by those attentions she knew the queen most liked, to put all thought of it out of her majesty's head. Her father and the merry Alice sought all occasion to second her endeavors, seeing that it was of so much moment to her peace of mind ; but all their cares, and all her cousin's pleasant talk, removed not from her the conviction that she had been the ruin of him whose

happiness she would have died to secure.

As for Master Francis—never youth went on so prosperously. Sir Walter seeing that he was apt and well disposed, every day took a greater liking to him. He would have him taught under his own eye all gentlemanly accomplishments, in the which he made such rapid progress as delighted him amazingly; and would frequently discourse to him of such matters as he thought the most likely to be of service hereafter. Such a change took place in the scrivener's nephew, that he looked in no way the same person. He dressed in style, with a goodly feather in his hat, and a handsome rapier at his side; and having mingled continually with gallant knights and gentlemen, some of his shyness began to wear off. In truth, he was as handsome a youth as any of them, though still exceeding fair and delicate; the only sign of man in his appearance being a slight mustache on his upper lip—the which, had Gib the call-boy seen, might somewhat have shaken his conviction of Master Francis's fitness to "do the women."

The duties of Sir Walter Raleigh's secretary consisted in most part of writing letters, keeping a journal of the voyage, and putting down, at his patron's dictation, remarks on such subjects as he was disposed to treat of. Of this employment the young secretary never tired, it was so agreeable to his humor; and so well did he quit himself, that he soon gained Sir Walter's entire confidence. That he thought much of his miserly uncle is not to be expected, but the mercer's daughter was a frequent subject of his reflections; and his last interview with her oft gave to his memory exceeding satisfaction. He had written to her since several times, and had received from her a few letters—the which, though they were in some degree kind, he liked not, for they appeared unto him scarce kind enough; but though this gave him no little uneasiness, he doubted not when he returned, to find her everything he wished. Nothing could exceed the respect and admiration he felt for Sir Walter Raleigh, for he was of that disposition to be most sensible of Sir Walter's friendliness toward him; and his own intelligence which, for his years, was great indeed, enabled him the more correctly to appreciate the other's singular fine genius in all things.

One evening, as they were homeward bound, they were together in Sir Walter's cabin, which was pleasantly fitted up with

all manner of charts, some few books on choice subjects, and divers instruments necessary for the voyage. Master Francis sat writing at a table that was made fast to the flooring, and which was lighted by a lamp that swung from above; and his patron walked up and down the room with folded arms and grave aspect, occasionally stopping to dictate something to his secretary which the latter presently put to paper. This had continued for some two hours or more, when Sir Walter stopped in his walk, and the other thinking that he was about to say something of moment, leaning his left arm on the table and holding his pen in readiness, in an attitude of profound attention did look up into his patron's face; but Sir Walter, at that time, thought of no other thing than the pale and pensive countenance of the youth before him, for the light from the lamp falling on it as he sat in that position, gave to him an appearance so delicate that it clean put all other subjects out of his head.

"So you know not your parentage?" said he at last in a very friendly tone of voice. Master Francis was taken by surprise as it were at this, as he looked for other sort of speech from him; and his features presently were clouded with a sudden melancholy.

"Aught more than I have told you, honorable sir, know I not," he replied.

"'Tis a strange history," observed the other.

"In truth it is," said the secretary very dejectedly.

"I have taxed my memory more than once," continued Sir Walter, "to see if among all mine acquaintances there was one whose name would answer to the initials you have on the miniature, but with small profit. Certain it is, that when I was seeking to advance the protestant cause on the plains of Flanders under that experienced soldier, Sir John Norris, in my company there was one Holdfast, whose Christian name, methinks, was Francis."

"Ha!" exclaimed the youth, earnestly. "Perchance it was my father."

"I doubt it, Master Francis," said Sir Walter, kindly to him. "He was but an indifferent fellow—a mere adventurer, and a sorry character, by all accounts. It was said of him he had left England to avoid a marriage with some person of poor origin, whom he had undone, and whose relations were like to make a stir upon the business."

"'Tis he!" cried his secretary, in very

woful fashion; for his heart was cast down, and his aspiring thoughts utterly discomfited.

"Nay, I doubt it hugely," replied his patron. "This Holdfast was of so contrary a disposition to yourself. He was given to many dishonorable practices—a hanger-on of prodigal youth, whom he fleeced at play; and a doer of any mean thing by which he might get present profit. I held him in exceeding dislike, and was well pleased, upon proof being shown that he had cheated a companion at the dice, that we got rid of him."

"Know you what became of him?" inquired the youth, anxiously.

"I did hear he had turned puritan," answered Raleigh, "yet I can not say whether upon sufficient authority."

Master Francis was now in most comfortable case, for he did remember that his uncle, in his passions, oft had called him "base-born," and the like; which made him apt to believe that he was the fruit of some low intrigue; whereof the thought, to one of his sensitive nature, was scarce to be endured. Seeing that his intelligence had been taken in such sorrowful part, Sir Walter did presently go up to the youth, and laying his hand, in a friendly manner, on the other's shoulder, said kindly to him:—

"Be of better heart, Master Francis. If matters turn out so untoward as that your birth should be of such indifferent sort, mind it not, I pray you. Of your fortunes I will take good heed. But there exists no proof you are of such descent; and the evidence is not circumstantial enough for me to place much reliance on it."

"I think it be but too true, honorable sir," replied his secretary. "For mine uncle"—

"What of your uncle, Master Francis?" inquired his patron, seeing that the other hesitated to say more.

"In his anger, hath often called me by such vile terms as"—

"Fear nothing," said Sir Walter, encouragingly, "'tis a friend who listens."

"Indeed I can not say it," exclaimed the youth, shaking his head, and looking as if it was too repugnant to his feelings to be named.

"Well, well, as you list," answered Raleigh, raising himself up; for he had been leaning over him, and seemed to understand and appreciate his feelings; "but whatever it be, regard it not; for a bad man—which, from what you have said, I take your kinsman to be, will say

anything in his passion. It is a certain truth that, in these times, good birth is ever your best recommendation; but let not this affect you, even if it be your mishap to want it; which, till I have better warrant for it, will I never believe. It sounds fine, doubtless, to claim kin with a long line of honorable ancestry; but men that have no other merit than this be like unto a growing crop of our new vegetable, the potato—all that is good of them be underground. How much better is it to be yourself the getter of your own greatness. If you continue to show that commendable nature I have perceived in you, you shall not lack opportunity for honorable advancement, let your birth be what it may: therefore I would have you think no more of it, but the rather apply yourself to get perfect in such qualifications, as seem the most likely to stand you in good service at a fitting time." Saying which, Sir Walter Raleigh made for the door; and left the cabin.

But Master Francis did think more of it: and the more he thought, the more he seemed inclined to think. His ambition had had a shock, from the which he was not like to recover speedily; for a notion had got fixed in him, that of all things, ill birth was the most disgraceful (seeing the odium in which it was generally held); and he could not endure it should be said of him, that he was the misbegotten child of a paltry cheater. His pride was humbled mightily; yet did it rise up against such dishonor the more it was cast down at it. It seemed as if he would not be held in such poor esteem of the world, however degraded he felt in his own opinion. He tried to think Holdfast and he could be of no sort of relationship; yet, in spite of himself a conviction was forced upon him that the contrary was the truth; and the fear he had now was, that it should be talked of.

In the meantime, the enemies of Sir Walter Raleigh slackened not in their endeavors to ruin him with the queen. It may appear to some passing strange that one who, besides being of most notable excellence, sought to do no man ill, should have enemies: but it was in consequence of his towering so much above them in all commendable things, that he was misliked of so many. And as they who longed to ruffle it at court above all others, thought they had no chance of it while he was in favor, to whom they stood in such poor comparison, they strove all they could to bring him down, that

they might advance themselves upon his ruin. First of these was Sir Robert Cecil, whose ambitious aims would stop at no impediments that craft could overcome; and he was so skilful in his cunning as to be suspected of none; for he seemed to make all around him his tools, to do what he would; and keeping in obscurity himself, escaped free from all suspicion. His talents were above the ordinary; but he was ambitious of holding the greatest power in his own hands, and liked not that any should be mightier than he. Next to him was Lord Henry Howard, his associate and sworn coadjutor, one of a good family, being brother of the Duke of Norfolk; but having been a great spendthrift and profligate, to the ruin of his fortune, made him glad to assist Cecil in his plots and devices to oust Sir Walter Raleigh from his vantage—which he did with exceeding craftiness. In the Lady Howard of Walden they found a fitting helpmate. She was a woman of some beauty, but of no principle; and as she believed that Sir Walter had slighted her, she was impatient to be revenged of him. Her close attendance on the queen gave her what opportunity she wanted, and she was only kept back from using it by the counsel of Sir Robert Cecil, who liked not to have it done till matters were more ripe.

To these were added all the envious, the ambitious, and the vain, who hung about the court, and were ever intriguing to raise themselves upon the disadvantage of another; and these had already made themselves busy with calling in question Raleigh's conduct with the fleet—and not without the effect they desired. It was at this time that whispers were set afoot concerning Sir Walter's marriage, and many malicious things were said of the cause of it; but none, as yet, had hinted it to the queen. It was now thought time to bring matters to a push, for her majesty was in some sort displeased with Sir Walter that he had delayed so long with his expedition, and had done nothing, as was yet known of him. Therefore the Lady Howard took occasion, when she was in private with her majesty, to acquaint her with all that she knew between Elizabeth Throckmorton and Sir Walter Raleigh, taking care to aggravate the matter as much as was possible.

Nothing could exceed the indignation of the queen. She was now pale with anger, and in a moment red with shame. Every wrinkle in her face was made

conspicuous, she was in such a towering passion; and she strode up and down the chamber with haughty steps, now uttering denunciations against her maid of honor, and now denouncing terrible punishment upon her captain of the guard. Her attendant stood by, her dark eyes flashing with pleasure at the storm she had raised, endeavoring, by all manner of spiteful insinuations, to increase her majesty's fury against the offenders.

"Nay, by God's wounds, 'tis too bad," exclaimed the queen; "they shall rue it. Their guilty doings shall have fitting punishment, else are we not queen of England. And for her, no disgrace can be sufficient for so deep an offence—a wanton—a hussy—a creature vile and infamous! Had she no shame? Had she no sense of her wickedness, to commit her villainies so near us, and turn our palace into a —O! it is monstrous!"

"In truth, I wonder she could ever look her virtuous sovereign in the face," said her ladyship.

"Such unblushing impudency never disgraced a Christian court," cried her majesty; "it exceedeth aught of which we have ever heard; 'tis most atrocious, horrible, and abominable! What will it be thought of us, if those so near our person take to such vile courses? Why, it may give a handle to the malignant to say we are as evil disposed ourselves. Every hair stands on end at the thought of it."

"I am horror-struck," observed my Lady Howard, looking more completely shocked than her royal mistress.

"Such shameless iniquity deserves to be whipped through the world," continued the queen; "out upon it! fie upon the age that doth produce such vile women! Nay, and forsooth, if things go on at this rate, there will be neither safety nor honor for us poor virgins."

"Indeed, I think not, please your majesty," responded her attendant, who, by-the-by, bore no very reputable character; "and am I the more indignant, when I think what a glorious example she hath had before her in your majesty, whose exceeding virtuousness should, methinks, have taught her better behavior."

"Her extreme vileness was such that it was beyond all teaching," replied her majesty, sharply; "she was a worthless baggage from the first, who could profit by no example. We are amazed she should ever have ventured herself in our presence: but by all the angels in heaven, she shall suffer for it. As for

him, whom we have raised from nothing, we will let him know, and quickly, that she who makes can mar. The ungrateful caitiff, to carry on his paltry doings with such a Jezebel, in total disregard of his duty to us."

"And so near your royal presence too," cried my Lady Howard.

"Oh! 'tis most intolerable," exclaimed the queen, in a fresh burst of rage; "'tis the horriddest—loathsomest piece of villany that ever disgraced a royal palace. What devilish malignity led him into it 'tis not possible to say; but he hath done us foul dishonor in the face of all Europe; and, by God's wounds, he shall smart for it. The ambassadors will talk of it—it will be a jest for Philip of Spain,—that arch idolater the pope will have it preached from the pulpit; and all the wretched papists abroad and at home will find matter in it for further calumnies of us. Art sure he hath married the wretch?"

"I have heard, please your majesty," replied her ladyship, "that Sir Robert Cecil and my Lord Henry Howard, having got into a pair of oars but a brief space after this abandoned creature took water, saw her land at Durham house, where it is supposed of many, Sir Walter's chaplain, Dr. Robert Burrel, did make them man and wife."

"Worse and worse!" cried the queen, renewing her lofty strides along the chamber, while her eyes were flashing with anger, and her bosom heaved mightily—her wrath so moved her. "He hath not only done us notorious infamy, but, without our permission first asked and granted, he hath dared marry. What! he thinks, forsooth, because we have shown him some small favor,—having better opinion of him than he deserved, he shall be allowed to ruffle it as he please. Now, by this blessed light, we'll teach him somewhat differently. As for that Burrel, he must be made to know that to thrust his fool's head into such a pestilent meddling, is not doing God's work, but the devil's. He deserveth to have his gown stripped off his back, and whipped at the cart's tail by the common hangman. Such meddling-priests are ready for any villany. We marvel greatly that Sir Robert Cecil informed us not of what he had observed of this, as in duty bound he should. But 'tis thus we are served: the shamefulest things are done against us from day to day, yet those we have promoted to do us service, instead of giv-

ing us instant knowledge thereof, keep as close upon the business as if they had been bribed into complacency."

"There is a knocking at the door, please your majesty," said my Lady Howard.

"See to it," replied the queen.

"'Tis my Lord Burghley," added her attendant, after she had gone to the door to notice whom it might be.

"Let him have entrance," cried her majesty. Presently the lord treasurer advanced slowly into the chamber, with his hat in his hand, making proper obedience; and saw in a moment by the queen's countenance—which, in spite of all her cosmetics, looked exceeding black and sour—that something was out of place.

"Be seated, my lord," said the queen, for this indulgence she granted because of the infirmities of his age. The lord treasurer seated himself with becoming gravity, marvelling much what made her majesty look in such sort, and pace the chamber so haughtily; and he turned toward my Lady Howard to see if he could read in her looks any interpretation of the mystery, but, to the prodigious increase of his astonishment, she looked the blacker of the two.

"My lord treasurer!" exclaimed the queen, scarcely able to speak, she seemed in so great a passion, and stopping suddenly before him, "that Raleigh hath become the blackest traitor that ever was known."

"Humph!" cried my Lord Burghley, in some sort of surprise, and drawing in his lips with an appearance of the very profoundest gravity.

"He hath done us gross offence," continued the queen. "He hath committed such foul wrong against our royal dignity, that the sacrifice of his life will not be enough amends."

"Ha!" exclaimed the lord treasurer, dropping his jaw as if with a sudden astonishment.

"He hath had the audacity—think of the fellow's vileness, my lord—to be shamefully familiar with that horriddest of wantons Elizabeth Throckmorton!" and then her majesty continued her haughty pacing of the chamber.

"And in the palace too, my lord," added her attendant, with a look of exceeding indignation.

"Ho!" ejaculated the other, poking out his chin the while, as if in wonder at the enormity of the offence.

"She shall meet with her reward,

continued the queen very angrily. "It shall never be said that we left such husies to the indulgence of their own wicked wills."

"And so near the royal presence!" added my Lady Howard, with sufficient emphasis.

"Humph!" cried my Lord Burghley, seeming very much shocked.

"But more than this—my lord! more than this," said the queen, stopping before her lord treasurer with a look of extreme anger, and raising her voice to the highest pitch, "he hath dared to marry her."

"Ha!" exclaimed he, in a manner as if horror-struck.

"He hath held us in contempt—he hath put a slight upon our authority," saying which the queen bounced off as before.

"After her majesty hath been so bountiful a mistress to him," added her ladyship, "I am quite shocked at such devilish ingratitude."

"Ho!" said my lord, looking monstrously shocked also.

"Where is Sir Robert Cecil?" inquired the queen, "we must have speech with him instantly. It will go hard with him if he do not explain satisfactorily how he hath so much fallen short in his duty. We will have none such about us. We will favor no neglecters. We will not be served by such as can be dumb when treason stalks abroad. Send him to us, my lord, without fail. He hath been privy to these villanous goings-on, and hath taken care to give us no hint of the matter."

"Humph!" cried my Lord Burghley very seriously, as he rose from the chair; then proceeded out of the chamber in search of his son, as his royal mistress had commanded him.

Her majesty continued in the same humor to stride backward and forward, letting out her anger without stint, now against the one and now against the other, but most prodigally against her fair namesake, for whom no punishment seemed with her to be ample enough; while the Lady Howard took care that her rage should not go out for lack of proper stirring. Sir Robert Cecil evidently had not been far off, for he knocked at the door in a little space after the Lord Burghley had left it.

"So, Sir Robert Cecil!" exclaimed the queen angrily, as soon as he made his appearance before her, "you must needs become an aider and abettor of treason."

"I aid treason—I abet treason!" cried

he in seeming consternation, as he humbly knelt before his sovereign. "What ill hap is mine to have such accusation brought against me by so good a mistress? I will be sworn on my life I never spoke or did aught against your majesty. Far from it, I find most exquisite delight in endeavoring to prove myself your majesty's faithfullest servant; and I would not change your service for that of any sovereign upon earth, were I tempted to it ever so. Indeed, please your majesty, if you take from me the reputation I have at all times diligently sought, of giving place to no man in honesty and obedience, I would not wish to live another hour: for without character I should be unworthy to breathe in the presence of one so exalted in excellence, and deprived of the pleasure all persons enjoy who are held in such honor as to be selected to do your majesty's bidding, life hath nothing left that can be esteemed after it. Let me humbly ask of what treason I am accused?"

"The knowing of Raleigh's traitorous proceedings with that disgrace of our court, Elizabeth Throckmorton," replied the queen with exceeding bitterness, "whereof you told us nothing. What they have done is as black treason as ever was thought of—secrecy was all they required to succeed in their infamous designs, and by not declaring to us what you were privy to, that we might have it hindered, you allowed them to go on to the perfection of their iniquitous doings, and so became an aider and abettor of their treason."

"Please your majesty," said Cecil very earnestly, "two reasons had I, and good ones they seemed to me, that I should not make a stir in this business. In the first place my knowledge amounted to little more than the common suspicion, of the which there was no certain proof—in the next place, I like not being a tale-bearer in the best of times—but I do stand in such respectful awe of your majesty's superhuman virtue, that I could not for the life of me break any matter to your majesty's modest ear that appeared tainted with indelicate meaning."

"We do approve of your reasons, Sir Robert," replied the queen; "so far as to clear you of all offence in this. But now we charge you on your allegiance speak without extenuation whatever hath come to your knowledge."

"Since your majesty hath graciously given me leave, I will," answered he. "I must premise that of their intercourse

knew I nothing save what was the general gossip; but knowing how much the world is given to scandal, I took no heed of what I heard, believing, as I do, that Sir Walter Raleigh is too noble and discreet a gentleman to take to such dishonorable courses."

"My Lady Howard hath given us good proof of it, which she had from their own lips," observed the queen impatiently.

"Indeed, Sir Robert, I did by accident overhear all their infamous secrets, the which I thought it but proper in me to carry to her majesty," said her attendant.

"I'm all amazed!" cried Robert Cecil, looking in as absolute an astonishment as was ever beheld. "I marvel at it infinitely! who could have thought it? How impossible it doth seem that one so superlatively wise and learned as is your majesty's captain of the guard, should have committed himself so abominably! Indeed, it maketh me afraid of mine own honesty. I shall tremble for myself, knowing as I do that if they who have such wonderful store of learning can not keep upright, we who fall short of such gifts can not but tumble. Of all men few have I regarded with the like admiration I felt for Sir Walter Raleigh, for in truth he did always appear to me a most inestimable sweet gentleman. I am heartily grieved"—

"Proceed with what you have to say on this infamous matter," said the queen sharply.

"That will I without further loss of time," replied the wily Cecil. "It chanced that my Lord Henry Howard and I going to the Bankside, got into a pair of oars just as the barge containing Mistress Throckmorton left the shore. My lord directed my attention to some one who sat in the barge cloaked up very close, whom I had not noticed, for in truth I had such respect for Mistress Elizabeth, believing, from her nearness to your majesty's person, that she was of a most honorable nature, that I could not entertain suspicion of wrong in anything that she did, and was not curious about her proceedings."

"Who was that person, think you?" eagerly inquired the queen.

"That know I not of mine own knowledge," answered Cecil, "for we being of the other side of the water could not have a very distinct sight of things so far off. I do not think it was Sir Walter Raleigh for a reason I will presently explain. The barge made for Durham

house, which, knowing the suspicions that were afloat, created in us no small astonishment. Then we saw him in the cloak, land, with Mistress Alice and her cousin; and these three went up the steps into the house. This seeing, we knew not what to make of it; so for the satisfaction of my lord's curiosity and my own, we waited at a convenient distance. In half an hour or less, the three returned to the barge and went on their way; and I, thinking it could be nothing more than a passing visit, thought so light of it that we watched them no more. He in the cloak could not have been Sir Walter Raleigh, because my father did have speech of him at your majesty's command in his own house, at the very time I saw this person on the river. Knowing this, as I soon found out, I did not see any wrong in the visit of these young women with another person to Durham house; but my Lord Howard did offer me a wager, that Mistress Elizabeth had gone there to be married, and that he in the cloak was no other than her father, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, who had good reason for seeking concealment, as it was given out he was like to perish for want of proper nursing."

"Now is it all made clear to us," exclaimed the queen, her face crimsoning with rage. "We have been cozened, cheated, and imposed upon; and doubtless they now laugh in their sleeves at finding us gulled so easily. By God's wounds, we'll let them know what it is to make sport of their sovereign."

"I wonder at their baseness," cried her ladyship with much asperity.

"'Tis not enough for them to do us the foulest dishonor we have received since we have been a crowned queen," continued her majesty, seemingly waxing more wrath every minute, "they must needs play a trick upon us! We are thought to be worthy no better hap by this false woman than for a stale to catch her woodcock Raleigh!"

"'Tis marvellous strange how such extreme impudency can exist," said Cecil very gravely.

"Get you to his chaplain, Sir Robert," added the queen. "He is one Burrel, in some repute for his learning, and doubtless may be found at Durham house. Question him of this marriage: for we would know if it hath taken place. If he answer you to the purpose, you shall come away and do him no hindrance—but if he be contumacious, or seem to hold back what he knoweth—straight

with him to prison : he shall there have time to repent him of his meddlesomeness. Delay not to report to us the minute you get aught worth the telling."

"I will be the most zealous intelligencer in your majesty's dominions," replied Cecil.

"My Lady Howard, we are for the presence chamber," said the queen, and straightway she passed haughtily out at the door with her attendant, but not before the latter and Sir Robert Cecil had, unseen by her majesty, exchanged a look in which there appeared a wonderful deal of meaning.

CHAPTER XI.

I can not eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good ;
But sure, I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
I nothing am a cold,
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE.

My masters, are you mad? or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? SHAKSPEARE.

It was getting deep into the evening. The prudent citizens had long closed their houses, and many of the more sober sort had retired to rest. Nothing disturbed the silence of the streets, but now and then the riotous singing of some prodigal gallants returning late from the tavern, with more wine in their pates than wit, with perchance the hoarse bawling of some of the city watch, chiding them for disturbing the night with their caterwauling; or mayhap a score of disorderly apprentices for the sake of diversion screaming fire, murder, and the like, from different places, till the whole neighborhood was in an uproar, and the watch running to and fro in strange perplexity as to where was the mischief. Now you might hear some particular clock striking the hour, and anon there was such a striking from all parts that it seemed as if there would be no end to it; like unto when chanticleer croweth in the early morning, there answereth to him another, and he is taken up by a third, and so on till the whole of the cocks round about have tried the strength of their voices.

So it fared in the city, and in Eastcheap more especially—which of all places was most noted for mad pranks and merry doings; but while such goings on proceeded

outside, the little back parlor of Geoffrey Sarsnet, the mercer, as oft did echo with a very similar merriment. There he sat before an oak table having on it a bowl and drinking-horns, looking very portly in a buff jerkin; a jolly face and a merry eye seeming to mock the gravity of his gray beard and bald pate, and a loud, short laugh, bursting from his mouth ever and anon, said plain enough, of all conscience, that his thoughts were none of the saddest. Opposite to him, in singular fine contrast sat the meager form of the miser of St. Mary Axe, who, by the complacency of his withered aspect, had evidently forgiven Joanna the loss of the Venetian chain.

"Margery! Margery!" bawled the mercer, after he had looked into the bowl and found it empty of liquor. "By cock and pye, I'm no lover of jolly good ale and old, if we haven't drained it as dry—as dry as thy wit, thou ghost of a pickled herring. Haw! haw! haw!"

"Forsooth, thou art in a most facetious vein gossip," replied Gregory Vellum, who cared not for being laughed at when he had aught to gain by joining in the mirth.

"If I be not in the vein, the vein be in me," said the jolly mercer, with another laugh as loud as the preceding. "Here, Margery," cried he again—then sinking his voice, added, "Hang these old women, say I! They be as deaf as thy conscience, and as slow as thy comprehension. Is't not so, thou delectable pippin-face?"

"In truth they be exceedingly deaf and slow," answered the scrivener, with a wonderful gravity.

"The young ones for me—eh, Gregory!" continued the old fellow, with a knowing wink of his eye. "They have ears for anything; and as for going, I doubt them not, at an ambling pace, they would beat any colt that runs. Haw! haw! haw! Why, Margery, I say!"

"How, now? what do you lack, sweet master?" exclaimed a little old woman with a very pointed nose and chin, and sharp gray eyes, who appeared at the door.

"Another bowl, Margery!" replied Geoffrey Sarsnet. "And, prythee, brew it delicately, with good store of nutmeg and a famous toast in it."

"That will I, kind heart, and quickly," answered the old dame, fetching the empty vessel.

"I'faith, Margery, thou lookest as innocent as a sucking donkey," said the jolly mercer, with his usual laugh, as he gazed upon her uncomely face.

"An't please your goodness, I was always noticed for the innocency of my looks," replied the old dame very demurely.

"I doubt it not," cried her master; "and thine innocency was always respected, I'll be bound for it. Haw! haw! haw!"

"Indeed, you may say that," responded she. "For it is a most notable truth that no longer ago than five-and-twenty year last Martinmas"—

"Thou must then have seen a good forty years at least—an excellent fine age for innocency;" and then the old fellow chuckled again mightily.

"Fie on you for saying so, and I not fifty yet!" said Margery, her yellow physiognomy blushing with indignation at such an insinuation of her antiquity—the which, however, was no great way from the truth. "No longer ago than five-and-twenty year last Martinmas"—

"Thou wert put in the stocks for a wanton—an excellent fine proof of innocency, o' my life! Haw! haw! haw!" And then he gave the table a slap that made the horns jump again.

"What, I! I that have ever been the discreetest and virtuousest of virgins!" exclaimed the old woman, in a seeming monstrous to-do. "I'll be upon my oath I was never put in the stocks."

"Well, thou hast had exceeding good luck, then," replied the mercer, winking at his companion, and endeavoring to keep a grave face; but he succeeded not, for he presently burst out in the same short, loud laugh as at first.

"Nay, I'll tarry not to be made game of," cried she somewhat sulkily; and thereupon hurried out of the room.

"Mayhap, if she tarry to be made game of, then should none hurry to put her on the spit. Haw! haw! haw!" shouted her master, his eyes twinkling very merrily at the conceit.

"Methinks it would be but barbarous to make a roast of her," observed the scrivener, with a perfect seriousness. "And indeed she seemeth not very delicate eating."

"No more delicate eating than thou art; and I doubt not to find more juice in the fag end of a piece of dowlas, than thou canst boast of in thy whole body," replied the mercer, who, being of a well-fed person himself, held the other's lankness in seeming contempt. "But what sayest thou to a dainty young wench of some sixteen years or so—fresh and plump and tender as a chicken? Doth

not thy mouth water at such fare—eh, Gregory?"

"In honest truth, I have no stomach for human flesh," answered the scrivener.

"Out on thee for a dull wit!" exclaimed the other. "I'll be hanged if thou hast more brains than a roast chestnut. But as thou canst not entertain me with thy discourse, see if thou canst tune up thy pipe for a song. A song—a song, Gregory!"

"Believe me, I have forgotten every tune but one," said the miser of St. Mary Axe in very serious fashion, "and that be the hundredth psalm."

"Psalm me no psalms! Dost take me for a puritan?" cried the jolly mercer.

"Nay, but it was an excellent sober tune, Geoffrey Sarsnet."

"Then shall it be the most unfit tune in the world over a full bowl. Haw! haw! haw!" shouted his companion in the same merry key as at first.

"Methinks I know of none other," said Gregory Vellum.

"Then ale of mine shalt thou never taste till thou hast bethought thee of something more to the purpose. So look to thy memory, and quickly."

"I do remember me there was a song I did use to affect in an idle hour when I was but an apprentice," observed the scrivener.

"Prythee, then, out with it!" exclaimed the other.

"Indeed, I have no voice for singing, gossip. Hem! hem!" and then the old fellow began to clear his throat very diligently, looking, or rather striving to look, exceeding modest all the time.

"I have asked thee not to sing with any other voice than thine own, so I must needs make the best of it," replied the jolly mercer very merrily.

"Hem! hem!"

"Nay, I would as lief sit with a tailor as with one that doth nothing but 'hem,'" said his companion, with a laugh as loud as ever.

"I will fall to it as well as I may," replied the scrivener. Then turning up his eyes to the ceiling, began in a wonderful shrill, trembling pipe—

"When little birds sat on their nests"—

"Nay, but good gossip, I be not in most excellent voice," said he, ere he had got any further. "Hem, hem."

"It wants no conjurer to tell me that," answered his companion with a chuckle. "But not a drop of my good ale shall

moisten thy throat if thou dost not sing me the song before it be brought in."

"Hem, hem!" repeated the other quickly, for he had no objection to any good thing at another's expense. Then, with a lack-a-daisical look, the like of which it is impossible to conceive, he recommenced—

"When little birds sat on their nests,
And conies to the young wheat hied;
And flowers hung down their dainty crests,
And Philomel her sweet trade plied.
'With my heigh-ho!
Whether or no,
Kiss me but once before I go,
Under the tree where the pippins grow.'"

"I say nothing against the matter of thy ballad," here interposed the mercer; "for it be as exquisite foolish stuff as heart can desire. But if thou art not singing it to the hundredth psalm then never gave I honest measure."

"'Tis very like," replied the old miser gravely; "for I did tell thee I knew of no other tune."

"I'll have none on't. So look that thou sing the proper notes." At this, with a preliminary hem or two, Gregory Vellum did essay the second verse, much after the same die-away fashion as at first.

"'Twas then a lover and his lass,
Her rosy cheek with his acquaint!"—

"Thou art at the psalm again, and be hanged to thee!" here exclaimed his companion.

"Indeed, then I knew it not; but I will take good heed I fall no more into that strain." And then he continued his ballad:—

"Had set them on the tender grass;
Whilst he thus fondly made his plaint.
'Singing heigh-ho!
Whether or no,
Kiss me again before I go,
Under the tree where the pippins grow.'"

"Thou art clean past all hope," cried Geoffrey Sarsnet; "for to one note of the ballad thou hast given a score of the hundredth psalm."

"Ah, did I so?—then in truth it did escape me unawares," replied the other, and resumed his ditty, the first two or three notes of the which seemed of a fitting tune; but the rest was the psalm beyond all possibility of contradiction.

"He kissed her once, he kissed her twice,
Though oft she coyly said him nay;
Mayhap she had him kiss her thrice
Before she let him get away.
'Singing heigh-ho!
Whether or no,
Kiss me again before you go,
Under the tree where the pippins grow.'"

"Odds, my life! thou hast no more

notes in thy voice than hath a cuckoo, who singeth the same sorry tune ever," said the jolly mercer. "But here comes the bowl," he added, seeing Margery enter with it in her hands, and place it before him.

"Ay, marry does it," said the old woman—all trace of her late displeasure having vanished—"and there is in it as fine a roasted crab as heart could wish for, with store of all proper things."

"By cock and pye, so there is!" exclaimed her master, gloating over it with his rosy face, and sniffing up the spicy steam with wonderful satisfaction, "Now, will I believe, Margery, all that thou hast said of thy exceeding virtue: nay, more, looking into thy face, I could take upon me to swear, with a safe conscience, that thou hast never had a lover in thy life." And thereupon he again burst out a laughing.

"Nay, you are wrong there, kind heart," replied Margery, with great complacency, "I have had no lack of lovers in my time, I warrant you. For, as I was a saying but now, it was just five-and-twenty years last Martinmas"——

"Since thou wert taken up by the constable on evidence that thou wert like to become chargeable to the parish: a singular fine proof that thou hast had lovers sure enough. Haw! haw! haw!" Thereat he slapped the table so hard that it did overturn one of the drinking horns he had just filled.

The old dame answered not, save by bouncing out of the room more angry than before.

"Mind it not, Gregory!" exclaimed the jolly mercer, as he beheld his companion trying to save the ale, by catching it in the empty horn, as it run through the chinks of the table.

"It be a shame to let such good liquor run to waste, gossip," he replied.

"'Twould have been all the same hadst thou swallowed it," observed the other; "for to give it thee is to waste it indeed; because thou dost never look the better for it. Here, hand up thy cannikin—though, in truth, thou deservest not to partake of such brave stuff, seeing that thou didst make such a miserable hand at thy ditty."

"To tell thee the exact truth," said the old miser, very earnestly, "though I have, at divers times, essayed many different songs somehow or another, yet know I not why, I never could find any other tune for them but the hundredth psalm."

"Then art thou but a goose at singing," replied his companion, finishing a draught of the good liquor before him, which, by the smacking of his lips, seemed to please his palate mightily, "but I will troll thee a song, Gregory, and one worthy to be mated with such right exquisite tipple as this."

"'Tis famous drinking, indeed!" remarked the scrivener, after a hearty draught of the same; "and the singing, I doubt not, will match it."

"Thou shalt judge," said the other; then, with a full round voice, and in a very jovial manner, he did give out the following strain:—

"I never had voice for a song that's choice,
And dainty ditties with me must fail:
Yet, weeks at a time, I fain would chime,
Whenever I strike up in the praise of good ale.
Then troul, troul,
Each hearty old soul.
That loveth the sight of a foaming bowl;
For there's naught in the land
He should care to command,
Who hath got such brave liquor as this at his hand.

"Full oft to the great have I held my prate—
But when I have had good ale enow,
I be not afeard to wag my beard
With any woman's son, be he high or low.
Then troul, troul, &c.

"Perchance I am shy when a woman is by—
Yet if but good ale my jerkin line,
Wife, widow, or maid—in sun or shade,
'Ere an hour may have passed, shall have sworn her-
self mine.
Then troul, troul, &c.

"Mayhap I've no store of the sage's lore—
But when some good ale is in my pate,
I'faith I can speak in Dutch or Greek,
And argue a whole college as dumb as their gate.
Then troul, troul, &c.

"It may be from fright I would run than fight—
Yet when with good ale beneath my skin;
With sword or with lance will I advance,
And leagured by my foes, cut through thick and thin.
Then troul, troul, &c.

"'Twill needs be my hap to have not a rap—
But when that good ale hath warmed my veins,
There be none like myself, so rich in pelf—
For ne'er can I count up the whole of my gains.
Then troul, troul, &c.

"I'm nigh unto Death for the lack of breath—
Yet if of good ale I am not scant,
Full many a bout shall I see out,
And never shall I know aught of pain or of want.
Then troul, troul,
Each hearty old soul,
That loveth the sight of a foaming bowl;
For there's naught in the land
He should care to command,
Who hath got such brave liquor as this at his hand!"

"Indeed it be an excellent fine song, gossip, and a merry," observed the old miser, with exceeding complacency.

"Somewhat better than thy miserable ditty, that be only fit to be sung over a kitten in a fit," replied the jolly mercer, with his customary laugh. "But hand up thy vessel, Gregory, for it hath ac-

quired a marvellous resemblance to thyself—it be singularly empty: Haw! haw! haw!"

"In truth, it hath nothing in it," said the scrivener, losing no time in doing as he was bid. "But what hath become of the beautiful Joanna all this time?"

"Like enough, she be above stairs with some of her gallants," answered the other, carelessly.

"With some of her gallants?" exclaimed Gregory Vellum—his leaden visage in no small degree disturbed—"Prythee, tell me, be there many that consort with her?"

"Some score or two, at least," replied his companion.

"But dost approve of it?" asked the old miser, looking still less at his ease.

"To be sure I do, Gregory. Dost think I know not on which side of the bread the butter lies?—I tell thee, there be all sorts of notable gentlemen and brave gallants, come after her upon the fame of her infinite comeliness; and, doubtless, seeking of my favor, they order of me great store of fine things for their own wearing. Many's the piece of satin I have sold for a cloak; and as for velvets and silks, it be beyond calculation the store I have got rid of on that account. Mayhap, in time, some of them owe me a swinging bill, and I go with it to their houses, and, like enough, get no answer—then send I Joanna, and she bringeth me the money in a presently. Odds my life, man! seeing that she be of such profit to me, will I not let her do as she lists?"

"But dost not fancy it may like to damage her reputation?"

"Damage her fiddlestick!" replied the jolly mercer, with his ready laugh. "I doubt not she be well able to take care of herself; and if she grant them any favor, 'tis like she maketh them pay roundly for it."

This communication the miser of St. Mary Axe in no way seemed to relish, as was evident from the increasing uneasiness of his countenance.

"Surely thou wouldst be glad to see her honestly married to some reputable person," said he at last.

"Dost take me for an ass, Gregory?" sharply inquired the other. "Neither honestly nor dishonestly, with my good will; for should I not lose by it all the good custom that is now drawn to my house? If she marry, I must needs make the best I can of it; but I would ever hinder it if I could."

"Alack do not say so, gossip," cried his companion in very woful fashion, "for in honest truth I love her infinitely, and would marry her myself."

"Thou marry her!" shouted the mercer, pushing back his chair, and staring on the other in exceeding surprise.

"Ay, good Geoffrey, and have come expressly to talk to thee upon the business."

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared out his lusty companion.

"And, as she knoweth full well, have been courting of her for some time past."

"Haw! haw! haw!" repeated the jolly mercer louder than before.

"Nay, forsooth, it be no laughing matter to me, I do assure thee," continued the old miser, now a little nettled at the manner in which his communication had been received. "She hath had great store of gifts from me—owches, rings, a Venetian chain that cost me fifty crowns, besides sundry sums in rose nobles for her private expenses; and when upon showing her of what bountiful disposition I had been, I pressed her to name the nuptial day, she did earnestly assure me of her willingness, provided I succeeded in the obtaining of thy consent."

"Haw! haw! haw!" shouted the other, giving the table a thump that made it sound again, and looking as if he could hardly see out of his eyes, his cheeks were so squeezed up with laughing, "That be best of all. So thou hast been courting Joanna, eh, Gregory? Why thou shadow! thou lath! thou rash! thou first cousin to nothing!—what could mislead thee into such egregious folly? to say nothing of the presumption on't. To think for a moment such a withered apple-john as thou art should succeed against so many fine young knights and sprightly gentlemen!"

"Prythee, if I am not to have her to wife, let her return the gifts she had of me," cried the old miser with exceeding earnestness.

"If thou ever seest a glimpse of one of them, then shalt thou have better eyesight than is customary for one at thy time of life," replied the other, chuckling famously.

"Nay, I will go to law on it an' I have them not," cried the scrivener, starting up from his chair in a monstrous consternation at the thought of losing so many valuable things.

"Prythee do no such thing," answered the jolly mercer, as well as he could for laughing, "for of a surety thou wouldst

be laughed out of every court in Christendom."

"Oh, I be utterly ruined and undone!" exclaimed the old miser wildly, as he sunk his hands in his face and dropped again into his chair.

"I doubt it be so bad as that," observed Geoffrey Sarsnet, "but it will be a good lesson for thee to take heed when thou dost again pay the piper, to see thou art not left alone in the dance."

Gregory Vellum replied not—for indeed he did stand very much in fear of his lusty companion, and did scarce dare utter a word: but no unfortunate wight looked ever in so disconsolate a mood.

"Come, drink, man! drink!" cried the mercer very merrily. "Care killed a cat, and if it could put a finish upon her nine lives, surely thy one must needs stand but a sorry chance. So drown care in the bowl, and thou shalt live all the happier for it."

The scrivener of St. Mary Axe then, as if in a desperate taking did begin to drink like a fish, in the which he was encouraged by the other, who joked and laughed without ceasing. At this time there entered one of a very impudent countenance, and monstrous swaggering manner. His hair was of the color of flax that hath been scorched in the dressing, and was combed back in a mighty coxcombical fashion from his forehead, where it was twisted up like unto a cockatoo's crest; his beard was of the like hue, and cut to a peak. Of his face it may suffice to say that it did express a singular fine opinion of the owner, and for assurance was not like to meet with its peer. For his age it seemed nigh unto thirty. He wore a high ruff and a doublet very conceitedly cut, that had once been much better than it was; with breeches stuffed out extravagantly—red hose cross gartered, and yellow rosettes in his shoes, a world and all too large. Sticking his right arm straight out, with his other arm a-kimbo, as soon as he had entered; with a very fustian voice, and high and mighty look, he thus addressed the twain:—

"Brave peers of France! sith we have passed the bounds
Whereby the wrangling billows seek for straits
To war with Tellus and her fruitful mines:
Sith we have furrowed through those wandering
tides
Of Tyrrhene seas, and made our galleys dance
Upon the Hyperborean billows' crests,
That braves with streams the watery accident!"—

"What, Ralph Goshawk!" cried the jolly mercer as he noticed the intruder,

"Come, sit thee down, and help us to finish this bowl." But the other, without minding the interruption, continued :—

"And found the rich and wealthy Indian clime,
Sought to by greedy minds for hostile gold"—

"Nay, give over bombasting out thy blank verse awhile," said Geoffrey Sarsnet. "In truth, Ralph, thou art exceeding like a gutter on a house-top in a storm of rain—thou art so abominably given to spouting. Haw! haw! haw!"

The miser of St. Mary Axe started with a sort of consternation, for either what he had drunk had fuddled him in some measure, or he liked not the stranger's appearance; seeing which, the latter made two or three dignified strides to where the scrivener sat, and spoke him thus :—

"And I, my lord, am Mandricard of Mexico,
Whose climate fairer than Tyberius,
Seated beyond the sea of Tripoly,
And richer than the plot Hesperides."

"I drink your worship's health, Master Mandricard," falteringly replied Gregory Vellum, with trembling hands raising the horn to his mouth. Thereat, the other proceeded after the same fashion.

"As for myself, I walk abroad a nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls."

At this the miser could not drink, he seemed struck with such a sudden fear.

"Sometimes I go about and poison wells."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the frightened scrivener.

"And now and then to cherish Christian thieves
I am content to lose some of my crowns;
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'em go pinioned along by my door."

"Ha!" cried the frightened scrivener, in a long tremulous tone.

"Then after that was I an usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery—
I filled the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad."

"Good Lord, deliver us!" piously exclaimed the old miser. Then raising his voice, and looking very frowningly, the other recommenced :—

"'Twas I, my lord, that got the victory—
The god of war resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make the general of the world.
Jove viewing me in arms looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne,
Where'er I come, the fatal sisters sweat,
And grisly Death—by running to and fro
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword."

At this, Gregory Vellum trembling in every joint, and looking as pale as any

of his parchment, threw himself on his knees before the other, with closed palms and uplifted eyes, and cried out as loud as his fright would allow,

"Good, your worship, don't kill me this time!"

"Haw! haw! haw!" shouted the jolly mercer, who with much ado, had refrained from laughing before. "Get thee up, Gregory, and fear nothing. It be only Ralph Goshawk, a young haberdasher from the Strand, as impudent a varlet as lives; but there be no harm in him, save that he be stage-struck. He goeth to the playhouse so oft, that his talk is all of fag-ends of plays; and so far gone is he in it, that if one ask of him the price of pack-thread, he will answer, like an emperor, in blank verse. Sit thee down, Ralph! and take me off this horn of good ale, or I will beat thee out of thy humor in a jiffy."

The young haberdasher took two majestic strides to a chair, which, in the like princely manner, he drew to the table; then, with a right royal salutation to the company, he tossed off his ale, and sat himself down very gravely; at the which Geoffrey Sarsnet laughed louder than ever. The scrivener, in some degree assured that the other would do him no harm, now returned to his seat; but the drink he had had, evidently was getting into his head, for he had a very vacant look with him, and he walked unsteadily.

"Come, drink, my masters, drink," exclaimed the mercer, filling the cups of his guests as fast as they were emptied. "And how weareth the night, Ralph?"

No sooner had the question been asked than he that was spoken to jumped up from his chair, placed his arms as before described, and thus answered :—

"The golden ball of Heaven's eternal fire,
That danced with glory on the silver waves,
Now wants the fuel that inflamed his beams;
And all with faintness and for foul disgrace,
He binds his temples with a frowning cloud."

Then sat him down.

"Thou villain, thou wilt be the death of me," exclaimed his lusty host, with his usual hearty laugh. "But can not we have a catch, my masters? I'm in a brave humor for singing. A catch, my masters—a catch!"

Up jumped the young haberdasher at this, exclaiming exactly after the same fashion as at first :—

"And in this sweet and curious harmony
The god that tunes this music to our souls
Holds out his hand in highest majesty
To entertain divine Zenocrate."

"A fig for Zenocrate and all her generation!" cried the jolly mercer. "I tell thee we will have a catch; what sayest thou, Gregory? Art for a catch?"

"I'd rather the hundredth psalm if it please thee, gossip," drawled out the scrivener, winking his eyes abit, as if his sight was none of the clearest.

"Be this a time to sing psalms, thou heathen!" bawled out he of Eastcheap. "Hast no respect for places? well, if we can not sing a catch, we will dance the brawls: so away with the tables and chairs, my masters, into the corner, and let's foot it bravely."

The tables and chairs were quickly moved by the jolly mercer, assisted by Ralph Goshawk, who could not, in the meanwhile, refrain from breaking out:—

"Now Hecuba and Ilium's honored line."

"Hang Hecuba and thee too!" cried Geoffrey Sarsnet; "and for the matter of that, Ilium may take his line and hang himself. Haw! haw! haw! Now then, my masters, at it in style, to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.'"

Then commenced a scene, the like of which hath rarely been looked on; for the jolly mercer began throwing about his lusty limbs, singing of the tune to the top of his voice, with now and then varying it with a loud whoop, as he slapped one or other on the back. He was seconded by Ralph Goshawk, who moved about as gingerly as though the flooring was of pins and needles, and he was mightily afraid of pricking his toes; and after him came the old miser, with his eyes half shut, and hanging of his head on one side, as he staggered here and there, as if without the slightest knowledge of what he was a doing. Such a din they kicked up as would have astonished a blacksmith. In the very midst thereof, Gregory Vellum made a stumble, and came with his back against the table, knocking down from it the lights, the horns, and every one thing that had been there, and putting the place in utter and complete darkness.

Immediately after the crash, the door opened, and there appeared at it the beautiful Joanna with a light, with Dame Margery close behind, peeping to know what such a terrible racket could be about. Seeing the mercer's daughter, the old miser, who had till now supported himself against the table with his hands, slipped down upon his nether end, staring at her as foolishly as you please, with his mouth open; and the young

haberdasher marched forward two paces, and with his arms in the usual position, addressed her thus:—

"O gentle daughter of King Œdipus,
O sister dear to that unhappy wight
Whom brother's rage hath reaved of his right,
To whom thou knowest, in young and tender years,
I was a friend and faithful governor,
Come forth, since that her grace hath granted leave,
And let me know what cause hath moved now
So chaste a maid to set her dainty foot
Over the threshold of her secret lodge."

"Go it, fustian!" cried the mercer, giving the other so forcible a slap on the back that it put him quite out of his favorite position, and nearly sent him sprawling on the floor.

"Father, I wonder you should make such a clatter at this time of the night," said Joanna, as gravely as she could; for in truth the scene was extremely ludicrous: then she added to the old woman—"Margery, let them have lights." At the which, giving her candle to the other, she was hastening away, when she stopped suddenly, turned back, and said, "I think you had best go to bed, father, for 'tis exceeding late, and the neighbors will marvel hugely at your making such a disturbance;"—and then she went away.

"Well, the choicest of fooling must have an end," exclaimed the jolly mercer; "so we must e'en part. Ralph, thou hadst best see Gregory Vellum to his house in St. Mary Axe, for I doubt much, if he were left to find his way, he would get beyond the next gutter." At the which the young haberdasher answered only by staring at the open door very earnestly, and exclaiming thus:—

"Tehelles, draw thy sword,
And wound the earth, that it may cleave in twain,
And we descend into th' infernal vaults
To hale the fatal sisters by the hair,
And throw them in the triple moat of hell,
For taking hence my fair Zenocrate."

"What, Zenocrate again? and be hanged to thee," cried out his lusty host, and thereat lent him such a kick of the breech, that it sent him bounce against the old woman, as she was a going out at the door.

"Ya!" screamed she, as loud as she could bawl, and took herself out of the room as if she had been shot out of it.

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared the jolly mercer, while the discomfited haberdasher stood at a little distance, diligently rubbing his nether end. "But haste thee, Ralph, and take this fellow away straight, for I am eager to have him out of my house."

At this Ralph Goshawk took two or three of his most majestic strides to

where Gregory Vellum now lay at his length, and with the assistance of his lusty companion, raised him on his legs. The old miser opened his lack-lustre eyes, and tried to look sensible, in the which, as may be supposed, he succeeded not at all.

"Oh, woman! lovely woman!" cried he, in his shrill treble; and thereupon hugged Ralph so closely in his arms that both of them came tumbling to the ground together.

"Odds my life, this fooling will be the death of me," exclaimed the mercer, his fat sides shaking with laughter; and then the two again essayed to raise the tipsy scrivener.

"Spare my money, and take my life," drawled out he, as he arrived at his perpendicular.

"Thy money's safe, I'll be bound for it; and as for thy life, 'tis the safer of the two, for it be not worth the taking." And then the mirth of Geoffrey Sarsnet burst out as loud as ever.

"Oh, my gold! my gold!" cried the old miser, knocking his hands together, and looking marvellously helpless and pitiful, as, supported by the arms of Ralph Goshawk round his waist, he dragged himself along. The young haberdasher accompanying him with a monstrous dignified slow march, and looking as tenderly on his charge, as if he had been some delicate princess; and the jolly mercer, following with the light, ever and anon, breaking out in his customary laugh.

"Gently with him!" exclaimed he. "Hold him up, or he will slip down again, and mavhay hurt his fool's head. Stop, let me put on his hat—and here's thine. Now, let me ope the door: and if thou meet any of the watch, say it be an honest friend of mine, and they will molest thee not; for I be in good odor with Master Constable, and have treated many of his brethren with a tankard. Good night to thee, old boy; and, prythee, keep thy body up if thou cast. Good night, Ralph!"

The young haberdasher no sooner heard the words that had just been uttered, than holding his charge firmly with one arm, he struck out the other, and replied "Thus Rhadamanthus spoke—"

"Hang Rhadamanthus and thee too!" cried the other, as he banged the street door in his face: and what Rhadamanthus spoke remaineth to this day a mystery. The jolly mercer, like a careful citizen, fastened the door, and saw that all things were safe in his house; and

then went he up stairs to bed, singing very merrily:—

"Full oft to the great have I held my prate;
But when I have had good ale enow,
I be not afraid to wag my beard
With any woman's son, be he high or low."

CHAPTER XII.

Since Fortune's will is now so bent
To plague me thus poor man!
I must myself therewith content,
And bear it as I can.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Happy is he that liveth in such a sort;
He need not fear the tongues of false report.
LORD SURREY.

What comfort have we now?
By heaven, I'll hate him everlastingly
That bids me be of comfort any more.

SHAKSPEARE.

THERE was a goodly company in the parlor of mine host of the Ship at Chatham, whereof most of them seemed to be seafaring men from the vessels lying in harbor, shipwrights of the town, and the like. Some were a playing at shove-groat; others leaning out of the open bow-window watching the ships. Here one was upon a bench as fast as a church,—there another a nodding his head over the table, as if he would speedily follow his neighbor's example; many were a drinking, and some few discoursing very soberly; whilst ever and anon mine host (a very tapster-looking varlet, with a right rosy face and a short plump body) came in and out, serving of his customers with a tankard or so, and having something to say to all.

"Prythee, tell me what ship be that, Simon Mainsail?" inquired a stout handicraftsman of some sort, to a weather-beaten old mariner with a scarred face, who stood by him at the window.

"Which ship, messmate?" asked the other.

"That one that hath but lately come in," said the first.

"Oh! be that she squaring her yards?" observed the mariner inquiringly.

"Nay, I know not if she be squaring of her yards or her inches," replied the handicraftsman; "but it seemeth to me that she be just come to an anchor."

"That be the craft, ey?" answered his companion. "'Tis a pinnacle of my Lord Admiral's, called the Disdain, and many a time and oft have I been afloat in her. She saileth well enough afore the wind—ay, my heart! as bravely as a witch in

a sieve; but she wears heavily in some weathers. I was in her off the Lizard, when we first had sight of the Spanish armada, and Captain Jonas Bradbury was her captain—a right gallant gentleman, and a skilful. Well, when my lord admiral had allowed the villain Spaniards, with all their host of big ships, amounting to 160 sail, to pass him by as they did, swaggering it along like very bullies as they were, we in the *Disdain* were sent to challenge them to the fight, at the which we lost no time, for we straight bore down upon the nearest, and discharged our ordnance at her. Then up came my lord admiral, in the *ark Royal*, giving to the first galleon of the enemy such a broadside as made her shiver in all her timbers. Close at his stern came Drake, in the *Revenge*, Sir John Hawkins in the *Victory*, and Sir Martin Frobisher in the *Triumph*, which last was the biggest of all our ships, and they soon began to fire away like mad. Other of our craft followed, and they of the armada, after a while, liked not our salutations, I promise you; for they that were nighest to us bore away as if Old Clooty was at their heels; but not before we had done them great damage, burnt one of their largest ships, and took another, in the which we found 55,000 ducats, whereof I spent my share (for it was all divided amongst the sailors in drinking confusion to all villain Spaniards.)

“That was a proud time for Old England,” remarked a bystander.

“Proud time!” exclaimed Simon Main-sail. “’Slife, messmate! I never think on’t but I feel as if I were head and shoulders taller.”

“Here be a brimming tankard, my masters!” cried my host, as he set a filled jug before two youths, who appeared by their looks to be but simple apprentices. “I doubt not ’twill warm your young hearts famously. ’Tis mild as milk, and soft as silk; and as good as can be drunk by any nobleman in the land. But the money, my masters—the money!”

“How much be the cost of it?” asked one very innocently.

“Why, to such noble young gentlemen I must say a groat; though I would not let those of meaner quality have it under threepence, I promise you.” Thereat he nudged a bystander at the elbow.

“I thank you kindly, good sir,” replied the youth; and then in a whisper added to his companion, “Tim, hast got twopence?—for no more than that have I.”

“I have it to a farthing,” said the other; and thereupon handed him the amount, which with his own he placed in the hands of mine host.

“I think you will find it right,” observed the apprentice, as he noticed the tapster begin counting of it.

“One penny—two—three—a halfpenny and two farthings is it exactly, and thank your worship,” replied mine host, with a monstrous serious countenance, while all in the room could scarce refrain from a laugh.

“Will you take a drink with us, good sir?” asked Tim modestly.

“That will I, and thank your honor,” answered mine host, raising the untasted jug to his mouth. “So, your worships’ very good health!”

“I thank you,” said both at the same time. The two apprentices now watched the tapster very curiously, as they saw his head gradually fall back as he was a drinking of their liquor, and his stomach poke out as much, till he put down the tankard.

“Why, he’s drank it all!” exclaimed one, opening his eyes with astonishment, as soon as he discovered the vessel was empty; at the which announcement the jaw of the other fell prodigiously, and all the company burst out into a roar of laughter.

“Your worship was good enough to ask me to take a drink, and methinks I have done your bidding famously,” said mine host; and without ever a word more, he walked straight from the room, as if he had done nothing out of the common, leaving every one a laughing more than ever, and the two youths looking at each other as foolish as you please. The latter seemed as if they knew not whether to go or to stay. Without doubt they were monstrously ashamed, and would have given their ears never to have entered into a place whereof, it is on the face of it, they had had so little experience; but while they were a reddening and fidgeting about, and making up a resolution to take to their heels, in comes mine host with a full tankard, as if for another customer, and with such an exceeding comic face, that at the sight of it the company laughed louder than at first.

“Here be a somewhat larger tankard than the one I brought you in a while since,” said the tapster, as he placed the vessel before the astonished youths. “But the liquor hath been drawn from the same tap, I’ll warrant it. ’Tis in exchange for that I have swallowed. Drink, and make

your hearts merry, my masters. But let me give you this piece of advice, which you will, I doubt not, find of some profit to follow. Never ask another to drink with you till you have first gauged his stomach to see what he will hold."

"I'll gauge him without fail, depend on't, good sir," exclaimed Tim, in an excellent cheerful humor; and then all in the room expressed their delight at mine host's conceit, and many did order fresh tankards, they were so well pleased with the handsome way in which he had made amends to the simple apprentices for the trick he had played upon them.

"That be so like thee, Ephraim Spigot," observed one merrily.

"That be a sure thing," replied he, after the same fashion; "for of all my family I be reckoned most like myself." Thereat there was a laugh of course, and he took himself out in the midst of it.

"Knowest thou where that vessel hath been?" inquired the handicraftsman of his neighbor.

"I did hear she sailed to bring back Sir Walter Raleigh," replied Simon Mainsail.

"What, he that went from here on the late expedition?" asked his companion.

"Ay, messmate, the same," said the mariner.

"It hath been said that he be in disgrace at court, for that he will not splice himself unto a gentlewoman of the queen's choosing," observed another seafaring man.

"Now, I heard from my gammer," said an artificer—"and my gammer got it from her gossip, and her gossip had it from a cousin of hers, who is a serving-man to some person of worship in London—that this Sir Walter Raleigh hath fallen out with the great Earl of Essex, and that they were nigh coming to blows before the queen's majesty, the which put her into so monstrous a fret, that she straightway forbid them her presence."

"'Tis said that this Raleigh be a famous conceited fellow," remarked another, "and spendeth as much on his back as would clothe a whole county."

"What dreadful extravagance!" exclaimed the handicraftsman. "Why can not he be content with a jerkin of a moderate price, such as might become any honest man, and give the rest to the poor?"

"Why, messmate, thus runs the log," replied the old mariner, hitching up his slops: "If so be he be ordered to dress

his vessel after one fashion, he must needs do it, or be put in the bilboes for a mutineer. Mayhap he hath had signals from his admiral to have his rigging smarter than ordinary, and like a good seaman he hath obeyed orders. As for his hanging astern at court, for not consorting with such as his betters choose for him, I have seen none that have taken soundings there, therefore have I no chart to go by to lead me to the truth; and whether he have come to an engagement with Lord Essex, know I as little; but let him have sailed on either tack, or, for the matter of that, on both, I see nothing in it creditable to his seamanship."

"I heard from a very honest intelligenter that he was to be fetched back from his command in huge disgrace," observed one of the artificers.

"Mayhap," replied Simon Mainsail: "the very best man that walks a plank can't always have fair weather with his officers, albeit he have no fault in him; for on one watch they shall be in this humor, and the next in one that is clean contrary. 'Slife! it be the difficultest thing that is for a fellow to warp out o' harbor without meeting with a squall from some of 'em. As for Sir Walter Raleigh, 'tis like enough I be as familiar with his trim and seaworthiness as any, seeing that I served as gunner under him in Drake and Norris's expedition to the Groyne, in the year eighty-nine; and I can say this much, that never met I a more proper commander. He be none of your thundering great ships that bear down upon us smaller craft, as if they would swamp every mother's son of us; but he hath often and often crept up along side of me, and spoke about gunnery and such matters with as much cunning as if he had been at load and fire all his life. And as for his spirit,—after we landed in the bay of Ferrol, I saw him bear up among the Spaniards at Puente de Burgos, after a fashion that reminded me only of that right gallant officer his kinsman, Sir Richard Grenville."

"And what did he, neighbor?" asked the handicraftsman.

"What did he, messmate?" replied the veteran. "Why, he did the gallantest thing that ever was known on the high seas. You shall hear, for it be marvellously worth the telling. You see there was a fleet sent out in the year ninety-one, under the command of Lord Thomas Howard, consisting of six ships royal, six victuallers, and a few pinnaces; whereof Sir Richard Grenville was vice-

admiral, in the *Revenge*, in the which I had gone on board as master-gunner; and this expedition, like unto the one that sailed from here awhile ago with Sir Walter Raleigh, had for its object the surprising of the Plate fleet, belonging to the villain Spaniards, as it rendezvoused at the Azores, coming from America. Somehow or another the pestilent knaves, the enemy, had wind of it, and they sent a fleet of fifty-three of their biggest ships of war to act as convoy; of the which we knowing nothing, were quietly taking in water at Flores, when down they came upon us. All hurried on board to weigh anchor and escape, as there was no fighting against such odds. But Sir Richard Grenville, having seen every one of his men embark, was the last to leave the shore; and by this necessary delay the *Revenge* was left alone. He seeing that there was no hope of recovering the wind, knew nothing was possible but to cut his mainsail, tack about, and be off with what speed he might, or stay and fight with all that could come up with him; but though the enemy had surrounded his ship in such a way as to leave him little chance of escape, and though ninety of his men were on the sick list, and only a hundred able for duty, he was not the fellow to turn from a parcel of villain Spaniards; so he had everything prepared for action, and bore down to force a squadron that stood on his weather bow.

"There, my messmates, was a sight to see," continued the old mariner, his honest weather-beaten face glowing at his own narration: "one ship attacking a whole squadron! And the gallant Grenville was nigh being as successful as his great heart merited, for divers of the villain Spaniards springing their loof, fell under his lee; but a cursed big galleon of fifteen hundred tons gained the wind, and bearing down on the *Revenge*, did so becalm her sails that neither could she make way or obey the helm. You may have a notion, messmates, of what sort of a customer this galleon was like to be, when I tell you that she carried three tier of guns on each side, and discharged eight foreright from her chase, besides those of her stern ports. Well, as ill luck would have it, while we were peppering away at this monster in such sort as soon made her glad to sheer off, two of the like kind boarded us on the starboard, and two on the larboard; but we minded 'em not a whit—nay, we beat 'em off, one after another, big as they were, till we had fought some sixteen of them for the space of fif-

teen hours, two of which we sunk and two made complete wrecks, and the rest we handled pretty rudely, I promise you.

"But how fared we all this time, my messmates? Scarce one of us escaped—forty as brave fellows as ever trod a deck were sent aloft, where 'tis to be hoped they'll be well cared for; and of the rest scarce any were left without something to show of the sort of employment they had been at. I got this slash across my figure-head, with a bullet through my starboard fin, and another near the main hatchway, all along of those villain Spaniards. Sir Richard, who had not left the upper deck for eight hours after he was first wounded, which was in the early part of the action, was then shot through the bulwarks; and as they were repairing the damage, he received another bullet, and saw the doctor regularly capsized along-side of him. But the *Revenge* was treated worse than all; for when the morning broke she was nothing but a naked hull, having received as many as eight hundred shot of great artillery, which those bullies of galleons had fired into her, whereof some were under water: her masts were beat overboard—her tackle split to ribands—her upper works levelled to the water's edge; and she was altogether in so pitiful a condition that she moved only with the motion of the billows.

"For all that, my messmates, Sir Richard wasn't for striking his flag; but proposed to sink the ship rather than fall into the hands of such notorious villains, in the which he was seconded by myself and some few of the crew; but the rest not being of the like spirit, compelled him to surrender,—and this, methinks, rather than his wounds, caused him to die soon after."

"There went a noble heart!" cried one of the seafaring men.

"In truth, he was a gallant gentleman," said the handicraftsman; and others made like ejaculations, for all had listened with exceeding interest to the old man's stirring account of the fight.

"But how got you out of their clutches, Simon Mainsail?" asked one; "and how did they behave to you?"

"Slife! they used me like a dog, messmate," replied the veteran, in a monstrous indignation; "my wounds were most infamously handled; and how I recovered under such barbarous treatment is a marvel to me. But we were all served alike, clapped in irons, and treated with mouldy biscuit and bilgewater, till we came to an anchor at

Cadiz, when we were paraded through the streets, accompanied by shoals of papist priests, soldiers, and a bloodthirsty mob, yelling at the sight of us, as if they had reason to boast of their victory. It was given out that we were to be hanged, which sent some of us on our beam-ends at the thought of it; but I told 'em not to despair, and set them up to a thing which made them put their helms up in a presently. You must know, messmates, that these Spaniards hate us for not caring a breath of wind for their images, relics, and such like popish abominations, and curse us in their hearts for heretics; but the priests are mightily pleased at the thought of converting a protestant, as they look upon it as a sort of victory. So we got one of our crew who understood their patter, to say we would fain change our religion; thereupon came father this and father t'other, who preached to us by the hour, and very easily persuaded our whole company to cross ourselves, to kiss this image, and the other image, and assent to whatever they directed. Then, seeing us such good catholics, we were taken out of our chains—our victuals became of a better sort, and they kept not so sharp an eye on us as they did. The end of all this was, one night we broke out of prison very quietly, got into some boats that were high and dry on the beach—with them boarded a ketch that lay at anchor in the bay; and having found the crew asleep, took possession of her without a blow; and in the morning we were far out at sea, better protestants than ever, making for Old England, with a whole crew of villain Spaniards our prisoners."

"I'faith that was well done!" exclaimed one; in the which all seemed to assent, especially the apprentices, who, having finished their tankard, had grown bold enough to express their approval of the old mariner's conduct.

"I should like to beat a Spaniard hugely," said Tim to the other, very bravely.

"Suppose he stand upon his weapon and will not be beat of thee—what then?" asked his companion.

"Why a—" observed Tim, somewhat as it were in a sort of hesitation—"I would e'en tell him go hang for a knave, and let him go."

"Walk in, my masters—walk in, I pray you!" cried out mine host as he ushered into the room two serving-men, who looked by the dust on their jerkins and long boots, that they had come of a

journey. "There be room enough and to spare, I warrant you: and if so be you are as dry as are the roads, doubtless you will be all the better for a wetting."

"What sayest thou, Diggory, shall we have a tankard?" asked one of the other as they swaggered themselves into a seat.

"Ay, Peter, let it be a tankard," replied Diggory.

"That you shall have, and of the best," said Ephraim Spigot, "and 'tis to be hoped 'twill enable you to drink away your drought, and draught away your drink." And away went the portly tapster, with a loud chuckle at his own conceit.

"Doth that fellow laugh at us?" said Peter with exceeding fierceness. "Nay, and by goles I'll rap him over the pate an' he do."

"Prythee do not," said his companion urgently, "for rememberest thou what Sir Nicholas Throckmorton said—'Mention my name on no account, and of all things keep out of brawls.'"

"Ha! so said he sure enough, Diggory," replied the other, "I mind it well, and will be as close upon this business as if I knew it not. Nay, if there be any so daring as to say I be Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's serving-man, I'll swear he lies in his throat, and slit his weasan for him."

"Dost think Stephen Shortcake will be long, Peter?" asked Diggory.

"Indeed, I can not say," responded he sharply. "To tell thee the truth, Diggory, I like him not; for when I wanted to cut off that impudent varlet's ears that did seem to dog us so as we came along, he would on no account let it be; and did give me a rating for seeking to endanger the reputation of our mistress by my quarrelsome-ness. 'Slife, I take him to be a very precise fellow, Diggory."

"Here you are, my masters!" cried mine host bringing in the liquor and setting it before his customers, "and never tasted you better stuff, I'll be bound for it."

"Our master, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, hath better liq— Hang thee, Diggory, what dost tread on my toes for!" exclaimed Peter, cutting himself short in the middle of his speech, and making an exceeding wry face.

"Here's the money, good sir," said Diggory in a civil manner to his host, "and doubt I not the excellency of your liquor, believe me."

"I'll believe any one who pays without being asked for his reckoning," re-

plied Ephraim Spigot with a knowing look; and thereupon proceeded out of the room.

"I marvel at thee, Peter," exclaimed the other, immediately mine host had turned his back, "thou wouldst have begun thy brawling had I not stopped thee."

"Slife! and shall a paltry tapster have better ale than our master?" cried Peter indignantly. "By goles, I could out with my tool and beat the knave into shavings."

"Prythee be quiet, and take a drink," said Diggory.

"Well, here's to thee, and confusion to all beggarly knaves that can not fight their way," replied his companion, taking a hearty swill at the tankard.

"How look the roads, my master?" exclaimed an honest-looking yeoman in the next corner.

"Why, but indifferently, good sir," responded Diggory, with a like civility. "Indeed, I may say that ever since I left the house of my master, Sir Nicholas Throck—Hang thee, Peter, what dost pinch me so for?" cried he, turning sharp upon the other.

"Slife man, thou wert a saying Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's name, which be against the law," said Peter in a whisper, which was overheard by every one in the room.

"Thou didst right to interrupt me then," replied Diggory. "But prythee don't pinch quite so hard again," and then he took a hearty swill at the tankard.

"All that be not seafaring men be cowards!" cried out a drunken boat-swain, as he woke up from his sleep on the bench.

"Thou liest, dog!" shouted Peter, drawing out his rapier, "I be no seafaring man, yet will I prove myself valiant upon thy villanous body."

"Have at thee, then!" exclaimed the seaman, endeavoring to stand up and draw his weapon.

"Peter! Peter!" cried Diggory, beating his fist against the other's back to make him attend. "Rememberest thou the law? Peter, I say, thou knowest there must be no brawling. Put up thy weapon, Peter, I prythee!"

"For shame upon you, my masters!" exclaimed Simon Mainsail, running in between the combatants, and assisting with others to make them desist of their intended violence; whilst the two apprentices, like prudent youths, as soon as they saw there was like to be a fighting with swords, took to their heels.

"No brawling, I pray you, my masters?" exclaimed mine host, rushing into the room as if with a fear of mischief.

"Make not an honest man's house a place for the shedding of blood," cried the handicraftsman.

"Hang him, villain!" shouted Peter, endeavoring to get at his opponent, who was held from him by the bystanders. "Shall he call me a coward because I be no seafaring man? He lies in his throat! By goles, I'll cut off his ears for't."

"Peter! Peter, I say!" cried Diggory, pulling and thumping him with all his might.

"Slife! man, dost want to pound my back to a powder!" bawled out Peter to his companion. "I will let out my valor upon him. I'll cut him over his knave's pate at least. Nay, our master, Sir Nicholas Throck"—

"Put up thy weapon, varlet, this instant!" angrily exclaimed Stephen Shortcake as he entered the room and seized his uplifted arm? "How darest thou draw upon any man? Wert not expressly forbid to brawl and to mention names? and I leave thee only for a short space, and find thee a doing of both. Up with thy weapon, or thou shall rue it."

"Peter slowly and somewhat reluctantly put away his rapier, and the words of the seafaring man hurried him out of the room.

"O my life thou art the most pestilent knave that lives," cried the old butler to the pugnacious serving-man. "Thou art like to bring us all into trouble by thy villanous quarrelsomeness. What need hadst thou with a drawn weapon in thy hand? nay, I marvel hugely that thou shouldst be allowed a weapon at all."

"He did say that all were cowards except seafaring men," replied Peter doggedly, "and I could not stand by and disgrace our master by stomaching it."

"Thou hast disgraced thy master as it is," said Stephen Shortcake, looking very wrath at him. "But see that thou offend not again, or it shall go hard with thee. And I am ashamed of thee, Diggory, that thou shouldst have stood by and hindered him not," he added, turning sharp round upon the other.

"Nay, I do assure you, I did essay all means to withhold him from it," answered Diggory. "I did remind him that our master, Sir Nicholas—Oh!"

"Hang thee, thou babbling knave!" cried the enraged old man, as he seized

the uncautious Diggory by the ear—"Is this the way thou obeyest thy master's orders? O' my life, I know not which is the most pestilent villain of the two. Now I charge thee stay here till I return; and if there be any more prating, or the least stir to a brawl, at thy peril be it." So saying, Stephen Shortcake took himself out of the room, leaving the two serving-men mightily intent upon their best behavior, and the rest of the company in a famous marvelling at the strangeness of their conduct. He then proceeded up a winding flight of stairs to the first landing, where there was a door, at the which he knocked, and being bid come in, he did enter accordingly.

"Well, good Stephen—what news have you?" inquired the beautiful young wife of Sir Walter Raleigh, who sat leaning on her arm looking out of the casement, attired as if she had but just come off a journey.

"Indeed, sweet mistress, I have very comfortable news," replied the old butler respectfully. "I did make inquiries of divers worshipful captains and men of the sea, and some have told me, that they know for certain my honored master is on board a vessel that hath but lately come in."

"'Tis comfortable news indeed, Stephen," said Dame Elizabeth, brightening up exceedingly. "But how looks he? Doth he ail anything? Hath he prospered in his voyage? When shall I see him?" she then eagerly inquired.

"Of his looks I could learn but little," answered Stephen Shortcake; "seeing that I have met with none that have had speech of him since he left here; and of his voyage know I no more, for there were none who were informed of it. And as for when you shall see him, sweet mistress! methinks 'twill not be long first, as I did lose no time in despatching a trusty boatman with your note, who hath promised me to use all speed, and to give it into Sir Walter's own hand."

"Thanks, good Stephen!" exclaimed she. "I am glad the information I received that he was spoke with off the coast, hath proved correct; for the rest, I doubt not, I shall have it from himself. But get you some refreshment, good Stephen, for you have had a hard ride, and doubtless do require something."

"Nay, if it please you, I would rather be a getting of some dainty for yourself," observed the old man. "For you have scarce tasted bit or sup since we left Aldgate."

"I have no heart for anything till I see Sir Walter," replied the affectionate woman. "But I thank you for your painstaking; and do insist upon it, you presently procure for yourself, whatever proper thing the house affords."

"I thank you heartily, sweet mistress!" exclaimed he, "and will haste to do your gracious bidding."

When Stephen Shortcake had left the room, Dame Elizabeth turned again to the casement, and gazed among the vessels as if with a hope of finding out the ship in which was her beloved husband. All at once she did behold a boat putting off from one, upon which she kept her eyes, as it made for the shore, pleasing herself with the fancy, that therein might be him she most wished to see. She could just discern two persons (besides the boatman), one of whom, as far as she could make out in the distance, looked the taller and nobler of the two. "'Tis he!" she exclaimed joyfully, as she thought she recognised his figure; and then added, pressing her hands over her throbbing breast, "be still, my heart!"

In a few minutes there could be but little doubt of it—for the one she had observed, as if noticing her at the casement, did suddenly stand up in the boat and whirl his hat round and round his head; whereupon she took her kerchief and waved it in the air;—her heart all the whilst seemingly being in as great a flutter. Then it was seen, as they made the land, that the two were Sir Walter Raleigh and Master Francis. She watched them very earnestly as they neared the house, and when she lost sight of them she rose from the casement—then sat herself down again—while her heart seemed so to beat, and her countenance became so pale and agitated she scarce knew what to do; and when Sir Walter's quick step was heard upon the stairs, she could only stand by catching fast hold of the arm of the chair, the which she had not let go till she found herself within the embrace of her loving husband.

"After all said and done, dear Bess," said Sir Walter Raleigh, when they had exchanged their affectionate greetings, "I think we shall live as pleasant a life of it as heart can desire."

"I hope so, dear Walter," replied his beautiful young wife, "yet I have had my doubts. There have been rumors afloat to your disadvantage, which have given me infinite uneasiness, and I oft-times thought that our marriage had come to the queen's ears, and she in con-

sequence thereof, had resolved on your disgrace. Indeed it made me exceeding sore of heart."

"Tush, girl, care not for it!" exclaimed Raleigh. "I did hear of its being whispered before I left here, and thereat did write Cecil an ambiguous letter which, methinks, should by this time have put an end to all rumors. I know not why it is, yet have I been marvellously ill used in the matter of this expedition, for the queen kept not her faith with me, and hath put me to a sore trial of my patience. But I doubt not the great success that hath attended this adventure, will not only create in her majesty a desire to make me amends for what unkind things I have endured, but will win her pardon for having married without her approval."

"Hast had great success, Walter?" inquired Dame Elizabeth anxiously.

"Ay, that have we, sweet Bess," he replied. "'Tis true I have most unjustly been called from my command, but before I left the fleet I gave orders that one half of it, with one of the queen's ships under the command of Sir John Burgh, should cruise off the coast of Spain, while Sir Martin Frobisher, with the rest, should lay in wait off the Azores; for I had great expectation that there we should have the good hap to intercept the Plate fleet. Well, I have so long been kept back by contrary winds, that as I entered this port, I was overtook by a fast-sailing vessel, that hath assured me on credible authority, that Frobisher's squadron fell in with the Indian ships as I expected; and hath taken a carrack of the burthen of 1,600 tons, valued at half a million sterling—which most assuredly is the largest and richest prize ever had from the enemy."

"Indeed, that doth give me exceeding comfort," cried she very joyfully.

"I doubt 'twill be the best recommendation to the queen I have been able to show this many a day," added Sir Walter.

"I do think, myself, it cometh most opportunely," observed his devoted wife. "It hath put to flight all my foolish fears, and methinks I can allow myself now to hope that all will soon be well. We will then be so happy—so very happy, won't we, dear Walter?"

"Ay, dearest, without a doubt," he replied.

"Open, in the queen's name!" shouted out the voice of one who beat the door rudely.

"Ah!" screamed Dame Elizabeth, starting from the fond embrace of her husband, and trembling in every limb.

"Hush, Bess, 'tis nothing," said Sir Walter in an encouraging tone, and went to open the door. "Ha, Sir George Carew, right welcome!" he added, as he noticed who it was that had disturbed them; and then one of a military appearance, and somewhat serious countenance, walked into the room with his rapier drawn.

"I am sorry that I am come of so unwelcome an errand," said he. "But I have the queen's commandment to arrest you, Sir Walter Raleigh, and you, Mistress Elizabeth, and convey you prisoners to the Tower."

"Ah, I was afraid of this—I have ruined thee," exclaimed Dame Elizabeth in a piteous accent, as she fell sobbing on his shoulder.

"Bess!" cried Sir Walter in a grave voice, as he lifted her from him, and looked reprovingly in her face. "Remember, that thou art my wife!"

No sooner had these words been spoke than the beautiful woman, as if with a sudden effort to conquer her feelings, cast back her head proudly; and walking with a truly majestic carriage up to Sir George Carew, said in a firm voice, "I am ready, sir."

CHAPTER XIII.

Other sins only speak, murder shrieks out.
The elements of water moisten the earth,
But blood flies upward and bedews the heavens.

WEBSTER.

This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accursed;
Make the hoar leprosy adored! place thieves,
And give them title, knee, and approbation,
With senators on the bench.

SHAKSPEARE.

There is the murderer, for ever stabbed—
Yet can he never die.

FORD.

THE miser of St. Mary Axe sat in a worm-eaten arm chair, in a narrow chamber, of comfortless and mean appearance, before a table on which were sundry parcels wrapt up in dirty bits of rag, and a pair of small scales; and he was engaged in counting out a store of gold pieces from an old stocking. His face looked somewhat sickly, and his eyes yellowish; and his hands shook much as he handled his treasures. There was a window in the room, but it was so covered with dirt,

and the broken panes so pasted over with parchment, that it gave only sufficient light to discern the squalidness and filth of the place, one or two broken chairs, a rickety table, some bundles of papers covered with dust, a great chest, with a padlock, that stood open behind him, and himself—the owner of all. Besides his usual dress, which never varied, he had on his spectacles, with which he carefully scrutinized every coin, and weighed some; now and then giving quick suspicious glances around the room, and starting fearfully at every little noise. It is not to be supposed that he held his peace, for he did talk continually, as if for company; and on divers subjects, much at the same time, like unto one whose mind wandereth somewhat.

“Forty-nine—fifty,” said he closely examining the last piece he had taken from the stocking. “Methinks this be exceeding light. It hath been clipped, doubtless. Mayhap it hath been in the hands of some vile Jew? No matter—it must with the rest. Alack! how my head do ache! Fifty-one—fifty-two. What a dolt have I been to drink so much of his villainous ale, knowing that it doth ever get into my pate! Fifty-three—fifty-four. That Geoffrey Sarsnet be a most ungodly varlet—he liketh not the hundredth psalm! Fifty-five—fifty-six. Ha! this has a crack in it, sure enough. And that he be a knave there can be no question, seeing how he entertained my proposal of marrying Joanna; and doth allow her to retain the many costly things she hath tricked me of. Fifty—this be rather of a dull color. Certes, I have had a good escape from that seductive Jezabel. Fifty-seven—fifty-eight. But she hath most shamefully cozened me. I am glad I am quit of her. Fifty-nine—here be as clean a face as if ’twas fresh from the mint. Oh, that I could make her give up that which she hath robbed me of! Sixt—Ha!—what noise be that!”

The old miser looked about him very earnestly, and listened in a great tremble—for some sort of noise was heard.

“It be the wind, doubtless,” continued he, “for it doth at times make great disturbances. Sixty-one—sixty-two. I marvel what hath become of my pestilent nephew; but I am hugely delighted that he hath taken himself off. I did think he had robbed me, knowing he be a most dishonest caitiff—as instance the excellent candle-ends he stole of me; but I have searched, and missed nothing. Sixty-three—surely this piece be not good

—it hath such a marvellous copper look with it. If any one were to give him a knock on his knave’s pate now, then should I be rid of all fear. But it be the right weight to a hair. Sixty-four—sixty-five. He hath been monstrously urgent concerning of his father, yet hath he got nothing of the truth from me, for all his blustering. Sixty-six. ’Twould be most unnatural were one of my years unable to deceive such a boy as that. Sixty-seven—sixty-eight. He doth not like the hundredth psalm, the reprobate! and as for her, she be the impudentest baggage that lives. I would I could get back what she hath so infamously cozened of me! Sixty-nine—seventy. That be just right:” he added, as he proceeded to put his store of gold back by handfuls into the old stocking; and whilst he did so his eyes seemed to glisten with exceeding gratification.

“’Tis well I married not that villainous jade—a murrain on her!” exclaimed he. “Else the infinite pleasure I find in such brave sight as this, should I not know for long; for all would go to satisfy her prodigal humors. What a dolt was I to let her have of me such store of costly things; and he such an ungodly wretch as not to like the hundredth psalm! My head doth seem to split of this aching. Oh, ’tis an exquisite fine sight to see so much lovely gold!”

“’Tis an exquisite sight, indeed!” said a gruff voice, at his elbow.

“Mur—mur—mur—murder!” screamed Gregory Vellum, as loud as his fright would allow, and letting drop some of the gold upon noticing two fierce-looking men standing over him, regarding his treasures with eyes kindling with excessive covetousness.

“Take that for thy bawling!” exclaimed one, hitting him sharp over the pate with the pommel of his dagger, “and if thou breathest but a sound loud enough to be heard within a yard of thee, I’ll slit thy weasan the same minute.”

“Nay, what be the use of sparing such an old hunks,” observed the other, who looked the most desperate cut-throat of the two. “Let me give him a dig in the ribs, ’twill do his business for him, I’ll warrant.”

“’Sblood! be not such a fool, Tony,” replied the other, sharply. “He hath more hoards than what we see; and how shall we find ’em, if we make him not point ’em out to us?”

“True, Jack!” responded the other. “So let’s bind him whilst we secure the

prog around, then will we make him tell where lieth the rest." Then these villains bound the miser, with cords, to the chair on which he sat; he, too frightened either to move or speak, made no noise, save that of his teeth chattering together, and rolling of his eyes (from which the spectacles had fallen), with extreme fear, as he turned his looks from one to the other.

"Slife! this be a proper windfall, Tony!" cried he that was called Jack, as he proceeded to pour into his hat the contents of the stocking. "But I did tell thee the old miser was a bird worth the plucking."

"So thou didst, bully rook!" answered Tony. "But let us count all the coin into thy hat, that we may the easier divide it."

"That will not I," replied the other, with a loud laugh. "Find a stocking for thyself, man, and mayhap it shall fit thee as doth this me."

"What, shall we not share alike, and be hanged to thee?" asked Tony, fiercely, as he undid one of the parcels done up in a dirty rag. "Nay, I care not," he added, and instantly swept all the parcels into his hat. "Each of these be full of Harry the Eighth's nobles."

"Nay, then, let us share, Tony," cried Jack, his forbidding visage now seeming disturbed at the other's greater good fortune, "twas but a jest of mine."

"Sblood! I care not, jest or no jest!" responded Tony with a chuckle of satisfaction, as he poured out the contents of each dirty rag, "Keep to thy stocking—I'll keep to my rags."

"Hang thee for a villain!" muttered the other, and then turning round, went straight to the open chest, the which seeing, made the old miser utter a faint exclamation—a sort of wailing that denoted both terror and despair.

"Slife! art weary of thy life?" exclaimed Jack, threatening the trembling scrivener with his drawn dagger, which he held as if about to plunge into the old man's side, and giving him a look which seemed to make his very blood turn cold within him.

"Here be the best prize of all!" cried Jack, as he began searching of the chest.

"Ha! what hast got?" inquired Tony, hastening to the side of his companion. "P'faith, Jack, this be a prize indeed!" continued he, as following the other's example, he eagerly commenced hauling out of the chest divers pieces of rich silver plate, such as candlesticks, tankards,

drinking cups, plates, and the like, whereof each appropriated as much as he could lay his hands on; yet seemed he to grumble much at whatever his associate did get into his possession. The spirit of avarice was at work in the hearts of both, and the great wealth each one found himself possessed of, only made him all the greedier to have more.

"If this be not the making of us for life, I know not what filching means," observed one, with his eyes glowing with unlawful pleasure at the costliness of the spoil he was making his own.

"We will turn honest upon the strength of it," said the other, equally busy at his work. "We will buy us some place of lordship in the country, and swagger it as bravely as any knight of the shire."

"And why not become parliament men?" asked the first. "They that have been knights of the post will make better knights of the shire than any, seeing that they be already marvellous skilful in fingering the people's money."

"Ha! ha!—that be true enough," exclaimed his companion. "So knights of the shire we must needs become; and then will we have a law made that rogues shall be protected in their calling till they turn honest."

"Oh!" groaned Gregory Vellum in all a miser's agony, as he beheld his secret treasures passing away from his custody.

"Ha! What, dost move?—dost breathe?" cried Jack, scowling at him so ferociously that it did set his teeth a chattering all the more.

"Slife!—let's finish him at once," said Tony. "Then will he tell no tales. Methinks we shall have enough to do to get away what we have found without seeking for more."

"I tell thee we will pluck him bare first," replied the other ferociously. "Such a prize comes not in our way oft, therefore are we the more bound to make the most of it we can. For mine own part, I'll risk Tyburn rather than leave him so much as would keep his miserly old carcase for an hour."

"Well, hang him for a villain, I care not," observed his associate. "But what have we here?" he added, as on putting his hand into a goblet he did bring out of it sundry gold rings, with precious stones therein.

"Nay, I must have some of those!" cried Jack, making a snatch at them.

"I'll see thee hanged ere I will let thee," replied Tony, quickly placing the goblet out of the other's reach.

"'Sblood!—but I will be even with thee!" muttered his associate, regarding him with a threatening visage, which he seemed in no way to heed.

"Tush!—what care I!" said the other. "Find a goblet for thyself, and mayhap thou shalt have good store of jewelry in it."

"Thy greediness is properly punished—for see! here be something worth more than all thy paltry rings." And, as he opened a jewel case, he exhibited a costly necklace of pearls set in fine gold.

"I had mine eyes on that ere thou didst lay a finger on't," said Tony, exceeding vexed that he had missed so fair a prize.

"Tush! what care I?" replied Jack, in the very words his associate had used a moment since.

"Wilt let me have no share in't?" asked the first, staring on the jewel and then on the thief with eyes of devilish covetousness and malice.

"Share in't!" exclaimed the other with a scornful laugh. "Not so much as would buy thee a rope to hang thyself with."

"Then take that!" cried Tony, thrusting his dagger at him.

"What!—wouldst stab, villain?" shouted Jack, starting up in a monstrous rage on finding himself wounded. "Then here's at thee."

"And that—and that!" continued his companion, repeating his blows which the other tried to ward off.

"Murderous devil—I had thee there!" exclaimed the other, as he succeeded in digging his weapon into his opponent's shoulder; and thereupon commenced the most sanguinary fight that ever was seen; for the two villains, smarting with pain and rage, and driven on by extreme thirst for gain, did follow each other round and about the room, cutting furiously one at the other's flesh, with abundance of curses and execrations—their looks all the while being more resembling those of fiends than of anything human, and their bodies streaming with gore from their different wounds. Gregory Vellum, half dead with fright, stared upon the spectacle with eyes ready to start from his head; his teeth chattered as if there was no keeping them quiet; and at every blow that was struck he gave a wince as if the weapon entered his own flesh. They passed him close several times, and one striking furiously at the other upon the moment, some blood did spirt over his face, at the which he

seemed ready to give up the ghost, he uttered so pitiful a scream. This might have brought on him more dreadful punishment from the two robbers; yet were they so fired by their mutual hatred one of the other, and each so eager to destroy his associate, that neither did take of him the slightest notice.

All on a sudden, having dropped their daggers, they had got locked in each other's clutch, pulling here and pulling there, tearing at each other's hair, and giving blows with all their strength, when tumbling over something, both came to the ground together and began rolling over and over, swearing horribly, and striving to bite at each other's faces. Surely never were two such incarnate demons seen. There appeared to be nothing human of them, and the mutual deadliness of their hatred was terrible to look upon.

"To hell with thee for a monstrous murderous villain as thou art!" cried Jack, who having recovered his weapon as he passed over it, had plunged it into Tony's breast as he lay upon him. The other raised his head as if with one last effort, and fixed his teeth in the cheek of his murderer.

"Ah!" screamed he in agony, letting his head fall with that of his companion. "Unclose thy villainous teeth!" Jack then stabbed the other several times whilst writhing above him with the pain, expecting to get free thereby; but he was in the gripe of the dead, and all his cutting and screaming availed him none at all. The torture he endured must have been fearful, for the perspiration run down over his face in a thick shower, as he sometimes was cursing dreadfully, sometimes making very pitiful moanings. At last, as if unable to bear it any longer, he thrust his dagger into the dead man's mouth, unlocked his jaws, and freed his own lacerated face.

"A murrain on thee, thou pestilent villain!" exclaimed the survivor, casting wrathful glances at his fallen comrade, "if thou hadst any life in thy treacherous body, I would hack thee into shreds for having so spoilt my face: but I have mauled thee beyond all hope, that's one comfort. 'Slife—how I do bleed!" he added, as he looked to his hurts, which were by no means slight or few, and did attempt to bandage them. "This dig in my side, methinks, hath an ugly look. Alack, what a thrice-cursed knave hast thou been, Tony! and a fool to boot. Not content with thine own gettings,

thou didst covet mine; and now I have all."

"Oh!" groaned the old miser.

"What! dost attempt to give the alarm?" cried out the robber. "Nay, then will I settle thee at once." He rose with his dagger in his hand, as if to put his threat into execution, but his foot slipped in the blood that had dabbled the boards, and in falling he burst the bandage he had tied over his wound in the side, which began to bleed afresh. At this he renewed his execrations, and again essayed to stop the hemorrhage; but he seemed to be getting weaker rapidly, his hands were exceeding unsteady, and his eyes appeared to swim in their sockets. "Oh, I be deadly sick!" he exclaimed in a faint voice, as he supported himself on one hand, sitting on the floor; thereat his head drooped on his shoulder, his arm gave way from under him; and he fell smack upon his back with a loud groan.

Gregory Vellum had watched the struggles of the surviving villain with mingled horror and fright—for a more ghastly object never presented itself to the eye—his face being so dreadfully disfigured and covered with dust and gore, from amid which the ferocious expression of his eyes glared upon the trembling scrivener, whenever he turned in that direction, in a manner so terrible, that it made him feel as if his heart was bursting in twain. Seeing him fall and lie motionless, he did think he was dead, the thought whereof gave him inexpressible comfort; but not liking the idea of being kept bound close to two dead men, he presently began to scream at the very top of his voice, hoping that some of the neighbors would come to his assistance. He had scarce done this, when the robber who had swooned raised himself, and fixed upon the miser a look so threatening and ghastly, that he presently drew in his breath, as if his last hour had come; but he could in no manner draw away his gaze from the villain's horrible stare, and there he sat staring at him, with his teeth knocking against each other, and every limb a trembling like unto one in a mortal agony.

Presently he heard some sort of a noise below stairs, at the which he gave a sudden gasp; but the terrible eyes of the dying robber did then glare upon him so ghostlike, that he dared not make a sound, and felt that he could not if he dared.

"Uncle! uncle! where are you?" he heard cried out to him, and though he

recognised the voice of his nephew, whom a short time since he would not have cared to see hanged, it now seemed to him the voice of an angel from heaven; and he was about to reply, when the robber crawled a bit nearer, with his dreadful dagger in his hand, the sight whereof put him into so monstrous a sweat that he felt himself drenched all over. Still the dying villain crawled slowly toward him, dragging his wounded body along by his hands; and though at the same time Gregory heard his nephew's foot upon the stair, the villain was so nigh upon him, having got his hand upon the bottom rail of his chair to raise himself up, with his disfigured face, and terrible eyes seemingly possessed of a thousand new horrors, upon a level with his knees, that knocked against each other most deplorably, he did give himself up for lost; and when he found the ghastly countenance close to his own face, and the fearful weapon uplifted over his breast, his heart sunk within him, and he swooned outright.

Master Francis, coming to visit his kinsman, to see if he could gain of him any intelligence of his father, and finding the door ajar, and seeing that his kinsman was not below stairs, he did call out; but receiving no answer, mounted to a room he knew of old he was oft to be found when wanted. At opening the door, a sight presented itself to him, the like of which, surely, he had never seen. There was the room as unsightly as a shamble, and strewed all about with coin, jewels, plate, and most precious things, which the robbers, in their scuffle, had rolled over and over, and knocked in all directions—one man lay dead, and another—the frightfullest object his eye ever lighted on—supporting himself on the chair with one arm, had the other raised clasping a blood-stained dagger, which was descending in the direction of the heart of his kinsman, who already looked more dead than alive. At the robber he made a rush upon the instant, and caught him by the back of his jerkin at the scuff of the neck, in the very nick of time to save the old miser's life; and dragged him from the chair a distance of some yards, and flung him heavily on the boards. The dying villain did glare on Master Francis with a look so terrible that he could never forget it—the weapon fell from his hand—he gave one mighty shiver in all his limbs, then was there a hollow rattling in his throat, which lasted but a few seconds; and then he lay as dead as any stone.

The youth, in a monstrous marvel at the whole scene, more especially at seeing such a store of precious things lying scattered about as if of no sort of value, did presently cut with his own dagger, the cords that bound his kinsman, thinking at first, that he was as dead as the others—but in some minutes, after calling to him a bit, the old man opened his eyes very fearfully, and with a great wildness; but, they lighting upon his nephew, who, very concernedly, was assuring him of his safety, he did grow more composed; and, upon looking about and seeing of his treasures so scattered, he started up with a suddenness that nearly upset Master Francis, and, as if ailing nothing, he began to gather up his riches.

“Oh, these devilish villains!” exclaimed he to the wondering youth. “They did break in upon me—having got entrance I know not how, and, after binding and threatening of me, proceeded to rifle me of these valuables; which an honest friend hath left in my custody—for thou knowest they can not be mine, seeing I be so exceeding poor; and then falling out upon their division, did straightway go to murdering of each other. When one had killed his companion, the survivor though sorely wounded himself, like a murderous villain as he was, made toward me with his dagger to kill me, the which thou didst luckily prevent by thy coming in. But they have given me a most mortal fright.”

“Indeed you have had a narrow escape, uncle,” observed Master Francis.

“Ay, have I,” replied the old miser, very carefully wiping of everything that had got in any way stained. “And I give God thanks for it—more especially for the saving of the honest man’s goods; who, had he suffered aught, might, peradventure, have wanted me to make up his loss; the which thou knowest I could never do, being in so poor a state that I can scarce get enough to live by. But take heed that you give no hint I have these things in my custody, else the report thereof may bring other murderous thieves upon me, and not only shall I be like to be robbed of my life, but all this goodly store I may be despoiled of, as I was but now like to be; which doubtless would be the utter ruin of the honest man who hath placed them in my keeping.”

“Be assured I shall say nothing,” replied the youth. “But shall I not assist you in gathering them up?”

“Nay, touch them not, I prythee!”

quickly cried out Gregory Vellum in great alarm, and casting a suspicious glance at his nephew, as if doubtful of the honesty of his intentions. “I will look to them myself.”

“Well let it be as you like, uncle,” said Master Francis, in no way offended, for he had much experience of his kinsman’s suspicious temper; besides, he wanted not to anger him, by taking offence at aught he might do, as he had an object to gain thereby, the obtaining of which, was to him of the greatest interest.

“But where hast thou been all this time?” inquired his uncle after a short silence—still employing himself diligently in wiping the plate and jewels, and replacing them in the chest. “Thou didst leave me of a sudden, without why or wherefore.”

“Methought ’twas time to do something for myself,” answered the youth, “and not any longer to be a burthen to you, who seemed to lack either the will or the means to make my life of any comfort”—

“The means, Francis—the means,” said the old man, quickly interrupting him. “’Twas the means I lacked. Indeed, I be exceeding poor.”

“By the recommendation of a true friend, I did accidentally as it were, encounter,” continued his nephew, “I succeeded in getting the respectable office of secretary to one of our chiefest men at court.”

“Truly thou seemest in very fine feather,” remarked Gregory Vellum, somewhat sarcastically, as he turned to notice the handsome apprelling of his youthful relative; “I warrant me thou wilt spend on thy back all thou earnest. Well, I care not, so that thou comest not back on my hands.”

“But I came to beg a favor of you, uncle,” said Master Francis.

“Nay, ask of me nothing,” hastily replied the old miser, as he left off counting the gold pieces into the old stocking; “I have scarce wherewith to live; I can not let thee have a groat. Thou hast taken thyself off, and must fare as thou canst; so come not a begging, for it be of no manner of use, I be so exceeding poor, as thou knowest.”

“I want not money of you,” observed the youth; “I have enough for my wants, and my patron doth not let me lack aught his power or purse can procure. I seek of you only that you truly tell me who was my father.”

"What dost come a worrying me of thy father?" asked the scrivener, with a disturbed countenance, as he quickly caught hold of some parchments that were nigh unto him, and placed them at once in the chest. "I know naught of him that be worth the knowing; he was some paltry fellow or other—a very mean person."

"Was he married to my mother?" inquired his nephew, more earnestly.

"Prythee question me not," replied the old man, seemingly taking it very uneasily. "It matters not at all; I can not be answering of thy unprofitable queries. It be of no consequence whether he had her in marriage or otherwise, for he was a monstrous paltry fellow at all events."

"Indeed, it be of vital consequence to me," cried the youth, in an increasing agitation; "I pray you, uncle, tell me the truth."

"Well, then, if thou wilt have it, I will tell thee," answered the scrivener—"I have kept it from the world, and given out otherwise, for the sake of my sister's reputation; but I can tell thee of a certainty that thou art illegitimate."

"Ah! I feared 'twere so," exclaimed Master Francis, as the color mounted to his cheek, and he hid his face in his hands, for very shame. The which seeing, Gregory Vellum regarded only with a sort of smile, that made his leaden physiognomy not a whit more pleasant than ordinary, and continued the counting of his money.

"Was he one Holdfast, and did he live in noted bad character?" asked the other, suddenly, as if with a kind of desperation.

"Ay, very like—very like," replied the old man. "If I remember me, his name was Holdfast, or something exceeding near it; and that he was a notorious villain is out of all question."

"Then I know the worst," said he, calmly, but with a great paleness of face, "and I will now take my leave of you."

"Stop awhile!" bawled out the miser, hastily coming up to his nephew as he was approaching the door. The latter, on this, did stay his steps.

"Hast taken nothing while I was in the swoon?" he asked, gazing on the other with a monstrous suspicious countenance.

"Nay, this is too bad," said Master Francis, in no mood to be so spoken to, and moving off.

"But thou shalt not go till I have

searched thee," sharply added Gregory Vellum, as he laid hold of him to make him stay. "I am sure, by thy wanting to be gone with such speed, that thou hast stolen something."

"Away! you are past bearing!" cried the youth, as he pushed him back, and walked out of the room.

"Francis! Francis!" the old miser bawled out as his nephew closed the door upon him. "Prythee leave me not alone with these dead men! I will not search thee—I do not think thou hast robbed me of anything. Nay, go not away till the house be rid of these corpses! Francis! Francis, I say!"—and he came down the stairs after him in great alarm.

The unhappy youth by this time was into the street, pacing along with a most woful heart. Indeed he had much to trouble him. He knew that his patron, Sir Walter Raleigh, whom he had begun to love exceedingly, was a prisoner in the Tower; when he could get out, no man could say. All that he had dreaded to learn of his parentage seemed now put beyond the possibility of question; at the which he felt so cast down as scarce to know what he was a doing; and the late behavior of his miserly kinsman, though nothing more than he might expect of his disposition, in the humor in which he was, did irritate him all the more. After passing along a little way in extreme despondency of mind, he bethought him of visiting his beloved Joanna, whose reception of him, he doubted not, would presently relieve him of his miserable feelings; yet when he came to think of the tone of her letters not coming up to his expectations, in the peculiar mood in which he then was, he straight began to have suspicions that she regarded him less than he would have her; but in a few minutes there came to his recollection numberless kindnesses she had done him, which to him were as positive proofs of the sincerity of her affection. The remembrance of these things did assure him somewhat, and became to him of such great comfort, that for the time it clean drove all unpleasant thoughts out of his head.

At this moment there came on a very smart shower of rain, and he, wishing to save his new doublet a wetting, hastened for shelter under a gateway close at hand. Passing beneath here, he spied an open door at one side, for which he made, but presently desisted of his purpose on hearing voices that of a certainty came from

it. He was about to content himself with the shelter of the gateway as far as might be from the door, when he recognised the voice of Joanna, that did at once fix him to the spot.

"Nay, nay, my lord," said she, "it may please you to affirm this, but I doubt you affect me so much as you say."

"O' my life, adorable Joanna!" answered one very urgently, whom Master Francis instantly knew, by the manner of speaking, to be my Lord Cobham, whom he had often heard. "I swear to you I do love you exceedingly. In truth, your infinite loveliness is of such a sort, that never expect I to find aught so worthy of the steadfast and most perfect devotedness with which I do regard you."

Speech like this, it may be believed, Master Francis liked not at all.

"Methinks you are but trifling with me," observed the other.

"Nay, my heart's treasure! believe me, I never was in such earnest!" replied her companion. "Take this ring—'tis a ruby of great price; yet should it be inestimable to come up with my estimation of your worthiness, exquisitely beautiful Joanna! Here, let me place it on your most delicate finger."

At this Master Francis began to be much troubled that she, whom he so loved, should accept gifts from one who, to his knowledge, was noted for his galandries.

"I scarce think it be right of me to take your gift, my lord," said Joanna. "Yet to refuse it might seem discourteous of me, so I will e'en accept of it."

"And grant of me in return but one precious favor," added the Lord Cobham in an entreating voice, that did much increase the disturbance of Master Francis. "It be but to press that tempting lip, compared with which, the ruby must seem but pale."

"Indeed, that I can never do," replied she.—"Nay, hold me not so closely, my lord, I entreat of you."

This put Master Francis in a perfect tremble, and he suddenly felt the blood a rushing to his cheek—yet was he like one chained to the spot; for though he felt desperately inclined to disturb them, he was so affected by the unexpectedness of what he had heard, that he had not the power of moving.

"Turn not away that exquisite countenance, admirable Joanna!" exclaimed the Lord Cobham, while a rustling was heard as if he was a struggling with her, which did increase Master Francis's disorder

mightily: "and strive not to move from arms so eager to hold so perfect a creature in their fond embrace. In good truth, I *must*, sweetest."

"Have done, my lord, I pray you! You hurt me, indeed, you do. Nay, some one will be a coming! How you tease! Well, if you will, it must needs be," was all that Joanna said in reply; and Master Francis, thinking from what she spoke, that she liked not my Lord Cobham's advances, with one desperate effort was about to break in upon him, when he heard the consent given, and immediately followed by the close smacking of lips, which moved him so against her, that he rushed from the gateway on the instant.

CHAPTER XIV.

I can not hold; good rascal, let me kiss thee:
I never knew thee in so rare a humor.

BEN JONSON.

A part to tear a cat in—to make all split.

SHAKSPEARE.

Sir Toby. Come thy ways, Signior Fabian!
Fabian. Nay, I'll come. If I lose a scruple of this sport let me be boiled to death with melancholy.—
IBID.

We hope to make the circle of your eyes
Flow with distilled laughter. BEN JONSON.

Now must I transport the courteous reader, who hath followed me along hitherto with admirable patience, and I hope with some pleasure, into the shop of a noted barber-chirurgeon, alluded to in the preceding pages, as living over against the jolly mercer's in Eastcheap. He was called Martin Lather and sometimes Master Lather by those who would seem to hold him in some respect; and he had for an apprentice one Harry Daring—a sturdy boy of some fifteen years or so; of both of whom more anon. First to describe the shop, which was of no little repute among the citizens. On a projecting window there were divers notices to acquaint the passengers of what Master Lather was skilled in: some of these were in rhyme, for he did pride himself mightily on his scholarship. As for instance—

"Shaving done here
By the day, month, or year."

Or in another case—

"Beards trimmed neatly;
And teeth extracted completely."

And mayhap close upon it would be found—

"I breathe a vein
For a little gain;

And on moderate terms
I cure the worms."

While in another place the gazer should meet—

"Hair cut and curled
As well as anywhere in the world;
And in bald places made to grow,
Whether it will or no."

About there were some few shelves, having on them bundles of herbs, jars of ointment, and the like—(very famous in the cure of many disorders); and elsewhere in the shop were some drawers, shelves with gallipots, and bottles containing different colored liquors, and some with powders in them. A lot of ballads and broad sheets were against the wainscot. Over the fireplace was framed a large writing, having for the title, very conspicuous, "Forfeits," which ran thus—

"He that must needs be served out of his turn,
Shall pay a penny, and better manners learn.
He that the master would stay in his calling,
Or dispute in such terms as will lead to a brawling,
Or meddle with what he hath had no occasion,
He shall pay two-pence to his great vexation.
He that doth swear, or doth say any scandal,
Or prate of such things as be not fit to handle,
Or from the ballads shall tear or take any,
Straightway from his pouch there must come forth
a penny.
And he that shall seek to to play any tricks,
With the pricking of pins, or the poking of sticks;
Or chalk on a doublet—or foul any hat,
Without doubt shall he forfeit a penny for that.
Likewise if against the queen's grace say he aught,
He shall, as 'tis fitting, be made pay a groat,
And ask pardon all round—the which to his pain
Will keep him from talking such treason again."

A large black cat was cleaning of its skin upon a three-legged stool, nigh unto a table standing by the side of the fireplace, on which were sundry combs, brushes, scissors, vials, a pestle and mortar, and instruments for the pulling out of teeth; and a little closer to the light, there sat in a huge high-backed chair, an exceeding serious-looking old man, rather short of stature, with some few gray hairs on his head, and a small peaked beard of the like sort; wearing on his nose, which was of the longest and of an excellent fine point, a pair of famous large spectacles, through which he was gazing upon what he was about. He was trimly dressed, with everything formal and grave about him. In one hand he held a lancet, and in the other a cabbage-leaf. A boy stood before him seemingly very attentive. He was thickset and short of his age, with an honest plump face, and eyes that looked as if ever intent upon some mischief or another. In truth, it was a countenance that was not easy to be described, saving that it was a very dare-devil—care-for-naught—full-of-tricks sort of face as ever boy had. He had on a leather jerkin

and breeches of the same, partly covered with an apron of linen, that looked as if he had been rolling on the floor in it—which was like enough. He wore yellow hose, and thick shoes of leather. These two were Master Lather, the barber-chirurgeon, and his apprentice Harry Daring.

"Methinks you know pretty well by this time how to dress hair," observed the barber to his pupil with a monstrous grave countenance, "seeing that you have been curling of the old mop for some time past: the which be an admirable way for the learning of that part of our craft—for if you singe it, then shall no man rate you for the burning of his pate: which maketh good the saying of Aristotle, 'Ante illum imperatorem!' which meaneth, 'hurt no one and he shall not cry out.'"

"I promise you," replied the boy, seeming as if regarding his master with great attention, "without doubt I be as clever at it as any 'prentice in the city; and upon the strength of my skilfulness at the mop, I did essay to frizzle up the locks of Gammer Griskin, who wanted them done in a hurry when you were from home, at the which I succeeded marvellously."

"I remember me well," said the old man, increasing in the gravity of his features, "when next I dressed the old woman I found one half of her hair scorched to a cinder, and inquiring of her what she had done to her head, did hear that you had been practising on it—whereupon I said nothing—remembering what is written in Epicurus, 'Nihil reliqui fecit,' the which translated is, 'hold thy tongue, and thy prating shall do thee no harm.' However, you are at least well skilled in the practice of shaving, seeing that you have put the razor over the scalded pig's head pretty often, and with a proper degree of cunning."

"Ay, master, that have I," answered the apprentice quickly. "Indeed, I have tried my skilfulness on others besides the chaps of dead pigs; for be it known to you, Gaffer Gravestone coming one morning before you were up, with a beard of a week's growth, to get rid of which he was in too great a hurry to wait your coming down, I took upon me to lather and shave him to a nicety."

"True," observed the barber-chirurgeon with additional solemnity, "the sexton did complain to me, with a face covered with plasters, that as well as slicing of a piece off his chin as big as a

rose noble, and gashing of his cheek in three several places, you had completely cut off from beside his ear two moles of no ordinary size, that there had grown undisturbed and respected for a matter of forty years. But with some ado I managed to pacify him, upon promising that his face should look all the younger for it, and doing his cure free of expense; having in my mind at the time the words of that famous writer Averroes, 'Tenuit hoc propositum,' that should be thus rendered in the vulgar, 'make amends if any have suffered by thee, but if it be not in thy power attempt it not, for thou canst never succeed in the doing of that which is impossible.'

"Well, seeing that you have sufficient insight for the nonce into these matters," continued the old barber very seriously, "methought 'twas fitting time you should be taught the more noble part of our excellent and profitable profession; so attend, and I will initiate you into the whole art and mystery of the breathing of a vein. See you this cabbage-leaf?"

"I'faith, master, that I can not fail of doing, it being right under my nose," replied the boy.

"Now, mark the different ridges in the leaf," said Master Lather, pointing to them for his inspection. "It hath been written in Galen, 'In suam tutelam pervenissent,'—which meaneth—'man be exceeding like unto a cabbage-leaf.' And the similarity is manifest—for there be veins in the leaf, and there be veins in man also. Now, in the breathing of a vein it requireth some dexterity; for, mayhap, you may chance to miss it; then shall it not bleed of a surety. Taking this ridge for the vein—having, first of all, tied a bandage of broad tape, at a penny a yard, above the bend of the arm, here you see"—and then he bared his arm to show. "You must hold down the vein with the thumb of your left hand, that it may not slip; then, in your right holding your lancet betwixt the thumb and finger, as I do, you will send down the point into the vein, making a moderate orifice by jerking it up thus;" and thereupon he did penetrate the ridge of the leaf, whilst the boy was a looking on with exceeding curiosity.

"The reason you should first essay in a cabbage-leaf is this," continued the chirurgeon: "that whereas, on a first trial or so, upon the arm of a living man, not having the necessary experience, you may chance to cut deep and draw no blood, whereth he may be in a monstrous

passion; but though you draw no blood from the cabbage-leaf upon cutting ever so, there shall be no falling out betwixt you and it: for truly it is said by Esculapius, 'Dulce est pro patriâ mori;' the which doth mean—'things that have no voice can give no abuse.' Observe you how it can be done, and then make trial yourself."

"I warrant you I can do it famously," cried Harry Daring, taking the lancet into his own hand, and digging into the cabbage-leaf after the manner of his master.

"Villain! you have cut my finger!" bawled out Master Lather, dropping the leaf, and looking very dismal at his finger, which began a bleeding somewhat.

"O' my life, I knew not your hand was so nigh!" said the boy with an exceeding demure face, though it be hugely suspected the young dog did it on purpose.

"A murrain on you, I doubt you will ever make a chirurgeon, you be so awkward," added his master, as he tied up his wound—which, luckily, was no great matter.

"Nay, master, look if I be not marvellous skilful already!" exclaimed the apprentice, now holding the cabbage-leaf himself, and digging at it in a very furious fashion.

"Not so fast! not so fast, I pray you!" cried the old man. "Put you down the point a little inward, and make a sweep with it up. Let it not go in so deep. Nay, do it not as if you were digging a salad! Alack! that will never do! In truth, if you were serving a man's arm thus, he would cry out against you, and have reason for't: for is it not written in Galen, 'Rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno;' which, done into English, is—'take heed you do no man any hurt, else marvel not he come to you for a plaster.'" There, that is better—now put it down. Mayhap I will give you another lesson on the cabbage-leaf tomorrow, for indeed, you must in no way attempt to breathe a vein till you have thus learnt of me the way many times. Now, perchance you shall not have forgot that we had part of a calf's head for dinner?"

"No, i'faith, not I, master," replied the other, instantly, a smacking of his lips, "seeing that I did pick the bones so superlatively clean, that puss hath looked daggers at me ever since."

"Well—get you into the kitchen and fetch me the jaw—for I have need of it."

"Marry, what wants he with it, I wonder?" muttered the boy to himself, as he went quickly on his errand. "Me-thinks he hath quite jaw enough as it is. And hath he not a calf's head of his own, too? Well, some folks be never satisfied!" On his return he found Master Lather with an instrument in his hand for the extracting of teeth.

"Now will I give you a lesson on another branch of our honorable profession," said the barber-chirurgeon, taking the bone into his hand, and handling his instrument so as to show the way of fixing it on the tooth. "When one comes to you with a raging tooth, it be best to take it out straight, for thereby shall you ease him of his toothache, and be at least a groat the richer for your pains. Now, there be two kinds of teeth, as it be writ in Aristotle, 'malus puer,' an 'easy tooth;' and 'bonus puer,' an 'obstinate tooth;' that is to say, one that will out with a small tug, and one that you may try ever so at, and it shall stick as firm as ever. Now, suppose you that this be the jaw of one that hath come to you to do your office on him for the riddance of his pain—for of a sure thing it be better at first to practise on such a thing as this than meddle with a living mouth; which remindeth me of what hath been said on this very subject by the learned Podalirius: 'De gustibus non est disputandum;' which, rightly translated, reads thus—'Touch but the tail of a living dog and he shall snap at you presently; but you may hawl a dead lion by the ear and he shall take it exceeding civil of you.' If the tooth be a back tooth, and in the under jaw (getting your patient to sit quiet and say nothing), you shall presently put your instrument into his mouth and fix the claw on the further side of the tooth, thus—holding it down firm with the finger of the other hand; then shall you give it a wrench, and, doubtless, it will come out, as you see."

"That be bravely done, master, sure enough!" exclaimed Harry Daring, who had watched the whole operation with an abundance of curiosity. "And methinks I can do it now."

"Be not too hasty, boy," replied his master. "See me do it some two or three times more, then shall you take the instrument and try for yourself." At this the old man went over the same process once or twice, with much the same directions as at first; to the which his apprentice did seem to direct an earnest attention, then gave he the instrument into

the boy's hands, and held the jaw for him to pull at.

"Now, supposing one came to you with a raging tooth, how would you set about the extracting of it?" asked Master Lather, with a famous serious countenance.

"Why, I would do in this sort," answered the other, setting briskly about the operation. "I would make him open his jaw straight, and fixing the instrument in a presently, I would give him a twist thus."

"Oh! you're pinching my thumb!" screamed the old man, stamping with the pain; and then releasing of it from the instrument in monstrous quick time, he sat twisting himself about—a shaking of his hurt hand, and making of such faces as were a marvel to look upon. "What an absolute awkward varlet are you! Oh, my thumb! my thumb! the flesh is squeezed to the very bone. Never was master plagued with such a clumsy apprentice. Oh, my thumb—it doth pain me piteously!"

"I knew not it was so nigh," said the boy with as grave a face as he could, though, from the twinkle in the rogue's eye, it was manifest he had perfect knowledge of the matter. Then he set to pulling out of the remaining teeth as if he was a doing of it for a wager. "But see, master, how bravely I can manage it."

"Nay I will give you no more lessons for the present—I have had enough of you!" exclaimed his master, taking his hat from a pin against the wainscot, and his stick out of the corner. "I am going to Master Tickletoy the school-master," he continued, putting on his hat, and making for the door. "Send for me, if I be wanted. Oh, my thumb! my thumb."

"Ha!" cried Harry Daring, as soon as the old man had disappeared. "Doubtless thou art for the picking up of some more Latin which old Tickletoy—a murrain on him for having given me the birch so oft!—doth get out of his school-books; and which, as Master Francis hath assured me, thou dost misapply most abominably; and he says thy translations be as much like the original as is a Barbary hen to a dish of stewed prunes. But I care not, so that there be fun in the world, and plenty of it."

Then finding he had taken out all the teeth from the jaw, he flung it aside, and looked as if he scarce knew what to be at.

“By Gog and Magog!” exclaimed he, chafing of his hands merrily. “If there should come one with a raging tooth now, I would be at it without fail, for it seemeth to me exquisite sport. Indeed, ’tis a thousand pities there be no living jaw to have a twist at; what, puss! puss! hast got never a raging tooth in thy head, puss? Come, none of thy nonsense!” he added, seeing that the cat, who knew him and his tricks of old, thinking that he meant her no good, after a pitiful mew, was making off to be out of his way. But he soon had hold of her; lifting her by the scuff of her neck, he carried her to the three-legged stool, on which he sat himself down, and placed her upon her back in his lap; where she lay quiet, as if scarce daring to move, and only now and then noticing what he was a doing of by a mew so exceeding piteous, that few could resist it: yet he minded it not a whit.

“So thou hast not forgot how I singed off thy whiskers, seeking to give them a right fashionable curl,” said the boy very seriously, as he took in his hand the tooth instrument, and seemed intent on getting it into the cat’s mouth. “I know thou hast got a villanous toothache by the look of thee, and mayhap, I will do thee such excellent service as to take it out. Ay, and charge thee nothing for’t; inasmuch as thou hast nothing to pay, and be hanged to thee! else shouldst thou pay a groat, like any other Christian. And I will talk Latin to thee, puss, and though I made nothing of it at school, at least shall it be as famous Latin as my master’s, and thou shalt understand it as well, I’ll be bound. For is it not writ in Aristotle, that there be two kinds of teeth—as ‘hocus pocus,’ ‘an easy tooth’—‘presto prestissimus,’ an ‘obstinate tooth.’ So open thy mouth, puss, and quickly. Nay, if thou dost but attempt to scratch, I’ll give thee such a clout of the head as shall put all thy nine lives in jeopardy. I do assure thee, puss, ’tis all for thy good, so there be no need of setting up so piteous a mew;—which remindeth me of what hath been said on this subject by the learned Podalirius, ‘fol de riddle ido, lillibullero, wriggledumfunnibus,’ which, rightly translated, reads thus—‘he can bear very little pain who crieth out before he be hurt.’ Ha!—thou understandest Latin, I see, by the very wagging of thy tail. So, prythee, open thy mouth at once, there’s a good puss, for I must give thy jaw a twist for the fun of the thing. What, thou wilt not, ey? O’ my

life, I’ll shave thy tail as bare as my hand, and make thee ashamed to show thyself before thy sweetheart,—for truly it is said by Esculapius, ‘hoppeti kickoti corum hic hæc hoc cum tickle me,’ the which doth mean, ‘that a cat with a shaved tail be by no means comely to look upon.’”

Here he was interrupted by an old woman with her jaw tied up, entering at the door; at the sight of which, he let down the cat very quickly, and with an exceeding innocent face, advanced up to her.

“Where be Master Lather?” cried the dame in right piteous accents, as with a shrewish countenance of exceeding uneasiness, she sat herself down on a chair, swaying backward and forward, and making such a moaning as was quite moving to hear.

“He be out, good dame, and will tarry long, doubtless, seeing that he be gone to set a marvellous bad dislocation,” replied Harry Daring, with a look as grave as that of his master. “But, if I can do you any service, believe me, I shall be infinitely glad on’t.”

“Oh, I have the cursedest tooth that ever plagued a miserable old woman!” said she, rocking herself to and fro, and moaning worse than ever.

“In the extracting of teeth lieth my particular skilfulness,” added the boy, “for in that have I had such practice as would astonish you mightily to hear. Indeed I am so cunning at it that master leaveth all the tooth-drawing to me, saying to the customers, that there be not so apt an apprentice in the whole city. Nay, I do assure you, take it as you list, I have arrived at such perfection in the art, that I could take out every tooth in your head and you shall know it not; which remindeth me of what hath been said on this subject by the learned Podalirius: ‘fol de riddle ido, lillibullero, wriggledumfunnibus,’ which, rightly translated, reads thus—‘he that can draw a tooth without pain, must needs be in famous request of those troubled with an aching jaw.’”

“Well, if you can talk Latin at your years, you must needs be exceeding clever,” remarked the old woman, “so I will let you take out my tooth, and here’s a groat for you, if you promise to give me no pain in it.”

“I will whip it out and you shall know naught of the matter,” answered the apprentice, readily taking the money, well pleased at having so fine an opportunity

for showing off his skill. "Which be it, good dame?" inquired he, after he had got her to sit in the chair, and stood before her, looking gravely into her mouth, with the instrument in his hand.

"It be the last but two on the left side, in the under jaw," replied she. "But hurt me not, I pray you."

"Be assured I will hurt you none, if you attend to my directions," said the boy. "So, hold fast by the arms of the chair, else you must needs feel the pain."

"Ah!" screamed the old woman, seemingly at the very top of her voice, as she lifted up her hands to her jaw immediately he gave a wrench.

"There, now!" cried Harry Daring, looking monstrosly displeased. "Did I not say you would feel pain if you held not fast to the chair? For is it not writ in Aristotle that there are two kinds of teeth, as 'harem scarem,' an 'easy tooth,' 'crinkum crankum,' an 'obstinate tooth;' and the latter kind have you, without a doubt,"

"Well, well, I will be as quiet as I may," said she, putting down her hands, but looking wofully frightened. "Yet 'twas a most awful pain. Now hurt not again, good youth, I pray you."

"Believe me I would not hurt a hair of your head, for any money," replied the apprentice, with a very touching earnestness; "but hold fast,—I can promise nothing if you let go the chair."

"Oh!" shrieked the dame, louder and longer than at first; and caught hold of his hands as he was a tugging with all his might.

"A murrain on you," exclaimed the boy, stamping as if in a great rage, "did ever any one see the like? I was having it out as easily as is the drawing of a cork from a bottle of Ippocras, and without pain enough to hurt a fly, when you let go the chair, and made the pain come on the instant. 'Slife, it be enough to put a saint in a passion; for truly is it said by Esculapius, 'Syrupus croci scrupulum dimidium, aquæ puræ quantum sufficit:' the which doth mean,—'she that will let go when she be told to hold fast, deserveth all she may get for her pains.'"

"If it was not for the Latin, I should doubt you were so skilled as you have said," remarked his patient, very dolefully; "but the Latin be a wonderful comfort. You shall have at it once more, and for the last time; for in truth I can endure no such horrible pain as the last."

"Hold fast, then; and now or never," cried the young barber, as he put his

whole might and main into one desperate tug.

"Oh! oh! murder! Oh! Lord ha' mercy on my sins! Oh! murder! murder! murder!" screamed the old woman, with all the strength of her lungs, as she tried to hold his hands; but this time he knit his brows fiercely, and twisted at the instrument as if for his life; and in spite of the struggles and shriekings of his patient, he desisted not till he wrenched the tooth right out upon the floor.

"Here it be, dame," exclaimed he, joyfully, as soon as he saw it fall, "and o' my life 'tis a famous one." But the other seemed to think that her jaw had been torn out; for with her hands up to her face, she sat a writhing and twisting her body about the room, as if she was in her last agony.

"Oh! I be a dying! my hour be come; I must needs give up the ghost," cried she, very piteously.

"Keep a good heart—you will be well enough soon," replied he, as he was a wiping of his instrument.

"Indeed, 'twas a most awful scraunch," added his patient, looking in most deplorable fashion; "methought my head was a going clean off, and you was a pulling of it up by the roots:—but where be the tooth?"

"There, dame," he answered, pointing to where it lay; at the which she hastened to pick it up.

"Oh! you murderous villain!" shouted out the old woman, her face all of a sudden becoming livid with rage, as she looked upon the tooth: "you have pulled out the only two sound teeth I had in my head, and left the aching one in."

"What, have I pulled out *two*?" exclaimed the boy, as if mightily pleased; "why, what excellent luck have I! But you must needs pay me the other groat, seeing that you bargained only for one."

"I pay thee a groat, caitiff!" cried she, in a worse rage than ever, "I'll see thee hanged first!—And two such fine teeth, too, that would have lasted me a good score years. Oh! 'tis not to be borne."

"Why, thou shalt have all the less toothaches for it," said the apprentice, in a wonderful consoling voice; "I warrant they shall never ache; for is it not writ in Aristotle"—

"Drat Harry's total and thee too!" screamed the other, looking as fiercely as if she was about to fly at him; "I could tear thee limb from limb, you horrible young villain."

"Nay, thou hadst best be quiet and

take thyself off," observed the boy, seriously; though he took huge delight in seeing her in so towering a passion. "Indeed, if thou showest thy tearing humor to me, I will set the dog on thee, who be famous for worrying of an old witch."

"Dost call me an old witch, thou pestilent little varlet? Me an old witch:—me!"

"'Tis like enough to be true; for 'tis well known thou wert seen last Christmas eve dancing of a measure with the devil's grannum on the top of the moon."

"I dance with the devil's grannum?—I!"

"I have spoke with those who will take their oaths of it: and moreover they do report that thou didst caper after a fashion that was a scandal to look upon."

"Oh! the horrid perjurers! But I do believe thou sayest it of thine own villanous invention:—thou wilt come to the gallows, that be one comfort."

"Away, old witch!"

"I'll live to see thee hanged, thou outrageous little villain."

"Mount thy broomstick, and be off up the chimney; for thy cousin Beelzebub be waiting for thee, with a goodly bowl of brimstone and treacle for thy supper."

"I tell thee I be an honest woman that have had children, and two of 'em be twins," squeaked out the old woman, now in such a rage she could scarcely speak.

"Ah! I have heard of thy twins," exclaimed the boy in an aggravating tone: "the midwife told her gossip, and her gossip told the neighbors."

"And what said she, thou hangdog?" cried the other, trembling in every limb with the greatness of her passion. "I do defy thee, caitiff; they were as fine twins as ever honest woman had."

"Marvellous fine, truly!" replied he, in the same manner; "for I was told by those who had sight of them, that one of them was a three-legged stool and the other an elephant."

"Oh! thou horrid young monster! thou perjured little villain!"

"Away, broomstick!"

"Thou hangdog! Thou gallows-bird!"

"Out, brimstone!"

"Thou misbegotten imp of mischief! Thou!"

"The devil waiteth supper for thee. Vanish!"

"Agh!" shrieked the enraged old woman, with a violent twist of her head, as if she had exhausted all her spite; and then shaking her skinny fist at Harry

Daring, she suddenly flung herself out at the door.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the boy, seemingly in a perfect ecstasy. "Well, if this be not the most exquisite fine fun, then know I not what fun is. But methought this drawing of teeth would be good sport; and, if I could only get to bleed a vein now, then should I be content. Ah, puss!—art there still? Well, I must needs have at thee again for lack of another customer. But I want not aught of thy teeth at present: I be only curious to know if thou hast got ever a vein."

The mischievous apprentice soon had the cat in his lap again, and after talking to her in a similar strain as at first, with a liberal supply of his Latin, he tied up one of her forelegs with a piece of tape as if about to let her blood. And doubtless would he have persisted in such intention, for he had the lancet in his hand, and the cat lay as still as if she was too frightened to move, when, upon a noise of opening of the door, he let her down quickly, and putting his hands behind him, that none might see what he had hold on, he turned round to see who it was, with a face as demure and innocent as you please. Then there entered no other than Captain Swagger (of whom the reader hath already some knowledge), marching in with the absolutest blustering manner that ever was seen.

"Fellow, where's thy master?" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, as, with his tremendous sword clattering against the boards as he went, he flung himself into the great chair, looking at the boy as if he would eat him at a mouthful.

"Please you, my lord," replied Harry Daring very respectfully, and with a countenance that would have become a judge; "he hath gone to wait upon an alderman, if it please your lordship, who be troubled with the windy colics exceeding badly, please you, my lord; but, as he hath marvellous great confidence in me, knowing that I be skilled beyond my years in everything that appertaineth to chirurgery and to the craft of a barber, he is willing enough I should attend his business in his absence, if it please your lordship: therefore, if there be anything you require of my master, if I attempt it you may be well assured it shall lack nothing in the doing, if it please you, my lord."

"Canst let blood, fellow?" inquired the captain, somewhat prepossessed in favor of the apprentice, for that he had taken him for a lord.

"I can let anything, if it please your lordship," said the boy, famously well pleased that such was required of him. "But, indeed, in the letting of blood lieth my particular skilfulness. I can assure you, for a truth, that I have acquired by repeated practice such excellent cunning in the breathing of a vein, that I do it, and lo!—the patient shall not know it be done. And in all honesty I can add, without boasting, that there be divers worshipful members of the common council who will not hear of any other letting them blood, I be held of them in such high consideration: which remindeth me of what hath been said on this subject by the learned Podalirius—*'Sanguis draconis granum unum, panis recentis drachmæ duas; misce et divide in pilulas centum,'* which rightly translated reads thus, 'He that can breathe a vein in such sort as to be out of comparison with any other, shall assuredly be considered as one beyond all price among those who would be let blood—if it please you, my lord.'

"What, canst quote Latin?" asked Captain Swagger, as completely imposed upon as the old woman had been. "Well, take my arm; but see that I be let blood in proper fashion, fellow! or I will cut off thy ears."

"Of that rest you well satisfied," answered the boy, gravely proceeding to bind up the captain's arm, and in no way daunted at his fierce manner; for, in truth, he was of such a spirit that he cared for nothing when he was about any mischief. "And as for the quoting of Latin, if it please your lordship, I began so early at it, and took to it so kindly, that I be now accounted such a dabster there be scarce any book in Latin I can not give you chapter and verse out of."

The young rogue had by this time bared and tied up the patient's arm, and gave him to hold the handle of an old mop to rest it on, and was looking very earnestly for the vein; but the arm was one of the fattest, and nothing of a vein was to be seen. At this he seemed a little puzzled for a moment; but being of a disposition that would stop at no difficulty, he presently put on a famous knowing look, and made up his mind about what he was to do.

"Now, grasp you the mop firm, and turn your head away, if it please you, my lord," said the young chirurgeon, pressing of the thumb of his left hand down nigh unto the bend of the arm, and in the

right hand having the lancet very close upon it. The other did as he was desired, but not without looking a little paler than he was awhile since. "I charge you to look not this way till I give the word; then shall I have breathed your vein for you in such delicate fashion as you can have no experience of." At this he made a sudden plunge of the lancet into the flesh, at which the captain winced; but, to the astonishment of the apprentice, no blood flowed.

"Hast done it?—methought I felt the prick," said his patient quickly.

"Nay, 'twas only my thumb-nail, which be rather of the sharpest; and like enough you felt it as I pressed down to feel the vein," replied Harry Daring, in no way put out. "For is it not writ in Aristotle that there be two kinds of veins; as '*hocus pocus,*' an '*easy vein*'—'*presto prestissimus,*' an '*obstinate vein*': and the latter kind have you, without doubt, for it lieth not easy to be got at, if it please your lordship." Then he made another plunge deeper than at first, at which the captain did wince again; but, to the exceeding puzzlement of the youthful chirurgeon, not a drop of blood did make its appearance.

"Surely thou hast cut me!" exclaimed his patient with some sort of earnestness.

"A murrain on my nail for its sharpness!" cried the boy, still not inclined to relinquish his purpose. "But rest you easy, and turn your head this way on no account, lest something wrong come of it; for truly is it said by Esculapius, '*Hop-peti kicketi corum, hic, hæc, hoc, cum tickle me,*' the which doth mean, '*he that looketh when he be told not, mayhap shall spy what he shall not be pleased to see.*'" Then he made another plunge deeper than ever, at which the captain cried out lustily.

"By Gog and Magog!" angrily exclaimed the mischievous apprentice, throwing down the lancet upon finding he was not a whit more successful with it than at first; and quickly taking off the bandage—"thou hast no more blood in thee than I could get out of a pickled herring."

It would be impossible properly to describe the rage of Captain Swagger upon turning round and finding a huge gash in his arm, and the vein not a bleeding. His bushy mustaches seemed to curl up with very indignation, and his face, which had got exceeding pale, now was in a monstrous fiery wrath.

"A thousand furies!" shouted he, start-

ing up of a sudden. "Hast dared to cut me in this manner?"

"In truth, I have cut thee to the bone!" said the other, as seriously as you please. "And if thou hast ever a vein in thy arm of other sort than I can find in a cabbage leaf, then know I naught of the matter."

"Slave! hast done this and expect to live? Dost know who I be, fellow?" thundered out the captain, in an increasing passion at the other's coolness.

"Mayhap thou art a brazier, and carriest thy stock in trade in thy countenance, for in truth it be exceeding brazen," replied the boy, in no way daunted at his patient's fierce looks.

"Sblood! I will crop thy ears for thee on the instant!" bawled Captain Swagger, as he drew forth his tremendous rapier.

"What! dost draw on me?" cried the apprentice, making to the door as if about to run for his life; but he was never in a humor for turning tail, for he was back again as quickly as he went, armed with the party-colored pole that standeth ever at such shops as his master's. "Now God defend the right! and look to thyself, old Brazen-nose!" added he.

"Villain! dost fight a gentleman with such a heathenish weapon as a barber's pole?" exclaimed the captain in a monstrous astonishment. "Down with it, fellow, or I will mince thee into nothing!"

"Nay, if thou likest not a barber's weapon, thou shouldst not draw upon a barber," quietly replied Harry Daring, as he boldly made up to him. "And now for thy ribs!"

Would I had Dan Homer's pen to describe the famous combat that took place betwixt these two heroes; for of mine own cunning can I never give the reader an idea of it which will come sufficiently nigh unto the reality—yet what my poor skill can effect he must needs put up with. First, then, there was the redoubtable Captain Swagger, foaming with wrath, flourishing of his formidable rapier, and skipping here and there and everywhere with a wonderful agility, to escape the blows that were quickly aimed at him. To him came Harry Daring, a very hero among apprentices, who crept cautiously along, holding of his pole with both hands a little in advance of him, with an excellent brave countenance, and ever and anon giving a poke at his opponent wherever he saw a place unguarded. The captain retreating with a marvellously imposing front, and the apprentice following him

round the shop, as if valorously resolved to conquer or to die. The one slashed about him his huge sword in a truly dangerous fashion; but the other came to the poke with his barber's pole in so decided a manner, that his enemy seemed to like the appearance of it less and less every moment.

"Oh, that I could get but one cut at thee!" cried the captain. "I would pay thee handsomely for the villainous hurt thou hast given me on my right side."

"Take that on thy left—then one side shall not grumble at t'other," replied the apprentice, hitting him another desperate poke where he had said.

"Villain, thou wilt break my ribs!" thundered out his antagonist, evidently in as great pain as rage.

"Then art thou but an ass for not having them made stronger," answered the other. "But look at thy toes, I prythee!" and then down came the end of the pole right upon his foot, so heavily that he bawled out with the pain, and began to limp about after such a sort as would have been piteous to look upon, had not the absoluteness of his rage made of him so droll a figure.

"I tell thee, fellow, I will have my action of battery against thee!" exclaimed Captain Swagger, making such desperate exertions to ward off the blows of his adversary, and to get out of the way of his terrible weapon, that his great fiery face seemed all in a muck.

"That for thy action of battery, old Brazen-nose!" replied Harry Daring, dealing him so famous a poke in his stomach, that it clean sent him over the three-legged stool, with his heels in the air, his hat flying away to one place, and his rapier to another, and his back coming with a monstrous thump upon the floor.

"Yield thyself my prisoner—rescue or no rescue!" cried the boy, stepping up to the fallen combatant with the air of a conquering knight-errant.

"Oh, my back! my back!" groaned the captain, as he attempted to rise.

"By Gog and Magog, thou shalt not rise from this till thou hast agreed upon thy ransom, Sir Brazier," said the apprentice gravely, as he poked him down again with his pole.

"Wilt murder me, varlet?" asked Captain Swagger, looking at the dreadful weapon of his opponent as if there was instant death in it.

"Nay, I will harm thee not, by the

honor of chivalry, provided thou dost agree to two or three things I shall require of thee."

"Prythee tell me what they be, and let me up."

"First, thou shalt acknowledge thyself conquered in fair fight."

"Granted. Oh, my back!"

"Secondly, thou shalt pay for thy ransom one shilling of good and lawful money of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth."

"Agreed. My ribs be as soft as butter. Oh!"

"Lastly, thou shalt from this time forward and for ever, hold in most especial veneration and respect the goodly weapon that hath caused thy overthrow—to wit, a barber's pole."

"Spare me there, I prythee!" groaned the prostrate captain, in the most piteous accents ever heard; "I would pay thee another shilling sooner."

"What, dost murmur, Sir Brazier?" cried out Harry Daring, and was just about to give him an additional poke, when the door opened, and turning round he beheld Master Francis. "Ah! I am right glad to see thee!" he exclaimed, going up to his visiter and shaking him by the hand with great heartiness—"for in truth I have missed thee exceedingly."

"But what hast been about with this good gentleman, Harry?" inquired his young friend, who marvelled greatly at seeing of them in such a position.

"What! hast dared to rise?" exclaimed the boy, upon perceiving that as soon as his back had turned the captain had sprung on his legs, with a wonderful agility considering how hurt he was.

"I pray you hold him, good sir," cried Captain Swagger, as he made haste to pick up his sword and hat. "He hath used me villanously. He hath hurt my back, my ribs, and my toes, beyond all endurance, by poking me with that heathenish weapon of his. Indeed, he be the horriest young wretch, and the absolutest little villain—"

"Ha! dost call names, Brazen-nose?" shouted the apprentice, lifting up his pole as if to renew the combat; but no sooner had the captain caught sight of his intention, than, with a look of the most exceeding horror and alarm, he made two or three tremendous strides to the door, and was out of the house without another word.

"Oh, Master Francis, I have had such exquisite fine fun!" said the boy, after a long fit of laughing, upon seeing of Cap-

tain Swagger take himself off in so evident a fright; and then he told the other the whole account of his attempts at chirurgery—at the which, though his companion seemed in a monstrous melancholy humor, he could not help smiling more than once. "Indeed, Master Francis," added he at the last, "if thou hadst heard me speaking of my fine Latin, and the infinite gravity of my behavior, thou wouldst never have forgotten it. But the rage of the old witch—that was the fun! Nay, I do think that the sight of Brazen-nose skipping away from the pole like a roast chestnut bouncing from the fire, was the exquisitest fun of the two. But what aileth thee? for in honest truth thou lookest marvellously disturbed."

"'Tis nothing—Harry!—'tis nothing," replied Master Francis.

"At least I rejoice exceedingly to see thee so famously attired," continued his companion, looking with admiring eyes upon his handsome dress, "and to wear a sword too! Well, he that says thou art not worthy of it lies in his throat; and I would like to cudgel him within an inch of his life. For in truth, in my estimation, thou art good enough for anything. Dost remember when we two were at old Tickletoby's, and thou wert a reading to me the romance of King Arthur and other famous histories? Thou didst then say, if so be thou shouldst ever have the good hap to become a knight, which I always thought would be the case, then should I be thy faithful esquire. Prythee tell me if it be possible to be where thou art—if so, I will straight show my indentures a fair pair of heels; for though I may have sport enough sometimes, in honest truth I would rather wear a sword as thou dost; and should think nothing so pleasant as to be alongside of thee fighting of the paynims and such like caiiffs. Indeed, there be none I think so true a friend as art thou, when I remember the many times thou hast saved me the birch by helping of me in my tasks."

"Hast forgot, dear Harry, how many uncivil boys thou hast beat who did call me names?" inquired Master Francis, kindly. "Some nearly twice thy size, too."

"Ah, thou wert then exceeding delicate," replied Harry Daring, "and unfit to cope with such. Yes, I remember me what a bout I had of it with big Jack o' the Turnstile, for calling of thee 'Molly-coddle'—a murrain on him! He got two famous black eyes, and had his villanous

nose pummelled for him till it was as red and as big as a carrot. By Gog and Magog, that was exquisite fine fun!" And then the boy chafed his hands as if with wonderful delight. "But I should like to fight for thee all my life long, if there be need of it; and be thy faithful friend and follower wherever thou goest."

"If I can get thee to be where I am, Harry, it shall be done," replied Master Francis.

"That be brave news indeed!" cried the barber's apprentice very joyfully—"then a fig's end for old Lather—and Esculapius, and Aristotle, and all the whole tribe of such pestilent knaves and thorough-going villains as they are, that can do nothing but give the horrid crack-jaw Latin names to things, that ever puzzled an innocent poor boy's brains to remember, may go hang!"

Harry Daring now went and restored the pole to its proper place.

"Seeing Geoffrey Sarsnet, the jolly mercer, at his door," said the boy, as he returned to his companion, "it hath put me in mind of a something methinks 'tis my duty to tell thee." Observing that his friend looked at him very earnestly, he continued—"Believe me, I like not the part of a talebearer, or to be a meddling with what concerneth me not: but noticing how hugely thou dost affect that Joanna——"

"Ha! what of her?" exclaimed Master Francis hurriedly. "Go on, Harry, I can hear anything now."

"Look not so pale then, I prythee!" observed the other with great concern, as he noticed the effect that had been produced by the mentioning of her name.

"Mind me not at all, I prythee, but tell what thou hast to say," said the youth with some eagerness.

"Well, I will," added the apprentice. "Then I take it to be the part of a true friend (the which I ever wish to prove myself to thee, Master Francis), that if one friend setteth his heart upon a pretty wench, the other, if he believeth that she playeth him false, should tell him of it as speedily as may be. And as it be my custom to go in the early morning to bathe in the river with Jack o' the Turnstile, long-legged Tom, the tailor's son round the corner, and Peter Perriwinkle, our neighbor the chandler's apprentice, I did notice sundry times, a man closely muffled up in a huge cloak and slouched hat, leaving of Geoffrey Sarsnet's house at daybreak. There was something marvellous suspicious about him, else had I

noticed him not; and the extreme cautiousness with which the door was opened and closed, as if to make no noise, did still the more attract my attention. Knowing that the old man was one not likely to have any such mysterious visitors, methought 'twas passing strange: and never seeing who it was that let him out, because of the person keeping so close behind the door all the while, I knew not what to make of it. However, as it so happened, one morn when the door opened as usual, the wind blowing pretty high at the time, I had the good hap to see part of a kirtle, that I recognised on the instant, and"——

"Who's was it?" inquired Master Francis, who had listened with too much anxiety to hear the narration to the end.

"Joanna's," replied the boy.

"And, like enough!" added the other with some sort of bitterness.

"But let it not move thee so, I prythee!" cried Harry Daring, noticing in great trouble the painful expression of his friend's countenance.

"And yet she hath done me great kindnesses!" exclaimed the youth, as if to himself.

"Though it look not well, mayhap there shall be no harm in it," observed the other, as if with a view of affording some consolation.

"But I have known that of her that hath harm in it!" exclaimed Master Francis, more disturbed than ever; "that had it not come of mine own knowledge, would I not have believed—and now it be easy enough to credit almost any treachery. No! I will never allow myself to be bribed into a toleration of such villanous deceits!"

"Well—if she do play her jade's tricks, let her go hang!" said the young chirurgeon indignantly. "I tell thee, Master Francis, if that be it, she be not worth the caring for. Thou art as sweet a young gentleman as eye would wish to look on; therefore shalt thou easily meet with her betters at any time. I say again, let her go hang!"

"She hath done me many great kindnesses—the which I now wish she had never done, or that she had left unthought of that which I now know of her," observed the youth in extreme thoughtfulness; then starting up suddenly, cried out, "but who was he she let out."

"That know I not," replied the boy. "For, as I told thee, he was so muffled up, there was no getting a glimpse of his countenance, or, in fact, of anything to

know him by. Methinks, however, he was much about the size of that spouting piece of fustian, Ralph Goshawk, whom I have noticed to visit there very frequently of late."

"Dost think 'twas he?" inquired Master Francis, with much earnestness.

"I would not affirm it, of an absolute truth," answered Harry Daring. "Although I mislike the fellow hugely, and would as soon give him a bloody coxcomb as look at him; for, indeed, I take him to be the impudent jackanapes, and the shallowest poor fellow I ever came a nigh. I can not abide his tragedy airs. But whether he be or be not the villain, I should take it kindly if thou wouldst let me break his fool's head for him."

"Why, he be twice as big as thee, Harry," said his companion.

"What care I for his bigness?" replied the apprentice. "In truth, the bigger he may be, seemeth all the more favorable, for then shall he afford space for a greater cudgelling. The varlet, for all the greatness of his humors, be nothing better than a very paltry swaggerer; and I should take it exceeding kind of thee, if thou wouldst let me give him a bloody coxcomb."

"No, no, that must not be," observed Master Francis. "If he is to blame in this affair, his punishment must be at my hands. But I must make inquiries into this. As for her, I will see her, and have done with her." So saying, he bid a hurried "good-by" to his companion, and immediately crossed the way to the mercer's.

CHAPTER XV.

Sooner hard steel will melt with southern wind,
A seaman's whistle calm the ocean,
A town on fire be extinct with tears.
Than woman, vowed to bluishness impudence,
With sweet behavior and soft minioning
Will turn from that where appetite is fixed:
O powerful blood, how thou dost slave their souls!

MARSTON.

Oh, what a sight it was wistfully to view
How she came stealing to the wayward boy;
To note the fighting conflict of her hue,
How white and red did each other destroy!
But now her cheek was pale, and by-and-by,
It flashed forth fire as lightning from the sky.

SHAKSPEARE.

"HA, Master Francis!" exclaimed the jolly mercer, looking up from measuring of some silk, as the youth entered his shop. "I am rejoiced to see thee—more especially, as thou comest in such famous fashion as this. I heard of thy good for-

ture, and was desperate glad on't: for I liked thee well all along. And dost wear a sword, too? Well—see that thou be not too ready to draw upon a man; and, as for a woman, thou wilt do none such any harm, I warrant." And then the old fellow burst out in his customary short loud laugh.

"Is Joanna at home?" inquired his visiter.

"At home!" cried Geoffrey Sarsnet. "Why, she maketh herself at home wherever she goes. By cock and pye, I do verily believe though, that she be as much abroad when she be at home, as at home when she be abroad; for at times I know not what to make of her. In truth, she be given to strange humors, though willing enough when in the mood."

"Think you I shall find her up stairs?" asked the youth.

"Either up or down," replied the jolly mercer. "That is, if she allow herself to be found: for mayhap she shall be with some of her gallants—then shalt thou not find her, I warrant."

At any previous time such an intimation would have startled Master Francis; yet now it moved him not—though it passed him not unnoticed.

"But how fareth that superlative old pippin face, thine uncle?" inquired Geoffrey Sarsnet merrily. "Ha! if thou hadst but seen him last night singing of a miserable love-ditty to such a villanous hang-dog tune as the hundredth psalm, with a melancholy small voice, like that of a dying weasel hit on the head by a tinker's hammer, thou wouldst have laughed at it for the rest of thy life. But when he got up to dance the brawls, with his lack-lustre eyes sinking into his pate, as if to see that his wonderful small stock of brains escaped him not—that was a sight to look on. Haw! haw! haw!" and here the old fellow shook his lusty sides famously.

The youth marvelled greatly that his kinsman should so conduct himself, it being so opposite to the usual staidness of his manner.

"He aileth nothing," said he.

"By cock and pye, he aled so much last night, that I was forced to send Ralph Goshawk to see him home," observed the jolly mercer laughing as loud as ever. "He had put so much of my good liquor into him, that he had scarce left for himself 'standing room.'"

"I knew not that he was so given to drink," remarked the youth.

"I'faith I do believe this of him, that he be never given to drink unless the drink be given to him. Haw! haw! haw!" roared the old fellow, as if in exquisite delight with the conceit.

"I will just step to speak with Joanna," said Master Francis, moving off to the door.

"Prythee do," replied Geoffrey Sarsnet, "and see that thou hast a more pleasant look with thee at thy return; for, in truth, thy countenance seemeth about as cheerful as one that hath lost a shilling and found a groat." Thereupon the jolly mercer gave his customary laugh; then bawled out, in the same humor, as the youth was leaving the shop, "Take heed, and spoil no sport; for there be few gallants who like their privacy to be broken in upon when engaged with a pretty wench."

Master Francis went not up the stairs in any pleasanter mood for this, it may well be believed; but his thoughts were in a sort of confusion: He scarce knew what he would be about. The shock he received from what he gained knowledge of when he was under the gateway, had completely changed the current of his feelings toward Joanna, and what he had heard since was not like to do aught in her favor; yet was there still some lingering tenderness in his disposition on account of the many kindnesses she had done him, but when he came to think that these had been done but as bribes to keep him in compliance with her humors, as he thought more than once, his mind was made up; and he would have none of her. In this mood reached he the room that hath been previously described as the one he had been in before, the door of which standing open, he walked in: but there found he no one but Dame Margery, who seemed busy at dusting of the furniture.

"Ah, Master Francis, be that you?" exclaimed the old woman, seemingly with huge delight, as she observed who it was. "Well, to be sure! And how bravely you be dressed! In honest truth, dear heart! you be the sweetest young gentleman I've seen this many a day."

"Is Joanna at home, dame?" inquired the youth.

"No, dear heart!" replied she. "She hath stepped out some time since. And you wear a sword too! Indeed, you have as handsome an appearance with you as heart could desire."

"Know you what time she will re-

turn?" asked Master Francis, in some disappointment at not meeting with her.

"Nay, forsooth, how should I," answered the old woman with an indignant toss of her head, "seeing that she goeth out at all hours, and stayeth mayhap half the day, and no one knoweth a word of where she hath been. Well, they that live longest will see most. I be not so blind, Master Francis, as some folks think. I was not born yesterday, and the goings-on that I have seen would be a marvel to hear."

"If you know aught of Joanna that be not maidenly, you do not well in keeping it from me," said the youth.

"Maidenly!" exclaimed Dame Margery, with a very significant look, as she went and carefully closed the door. "I'faith, 'twould be strange indeed, could it be called maidenly. But, in honest truth, I like not to see you so imposed on. I have noticed, scores of times, with what an earnestness you do affect her, which hath the more shocked me to know how she misuses you. But if I tell you aught, how know I you will not tell of me again?"

"Be assured I will do no such thing," replied he.

"Indeed, she would be the ruin of me, knew she I told you of such matters," added the old woman, "for she be of a very revengeful nature, and of an exceeding bad heart, as is manifest by her letting me work my old bones till I be ready to drop; and she standing by as fine as you please, and never lending me a hand. There's many a time she might have said, 'Here be a dress of mine but little the worse for the wear, that be rather too tight in the sleeve—or, mayhap in the body—but, doubtless, 'twill fit you, dame, if you please to accept of it;' which she hath never done. In fact, the grace of God be not in her, that's a sure thing. And she be the wickedest deceitful creature that lives, for she hath oftentimes got me a rating of her father, when she might easy have prevented it. Forsooth, all the blame must come upon poor me, when I be as innocent as a babe."

"What hath come to your knowledge concerning of her unmaidenly doings?" said the youth, in a little impatience.

"Oh, scores of things, I warrant you," answered the dame, "and such things, that the speaking of them maketh me blush outright. Indeed, it be a most absolute truth that I be the virtuousest of women; and it be no other than a

burning shame in her to do what she hath, instead of following my excellent example. I never gave encouragement to a parcel of fellows, I warrant you. I never shut myself up in rooms with fine gallants—not I, by my troth! I never went nobody knows where, and stayed nobody knows how long, believe me! No! I was ever as discreet and modest as a virgin ought to be! that was I—and all the world knoweth it.”

“Well, but what have you got to tell me, dame?” inquired Master Francis, rather earnestly.

“I be coming to it, kind heart,” replied Margery. “Now, had it been my good fortune, at her years, to have met with such a sweet young gentleman as yourself, methinks I should have cared for no other; but she—she must entertain gallants by the score! Not only, forsooth, must she have a parcel of famous fine fellows to fill her head with nonsensical notions about love and the like—but she must needs have a few of meaner quality. Nay, for the matter of that, I do believe she be in no way particular. She liketh one as well as another, and careth only that there should be plenty of them. Would I have done such? I that was in such repute for the seriousness of my behavior, that no man dared so much as meddle with my kirtle? In honest truth, it be but five and twenty years last Martinmas”——

“But I have heard that before—I pray you, say at once what you have to tell me,” said the youth, still more impatiently.

“Ah! but I forgot I had told you of it,” continued the dame. “Well, then, to proceed. Often have I, going up the stairs in the dark, stumbled over some fellow sneaking out—who’d been after no good, I’ll be bound, by the suspicious manner of his getting away; and when I have come into the room suddenly, I have surprised her with some of her fine gallants sitting as close as you please to her—mayhap with his villanous arm round her waist. Would I have done such? I that—but no matter. Then I have heard such whisperings in corners as were awful to listen to. And there was that Ralph Goshawk”——

“What of him, dame?” inquired her companion suddenly.

“Oh! the paltry fellow! Oh! the fustian rogue! I could never abide his presence,” she added, as if in a monstrous indignation; “he would pass himself off for a gentleman, forsooth! and talk in as holyday terms as any lord: yet was he

nothing but a trumpery haberdasher, who had no higher employment than the measuring out a yard or so of sad-colored taffeta for some tapster’s widow. He be the impudentest varlet:—but I will acquaint you with what he did, Master Francis, no longer ago than last week, and you shall judge him for an unmannerly knave, as he is, that hath no respect for the virtueest of women. This was it. I was sitting in the low-backed arm-chair, that hath a cushion in it, by the side of the kitchen-fire, mending of master’s hose. I remember me, ’twas a pair of blue hose; for having no worsted of that color, I was obliged to go out as far as Jonathan Bodkins, at the next corner, to get me a halfpenny ball. But you must needs know I be obliged to mend all master’s hose, for she considereth herself too fine a lady to touch them;—and a famous labor be they, I do assure you, Master Francis, for master hath got a villanous fashion of wearing monstrous great holes in the heel, as big as a crown piece. Well, I was a putting in my stitches as closely as I might, when up comes this scurvy mealy-mouthed varlet, who had been sitting some two hours or more in the kitchen, talking the horriblest fustian to Joanna, about a certain Zenocrate (who was no better than she should be, I’ll lay a wager, or she never could have tolerated such a paltry fellow as he is); and he says to me, in his thundering fine swaggering air,—

‘And if thou pitiest Tamburlane the Great,—
Tell us, old woman, what o’clock it be.’

Oh! the scurvy villain! Oh! the fustian rapsallion!” continued she, seemingly in as great a rage as she could well be in, “to call me an old woman!—me that am not fifty yet. *He Tamburlane the Great!* A poor paltry twopenny-halfpenny haberdasher!—a swaggering rogue!—a very trumpery fellow, that hath no more respect for virtue than he hath for a rotten apple. Oh! I be out of all patience with his shameless impudency!”

“But what have you seen in his behavior to Joanna not proper in her to allow?” asked the youth, getting in some degree tired with the old woman’s garrulousness.

“Seen!” exclaimed Margery, throwing up her hands and eyes, in amazement; “what is it I have not seen?” Then she came nearer to him, wearing a face of exceeding mysteriousness, and dropping her voice a little, added,—“I have seen him paddle with the palm of her hand in a way that was awful for to see. The

paltry fellow! I have seen him give her the shockingest looks that eye ever lighted on. The scurvy villain! I have seen him so horribly familiar with her, that the like was never before known in an honest house. The fustian rogue as he is, to call me an old woman! And as for her, instead of giving him such a setting down as might have put him to the blush for the villanousness of his conduct, as would I in such a case, she would sit smiling at him most abominably by the hour together; nay, she has actually got up to dance with him a gullard, and behaved with so thorough a wantonness, that I have oft been obliged to take myself off to bed, my virtue could no longer abide such infamous doings.

"But worse than that, Master Francis," continued the old woman, with increasing indignation, while the countenance of the youth exhibited considerable uneasiness; and coming closer, with a look of greater mystery she added in a deep low voice,—“I have seen that which would make your hair stand on end to hear of;” then observing that his cheek became still paler, and his look more disturbed, she proceeded first giving a cautious glance at the door:—“listen to me and you shall hear all. Coming down stairs in the early morning to do the household work, I oft noticed, during this last winter, when I went to light the fire in this chamber, that there were live embers in the grate; which I knew could not have been unless a fire had been kept burning till within an hour or so of my coming down. From this I gathered that she set up o' nights. My chamber being nigh unto hers, put me upon keeping awake, to know for a certainty if such was the case. I listened and watched all the next night, and sure enough I heard my dainty madam creeping to her chamber, nigh unto six o'clock in the morning. The next thing was to discover what she set up for; for I hugely suspected she was not likely to sit up for nothing. But this was a hard matter to know, she being as close as a fox; so that there be no getting at what she be about. Yet had I known such things of her with that fustian rapsallion Ralph Goshawk, and others, that I was as good as certain she was after what she should not. Well, I kept a planning and scheming, in hopes of finding it all out, for I knew there was something villanous at the bottom of it; when one morning, an hour or two before my usual hour of rising, up gets I; and after creeping as softly as a mouse down

stairs, I saw by the light under this door that madam was there. I stood still and listened a bit; and as certain as I stand here, I heard a whispering. ‘Ahum!’ said I to myself, ‘you be at your tricks sure enough;’ then I just stooped down and took a peep through the keyhole, and there I saw,”—said the old woman, very slowly, and with great emphasis,—

“Saw what?” quickly inquired Master Francis, trembling so he could scarce stand.

“I saw Joanna and”—

“And who?”

“And a man!” cried Margery, starting back, her skinny lips puckered up, and her little sharp eyes fixed on him, with a stare of horror;—“but, hush!” she suddenly exclaimed, her wrinkled and yellow physiognomy changing its expression from intense indignation to extreme caution—“that be her foot on the stair: say not a word, I pray you, else shall I be ruined.” No sooner, however, had Joanna entered at the door, which she then did—looking more beautiful than ever, dressed as if from a walk—than, with a smile, the old woman hastened up to her.

“It be you beyond all doubt,” said she, as if overjoyed to see her, “as I was just a saying to this good youth. Indeed, and you have the sweetest bloom on your delicate cheek I have seen you wear a long time. I warrant me now, you have had a right pleasant walk.”

“Take these things and put them in my chamber,” said the mercer’s daughter to her, as she took off and gave into her hands her hat, muffler, and cloak.

“Ah, that will I upon the instant,” replied Margery, cheerfully; and then, as soon as Joanna’s back was turned from her, she gave a look full of meaning to Master Francis, put her finger to her lip, and hastened away.

During these few seconds the youth had been in a very agony of conflicting emotions. He seemed making up of his mind what to do; and yet there was such a tumult in him, of rage, and jealousy, and indignation, that he looked as if he knew not what he was about.

“I can scarce think that the voyage hath done you good, Francis,” observed Joanna, as she approached him—“for in truth you look not so well as you used.”

“Like enough,” replied he, bitterly—“ay, it be exceeding like indeed.”

“What aileth you?” she inquired, with much tenderness.

“Sick at heart! sick at heart!” quickly answered Master Francis—“sick of

the villanous deceits that have been played upon me. Like enough indeed to look not so well as I was. I went in the extreme comfort of thinking myself beloved by one I imagined to be possessed of a goodly store of all honorable virtues.—I return but to find that I have been the dupe of the very wickedest wanton that ever disgraced God's earth."

"What mean you by this?" asked the mercer's daughter, seemingly in great astonishment.

"What mean I?" exclaimed the youth, indignantly. "Hast done no ill thing?—hast given me no provocation to quarrel since I have been away, by the infamously of thy behavior?"

"None!" replied she, with exceeding earnestness. "I have done no ill thing: I have done nothing that should give you provocation to quarrel."

"Ha! and indeed?" cried her companion, now still more incensed against her; "dost tell me that, and come straight from the kisses of my Lord Cobham?" At hearing this the color mounted into her cheek a little, of which he took speedy notice and continued: "I see nature will take no part in so monstrous a lie. But I will at once confess that I was nearly as nigh unto you as I may be at this present, and heard all the shameless impudency of your proceedings. In truth, you have made of your lips a common, upon which every ass may find pasture. Go to! you are a wanton." And so saying, he turned away from her.

"I pray you, Francis, speak not in this way," said Joanna, in a very serious manner, and with a face somewhat troubled. "That my Lord Cobham hath caressed me, I acknowledge; but that I gave him any such return, is most untrue: and of aught worse than that done by me at any time, know I nothing."

"Dost think I can believe any such thing from you?" asked Master Francis, suddenly. "Dost think I know not more of such conduct?—even if 'twere not enough to condemn you by, as the stealing under a public gateway with one so noted, and going into hidden corners to be caressed by him. I tell you he be not the only one—nor Ralph Goshawk, whom you did unblushingly assure me you cared not for, to whom you have given such villanous encouragement; for I have knowledge of divers fine gallants that you must needs have to attend upon you, doubtless to afford you the like gratification. Nay, to such a pitch of shamelessness have you arrived, that it be known to more than

one you have a man with you in private the whole night long, and then do yourself secretly let him out into the street in the early morning. And this hath been done too when you have sworn you loved me alone! I do believe there existeth not in this world so deceitful a creature—one of so false a heart and of so profligate a nature—one so thoroughly lost to all sense of honor and of true affection. Why, the wretchedest woman that liveth upon her own iniquity, be no other than what she seems, and seeketh not to pass for anything better; but thou hast added hypocrisy to sin, and would hide the disposition of a wanton under the character of a vestal."

"Take heed," exclaimed the mercer's daughter, who, as she had listened, had become exceeding pale—her bosom heaved mightily—her brilliant eyes shot quick and uneasy glances, and, altogether, her appearance was that of one marvellously disturbed. "Take heed, Francis, I can bear much from you, but this—this I can not bear."

"'Tis less than you have deserved," replied he. "And now I have done with you. There!" he cried, as approaching her closely he dashed at her feet the chain of gold she had of his uncle—"there lies one of the gifts with which you have sought to bribe me into a toleration of your infamous doings. And here!" he added, as he followed it with a purse that seemed tolerably well filled—"here is that which will pay for the cost I have been to you in other things. Be assured it hath been honestly come by; and not like your costly presents and generous supplying of my wants—the liberal wages of a more liberal iniquity."

To this she answered not save by a slight gasping as if for breath; but her brow became darker, and the expression of her eyes unnatural.

"I now take my leave of you," added Master Francis in a voice somewhat tremulous. "I care not if I ever see you again. You have misjudged me hugely if you thought I was of such a nature as to tolerate for a single moment the infamy you have been about. Your judgment and your gifts have been equally misplaced. My heart is not one of so mean a sort as to suffer itself to be satisfied with the affections of a jilt; nor is my disposition so base as to suffer itself to be bribed by a"—

"Villain!" screamed Joanna, as she furiously clutched him by the throat with both her hands before the offensive word

had been spoken. "Dost think I can be maddened in this vile way, and bear it tamely! If thou hadest twenty lives they would scarce be atonement enough for so atrocious an insult. Thou hast traduced me. Thou hast spoken of me the horriblemest things—the falsest—vilest—wickedest matters that ever misused woman hath been forced to endure. Dost think to live? Dost hope for mercy that hath shown none? Thou hast tortured me into a raging madness! My heart is ready to burst—and my brain reels! But thy life shall be the forfeit. Thy life, villain—thy life!"

Master Francis was so seized by surprise that he seemed not to have had time to make any struggle, for she had grasped him with such exceeding violence that he had only the power to move up his arms a little and then let them fall; and his face grew black with an extreme suddenness, so that when she took away her hands from about his neck, his head fell back, and he was falling to the ground like one that is taken with a sudden death, when Joanna sprung forward and caught him in her arms.

"Why, I have not killed thee, sure!" exclaimed she, apparently in wonderful consternation. "Nay, it can not be!—Indeed, I meant it not! 'Twas but the madness of the moment. Oh! what a wretch have I been if I have done thee any hurt. Francis!—dear—dear Francis!—I will forgive all the vile things thou hast said of me if thou wilt not look at me so horribly. Move but a limb—breathe—or let me feel but the beating of thy heart. No—all be as still as a stone. Oh, God! he is dead—he is dead, and I have killed him!" So saying she clasped him close to her breast with many piteous sobs, and with the saddest wildest look eye ever beheld. Again she felt for his heart; but there was no beating; she looked to his lips, but they were slightly open, and breathed not at all; and eagerly watched all his limbs as if to observe the slightest movement, but the quietness of death seemed to be upon them. The eyelids were not quite closed, and little of the eyes save the white part was to be seen, which made them appear to look very ghastly and unnatural; and the delicacy of his complexion was scarce discernible for the discoloring of the skin, which marvelously increased his deathlike appearance.

"Alack!—what a sight is this! What a villanous thing have I done!" she con-

tinued as she kept kissing of his lips, and pressing of him to her bosom with a very heart-broken countenance. "I that have loved thee better than all the world beside, and would freely have given my own life to have saved thine! I know not what could have possessed me to lay hands on thee. Oh! 'twas a most horrid wickedness! Francis!—thou who hath ever been to me the gentlest, fondest, and best of creatures, and that I have loved more as a child of mine own than aught else. Oh! speak but a word, or my heart will break! Indeed, and on my life, and heart, and soul, and all things that be most sacred in this world—thou hast been most shamefully deceived in what thou didst say of me. I have done no such vileness. Alack!—Alack! He heeds me not!"

Then she carefully laid him down on the floor, and stood over him for the space of something more than a minute, wringing of her hands, and sobbing in such sort as none could see unmoved; when, suddenly, as if a thought had struck her, she began vigorously chafing of one of his hands with both hers, and then the other; and then she unfastened his doublet and chafed his breast in the same manner, lifting up with her other arm his head the whilst, which she pressed closely to her; and kissing of his forehead; and sobbing wonderfully; and ever and anon saying all sorts of endearing things to him. All at once he gave a slight gasp. At this she uttered such a scream of exultation that surely the like was never heard; and fell to a chafing of his breast with more vigorousness than ever—now laughing, now crying, now caressing of him, now pressing him fondly, in so wild and distracted a manner as was a marvel to look upon. In a little time he gave a stronger gasp; then two or three; then moved he his arms, sighing very heavily. Presently his eyelids opened more and he looked about him with a strange unconscious stare, and kept breathing with some sort of difficulty. The blackness went from his face, leaving it exceeding pale, and his lips got a little more color in them.

Seeing these things, Joanna grew so agitated that she was obliged gently to put his head again upon the ground whilst she stood up a bit. Then she pressed her temples in her hands, and seemed as if she was striving to collect her scattered thoughts. In a few moments she went to a cupboard and poured out some wine into a cup, with which

she presently returned to him, and setting his head against her shoulder, she poured the liquid down his throat. This appeared to produce a wonderful good effect, for in a few minutes his cheek lost much of its extreme pallidness; his eyes looked as if with some knowledge of where he was; and he breathed not so hard as he had done but a moment since. Making a movement as if to rise, Joanna placed her arm around his waist, and assisted him up; but she spoke not a word, nor had she done so since he had given such signs of his returning life as showed he had some consciousness of surrounding things.

In truth, she seemed in extreme perplexity as to how she should conduct herself. She knew not what to say, and scarce what to do. So monstrously ashamed was she that the violence of her passion should have led her into so great a wickedness as the attempting of his life, that she felt as if she could urge nothing in defence of it; and scarce dared look him in the face. Every moment she expected him to overwhelm her with reproaches; and the more she thought upon the matter, the more bewildered did she seem to get. At last, when she had got him to stand upright, and found he could do so without assistance, her uneasiness became so great, that she was obliged to leave him and lean upon the back of a chair for support. As for Master Francis, he was in such a state of mind, that he could not for some time, remember what had taken place. He looked about him like one amazed. He thought that something terrible had been done, but he knew not what. It happened that his gaze wandering about the room, met that of Joanna, who was watching him with great anxiety; and then, by degrees the whole scene, till he was deprived of consciousness, came upon his memory. At this, in a sort of horror, he shook in every limb, and looked as if he was about to fall; which seeing, Joanna, regardless of all else but his safety, hastened to support him; but the weakness was only momentary, and gently pushing her from him, with a look of mingled terror and dislike, he turned from her, and slowly left the room.

Joanna moved not, and turned not her eyes from him till the door closed, when she had just strength left to totter to a chair; were she was found about an hour afterward by Dame Margery, with her arm thrown over the back, and her head

leaning on it, in a state of complete insensibility.

CHAPTER XVI.

— nature only helpt him, for looke thorow
This whole book, thou shalt find he doth not borrow
One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,
Nor once from vulgar languages translate.

DIGGES.

Dawberry. Whither speeds his boldness?

Check his rude tongue, great sir!

King Henry. O, let him range:

The player's on the stage still, 'tis his part;
He does but act.

FORD.

Now before Jove, admirable! By Phœbus, my
sweet facetious rascal, I could eat water-gruel with
thee for a month, for this jest, my dear rogue.—
BEN JONSON.

A NUMEROUS party were assembled in one of the queen's withdrawing-rooms, consisting principally of the ladies of her court, to hear Master Shakspeare read a new play which he had writ upon her majesty's suggestion, as hath been described. Master Shakspeare stood with his back to the light, and his face to the queen, reading of his manuscript, with his audience in a half circle before him, in the centre of which sat Queen Elizabeth in her chair of state, looking exceedingly pleased, and dressed with marvellous grandeur; having at her right hand the earl of Essex attired very gorgeously, and leaning on her majesty's chair with the air of one that is privileged to say what he lists, ever and anon making of such remarks as the circumstances seemed to give good warrant for; and joining in her majesty's mirth, whenever it was exhibited, with a heartiness which showed that in such instances, to play the courtier was nothing but natural to him. It was remarked of all, that never had the queen looked so gracious, for she kept turning and smiling upon the handsome nobleman at her side, and saying of this thing and that thing after so amiable a fashion; and commended Master Shakspeare so liberally, that the whole court were moved with admiration. All present appeared in an excellent fine humor, and listened with the very profoundest attention. Some looked to be in a continual smile—others frequently did indulge themselves with a giggle—and some few, who seemed as though they could not confine their mirth within such modest bounds, must needs laugh aloud.

By this time Master Shakspeare had got into the third act of his play, which hath become so singularly liked of the

world, under the title of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and that it lacked nothing in the reading of it is beyond all possibility of doubt. Indeed it may be said, without starting from the truth any great way, so altered he his voice, and expressed he the dialogue with such a natural manner, that any one, at the shutting of his eyes, might have fancied he heard many different persons. In truth, there wanted no more actors. He was the whole dramatis personæ in himself. This excellent talent of his made his hearers receive the scene of the challenge between the choleric Welchman and the equally incensed French doctor, in the field nigh unto Frogmore, with wonderful admiration. But when came Sir John Falstaff put into the buck-basket by the merry wives, and the account he gives of it to the jealous husband, surely nothing could exceed the delight with which it was received.

"In honest truth, Master Shakspeare," cried the queen very merrily, "that fat knight of yours is like to make our sides ache. Oh, the absolute villain! Oh, the monstrous rogue! P'faith 'tis in excellent conceit. We are taken with the humor of it mightily. What say you, my lord," exclaimed the queen, turning to her favorite, "doth it not seem to you as ridiculous as heart could wish?"

"Please your majesty, never have I been so taken with any play," replied the Lord Essex. "It hath in it a wonderful store of wit certainly—indeed, I take it to be as rare a device of the mind as was ever writ."

"What say you, my Lady Howard," inquired her majesty, turning round to the Lady Howard of Walden, who was to the left of her, "think you the villainous old fellow was well served of those merry wives, by being stuffed into the buck-basket, and then cast into the ditch at Datched mead?"

"Indeed, please your majesty, methinks he had the very properest reward for his abominable impudency," answered her ladyship. "I would have served him worse, for I would have had the greasy rogue smothered to death, or drowned outright."

"Nay, that's too bad of you," observed the queen, "'twould be but right to let him live and repent him of his misdoings. But, odds my life, he be so droll a fish none should have the heart to kill him."

"O' my word, so think I," added my Lord Essex, "your majesty hath expressed the very drift of my mind in this. I

must say I like the varlet hugely, and consider a ducking or so a very fitting punishment for his offences."

"Nay, I think it be monstrous of him, at his time of life, that he should be galling of two women at once—and they married too!" cried Lady Blanche Somerset, who was somewhat of a prude.

"*Married two!*" exclaimed my Lord Bumble, who had heard not enough of what had passed to give him a proper knowledge of the matter. "Married two did he? that be clean bigamy: that is to say, if he had marriage of one while the other was above ground; but if one of the two shall have become a defunct, then shall there be no harm in't."

"Proceed, Master Shakspeare," said the queen; and not without a smile at the mistake of her lord in waiting, which seemed to have amused many. "We are marvellously anxious to learn how Sir John speeds in his wooing."

Master Shakspeare had said nothing hitherto, yet did he seem in no way abashed at being among so many people of worship, for he turned his intelligent eyes from one to the other as either spoke, as if regarding with some amusement the variety of characters before him, as each displayed some distinct feature in what was said, or in the manner of saying it. Then fell he to the perusing of the fourth act, in the very first scene of which, where the Welsh parson is trying of the boy in his Latin grammar, the queen once or twice did put up her fan and giggled very prettily, and thereupon her ladies seemed wonderfully confused, and giggled also; and the lords and gentlemen smiled somewhat: but when in the next scene Sir John Falstaff is in such a wonderful anxiousness to escape, in consequence of Mistress Page bringing intelligence of Master Ford being a coming from birding, with a whole company to search the house for him; and the jealousy of the husband is made so manifest, and he beateh the old knight in his disguise, taking him for to be the fat woman of Brentford, whose dress he wear-eth, every one appeared to laugh till their ribs were like to crack.

"Better and better!" exclaimed the queen, in evident delight, when he came to the ending of the act. "These be merry wives indeed! P'faith 'tis the difficultest thing possible to say which serve they out the best—Master Jealous-pate the husband, or that huge piece of roguery Sir John Falstaff. Is it not so, my lord?"

"Without doubt," replied my Lord Essex, "nothing have I seen in play or history so painted to the life. That your majesty hath extreme discrimination in the detection of that which be most admirable where there is much excellence, what hath just fallen from you proves."

"Nay, my lord, you flatter," said her majesty, smiling upon him all the time very graciously. "We have but an indifferent judgment in these things. Our opinion must be scarce worth the having. Mayhap we have just wit enough to know the good from the bad: but, indeed, that be all our poor knowledge can lay claim to."

"That will I never believe, please your majesty," cried my Lord Henry Howard, who was close behind her chair. "For of all human creatures that breathed, never met I one that came at all nigh unto your majesty in niceness of judgment; not only upon such matters as are now honored with your infinite condescension, but in all things whatsoever, whether they be of the simplest or of the difficultest nature to comprehend."

"You think too well of us, my lord," observed the queen, evidently taking what was said in very good part. "It be but as we have expressed it. Such knowledge as we possess must needs be but small."

"By my troth, then, the wisdom of all else must be none at all, please your majesty," exclaimed the Lady Howard; "for as it is beyond all contradiction that your majesty's wisdom toppeth that of the wisest of our time to an extent that be wonderful to observe, if, as your majesty is pleased to say, it must needs be but small, the smallness of the wisest of your subjects can not but be of such sort as may not be visible. But 'tis the modesty of your majesty's disposition that leadeth you to say this."

"Indeed, her majesty is noted for an exceeding modesty," said Lady Blanche Somerset.

"That be a true thing!" cried my Lord Bumble, who leaned forward with his head a little on one side, to catch with his ear, as well as his deafness would allow, the purport of what was said. "Her majesty is noted of all for an exceeding modest eye."

"O' my life, my Lord Bumble, that be the prettiest blunder we have met with a long time," exclaimed the queen, in an infinite pleasant humor, while there was no lack of smiling and tittering among the courtiers, at the mistake.

"As your majesty says, it be the prettiest wonder we have met with a long time," added the old lord, who, from the great length of his service in the palace, was oft allowed by the queen a greater license than had many others of more influence. "By this hand, know I not a prettier wonder in the whole world than such a modest eye. 'Tis a marvel to look on. There be no such another anywhere."

"Alack then, are we blind of an eye!" cried her majesty, laughingly; which conceit did so tickle the fancy of those around her, that the mirth it created was in such excess, and the commendation it received was so abundant, that, surely no wit had been ever so received. All this time, my Lord Bumble fearful, by the general laughter, that he had said something amiss, did keep turning from one to the other, in extreme consternation, as if to learn by their faces what strange error he had had the ill hap to commit.

"Now, Master Shakspeare," exclaimed the queen, "we are wonderfully desirous of learning what next these merry wives of yours shall do with that fat knight."

At this Master Shakspeare, on whom it may well be believed nothing had been lost of the preceding conversation, did go on with the reading of his play. The description of how Sir John Falstaff, in the last act, was cozened into the taking upon him the disguise of Herne the hunter, and how he was tormented by the pretended fairies when he lay under the oak in Windsor forest, hoping there to have much pleasure with Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, according to their appointment; and how they and their husbands did jeer and laugh when they came upon him in his concealment, was taken in huge delight of all parties; but the manner in which Ann Page tricked the simpleton Master Slender, and the choleric old French doctor, by getting each of them to run away with a boy, dressed up in such clothes as they expected to find her in, while she went and got married to her own love, seemed to be liked best of all.

"An admirable ending, Master Shakspeare," exclaimed the queen, in her most gracious manner, at the conclusion of it. "We like that mum and budget conceit infinitely; indeed the whole play is one of exceeding meritoriousness; and be assured that we will go to the playhouse the first time it shall be acted." At the hearing of this, all the courtiers did join in commendation of the play, as if one

was striving to exceed the other in the liberality of his praise.

"If there be any merit in it, please your majesty," said Master Shakspeare, respectfully, "without doubt 'tis owing to your majesty's infinite condescension, in having desired of me the production of such a play; therefore I can not say the merit be mine, but must, in proper honesty, give it to the illustrious source from which it sprung."

This speech appeared to give her majesty great satisfaction, for she looked well pleased at it; and the ladies around her spoke to one another in commendation of Master Shakspeare's modesty, and did regard him with a wonderful pleased aspect.

"Nay, you shall do yourself no such wrong," replied the queen, with a kindness of manner that was truly admirable; the performance is of your sole invention, to the which we have contributed not one line; therefore in no case can we claim the smallest partnership in the merit. We have been hugely taken with that fat knight of yours all along, and we have found so much gratification in the very proper treatment of him by the merry wives, that we shall think the better of Windsor for containing such."

At this the courtiers began a praising of her majesty's liberality, for so handsomely denying having any share in the excellence of what at least had been done at her instigation; and in consequence thereof she might justly, they said, have claimed some part of the merit; and all, marvelling at the extreme pleasantness of her majesty's humor, did anticipate that it would be to Master Shakspeare's profit. In that it seemed, from what immediately followed, they were not without some grounds.

"Think you there is aught in which we could do you a service?" inquired the queen.

"That is there, please your majesty, I should like done of all things," answered Master Shakspeare.

"Speak, then, what you would have; and if it be within modest bounds, it shall be granted," added the queen.

"Please your majesty, 'tis but for the pardon of a distressed friend of mine, that hath the ill hap to offend your majesty," said Master Shakspeare, with exceeding urgency; "he is one of most notable good parts; as gallant a gentleman that breathes; infinite in his accomplishments, and princely in his disposition; who hath borne himself so on

manifold occasions, as is alike honorable to your majesty, whom it was once his pride and happiness to serve; and creditable to himself, who now languisheth in a prison in utter hopelessness, at having, in some misguided moment, incurred your majesty's displeasure. I will wager my life he is heartily sorry for what he hath done amiss; and that there lives not in this bountiful world one who, if he were allowed, would serve your majesty with more honesty, valor, and devotedness."

"And who may this distressed friend of yours happen to be?" asked the queen, in some degree pleased to meet with one of such a nature as would rather ask for another than for himself.

"Sir Walter Raleigh," replied he.

Thereupon every one did look amazed at Master Shakspeare's imprudence, and the queen's brow grew black of a sudden.

"We are astonished that you could find no better request to make," observed the queen, somewhat angrily; yet in her heart wondering that there should come before her one so bold as, in his first request of her, to plead for a disgraced favorite. "He hath done us such extreme dishonor as surely never before did crowned queen suffer of a subject. We have had him placed where he shall have time to repent him of such shameful misdoings; and there 'tis our good pleasure he shall remain. As for yourself, Master Shakspeare, you have done greatly amiss in speaking of such a traitor. It seemeth to us somewhat overbold of you. Go your ways, sir, and when we next allow of your asking of us a favor, see that it contains no such offensive matter."

At this Master Shakspeare bowed very low, yet with a marvellous dignity, that was the admiration of all, and was about to depart from the presence, when my Lord of Essex, who, notwithstanding his exceeding pride, and jealousy of any that did seem to interfere with his supremacy, was possessed of some noble qualities, thought to put in a word for him.

"Please your majesty," said he, "it be all out of the very honesty of Master Shakspeare's nature, that he hath said this, I will be bound for it. My honorable friend the Lord Southampton, hath given me great commendation of him; and I do assure your majesty he is in excellent good report of all men. What he hath urged in behalf of his friend is in the manner natural; and methinks he might escape blame without

any dishonor to your majesty, whose bountifulness of heart can in no way suffer by it. I pray you, let not what he hath said move you against him, for I for one, who it may be supposed am not like to go out of my way to say aught upon the matter, do consider that Sir Walter Raleigh hath the requisites of a very noble gentleman."

Now the courtiers knew not which to marvel at most—the imprudence of Master Shakspeare in requesting pardon for his friend, or the magnanimity of my Lord of Essex in speaking in favor of his rival; but the consequence of my lord's speaking was, that the queen did give Master Shakspeare a more gracious dismissal than she seemed before inclined to do; and acknowledged that she believed her captain of the guard had many commendable qualities: and it now appeared to those around her, a greater marvel than all, that her majesty should say this when it was known he had done her so grievous a wrong.

Master Shakspeare made all haste from the palace to the lodgings of Master Burbage in Cheapside, in great disappointment that he had succeeded no better for Sir Walter Raleigh, whom he greatly esteemed; yet in some hope that the consequences would not be to his disadvantage. He found his friend dressed, and on the point of going out.

"Ha, Will!" exclaimed he, as soon as the other entered the room, "How liketh the queen thy new play? Doth it please her? Dost think 'twill draw her to the playhouse? How was it taken among the noble lords and fair ladies of the court?"

"I prythee have patience, Dick," replied Master Shakspeare, sitting of himself down awhile, "I will answer thy questions as speedily as I may. The queen liketh my new play well—it doth please her, because she liketh it—she will be at the playhouse the first time of its performance, because it pleaseth her—and the noble lords and fair ladies were taken with it exceedingly, because it was exceedingly taken of the queen."

"Bravo, Will! thou answerest marvellously to the purpose," cried Master Burbage, cutting a caper, as if the intelligence was hugely to his liking.

"F'faith, 'tis well that thou art pleased," remarked the other, "for I had need of half a dozen tongues to do justice to thy questions, they come so thick upon one."

"Tongues! Talk not to me of tongues, I prythee," exclaimed his companion, in

seeming anger. "Thou hast one of such a sort that it requireth no other to help it. O' my life, I do believe thou couldst wheedle the moon into a nut-shell—thou hast got such a tongue. Didst thou not cut me out with the mercer's daughter, and be hanged to thee?"

"Indeed I fared no better than thyself in that quarter, believe me," said Master Shakspeare.

"No!" cried Master Burbage, in extreme astonishment. "What, did she not become villanously in love with thee? Did she not give thee most exquisite, fond entertainment? Didst thou not, now, in honest truth, find her 'a most delicious creature,' as thou didst say to me through the keyhole—thou aggravating villain!"

"In honest truth, then, Dick, I must answer to all thy questions—no!"

"Ha! ha! ha! 'tis good! 'tis excellent good!" exclaimed Master Burbage, and he began to caper about the room, seemingly in a monstrous delight. "That be the pleasantest news I have heard a long time; and, in truth, thou hast been but rightly served for the very heathenish wickedness thou didst commit, of cutting me out with her."

"Nay, I do assure thee, Dick, I knew not, till within a minute or so of thy coming, that thou wert at all of her acquaintance; and I then was resolved to have some sport at thy expense, merely because of thy having disparaged me to her, and claiming for thyself the merit of my best verses."

"Ah, that was done out of no malice, thou shouldst be well aware I said it but out of vanity, and would have been the very first to tell thee of it again. By this light, Will! I do think it lawful to tell a pretty woman anything. I would swear to her I was the greatest, wisest, faithfulest of men, if I thought she would believe me. I would brave it out with her I was the pope of Rome, or the Great Mogul, or even one of the Anthropophagi, if it looked as if 'twould advantage me in my suit. Nay, Ovid himself knoweth not the metamorphoses I would undergo under such circumstances. Dost think they would have no disguises? Dost think they stand upon the saying of anything with us? By this hand, I would as soon expect to find sunbeams in a snowball, as truth in a pretty woman. Ask of her if she love thee, she shall answer 'no' straight, when be sure she hath 'yes' in her heart all the time. Attempt to lay siege to her lips, she shall presently frown and seem in a monstrous to-do,

but so completely doth her nature assent to it, that do but persist for a sufficient time, and make no doubt the citadel shall surrender at discretion."

"I do believe, Dick, thou knowest very little of the matter," observed Master Shakspeare. "Thou art like to a many more I have met with, that can speak bravely of the difficultest things, but question them close of their knowledge, and they shall be proved as ignorant as a dead horse."

"None of thy dog's meat similes," exclaimed Master Burbage, as if in some disdain: "I tell thee 'tis a subject that none have studied closer than have I—I have entered into it thoroughly. I have pursued my investigations (albeit though it be a matter so exceeding profound that no one ever got to the bottom on't) as deep as have any. But tell me, Will, how did it happen that, notwithstanding of thy villany in cutting of me out, for the which I now heartily do forgive thee, thou hadst no better luck with the incomparable Joanna."

"She told me that she loved a youth for whom I entertained great friendship," replied his companion, "and thereupon did I desist of my intentions toward her out of respect to him. She did speak to me of him with marvellous earnestness; and knowing that he had such excellence as well deserved her praise, I joined with her in such commendation. But liking not the character of her behavior to me previous to this avowal, which was that of one who in appearance is indifferent to admiration, and yet doth encourage the admirer, I spoke to her upon the possible mischief of it to herself, as much as to those whose advances she allowed of; and the palpable injustice of it to my young friend, Master Francis, whom thou hast seen with me once or twice. Upon this she sought to defend herself upon the plea, that if she could without sinfulness create the happiness of others, she thought there could be no harm in so doing to ever so many. But I straightway gave her to understand that the philosophy of love be the possession of the beloved object; and assured her it was a truth beyond all dispute, that no real lover ever yet existed who did not at some time or other hope to possess his mistress."

"Spoke like an oracle, Will, as thou art," said the other.

"I said also," continued Master Shakspeare, "that one of so much beauty of person and kindliness of heart, as she seemed to be, might, without the com-

mission of any apparent criminality, create a present pleasure of no ordinary kind among such as may be content with affectionate looks and sugared phrases—but no man that truly loveth will remain all his life so easily contented; and the present pleasure will in all likelihood be turned to a continual misery, when he finds, as find he must, 'tis all profitless and inconclusive."

"That be indisputable!" observed Master Burbage. "'Tis marvellous pleasant certainly for a pretty woman to say she loveth thee, but if that be the full extent of her love, then is her parrot to be as much envied as art thou. I'd be none of such parrots, I promise thee, Will. I would hop her perch in a twinkling."

"But more than all," continued his companion, smiling at what had dropped from the other, "I dwelt particularly on the impossibility of her creating such happiness with any honesty. The happiness that may be created at the expense of another can never be defended. Master Francis I knew had given her his exclusive affections, and he naturally looked for, and imagined himself possessed of, hers to the same extent. Any division of her love to another, I told her was not only an injustice to him, but, as the knowledge of it was very like to make him uneasy, it would decidedly be at the expense of his happiness. It so happened, that in a play of some merit Master Francis showed me on our first acquaintance, there were certain passages marvellously to the purpose on this very point, which hath since given me reason to believe he had some suspicion of her true character, and wrote it as in the nature of an exposition, hoping she would mend. I know not whether I quite succeeded in proving to her her error; but I fear much for my young friend if she alter not speedily. I know that, though of a truly modest disposition, he may be easily moved; and as for Joanna, I think she is one of a very insatiate vanity and selfishness, and seeketh with great cunning to be admired of as many as she can with a little peril to her virtue as possible; or else she is one of those well-meaning, inconsiderate creatures who cajole themselves with the belief, that as long as they do what at the first blush appeareth no absolute harm, the greater degree of pleasure they may be able to create around them, the greater degree of good will they be enabled to produce; which, under those circumstances, is nothing better than a

robbery of one to be shared among many."

"Well, let her rob and go hang," cried Master Burbage impatiently, "I've had enough of her; and if ever I be caught going after a mercer's daughter again, tickle me with a fishhook. It hath cost me a world in moneys expended with her father in such braveries as methought would the sooner win me her love and his good will, and I have got about as much by it as I might kick my shins against without fear of a hurt. A plague on all mercers' daughters, say I; and as for that cot-quean Joanna, I have a huge suspicion her lip is like a nutmeg in a vintner's parlor—every one may have the flavor on't when he lists. She hath gone clean out of my opinion. I'll have none of her."

"That's a most magnanimous resolution of thine, Dick," said Master Shakspeare laughingly, "considering she'll have none of thee."

"By this hand, she loved me as flies love sugar!" exclaimed the other.

"As flies love pepper, thou shouldst have said, Dick," observed his companion; "for I do assure thee she acknowledged to me that she heeded thy fine compliments as a thrifty housewife does a litter of kittens she be pitching all of a lump into the next pool."

"Ha! said she so? the little villain!" cried Master Burbage. "But it matters not—I have done with her. And now attend to me, I prythee, for I have more attractive matter in hand."

"Another Joanna?" inquired Master Shakspeare maliciously.

"Another polecat!" sharply replied the other. "I tell thee, Will, I but want thy assistance to have such sport as we have not seen together this many a day."

"Surely thou wouldst seek of me no more verses?" said his companion archly.

"Verses! hang thy verses!" answered Master Burbage.

"Well, if thou wilt hang them, let it be with one of the *lines* I have been so oft obliged to borrow of thee when I came to a halt in my measure," observed the other with exceeding seriousness.

"By this light, thou art like a woman that hath left off having children—thou art past bearing," said his associate, as if in some sort of vexation. "But listen now, I prythee: thou knowest my Lords Simple and Dimple?"

"What, our Damon and Pythias? our Castor and Pollux? our David and Absalom?" asked his friend with a laugh.

"To be sure I know them. There exists not a pair of fools so well matched throughout these realms."

"Thou hast it, Will," added Master Burbage, in a like humor. "They are precious fools indeed—as innocent as lambskins, and as loving as turtles. They seem born of Folly, and twinned at a birth. P'faith they seem such sworn friends that one might as well expect to meet with but one pannier on an ass as one of these lords without the other. Now, methinks such pestilent affectations should be put down. I like them not: and doubtless 'twould be exquisite sport could we two set this Damon and Pythias by the ears so completely, that they shall not only be eager to forswear each other's company, but that there shall be so deadly a quarrel betwixt them, that they shall presently out with their tools, and appear to thrust away so nimbly, that it shall be a difficult matter to say which be the most ready to destroy the other."

"I like the humor of it vastly," replied Master Shakspeare, who seemed to enter into the jest with great spirit—"indeed 'tis exceeding well concerted. But there must be no mischief come of it."

"Mischief!" exclaimed the other, as if in some astonishment at the idea. "Nay, Will, make thy mind easy on that score. If ever they come nigh enough with their weapons to hurt each other, then am I no judge of true valor: but we will be ready to interfere in case they shall be bent upon anything deadly."

"Well, 'tis a goodly scheme," said his companion, "and I doubt not 'twill afford marvellous proper sport. But how dost mean to set about it?"

"In this way, sweet Will," replied Master Burbage. "About this time we may make sure of finding these faithful shepherds taking of their customary walk toward Finsbury Fields, discoursing in very delicate phrase of the delights of friendship. We will then be upon them. Thou shalt draw one aside and I the other, and with well asserted accounts of what one hath said and done in contempt of the other, we will move both to a monstrous furiousness."

"'Tis admirable, Dick!" cried Master Shakspeare, starting up in evident delight. "I do commend thy wit hugely, in the devising of so superlative a piece of wickedness; and, mayhap, it shall afford thee a far more exquisite pleasure than did thy aims upon the mercer's daughter."

"Hang the mercer's daughter!" ex-

claimed his companion, seemingly in some dudgeon. "By this light I would not throw away a thought on so errant a jade."

"The grapes be sour, Dick," said the other mischievously.

"Grapes! grapes, quotha!" cried Master Burbage, with a well-assumed indignation. "Yes, she shall be thought such when grapes do grow on thorns and figs on thistles."

"Oh, thou perjured piece of villany!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, laughing very heartily. "Dost remember when thou first spoke of her to me in my lodging at the Bankside, how, in a feverish ecstasy, thou didst assert that she had an eye like Venus, a bust like Juno, and every grace that all Olympus possessed?"

"That was out of the very generosity of my disposition, I do assure thee, Will," added his companion, with as serious a face as he could put on. "Thou knowest I am ever inclined to make the best of matters at all times, let them be ever so bad; but believe me, her teeth be like park palings after a hurricane; and her nose hath an exceeding resemblance to an onion running to seed—it doth sprout up so abominably."

"Alack, that disappointed vanity should make of thee such a thorough slanderer!" cried Master Shakspeare. "If she be not as pretty a piece of womanhood as eye ever dwelt on delightedly, then know I not what is perfection in comeliness. All the harm I could say of her is, that in my thinking she is either mightily deceiving herself, or deluding others to a similar extent—mayhap, there shall be something of both when the truth cometh to be known; and I blame her only because I feel assured there will mischief happen of it either to one party or the other—like enough to all. But come along with thee, and let us after these lords."

Saying this, the two friends started off, and laughing and jesting all the way, they made for Finsbury Fields, out by Cripplegate. Here had they scarce arrived when lo! they spied my Lords Simple and Dimple very soberly a strolling together for to take the air, in the direction of the windmills; and so earnest in talk, they knew not that the two players were close upon them, endeavoring all they could not to laugh aloud; and nudging of each other on the elbow when anything fell from them which was more than ordinary ridiculous.

"Now, Simple, thou art in the wrong

there," said one, as if with great seriousness. "Thou knowest I am fully two days older than art thou; therefore, if, as I before said, some tyrant should order us to be executed to the death, I would have precedency of thee, and suffer first."

"By this glove, that would I never allow!" exclaimed the other with extreme eagerness. "What, shall it be said that such a true heart as am I, should allow his friend to die before him? I tell thee, Dimple, it must not be. I will set thee such an example of friendship as shall do thee infinite good to look on; and shall be a marvel to the world ever after."

"It is for me to set the example, who am the oldest," cried Dimple, more seriously than at first. "I claim it of natural right, which will I never give up; and peradventure it shall happen as I have said, then shalt thou wonder to see how heroic I will behave myself—ay, with such a strength of soul, that the name of Dimple shall be engraved on monuments of adamant unto latest posterity."

"If I let thee, then am I no true friend," replied Simple, with a more earnest eagerness. "I will have it so. I would give way to none in so vital a matter. Indeed it *must* be. Then will I astonish human nature—then—"

"Indeed it shall never be, my lord!" exclaimed the first, as if in some way nettled—"I am the elder, and if I die not first, then will I know the reason why."

"My lord, you do ill in disputing upon this," observed the other somewhat warmly. "'Tis my particular wish to suffer before you, and I will have it so."

"You be no true friend for wishing what be against my inclination, and I will not suffer it," said Dimple, as if getting into a rage.

"You be a scurvy fellow, if you say I be no true friend," replied Simple angrily.

"What caitiff! dost call me scurvy fellow?" shouted one in a very monstrous fierceness.

"My lords, this be a marvellous sight, indeed!" exclaimed Master Burbage, now breaking in upon them with as grave a face as he could assume for the occasion, and leading of Dimple on one side behind one of the windmills, whilst Master Shakspeare did the same with Simple. "Between ourselves, my lord," added he, "you do exceeding right in quarrelling with this person. He hath no proper estimation of your lordship's excellent parts. I did myself hear him

say that you had no more brains than a maggot."

"He lies in his throat!" furiously cried my Lord Dimple. "I will prove on his villainous body that I have more brains than fifty maggots."

"My Lord Simple," said Master Shakspeare very concernedly, "I think 'tis exceeding strange that you should hold acquaintance with one who hath said you are of so faint a heart, you would not draw upon a snail for fear he should run at you."

"Oh! the pitiful traitor!" shouted my Lord Simple in a tearing passion. "By this glove, there liveth not on this earth the snail that I am afraid of."

"See! he is going to draw upon you, my lord!" said Master Burbage. "I pray you out with your weapon quick, or he shall take you unawares, and mayhap, give you a mortal wound."

"Prepare you, my lord, quickly," cried Master Shakspeare. "He hath his weapon out, and cometh with deadly mischief in his eyes."

"Thou villain, Dimple!"

"Thou villain, Simple!" shouted both at the same moment of time, as they came furiously on with their drawn weapons and began a thrusting at each other, though, without doubt, at a wonderful respectful distance, after as fierce a fashion as might be possible to behold. But this continued not for long—for suddenly they dropped the points of their rapiers, upon hearing of such a burst of laughter as startled them exceedingly, and looking round, observed Master Burbage a holding of his sides, and Master Shakspeare with his hand before his mouth. The two lords, upon this, looked as if they knew not what to make of it.

"Didst say I had no more brains than a maggot, my lord?" inquired Dimple, as if wonderfully moved.

"By this glove, no," replied Simple, with exceeding gravity. "For, if thou hadst no more brains than half a maggot, it be not the part of such a true heart as am I, to say it of his friend. But didst thou assert I was of so faint a heart, I would not draw upon a snail for fear he should run at me?"

"By all true friendship, never asserted I aught of the kind," answered the first with a monstrous seriousness. "For, if thou wouldst not draw upon half a snail, I would assert it to none, because I could never do so unfriendly a thing."

"These players be making fools of us," whispered the other as he put up

his weapon. "Let us away from them."

"They be low fellows, that's a sure thing," replied his friend as he sheathed his weapon. "So we'll e'en have none of their villainous company." Upon this both went off together as quick as they might; and in no way relishing the mirth that was so loudly shouted from behind them.

"Oh! Dick, Dick!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, as seriously as he could, "thou hast spoiled the most exquisite sport: 'tis a thousand pities thou shouldst have broken out into a laugh."

"Laugh!" cried Master Burbage, still holding of his sides; "'twould have made a man laugh that had been dead this seven year. Never saw I so rare a sight! they skipped about like two fleas on a bolster! O' my life, 'twould be no easy matter to say which was the most afraid of the two. And then the terrible fierceness of their looks, and the awful manner in which they made their thrusts, compared with the monstrous safe distance at which they kept from the point of each other's weapon, made me roar again. By this hand, I would not have missed so fine a jest for half my share of the playhouse."

"But who have we here?" said his friend, pointing to a man who was making up to them, wearing at his side a rapier of extraordinary length.

"I'faith he taketh care he may be known by a goodly weapon, at least," observed the other; "but see, here come two others across the fields, from t'other side."

"And beyond all doubt one of them is my young friend, Master Francis," exclaimed Master Shakspeare.

The person first alluded to, whom the courteous reader will have no great difficulty in recognising, as soon as he came nigh unto the two players, stopped, placing his right foot a little forward, one arm stretched out, and the other a-kimbo, as was usual with him, and thus addressed them:—

"Look on, great princes! for 'tis I who come
To rend the world with adamantine groans,
And suck sweet horror from the empty air.
Then let some holy trance convey my thoughts
Up to the palace of th' empyreal heaven,
That this my life may be as short to me
As are the days of sweet Zenocrate."

Master Burbage, upon this speech, did nudge his companion on the elbow, and look as if he were marvellously inclined for another laugh.

"Attend not to him, I pray your wor-

ship," shouted Harry Daring, as he, with Master Francis, hastily approached the spot, cudgel in hand; "there be no more truth in him than you shall find in an empty walnut."

"Casane and Theridamas, to arms!"

now cried Ralph Goshawk, in exactly the same posture as he had used at first:—

"Raise, cavaleros higher than the clouds,
And with the cannon break the frame of heaven;
Batter the shining palace of the sun,
And shiver all the starry firmament."

"I am right glad to see you, Master Francis," said Master Shakspeare, shaking of his young friend heartily by the hand; "but I pray you tell me what all this may mean."

"Please your worship, that will I tell you straight," said Harry Daring, as soon as he heard the question. "You must know that this be my particular friend, Master Francis, who be as sweet a gentleman as you shall find anywhere, and I will undertake to prove it with any weapon, against all comers; and he, as be but proper for one in his condition, happened for to look with a sort of affectionateness upon a comely wench;—albeit I of late have had some suspicion her virtue be somewhat out at elbows; when up cometh this fellow, who, for all he may appear so bounceable, be nothing more than a rubbishing haberdasher; and taketh the opportunity, to use some devilish potion or another, for the ruin of my friend's mistress,—which I hugely suspect he hath accomplished;—thereupon Master Francis sendeth him a challenge by me purposing here to meet him, and punish him for his villany; upon the which he breaketh out into such language as would make a dog vomit to hear of, were he within a mile of it, and straightway calleth him 'Zenocrate.' Upon the which, I, taking it to be some vile name it was not proper for me to put up with, did on the instant fetch the pitiful villain such a punch under his ribs, that it made him cry out like a scalded pig; and here have I brought my true friend to do him battle, as becometh a gentleman who hath received so deadly an offence as to have his mistress ruined away from him, and then called such a horrid name as Zenocrate."

"Am I to gather from this that you intend to fight this person?" asked Master Shakspeare.

"I am here for that purpose," replied Master Francis.

"Well, I will at least see that you have fair play," said his friend; "but methinks 'tis not honest of him to come with so monstrous a weapon."

"If it please you, sir, to let me fight the villain instead of my friend, I would thank you for it," observed Harry Daring, earnestly. "I care not for his monstrous weapon, I promise you. Nay, by Gog and Magog, if I am not hindered, I will undertake to beat him out of the field with this my cudgel."

"Harry, I have told thee before, he must be left to me," replied Master Francis determinedly.

"But you must fight with equal weapons, my masters," cried Master Burbage; "'tis not fair, Master Haberdasher, to come to the field with a thing at your side long enough for the devil's tooth-pick."

"Art not ashamed to bring such a villainous tool before gentlemen of worship?" inquired Harry Daring, flourishing of his cudgel before Ralph Goshawk, as if he did itch to let fly at him.

"What daring god torments my body thus,
And seeks to conquer mighty Tamburlane!"

answered the other as he retreated a little way out of the reach of the stick.

"I pray you, sir, let him keep his weapon, and I will have at him with mine," said the youth, gallantly drawing of his rapier. Seeing this, Ralph Goshawk, with a fierce swaggering air, drew from its scabbard the two-handed sword he carried: which in truth had a blade of prodigious length; and he being much stouter built than his opponent, and looking as if he were a thorough master of fence, did seem unto Master Shakspeare and Master Burbage a very formidable fellow.

"Come, let us march against the powers of heav'n,
And set black streamers in the firmament,
To signify the slaughter of the gods!"

"I tell thee what, thou detestable fustian rogue," here exclaimed Harry Daring to Ralph Goshawk, "slaughter the gods and welcome, for they be fellows I know not of, and therefore care not for; but if thou shouldst hurt but a hair of my friend's head, I'll cudgel thee to death ere thou hast lived another minute." Upon hearing of this the other cried out,—

"Villain, away, and hie thee to the field;
I and mine army come, to load thy back
With souls of thousand mangled carcasses."

and thereupon he advanced toward Master Francis, flourishing of his long rapier about, in a manner that made his friends

tremble for his safety. But the youth waited, with his weapon upon guard, watching of the haberdasher's movements with a cautious eye, and presenting a bold front to him as he came, slashing away, now on this side, and now on the other. This had remained for some few moments, when as if Ralph Goshawk had calculated upon frightening his rival, by his terrible swagger and dangerous weapon, and was himself in fear of the youth's courageous bearing and light sharp rapier, his looks began to lose much of their fierceness; his impudence seemed about to forsake him; and observing Master Francis draw back his arm, as if about to make a thrust, with a wonderful frightened aspect, he suddenly put his sword under his arm, and took to his heels as fast as they could carry him along.

"I'll be hanged if thou shalt escape without a cudgelling," cried Harry Daring; and while the others were laughing famously at the fellow's cowardice, the barber's apprentice pursued the runaway haberdasher with all the speed he was master of. Ralph Goshawk took but one look behind him, and finding that he was followed by the little desperate fellow who had hit him so sore a punch in the ribs, he seemed to take wings and fly, he was so quickly out of sight.

"And, if 'tis a fair question, I pray you tell me who is this pretty piece of frailty, for whom you have so ably frightened this hero out of the field?" asked Master Shakspeare of his young friend, as soon as their mirth had subsided a little.

"By this hand, 'twas almost as good a jest as that we had of the two lords!" exclaimed Master Burbage, who appeared to have taken it in huge delight.

"Oh! she be of a very delicate comeliness," replied Harry Daring, as he returned out of breath from his bootless chase. "And she be called Joanna, the mercer's daughter in Eastcheap."

"Joanna!" cried both the players in the same breath, as if marvelling exceedingly.

"That be her name beyond all doubt," added the barber-chirurgeon's apprentice; and Master Francis, looking exceedingly disturbed, said nothing.

"Will!" said Master Burbage, as he came up close to his friend, with a mighty serious countenance.

"What, Dick?" answered the other.

Master Burbage stooped his head a little and whispered into the other's ear, with all the emphasis he could put into the words, "*The grapes be sour!*"

CHAPTER XVII.

Great miracle of constancy! my miseries
Were never bankrupt of their confidence
In worst afflictions, till this—now I feel them.
Report, and thy deserts, thou best of creatures,
Might to eternity have stood a pattern
For every virtuous wife, without this conquest.
Thou hast outdone belief: yet may their ruin
In after marriages be never pitied,
To whom thy story shall appear a fable. FORD.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH sat at table, on which were many books and papers, in a small chamber in the Tower; which, certes, was properly furnished enough though everything therein was of an exceeding antique fashion: and the beautiful Dame Elizabeth, now looking with a very matronly dignity, sat as near as might be opposite to him, working of a baby's cap, whilst close by her side was a cradle, in which slept a marvellous pretty infant. Now she would take her eyes from her work and fix them on the slumbering child with such sweet and smiling looks, as showed her heart was delighted with what she gazed on; and anon she would turn them to where sat her husband, leaning of his head on his hand over a large book he seemed to be a studying of so intently that he could regard naught else; and there was then so tender a solicitude in her eyes as was quite moving to see. She seemed as though she would have spoke, and yet refrained from it for fear of disturbing him in his studies. Again she continued at her work, but not without stealing of an occasional glance at the babe, or at Sir Walter. Yet was there ever a singular difference in the expression of her look to each. She still regarded her child with a fond and truly delicate smile, whilst upon her husband her gaze fell with an increasing melancholy, which at last became exceeding pathetic. It so happened that Sir Walter Raleigh, turning over a leaf, raised his head, and noticed the moving sadness of her looks.

"What makes thee look so woful, Bess?" inquired he affectionately.

"Woful!—Surely I look not woful, dear Walter?" she replied as if with an assumed cheerfulness. "I am content—I lack nothing. Thou art everything I could wish. For what should I look woful then? Indeed thou must have mistaken my countenance hugely, if thou hast gathered from it I be in any way out of heart."

"In truth, sweetest, thou hadst but now so piteous a look that I was moved at it," said he.

"Then was it a false look, dear Walter; and therefore regard it not, I prythee!" exclaimed his beautiful wife very earnestly. "Let it not move thee at all, for it must have been a villanous deceitful look if it hath given thee a moment's uneasiness."

"I have never yet seen aught in thee deceitful, dear Bess," observed Sir Walter. "Therefore am I now loath to believe that thou couldst have to do with such. Have I said or done any such thing as might have made thee sad?"

"Nay, on my life, thou hast been to me the kindest best creature fond woman ever loved!" replied Dame Elizabeth with great eagerness. "I am not sad at all, dear Walter. I'faith! methinks I should be more merry than sad, seeing what bountiful good fortune is mine. Thou art with me. The queen might have done me such ill office as to have kept us separate; yet hath she graciously allowed me the extreme happiness of being with thee. Then why should I be sad! Looked I less cheerful than ordinary, mayhap it was for fear such deep study as thou dost fall into may do thy health some hurt."

"Fear not, sweet heart," said he, with a most endearing smile. "There dwelleth such excellent good philosophy in these books, that the perusing of them maketh me forget I am here cribbed within stone walls a doing of nothing of any advantage to the world; but if it doth now afflict thee to see me so intent upon such labors, I will for the present leave them, and study a more alluring lesson—which is no other than thee, dear Bess."

"Prythee do not, dear Walter!" exclaimed she very fondly. "If these books are such as have taught thee to become so brave of soul, so good, so noble, so kind and generous as thou art—I would on no account have thee leave such excellent studies to regard one who can teach thee no one thing of any usefulness. But I like not to hear thee say that thou art doing of nothing of advantage to the world; for art thou not constantly writing upon such matters as I doubt not must be of great profit to all, and in after times will make thee as exceeding famous, as thou well deservest to be?"

"'T would be a right wonderful comfort could I think so," observed Sir Walter.

"Then such shouldst thou ever think," she replied. "I know that 'tis something too much to expect of thee to show a

cheerful heart at all times, when I reflect to what a doleful strait thy goodness to me hath brought thee to, the thought of which is enough, methinks, to make the most patient nature feel vast discomfort upon occasion; yet well assured am I that, whether thou art within stone walls, a powerless prisoner—or aboard of a goodly ship, the leader of a gallant armament—thy noble mind would ever be devising of some greatness whereof all mankind might receive benefit. If thou art melancholy let me sing to thee, dear Walter, and perchance thou shalt find some pleasure in it."

"Indeed, thy singing is of so sweet a sort that my spirit is enraptured when I hear thee," said he. "Sing, dear Bess! I do feel somewhat weary. 'Tis of little moment that thy virginals be not at hand; for thy voice doth discourse such delicate music as requireth no accompaniment to set it off."

Then placing of her work in her lap she turned upon him a look full of most exquisite devotedness, and with such tuneful notes as were a marvel to hear, she presently did commence the following words:—

"Prythee, sweetheart! be not so sad,
Else shall I think thou lov'st me not;
For he that loves to love is glad,
And loving, hath all else forgot.
If that the Past doth seem unkind,
I will a better Present find:
If Present things should bring annoy,
I'll make thy Future brim with joy."

"If friends to thee have proved untrue,
I will be all they should have been;
If Fortune frown upon thy view,
I'll give the smiles thou shouldst have seen:
Thou shalt not want for anything
That she who loveth thee can bring;
And love makes all things to be had:
Prythee, sweetheart! be not so sad."

"Truly a simple ditty and a kind, Bess!" exclaimed Sir Walter Raleigh, who had listened with evident delight both to the singer and the song. "I'faith!—it almost maketh me think that to be in a cage with so sweet a bird as art thou, must needs be better than to have the freedom of the whole world, and lack the hearing of so brave a songster."

"I care not what it maketh thee think, Walter," replied Dame Elizabeth affectionately; "so that thou canst be in any way the happier for it: and as for thy freedom, I do believe thou canst acquire it at very slight pains."

"Indeed!" cried he, as if in some surprise. "'Tis strange I knew it not. Believe me, I would not stay here an instant longer than I could help."

"Then, why not seek to move the queen to thy pardon?" she asked.

"Because I know 'twould avail me nothing with her," he replied. "My enemies are numerous and powerful, and would be on the watch to overthrow any attempt I might make for my liberation; for they know full well 'tis to their advantage to keep me where I am; and having constant access to the presence, could easily increase the queen's wrath against me."

"That will I never believe, dear Walter," said the devoted woman. "Her majesty hath had considerable profit out of the galleon that was taken at the Azores, hath she not?"

"Sir John Hawkins hath writ me word," added Sir Walter, "that, in consequence of the villanous pilfering of some of the men, the Madre de Dios, on examination, fell very far short of its estimate: and of this, although the queen had but one of her ships present, she hath seized upon as great a share as if she had been at more than one half the trouble and charges of the expedition."

"The possessing of so much treasure through thy means will assuredly make her somewhat favorably disposed toward thee," she observed; "and that the greatness of her rage hath by this time much abated I make no manner of doubt. This being the case, dear Walter, as it needs must be; and I—knowing her to be one with whom some pretty adulation will do anything, so that there be enough of it—would wager mine existence that if thou wouldst but contrive some pleasant conceit, in which it shall appear that thou art gone distracted because of the impossibility of seeing her, and season it with such pretty tropes as thou knowest she most affects, thou shalt have thy liberty in a presently."

"I like it not, dear Bess," replied her husband, as if he entertained the proposal with some distaste. "I have played the courtier's and the lover's part with her already to such an extreme, that it made her all the more enraged against me when she discovered my marriage with thee. She must be exceeding credulous if she would believe anything of the kind of me now. Besides, it is a fashion that however oft I may have fallen into, I liked never; and at the present time am more than ever disinclined to."

"That ought thou not to hold in any sort of consideration, dear Walter," she answered quickly. "Remember that she hath made such flattery the common lan-

guage, without which none who seek her favor can expect to get aught of her; and thou art no more to blame in using of such means than art thou for wearing of a doublet of a certain make: for both are the court fashion, which every one must adopt who would be in good esteem with his sovereign. And who can be so worthy of such estimation as art thou? In truth, if thy merit were properly rewarded thou shouldst then have the highest place there, and take precedence of all. As for her indignation in finding out that thou hast been playing of the lover to her whilst thou were acting it more truly to me, heed it not. In the first place, the blame must be entirely her own: for when a woman entertaineth a lover of whose affection she hath good knowledge that it can be naught but words, she is but rightly served when he leaveth her for the enjoyment of a more sincere and more profitable passion. And in the next place, the queen hath so excessive a vanity, that there be nothing so preposterous told her of the power of her beauty she will not believe. Do but say that I have been the party to blame—and in truth, dear Walter, all the censure should be mine—and assert with a sufficient show of sincerity that none but her can be mistress of thy affections, and I make no manner of doubt that she would presently take thee into more favor than ever."

"Nay, if ever I say a word in censure of one who hath shown to me so true a heart shall I be the basest wretch that lives!" exclaimed Sir Walter.

"Indeed I should think of thee all the better for it," replied she very earnestly. "Of a truth, dear Walter, I can know no true pleasure till I see thee in the possession of such greatness as thy noble heart deserves. For me thou hast sacrificed all thy well-earned honors; and knowing this, it can not be possible I should feel any easiness of heart till they have been restored to thee. As for me, I am nothing but what thy infinite goodness hath made me; and thou couldst say no censure, however great it might be, that my demerits have not called for. Prythee!—do it, dear Walter."

"Never!" cried her husband with a very sincere earnestness. "I will never be brought to say aught of thee but that thou art the kindest, truest, and best of wives, and the very fairest, sweetest, and dearest of women."

"O' my life, thou thinkest a vast deal too kindly of me!" said the affectionate

wife; and then putting aside her work, rising from her chair, and taking him by the hand, she led him to the cradle, where, resting of her arm fondly upon his shoulder, she did address him with more seriousness, as she pointed to the sleeping child. "Dear Walter! think of that boy. He is now, as thou seest, as lovely an infant as ever fond mother was blest withal; but when he cometh to riper years, what poor hap must be his if he come only to succeed to the ruined fortunes of a disgraced father!—and how can he properly reverence that parent, who, having it in his power by means of a few idle words to gain the restoration of his own honors, and leave them in costly legacy to his child, chose rather to remain in discredit with the world, and to leave his son no better inheritance than the remembrance of his father's misfortunes. See, Walter! he openeth his little rose-buds of lips, and smileth on thee! He pleads with his mother that thou wilt have more heed of thyself and of him. Now his eyes unclose and look upon thee like glimpses of heaven. Wilt thou deny him? And now he stretcheth forth his little arms to implore thee to such an act of justice. *Canst* thou deny him?"

"Indeed, dear Bess," said he, looking fondly upon her—"thou hast proved thyself so excellent an advocate, that I shall never attempt after this to argue a cause against thee. I will promise thee to use my best endeavors with the queen; but as for saying aught of thy unworthiness, it is a thing of which I am so entirely ignorant, and is a theme for which I have so little inclination, that I do feel assured I should break down in the very smallest attempt. But I must take up this thy admirable little assistant in thy pleading, for in truth he appeareth as if he would not rest where he is." Thereupon Sir Walter did take the babe into his arms, and fondle him, and toss him up, in the which the little fellow seemed to find huge delight, for he crowed and clapped his hands famously; while Dame Elizabeth stood close by, watching of the two as if she knew not which she loved the best.

"I'faith, the rogue seems to like it, methinks!" exclaimed Sir Walter, as he kept throwing the child up in his arms; and it was difficult to say which seemed the most gratified of the two.

"Like it! to be sure he likes it, Walter," replied his beautiful wife. "And when he careth not to be caressed and

dandled by so good a father, 'tis like enough I shall fall out with him."

"What, canst talk of falling out with so handsome a babe?" asked Raleigh, seemingly in some astonishment; and gazing upon the smiling infant as he held it before him, added: "There are its mother's eyes, of a surety!"

"Nay, Walter," said she, with an exceeding affectionate smile; "if he be not every bit of him like thee, then am I but an indifferent judge of a resemblance."

"Out on thee for a flatterer," exclaimed her husband playfully.

"Well, if thou wilt not acknowledge what all be ready to swear to, it be so manifest, thou shalt have none of him," replied the devoted woman, coming as if to take him away. "So hand him over to me, I prythee."

"Be assured I will do nothing of the kind," said Sir Walter, as he caught the child close to his breast. "He is mine; I have him, and will keep him. Get thee gone, good woman, thou hast had nothing to do with him, and therefore art not at all a proper creature to trust him with."

"Oh, shame on thee, for saying so," answered Dame Elizabeth, laughingly. "But I must have him, Walter—his mouth is on the silver buttons of thy doublet, and he will put thee in a most woful slobber."

"Better to spoil my doublet than lose my boy!" cried he; and then sportively made off with him, as if he would give him up on no account, while his beautiful wife kept following them round the room with her arms stretched out, begging to have the child. Presently, the little fellow spying of his mother, put out his arms likewise, and soon after cried to be taken.

"'Tis nothing else but a conspiracy," observed Sir Walter, as he gave the boy into his mother's arms. "He assists thee in everything. I like not being opposed to so unnatural a combination; so I will to my books again."

Then he returned to his chair, and Dame Elizabeth did go to hers with the infant in her arms, who was soon very quietly enjoying of himself after such a fashion as seemed to be wonderfully pleasant to him. This continued for some short time, when Sir Walter Raleigh looked up and said—

"Hast seen anything of Stephen?"

"He hath been here this morning," replied his wife, "with a letter from Alice, who writes me in a most merry vein, as

if for the enlivening of my spirits. I have it here, if thou wilt read it." And then she offered to him the letter.

"If there be no secret matter unlawful for husband to look into, I should like, infinitely, to see what the merry wench hath to say for herself," observed Sir Walter, as he took the letter into his hand.

"I can never have any secrets from thee, dear Walter," answered Dame Elizabeth; and, upon this, her husband did open and read the letter, which proceeded to this effect:—

"SWEET Coz: While uncle is amusing of himself by cudgelling of Peter, I will seek entertainment for you in cudgelling of my brains. I am willed to do this by Sir Nicholas, who thinketh you shall be all the better for some intelligence of home; yet I find no lack of mine own inclination in it, I do assure you, for there is nothing in which I take such singular pleasure, as in affording of some comfort to my excellent good Bess. But, first of all, I know 'tis necessary, if I seek to be loved of you, I should inquire concerning of that man-animal, his worship, your husband; the which I now do with exceeding courtesy, thinking it a thousand pities he should be the queen's prisoner, when I am oft left to the small profit of counting of my fingers for lack of having him to teaze."

"The little villain!" exclaimed Sir Walter with a smile, when he came to the perusing of this passage; then continued.

"I like him hugely—just as mischievous boys like cats, old women, and bonfires—for the sport they afford."

"Oh the impudent baggage!" cried he.

"But, as you have told me, that he is the very best, and kindest of creatures to you, dear Bess, for his sake will I think well of all man-animals—if I can."

"There is nothing I should so much delight in, as seeing her ladyship desperately in love," observed Raleigh. "I-faith, 'twould be a delectable revenge."

"I doubt not her time will come," said Dame Elizabeth. After which her husband did proceed.

"It must be known unto you that, on the report of the fortune Aunt Dorothy left me, I have got me a famous set of lovers. Oh, 'twould be a comfort to your heart to behold what goodly fools they be. By my troth, there shall be no occasion for any of them to wear motley—they may be known for such as they are

let them wear what they list. First of these, for methinks he should have precedence, being out of all contradiction, the greatest wittol of the lot, there cometh Sir Narcissus Wrinkles. Hast ever been at table where there hath been mutton dressed lamb fashion? If so, then shall you have some notion of Sir Narcissus Wrinkles. He is nothing else than a poor old wether that would needs pass himself off for as innocent a lambkin as ever frisked in a meadow. Yet is he so marvellous stiff in the hams, that when I drop my fan, which I do on the purpose pretty oft, it taketh him a monstrous space of time before he can stoop to lay hold of it, and then he presenteth it to me with his hand on his heart, swearing by Cerberus, he would find infinite pleasure to fetch and carry for me like a very spaniel; and all the whilst he looks as if he had broken his back, and hath scarlet enough in his face for the making of an old woman's cloak. Then he hath such oaths as be a marvel to hear. Mayhap, if you heard him, you should presently affirm that he was nothing better than an ancient pagan dug out of the earth after a sleep of some centuries, for he swears by all the heathen gods and goddesses.

"He skips after me, as perchance he shall fancy, like a mountain kid; but as it seemeth to me in much more resemblance of its venerable grandfather; and he looketh upon my face till his eyes water, and sighs heavily enough, I warrant you; but though he would have me take such signs for love, I do very affectionately tell him I grieve that his eyes should be so weak, and that he should be troubled with so pitiful an asthma. Upon this 'tis exquisite sport to see how bravely he ventureth to swear he hath such excellent vision, he can read print so small others can in no way make out, and that his constitution be of so fine a character, he knoweth not what illness means—and to this he hath the unblushing impudency to add, that he is so sound of limb, and so active withal, that he doubts not when, he shall be forty, he shall be as young as is another at thirty or less. Now, think of his saying this, when he is as like to see any more fifties as am I to marry him!

"After him cometh my Lord Wisacre, a young coxcomb of a fellow, who looketh as grave as is a death's head upon a tombstone, and seemeth as sanctimonious as an alderman saying of grace. He seeketh to be a wooing of me with the saws of a graybeard, and talketh of

his experience with so solemn an air, that I can scarce help laughing in his boyish countenance. Then he hath so pragmatikal a humor with him, that he liketh not to see anything which doth not assort with the very monstrosousness of his own gravity, and this profound conceit he carrieth to such an extreme, that if any do but attempt to jest in his presence, he shall look as solemn as one with the toothache, and at the breaking out of a laugh he shall appear as if he should swoon on the instant. I do assure you, Bess, you would wonder mightily were you to see us two. If he look serious, I look grave—if he look grave, I look solemn—if he look solemn, I look stern—if he accost me in saws, I answer him in proverbs—and if he lament the frivolity of youth, I sigh for one who hath the experience of Methusalem. I believe the varlet maketh sure of me for this, yet will I show him such a change as shall incline him the rather to wed with the parish pump.

“The next is Master Aniseed—one who seemeth but lately to have exchanged the grub for the butterfly. His phrases, whereof he hath a goodly assortment, he ever and anon mingles with some of a coarser quality, that plain enough betray him to have been no gentleman born; yet in his attiring is he as fine an insect as ever fluttered in silk and satin; the which fabrics, however, he weareth not with that becomingness that would prove him to be properly used to such. What he hath been I know not, yet will I strive to find it out; for methinks I shall have some sport in the finding. Already I do enjoy very pretty pastime in the exceeding daintiness of his speech, when he hath discourse with me, it seemeth so all of a piece with his doublet, which be ever of the delicatest hue or finest fabric. He can not talk of the smallest matter without dressing it up in the courtliest terms. If he ask after my health, it shall be in so nice a phrase that one who heard him would think me to be some marvellous fragile being or another, that requireth to be wrapt up in lavender, and handled as tenderly as a sparrow's egg; and if he bid me good day, it shall be after so embroidered a fashion as a mercer would speak of his choicest goods.

“After him I have Dr. Bashful, a young divine, who can not look at me without blushing; and if he offereth me his hand when he approacheth me, 'tis after such a sort as if he thought I should bite him. He trembleth terribly when I

speak to him; and if I ask of him to take wine, he shall contradict himself half a dozen times before he maketh up his mind whether to take it or leave it alone. He is so entertaining a companion that he will sit by me a whole hour as dumb as a post, and then, on a sudden, ask of me what I think of the fathers. Although he seemeth to love me, he would as soon dare lay hold of my hand whilst we sit together, as take a mad dog by the tail: and although I doubt not he likes nothing as well as to gaze on my face, he can only have courage to steal a look at me when I be a turning another way. Then he seemeth continually intent upon the making of some blunder. He be ever upsetting of something in his haste to show me some courtesy. He will destroy everything breakable he shall lay his hands on—for he will either grip it so firm that it shall smash in his hands, or hold it so tremblingly that it shall fall to pieces at his feet. Mayhap at dinner he shall pay his court to me by knocking off a tankard of ale into my lap, and then, in his hurry to repair the mischief, he shall upset a bowl of soup into his own. If he be watched, he shall be found saucing of his pudding with catsup; and, anon, drinking of the vinegar for wine. Then, when he discovereth his mistake he grins like a monkey over a bone, and sets to a blushing till his face outrivaleth the crimson of a poppy in a cornfield. Oh, what goodly fools these man-animals be! But were I to describe to you every one of the worshipful set by which I am environed, methinks 'twould tire your patience wonderfully, therefore will I wait till you can have sight of them for yourself; the which I am exceeding hopeful will not be long first, for there is none I so much desire to see as my own sweet Bess.

“Uncle hath been in excellent good health, but though I do all I can to make him merry, I know that he doth miss you oft. I have heard say that the queen is going the progress, and perchance she may be in so gracious a mood as to forgive her prisoners and let them have their liberty. I would she could be brought to it. But keep a good heart, and I doubt not matters will go right enough soon.

“From your loving cousin,

ALICE THROCKMORTON.

“I'faith, if Alice had such lovers, I doubt not she will have famous sport of them,” observed Sir Walter Raleigh, as he finished the letter. “Some of them I know, and therefore can I safely say she hath hit them off to a nicety. I will lay

a wager upon it that she will play them such tricks out of her infinite genius for mischief, that they shall be right glad to get themselves out of her way."

"'Tis a thousand pities she meets not with some of more likely sort," said Dame Elizabeth. After this there was a pause of some few minutes.

"I marvel much at not seeing of Master Francis," exclaimed her husband, at last. "He is not wont to make such long stays. I hope nothing amiss hath happened to him."

"In honest truth, I hope so too," added his fair companion, "for he seemeth to serve thee so lovingly, and with so modest a spirit. Methinks he doth look exceedingly unhappy."

"I do believe his mind is ill at ease," replied Sir Walter. "There existeth some obscurity in his birth which he doth allow to prey on his sensitive spirit more, I think, than the matter calls for. Without doubt, he is a youth of admirable good qualities; yet hath he his faults nevertheless. He is oft too apt to draw conclusions which the premises will scarce warrant: this is, however, a natural error at his time of life, and one that time will correct. I have great hopes of him."

Having said this, he did again return to his books, and Dame Elizabeth continued nursing of her babe, who seemed at it to crow and laugh so prettily, that Sir Walter did more than once raise his head and smilingly observe him; and mayhap would call to him in such sort of prattle as parents do usually adopt on the like occasions. Presently there was heard a knocking at the door, and admittance being allowed, in walked Master Francis, with a very gentlemanly courteousness, yet looking as pale and melancholy as ever.

"I have been detained, Sir Walter, upon certain of mine own affairs that did require instant attention, else had I been here earlier," observed the young secretary.

"It matters not," replied his patron, kindly. "But now sit you down, Master Francis. I would have some talk with you."

The youth, at this request, put his hat on one side, and sat himself down near the table.

"Hast ever considered the moral effects of solitude upon the heart?" inquired Raleigh, after a little while.

"Methinks its tendency must needs be of a very soothing kind," replied the

other modestly, "yet, save the impressions I have got of books, know I but little of the matter. I have heard of divers philosophers and many godly eremites, who, by retiring from the cares of the busy world, have acquired a marvellous wisdom and a right notable holiness. Nay, it hath been writ in credible histories, that men used to, and moving in the restless turmoil of political governments and military avocations, have found wonderful comfort from the enjoyment of a perfect solitariness. It hath been said of Pericles, as an example among many such famous lawgivers and statesmen, that when he entertained in his mind any great object, the which, peradventure, might be for the right governing of the Athenian people, he would refrain from all social feastings, and every pleasure he was wont to delight in whatsoever, and, as much alone as might be possible to him, give himself up to the perfect consideration of the question. As far as I may be capable of judging, this seemeth a truly excellent good plan. Out of no small number of notable commanders, Scipio Africanus, the Roman, and Epaminondas, the Theban general, had a like passion for retirement, and, doubtless, found profit in it. And of the learned and pious is there so great a number who have lauded its advantages, as is almost impossible for me to name."

"And from their report you do consider that solitariness is to be recommended?" said his patron, inquiringly.

"It seemeth so to me," answered the youth.

"Believe me, 'tis a great error," observed Sir Walter. "Of all things contained within this infinite world that have powers and offices over man, you shall find nothing so pernicious and unnatural as this same solitude. That it be pernicious, is on the face of it, for it doth rob society of a member, whose duty it should be to labor for the rest as much as in him lieth. As you shall see in a hive of bees, or in a community of ants, there be none that go into holes and corners, shutting of themselves up from all fellowship, and working only for their own gratifications; so ought it to be in the common hive of the world. 'Tis sociality that createth the sweet honey of life, to wit, philanthropy; and he who is active in doing of good amongst his fellows, is the industrious ant, that ever storeth up grain for the general use. He who findeth enjoyment in solitariness, can not help but be selfish in his

nature; for it requireth of a man to concentrate all his affections upon himself ere he can take any pleasure in it. That 'tis unnatural, is full as evident: for nature hath made us all one universal brotherhood, for the helping of each other, for the pleasure of each other, and for the teaching of each other, by such exemplary doings as may be profitable in the following. For one to get away from the rest, and keep himself in secrecy, and labor in loneliness he shall be accounted a deserter from his colors, the defence of which he hath abandoned to save himself; and deserveth no better treatment than to be shot for the acting of such an infamous cowardice.

"As for what you have said of Pericles and others, in no instance must such be brought forward as examples of solitude, else with as much show of truth it may be said of me because I have oft retired unto the privacy of my study that I might not be disturbed in my contemplations, that I did it for no other end than to gratify a desire for a like thing. I would take it upon me to say, that he who maketh it a practice to live out of the world, is in no way worthy to live in it."

"And yet I have found it asserted, both of philosophers and divines," observed Master Francis, "that solitude doth afford excellent opportunity for a man to study *himself*, without a proper knowledge of which, he shall be considered exceeding ignorant."

"Better be ignorant in one thing than useless in all," answered his patron. "If a man having only one book of his own, and that mayhap of no great value, goeth into a goodly library where there shall be volumes of every sort out of all number, whereof he may find admirable entertainment when he lists by perusing them, still keepeth poring over his own book, what knowledge think you he would get by it?"

"It could not help being but little, especially when brought into some comparison with what he might have had," said the youth.

"I'faith you could not have answered me more in accordance with what I expected of you," added his patron. "Like unto that man is he who goeth away from the numberless natures around him, where doubtless he shall find an exhaustless stock of learning ever at his hand, to creep into some desert place or another, with nothing to study from but himself, the which I do hugely suspect

would turn out to be a very sorry volume. Such a one must needs be a fool all his life—ay, though he thumb his book till he knoweth it every bit by heart: and he shall be a doing of no more good by it, than if he had been dead and buried a hundred years."

"May I ask of you then how cometh it that there hath been such store of learned books and pious discourses writ in solitude, from which surely the world hath been the gainer?" asked his secretary.

"It must be proved that they are the result of solitariness, ere solitariness should have the praise of them," replied Sir Walter. "It may perchance hap that they were writ in retirement, yet are they the result of much previous study among men. Doubtless there are such matters of science as perfect abstraction from all things else shall greatly advance the knowledge of; and this abstractedness passeth among the many for the love of solitude, yet of that selfishness which solitude engenders hath it nothing; for the man of science careth as little for his own person as for all other things, and, like Archimedes, would allow himself to be slaughtered in the working of a problem, than have the slightest care for his safety. Nor is the solitude of out-of-the-way places a thing for them to heed, when they shall be as much alone in the most populous city as in the desertest spot that can be found. Surely such books as I may chance to write in this my imprisonment, ought in no way to be attributable to solitude, when it is certain I would have writ the same at Durham house had I enjoyed the like leisure. Nor is this to be considered a solitude at all; for I do not confine my studies unto myself, but look, as well I may, into the natures of all with whom I can get discourse: then ought you to be cautious of believing that such books, to the which you have made allusion, because they were produced in some secludedness, were writ otherwise than from a necessity in the putting up with such a place, or in some advantage it giveth to the perfect contemplation of the subject writ upon."

"Then it seemeth to me you have no opinion of the efficacy of seclusion upon human nature?" remarked the youth.

"Entire seclusion methinks is entire foolishness," answered his patron. "Occasional meditation in privacy may be so far beneficial as to give a greater zest to the right humanizing pleasures of social intercourse when taken to again; but se-

clusiveness is exclusiveness, it shutteth the breast against all—perchance with no great loss to the world, for I doubt not on examining the hearts of such they should be found exceeding hollow.”

“From this, if I understand aright, monasteries, nunneries, and institutions of the like sort, which seemed framed for the express purpose of providing opportunity for meditation, in your judgment can be of no particular benefit to the community at large,” said Master Francis.

“Of so little that their benefit must be in no comparison with their mischief,” answered the other. “The ostensible object of all such establishments appeareth to be the exclusive serving of God, but that God is better served by a certain set of dirty fellows that mayhap live in unwholesome cells, when they might have comfortable lodging, going barefooted when they might be properly shod, wearing of one dress when they might have a change as cleanliness made it necessary, and fasting nigh unto starvation when they might eat enough and be thankful, than he shall be by those who come to him with a clean skin and a decent garment, and a heart full of thankfulness for the blessings he hath sent for their partaking, and are moreover industrious citizens, good husbands, and careful fathers, I will never believe. But all monasteries are not of this sort. In the greater number, as was proved at the dissolving of the religious houses in the reign of Henry the Eighth, there were fellows whose portly persons showed they lacked nothing either in eating or drinking; and as for other indulgences there can be no doubt that they rioted in a very infamous dissoluteness and prodigality. And that this be serving of God in the best way will I never believe.

“Then as to nunneries, the chief boasts of them seemeth to be in the preservation of the chastity of their members, who are such women as choose to retire from the allurements of the world, or are forced to it. In the first place I maintain, and I doubt not to find plenty to believe me, that such chastity as can only be preserved by being shut up close in stone walls, is not worth the keeping, It is very snow, that must be kept in a cold corner, else it will clean melt away. In the next place, 'tis no preservation at all, for it be nothing else than a continual endeavor to stifle the very delicatest feelings of humanity, that have been given as a source of every excellence in woman, and every happiness in man. Nor

is it chastity, for the wife may be chaste, but a nun knoweth nothing of chastity, she only practiseth continency, which is no virtue of any kind, but a quality of no more service to herself or to anybody else than her ever wearing of a certain kind of a garment, instead of others in which she would find the greater comfort, or fasting for any unnatural long time when she hath plenty of wholesome food at hand. That a way of life that preventeth a woman from becoming a loving wife and a tender mother, and a giver and receiver of such sweet affection as be a delight to think of, which beyond all dispute are the properest qualities of womanhood, be the best way of serving God will I never believe. Yet as there have been other monasteries than the strict ones, so have there been other than such nunneries, in the which it was proved, every conceivable kind of profligacy was proceeding; and that *this* be serving of God in the best way will I never believe.”

“Methinks then you must have a still less opinion of hermits and the like,” observed the secretary.

“Hermits, anchorites, and others, who live entire by themselves, are of three sorts—fools, knaves, and madmen,” replied Sir Walter. “They shall be fools if they live upon herbs when they might have wholesome food—they are knaves if they practise austerity for the sake of such offerings as a few simple peasants may bring to their abodes—and they must be madmen if they imagine that standing upon a pillar, lying on a board covered with nails, wearing of a hair shirt, or flagellating of themselves without mercy, shall be of any kind of service to them either in this world or in the next. I would as soon respect a jackass for eating of thistles as a man for living upon roots; and as for the humility of such men, there lieth a monstrous deal more ostentation under rags and filth than you shall find beneath a robe of purple and a clean skin. Now, it hath generally happened that anchorites either leave the world, or the world leaveth them, and seek to live in solitary places when they no longer can find pleasure in the abodes of their fellow-men; or that knowing something ill that they have done, these their fellow-men will have none of them, and force them to take to a hiding-place and a severe life for the acquirement of a better reputation than what they had. In most instances a man becometh a hermit or a monk from dis-

gust of life, or disappointment of the world, and seeketh in self mortification and a solitary living, to lose remembrance of what he hath suffered. None but a fanatic ever became such upon choice. It seemeth to me that he is considered the happiest amongst them who shall succeed in making himself the most miserable; and that *this* be serving of God in the best way will I never believe.

"In short, it hath all along been my conviction that if these pretended lovers of solitude, instead of seeking of a reclusive life, and undergoing of numberless voluntary hardships, had attempted the practice of some honest calling, and had bestowed on the poor and helpless such assistance as might have been in their power to give, they would have lived in such a sort as would have been much pleasanter to themselves, of more advantage to the world, and a wonderful degree more to the true glory of Him they sought to serve by it."

To this Master Francis replied not. Dame Elizabeth had all the time seemed to take exceeding interest in the discourse, now turning to her husband, and now to his secretary, as each spoke, with a countenance that evinced she found wonderful pleasure in what was going on, and occasionally putting up of her finger to the child when he appeared in any way inclined to interrupt either of them. It was in this way that Sir Walter Raleigh oft invited his young companion to express his thoughts, and then, if he found him in any error, would straightway proceed to set him right in the matter.

"Liked you our last voyage, Master Francis?" inquired he, after a silence of some few minutes.

"Indeed did I, Sir Walter," replied the youth.

"Then, if I gain my liberty, as soon after as may be, will I be upon another," added his patron. "In truth, have I for some time considered of it, and methinks you will find in it far more attraction than the preceding, for it hath for its object no other than a search after the right famous El Dorado, or city of gold, the which am I in tolerable certainty of finding."

"I like the idea of it exceedingly," observed Master Francis, with some earnestness: and then he waited in expectation of hearing more upon the subject; but, somewhat to his disappointment, Sir Walter soon after set him about the writing of some papers, and then went to lean out of the window, where he long

remained, gazing upon the vessels in the river.

"There goeth the queen's barge," exclaimed he, all of a sudden; then turning to his wife, added, "now, Bess, will I essay what thou hast desired of me,"—and hastily left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

If so be that one had a pump in your bosom, I believe we should discover a foul hold. They say a witch will sail in a sieve, but I believe the devil would not venture aboard your conscience.

CONGREVE.

Seal up your lips, and give no words but—*mum!*
The business asketh silent secrecy.

SHAKSPEARE.

Olivia. Did he write this?

Clown. Ay, madam.

Duke. This savors not much of distraction.

Olivia. See him delivered.

IBID.

It was not many hours after the transpiring of what hath been writ in the preceding chapter, that Sir Robert Cecil and my Lord Henry Howard sat together in close converse in the armory at Burghley house. How long they had been so engaged no man knoweth to this day; but there seemed a marvellous deal of secrecy in what they were talking of—their looks were exceeding mysterious, and they smiled in such a sort as do men pleased with their own craftiness. Upon a small circular table, close to which they sat opposite each other, lay sundry papers and letters, which Cecil did read and make comments on, as if they were of great import; and the other appeared to give such explanations as might be necessary to the perfect understanding of them.

"Then you are sure that my Lord Essex hath constant communication with the Scottish king?" inquired Sir Robert.

"I have it from my trusty correspondent Master Edward Bruce," replied the Lord Henry Howard, "that King James stands well affected toward my Lord Essex, from whom he hath continual intelligence of all things relating to the queen."

"That hath a bad look for our interests," remarked Cecil. "If we mind not, Essex will so ingratiate himself with his majesty, that we shall scarce be able to keep up our heads when he cometh to these realms. And yet the king seemeth to hold us in good countenance."

"Without doubt doth he," answered the other. "I do believe, from what Master Bruce hath writ, that he putteth

great confidence in you. Would it not be good policy, think you, to set the king's mind against him, as we have done against Sir Walter Raleigh and my Lord Cobham."

"That would be a difficult matter, and a dangerous matter to boot," replied Sir Robert. "King James hath knowledge of my Lord Essex, and hath of him a favorable opinion, the which methinks would be no easy matter to shake; while of Raleigh or Cobham he knew naught, therefore could the easier believe aught that was said of them. My Lord Essex hath also divers powerful friends at the Scottish court, who, 'tis like enough, would not rest idle while attempts were made to ruin him with the king: and of such influence, neither my brother-in-law nor his fine friend could make any boast. I doubt not being able to spoil the ambitiousness of all such in good time; but at present it be a difficult task to do either Raleigh or Essex any great hurt without the other being the sole gainer by it."

"Mean you to let Raleigh out?" asked his companion.

"It must needs be," said Cecil. "I mean to move the queen about it; and these letters I have received will doubtless go far to the completing of the business. As I expected, my Lord of Essex hath grown all the haughtier for the banishment of his rival. He beareth himself as if he had sovereign authority; but, paramount as he thinketh himself, will I pull him down."

"He hath now got completely the favor of the queen," observed the Lord Howard. "Indeed, never saw I her majesty so gracious to him as she hath been of late: it seemeth as if he might have what he lists for the asking of it."

"Count not upon that," replied his companion, with something of a sneer upon his countenance; "he is one of those fools that seem ever inclined to the quarrelling with their good fortune. He playeth the lover bravely, I am well aware; and that her majesty delighteth in having one of such gallant bearing at her side, I make no manner of doubt; but such happens to be his disposition, that the more she alloweth him of her favor, the more will he increase his demands upon it; and upon ever so slight a cause, will straightway become petulant, and give her majesty some offence."

"I doubt much all that we have said to him concerning Raleigh hath been of any service," said the other. "I noticed

him some time back speaking of Sir Walter, in the presence, in exceeding friendly terms."

"That is easily accounted for," exclaimed Cecil; "he can afford to speak well of one who is in discredit, and therefore can in no way excite his jealousy, or ruffle his pride; but let Raleigh return to his former influence, and I warrant you Essex shall be marvellously sparing of his good word for him."

"O' my life I know not which I mislike the most," cried his companion, evidently with much sincerity—"the one be so pestilent proud, and the other such a thorough upstart."

"Both shall fall, and neither know who giveth the blow," replied Sir Robert very coolly. "For all that my Lord Essex seemeth in such fine feather at present, methinks he will be the first for the tumble; for he is the more easily worked upon, being rash, haughty, and apt at a desperate fancy. Though he can persuade himself that I am honest to him, yet would he none the less be ready to quarrel with me, should I give him occasion. Raleigh considereth me his true friend, and this character must I keep up with him, else might he have some suspicion of my real intentions. He is by far the difficultest character to deal with, for he hath prudence and knowledge as much as any man; but methinks I shall touch him through Cobham, who is weak enough to be easily misled, and, on account of their strict intimacy, may as easily involve the other."

"Hast heard of this Master Francis Bacon, the son of old Sir Nicholas, that is said to counsel my Lord Essex in every thing?" inquired his companion.

"I have heard of his being well learned in the subtleties of the law," replied Cecil. "But further than this know I nothing."

"I have heard famous talk of him," added my Lord Henry Howard eagerly. "It hath been said that the greatness of his learning maketh all persons marvel. He can discourse on the abstrusest matters of science and philosophy in such a sort as will astonish even the profoundest scholars, and there appeareth no particle of human knowledge he is not as familiar with as others shall be with the commonest things. Nay, I can not tell you half the wonderful things that be said of him. It be moreover related, on credible testimony, that my Lord Essex hath taken him to live with him in his house, where he is to be his friend, and counsel

him on all matters of difficulty and importance."

"I doubt hugely my Lord Essex will allow of the counselling of any man," replied his companion. "He is of too great a spirit, of too proud a heart, and too vain a mind."

"Nevertheless, 'tis believed of all that he will advance his fortunes at court," observed the other. "Where, if Master Bacon possess such monstrous excellence as report hath declared, it be like enough he will come to some distinction. Mayhap we shall then have to deal with *him*; and if he hath any particular knowledge of laws and government beyond that of others, it may chance he shall attain to so high an eminence as shall put him out of our reach."

"He shall be raised high indeed if I can not lay a hold on him," said Cecil. "If he be sufficiently pliant I will make a tool of him, let his learning be what it may, and then shall he work for his own advantage and mine too; but if he be of such nature as are those whose stubborn spirits will not bow to any control of mine, then will I seek either to overreach him, or undermine him, so that he shall topple headlong, as in good time shall I make Essex and Raleigh."

"How mean you to work with these two when Raleigh is let out?" asked his companion.

"In a like manner as hath been done hitherto," replied Sir Robert. "I will with as much secrecy as shall be possible, set the one in opposition unto the other, and yet in the belief of both endeavor to appear the very good friend of each. With Essex methinks my labor will be easy, notwithstanding he hath taken to himself so sage a counsellor as Master Bacon, for immediately he findeth the other in rivalry with him, you shall find him ready of belief to aught concerning of Raleigh that seemeth to threaten his pre-eminence, then straightway will he become as haughty and insolent as you please, the which will sufficiently convince Sir Walter that he beareth him no good will, and he will, as it were in self-defence, set about the strengthening of his own position in the queen's favor, and the lessening of his rival's influence; and this appearing a greater show of opposition shall so incense my Lord Essex, that if he break not out quickly into direct and open violence, I lack judgment in his character. Upon this, 'tis like enough the queen shall be in some way wrath with him; for despite of her seem-

ing fondness, I am hugely mistaken if she would not look upon any affront done upon Raleigh whilst he possessed her consideration, as an offence to herself; whereupon it would be easy to move her to send my lord from court to some office of great honor, yet of greater difficulty afar off, the which the boastfulness of his spirit would make him eager to accept: there placed, his rashness and unskilfulness would soon involve him and her majesty's government in some terrible embarrassment, which should more and more lose him the queen's favor, till she put upon him such disgrace as his proud spirit can never stomach, and then his rashness will like enough set him upon some desperate enterprise of a treasonable nature to regain his lost ascendancy, which failing, as it needs must in the hands of one so headstrong, there shall presently be an end of my Lord of Essex."

"Admirably devised!" exclaimed the Lord Henry Howard, in a marvellous cheerfulness. "'Tis good! I'faith, 'tis excellent good! 'Tis a plan so deep and of so fine a contrivance that it can not fail of success. But how shall this affect our interest with the Scottish king, who by all accounts is so well inclined toward my Lord of Essex, that he would take instant indignation against any who should do him an injury."

"We will so bring it about that it shall appear as if we had no hand in it," replied his wily companion. "At the same time we would contrive to shift the blameableness of it upon Raleigh and Cobham, which shall the more incense the king against them."

"Good again!" cried the other with increased gratification. "'Tis as well conceived a plot as was ever thought of. Then how shall we do with Raleigh when the other is put out of the way?"

"Methinks we shall have some difficulty to get him to commit himself, because of his exceeding prudence," answered Cecil. "He will in no way anger the queen if he can help it, if she forgive him his foolishness in marrying of Elizabeth Throckmorton: therefore he shall not be made to lose his influence at court so easily as may at first be thought. We must either build upon her majesty's variable humor, or await a better opportunity. At least, we will do what we can; and, in the meantime, by persuading of the Scottish king that Raleigh and Cobham are ever in opposition to his succession—that they hold him in small respect, and were foremost in the working of the

downfall of my Lord of Essex, he shall acquire such a dislike of them both, that upon the king's coming to these realms, which can not in the course of nature be long first, seeing that the queen waxeth old and sickly exceeding fast, he shall disgrace them and distinguish us. Methinks even then 'twill be a difficult task to get Raleigh into the doing of such an act as would put his life in jeopardy, though 'tis easy to believe he would be hugely discontented. But I know my brother-in-law Cobham to be vain and weak, and like enough to be so indignant at the slight which would be put upon him by the Scottish king, as to be readily drawn into any treasonable conspiracy, into the which 'tis natural enough to believe he would presently seek to draw his friend; whereupon, if Raleigh will have no share in it, I doubt not being able to make it appear as if he was a principal, which shall be quite sufficient to bring him to such a trial as must needs end in the lopping off of his head."

"O' my life! never heard I any scheme possessed of so wonderful a cunning!" exclaimed his companion, as if in a monstrous admiration. "In my mind is there no doubt of the very completeness of our success."

"All that be necessary to secure it is a sufficient secrecy," added Sir Robert. "In your letters to Master Bruce seek not to say more than the occasion shall warrant; and in all other communications whatsoever take heed to write or speak in such a style as none but the trust-worthy can make anything of. Appear to all three acting toward them with a sufficient friendliness; and if you say aught to one against the other, let it not appear too officious of you, but the rather lamenting that there should be anything but harmony betwixt them. By these means shall you gain their confidence, and give no color of suspicion in your actions."

"I will fail in nothing that infinite dislike of them can accomplish," answered my Lord Howard.

"Now will I take these letters to the queen," said his companion, as he took some papers from the table. "If I find her in the mood, which 'tis like she will be, I will essay to move her to Raleigh's liberation, the which if I accomplish, I doubt not by it raising myself so high in his opinion, that he will take me for his best friend ever after; and give me by his confidence such opportunity as I may want for the furtherance of my plans."

Upon the saying of this both prepared

themselves to depart, and soon after went together to court, which was held at no great distance, the queen then staying at Somerset house. Somehow it did happen that as they were journeying in that direction they chanced to meet my Lord Cobham; and between him and them there were presently such greetings as might have convinced a looker-on that few could be so well disposed toward each other as were Sir Robert Cecil and my Lord Henry Howard toward my Lord Cobham. Presently Cecil did tell his brother-in-law, in a manner as if his whole heart was in the business, how long and how anxiously he had been seeking for an opportunity to serve their imprisoned friend, and now that he was going to the queen with great hopes of so disposing her toward him, that at the least the accomplishment of his object, which was no other than the liberation of Sir Walter Raleigh, for whom he would at all times strain his utmost, he held him in so high a respect for his many commendable qualities, would be achieved at no very distant day. At this my Lord Cobham seemed in a very excess of gratification; and did not proceed on his way before he had expressed himself to that effect.

"Now will that silly woodcock make such a report of what I have said to his chosen friend," observed Sir Robert to his companion when my Lord Cobham was out of hearing, "that I shall be considered so honest of heart toward Raleigh as to be quickly in high esteem of both. But 'tis with such baits these fine birds are caught."

They had not made much progress after this, before they observed my Lord Essex, surrounded with a goodly group of some of the highest nobles in the land and men of distinction, in such gallant array as was quite a splendor to behold, bearing it so bravely among them as made it evident he was considered as the very greatest man of them all. He hardly seemed to notice Cecil and his associate, save by a haughty bend of his head, and so little were they cared for by the group, that the two were obliged to content themselves with the road, the pathway being entirely taken up with my Lord Essex's friends, who appeared in no way inclined to make room for them to pass.

"Ah!" exclaimed Cecil with some bitterness, looking after them with an exceeding frowning countenance when they had got some way, "you ruffle it famously, my lord, without doubt; but high

as you hold your head, if I make it not lie as low as shall lie that of the meanest man in these kingdoms, then have I strangely mistaken mine own power."

"A set of pestilent proud fellows!" cried my Lord Howard very indignantly, "to force us into the road! Nay, if this Essex be not put down shortly, there will be no finding of a pathway for oneself in all the realm, for him and his insolent followers."

A few minutes after, they arrived at Somerset house, where, bidding my Lord Henry Howard tarry in one of the waiting-rooms, Sir Robert Cecil went straight to the queen's closet, in which he found her majesty dressed to go on a journey, and seemingly in a very fair humor. Upon saying that he had private business to communicate, the queen instantly did dismiss all her attendants, and sat herself down in some stateliness, to know of what pressing matter it might be, for he was greatly in her confidence.

"Any news from France?" inquired the queen, "or is Philip of Spain proceeding to any further hostile measures against us?"

"I have news from France, please your majesty," replied Cecil, "which seemeth to me of the uttermost importance."

"Ha!" quickly exclaimed her majesty. "Hath the league got the upper hand? But God forbid such murderous villains should triumph! Is the Duc de Guise in paramount authority? But 'tis not to be believed so base and brutal a wretch could be allowed to have sovereign power. Doth not the Huguenots prosper? Or hath any ill hap come to their gallant leader Henri?"

"Please your majesty, my advices are enough to make me despair of my fellow-protestants," answered Sir Robert. "'Tis reported that Henri is about to change his religion."

"The traitor!" cried the queen, looking exceedingly disturbed. "Surely he can never think of so base a thing as to forsake the holy protestant cause to become a spiritual vassal of his arch enemy the pope? 'Tis not to be believed of him."

"I doubt not, please your majesty, that by this time 'tis already done," observed her companion, then laying some papers before her, added, "here is the correspondence of your majesty's agent at the French court, in which will be found the excuses Henri hath made to him for the taking of such a step."

"What inexcusable villany!" exclaimed Elizabeth, seemingly in great anger.

"What horrible ingratitude! After we have sought to serve him in all possible ways, he can show no better return for such goodness, but the doing of this shameful apostacy. We will write to him speedily our opinion of so deplorable, so wicked an act: and for these papers, we will look over them at our leisure. What letters are those you have in your hand?"

"Please your majesty, they shall be found of very different sort," replied the other. "They relate to a matter in which your majesty is like to be charged with the death of a certain gallant knight, who, having incurred your majesty's displeasure, seemeth to have gone quite distraught because he can no longer delight his heart with the marvellous comeliness of your majesty's royal countenance."

"Alack! and is it so indeed?" inquired the queen, with an expression of some concern. "Hath his wits forsook him on that account? Poor man! mayhap he is to be pitied. But who is this knight?"

"It is one, please your majesty," answered Cecil, "who hath doubtless well deserved all he hath got, for 'tis beyond all doubt he hath committed great offence; but methinks—that is, if your majesty will graciously allow your poor servant to think upon such a business—that, as he hath suffered very severely, and undoubtedly hath that opinion of your majesty's perfections which be very proper in him to have, your gracious consideration of his offence may not be otherwise than beneficial to him, for it can not help making him the more ashamed of what he hath done, whilst the punishment he hath endured must needs keep the fault properly in his remembrance. Please your majesty, it is Sir Walter Raleigh who hath been brought to this pitiable strait."

"Away with him!" exclaimed Elizabeth, yet not with any particular anger. "We doubt that he deserves any pity of us whom he hath so foully wronged."

"Mayhap, if the truth could be come at, please your majesty," said Sir Robert, "she who brought him into the doing of such a wickedness was the more to blame than he; for upon perusing of these letters, and from divers other sources, I feel assured that the entireness of his devotion unto your majesty was so extreme, that he could not, of his own accord, have committed such evil. He was beguiled into it, as it were."

"Like enough," replied the queen, "that Elizabeth Throckmorton was vile enough to induce him into any baseness:

but he should have known better than to have tolerated so infamous a creature. And then to have taken her to wife. Oh, it was villanous!"

"Perchance he did it to save her from utter disgrace," observed Cecil. "It is on the face of it, please your majesty, he married her from no hope of advantage. He could get no gain of it. Methinks, then, he is more to be pitied than blamed, or that he should be considered more foolish than ill inclined. But I have a letter here from Master Arthur Gorges—one of a creditable testimony—that relateth to something which hath lately taken place in the Tower, in the which Sir Walter Raleigh did behave very strangely, that seemeth to me to be exceeding proper that your majesty should hear of."

"We are careless whether you read it or not," said the queen; yet looking all the while as if she was wonderfully eager to hear it read. "But since you have it in your hand you may as well make us acquainted with its contents."

Permission had scarcely been given before Sir Robert did commence the perusal of the following:—

"HONORABLE SIR:

"I can not choose but advertise you of a strange tragedy that this day had like to have fallen out between the captain of the guard, Sir Walter Raleigh, and the lieutenant of the ordnance, if I had not by great chance come at the very instant, to have turned it into a comedy. For, upon the report of her majesty's being at Sir George Carey's, Sir Walter Raleigh having gazed and sighed a long time at his study window, from which he might discern the barges and the boats about the Blackfriars' stairs; suddenly he brake into a great distemper, and sware that his enemies had on purpose brought her majesty thither to break his gall in sunder with Tantalus's torment, that when she went away he might gaze his death before his eyes—with many such like conceits. And as a man transported with passion, he sware to Sir George Carew that he would disguise himself, and get into a pair of oars to ease his mind but with a sight of the queen, or else he protested his heart would break. But the trusty jailer would none of that, for displeasing the high powers, as he said, which he more respected than the feeding of his humor; and so flatly refused to permit him. But in conclusion, upon this dispute they fell flat out to outrageous choleric words, with straining and

struggling at the doors, that all lameness was forgotten, and, in the fury of the conflict, the jailer had his new perwig torn off his crown; and yet here the battle ended not, for at last they had gotten out their daggers, which, when I saw, I played the stickler between them, and so purchased such a rap on the knuckles, that I wished both their pates broken; and so with much ado they stayed their brawl to see my bloody fingers. At the first I was ready to break with laughing, to see them two scramble and brawl like madmen, until I saw the iron walking, and then I did my best to appease the fury. As yet, I can not reconcile them by any persuasions, for Sir Walter swears he shall hate him for so restraining him from the sight of his mistress, while he lives; for that he knows not, as he said, whether he shall ever see her again, when she has gone the progress. And Sir George, on his side, swears that he had rather he should lose his longing than he should draw on him her majesty's displeasure by such liberty. Thus they continue in malice and snarling; but I am sure all the smart lighted on me. I can not tell whether I should more allow of the passionate lover or the trusty jailer. But if yourself had seen it, as I did, you would have been as heartily merry as ever you were in all your life for so short a time. I pray you pardon my hasty written narration which I acquaint you with, hoping you will be the peace-maker. But, good sir, let nobody know thereof; for I fear Sir Walter Raleigh will shortly grow to be Orlando Furioso, if the bright Angelica persevere against him a little longer."

Queen Elizabeth appeared to listen with marvellous attention while the letter was being read, ever and anon smiling very prettily, and smirking up her wrinkles after such a fashion as showed she was monstrous well pleased with the whole affair.

"Well, he must be in a tearing humor, certainly, if he goeth on at such a rate as that," observed the queen, laughingly. "We knew not that our venturing to Sir George Carey's would have caused so terrible to-do, else mayhap we might have changed our course. 'Tis grievous to think Sir Walter Raleigh should take on so on our account, yet hath he none other to thank for it but himself, and the wicked Jesabel he hath married."

"Then, am I to judge, from what your majesty hath stated, that you will graciously be pleased to give your un-

happy prisoner his liberty?" inquired Cecil.

"Not so fast!" exclaimed her majesty, with a more serious countenance. "We intend naught of the kind, depend on't. 'Twould be a fine thing, truly, were we so credulous as to believe all that hath been writ in your friend's letter. How know you not it be all a counterfeit? 'Tis like enough the whole affair is mere invention. But we are not juggled so easily as may be supposed of us. We put no faith in fine words. We can not abide flatterers."

"Ah! please your majesty," cried Sir Robert, in a wonderful earnestness, "I can not see how there can be anything in the shape of flattery ever presented to your majesty's ear; for your majesty, it is well known, hath such extraordinary excellences, that however the world may praise, it can not do otherwise than speak the truth."

"Nay, we are in no way better than the ordinary," replied the queen, as if carelessly, yet well delighted with such language. "By God's good help, we are not badly off in some qualities, yet, doubtless, have we our faults, nevertheless."

"If your majesty hath faults, 'tis a marvel to know where they lie," answered her wily companion; "for many have carefully looked for such, and could get no sight of them, let them search ever so. If it be not thought too bold of me, I would fain present unto your majesty that clemency hath ever been your majesty's brightest attribute: and although this Raleigh hath behaved himself infamously, which none can gainsay, yet hath he suffered in such a sort!"

"By God's wrath, he shall stay where he is," sharply exclaimed the queen, interrupting the other in the very middle of what he had been about to say.

"Then there is no occasion for me to read your majesty this letter," observed Cecil, turning another letter over and over in his hand. "It is of Sir Walter's own writing to me; and speaketh of your majesty in such exceeding delicate terms, that my heart was quite moved at it. But I will put it up, since the perusing of it meeteth not with your majesty's approbation."

"Nay, do not so," cried the queen, as she observed the letter about to disappear; "we care not for its being read, yet if it be worded with a proper respect of us, it can do us no wrong to hear of it."

"Indeed, 'tis the very properest piece

of writing eye of mine ever beheld, please your majesty," replied Sir Robert; and thereupon proceeded quickly to the perusing of what hath here been writ:—

"SIR:

"I pray you be a mean to her majesty for the signing of the bills for the guards' coats, which are to be made now for the progress, and which the clerk of the check hath importuned me to write for. My heart was never broken till this day, that I hear the queen goes away so far off, whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire in so many journeys, and am now left behind her in a dark prison all alone. While she was yet near at hand, that I might hear of her once in two or three days, my sorrows were the less; but even now my heart is cast into the depth of all misery. I that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander—hunting like Diana—walking like Venus; the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometimes sitting in the shade like a goddess—sometimes singing like an angel—sometime playing like Orpheus. Behold the sorrow of this world! once amiss hath bereaved me of all. O glory! that only shineth in misfortune, what is become of thy assurance? All wounds have scars, but that of fantasy; all affections thy relenting, but that of womankind. Who is the judge of friendship, but adversity; or when is grace witnessed, but in offences? There were no divinity, but by reason of compassion; for revenges are brutish and mortal. All those times past, the loves, the sighs, the sorrows, the desires, can they not weigh down one frail misfortune? Can not one drop of gall be hidden in such great heaps of sweetness? I may then conclude, *spec et fortuna, valet!* She is gone, in whom I trusted; and of me hath not one thought of mercy, nor any respect of that that was. Do with me now, therefore, what you list. I am more weary of life than they are desirous that I should perish; which, if it had been for her, as it is by her, I had been too happily born.

"Yours, not worthy any name or title,
"W. R."

It was a marvellous sight to observe the countenance of the queen during the perusal of the foregoing. At the first few sentences she seemed moved to a great attention; when it came to the describing of her riding like Alexander, and the like gross flattery, the sudden flushing of her face showed itself all through her cosmetics; and at her being likened unto a

goddess, an angel, and Orpheus, she simpered famously, and showed her teeth, which were none of the whitest. But when the writer began to make his dolorous moan, the which Sir Robert read with so pitiful an accent, as if his heart was a breaking, her majesty looked concerned, then piteous, then sorrowful, and at the ending of the letter she put up her handkerchief to her eyes; but whether there was any likelihood of tears, know I not.

"Odds pittikins! it be wonderful moving," exclaimed the queen; "he hath suffered more than we thought of: he shall have some comfort straight. But read that passage again, Sir Robert, that beginneth concerning of our riding like Alexander."

At this Cecil, with very good expression, read the whole of that dainty piece of extravagance a second time, to the which the queen did lend her ears in a manner that showed she was infinitely pleased at it.

"Ah! never was anything so delicately writ," cried her majesty, earnestly; "he hath a good opinion of us, that is a sure thing; so we must e'en let him out of prison. Go on the instant and see that he have his liberty. 'Tis a cruel thing to let him suffer what he doth. Indeed, it be exceeding delicately writ."

It may easily be imagined Cecil lost but little time in executing of her majesty's commands; and to the great joy of all his friends, and in particular to his beautiful wife, Sir Walter Raleigh left the Tower the same day.

CHAPTER XIX.

Come, spur away,
I have no patience for a longer stay;
But must go down,
And leave the changeable noise of this great town.
I will the country see,
Where old simplicity,
Though hid in gray,
Doth look more gay
Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad.

RANDOLPH.

In thy fair breast, and once fair soul,
I thought my vows were writ alone;
But others' oaths so blurred the scroll,
That I no more could read my own.
And am I still obliged to pay,
When you had thrown the bond away?

SIR ROBERT HOWARD.

I MUST now hurry the courteous reader a little forward in this my narration, first premising that Sir Walter Raleigh, though he had his liberty of the queen,

was not allowed of her to appear at court, and was still a sort of prisoner at large; the which to Dame Elizabeth, was of huge discomfort, and she was ever urging him to the doing of such honorable deeds and great enterprise as the report thereof might regain for him the queen's favor. Indeed, so admirable a wife scarce ever lived as she proved herself to be at all times; for, though the knowledge of his disgrace having come upon him on her account, ever made her monstrously ill at heart, she was intent upon the continual cheering of him, seemingly with such fine spirits as was marvellous to behold, knowing of her unhappiness; and though it could not be disputed she loved him as her life, and cared for nothing so much as his society, she would in no way allow of his giving such attention to her as might interfere with the carrying on of such great intentions as appeared likely to restore him to the honorable influence he had lost. Despite, however, of this seeming disparagement of his fortunes, he was chosen at this time for a parliament man, and soon did so distinguish himself as an orator, in the advancement of all such measures as were for the public good, and for the safety of the state, more particularly in the complete disclosing of the hateful intrigues and malignant designs of Queen Elizabeth's powerful enemy, the king of Spain, that he won for himself the opinion of many who had thought ill of him hitherto: and though her majesty looked exceeding inveterate against him, and would not hear of his venturing into her presence, this was merely the behavior of an offended woman; for, as a sovereign, she could not help esteeming of his worth, and as a sign thereof, at some solicitation of him, she did grant him the manor of Sherborne, in Dorsetshire; a very princely gift, for it did include the castle and park, and a fair piece of land.

Here did he employ himself delightfully for some time. He builded, he planted, he sowed with such skilfulness, that the place all around and about became quite an earthly paradise. There was soon newly raised a most fine house, bountifully embellished with all manner of orchards, gardens, and groves, so fair to look upon, that for a right delicate aspect, it had not its like in those parts. But his excellent wife would not allow him to be satisfied with these pursuits, doubtless thinking that, surrounded by so many enticing pleasures, his noble spirit

might sink into indolence, and he should not be able to recover his lost greatness; therefore he did liberally employ his pen in the writing of such papers to the queen, concerning of the dangers of England from foreign states, as might put her to a careful regard of her own security. Though he failed not to accompany them with most moving complaints of the unpleasantness of his situation, in being kept from serving of her majesty in such sort as he desired, while she paid the properest attention to what he stated upon matters of state, she heeded not anything that related to his own affairs. In truth, she was so taken up with my Lord Essex at this time, that she cared not for the presence of his rival. Yet had she such estimation of Raleigh's insight into the designs of her enemies, in the which her great discrimination in such matters made her a profound judge, that she would receive aught from him, in the way of information, with more respect than she would give even to the opinions of any in greater favor with her.

Finding that all these endeavors of his availed him nothing, he then commenced preparations for the going upon a grand expedition, having for its object no other than the discovery and conquest of that wonderful rich country called Guiana, in which was situated, as had been related by many credible writers, that far-famed city styled El Dorado. Now it was the belief of all persons of experience inhabiting the coast of the Spanish main, that there was an inland country abounding in such store of gold and precious things, as exceeded all sober belief among other people. And, moreover, it was said by the Spaniards generally, that upon their conquest of the great empire of Peru, a kinsman of the last reigning inca Atabalipa did make his escape from that country, and taking with him a powerful force, and so wonderful a store of treasure that the like hath never since been heard of, did migrate into a place afar off, where, in the course of time he established for himself a richer kingdom than that he had left. This new country so abounded with mines of the most precious ore, as was reported, and with other costly things, that the fame of such great riches had stirred up divers Spanish commanders to attempt its conquest; but all had failed, from the lack of such knowledge in them as might lead them to the discovery of the exact place where this El

Dorado might be found. In the meanwhile, the fame of such a wealthy country more and more increased, not only among the Spaniards, but it spread from them into other nations; and among those notable commanders who were ambitious to attempt its discovery and conquest, Sir Walter Raleigh had long been of the foremost.

He saw at a glance that there was nothing so like to restore him to the queen's favor as the succeeding in so famous an enterprise; and to the acquiring of the necessary knowledge, and the getting of proper assistance from his friends, he now bent all the powers of his mind. With the first of these objects in view, he presently fitted out a ship under the command of one Captain Whiddon, in whom he placed his trust, to obtain such information as he could of Guiana at the island of Trinidad, and make such observations of the coast bordering on the Orinoco (a famous river in the New World, up which he must go to approach the place he sought), as might be serviceable to him when he proceeded on the voyage. Then for the other object—he made it public that he was about to venture himself on this alluring expedition, and such was his reputation in these things, that in a marvellous brief space he was addressed by scores of the bravest spirits in the land, eager to join him in the adventure. With his share of the prize taken at the Azores, which, despite of what was seized of the queen and pilfered by the men, amounted to so large a sum, that after the making of all his improvements at Sherborne, he had still enough to spare to commence the procuring of such an armament as seemed to him sufficient for the realizing of his wishes; in the doing of which it was not long before he had such assistance from those desirous of embarking with him, that his preparations proceeded so fast as to make him and his adventure the subject of the general talk.

When the captain whom he had sent out returned from his voyage, the information he brought, though it spoke of difficulty and danger, in no way abated the eagerness of Sir Walter Raleigh or his associates for the adventure; and now so well was it entertained of all men, even of those skilled in maritime affairs, and others of too much gravity to be easily misled, that my Lord Howard, the lord high admiral, did send him a ship of his own called the Lion's Whelp, and Sir Robert Cecil did forward him such

assistance as was like to stand him in good stead, and both, it hath been suspected, not without some coloring of probability, were done at the command of the queen; but as if it came of themselves, because she would seem as if she would have no hand in it, in consequence of his having so hugely offended her in the matter of Elizabeth Throckmorton. By these means there were collected of soldiers and their officers, and the gentlemen-adventurers, as many as a hundred, with mariners in sufficiency, and a squadron of five sail well equipped with all manner of warlike stores, and with such a complement of barges, wherries, and tenders, as might suffice for the inland navigation.

During this time Master Francis had grown to be as gallant a gentleman as you shall see of his years, well taught in all proper accomplishments, and in the possession of a beard which would have put his fitness for "doing the women," completely out of the conceit of Gib the call-boy. He was held in such estimation of Sir Walter Raleigh, for the aptness he displayed in everything, his modesty, and his affectionateness, that Sir Walter seemed inclined to stop at nothing for the advancement of his welfare, and his fortunes thus seemed to be in such goodly keeping that it was believed of many none ought to be more happy than he. Yet was he very doleful upon occasion. The more he moved among persons of worship, which he did in some respect of them, in consequence of the visible esteem he was held of Sir Walter and his lady, the more the knowledge he had acquired of his birth preyed upon his spirits. That he did earnestly pant after honor and distinction there is no doubt; but, in the extreme sensitiveness of his mind, his illegitimacy came as a bar to his ambition; and the more he saw of what good opinion he was held in by others, the less did he live in his own repute. Whenever he was in company, and there began a talk about noble descent and the like, the hot blood would rush into his cheek, and he would feel as if well inclined to sink into the ground, so that he might escape the gaze of those around him. To him it were as if all had a suspicion of the disgrace he was born in, and he was continually in fear that some one or other would find him out for what he was, and would begin a whispering it about, till he should be turned from with coldness, or pointed at with contempt.

Of Joanna he found himself thinking

more often than he desired. For some time after he had seen her last he had heard nothing from her; then there came to him a letter in her hand, the which he straight returned unopened. After that there came a message from her borne by one whom he knew not, that she earnestly desired to have speech of him, of the which he took no heed. Since that he was troubled no more by her; but he heard of his true friend Harry Daring that she had been seized with a sickness that brought her nigh unto death's door; and it was said by Dame Margery that she was all the while in a violent phrensy that could not in any way be allayed, and that she called upon Master Francis so piteously, that old Lather, who attended her, knew not what it all meant. This put the young secretary in some trouble, for though he doubted not of her guiltiness, he had no desire that she should be in such a strait as she then was. Sometimes he would think he had been too hasty, and a doubt would occasionally arise in him that she was not so blameable as she seemed, for what had been said of her by the old woman might not be true. But then he quickly remembered it was so strongly corroborated by what Harry Daring had seen; and what he had himself been witness to under the gateway, was of such a sort that it was plain her conduct could not be justified. Upon her recovery he treated her letter and message as hath been described, and determined in his mind to forget her, as one unworthy of a thought; but forget her he never did.

It was about this time that Master Francis, having oft spoken to his patron of the courageous spirit of the barber-chirurgeon's apprentice, did earnestly request of Sir Walter his good offices in providing of the boy, now grown of somewhat higher stature, and of great activity, some fitter employment for his courageous nature than what he held; and having sent for him at his patron's request, the latter was so pleased at Harry Daring's undauntedness that he presently took him into his service, and had him taught something of maritime affairs, designing him to be a petty officer in his projected expedition. At this no one could be in such huge delight as our young barber-chirurgeon. He left Eastcheap with an especial contempt of all things appertaining to chirurgery and barbering, and with the particular gratification of his master; for the tricks the apprentice had played upon his best cus-

tomers were so frequent and of such a sort that they were quickly destroying of his business. Therefore with marvellous gladness of heart he cancelled his indentures, and was well pleased to get rid of him at so cheap a rate: but Harry Daring went not without displaying of his love of mischief, or as he called it, "exquisite fine fun," in a manner best suited to his humor at such a time. He played such confusion among the medicaments as must sadly have puzzled old Lather to know what he had hold of when he should next meddle with them; for he mixed the liniments with the juleps, the syrups with the acids, and the purgatives with the carminatives. Then he notched the razors, broke off the points of the lancets, cut the brushes in such a fashion that upon being used all the bristles should fall out, and set a shelf of gallipots so insecure that on the slightest touch of his master they should all tumble on his head. After this he parted with the old man in a wonderful gravity, but from the time he got out of sight of him, up to his joining of Master Francis, he kept himself in a continual chuckle of delight at the thought of the monstrousness of old Lather's rage upon his discovering of what he had been at.

When he found himself with his true friend Master Francis he seemed as happy as his heart could be, for that he loved him with a perfect sincerity was out of all question. His friend was some few years the elder of the two, and was looked up to by him as something much superior to himself, because of his superior learning and the gentleness of his appearance. Though he sought as much as he was able to keep down the mischievous propensities of the other, and Harry Daring seemed as if he would do anything to please him, he had no great success in his efforts, for Harry was always a playing of some tricks upon the serving-men, whereof there were few who liked him much at first, but before a very long time he had cudgelled them all into respect of him; and once when Peter had come with his master, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, a visiting at Sherborne, and that quarrelsome varlet had began a bullying of Harry Daring for having chalked an ass's head upon his back while he was asleep, Harry straightway challenged him to a bout at quarter staff, and in half of an hour or less, had given the big fellow such a drubbing that he was fain to cry out he had had enough of him. But such was the greatness of his spirit,

that upon very little occasion he would fight like a dragon with any one, or any number, be they big or little, and he seemed as if he would rather die than give in. He constantly exercised himself with Master Francis in the firing of pistols, guns, in the use of the sword, and other warlike amusements, in which he quickly attained great practice, and he took care that he should hurt him not; but if he was a fencing with any other for whom he cared but little, depend on't he would give him a sly cut, and then put on a face of such concern at the accident, that every one believed he had not done it on the purpose.

With Stephen Shortcake, who had now become Sir Walter's steward, though he rated him famously when he found him at such things as driving of all the cocks together and setting them a fighting—or getting of the dogs to worry the bull—or tying of the tail of the old sow to that of a cat, and while the one scratched the other with a hideous screeching, the old sow took to her heels a grunting at such a rate that the whole neighborhood was in an uproar, and he upon the back of a jackass, without any other bridle than a halter, hunted them over the fields, whipping of his steed, a laughing, and hallooing like mad—his fearlessness made him somewhat of a favorite, the which grew to a greater liking when, as he was returning from a neighboring fair, the old man was set upon by thieves, and as they were a rifling of him, up came Harry Daring with his cudgel; and he so belabored them that one was left for dead, and the rest, sorely bruised, took themselves off with such speed of foot that they presently were gone clean out of sight. This piece of good service Stephen Shortcake never forgot, and told Sir Walter of it, and every one else he could, to the great credit of his defender; nay, when complaints were made to him of such mischief as the young rogue would oft do, he would hush it up as well as he could, that it might not come to the ears of his master.

Once Harry Daring was a walking along the high road by himself, anxious for some sport, he cared not of what sort, he met an old woman in a red cloak a going to market, seated on the top of a high horse between two panniers full of eggs; and walking by the side of her, he very soberly entered into a discourse upon the price of butter and cheese and such things; when all of a sudden he fired a pistol close unto the horse's ear, at the

which the animal set off full gallop, pitching of the old woman head foremost into a neighboring ditch, and shaking of the panniers till the eggs were all of a smash. After laughing heartily, he presently lifted the old dame out of the ditch, luckily in no way hurt, yet in as complete a pickle as was possible for her to be in; and, much lamenting of the accident, he caught her horse, which he brought to her to mount; but when she saw all her eggs a streaming through the panniers, and Dobbin's sides as yellow as a piece of gold, she would have none of his lamentations, and on the instant broke out into such a fury as might have been terrible for any one else to have looked upon. Of this he took no heed; but quickly began abusing of her in return, after so aggravating a fashion, that she ran at him to give him a good clouting, whereupon he dodged her round the horse till he made her legs ache again, laughing all the time, as if he had never had such excellent pastime; and when he had made sufficient sport of her, he took a quick run, and making a leap over the hedge close by which she stood, to her great astonishment vanished from her sight. However, it so happened that she found out where he lived, and she soon came in a desperate rage, and with a woful tale, to Stephen Shortcake, who, rather than Sir Walter Raleigh should hear of it, paid her handsomely out of his own gains for the damage she had been at, which sent her away in a better humor; but he allowed not Harry to get off from this mischievous trick of his without speaking to him severely upon the very heinousness of such doings, and showing him how like it was to lose him Sir Walter's favor, at the which the boy expressed such great contrition, with so very innocent a face, that the old steward was charmed with him, and gave him a cup of choice old wine to warm his young heart, as he said. Nevertheless, his contrition lasted not long, for the very next day Gabriel and Roger, two of the serving-men, fell into the brook, because of the plank going across having been sawn nearly through; and although upon close investigation it was found out nobody had done it, that it was a trick of Harry Daring's contrivance none doubted. During this time he discoursed frequently with Master Francis and others upon what he would do when he was a venturing of himself in foreign parts; for the intended adventure in search of El Dorado suited his humor to a nicety, and he spoke of

the exquisite fine fun he should have in the killing of Spaniards, with a wonderful degree of pleasantness, as if all other pastimes were as naught to it.

Now that preparations for the expedition were so far advanced, there was a large party of the gentlemen-adventurers and the principal officers met at Sherborne, and with them a many of Sir Walter's choicest friends, to take leave of him. For two or three days these, his guests, were kept in the constant enjoyment of such pleasures as the country afforded. There was hunting and hawking for some, and others seemed to take most delight in going a fishing: the dainty walks, the delicate orchards, the flowery gardens, and the solitary groves, did invite many to a stroll, where, as the gallants with their ladies passed along, mayhap they would come to a party of country people, dressed up very famously, dancing of a morrice to the pipe and tabor, or on a sudden their ears should be ravished with a concert of concealed music from all manner of sackbuts, cornets, flutes, and the like pleasant instruments. Then, when they got into the solitary groves, they should hear voices singing of a roundelay, and none could tell whence they came, which made them all marvel exceedingly. In the evening there was dancing and singing of madrigals among the guests; and some did act in masques marvellous well devised, and others played them on the lute, the virginals, and the theorbo, to the complete enrapturing of the whole company: besides which there were some of the best musicians who could be had for money, and they were placed in different rooms, and, when desired, struck up most excellent sweet music.

Among the company there came the merry Alice and her lovers, and she being desirous of vexing them as much as possible for her own especial amusement, did dance oft and very lovingly with Master Francis, and appear wonderfully taken with him; and he, with a courteousness that was natural to him, though his heart was not in it, at her requesting, did play the lover to her in jest, paying her such close attention as moved them all into a wondrous jealousy. Dr. Bashful sat himself in a corner, and would have speech of no one, he was so disturbed at the sight; others looked on exceeding melancholy and dejected; and Sir Narcissus Wrinkles, my Lord Wiseacre, and Master Aniseed, did get into such a rage, that after remarking unto each other the

strange familiarities of the young heiress with Master Francis, it was resolved amongst them, that each should send him a challenge, not doubting that one or other should kill him, and so the survivors have the better chance. The next question was, who was to take the challenge; and whilst they were debating upon it, who should come up to them but Master Shakspeare, whom they all knew; and they instantly agreed it should be no other.

"By Tartarus!" exclaimed Sir Narcissus, to him, "you are come in the very nick of time to do us three a marvellous piece of service."

"Then have I come at the properest time I could have chosen," replied Master Shakspeare, very merrily. "What want you of me, my masters? Hast got ever a message for a pretty woman? if so, I will do my best she shall like either the message or messenger, so that she should be well pleased to hear more by the same conveyance."

"Nay, it be a graver matter, I do assure you," said my Lord Wiseacre, with a monstrous serious countenance. "Jest not at Death, else he may make your wit come to a sorry ending. You must know that a lady of no indifferent comeliness!"

"By this sword!" cried Master Aniseed, interrupting of the other, "she be of such wonderful blessed condition that the enamored air feedeth on the delicacy of her most absolute beauty, as"—

"By Charon, she be the very sort of creature for any of us youth to love!" exclaimed Sir Narcissus. "And she hath given me such abundance of her favor as to tell me she could not abide men in general, but that a young fellow of my years was more entertaining to her than many others of riper age."

"And of me she hath said that the very look of my face maketh her smile," observed my lord. "And it must be known unto you that women only smile upon those they most affect. They that be pleased shall have reason for smiling."

"Smile!" cried Master Aniseed, in a seeming ecstasy, "never did the cerulean heavens in sapphire beauteousness shine out on this terraqueous globe, as did this paragon of prodigal attractions smile on me, while, to her ever-attentive ear, I poured out the infinite eloquence of my unfathomable affection. Nay, I would take upon me to swear, by the very everlastingness of my fantasy that she hath as great regard for the many inconceivable fine qualities I have made manifest

to her, as you shall find in a rat for a piece of rusty bacon that has been a little roasted at the fire."

"Well, I dispute not what hath been said," observed the old knight, "but by Cerberus and all his heads! if she loved not me as any pretty woman might regard one so young and active as am I, then know I not what loving be. However, up comes this pestilent varlet, Master Francis!"

"Master Francis!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, in some surprise.

"A paltry secretary," added the retired rat-catcher, with a look of monstrous contempt.

"A mere boy," said my Lord Wiseacre, disdainfully, although he was not many years his senior.

"By gloomy Styx!" cried Sir Narcissus, "if he be a boy then am I one likewise, for methinks we are much of an age: but whether or no, he hath had the abominable effrontery to thrust himself into the notice of Mistress Alice!"

"Speak you of Mistress Alice Throckmorton, my masters?" inquired Master Shakspeare, who now began to have some insight into the matter.

"You have her name of a surety," replied my Lord Wiseacre, very gravely. "A good memory misnameth nothing."

"Ah, 'tis the delectable she herself," added Master Aniseed, with a great earnestness. "The incomparable dainty sweet creature, who hath such superlative excellences of condition that"—

"And so we, being filled with indignation at his monstrous impudency," said Sir Narcissus, assuming a very fierce aspect, "have resolved to punish him as the fellow deserveth of us, and would desire of you, from us three, to challenge him to a combat of life or death, if that he do not instantly give up all claim to her hand, and take himself straight away from her society: and, by the god of war! you may tell him from me, he had best provide him a coffin, for I will leave him not while there be any life in his pestilent body."

"I will slay him outright," cried my Lord Wiseacre. "A dead lover giveth no cause for jealousy."

"He shall die before me like unto a rat after a dose of nux vomica," exclaimed Master Aniseed.

"But it seemeth to me you know nothing of this person," observed Master Shakspeare, very seriously. "You surely can have no knowledge of his true character, else would you as soon fight

with the devil as fight with him. For all that he look so quiet, there liveth not so deadly a swordsman in the queen's dominions. He is so cunning of fence that no man can do him any hurt. Indeed, I can say of my own knowledge, that a great fellow of a Frenchman, who had boasted of his skill at the weapon, he challenged, and after a few passes he left him dead at his feet. In private quarrel I have heard that he hath killed at least a score. Nay, I know of a surety, he be so bloody-minded that he maketh it a rule to kill all who oppose him."

At the hearing of this alarming intelligence the three did look infinitely uneasy, and there was a dead silence for the space of some seconds, each one looking at the face of the other as if he expected of him to speak; and Master Shakspeare gazing upon all, as if watching the effect of what he had said.

"He be nothing better than a paltry secretary!" cried Master Anised, at last, with a wonderful disdain, "therefore is he no fit opponent for a gentleman." And then the rat-catcher's son marched himself off very haughtily.

"I will have naught to do with such boys," observed my Lord Wiseacre, in seeming great contempt. "He that would be wise consorteth only with they that have wisdom." And away went he after a like fashion as his companion.

"By Medusa and all her horrid snakes, he be a murderous villain, and I will have none of him," exclaimed Sir Narcissus Wrinkles, in a sort of terrible indignation, and off he started.

When Master Shakspeare had sufficiently laughed at the success of his experiment, he went in search of Master Francis, whom, after some trouble, he found in an adjoining room, dancing of a gullard with the merry Alice, so gracefully, and with such spirit, that it was the admiration of the whole company. Upon the conclusion of it, his partner hurried away, as she said, to make Dr. Bashful dance with her a coranto, because she knew he could not dance at all. Master Shakspeare found no difficulty in drawing of his young friend out of the crowd, through the glass door, into the open air, where, as they walked together, he told him of what Mistress Alice's lovers had said of him, and how he had made them so marvellous fearful that they would as soon take a mad bull by the horns as meddle with him. Whereat the young secretary could not help smi-

ling; for his companion took off their several humors so capitally.

"I congratulate you that you are on such excellent terms with Mistress Alice," said Master Shakspeare.

"Indeed, 'tis very good of her she should take such notice of me," replied Master Francis; "but she does it at present merely to vex these fellows who are after her, knowing that she hath a fortune."

"Methinks you have had a lucky escape with that Joanna," observed the other; and at the mention of her name, the youth's cheek became of a sudden paleness. "I must say I had a better opinion of her, for she did appear to me, although acting with great imprudence, considering of her acknowledged fondness for you, one of a far superior nature than the ordinary."

"I knew not you were acquainted with her," said his companion, rather tremulously.

"I knew of her but little, and that was before I had knowledge of your intimacy with her," answered his friend; "and though, from what I saw, I did tremble for your happiness, I could not believe she was so bad as she hath proved herself, till calling upon her father a short time since to make me a doublet, I found him like one that is crazed; and inquiring of the old woman of the house, I learned, to my absolute astonishment, that Joanna had suddenly disappeared, taking with her her things, and gone no one knew where. But the old dame hinted to me that there was very good reason for her taking of herself away; for that, to her certain knowledge, she could not stay in the house much longer without disgracing of herself and her family."

"Lost, misguided creature!" exclaimed Master Francis, with great earnestness; "how hath she fallen from that high opinion in which I once held her. I do assure you, Master Shakspeare, that there was a time, when she showed to me as noble a heart as ever woman possessed. She did me many kindnesses—many great kindnesses, and I could not but love her, she appeared to me of so loveable a nature. Alack! 'tis a most piteous thing she should have so changed for the worse, I have been monstrously deceived in her, and never will I put my trust in woman again."

"This is ill said, Master Francis," observed the other, seriously, "and I doubt not you will live to unsay it. There can not be a more gross injustice than the

condemning of the whole sex, because one hath been found at fault. Believe me, there is that excellence in woman which exceedeth your conception and mine too. In fact, her extreme goodness, her enduring patience, her wonderful kindness of heart, and the exquisite sweetness of her regard for the one she doth most affect, is a marvel, and will remain a marvel to the end of time."

Soon after this they returned to the dancing-room, where they arrived just in time to see the conclusion of Mistress Alice's coranto with Dr. Bashful, which every one had crowded to see, it was of so amusing a sort. There was the merry Alice, with as serious a face as if she had never laughed in her life, going through the graceful figure of the dance, with the young divine, one with an exceeding grave countenance, and with a habit becoming his profession, who, with his face in a constant blushing, his arms a trembling so they seemed about to drop from his shoulders, and his feet a shuffling along as though they knew not where they should go, tried to get through it as well as he could. His awkwardness was most ridiculous, and the gravity of his appearance not the less so; and as he occasionally heard the suppressed tittering around him, with a perfect consciousness that he was the object of it, he seemed as if he would gladly have given all he was worth to have been at the bottom of the sea. When it was over, he received the congratulations of his fair partner at the grace with which he had conducted himself, and heard the like praise from other ladies, who helped to carry on the jest, with a sort of hysterical laugh, and stared, as though he knew not the parties who spoke; and making haste to break away from the mischievous circle, he took himself out of the room as fast as he could; but not without first laying of his length on the floor, from stumbling over the feet of an old lady who was sitting down to rest herself.

Supper was served in the great hall, a famous large chamber, with a goodly roof of carved cedar, very lofty, and pleasant to look up to, and the walls hung round with old battleaxes, helmets, bucklers, and swords; and there were tables laid all along, and at the top was a raised dais, at which sat Sir Walter and Dame Elizabeth; and at each side sat the guests, a lady between two gentlemen, the whole length to the salt, which was as gallant a sight as eye

could wish to see; and there was brought on every delicacy that could be had, and wines and liquors of every sort; and all feasted merrily, and the jest went round, and the laugh followed, and there was such a flashing of bright eyes, and such a wagging of beards, as had not been seen there for many a day. It so happened that, when the whole company seemed in the finest of possible humors, Master Shakspeare, after filling of the silver goblet he had before him with choice Muscovadine, stood upon his legs, as if about to say something; and as he was well known of all for the noble creature he was, there was presently such a silence as you might have heard a pin drop.

"Methinks we lack something, my masters," said he, looking round upon the long lines of gallant gentlemen and lovely dames who were gazing upon his admirable countenance with mingled feelings of curiosity and respect. "We have been somewhat amiss in our behavior. Our worshipful host hath provided us of his own bountiful nature, with all things necessary for our delight, and with such store of delicacies as must have been equally refreshing unto the eye as the palate. Yet, hitherto, have we enjoyed all and said naught. Mayhap, if you give a dog a bone, if he wag not his tongue he shall wag his tail, in token that the kindness be not lost on him; but we have had each thing that heart could desire, and we have wagged nothing but our beards. Of a truth, this seemeth not to be holding the giver of the feast in proper esteem. Under favor I would say, it hath but an ungrateful look. Another thing—'tis not unknown unto us, that our excellent and most liberal host goeth on the morrow on a dangerous adventure across the wide seas, and far away into foreign lands seeking of great perils, and having such great ends in view as, to those who know not the greatness of his spirit, seem impossible to be achieved; and yet no man hath said to him, 'God speed you!' Among so many brave captains and princely gentlemen, is there not one who hath such proper estimation of the pleasure he hath enjoyed as to be able to speak his thankfulness, or careth so little for him who gave it, as to seem indifferent as to his safety in his dangerous undertaking? I will not think of you so unkindly. I see a different spirit in your looks. Like enough, all are ready to do this proper office, but wait in hopes of one appearing

who will express their inclinations after a better fashion than could they of their own accord.

"Gladly will I do this office for you," continued Master Shakspeare, when the applause which followed the close of the last sentence, and plainly said it was him they wished to speak for them, had subsided. "Yet can not I help thinking that there be many of this noble company fitter than a poor player to discourse of the courtesies of so gallant a knight, and to give him God speed in such terms as so brave a commander properly meriteth; but I who have put so many speeches into the mouths of others, now must needs put what should have been another man's speech into mine own. If it wanted naught but friendliness in the speaker, methinks I could not fail in the speech; for I will allow of no man acknowledging a greater regard for his truly famous virtues than do I. Then, at once, I will begin by saying, as the mouthpiece of all present, that the entertainment we have been furnished with hath been of that princely sort which could not come of a less prodigal disposition than the giver possesseth. But as I can never hope to do it justice, I will e'en let it alone, only saying, that like unto the bountifulness of his hospitality would we show the bountifulness of our gratitude, could we express the one as well as he hath done the other.

"And now be it known unto you, that he of whom I have been speaking is inclined to play the part of Jason, and is about to set off in search of another golden fleece. Shall we not pray for him and his adventurous band of argonauts, and hope for them success in their efforts, and security in their perils? If, to have for their leader as skilful a commander as ever led men to victory is the properest thing to secure their fortunate returning, they have it. If an honorable mind, a courageous spirit, and a heart well disposed toward every one who shareth with him in the dangers, are at all necessary for their succeeding, they have them. If knowledge in all things appertaining to matters of warfare on sea or land is requisite for the complete realizing of their hopes, out of all manner of doubt they have it. In short they have, in their commander, every one thing that could at all assist them in making success their own; and none of us are there here who feel not satisfied that such success will be theirs. This being our farewell of this heroic leader, we must not allow

the night to wane without the taking of a parting cup. Therefore fill my masters, I pray you, every one his cup to the brim, and join with me in drinking, with a true heart, to the health of Sir Walter Raleigh, with our earnest wishes for the prosperity of his expedition in search of the famous El Dorado."

Master Shakspeare tossed off his draught in the instant, and he was quickly followed by the whole of the worshipful company amid a very uproar of applause, and then Sir Walter did rise, and spoke very much to the purpose concerning of his thankfulness for the honor that had been done him and the like, and he launched out into exceeding commendation of Master Shakspeare, which was well received of all; and then he proposed his health, which was acceded to with great heartiness. And so they kept a drinking of healths till it grew into the morning; and at last separated every one with wonderful regret at the parting with Sir Walter Raleigh, but with an equal degree of satisfaction at the entertainment they had received.

CHAPTER XX.

Whene'er the skilful youth discoursed or writ,
Still did the notions throng
About his eloquent tongue,
Nor could his ink flow faster than his wit.
COWLEY.

Now, by the gods, I pity his misfortune,
And will awake him from his melancholy.
SHAKSPEARE.

I would leave kingdoms, were I queen of some,
To dwell with thy good father; for, the son
Bewitching me so deeply with his presence,
He that begot him must do't ten times more.
MASSINGER.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH sailed from Plymouth in the Lion's Whelp, accompanied only by a small bark, because of the other ships and pinnaces not being ready at the appointed time, and he stretched out to Teneriffe, giving orders they were to overtake him there. Among others who had come on board of Sir Walter's vessel was Simon Mainsail, as chief gunner, and between him and Harry Daring there was presently a huge liking, because of the boy's apparent great courage, and his eagerness to be taught of all matters relating to maritime affairs, and of the old man's wonderful experience in such things. The former seemed of a sudden to lose his relish for mischief in the strictness of his attention to the gain-

ing of this knowledge, and he would go over every part of the ship to know its use, and be familiar with it; then he would handle the ropes and the sails, till he was as well acquainted with their application as was any; and as for climbing, he had scarce been at sea a week before he would ascend to the topmast yards with such nimbleness and fearlessness that none would follow him, and all were in dread of his falling. He seemed to like nothing so much as to hear the old mariner tell of the dangers he had passed; of the terrible storms he had seen; and of the fearful fights he had been in; and it appeared as if Simon Mainsail liked nothing so much as to talk of them. Often and often would they two get together, mayhap sitting on the breech of a gun, as the goodly ship was a ploughing the waves in right admirable fashion, and whilst the boy, wrapt up in the very earnestness of his attention, gazed upon the veteran's honest weather-beaten face, the latter would discourse in his homely yet stirring manner upon the great store of riches the Spaniards had acquired in the New World, and how many brave spirits had enriched themselves by plundering of their ships and sacking of their towns, till the boy, entering into the excitement of his companion, would cry out in the midst of the narration, "By Gog and Magog, what exquisite fine fun!"

"You see, Harry," continued the chief gunner, "these same villain Spaniards are the most treacherous craft as you shall find anywhere—they be the savagest, rascalliest, falsest set of catiffs that ever warped out of this world into i'other, and it be but the doing of God's good work to sink the whole crew, if per-adventure they could be met with in one ship. There be no telling of what horrid cruelties they have practised upon the poor Indians when they came aboard of them in their own country, from the which, being but simple, and not having so much as an arquebus among the whole lot, much less any piece of ordnance, the poor Indians were soon driven out, and rifled of all their gold and of every one thing they possessed. Well, in the wake of this the Spaniards built themselves fine towns along the coast of the Spanish main, which, what with the plunder they had of the natives, and what they got out of the mines—for I have heard it said that in those parts the earth be solid gold—they soon became so monstrous rich that they sent fleets of huge ships

every year to Spain laden with bars of gold and silver."

"It would serve them but right, methinks, could any of our ships meet with such, and spoil them as they had done the Indians," observed Harry Daring.

"It hath been done scores of times," replied Simon Mainsail. "Nay, I have more than once given a helping hand in the business. Many of their tall masts have I sent by the board, and I have made such havoc upon their decks as would have been pitiful to look upon, had they been anything but the monstrous villains they be. Then comes the boarding; and I promise you I never lagged astern at that. I tell you, Harry, 'tis a wonderful fine thing to have sight of these galleons of theirs, every one with three decks, sailing along as proudly as if they were the castles of some prince or another, that would not consort with vessels of meaner quality; but presently we in our craft, that seemed unto them like cockle-shells to a Gallego boat, gave chase, and accosted them more familiarly than pleased their mightiness. At them we went with every gun as could be brought to bear, sweeping them into the sea after such a sort as they knew not what to make of; and then, if perchance they allowed us to get upon their decks before they struck, up we came clambering like so many cats, caring no more for their fire than if they had naught but popguns; and then there was such cutting and slashing and pistolling; driving of them here and slaughtering of them there; now on the upper deck and now on the lower; pinning them to the bulwarks with our pikes, or sending of them headlong down the hatchway with our pieces, till we had got the ship in our possession, and the captain had sung out for quarter."

"What would I have given to have had a share in such glorious doings!" exclaimed Harry in huge delight. "Indeed, methinks there can be nothing like the killing of Spaniards. By Gog and Magog! I am in a monstrous impatience to be at them, and if I kill not a score or two at least before any long time is past, I shall grow exceeding dull at heart."

"But you have not heard all, mess-mate," said the old mariner, looking well pleased at the boy's eagerness. "Having secured our prisoners, we had next to look after the cargo; and there we would find such a prize! The commonest things were solid cakes of silver piled in heaps, and ingots of the most precious gold in

the like abundancy; and, in overhauling of them, mayhap we would light upon bags of costly pearls, and all manner of rare stones, each one a fortune of itself. And then every man of us were so wealthy when we returned to port, that it was the difficultest thing as could be to find out what course to go upon so that we might spend it all."

"'T'faith! if I were so rich I'd soon get me a ship of my own," observed his young companion. "'O' my life, Simon! there be nothing I have so much desire of as to be the captain of a goodly ship like this; or failing in that, that my true friend Master Francis should be captain, and I next him, that we might, with a plenty of brave fellows and lots of muskets and swords, great guns and the like, go after these same galleons, and when we have peppered them famously, and slashed the Spaniards after so excellent a fashion as you have said, enrich ourselves with their gold and silver."

"Perchance that shall come to pass in good time," replied the gunner. "'Under so noble a commander as is Sir Walter Raleigh, if you stand to your gun like a true man, you shall fail not in the getting of proper advancement."

"Nay, if I turn tail I would like to be pistoled on the instant!" cried Harry Daring earnestly. "I promise you I am none of such sort, whereof you shall have good evidence on a fitting occasion."

"I doubt it not, Harry—I doubt it not," exclaimed Simon Mainsail. "You bear up bravely; and to my thinking, would carry all the sail you could after an enemy—never asking of what force she may be. Though you be of small tonnage, I've seen many a bigger vessel I have had less hope of. Let your gun want nothing but the firing, and if your enemy spring her loof, let her not slip away for want of proper speed in the chase."

"If she slip away when I once have hold of her, I will give her leave," answered Harry Daring. "But what more of these Spaniards? Methinks I could listen all day to hear of them."

"Why, they be so preposterous greedy," replied the old mariner, "that they will allow of no ship of any other country trading in that part of the world in the which they have gained such store of riches: and if they but catch any sufficiently weak for them to overpower, they will presently set a torturing of them with such cruelties as be horrible to think of."

"Hang them, the villains! How I do

wish to be at them!" cried the boy, seemingly in a very moving indignation.

"And to such mariners as be of England, they be dreadful inveterate against, because of their being heretics, as they call us," continued the gunner. "And nothing seemeth so pleasing to such abominable papists, as the doing of us all manner of treachery and deadly hurt. 'Slife! it was only last year, when Sir Walter sent Captain Whiddon on a voyage to the Orinoco to see how things looked for this expedition, there was a certain governor of these villain Spaniards, named De Berrio, in the island of Trinidad, who with a great cunning and cruelty, got hold of eight of the captain's men, whom he used after an infamous fashion, and would have given Captain Whiddon no better treatment had he succeeded in making him his prisoner."

"'Tis to be hoped he will now be well paid for it," remarked Harry Daring.

"Our commander be not of that sort to pass over such a thing," replied Simon Mainsail. "I doubt not Sir Walter will cut off his head."

"Hath he ever a son or two?" inquired the boy earnestly.

"Indeed I know not," answered the other.

"If he have, and they be but big enough, by Gog and Magog! I will cut off their heads too, if I meet with them!" exclaimed his young companion resolutely.

"'Tis like enough we shall have fighting and plenty of it," said Simon Mainsail. "For these caitiffs will, on no account, let us make way in Guiana, if they can help themselves, because of the exceeding richness of the country; and they will bear down upon us with all their force in hopes of driving us back into the sea; but our commander careth for them no more than do I for a maggot in a mouldy biscuit, and, I doubt not, we shall have such sacking and burning as will be a delight to see."

"'Twill be exquisite fine fun," cried Harry Daring, overjoyed at the very thought of it. "It be a thousand pities we shall be so long before we get to them; for, in truth, I do long for nothing so much as the killing of a Spaniard."

"Take heed the Spaniard kill not you," observed the other.

"Kill me!" cried his young companion in exceeding astonishment. "Nay, 'twould savor very much of the ass if I let him. I promise you I can now handle my piece as well as the rest—at the firing

of pistols am a match for any; and as for sword or dagger, if I show my back to an enemy, be he big or little, at such weapons, I will give up fighting, and get me back to Eastcheap for to be nothing better than a barber-chirurgeon all my life. A Spaniard kill me! Hang the villain, I should like to catch him at it."

"Indeed, if you get in the way of a bullet, you shall hardly escape," added the old man seriously.

"Escape! Dost think I would try to escape, Simon?" asked Harry Daring, as if like to be wrath at the thought of such a thing. "Hast that ill opinion of me, as to fancy I be of so poor a spirit I must need take heed of my life when there be a plenty of enemies to kill? By Gog and Magog, if you catch me doing of so paltry a thing as escaping, methinks I had better be made meat for dogs."

"In honest truth, messmate, I meant not you should take me on that tack," replied Simon Mainsail, inwardly much pleased with his young companion for the courageousness of his manner. "It was but my intention to hold out a signal to tell you, 'twould show but a proper cunning to change your course a little, if that a bullet should be a coming that way."

"I will change my course none," cried the boy, determinedly. "If the bullet go another way, let it go and be hanged! If it come at me, I care not to shrink before a thousand of them."

"But if you keep not a good lookout, you shall show no sense in it," observed the old gunner. "Suppose, now, I be the only one left at my gun, I see a shot making straight for my figure-head, thereupon I veer a point or two, and the shot goeth by harmless; then do I discharge my gun at the enemy and do them great damage! whereas had I stayed where I was, I could not help to be killed outright, and my gun having none to serve her, could be of no service against the enemy, who would quickly have had some advantage of it, and mayhap have taken the ship. So you see it be the duty of one that wisheth to be thought skilful in war, not to be rash, else not only himself, but his messmates may suffer for't."

"I will be no more rash than I can help," replied Harry Daring; "but if that I am to be ever a looking after the shot, there shall be no opportunity for me to a killing of any one; and in my thinking, it be more satisfaction to cut down a whole lot of pitiful Spaniards, than to be a jumping away from a few pestilent bul-

lets. But I promise you I will give them no time to aim at me, for I will presently get into the midst of them, and commence slashing away at such a rate, now here, now there, and now in another place, that they shall be glad to take more heed of themselves than me. Would the time were come! I shall rest but little till the fighting commence. Indeed, I be ever a dreaming of the storming of towns, the taking of ships, or the like, whereof I find excellent entertainment in hearing of the clashing, and groaning, and shouting, and seeing heads flying this way, and arms that, and other pleasant pastime of the same sort, that when I wake and find I have killed none, I be monstrous down at heart at it."

"Be not out of patience, messmate," replied the veteran; "you shall take your own course in time, depend on't. There be no making a ship sail faster than she will, unless perchance you shall have dealings with those who have power over the elements, which I take to be both dishonest and unlawful."

"Think you there be any such?" inquired the boy, earnestly.

"There's no doubt on't, messmate," replied Simon Mainsail; "there be certain old hags as familiar with the devil and his imps, as am I with the breech of this gun. And having sold themselves body and soul to him, they be allowed for some period of time to do as they list: to command what wind shall blow, raise a storm, sink ships, and work such mischief as they have a mind to; and if you put not a horseshoe on the mast, or carry not a child's caul aboard, it be a thorough certainty that, when these witches choose it, the ship and all hands shall go to the bottom."

"What horrible villainy!" exclaimed Harry Daring; "but methinks I have knowledge of some of these old hags. Hast heard whether any be ever troubled with a raging tooth, or ride on a high horse between two panniers of eggs? For then have I known some; and exquisite fine fun I have had of them too." And then he laughed heartily at the remembrance of how he had served the two old women, as hath been already described.

"O' my life it be no laughing matter, if you have angered any," remarked the gunner; "they be desperate in the doing of some terrible mischief."

"I care not," cried the boy; "I warrant you I will give them as good as they send, be they ever so familiar with the devil and his imps. Indeed, I care as

little for the best devil that wears a head."

"Hush, Harry, it be exceeding wicked to say so; how know you not the old fellow be a listening?"

"Let him listen and be hanged to him," exclaimed Harry Daring, fearlessly; "I say my prayers nights and mornings, and therefore will I take heed of none such. By Gog and Magog, if it comes to that, I would as soon kill a devil as a Spaniard, they be both such thorough-going villains."

"I would on no account have you say so," observed the veteran, looking timidly around him:—for though brave as a lion, he was as superstitious as the rest of his class; "he be ever stealing alongside of some of us, and giveth us a broadside if we be not on the watch."

"Then up and have at him again," cried the boy, quickly; "it be not the part of an honest man to give in to a scurvy devil. For mine own part, I know not what his weapon may be; but sword or dagger, pistol or harquebus, I am for him at any time."

"Slife you will anger me if you go on so," exclaimed Simon Mainsail, with a countenance somewhat disturbed: "it be as easy for him to sink this ship, as for me to walk the deck. Now on that point I have made an entry in my log, which, mayhap, it shall do you good to know of:—and this be it. You must know that there was a messmate of mine once, by name Jack Buntline, who was just such another dare-devil as yourself, only he had been launched many years before, and he had no more religion in him than you shall find in a shark's belly. Well, he was always a blowing great guns about what monstrous things he would do with the arch enemy of all true mariners, if peradventure he could have the weather-gage of him; and he often said he should like to get sight of the devil for a few minutes or so, he would soon make him mighty glad to sheer off. Now it so happened, that one night while he was upon watch, something he had got in the hold made him wonderful drowsy, and he was just a casting of his anchor in snooze harbor, when he felt a queer sort of a something a grappling of him on the lee quarter; at the which he opened his day-lights pretty quickly, and there he saw what was enough to cast him on his beam ends in no time."

"And what did Jack Buntline see?" inquired his companion, unconcernedly.

"He saw Old Nick himself!" replied

the old mariner, with a look of exceeding horror and alarm; "there he stood afore him with two great saucer eyes flashing fire and smoke; a huge pair of horns growing out of his head; a long tail that hung abaft, with a sting to it; two ugly hoofs instead of feet; monstrous claws, by way of hands; and all over him flames of blue, and red, and yellow. Now Jack hadn't a word to throw away upon a dog; he was as dumb as a fish; he hadn't fight enough in him to have killed a cockroach; but he sat stern on, with his jaw-port open, and his eyes a winking at the rate of fifty knots an hour. Thereupon Old Nick flew upon him, blazing away like a fire-ship, and was for taking him up in his claws; when Jack had sense enough to mutter a bit of a prayer his mother had taught him when he was a baby—albeit 'twas a long time since he had been on his marrow-bones; and at that Master Beelzebub vanished like a flash o' lightning, leaving behind such a smell of brimstone there was scarce breathing for it. After this Jack Buntline made no more boasting on that head, as you may suppose."

"For all that, I would as soon kill a devil as a Spaniard," said Harry Daring, and then walked himself away, to have speech with his true friend, Master Francis.

In the meantime Sir Walter Raleigh and his secretary were pursuing their studies quite as vigorously as if they were on land; for it was the practice of the former to devote so many hours a day to his books, whether he were on sea or on shore; and on all his voyages he failed not to take with him a choice collection of volumes. From this habit of his Master Francis profited much, for it did enable him to keep storing of his mind with useful lore; and the conversations he was ever having with his patron were usually of that instructive character which was the most fit to assist in the like object. Indeed, Sir Walter, not only of such things as he thought properest for him to have, helped him in the acquisition of those languages as seemed the profitablest to learn; but had that affection for him as to encourage him in his efforts at composition, showing where lay the faults, that they might be corrected; and giving him such commendation as looked the likeliest to make him renew his labors. Could he have lost all thought of Joanna, or have been careless on the subject of his birth, there can be no manner of doubt he would have enjoyed a very marvellous comfort;

but, despite of his attempting to dismiss the subject as being unworthy of a thought, the mercer's daughter would ever be foremost in his contemplations; and he would at last acknowledge to himself it was pitiful—exceeding pitiful, she should so have disappointed his expectations: and when he got a thinking of his reputed father, it grieved him to the heart to know he should be the son of such a notorious poor scoundrel as that Holdfast.

Sir Walter had been walking with him on deck, as was his custom, after, what was considered by both, the business of the day had been done, and, as was usual with them, they were discoursing together on such knotty points as might chance to come uppermost in their thoughts. From this there came to be some talk concerning of those who had distinguished themselves in any famous manner as commanders, which was ever a favorite subject with Sir Walter Raleigh; though with his secretary there were divers other matters he would have preferred the discourse of.

"Think you that war is not a thing in some degree to be lamented of all true Christians?" inquired Master Francis to his patron, when the latter had finished a very moving picture of damage done to the enemy in one of his campaigns abroad. "Methinks all this wasting and spoiling, this burning and slaughtering, is after all nothing better than the creating of so much misery and mischief, of which the world hath already such store, that it be scarce eadurable at times."

"Doubtless warfare is attended with such effects as must be exceeding distasteful to a benevolent spirit," replied his patron; "but you shall scarce find one good without having in it some admixture of evil; and among evil things there shall always be some that are absolute and necessary; nevertheless have they an especial good purpose. War is a sharp remedy for an intolerable disorder—it raiseth a blister and createth great irritation; yet in the end doth it remove the inflammatoriness of the parts adjacent; and the peace which followeth is the state of health that treadeth on the heels of such powerful medicaments."

"'Tis a thousand pities all cause for quarrel among neighbor states can not be done away with," observed the secretary.

"'Tis a thousand pities all disturbances of the body can not be done away with," answered Sir Walter. "The learned Cusanus hath it 'Mundus universus nihil

aliud est quam Deus explicatus'—the world universal is nothing else than God expressed; thereunto would I add, you shall see in one man the whole world in a small compass; for, as the universe showeth the greatness of the Deity, in one man appeareth the universe in miniature. There is in him strange passions and fierce desires, that are the rebellions of the flesh—pride and ambitiousness, the very tyrants of the body; and jealousies and revenges, relentless enemies that carry fire and sword through every vein; and these are oft the workers of such strife in the man as could not be exceeded in the world look where you will. It be these agencies that have a many score of times set the mind against the body, or stirred one member into the desire of overpowering the rest, with so desperate an opposition, that at last nothing has come of it but the absolutest rack and ruin over all. Let a man govern himself as well as he may, still shall something or another internally or externally put him in a disturbance either with himself or with others: so let a state be ever so properly ruled, it can not help upon occasion, avoiding of a quarrel either among its own parties, or with a neighboring kingdom. War, therefore, it must not be expected of any, can ever be altogether done away with; and wars against the enemies of one's country, or for the hindrance of foreign invasion, in my opinion is as lawful an occupation as any man could be engaged in."

"But surely the warfare of the mere conqueror hath no excuse for it," observed Master Francis.

"That is as it shall happen," replied Raleigh. "If he shall be a leader of barbarians and over-run a more civilized state, perchance he shall do but little good, unless as it hath come to pass before this, the conquerors being of a notable courageous spirit, mingling with the conquered, who may be luxurious and of an effeminate heart, produce, in a future generation, a people having the valorousness of the one and the greater learning of the other mixed into one harmonious whole; but when such heroes as Alexander the Great or Julius Cæsar carry the arts and arms of a more enlightened country into countries rude and untaught, they shall presently make of their conquests a great benefit, inasmuch as they spread abroad the superior civilization they possess at home. What degree of good followed the victorious achievements of the son of Philip none can say with

any great exactness of calculation, but that they were entirely unprofitable, as some would assert, will I never believe. It is, however, more notorious, that the Gauls and the Britons, to say nothing of other nations that were possessed of the Romans, did gain exceeding advantage by the dwelling among them of their enlightened conquerors. To come more to our own time, the conquests of Cortes and of Pizarro, though they might be attended with many very monstrous cruelties, produced wonderful advantage in increasing of our knowledge of the earth, making known unto us kingdoms whereof the skilfullest geographers were ignorant, and diffusing among a heathenish and barbarous people some insight into the religion and the arts and the sciences of a nation of Christians. In brief, it must needs be an evil indeed that hath no good mixed with it—war may be considered an evil, but upon proper scrutiny it shall be found, except upon rare occasions, to be attended with such advantages as must make it a thing necessary to the maintaining of the world in healthiness.”

“Allowing of the necessity of warfare,” said the young secretary, “which I can in no way help grieving at, it doth appear to me a monstrous sort of thing, that there should be companies of men willing to leave their own nation and take part in the brawls of another. Of such mercenary soldiers I think they deserve but little respect of their fellow-men. They fight not for their country but for their hire; and perchance they shall care nothing against whom they fight, so that they be well paid for it.”

“O’ my life, you are rather hard upon them,” exclaimed his patron. “I have known as gallant spirits as ever breathed, which were such as you have disparagingly spoken of. Were not the ten thousand, of whose exploits Xenophon hath given so marvellous a history, of this kind? And surely none could behave themselves more like good men and true. In fact, it is a great conveniency when one’s country is at peace, and there be no employment for its valorous spirits, which country, for lack of such, may become so ignorant of warlike accomplishments as to be made an easy prey of by some other state, for them to take part in wars abroad, and by such means improving of themselves in strategy and good soldiery, as to make of them all the more valuable when they shall return home. This remindeth me of something which seemeth a little to the purpose. I

remember me when I went as one of the hundred gentlemen volunteers under my kinsman, Henry Champernon, sent by the queen to assist the Huguenots in France, of the chiefest among them was one Colonel Harquebus, who was some years my senior, and as proper a soldier as you shall find anywhere. He had, before this, served in the Venetian, and in the Scottish wars, to the obtaining of a notable reputation. Indeed I do believe he cared but little for whom he fought, so that the cause seemed to him a good one. He had travelled much, and had gathered abundance of information concerning of the characteristics of the many different people he had journeyed among, and few were so familiar with their different ways of behaving in the field, so that for a young soldier like myself there could scarce have been found a more agreeable companion.

“Our intimacy became the more confidential in consequence of our families having been very friendly for many years, their lands adjoining each other in Devonshire; and seeing me in some delight with his society, he did give me as much of it as he could. Thus it was I ascertained that his mother, who I knew to be of as proud a nature as was ever met with, being importunate that he should marry a lady of high birth and great fortune in those parts, for whom he could have no liking, he chose the rather to go to the wars, where he remained, making most excellent use of his sword wherever there was any fighting to be met with, or improving himself by foreign travel as I have said, to avoid a marriage he so much disliked. A most gallant heart had Harquebus. Ever foremost in danger, he would seek the thickest of the enemy, and make such havoc in their ranks as caused him to be held most conspicuous in their dislike of us. The queen of Navarre had oft noticed him for his gallantry, and, with Admiral Coligni and the Prince of Condé he was ever a special favorite.

“I remember well, at the battle of Jarnac, which was of such great disadvantage to our cause—for we suffered a signal overthrow, and the prince of Condé being taken prisoner of the catholics, was treacherously murdered by them in cold blood—Harquebus had before the battle sent a challenge to the enemy to fight any of a like condition with himself, and a certain Colonel de Bombardiere did answer it. He was as tall and proper a man as I have seen in my time, and reckoned

the completest swordsman in France. Now, both of the combatants were well esteemed of their weapons, therefore it was agreed they should fight with swords only: and each was above six feet in height, brave, and soldier-like. After there had been some passes between them, De Bombardiere's rapier flew out of his hand, at the which he expected instant death; but his opponent quickly picked up the fallen weapon, and presenting him the handle of it, merely begged of him to be more careful in his hold. Then at it they went again, but the Frenchman was disarmed sooner than at first; and upon the getting back of his sword, with some comment upon his unskilfulness, he was so nettled that he rushed upon his adversary with more heat than cautiousness, and thereupon was run through the body. My friend also distinguished himself greatly in the battle; but his valor could not save the day.

"Afterward, at Moncontour, when we suffered a like disastrous defeat at the hands of the duke of Anjou, he did behave himself most valorously during the fight, killing of so many of the enemy with his own hand as would almost seem incredible to tell of, and in the retreat so conducting of himself as to bring upon him the commendation of Count Ludowick of Nassau, to whose ability and generalship we who survived the day were indebted for our safety. Of the six years I sojourned in France, endeavoring to perfect myself in the military art, I was kept in constant admiration of his great bravery, for he was of so valiant a spirit he could not rest a doing of nothing. He was blunt in his language, and plain in his apparel, and despised all who were not of the profession of arms; and he was ready to undertake any man's quarrel, so that there did appear to him no injustice nor dishonor in it. He was free and hearty in his manners upon general occasions; yet have I come upon him when he hath been in so melancholy a mood he seemed not fit society for any. Mayhap this was on account of his mother pressing of him to return to England to accomplish the marriage which she was so intent about; but I, liking not to appear inquisitive, did make no inquiry, therefore know I not exactly whether this was it or no.

"I met with him again in the force under Sir John Norris, sent by the queen to assist the states of Holland against the power of Spain. This was a body of five thousand strong in foot, and one thousand

in horse, and they did great service in the Netherlands. Of these none distinguished themselves more nobly than did Colonel Harquebus; and upon one occasion, in the right famous battle of Rimenant, in the which we gave a complete overthrow to the Spanish army under the command of Don John of Austria and the prince of Parma, he seemed to excel all his former efforts. Before the battle we were joined by a Scottish force under Sir Robert Stuart, who gave us excellent assistance; but it did so happen that, coming into the field after a weary march on a sultry day, we straightway took off our armor and our doublets to be the more at our ease, and, doubtless to the wonderful astonishment of the Spaniards, fought them in our shirts and drawers. Now it be out of all questioning, that the success of that day was owing to the ardor with which the enemy were attacked by the English and Scottish volunteers, for nothing could exceed their determined courage and great discipline. At one time, led away by the heat of the conflict, I had got completely surrounded by divers of the Spaniards, by whom, though I was doing of my best, I must soon have been cut down, had not Colonel Harquebus, seeing of my danger, dashed in among them with so absolute a furiousness, that I was rescued in a presently, and just in the very nick of time to save me from their bloodthirsty weapons.

"Now the volunteers that did assist the suffering Huguenots, and those that entered into the service of the States, though they were what you call mercenary soldiers, and spoke so ill of because of their leaving their own country to share in the conflicts of another, were as honorable men as can be met with anywhere; and my friend that I have described to you at some length was a fair specimen of the class. For mine own part I think it no disparagement of a man, but rather showing of his sense, let him be of what profession he may, if that there shall be abroad better opportunities for the studying of it than at home, he seeketh to advance his knowledge by attending of a foreign school."

"I deny it not," replied Master Francis; "yet would I rather that all men should seek improving of themselves in such studies as give no provocation to anger, than be earnest in the acquiring of such skill as can only be used for the slaughtering of their fellow-creatures."

"Every truly philanthropic mind would say amen to your wish," observed Sir

Walter. "But while different governments have different religions, the people of one will in some way be prejudiced against the inhabitants of the other; and if such prejudice lead not to a war between them, it shall continue it with greater fierceness than can any other thing. There are a many hot-headed zealots who seem to think of their Creator as but another Mars, who delighteth only in sanguinary fields; and think the fittest service they can render him is the slaughtering of as many as they can of such as worship him not after the exact fashion as themselves. St. Bernard hath justly said: 'Frustra sperant qui sic de misericordia Dei sibi blandiuntur,'—they hope in vain who in this sort flatter themselves with God's mercy."

"But what became of Colonel Harquebus?" inquired the secretary, after there had been a pause of some few minutes, for he had listened with some interest to Sir Walter's account of him.

"By the last intelligence he was fighting with his customary valor against the Spaniards, who had come to assist the Leaguers in Bretagne," replied Sir Walter. "Yet I marvel somewhat he hath not returned to England before this, for his mother hath been dead these ten years, and the lady she was so eager for him to wed, hath long since been married to another; so that there can be now no hinderance to his coming back; but possibly the stirring life he hath led abroad for the last twenty years he hath grown so accustomed to, that he could not put up with the quietness he should meet with at home."

"Methinks 'tis marvellous strange there should be such a fondness in one man to seek the lives of his fellows," observed Master Francis. "He must needs be but a poor spirit who will not do battle with the enemies of his country when they are intent upon her disadvantage; but of the sort of satisfaction that is to be enjoyed by constant strife wherever it is to be met with, I know not, nor wish to know. I think he that be most worth the respecting is one that hath ever his weapon ready, but is loath to draw it save upon warrantable grounds; and employeth his leisure to gain such knowledge as may be most useful to mankind, whereof he shall essay to make it profitable by the writing of books and the like."

"If all were to write books there should presently be no readers," replied his patron, "nor can all have that incli-

nation for study that will lead to the writing of books; nor can all books be of advantage to the reader when he hath such in his hand. However it doth oft happen that what is stupidly writ shall find admirers; or, as St. Jerome hath it, 'Nullus est imperitus scriptor, qui lectorem non inveniat'—there be no book so dull but it shall meet with a suitable dull reader. You should quarrel with no man for having his taste or disposition unlike your own; for if it were not for the infinite diversity of likings which are to be met with in the world, all mankind would be everlastingly set by the ears because of the insufficiency of what they most affect to satisfy so great a number; whilst of what they dislike there should be nothing but a monstrous wastefulness ever a going on, because there is not one who careth for a taste of it."

"Had I my will, there is none living I should so much desire to be like as yourself," said Master Francis, "for it must be manifest unto all that you are as excellent in the most admirable scholarship as you are in every kind of thing necessary for the statesman and commander."

"And why should you not be like me?" inquired his patron, kindly. "Do as I have done. No matter how many and how pressing be your occupations of the day, give but five hours to sleep, and six to study, and you shall find time, as I have, for the acquiring of a proficiency in such matters as some think me perfect in. I began life with no better advantage than yourself—scarce so much—for when I went with the volunteers into France, and had little beside my sword to help me, I was then but about seventeen years of age. However, by doing of what I have said, and throwing away of no opportunity for honorable advancement, I have become what I am. And why should you not be like me?"

His secretary did hesitate in giving him an answer, and seemed a little disturbed; and when his patron repeated the question he grew more embarrassed in his countenance.

"Supposing I possessed the wondrous talents you have shown, which can not be imagined a moment," at last he observed, with a manner that looked as if he were ill at ease. "My birth must be an insurmountable bar to my rising above what your goodness hath made me."

"You *will* have that Holdfast, then, for your father!" exclaimed Sir Walter.

"I have spoken to my uncle on the

subject," replied Master Francis, "and he hath assured me there can be no doubt of it."

"I had rather it had been otherwise for your sake," said his patron, with all sincerity of heart; then, as if desirous of changing the subject, he pointed out to his secretary the little bark that had accompanied the *Lion's Whelp*, breasting the waves very gallantly at the distance of half a mile astern, with all her sails spread out. Both watched her progress with exceeding interest, for truly it was a pleasant sight to look upon so small a ship—the only thing visible in the wide expanse of waters, save a few porpoises, nearer at hand, sportively tumbling about—dancing over the huge billows as lightly as a rose-leaf.

"She smacks along at a brave rate," observed Sir Walter, "seemingly as if she were proud of the adventurous spirits she carries. Well, they be noble hearts, sure enough, yet are they of the same sort of stuff as have been many others since the days of Columbus, who boldly dashed through unknown seas in vessels of no greater burthen."

"It seemeth to me, that for a daring spirit, the mariners of England bear the palm from all others," remarked the secretary.

"That do they, whether in the fight or in quest of adventure," replied Raleigh.

"The consideration of this hath put me upon the writing of a ballad," said Master Francis.

"'Tis a stirring subject, and I should like to hear what you have made of it," added his patron. Upon this his young companion gave a paper out of his vest (with some modest apologies for its imperfections), the which Sir Walter opening, did read aloud, as followeth:—

"Old Neptune rules no more the ever-rolling seas,
And from their ozier beds have fled the Oceanides;
And despots of the earth that sought to sway the
waves,
Though they, like Xerxes, flung them chains, could
never make them slaves.
The mem'ry of the ark hath vanished from them
now,
And unsteemed the Bucentaur may bare her
golden brow;
Whilst fearfully to port the Argosie must flee,
For the Mariners of England are lords of all the
sea!

"A voice that pierced the world was shouted from
the isles
Where Phœbus in his glory, o'er a land of freemen,
smiles;
The Adriatic heard, and started at the sound,
The billows of the Bosphorus made each a loftier
bound;
Far o'er th' Atlantic waste that voice in thunder
roars,

And now the vast Pacific sends its echoes from
her shores;
And every Ocean deep cries out, 'Come bow the
knee,
For the Mariners of England are lords of all the
sea!'

"No more shall England's foes her island throne
put down,
Since Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake, have proved
she wears the crown;
No more Armadas now will come to work her
shame,
Since Howard made 'th' Invincible' to wear a mean-
er name;
Nor shall her gallant ships fear all the power of
Spain,
Since they have spoiled the Spanish coast and
swept the Spanish main;
And dread of foreign rule in England shall not be,
For the Mariners of England are lords of all the
sea!"

What Sir Walter Raleigh might have said upon the ballad know I not, for just as he had finished the perusing of it, there came the master of the ship to him on pressing business, and returning the paper to Master Francis, he did give up his attention entirely to the other.

CHAPTER XXI.

Aspasia. He has a cozening face—
You meant him for a man?
Ant. He was so, madam.
Asp. Why then 'tis well enough. Never look o'ac'k,
You have a full wind and a false heart, Theseus.
Does not the story say his keel was split,
Or his masts spent, or some kind rock or other
Met with his vessel?
Ant. Not as I remember.
Asp. It should have been so.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor;
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could;
And send the wondrous Machiavel to school.
SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER staying of several days at Teneriffe without being joined by any of his ship, Sir Walter Raleigh proceeded on his way to Trinidad, and cast anchor at a Spanish settlement called of the colonists Puerto de los Españoles, where to his great joy he found a part of his squadron. From the bay the town had a very goodly aspect, being of some size. The houses were principally those of the natives, and were built of wood very pleasant to look upon, with trees growing among them in great abundance, lofty, and of marvellous verdure. Some buildings there were of the Spaniards of a more stately sort; and the country round about seemed exceedingly inviting, stretching here and there into green pastures, with much diversity of rock, and wood, and mountain. Of natives they saw a vast number, but they

were at a great distance, and came not any nigher; but at the landing-place there was seen a company of Spaniards drawn up as if keeping guard, whereof were some stately fellows in long high-crowned hats with feathers in them, carrying of famous long pieces: seeing of the strength of those in the ships, they prudently gave them no molestation. Indeed, some of them presently got into boats and came on board, and Sir Walter had them treated very courteously, went amongst them himself, giving of them a plenty of wine and good cheer, of the which having been without a long time, it made them exceeding merry in a small space, and he talked to them in their own language inquiringly of Guiana—of the riches thereof—and of the bays and passages that were most practicable; making it appear all the while that he cared not for the going there, being bound for the English colony he had planted in Virginia; and the simple soldiers, charmed with his courtesy, not only told him all they knew, but all they had heard of, one eagerly interrupting of the other in some alluring narration of the wondrous riches of the place.

It did look exceeding picturesque to see those Spaniards grouped about on the deck, some a sitting where they could; one or two lying of their full length, resting of themselves upon their elbows; and the rest lolling wherever they might find a conveniency; their Spanish habits looking soiled and worn; their faces swarthy, with peaked beards, long mustaches, piercing eyes, and curly hair, all very black; every man armed, yet passing of the wine-cup from one to another with as cheerful a spirit as if such a thing as strife was gone clean out of their hearts; and Sir Walter standing amongst them—whose princely figure and noble countenance as much won their admiration as did the liberality of his spirit as evinced in his treatment of them—doing of every courtesy that could make them feel at their ease, the whilst he was dexterously intent upon the getting of such information as might be serviceable to him in his hoped-for conquest of Guiana. Close unto his elbow stood Master Francis, apparently somewhat interested at what was going forward, for he understood the language pretty well, and he was describing to two or three of the officers what was said. There was a strong guard of soldiers posted about the ship for fear of any sudden treachery, and the mariners were looking on from different places

about the deck and up aloft, and if with some distrust, yet with a singular curiosity of their visitors.

A little apart from the other Spaniards, leaning against a mast by which he was partly hid from Sir Walter and those about him, stood a man, evidently from his long black habit, a priest of the order of Jesus. His figure appeared to be rather above the ordinary, formed in a mould more graceful than bulky, as far as could be seen of it under the ample folds of his garment. His face was mostly shaded by his arms, which were against the mast, but above them two large dark eyes peered out upon Master Francis with an expression so fierce and penetrating, that once seen it was not possible to forget. Ever and anon he would take a stealthy glance round the ship, doubtless noticing of all things there, if he thought he could do so without being observed of any; but if he saw the eyes of one upon him, he would on the instant the more shade his face, and seem intent only upon what was going on before him. There was a group round a gun on the other side of the vessel, at some distance, but not far enough to be shut out from a fair view of these proceedings, and it consisted of Harry Daring, Simon Mainsail, a rough-looking fellow with proper broad shoulders and body thick and short, whose right-ugly countenance looked none the handsomer for a huge scar across the face, who was no other than Tom Growler the boatswain—as surly a piece of goods as you shall see anywhere—and they, with divers others of the petty officers, were discoursing about the strangers.

“Methinks it be clean contrary to all rule and reason to let these caitiffs live,” observed Harry Daring. “If they be the monstrous villains they must needs be being Spaniards, I marvel they should be so well treated of us.”

“Hang ’em!” exclaimed Growler emphatically.

“Doubtless our commander is well advised of their true natures,” said the old gunner. “He be not of that sort likely to venture upon a strange coast without taking soundings; and mayhap we shall find profit in what he be a doing of.”

“Mayhap we shan’t,” muttered the boatswain.

“At least they seem proper men enough for killing,” added Harry. “I expected not to have found such tall goodly-looking fellows. I do long to out with my tool upon them, and see of what stuff they be made of.”

"They be dogs!" cried Tom Growler.

"Despicable papists!" exclaimed one.

"The very cowardliest villains that live!" added another.

"Wretched traitors and scurvy rogues!" said a third; and in a moment nothing seemed too vile to be said of them by any there.

"They say the devil may be painted blacker than he is," remarked Simon Mainsail. "But if you seek to paint any of these villain Spaniards, depend on't you shall find no color of a sufficient blackness."

"Hang 'em!" again cried the boatswain, in the very gruffest voice that ever was heard.

"By Gog and Magog, my masters!—it must needs be a good action to rid the earth of such!" exclaimed Harry Daring with a very marvellous earnestness. "Instead of giving of them good cheer, it seemeth to me the best thing they should have is no other than cold iron; and I for one would be well pleased to see they had enough of it. For mine own part, I think it be quite monstrous that these our enemies should be allowed to come aboard of us, each man armed as if ready to do us all manner of hurt, and only lying in wait for an opportunity to take us off our guard. How villanously familiar they be! Some lolling in this place, and some in that; and jabbering away as if there was either sense or honesty in their speech. I do hugely suspect those who can not speak honest English. There be no good in them, that's a sure thing."

"Never was and never will be," muttered Growler.

"But mark you that fellow leaning of himself against the mast," said the boy quickly, as he pointed out to his companions the figure of the priest. "Hath he not the very air of a skulker? See how heathenishly the caitiff stares upon my true friend Master Francis. Hang me! if he don't look as if he meant him some hurt. O' my life! if I knew for certain he had such traitorous thoughts in him I would not rest a moment ere I had clove him to the chine."

"I have seen many such. He be a priest," observed the old gunner.

"He shall be just as like to be the devil," added the boatswain gruffly.

"Priest or devil, it matters not!" exclaimed Harry Daring, seemingly somewhat moved. "His looks be those of a murderous villain. And see how he hideth his face! Mayhap he hath a hid-

den dagger with him, and shall be intent upon springing upon my friend and killing him out-right before he can be saved by any. By Gog and Magog!—I will have at him ere he hath time to do it."

"Not so fast, messmate!" cried Simon Mainsail, holding him by the arm as he was hastening away. "Seek not to do a man damage unless you have better warrant for it than his looks. He be a villain Spaniard, therefore would I as soon see him killed as look at him, but he be now under the protection of our commander, who could not help but be exceeding angered were you to run aboard of him. I like not you should get yourself among breakers. Besides, he be but a scurvy papist priest, and it be no way in the nature of such craft to seek danger there shall be no chance of their getting out of. I will venture to say he meaneth no harm, but should he, it be quite certain he dare not act any."

"Let him go hang!" muttered Tom Growler.

Harry Daring was prevailed upon to remain where he was; but not without much pressing and almost forcible stopping of him by his companions. In the meantime the Spaniards seemed more and more pleased with their reception, for Sir Walter Raleigh did allow of their bartering for linen, a thing of which they stood much in need.

"And is Don Antonio de Berrio still governor of this island?" inquired Sir Walter of one better dressed than the others who stood by him.

"Ay, señor," replied he.

"Perchance you may be able tell me his residence, for I have a great desire to pay my respects to him before I make for Virginia," added Raleigh.

"Doubtless the Señor Gobernador shall be found at the new city he hath called Santo Josef de Oruña," answered the Spaniard.

"Can I have any guide or direction as to finding it?" asked the other.

"The padre is going there, Señor Capitaine," replied the Spaniard.

"What padre?"

"Padre Bartolomé."

"Have you left him on shore? Can I see him? I should hold it in everlasting estimation if he would be my guide to your excellent governor."

"There is the padre, señor."

Sir Walter looked in the direction pointed out, and, for the first time, observed the Jesuit. He was now in deep abstractedness, with his eyes fixed upon

a crucifix which was suspended from his neck by a rosary of large beads. He might be nigh upon forty years of age, yet a face of so mild a character, and of so pious an aspect, seemed the gazer never to have met before. Maphap he was younger, for was there a freshness in his countenance that persons of the age that hath been stated, seldom have; and the flesh looked of such transparency as may rarely be met with save in those of younger years. Be that how it may, it is certain none could look on him without being possessed in his favor as he stood up close upon the mast, his saint-like head, perfectly uncovered, bent a little back, showing of a most comely neck, and his arms raised holding, as if with both of his hands, the crucifix before his face, while his lips delicately rounded and exceeding rich in color, were parted but a little, as if in the very act of breathing of some internal prayer. Sir Walter looked on with some wonder and much admiration, Master Francis also was surprised, because he could not help fancying he had seen the face before, yet was he in a huge puzzlement to know where—the group about the gun, despite of their prejudices, were awed into respect; and others of the crew appeared to regard him with a like feeling, whilst the Spaniards all of a sudden began crossing of themselves and saying of their prayers with as perfect a zeal as ever was beheld even amongst catholics.

“*Salvé, Padre Bartolomé!*” exclaimed Sir Walter with much reverence, as after a long pause, which seemed not like to have an end, he approached the ecclesiastic.

“*Benedicte, my son!*” replied a voice, the softest and richest he had ever heard. Still the eyes were not moved from the crucifix.

“You speak English then, father,” said Raleigh, and not without some astonishment.

“Thou hast heard,” answered the priest without the moving of a muscle.

“I would gladly have speech with you, reverend sir, if you could for a few minutes favor me with your attention.”

“At the concluding of my devotions, which are now nigh unto the finishing, I shall be at thy service.”

Sir Walter Raleigh waited with an exemplary patience, employing of himself in more closely examining the appearance of the Padre Bartolomé; but upon the very closest scrutiny he detected nothing which could in the slightest de-

gree shake the favorable impression the first sight of him had created.

“Is there ought a poor son of the church can do to serve thee?” inquired the priest at last in such mild accents, and with so benevolent a look, that the other was charmed with him.

“Being in these parts,” said Sir Walter, “methinks I should be wanting in proper courtesy were I not to seek to pay my respects to your illustrious governor, Don Antonio de Berrio, to whom I have heard you are bound. If it is not asking too much at your hands, reverend sir, I should esteem it of you mightily, would you be my guide and messenger unto him. I am about to sail for my colony in our new territory of Virginia, but I should be loath to go till I had seen one whose excellent merit hath been so much bruited abroad.”

The ecclesiastic kept his dark eyes fixed upon the speaker with an attentiveness that made him feel he was before one who could look through the eyes into the heart; but he was not of the sort to shrink from such an ordeal.

“It giveth me pleasure to know that I can be of use to thee, my son,” replied the padre with the same kindness of manner as at first. “And his excellent lordship, will, I doubt not at all, be in a marvellous delight to make thy acquaintance, for he hath ever been well inclined to receive with a proper honor all creditable navigators that stop at his ports. I am but an indifferent judge if each be not greatly admired of the other. It will be but necessary for me to return to the shore to make such scanty preparations as will suffice me for my departure, when I will embark in this ship and bring with me one who shall pilot thee to our new city, under the sanction of the Most High: *a Dios, my son!*” so saying, the priest took his leave with a respectful inclination of his head, and Sir Walter, all courteousness at the finding him of so obliging a spirit, saw him enter the boat with his companions and regain the shore.

The good ship, the Lion’s Whelp, had scarcely been cleared of her visiters, when, as her gallant commander was speaking to his secretary concerning of some private matters, up comes to him Harry Daring.

“Well, Harry, what want you?” inquired Sir Walter.

“Want to go ashore, an’ it please you,” replied the boy.

“Want to go ashore!” exclaimed his patron in a considerable surprise. “I’faith

that is a marvellous want of a sure thing, considering that you would go among enemies, and as like as possible get your throat cut for your painstaking. I pray you tell me what want you to go ashore for?"

"To kill a Spaniard, an' it please you," answered Harry Daring, with as much unconcern as if it was but an ordinary sort of thing. Sir Walter could not restrain his mirth at this.

"You are indeed in a vast hurry, and possess an infinite lack of discretion," at last he observed. "Why you stand not an atom of a chance at the killing of a Spaniard should you go ashore, for you could not help but get shot ere you could well land."

"Indeed, and if they can they may," replied the boy carelessly, "but I'll be hanged if I would allow a paltry Spaniard shooting me. An' it please you to let me go ashore by myself, if I kill not one or two at least, I will ask not to go again."

"Quite preposterous, Harry," said Sir Walter in an excellent good humor.

"An' it please you, I am quite sick for the killing of a Spaniard," added Harry Daring, with a dejected look, and with a more earnest voice. "I have clean lost mine appetite, I lack sleep wonderfully, I care not for one thing more than for another, I be in a most woful taking; and I shall break my heart an' I do not kill a Spaniard straight.

"In truth, you are in a very piteous way," exclaimed his patron, quite amused at the boy's impatience to be at his enemies; and then added in a kinder voice, "Restrain your eagerness awhile, Harry, and mayhap you shall have the opportunity you seek: but at present it can not be. Attend to your duties, When the time comes, if you distinguish yourself as I hope of you, I will see that you shall be properly rewarded for it."

Harry Daring was turning away looking monstrous disconsolate at what he considered to be his exceeding ill fortune; but stayed at the voice of Master Francis.

"Can you say naught in thankfulness unto Sir Walter for his goodness to you?" inquired he.

"Indeed, I be wonderful thankful," replied the boy, yet in his countenance looking nothing of the kind, "more especially for showing of so generous a spirit unto you who hath been to me the truest of true friends; but would he have the bountiffulness to allow of my swim-

ming ashore, for I need not a boat or care for a companion, carrying with me only a pistol or two and my rapier, I'—

"Sir Walter hath already told you his commands on that head," said Master Francis in some seriousness, interrupting of him, "it is not acting a good part to moot the matter again, and I shall have great cause to be vexed with you if you make angry one who hath done you such true service."

At this Harry Daring said nothing, for he always had paid most extreme attention to what was said of the other, but presently moved slowly away. In a short time, however, it appeared as if all trace of his disappointment had vanished utterly, for having dared some of the nimblest of the mariners to follow him, he rapidly ascended the yards, and after leaping and scrambling along the rigging like a very wild cat, from one part of the ship to the other, he at last got himself up to a point so high, and a place so fearfully dangerous, that his companions halted below with dread and wonder, and would come anigh him on no account, whilst he continued to shout to them all manner of taunts and bravadoes, and played such tricks as proved he felt himself quite at his ease.

Sir Walter Raleigh had said nothing to either of the young friends after Master Francis spoke, but he had listened and observed the two with a deep and lively interest.

"O' my life this barber-chirurgeon is as famous a little desperado as ever I saw," observed he to his secretary. "He bids fair to be of some note, but his too great hastiness must be put down, or he must needs be his own destruction before he is much older."

"I have feared that often, and have checked him as much as I could," replied Master Francis, "but he hath always been of this humor after any sort of danger or mischief, which he seeketh entirely heedless of consequences, and merely for the kind of sport he findeth in it. At present and for some time past, the expectation of sharing in the danger of actual warfare hath so excited him that he can scarce contain himself. Still, however mischievously inclined he may be, it is ever from sheer thoughtlessness. Although his tricks have often been to the great loss of some one or another, he hath not an atom of malice in his heart. He can not see any wrong in what he doth, let it be ever so full of harm; every-thing of the kind to him appeareth only

to be 'exquisite fine fun!' and that seemeth sufficient excuse."

"He wanteth only a little disciplining," said his patron, "he must be got out of that recklessness, which I doubt not will be no great difficult matter as he gets older; and then his valorous spirit will carry him forward wherever he goes. But what thought you of the Padre Bartolomé?"

"He seems exceeding pious," remarked the secretary.

"Few are what they seem," replied the other. "Piety is a cloak that appeareth to fit all who wear it, and beateth everything for excellence in the hiding of defects; and though I was somewhat impressed with the padre's spiritual countenance and benevolent manner, I now do suspect that when religion is made such a display of as was apparent in him, it is but the cloak I have stated; and concealeth something which appeareth so to be hid. I shall watch him well."

"At the first it did strike me I had seen him before," observed Master Francis, "but as I can not bring to my mind under what circumstances, methinks I must have been mistaken."

"Doubtless you have," answered Sir Walter. "It can scarce be possible that you have met before. But see—the boat is putting off with him."

Sure enough the priest was seen standing up with his hands clasped, as the boat left the land, with his face toward the Spaniards, who were now kneeling in a confused crowd on the shore, as if sharing in his parting benediction, and supplicating of Heaven for his prosperous voyage. In the space of a few minutes the Padre Bartolomé came on board the Lion's Whelp, bringing with him a dark complexioned man, in the dress of a fisherman.

"With God's good help I am here to fulfil my promise," said the padre, as he approached Sir Walter; "and here have I brought with me honest Tobias, who of all men hereabouts knowest best the navigation of this island."

"I am infinitely beholden to you, reverend sir," replied Raleigh; then turning to the other, inquired,—"You are well acquainted with the coast, my friend?"

"Ay, señor," answered the man, with a sulky look, yet taking off a rusty old hat, and making an obeisance nearly to the ground.

"And can undertake to conduct a ship safely to your new city Santo Josef de Oraño?"

"Ay, señor," replied the Spaniard, repeating the genuflexion.

"Take the helm, then; and if your performance be as good as your promise, doubt not of receiving a handsome recompense."

"Ay, señor," repeated the pilot, making a more profound bow than either of the preceding; and straightway went to fulfil his mission, as orders were given to weigh anchor. All the vessels being now in full sail, Sir Walter was walking the deck in company with the Jesuit.

"I have heard that Don Antonio de Berrio is governor of the right famous province of Guiana," observed Raleigh.

"Unquestionably is he, my son," replied the priest. "He hath ever been a dutiful child of the true church, and the virgin hath favored him as he deserveth. He married a kinswoman of the illustrious Quesada, the conqueror of the Neuvo Reyno de Grenada, and by the will of that hero, confirmed by a royal grant, hath become governor of Guiana, inclusive of the island of Trinidad and the mouths of the Oronoco."

"Tis a most notable fine government," exclaimed Sir Walter, "and one that could not be placed in fitter hands than in those of so noble a gentleman. Methinks a space so great must require a vast force of soldiery for its proper security."

"Doubtless it doth, my son," answered the padre; "but I see but little occasion for soldiery, the governor being so much beloved of the natives."

"It delighteth me to hear that said of him," remarked his companion. "I suppose he hath a garrison at this new city of his, and if he feareth not an attack it need not be of any great strength."

"In truth no, my son, for he might do without, and no harm come of it," said the priest.

During this questioning and replying, the two kept ever and anon eying of each other's countenance as intently as they might, without exciting of any particular observation.

"Surely your pilot is bringing the ship too close to the rocks," suddenly exclaimed Sir Walter, as he noticed the gradual approximation of his vessel to a very dangerous shore.

"He is reckoned marvellous skilful in the conveying of ships about the island," replied the padre. "If I had not been well assured of his fitness, I would on no account have recommended him unto thee."

At this time Raleigh having cast his eyes around about the deck, met several anxious faces turned toward him, many of whom were his most experienced mariners, and it did appear, by their uneasy and gloomy looks, that they suspected some treachery. He gazed steadily on the padre; but the same calm and holy countenance beamed upon him as had so impressed him in the first instance. It was scarce possible for any one to distrust so saintlike a face: but Sir Walter did distrust him. Nevertheless he saw he had a difficult game to play, and in his own noble features exhibited no alarm.

"Methinks this Tobias can not be so well skilled, padre, as hath been represented to you," observed he. "Doubtless your good nature hath been imposed on."

"Nay, 'tis impossible any should have dared deceive me, my son," answered the priest; "I am convinced of his trustworthiness, and that, with the blessing of God, we shall in good time be safe at our destination."

"Will it please you to walk with me into my cabin?" inquired Raleigh, very courteously.

"I thank thee, my son; I am well enough where I am," replied the Padre Bartolomé, as if inclined to stay where he was.

"Nay, padre, I can hear of no denial," added the other, laying hold of him by the arm. "It is necessary you should have some refreshment."

"'Tis a strict fast with me, my son," answered the ecclesiastic, holding back, as it were.

"But I have matter of moment for your private ear, Padre Bartolomé," said his companion, more earnestly, as he still, in a very friendly manner, forced him along. The priest perceiving that he could scarce nelp himself, did as he was desired, and they left the deck together, as unconcernedly as if thinking of nothing in the world.

"I pray you be seated," exclaimed Sir Walter to the Jesuit, as they entered the cabin, and then suddenly added, as if in a wonderful surprise, "O' my life I have forgotten. Excuse me, padre, a brief space—I will return anon." He then left the cabin, locking the door after him, and hastily returned to the deck. Padre Bartolomé looked as though somewhat disturbed, and his large dark eyes flashed glances of a different sort to those that lately had given to his countenance so religious an aspect. He gazed out of the window, and noticed how closely the ship

was approaching the rocky coast. At this he smiled; but the smile had a very devilish malice in it.

During the latter part of the time taken up with what hath just been described, Harry Daring was seen as if stealthily approaching the man at the helm.

"I say, old fellow, can you fight?" exclaimed he to the pilot. The Spaniard turned round to see who it was who addressed him; and observing that it was no other than a boy, merely scowled at him and said nothing.

"Come give us none of your black looks, Master Dingey," cried the other, "I heed not any such, I promise you. You be the first villanous Spaniard I have had speech with, and if you are in the humor, I would fain meet you whenever there shall be a fitting occasion; and I care not how soon, with sword and pistol, or any other honorable weapon; and I mean not to leave you till I have killed you outright."

The man stared at Harry Daring with a fierce and malicious expression; for though not knowing a word of what was said, he might gather from the undaunted looks of the boy that he meant him no good; and then, in a deep gruff voice, muttered the word "herege," which was calling him a heretic—a most hateful and contemptuous appellation in the eyes of any catholic.

"You are a very absolute villain and coward, Master Jack Spaniard; or when one comes unto you with a civil challenge, you would answer me in honest English. I shall feel a marvellous comfort in ridding of the earth of so thorough a scurvy rogue."

To this the other answered only by calling of him diablo, meaning devil, and grinding his teeth at him.

"By Gog and Magog!" exclaimed Harry Daring, raising of his voice and regarding the pilot with famous angry looks, "if you answer me not in honest English, I will give you a clout of your knave's pate." And thereupon he shook his fist. Then the brow of the Spaniard grew blacker than ever, and putting of his hand into his vest, he showed a dagger, making a significant nod, and muttering in Spanish that he had a mind to stab him; but no sooner did Harry Daring catch sight of the blade than, as quick as lightning, he bent down his head, and making of it a sort of battering-ram, gave the man unexpectedly so vigorous a poke in the stomach that it seemed to have sent the breath out of his body, and after

staggering back a few paces, he fell so heavily upon a coil of rope that the dagger was knocked out of his hand. In the next instant Harry was upon him, and then commenced a most furious tusselling between the two. The Spaniard cursing, grinding of his teeth, and clutching of him as well as he could, and the boy, who seemed as strong as a young lion, abusing him for a villain, and ever and anon hitting of him such hearty cuffs as was evident he liked not at all.

This could scarce go on without attracting attention. Indeed, no sooner was Harry Daring seen to rush upon the pilot, than all within notice of it came crowding to the spot, some hanging by the rigging, others clambering to wherever they might get a place to stand on, and all cheering and encouraging of Harry as much as they could. Some of the officers were hastening to interfere, but it came to a stop much sooner than was expected, for the Spaniard having regained his legs rushed like a furious mad beast upon his youthful adversary, who, stooping as he came, sent his head between the other's legs, and putting forth all his force, gave him a jerk that pitched him on his head behind him, where he lay stunned for some minutes. At this moment the voice of Sir Walter Raleigh was heard giving orders to put the ship about; the men returned to their duties; the necessary alterations were made in the sails; an experienced mariner was placed at the helm; and in the space of half an hour or less the good ship the Lion's Whelp was seen retracing of her way to the place she had lately left.

CHAPTER XXII.

Sir, be appeas'd; he is come to humble
Himself in spirit, and to ask your patience,
If too much zeal hath carried him aside
From the due path. BEN JONSON.

Nay, then, I am betrayed,
I feel the plot cast for my overthrow.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

In at the window, or else o'er the hatch;
Who dares not stir by day must walk by night;
And have is have however men do catch,
Near or far off; well won is still well shot.
SHAKSPEARE.

It was with exceeding astonishment that Padre Bartolomé observed the ship receding from the shore. He began to feel a little uneasy at his own situation, and paced the cabin floor with hasty strides, and with wild malignant glances.

Nevertheless, upon the hearing of a foot-step close at hand, he hurriedly sunk down on his knees, and began praying with wonderful earnestness.

"I have tarried not a moment longer than I could help, padre," courteously exclaimed Sir Walter Raleigh, as he entered at the door.

"I have not missed thee, my son," replied the ecclesiastic, after he had risen from the ground.

"But a strange accident hath fallen out that had like to have kept me longer, had I not done what I have," continued Sir Walter. "But sit you, good padre, sit, I pray you."

"I hope nothing ill hath happened," observed the priest, as he seated himself opposite the other.

"O' my faith! it might have been of great detriment to us all," answered Raleigh; "for upon my getting upon deck the whole ship was in a perfect confusion and uproar. I know not the exact rights of it, for every one I have spoke to seemeth to have a different account of the matter. But it appears that your pilot and one of my people had somehow or other got to giving of each other ill language, and Tobias drawing his dagger upon the other, they presently fell to blows, in which the former being cast headlong very heavily upon the ground, received such a fall that for the time being it knocked all sense out of him. In consequence of this mishap I have been obliged to turn the ship about, and make for the place whence we came, for I could no longer allow of the safety of the ship and crew being intrusted to one who seemeth of so hasty a temper: and indeed I am exceeding anxious to get him back with a whole skin, for he hath made all my people so incensed against him that I expect if he be not removed away straight he will suffer for it. I am sorely vexed at this, for that it will delay my long-desired interview with your honorable governor."

"Indeed, 'tis much to be regretted, my son," answered the Padre Bartolomé, regarding his companion with one of his most searching glances. "Tobias deserveth to be well censured for behaving of himself so badly. Alack! it doth make my heart ache wonderfully to observe how prone to strife are the children of one Father. What vile thing can there be in human nature that preventeth the whole world living as they ought in a universal brotherhood? I have strove early and late to destroy that hatefulness

one of another which leadeth men into such riotous turmoils; yet it hath availed me but little, in vain preached, in vain prayed for the removing of their quarrelsomeness. Ever have I gone amongst them on missions of peace and charity, yet have I seen of my labors no better ending than war and bloodshed. Oh, Madre de Dios!" continued the priest, lifting up his brilliant eyes to the ceiling, and raising of his voice to a tone of greater excitement. "Pluck from our sinful hearts these hateful passions, that with one accord men of all nations and conditions whatsoever, may bow down in thy worship, and glorify thy name with natures attuned by thy sweet influence unto everlasting harmony and love."

"Amen!" exclaimed his companion reverently. "Much pleased am I to hear of such sentiments; and doubt I not that if they were common, and were acted on by the different ministers of religion, one faith would soon pervade the world, and one feeling of love unite all mankind in a bond of peace that should never be sundered."

"Ah, my son!" cried the padre with increased fervor. "How earnestly would I strife to bring about so good a work. There are multitudes of my brethren who hold that a man can not be saved unless he be of the catholic church; but my heart can not consign to perdition so many of my fellow-creatures. Among protestants I have met with very many who without doubt were truly excellent Christians. They led good lives; they gave bountifully to the poor; they worshipped their Creator in all gratitude and sincerity; and that such are to be rewarded with the torments of the damned, seemeth to me incredible."

Sir Walter Raleigh now had some doubt that his companion was of the sort he had suspected. Ideas so liberal he had not met with before in any catholic, much less a priest: and he could never have suspected them in a Jesuit.

"I am afraid, padre, the superiors of your order would but little approve of such opinions as you have just expressed," said he. "Yet I am wonderfully delighted with your liberality, and shall have better thoughts of your religion for producing such."

"Indeed, my son, I speak but as I think," replied the ecclesiastic, with a look of very convincing earnestness. "It is true that many of us are not so tolerant; but the cell and the cloister are the last places from which ideas enlarged

and charitable should be expected to come. It hath been my good hap to travel much. I have seen with mine own eyes. I have taken my opinion of men from themselves, and not from another party who may be either ignorant or prejudiced, and like enough give false testimony. The result of this thou dost behold. I can respect a man for all that he be of a nation with which mine is at enmity. I can believe in his worth for all that he followeth a religion which mine declareth to be damnation. I am not to be cheated out of my admiration of honorable conduct in deference to any unjust judgment of another, though he should be my spiritual chief and director in all matters of conscience."

"O my life, well said!" exclaimed the other, diligently scrutinizing the features of his companion to detect aught of insincerity. Finding that the benevolence of his aspect altered not a jot, he was beginning to think more and more every minute that he had been too hasty in what he had done. "And so you have travelled, padre?" continued he. "Certes, there can be nothing like travel for the liberalizing of the mind. Have you ever been in England?"

"I have, my son, but 'tis many years since."

"My secretary doth imagine that he hath met with you."

"Indeed!" cried the padre in some surprise, then added with more indifference, "It can scarce be, for I left England when I was but a boy."

"I thought he had been mistaken," observed Sir Walter. Then there followed a silence of some few minutes, in which each was busily engaged with thoughts of the other.

"Have you resided long in this island?" inquired Raleigh.

"For some years, my son," replied the Jesuit.

"Doubtless then you must be well acquainted with the natives, their dispositions and habits?"

"Methinks there are but few who know them better. I ventured here under the favor of the Virgin, in the hope of converting of these heathens to the true faith. I have labored hard, and not without some success. Still I must in friendliness acquaint thee that they are in no way to be depended on. They are thoroughly treacherous and false at heart. Mayhap if thou hast speech with them they shall tell thee the most moving stories concerning of cruelty and oppression

suffered of the Spaniards, whereof there shall be no sort of truth: their only object being to create a confidence by the which they may better be able to rob and murder those who put their trust in them."

"They must be a bad set indeed if that be the case, padre," answered Sir Walter. "Nevertheless, it seemeth strange to me that none of them should come on board."

"Fearing of some mischief," said the priest, "I did exert my influence with the commandant to stop them from leaving the shore, knowing how inveterate they be against foreigners, and, worst of all, against thy worthy countrymen the English."

"Then am I under much obligation to you," replied his companion: yet still he had his doubts upon the matter.

"Mention it not, my son. I am happy that I have the power of doing a service to one of a nation I have ever had such excellent good cause to respect. I hope thou wilt tarry amongst us some time?"

"I know not how long my stay may be, padre."

"Hast thou any more ships besides these, my son?"

"I have; but their sailing with me has been delayed."

"Perchance they shall overtake thee ere long?"

"'Tis like enough some of them may."

"Be they ships of a force like unto this, my son?"

"Somewhat, padre."

"Prythee, tell me again what number of ships thou expectest to join thee?" said the Jesuit.

"I said not any number," answered Sir Walter, who now began to suspect that his companion had some object in his questions.

"Oh, 'tis of no sort of consequence!" exclaimed the priest as unconcernedly as he might, and on the instant turned the conversation into another channel. Each tried to obtain of the other such information as he required—the one concerning of the force possessed by Don Antonio—the other of the number of men and ships under Sir Walter's command; and each strove to mislead his companion as much as was possible of him.

"I have changed my mind as to going to your new city," observed Raleigh.

"The Señor Gobernador will be right glad to see thee," replied the padre.

"And he will take it unkind of thee shouldst thou leave the island without

paying him a visit. I should earnestly advise thee, as a friend, to neglect such a thing on no account."

"I will think of it," said Sir Walter. "But you are proceeding thither I believe?"

"I shall go by land immediately I get me on shore," answered the Jesuit.

"Is the distance very great by land?" inquired the other.

"Some few leagues, my son; but the roads are not of the best, and the way by sea being the shortest, I usually prefer it."

"When you see the worshipful Don Antonio de Berrio, present my duty to him, and say I be most earnest in wishing him all the prosperity in his government his great merit deserveth: and that if he come not to see me straight, I will do my best to pay him a visit."

"I will not fail, my son."

Soon after this the Padre Bartolomé and the man Tobias went ashore, but not before the latter had expressed in Spanish to Harry Daring, with a look that could not be misunderstood, that he would be glad to cut his throat on the very first opportunity; to the which Harry replied by an action more expressive than elegant, that the Spaniard could not help interpreting much better than if any language had been used, in what contempt he was held.

Toward the evening of the same day the good ship, the Lion's Whelp, being at anchor about the same place in which she lay in the morning, and a strong watch being set for fear of a surprise, Harry Daring being on duty, observed several boats leaving the land. These made toward the ship, and it was presently noticed that they were filled with natives. Upon this Sir Walter and his officers, being told of it, hastened on the deck having everything in readiness in case of any hostile intention on the part of those in the boats; but upon closer inspection, seeing that they were without arms it was evident that their object was peaceable. As they neared the vessels they were hailed, and one, in good Spanish, cried out to be taken aboard. To some who seemed the caciques or chiefs, this was allowed, and presently, there came aboard the Lion's Whelp five or six Indians, most of them very proper looking men, though of a dusky hue, clad in little else save a linen cloth girt about the middle, a head dress of tar feathers very stately to look on, and a sort of cloak made of a curious stuff very bright, and ornamented with feathers and shells.

They came upon the quarter-deck where Sir Walter Raleigh was with his officers, and an interpreter which Captain Whid-don had brought from these parts on his voyage last year. The latter was named Ferdinando, and was an Araucan Indian from some place betwixt the Orinoco and the Amazons, and had been taken with his brother in canoes laden with cassava bread to sell at a neighboring island called Margarita. One of these Indians was a tall old man who carried himself very stately, and whether because of his being the chiefest among them, or the more experienced, is not known, but he acted as spokesman for the rest. He was called the acarawana or lord.

Upon being asked their intention of coming on board, he said that it was for the purpose of trading for such things as they could have, and that the reason of their not attempting it by daylight was, because of the governor having given orders through the whole island that none of the natives should go aboard of the English ships, upon pain of hanging and quartering. Upon this, Sir Walter Raleigh, who had had his doubts of the Jesuit, did question them through the interpreter, of the manner in which behaved the Spaniards to them; and the acarawana did reply right movingly, that Don Antonio had divided the island, and given each soldier a part, making of all the ancient caciques, who were the rightful proprietors, to be their slaves, some of whom he kept in chains, torturing of them by dropping upon their naked bodies burning bacon and the like: others of these Indians then spoke divers tales of cruelty and oppression which had been suffered by their countrymen of these Spaniards, till all who heard were in a monstrous passion at such barbarous doings.

Sir Walter then inquired of them where the governor was, and was told as the padre had stated, with the which he was informed that Don Antonio, upon hearing of the arrival of the ships, had sent for soldiers to Margarita, and likewise to a small place on the main land called Cumana, that it was known the padre had come straight from the very place he was pretending to go to; and that the way the pilot was directing the ship, was right upon the most dangerous part of the coast, it doubtless being his intention to get the vessels so entangled among the rocks that they must needs strike; upon which, all on board could not but fall an easy prey to the soldiers

which should be brought against them. The hearing of this convinced Sir Walter Raleigh that his suspicions had been correct, that some treachery was intended him; and he did congratulate himself on the manner he had acted, so as to be able to rescue his ships from the snare without exciting the alarm of the Jesuit. This he knew to be necessary, should he have any design for punishing the governor for his malice, which had been his intention all along, and he forthwith began considering the properest way to set about it. In the meantime other of the Indians were allowed to come on board, and presently the whole ship was in the completest bustle ever seen—all were so busy a trading.

On the next evening the acarawana came again with many of his countrymen, and they were exceeding wrath because of the Spaniards having executed two of those who had ventured on board the previous night. Upon this Sir Walter sounded them as to whether, in case he commenced hostilities against their tyrants, he could depend on them for any assistance, which, when they heard, they made him the most solemn assurances not only of their co-operation in the island, but of the friendliness of all the different nations on the main land should it become known amongst them, that Sir Walter came as the enemies of the Spaniards; and when he promised them, that if he had of them proper guidance to the new city he would rout their oppressors out of it, they seemed so overjoyed they could scarce speak, and said they were ready on the instant to do whatever he should desire of them.

Matters being so far favorable, the officers of the ships were called together into his cabin to consult with their commander as to the best measures to be pursued at this crisis of their affairs; and then Sir Walter reminded them of how treacherously this Don Antonio de Berrio had entrapped eight of Captain Whid-don's men in his voyage last year—how he had with devilish cunning, endeavored to cast away their vessels upon the rocks for the purpose of the more easily attacking them with his soldiers, and with what extreme cruelty he did torment the poor natives to get from them where they had concealed their treasures. Then he stated, as it was not possible to pass the Orinoco in his ships, he must leave them behind him some four or five hundred miles, whilst he got along as he best might in the small boats, which could

never be done with any safety to the former, should he leave a garrison at his back, who were anxious to spoil his enterprise, and, as he had heard of the Indians, were in daily expectations of great supplies out of Spain. Believing too, as he could not help doing, that the Spaniards would plot his overthrow as soon as they could do it with any chance of success, he stated it was safest to come upon them unawares before they could hatch their schemes; and he doubted not at all of being able to give them so absolute an overthrow as should sufficiently punish them for their villany.

This was marvellously well liked of all the captains, for there was scarce one there who did not burn with impatience to be at the Spaniards; and it was soon agreed that the following evening a strong force should be secretly got ready to attack the settlement before them, whence it was immediately to proceed to the new city San Josef de Oruño, to endeavor to take the governor prisoner. In consequence of this resolve, all who belonged to the expedition were as joyful as such brave spirits could be, their dislike of the Spaniards was so great; and every one was wanting to be of the party; but as it was necessary some must be left behind to take care of the ships, many of those who were the readiest to volunteer were hugely disappointed, because of their ill fortune in not being allowed to go with the others. It may readily be believed that of all who were in delight of the approaching encounter was there none so well pleased as Harry Daring. When he heard of it he flung his cap up in the air, and hurraed and jumped about as if he were crazed with joy. The evening before he could sleep nothing, because of his thinking so much of what he would do when the fighting began, and the exquisite fine fun he should have in it. He would scarce allow Master Francis, who slept with him to get a wink, he kept so continually asking of him how such and such a great knight's esquire had behaved when he first ventured into battle, and a many more of questions to the like purpose, whereof the other at first gave him such answers as seemed to inflame his humor the more, for he straightway waxed so wonderfully inquisitive on all warlike matters, that Master Francis got tired of it, and was obliged to tell him pretty sharply to hold his prate, for that he could get no sleep for him. In the morning, as soon as might be, he was found in an out-of-the-

way corner practising with one of the most experienced swordsmen in the ship the cunningest cuts that he knew of, and it was exceeding fair diversion to observe how earnestly the boy set about his lesson, evidently taking such huge delight in it as showed he had a greater liking for such things than he had found when he was apprentice to the barber surgeon in East Cheap. As the time drew on he grew more impatient. He must needs sharpen his sword to make it cut well—then he would polish up his piece and oil the lock, so that it should not miss fire.

Sir Walter Raleigh, who had taken great note of him, came up with Master Francis as Harry was busy in the steerage getting ready his accoutrements, assisted by a young Indian, whose affections he had gained by cudgelling of a big fellow who had been using of him ill, jeering him and playing him all manner of shameful tricks, ever since which Harry had acted toward him as a sort of patron, and would allow him to be despisingly used on no account. This youth, though dressed as an humble ship-boy, had a manner with him of wonderful courteousness. His face, albeit his complexion was of the darkest, was not uncomely, and his eyes were exceeding bright and expressive; indeed, there was often noticed in him, for all he seemed so simple and humble at other times, a look of pride and haughtiness, that did the more draw on him the uncivil remarks of some of his companions. He had been brought to England by Captain Whiddon; and being of Guiana, and of an intelligent nature, it was thought he might be of service in the present adventure.

"Now, Snowball," exclaimed Harry Daring, as he was loading of his piece and the other was looking on with wondering eyes, "you see, having cleaned the barrel and oiled the lock as well as I may, I presently put in powder, for there shall be no going off of the piece at any time unless there be powder in it."

"Deara me!" cried the boy, looking from the gun to its possessor with unfeigned astonishment and admiration.

"Then, Snowball," continued Harry with the like importance of manner, "I put me in this bullet, for it be a sure thing there shall be no killing of any one unless there be a bullet with the powder."

"Oh, my!" said the other, after the same wondering fashion as at first; for it seemed a very marvellous thing to the simple Indian.

"The which done, I next place a pinch of the powder in the pan, for if that be not done it shall be of no use to you to load your piece at all."

"Dat *very* strange! Massa Harry," exclaimed the boy with more wonder than ever.

"Then, supposing you to be one of those villanous cautiiffs the Spaniards," continued his companion, as he raised the weapon to his shoulder and pointed the barrel toward the young Indian. "I take aim at you thus—intending to have the killing of you on the instant."

"No, Massa Harry, you no killa me, if you please, sar!" cried the youth, as he shrunk down in some affright and looked imploringly toward the other. "You beat him big fellar cause him kicka me and pincha me. You no hurt poor Indian boy. You no killa me, Massa Harry?"

"Hullo, sir, what mischief have you in hand now?" inquired Sir Walter somewhat angrily, as he caught the piece out of Harry's hold.

"Surely you meant not any harm," said Master Francis, though he marvelled prodigiously at finding of the two in such a situation.

"Nay, o' my life I intended not to shoot him," exclaimed Harry Daring with extreme earnestness, "I was but showing of him how to manage his piece."

"No, no,—Massa Harry no mean to killa me, I tank you, sar," cried the young Indian, upon whom it was evident some pains had been at for the instructing of him in politeness. "He beat him big fellar cause him kicka me and pincha me, if you please, sar; he no hurt poor Indian boy, I tank you, sar."

"O' my word it looked exceeding like intent to kill," said Raleigh; "but it matters not, so that it be no worse than it is."

"If it please you, I was but showing the boy the right proper manner in which I purposed serving out the Spaniards," observed Harry Daring.

"But how know you you are to be allowed to join the attacking party?" inquired Sir Walter.

"By Gog and Magog, an' I be not allowed, I shall go stark mad!" exclaimed Harry, very earnestly; and he looked utterly dismayed at the thought of being kept away.

"Ffaith that must never be," replied his patron, with a smile; "or else, if it must needs be that you go mad, methinks 'twould be as well, were you to bite a few that would lag astern, when the en-

emy are before them; and mayhap they shall be none the worse for it. But if I let you go, will you promise me to be obedient to all orders, and never to move from the place you are put in till I shall think there be occasion?"

"If it please you I will promise anything, so that two things be allowed me," said Harry Daring in a more cheerful tone.

"And what may you require?" inquired Sir Walter.

"First that my place be by the side of my true friend Master Francis; so that if any of those villanous cautiiffs seek for to do him a mischief, I may, on the instant, cut off their knaves' heads for them."

"Granted," cried Sir Walter, seeming much delighted at the hearing of such a request.

"And next, should I have the good hap to meet with that monstrous poor worsted rogue that drew his dagger upon me, merely for giving him a civil challenge to fight, that I should have the killing of him for my own particular pastime."

"For the granting of that I am not so ready," replied Raleigh; "I think he is no fit match for you. He is a man grown, seemeth strong and cunning, and doubtless hath had much experience in his weapon. Depend on't, if he is found in arms, and maketh much resistance, he shall be well cared for by those who are better able to do it than are you."

"Say you not so if it please you, sir," asked the boy, imploringly; "my heart be set upon the killing of him; and as for his being a man grown, I care for it not a fig's end. He be but an ass, sir, I do assure, for he hath not the sense to speak honest English."

"Let Massa Harry killa him, if you please, sar," said the young Indian, very urgently, as he lifted up his expressive eyes unto the face of Sir Walter. "Massa Harry brave as lion. He beat him big fellar, 'cause him kicka me and pincha me, I tank you, sar."

"I think in this case, a conditional promise might be given, without hurt to any," here observed Master Francis to Sir Walter. "It may be, as circumstances shall direct, with proper caution attending it, as should save Harry from all dangerous consequences."

"Hang dangerous consequences! Master Francis," exclaimed Harry Daring, with his customary undauntedness. "I care not for such, I promise you. It be enough for me to look at what I be about,

without heeding what shall come of it. Let me have but the getting of this rumbustious fellow weapon to weapon, where all shall be as fair for one as for t'other, and if I let him get the better of me, I will e'en stick to a barber's pole for the rest of my days, deeming myself deserving of no better weapon. Not to say that it be one in any way to be despised; for I have had good service with it, as when I paid out that valorous knight of the brazen countenance, for drawing of his monstrous tool upon me, because, when breathing of a vein for him, I could find no more blood in him than you shall get from a cabbage-leaf."

The saying of this made Sir Walter exceeding curious to know more of the matter; but when, upon inquiring, he heard the boy relate the whole story of how, upon his first attempt in the breathing of a vein, he had cut, and cut, and cut Captain Bluster in the arm, to no manner of purpose—the rage of the patient—the deadly combat which ensued, and the overthrow of the valorous captain, he did laugh as if he would never have done. And so droll was Harry Daring in describing the whole scene, that Master Francis was more amused than when he first heard it; and the Indian kept showing of his ivory teeth, and grinning as though nothing could have so tickled his fancy.

"Well, if you can make such effective use of a barber's pole, I doubt not of your being able to do as much with more creditable weapons," observed Sir Walter, after his mirth had a little subsided; "therefore, supposing you shall come up with this Tobias, as I think he is called, provided it can be made manifest to me, he shall have no unfair advantage of you, I will allow of your giving him battle; and you shall be assured of my earnest wishes for coming off victorious in the encounter."

At this Harry Daring began a jumping about as if he was out of his wits for joy. In truth he was of a simple artless nature, for all that he was oft so mischievously disposed—doing naught from malice, as hath already been represented, but merely from the love of sport. He had not the heart to hurt a fly, unless perchance he should find a big fly a bullying of a smaller one, and then he would presently settle the matter after a fashion that showed he had the very properest sense of justice. Sir Walter having expressed himself as hath been described, gave notice that the attack was to be

made that very evening as soon as it became dark, which being made known throughout all the ships put every one into getting of himself ready for the conflict. When the hour appointed had arrived, and it was thought that all was still upon shore, the boats being got ready, the different captains with about a hundred soldiers and such mariners as were necessary, did leave their ships without any noise. The feelings with which Harry Daring steps into the vessel that was to bear him unto his enemies are not easy of description. Suffice it to say, that he was in a monstrous impatience, and did plant himself as near to that part of the boat he expected would first touch the land as he could, from a device of his own, which will be seen anon. Presently they all glided along the water never a one saying a word, Sir Walter Raleigh's own barge taking the lead, in which was Harry, and Master Francis, and such of the ship's company as the barge would hold, all armed to the teeth; and the other boats lay as close to her as they could get, using of their oars so dexterously as to make no great splashing, so as in any way to alarm the Spaniards. The night was somewhat of the darkest, but that was all the better for their enterprise, as they looked to surprise the *corps de garde* to prevent them from sending off any intelligence to the governor.

Scarcely had Sir Walter's barge touched the shore when Harry Daring sprung out of it before any one entertained a suspicion of what he intended, and leapt upon land the first of all. He was quickly followed by the rest with as little noise as could be, and Sir Walter giving some orders to his officers to keep the men together, marched them off. They passed several buildings, of what sort they knew not because of the darkness, and made direct for the guard-house, which was marked out to them by a strong light burning within. This they surrounded on all sides so as to prevent every chance of escape. There was a sentinel at the door, but he was so fast asleep leaning against a post, that he saw not and heard not aught of what was going on around him. He was not disturbed of any, but was allowed to snore where he was, which he did in very earnest fashion. An open window stood a little above the ground, and Sir Walter causing Harry Daring to be lifted in the arms of the tallest man, the boy gave note of what he saw within. There were the Spaniards lying of their lengths on the floor,

all fast asleep, their pieces were piled up in a corner of the room, and their swords hung against the wall. What to do was next to be considered. The sentinel lay across the door as it were, resting of his back against one post, and his feet against the opposite. He seemed to grasp his piece so tight that there appeared to be no getting it away from him without his crying out, nor could there be any passing of him without moving him in such a manner that he should wake on the instant. The casement was somewhat too high from the ground to be easily got at. However, it was determined, come what would, that as many as could should get in at the window, whilst others should remove the sentinel, kill him if he sought to give the alarm, and rush in at the door.

No sooner had Harry Daring heard of this arrangement than he leapt from the man's shoulders on which he had climbed, scrambled quickly up to the casement, and quietly dropped himself down into the room. There was he among the enemies he had so longed to grapple with; but every man of them seemed to be a sleeping soundly, and he could not think of attacking a sleeping foe. He examined them by the light which burned in the chamber, and, as he was intent upon this, who should he discover amongst them but his old antagonist Tobias, not dressed as a fisherman, as he was when aboard of the *Lion's Whelp*, but in the habit of a soldier. He had scarce made this discovery when he observed the man's eyes open, and, for a single moment glaring at him with the ferocity of a tiger, Tobias jumped on his feet with a scream of exultation, and made for the place where the arquebuses were piled: but Harry, who saw there was no time to be lost, levelled his piece at him, and laid him his length on the floor. The report of this roused the sleepers, but they seemed all taken with a sudden phrensy, running this way and that, making a strange wild outcry, and jostling against each other as if they knew not what they were about. Now, as quick as could be, one man dropped from the window, and then another, and at the same time there was heard the shout of the sentinel, a rushing at the door, and the hurra of Sir Walter's soldiers, for whom at this time silence could do no good.

Harry Daring, as soon as he had brought down Tobias, did himself haste to the place where the arms were piled, and drawing of his hanger, slashed about with

right good will, so that the whole company of Spaniards made at him with their rapiers for to get at their fire-arms, their numbers did so incommode each other, and Harry did use his weapon with such nimbleness, that he kept them at bay, giving a many fearful cuts to such as ventured within his reach, till some of Sir Walter's men jumping in at the window, and others rushing in at the door, at once bore down all opposition, and then the Spaniards straightway fell on their knees, imploring very lustily for quarter—which was granted them by the victors. Of the Englishmen there was none hurt, but of the Spaniards there were six killed, beside several wounded. Leaving these last to the surgeon, and securing of his prisoners, Sir Walter Raleigh sent one of his captains with sixty soldiers, guided by an Indian, whilst he followed with forty more, to look after Don Antonio de Berrio in his new city, San Josef de Oruña.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I am another woman;—till this minute
I never lived, nor durst think how to die,
How long have I been blind! Yet on the sudden
By this blest means, I feel the films of error
Ta'en from my soul's eyes.

MASSINGER.

Never have unjust pleasures been complete
In joys entire: but still fear kept the door,
And held back something from that vale of sweet,
To intersour unsure delights the more.
For never did all circumstances meet

With those desires that were conceived before,
Something must still be left to cheer our sin,
And give a touch of what should not have been.

DANIELL.

IN a handsome chamber of the governor of Guiana well lighted, and decked with such costly furniture as might become the dwelling of a sovereign prince, there sat a right beautiful woman in a dress in the Spanish style, of exceeding rich materials. She was reclining on a silken couch figured in with gold in a wonderful costly pattern, supporting herself by pillows of the same, and was leaning of her head back upon her hand, whilst her elbow rested on the cushions behind her. Her eyes were somewhat dark and marvellously lustrous, her face very lovely to look upon; yet the expression on it was of so gloomy and disturbed a nature, mingling great grief with great anger, that there would be few so hazardous as to venture to gaze thereon with any sort of affection, notwithstanding of

its great comeliness. Her form was truly beautiful, showing she was a woman arrived at the very maturity of her attractions. The outline of her limbs was fully rounded; whilst her spreading shoulders and swelling bosom were of a corresponding character.

Doubtless was she wondrously moved by her own reflections, for her breast heaved violently, and the glances that shot from her brilliant eyes were not such as betokened a mind at ease. After continuing to look more moodily every moment, and starting every now and then from her position with a sort of half-stifled sob, she rose from her seat, and began pacing of the room with haughty strides. The whilst she was at this a door opened; and there entered a stately looking man, habited in all the proud apparelling of a Spanish noble. His age might be somewhere about forty. He was well featured, yet had he in his countenance a sort of scornfulness that ever and anon gave his countenance an expression in no way amiable. Even when he was striving for to inspire confidence and affection, he had so much of guile in his look, that few could be deceived by it. An experienced observer could not fail, should he be long in his company, of seeing in him the selfish sensualist and the cruel despot. On the noise of the door opening the lady turned round, and noticing who entered, she seemed to make a struggle with herself; her look was not so gloomy, but still it was much disturbed.

"Ah! my adored!" exclaimed the gentleman as he advanced toward her with an easy carriage, and a face dressed in smiles. "I have hastened to thee from a thousand pressing duties; but when love beckons all else may stay behind. How fares it with thee, señora? Thy looks scarce welcome me. Is there aught I have neglected providing thee with?—any one thing thou hast the desire of? Nay, by the Virgin, thou usest me but unkindly if thou hast any wish ungratified."

"I lack nothing, Don Antonio," said the señora faintly, as she moved from him as if to hide her feelings.

"O' my life 'tis but uncivil of thee to turn away," observed the governor, as he went up to her and took her hand, gazing in her face all the time with very passionate admiration. "For art thou not the very light of mine eyes? Do I not love thee, doña?"

"Love?" cried his fair companion with a sort of sarcastic emphasis.

"Ay, love, Querida!" replied de Berrio. "And well art thou worthy of such. Madre de Dios! I shall think better of heretics for thy sake, and I shall ever hold the worthy padre's piety in greater estimation, because he hath secured so delectable a sinner for the consoling of so good a catholic as am I."

"Mention him not!" exclaimed the lady somewhat fiercely. "He is a wretch, upon whom to waste a thought would be a waste indeed. He is a villain—a very absolute villain. A traitor—a thorough black-hearted hypocrite—the very completest wretch that ever disgraced the name of humanity. I scorn and loathe and detest him from out of the very depths of my heart."

"Give him not such hard words, I prythee," said Don Antonio, seemingly a little surprised at the earnestness with which she had spoke. "As times go, methinks he is none so bad. For mine own part, I see nothing in him worse than shall be met with in most of our holy men. He is a marvellous fine preacher, and is altogether so skilled in the knowledge of human hearts, that he hath oftimes been employed by our government on the delicatest missions. What hath he done amiss?"

"What hath he done amiss?" echoed the señora in a voice and with a look that startled her companion. "But no matter. If he escape punishment in this world, which I doubt, I doubt not he shall have a fearful retribution in the time to come."

"Indeed, I can not help but think thou hast taken a great prejudice against him," observed de Berrio, "I have found him well to be depended on, and do trust him most implicitly. Even now he hath gone on an adventure for me that hath great risk in it, for 'tis no other than the endeavoring to entrap that notorious English pirate Sir Walter Raleigh and his villainous followers, so that I may give them a complete overthrow."

"Sir Walter Raleigh, said you?" inquired the señora, seemingly as if she marvelled much at hearing of his name mentioned.

"The same, doña," replied the governor. "He is now upon the coast with divers of his ships, intending to venture himself and the pitiful fools he hath induced to follow him, into the interior of Guiana, hoping for the discovery of El Dorado; but if I spoil not his voyage, then am I wonderfully mistaken."

"Are you sure 'tis Walter Raleigh?"

asked his fair companion, seemingly in a monstrous agitation.

"Sure!" cried Don Antonio, in some surprise. "What doubt can there be of it? Did not Padre Bartolomé bring me certain intelligence of every one thing connected with the expedition. I faith, so minute is my information, that I have with me a paper containing the names of every officer engaged upon it, and the exact number of the men and ships;" and he produced a paper from his vest.

"Let me see it," said the señora, and she instantly snatched the paper from his hand, and began a reading of it. She had not put her attention to it many minutes, which she did holding the paper trembling in her hand, when her gaze stopped a moment, and then quietly folding up the list, she returned it to the governor. "I thank you. But are you sure this is to be relied on?"

"I will be bound for't, 'tis accurate to a letter," replied Don Antonio.

"Doubtless, you mean to take them prisoners if you can?" inquired his fair companion, seemingly as if perfectly unconcerned.

"By the Virgin! I mean to hang up every rascal of them as soon as ever I can get them in my power," answered De Berrio. "I will make such an example of this Sir Walter Raleigh and his piratical associates, that no more such shall ever dare venture on the coast. But away with all thought of such poor knaves!" continued he, as he placed his arm round her waist. "This delicious evening surely was never made to be wasted in idle talk concerning of such sorry rascals; let us give the moments to love. Turn me those lustrous eyes this way, doña, and smile on me thy delicatest smiles."

"Smile! I have lost all humor for smiling," replied the señora.

"Then find the humor again, I prythee, for 'tis a humor that becometh thee infinitely." At the hearing of this his fair companion, mayhap intent upon some object, did smile most bewitchingly; peradventure, it may have been at the flattery she had just heard, for it be difficult to find any woman, upon so pretty a compliment entirely indifferent; but let it be as it may, that she smiled there can be no manner of doubt, even though the cause of her smiling there shall be no certainty of.

"O my life, thou art the very sweetest piece of womanhood eye of mine ever dwelt on," exclaimed the governor,

gazing upon her with most enamored glances.

"Thou dost but flatter me, Don Antonio," replied the lady; yet, as if with a manner that showed she was not ill pleased with what she had heard.

"Nay, by our Lady, 'tis the truest thing that ever was spoke," added Don Antonio, with more fervor, as he did press her very lovingly in his arms. "None of our Spanish women are to be compared with thee. Thou hast a shape which would dissolve the icy heart of an anchorite; and looks hast thou which heart of man never could stand against. By all the saints, Querida! I can not look upon those pouting lips of thine without mine own being drawn thereto with a power I can not resist for the soul of me."

The governor was about attempting to caress his fair companion when the noise of a door opening behind him was heard, and there was presently seen entering Padre Bartolomé, looking as if exceeding travel-worn. As soon as he caught sight of the two in the position in which they stood, of a sudden his handsome features did put on a scowl of very great malignity, and he stopped where he was. The señora was the first to observe him, which, when she did, she broke from the arms of Don Antonio, and with a look of extreme disgust and abhorrence, proudly swept by the Jesuit, and vanished out of the room. De Berrio upon this turned round, and then noticed the padre advancing toward him, now with a countenance of profound humility.

"Welcome, Padre Bartolomé!" exclaimed the governor, with wonderful cheerfulness; "welcome back to San Josef de Oruña. But say, how hast thou speed on thine errand? Are those woodcocks snared? Shall we have a famous revenge on these villainous Englishmen?"

"I grieve to say, my son, that the Virgin hath not smiled on my efforts," answered the ecclesiastic.

"What, have they escaped?" loudly inquired Don Antonio, and thereupon his face became mightily clouded.

"I did seek to cast them away on the coast, as I sent thee word," continued the padre. "Meaning to manage it so that it should seem but the result of an accident; yet the soldier Tobias, who was recommended to me as one of so daring a nature that he would do the boldest thing for love of God and the Virgin, did manage so ill, that, when nigh upon the very completing of our purpose, he must needs

pick a quarrel with one of those accursed heretics, and so bring on a brawl; which so incensed Sir Walter Raleigh against him, that he would have none of him for a pilot, and straightway turned the ship about, and made back for the place whence he came."

"A thousand curses on that villain's head for marring so goodly a plot!" exclaimed De Berrio, furiously. "He deserveth to be flayed alive, at least. I will see that he have fitting punishment. But thinkest thou those piratical rascals have taken the alarm?"

"I can not say for certain, my son," replied the priest. "It did seem to me more than once that Sir Walter had suspicion of me; but I could not be assured of it. He did behave very courteously, and talked much of the felicity he should enjoy, could he but assure himself of possessing thy company for a brief space."

"Madre de Dios! he shall have it longer than he looks for," cried Don Antonio, with a very savage expression of countenance. "He shall have right famous enjoyment of it. I will give him such felicity as he hath met nothing like in this world, or may expect in the loathsomest place in purgatory, where I will send him."

"Thou hadst best, then, be quick, my son," observed the padre, "else shall he slip through our fingers, and then shall the church suffer a great loss; for 'tis a most commendable thing to cut off these heretics root and branch—they be so inveterate against our holy religion. Lose no time, I prythee. Their force is already far from contemptible, and if they are joined by the other ships, it will be the difficultest thing possible to do them any damage, unless thou hast those supplies from Spain which will be sent thee on purpose to spoil their adventure."

"I would they had arrived!" exclaimed the governor, "then should I be at no loss what to do: but, doubtless, such soldiers as I can have, are now on their march, and will reach here in a few days. Then, methinks, 'twill be an easy matter to inveigle this Sir Walter Raleigh and his companions into the island, where they shall fall into an ambuscade, in the which they shall be so handled as shall make the survivors glad to surrender at discretion."

"Dost think 'twill be so late as two or three days, my son, before thou canst have the soldiers?" inquired Padre Bartolomé.

"It can not be less," replied Don Antonio.

"Methinks such a delay is exceeding dangerous," observed the Jesuit.

"What makes thee think so, padre?" asked De Berrio.

"The commander of these heretics was wonderfully inquisitive concerning of what force thou possesseth," answered the priest with much seriousness. "He asked many questions, whereof, as might be presumed of me, I gave him such answers as he could profit little from: but, supposing that he should get speech of the natives, the which, though I have endeavored to prevent, is like enough to happen; perchance he may procure such information as may lead him into the making of a sudden attack upon thee."

"Ha! dost think so?" exclaimed Don Antonio, listening attentively, and with some uneasiness.

"I had the ill hap to sprain my ankle, as I journeyed this way, else should I have been here sooner," continued the padre. "But it oft struck me in my progress, 'twould be an easy thing for them to master the guard at Puerto de los Españoles, and proceeding quickly thence to this place, come upon thee unawares."

"Carba de San Pedro, 'tis like enough!" cried the governor, now in some alarm.

"How are thy forces disposed? Hast a strong guard set? Hast thou such strength at hand as could beat off these cursed heretics?" inquired the ecclesiastic, with increasing earnestness.

"Nay, o' my life, I have scarce a hundred men," replied De Berrio, whilst fear and anxiousness did more and more take possession of his haughty countenance. "But how wears the night, padre? With the blessing of the virgin, there shall yet be time to prepare for these wretched villains, supposing they would dare to venture against me—which I doubt hugely."

"Doubt nothing of the kind, my son," said the padre quickly, "I know them well. There is nothing so like to happen as their surprising of thee. 'Tis now nigh unto midnight. 'Twould be best to rouse thy soldiers without a moment's delaying, and so dispose of them as to keep them from much loss, whilst they do what damage they can to these Englishmen should they make an attack."

"I will about it on the instant," answered Don Antonio, as he hastily made for the door. "But come thou with me, I would have speech with thee on the

way." The two then went forth together, but scarce had they got into the street when they were aware of a sudden firing of pieces, a clashing of swords, and a din of voices, that in the still night sounded with marvellous distinctness.

"By Heaven, they are upon us!" exclaimed the governor, drawing his sword and hastening to whence the sounds proceeded.

"Thou art going wrong, my son—the firing is from this way!" cried the padre, holding the other by the arm.

"Nay, 'tis this way, I am assured of it," said his companion more urgently, as he strove to proceed in the direction he was a going.

"Hark! hearest thou not the firing now?" cried the priest, still detaining him.

"Madre de Dios, they have us on both sides!" exclaimed Don Antonio with great emphasis, and he appeared quite bewildered. At this time there came running past him sundry of the inhabitants half-dressed, as if they had just fled from their beds, a screaming and crying out wonderfully; and seeing of the governor, some who knew him did implore his assistance with very piteous accents—and yet none knew of what they were afraid. Some said it was one thing and some another, and many got round De Berrio, every one telling of him a different story. During this the firing and the hurraing increased, and came so nigh that Don Antonio was shortly left alone; and upon his looking round for the padre, he was nowhere visible. Presently he observed a company of soldiers retreating in haste and disorder, and running in amongst them, he called on them to stop; but they would not hearken to him, and continued their flight, with him in the midst of them.

"By Gog and Magog, here be more of 'em to kill!" cried out Harry Daring, at the head of a party of his countrymen that now made their appearance.

"Down with the villain Spaniards!" shouted Simon Mainsail.

"A Raleigh! a Raleigh!" exclaimed some score of voices, and a discharge of firearms, followed by a rush sword in hand upon the affrighted soldiers of Don Antonio de Berrio, soon convinced the latter that they had fled from one set of enemies only to meet with others of a like desperate character. They made but little opposition; most of them threw down their arms and begged for mercy. A few of a braver sort fought round

their commander, but they were soon cut down by the followers of Sir Walter Raleigh, among whom Harry Daring distinguished himself in a manner that did greatly surprise both friends and foes.

"Yield thee my prisoner or die!" exclaimed Harry, after having knocked the governor's rapier out of his hand, he put the point of his own to his breast. Don Antonio looked as if he liked not to be mastered by so young an antagonist, but seeing there was no help, he said in Spanish that he yielded.

"Nay, if thou canst not speak honest English, thou must needs be a rogue and a villain, so I had best rid the world of thee," said the other, and seemed about to fulfil his intention.

"Hullo, Harry, hurt him not: he is an officer of rank!" exclaimed Master Francis, as he hastened toward him, seeing what his friend was a doing of, then addressing the governor in Spanish, added very courteously—"I pray you yield yourself prisoner, señor, and say of what quality you are. I will answer you shall have fair treatment."

"I have already yielded," replied the Spaniard proudly, "and am Don Antonio de Berrio, the governor of Guiana."

At this moment who should come up but Sir Walter Raleigh, at the head of a portion of his force, and he heard what was going on—"And I am Sir Walter Raleigh," said he, addressing the governor in his own language. "The fortune of war hath made thee my prisoner, Señor Gobernador. I am well aware that had I had the ill-hap to have fallen into thy hands, in consequence of the designs which I am confident thou didst entertain against me, I should have fared but ill: but I follow no bad example. I forgive thee thy malicious intentions, because thou art in my power, and will have thee treated as I should have wished to have been used had I been in thine." Don Antonio bowed, haughtily, but he said never a word. Sir Walter then gave certain commands to his officers for the securing of the prisoners, and the resting of the men after their fatigues; and then proceeded, accompanied by Master Francis, Harry Daring, and a sufficient guard, to take possession of the governor's house.

It was about an hour after what hath already been related, that Master Francis had laid himself down on the couch in the chamber described at the commencement of this chapter, whilst Harry Daring was laying of his length upon some

rushes at his feet. Neither had taken off any of their clothes, designing only to get what sleep they could for a few hours, the which they greatly needed, having had a toilsome march before they came to the city. The lights had been put out, but the moon shining through the windows with great splendor, did sufficiently enable any one to distinguish objects.

"Well, this be exquisite fine fun of a sure thing!" exclaimed Harry Daring cheerfully. "There be nothing like the killing of Spaniards. Indeed it be the very properest way of breathing of a vein after all. O' my word, if old Lather had seen me shooting of one villain here, and cutting down another villain there, the whilst so many of our enemies were running this way and that, some shouting, some crying, and some a fighting as well as they might, and the more peaceable sort of men, women, and children, striving to escape from their houses in so monstrous a fright, that they could scarce put on themselves a morsel of covering, would he not have marvelled wonderfully, Master Francis?"

"I dare say he might," replied his companion.

"By Gog and Magog! methinks he would not know what to say upon it," added the boy. "But hang all barbering! say I; and as for physick, let them that like it take it. I'll meddle no more with such things, I promise you. How I should have liked big Jack o' the Turnstile to have been amongst us. He would have seen how bravely thou didst bear thyself in the thick of the fray, and would not have dared ever after to call thee 'mollycoddle.' I'faith! I do believe that scurvy rogue of a Spaniard, when we were forcing of our way through the city-gates, would have pinned me against the wall—a murrain on him!—hadst thou not so timely cut in and given the fellow his deserts. Dost not think 'twas a great pity the fighting was so soon over?"

"The sooner such things are over 'tis the better for both the conquered and the conquerors," observed Master Francis.

"Dost think so indeed?" said Harry Daring in some surprise. "O' my life! I can not see it in that light. For mine own part, I would not care to meet with an enemy who would soon give in. There seemeth to be no credit in fighting with such. I be for those who will not allow of their being beat till they can not help themselves. Many a bout of

quarter-staff have I had with fellows who gave me no lack of sore thumps, and had I then said I had had enough of it, they should have boasted ever after that I was one of a poor spirit; but I held out at all times, and thumped the more for the thumping I got, the which they could never stand so well as could I; and the end of it was that I prevailed over them, and made them acknowledge they had got such a drubbing as till then they had no experience of. Dost not think quarter-staff an exceeding pleasant pastime?"

"I never had liking for it," replied his companion.

"True!" exclaimed the other. "I did forget how delicate thou wert. 'Twould never have done for thee to have practised at so rough an amusement, for thou couldst not have helped getting thy head broke in a presently, and mayhap some of thy limbs into the bargain. Indeed, there was but slight occasion for thy liking such rude sports; for, as I have ever said, thou wert a gentleman born."

"Prythee, talk not, good Harry!" said Master Francis in a marvellous tremulous voice, which showed that what he had just heard moved him exceedingly. "I am much fatigued, and need rest."

"Nay, then, I am a villain if I disturb thee!" cried Harry, perfectly unconscious that he said aught hurtful to the feelings of his friend. "Good night, Master Francis!"

"Good night, Harry," replied his companion, and for the space of a minute or so there was a strict silence; but after that the courageous boy seemed not to lay at all comfortable, for he turned himself about many times.

"What aileth thee, Harry?" asked Master Francis very kindly.

"The pestilent moon must needs shine upon my face, and be hanged to it!" exclaimed Harry Daring. "Do what I will I can not keep my eyelids closed."

"Come and sleep with me on this couch—there is plenty of room," said his friend.

"That will I never do," replied the other. "I have read in books it be not customary the esquire should sleep with the knight, nor have I heard of such a thing. It be the properest place for me to lie at your feet; and, like a faithful esquire, here will I take my rest."

"Let it be as is most pleasing to thee, good Harry," said Master Francis; "but I would not have thee deprived of sleep for such notions."

"Oh! I care not for sleep a fig's end," cried Harry Daring, "and would as lief keep awake as asleep. O' my life I think there be nothing so pleasant as having a famous talk with a friend just before one drops off like. Did I ever tell thee of the exquisite fine fun I had with old Barnaby Braddle, the constable of the watch? Nay, I be certain thou hast not heard a word of it. Well, it must be known to thee, that Barnaby could scarce see beyond the end of his nose: which, by-the-by had no end at all, for it was nigh as round as a ball, and of a very fiery redness; besides which he was so deaf, he could hear but faintly. For all that, was he made constable of the watch, and was ever in a monstrous tyrannical humor if he caught any of us apprentices playing of such innocent tricks as breaking windows, rousing up the citizens by calling fire, and the like; therefore did I determine to have some sport with him. So I and big Jack o' the Turnstile, long-legged Tom the tailor's son round the corner, Peter Periwinkle, our neighbor the chandler's apprentice, and one or two others, did station ourselves in such places as we knew were the properest for our plan; and presently we saw him, with his lanthorn in one hand, and his bill in the other, peering about him with as much earnestness as if he could see but a glimpse of anything, though it might be within a yard of him; and grumbling the whilst as if he must needs hear his own voice to keep up his courage.

"As he passed, one cried out, close at his elbow, 'Watch! watch! I be set upon by thieves.'—'Stand, ye dishonest caitiffs!' straightway would he cry; but he ventured only a step or two in the direction he fancied the sound proceeded from, and then stopped, expecting the thieves would run away at the hearing of his voice. 'Help! Master Constable, help! here be a cutpurse upon me!' shouted another from behind him; and he presently turned himself round, saying quickly, 'I charge ye hold him fast till I come;' and went a step or two that way. 'Here, honest Barnaby, help a poor woman who is nigh being undone by villains!' screamed a third, a little on the opposite side of him. 'Murrain on ye! why don't ye say in what direction ye be to be found?' grumbled out Master Constable, turning himself very leisurely about. 'Watch! watch! I pray you come, or I shall be killed,' cried a fourth very piteously, from another place. 'Be killed and be hanged to ye!' bawled the old

fellow, now in a horrible bad humor; 'canst not keep in one place? If the villains but stay till I come up to them, I promise to show them no mercy, so they had best look to it, and take themselves off;' and then he ventured a few steps in that way; but he had scarce done so, when another cried out something else from an opposite quarter, at the which he began to swear most lustily; but immediately he stepped in any direction, there was a voice calling of him, from one totally different.

"At last, when he appeared so bewildered, after poking of his lanthorn here, and then turning of it round there; and looking into this place, and then into that, with marvellous little profit and wonderful vexation, we all got round him and commenced a calling of him, every one at the same time; and this he could in no manner stand; for after listening a bit, in the most perfect fear and trembling ever beheld, he dashed through the circle, bawling out that he was set upon by devils, and stopped not a moment till he found himself among a whole company of his brethren of the watch, who had been drawn to him by his cries. Now I think he was rightly served of us. Dost not think so, Master Francis?"

Harry Daring waited a brief space, but received no answer.

"Dost not think he was rightly served of us, Master Francis?" he again inquired, but got no more answer than at first. "O' my life he hath gone to sleep," added Harry, as if in some surprise. "Well, I doubt not he be exceeding tired; therefore 'tis the best thing he can do, poor fellow. Methinks I have done but an ill thing in having talked to him so much. By Gog and Magog, this be the most pestilent moon I ever saw; for it will shine on my face in spite of me." Thereupon he turned himself upon his stomach, and resting of his forehead on his arms, in a few minutes it was evident, from his regular and deep breathing, he was as sound asleep as was his companion.

This had scarce concluded when the door opened, and the figure of Padre Bartolomé glided softly into the room, hiding of his face in his garment. Cautiously stepping over Harry Daring, he approached the couch on which Master Francis was lying. For a minute or two he gazed upon the sleeping secretary with a countenance more of a demon than that of a human being. Every trace of comeliness had vanished from his handsome features, and his eyes, that had been seen to

beam with piety and benevolence not long since, now flashed glances of the deadliest hate and malice. Master Francis lay upon his back, with his left hand under his head, and his right upon the handle of his rapier. His shoulders sunk into the soft pillows that he rested his arm on, and his legs were crossed one over another. Scarce any face could be met with more mild and affectionate in its expression than was his. 'Twas almost doubtful he was asleep he breathed so softly, yet was he dreaming a most pleasant dream of the happiness of bygone days, when Joanna appeared to him all he thought most worthy to be worshipped. Alack! that such visions of woman's perfectness should ever be so unsubstantial!

The Jesuit slowly drew from his vest a dagger. He knelt down on one knee to bring himself more upon a level with the sleeper. The weapon was raised above the breast of Master Francis. In the next moment it was wrenched out of the padre's hand. He looked up in some alarm, and beheld, standing over him, the beautiful form of the lady described at the commencement of this chapter. Surely never woman looked with such terrible glances as did she on Padre Bartolomé.

"Begone!" whispered she to him in his own language, holding the dagger over him with her right hand, whilst with her left she pointed to the door. "Stay but another instant in this place and I will cleave thy treacherous heart in twain." The ecclesiastic seemed quite cowed. Her gaze appeared to burn with pride and disdain. Her whole form looked as though it were dilating with a power something beyond the human. The Jesuit slowly rose. He felt as if he did not dare speak. His looked quailed before those scorching glances; and with cautious steps he left the room, her eyes fixed upon him as he went, and she continuing in the same attitude, and with the same fearful expression of countenance as when she first spoke to him. When he had departed out of the door she turned her eyes upon the form of Master Francis like one that is almost afraid to look. All of a sudden the expression of her features changed to the most devoted affection. She came closer. She stooped down over him with a gaze of the very sincerest love, and there stayed gazing for a minute or two. Presently she stooped lower, and looked as though she were about to touch his lips with her

own; but on a sudden she drew herself back quickly—a strong shudder passed over her limbs, and a look of terrible anguish took possession of her countenance. She seemed as if she could not glance that way again; and in a few seconds quietly followed the Jesuit.

CHAPTER XXIV.

For what man lives or breathes on England's stage,
That knew not lay. SOUTHAMPTON, in whose sight
Must placed their day, and in his absence night?
SIR JOHN BEAUMONT.

Thou glorious lau'ell of the Muses' hill;
Whose eye doth crown the most victorious pen;
Bright lamp of Virtue, in whose sacred skill
Lies all the bliss of eares-inchanting men.
JARVIS MARKHAM.

I ought to be a stranger to thy worth,
Nor let thy virtues in oblivion sleep.
WITHER.

Thy love is better than high birth to me;
Richer than wealth prouder than garments cost;
Of more delight than hawks or horses be,
And having thee our men's pride I boast.
SHAKSPEARE.

"I THANK you right heartily for the cheerfulness with which you have offered me your friendly assistance in this business," observed the youthful earl of Southampton, as he sat close upon Master Shakspeare in his lodgings at the Bankside. "Believe me, of all mine acquaintance there is none I could so readily trust as yourself in a matter of so delicate a kind."

"Be assured I will in no way discredit your favorable opinion," replied his companion very sincerely. "Indeed, I am delighted that it lieth within the compass of my poor ability to do a service to one whose friendliness to me hath been made manifest on so many occasions; to say naught of your lordship's singular admirable qualities, which make the service doubly honorable."

"Ah, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the young nobleman, seemingly in a more serious humor. "Of what avail is the good report of one's associates when that happiness which should be the reward of desert is denied me?"

"Nay, my good lord, not altogether denied," said the other. "Fortune doth not smile on your love at this moment as she should had it the controlling of her, nor doth her opposition look so formidable as to afford no hope of overcoming it. Hath not the lovely Mistress Varnon already favored you with excellent proof of her esteem?"

"Truly she hath," replied his friend, brightening up somewhat. "That I possess her young heart's best affections, methinks there can be no manner of doubt. She hath given me most sweet evidence of it a thousand times."

"And is she not bountifully graced by nature with all loveable qualities?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"Indeed is she!" answered my Lord Southampton with increasing animation. "Her beauty is of a very choice kind. Her disposition gentle and full of great kindness, and her modesty that of one who, innocent herself, believeth in the innocency of all around her."

"And enriched with the love of a creature so rarely gifted, you can assert that happiness hath been denied you!" exclaimed the former in some sort of surprise. "Fie on you, my lord! I can not help thinking that in this matter you show yourself discontented upon exceeding little occasion."

"But her kinswoman, Dame Deborah, hath forbid me the house," replied his youthful patron. "She is fearful of the queen's anger; for her majesty, having heard of my attachment, hath stated she will not allow of my marriage with Mistress Varmon, on the ground that she is no fit match for me; and expecting the same harsh results that followed the union of Raleigh with Mistress Throckmorton, the old gentlewoman is using measures to put an end to our intimacy. 'Slife, Master Shakspeare!" continued the young nobleman, evidently much moved. "Call you not this most tyrannical usage? Here is an exquisite sweet lady, who, because she is noted for a lack of the world's gear, is to be deprived of a loving husband; and I, who desire to be claimed by her by so fond a title, am to be denied the possession of an estimable and affectionate partner, who hath in her nature a treasury of all sterling commodities, because she only wanteth that of which I stand in no need. She is of good family, being of near kin to my Lord of Essex. Her behavior is of the best, she having been brought up in all courtly accomplishments; and for her disposition, it is not possible to meet with one more worthily disposed: and yet the queen declareth her to be no fit match for me! I'faith! fit match or not, I will have her, holds she the same mind she was."

"Now I do perceive in you something of the true lover," observed his companion with a smile; "which I could not but

have my doubts of before, seeing that the trifling obstacles you spoke of seemed sufficient to put you out of heart. Be assured that he who loveth sincerely, loveth only the more, the greater shall be the difficulties that oppose his affection; for love is that sort of seed which once planted in the soil will live on through the sharpest winter—nay, though hillocks of snow be piled upon it, and all manner of fierce storms assail the very spot it doth inhabit—there shall it dwell unharmed; and in its proper season of sunshine—lo!—you see it a perfect plant, rejoicing in such exquisite beauty as ravisheth the heart that can appreciate its divine perfections."

"Excellently said, sweet Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed my Lord Southampton, in evident admiration. "Tis indeed of the very sort you have so eloquently expressed; and that such love is mine you may rest assured. But the obstacles I am now threatened with can not be of the small account you hold them in. Remember I can get no speech of her though I have strove earnestly for such happiness for some days past. I can not even get sight of her, for the old dame keepeth her under strict lock and key in an out-of-the-way old house at Islington, and will let her be seen of none save such as be in her confidence. My letters have been returned; my messages receive no attention; I have attempted to bribe the servants without avail; and all my schemes to gain admittance to her dear presence have come to the like unprofitable conclusion. In sober truth, I am nigh driven to my wit's end; and if that you can not assist me, I know not what next to be about."

"Despair not, my good lord," replied Master Shakspeare. "Unpromising as things may be, I doubt not to make them put on a more pleasing aspect in no very long time."

"Say you so, indeed?" cried the young nobleman, his handsome features glowing with pleasure. "Let it be soon then, I pray you. Truly, if you accomplish such an excellent purpose, I shall esteem you the truest friend man ever had."

"I will do it, or else my wit shall be hugely at fault," replied Master Shakspeare. "But you must promise to be entirely guided by me in this matter, else can I succeed in nothing."

"All that you please to desire of me I will willingly perform, depend on't," said the other.

"Then come you this way, my good

lord," cried his companion rising from his seat and approaching what looked to be the door of a closet. "And if I fail in procuring you speech with your fair mistress before the day is over, proclaim at Paul's that Will Shakspeare is no match for an old woman."

"Sweet Master Shakspeare, I am at your bidding," answered the Lord Southampton very cheerfully, and thereupon they both proceeded into an adjoining chamber. There we must leave them for awhile.

In a room of moderate dimensions fairly hung with arras that looked to be of an ancient manufacture—for, out of all doubt, the colors were wofully dim; and in fact, the whole of the furniture had much the same appearance of wornout splendor—there were two ladies. One, from her evident antiquity and the faded costliness of her attire, seemed of a piece with the furnishing of the chamber. She could not have been many years short of sixty; her features were sharp, and at that time wore a marvellous cold and stern expression. Her false locks had been dyed of a sandy hue (doubtless in compliment to Queen Elizabeth, whose natural hair was of that color) and dressed in the fashion of the tire valiant, with no lack of feathers and jewels. Her ruff was laced and plaited with wonderful art, coming from the back of her neck very broad, and extending on each side of her face till the ends rested on her bosom, having two wings of lawn stiffened with wire, and starched of a yellow dye. The stomacher was exceeding long, straight, and broad, and in the fore part of the waist there was a pocket for such things as were needed to be put in it. The gown was of velvet embroidered with bugles, with the sleeves curiously cut; and the farthingale was monstrously bulky. Silk stockings, with shoes having famous high heels, and long gloves trimmed with silk, completed her costume; and there she stood as stately and stiff as the figure of Queen Sheba done in wax-work, occasionally fanning of herself with a large ivory fan, or putting to her sharp nose an embroidered pocket-handkerchief richly wrought and delicately scented.

To this the other lady was as exquisite a contrast as could possibly be met with. She was young. I doubt much she had seen more than sixteen or seventeen summers. Her stature was not above the ordinary, yet was her figure so graceful it looked as though to add would only be to spoil; and her complexion was of that

choice kind where the red comes peeping through the pure skin, as a flower out of the snow, that gives to comeliness of feature its rarest garnishing. There was in her countenance so admirable an expression of youth and innocence, that it must have charmed the most suspicious nature. In contrast to her companion's antiquated finery, she wore a simple gown made close to the body, with an apron of fine linen; and her hair without ornament save its being curiously knotted and raised from the forehead. She stood with her eyes modestly fixed upon the ground; whilst the other regarded her with a stern and searching look.

"I marvel at thy exceeding shamelessness, Mistress Varnon!" exclaimed the old gentlewoman in a tone of monstrous indignation. "Never, in all my days, saw I such thorough baseness of behavior. Prythee, dost think I can tolerate these unmaidenly doings? Dost fancy I will allow of our family being disgraced, and our name brought into disrepute—a name that hath hitherto been of such exceeding worship, that it might stand second to none in these kingdoms? I take pride in saying the honorableness of the Varnons hath never been questioned—the sons have been heroes of valor, the daughters models of discretion; but woe is me! our house is like to be utterly put out of its notable reputation by the contumaciousness of its last and only unworthy scion."

"But, dear aunt!" exclaimed her young kinswoman imploringly.

"Speak not to me, Mistress Varnon," replied the other with a dignified wave of her arm, and the same formal, proud, and stern demeanor. "Respect for myself and the unsullied name I bear, maketh me desirous of disclaiming all relationship with one who hath exhibited such abominable disobedience. I know not the language which should express my absolute abhorrence of thy crime. 'Tis something so marvellous in a member of our family that the commission of it hath moved me to so excessive an indignation, that I find it clean impossible to express the sense I hold it in. How horrified my sainted grandmother, the abbess of St. Ursula must be could she behold thy delinquency! How shocked would my great uncle the bishop become! With what consternation would it be regarded by my illustrious kinsman the lord-chamberlain! And how infamous would it appear in the eyes of my respected aunt the maid of honor! I am

thankful they have been spared this fiction. They are to be envied upon whom the grave hath shut out from their view so humiliating a scene."

"But my lord loveth me honorably, Aunt Deborah," murmured the abashed maiden.

"Love thee, Mistress Varnon!" cried the old gentlewoman, in some sort of astonishment. "And what, thinkest thou, is his love compared with thy loyalty? Hath not her gracious majesty forbid the marriage, and thinkest thou that a princess of such immeasurable knowledge, immaculate virtue, and unbounded beneficence, knoweth not what is proper for thee? Wouldst have the audacity to dispute the commands of thy lawful sovereign? My hair standeth on end at so traitorous a supposition. Queen Elizabeth, out of her abundant grace of disposition, hath ever held our family in proper estimation, which she showeth in a very laudable measure, in the favor with which she hath, for some time, regarded my kinsman the Earl of Essex; and shall a daughter of the house she hath so honored, ungratefully disobey her royal commands? Is it to be believed, that of a race approved for their loyalty, there should now come a rebel? If I had not known it as a truth, I would have doubted such wretched villany could have existed amongst us."

"Indeed, dear aunt, I can not help loving my Lord Southampton," observed her youthful companion, in a low sweet voice, "he hath so noble, so admirable a disposition."

"Disposition, quotha!" exclaimed the other with increased indignation. "Darest thou talk of his disposition when thy duty is concerned? Had he twenty dispositions, thou shouldst think no more of him when such be the will of thy sovereign. It is, on the face of it, that thou art obstinate to a degree that exceedeth all example. But thy ill-doing confineth not itself to obstinacy. Ill-hap is mine to find that a daughter of the house of Varnon hath not only so forgot her natural obedience, as to set herself in opposition to her lawful sovereign, but hath shown such little regard for the dignity of her family, as to attempt to bribe a serving-man to assist her in carrying on a clandestine correspondence. Yes," continued Aunt Deborah as she slowly drew a letter from her pocket, evidently to the infinite consternation of her pretty niece. "I have discovered all thy exceeding baseness. Thou hast done a deed

enough to draw thy ancestors out of their tombs, in horror of its very villany. But I will read what horrible treason thou hast here set down, though I doubt not 'twill move me to be marvellously ashamed of thy disgraceful conduct." And thereupon, slowly, and with an air of stern dignity, she first put on her spectacles, then broke open and commenced reading the letter, whilst the eyes of the fair culprit were fixed on the floor more intently than ever, with so sweet an expression of innocency, that it seemed impossible for any person to gaze on her face, and feel harshly toward her.

"To my ever-honored and most dear Lord Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton."

"Alack, what an atrocious superscription is here!" exclaimed the old gentlewoman. "'Most dear lord!' Hadst thou been married to him a good ten years, thou couldst not have addressed him more like a wife. But I will proceed.

"I am sorely grieved, sweetheart, that I am debarred the exquisite delight of seeing thee."

"Did ever any one read such downright rebellion? Sorely grieved because her majesty hath been graciously pleased to command that my Lord Southampton have naught to do with thee! I am all amazed. 'And thinking thou art in a like unhappy case—in hope of affording thee the sweet comfort I so much stand in need of—I write to assure thee I do love thee so infinitely, naught on this earth shall make it less.' Well! never met I such wanton immodesty! Why, what sense of shame canst thou have to tell a man such horrid things? But where left I off? Ah!—'make it less.' 'And all I now pray for is that thou wilt give me such covetable place in thy remembrance as, of a surety, dear lord of my life, thou hast in mine, till the happy time come round again when I may see thee, and hear thee, and bless thee, with such true affectionateness as would I at this present were thy dear presence allowed me.'

"And hast thou really the impiety to pray for such wicked things?" inquired Aunt Deborah with a look of stately astonishment, as she deliberately put away the letter and her spectacles, and then began to fan herself with a slow and dignified motion. "Well may religious men cry out against the iniquity of the age. Indeed, the world must have come to a sad pass when in one so young there existeth so much disloyalty, obstinacy, immodesty, and impiety. But to prevent

further dishonor to our name, I shall see that the commands of her most gracious majesty are properly obeyed."

"Dear aunt!" murmured the offender, as if almost afraid to speak.

"Go to thy virginals, Mistress Varnon," replied her kinswoman in a lofty manner. "Practise the last new madrigal I procured thee of the ingenious Master Morley. I will hold thee well to thy studies, so that thou shalt have no chance of practising the evil the infamously of thy nature would set thee upon."

The abashed maiden, probably glad to escape from the lecture, moved toward a corner of the room where the instrument was placed, and her aunt Deborah, with slow and stately steps, proceeded to a chair close upon it, where, after a solemn arrangement of her drapery, with a calm and dignified countenance she sat herself down. Presently Mistress Varnon commenced singing the first part of a madrigal, which she did with a very delicate voice, accompanying of herself on the virginals, whilst her kinswoman sat by listening with a most delectable gravity impressed upon her ancient features, a beating of the time with her fan. At this time an old serving-man, in a faded showy livery, entered, and advanced with an air of respectful awe a little way into the chamber. The music ceased, as did also the beating of the time.

"Well, Joseph?" exclaimed Dame Deborah, sitting upright in her chair very formal and stiff.

"An' it please you, my lady," replied the man, "there is one waiting below who calleth himself Master Dulcimer, a teacher of music, as he says, who desireth to have speech with you, saying that he hath come at the express desire of my Lord Essex."

"What sort of man seemeth he?" inquired his mistress.

"A very worshipful sort of man, an' it please you, my lady," replied Joseph, "one of wonderful fine accommodation in his apparelling."

"Let him have entrance," said Aunt Deborah in her stately manner; and at this command the old serving-man, keeping his face very respectfully toward his mistress, retreated out at the door. Directly he had disappeared the old dame began fidgeting about her dress, pulling out this part and smoothing that, and looking to see that nothing was out of order; and before she had well done this the door again opened, and thereat entered a stranger. He was a man of a

very commendable stature and features, yet carried he himself so stiffly, and looked with such a primness as was singular to see. In age he must have been no youngster, for his face seemed wrinkled somewhat. In dress he was attired as a gallant of the old fashion, wearing a beard of an orange tawny color, trimmed spade-wise, with jewels in his ears, and a love-lock with a silken rose at the end hanging down nigh upon the shoulder. The ruff was very large, well stiffened and bushy; and the doublet of fine cloth, having a capacious cape and Danish sleeves, was apparently so hard quilted that the wearer stood in it like unto a man in armor. The gallygaskins were bolstered up all round the lower part of the body to a preposterous size with a stuffing, doubtless of wool and hair; the hose were of woven silk with broad garters; and his feet were cased in pantofles of such high heels as bore him up some two or three inches more than his natural stature, and these were ornamented with shoe-roses that looked to be of some five pound a piece. He wore a dagger at his back, and a rapier, the scabbard whereof was very prettily ornamented, at his side. His hat was of a high tapering crown, daintily embroidered all over, and having a goodly plume of feathers drooping from it; and his gloves, as was soon made manifest, were perfumed very sweetly.

As soon as Dame Deborah observed the entrance of her visiter, she rose from her seat slowly and with a monstrous dignity; seeing which Master Dulcimer stopped, with his hat in his hand, and with a very famous courtesy bowed as low as the quilting of his doublet would allow him; thereupon the old gentlewoman courtesied to the ground with exceeding deliberation; after which he advanced in a respectful manner some few paces and bowed to her with the like profound courteousness, and then she again courtesied to him with the same stateliness of behavior. All this time each of them regarded the other with a visage of as perfect a gravity as was ever carried by one at a funeral, taking no manner of notice of Mistress Varnon, who, having risen at the entrance of the stranger, stood nigh unto her seat, marvelling in no small measure at the ridiculousness of the scene that was being acted before her.

"I have ventured to intrude myself into your desirable presence, most honorable lady," said Master Dulcimer at last, addressing Aunt Deborah in a voice of

infinite affectation, "having been moved thereto by the report of my worshipful friend and patron the Lord Essex, who for a right exquisite taste in the truly delectable science of music hath not his fellow anywhere. Peradventure it may be known unto your honorable ladyship that I have some poor ability in the writing of madrigals, and in divers other kinds of tuneful compositions, having, besides great study in the art pursued in these realms for a long course of time, travelled into Italy and in France, learning as I went of the choicest masters those countries afforded, from the which I have but lately returned. It hath been my extreme honor to be in admirable good favor with many persons of worship, but hearing of my Lord Essex that your excellent ladyship hath such fine judgment in madrigals as is marvellous to your friends and the world, I hasted here on the instant, desirous of all things that what my poor wit hath fashioned should be found worthy of a hearing by one of such notable delicate taste in these matters."

"I pray you be seated, Master Dulcimer," replied Aunt Deborah with exceeding graciousness, after listening in a stiff attitude and with exceeding gravity to the speech of the musician: at hearing this request, he, with a bow as profound as ever, walked with stately steps to the nearest chair, and put it down close beside her, with another bow of the like sort; but the old gentlewoman remained standing till her companion had placed a chair for himself over against her own, and then the two looking upon each other with immovable gravity sank gradually and at the same moment into their respective seats.

"For this courtesy, noble madam, I tender you my entire devotions," said Master Dulcimer respectfully.

"I could do no less for one that cometh with the recommendation of my illustrious kinsman," answered the other, holding up her head as high as she could. "But how fareth my Lord of Essex? I would fain know something certain of his health and well-doing; and you, Master Dulcimer, having parted with him but lately, must needs be the fittest intelligencer I could meet with. Time was, I had no need of learning what was going on at court, I being at that time in some honor there myself; but the degeneracy of the age is such as hath made me prefer a life of retirement to all the honors the queen's majesty could confer on me.

I pray you, tell me how fareth my noble kinsman?"

"Bountifully as his princely disposition deserveth," replied her companion, displaying a pouncet-box, the which he occasionally put to his nose. "Indeed, it is very much as your ladyship hath but now most justly remarked. Things are not now as they were. The times can not boast of such infinite choice accommodations as have existed in my remembrance. Methinks the world is wearing—nay, I am in some doubts it be not clean threadbare. Ah! what would I give to meet with such musicians as I have known, who could sing their part of a madrigal without previous study, and, mayhap, play an accompaniment at the same time."

"'Tis a rare accomplishment, Master Dulcimer," observed the old dame, with a conscious satisfaction showing itself in the very gravity of her countenance, "a rare accomplishment, beyond all manner of doubt: yet the great practice I have had from my youth in singing and playing on the virginals, maketh it to me a thing of easy performance."

"Say you so, indeed, honored madam!" exclaimed the other, with a look of pleased surprise. "Then am I fortunate above all measure. I have searched far and near amongst the young gentlewomen of the day, yet found I none so advanced in the exquisite sweet art as to be capable of what you have reported of yourself."

"Ah, Master Dulcimer!" cried Aunt Deborah, in her usual tone and manner. "In my time, girls were brought up in an honest fashion, and being ever of a very notable obediency, applied themselves diligently to the doing of what they were set upon. What famous cloth of tissue have I had a hand in the working of—ay, and goodly counterpanes and coverlets, and all manner of curious needlework. Then, in confectionary and in the making of wines and cordials, I was excelled by none; and so proficient was I in my music that there was no three or four part song I was afraid to join in. Though I say it, Master Dulcimer, 'tis not easy to meet with a young gentlewoman so well accommodated as was I. But I marvel not at all at it. The degeneracy of the age is such that no better can be expected than the infinite lack of excellency that distinguisheth the present time. My dainty young madam now must needs go to Paris garden when she should be at her virginals; and careth more to be loitering her time away in a

room at the playhouse, than to be playing the part of a good huswife in her own house."

"In truth, I do prefer that which I have seen in my youth to aught that the present age affords," observed her companion. "Yet is there one gratification left me for which I am prodigiously thankful. I remember me the exceeding beauteousness, the exquisite sweet grace, and the right excellent accomplishments of that star of the court of Queen Mary, Mistress Deborah Varnon, and to find such great skill, such marvellous comeliness, and such admirable fine wit, still adorning the world wherein I am allowed to move, produce in me so rare a comfort as nothing else under heaven can bestow."

During this courteous speech, which was delivered with a seriousness of countenance, and expression of voice, it is impossible to describe, Aunt Deborah frequently bent her head in acknowledgment of the compliments she was receiving, and fanned herself with an air of greater stateliness than ever.

"Said you that you had written some new madrigals, Master Dulcimer?" inquired the old dame, in an indifferent sort of voice, as if she cared not for being so talked of.

"Indeed have I," replied the musician, "and such as divers of my friends have well commended; but though these are persons of worship, and considered to be of a very absolute fine taste, I can not help being careless of their opinion while I lack the praise of so exceeding nice a judge as Mistress Deborah Varnon." Again that lady bowed her acknowledgments. "Such as I have done are for four voices, whereof the first part hath, by some ladies who have essayed the singing of it, been pronounced too difficult to be sung without a wonderful deal of study, and then, so it hath been said by them, it shall chance not to go so well as it ought. For mine own part, I doubt much whether any be so well skilled in music as to perform it at sight."

"In the first place, there is a voice short," said Dame Deborah; "in the next, you have not your madrigal at hand, else would I prove to you, Master Dulcimer, that there be no difficulties in singing I can not master."

"And have you three voices at command?" inquired her companion.

"There is myself for the first," replied she; "there is my niece, whom I have made next in skill to myself, for the second; and the third you can supply of your

own ability: provide you a fourth, and set your madrigal before me, I doubt not it shall be done justice to."

The musician appeared to reflect a few moments with a wonderful thoughtful countenance, and at last said:—

"I know not how it may be brought about, yet if it could be, I should like it well."

"What mean you, Master Dulcimer?" inquired Aunt Deborah.

"There is my boy waiting below with my cittern and music," answered he. "Now he hath as proper a voice as you might wish to hear; and having been long taught of myself, is cunning in all manner of singing."

"If he can bear himself discreetly, let him join us," observed his companion, who seemed anxious to convince the musician of her own skill in minstrelsey.

"For discretion he can not be excelled," replied the other; "but he is of a simple nature. Indeed he hath so wonderful a shyness with regard to ladies, that he can not bear to be looked at in the face by any."

"Since that be his humor, I will not gaze on him at all," said Aunt Deborah.

"I implore you not to do so on any account," added Master Dulcimer, "else you will so put him out, that his voice will leave him on the sudden."

"Neither I nor my niece shall regard him in any way, rest assured," answered the old lady; "and now, if you are for the trial of your madrigal, I will give orders that your boy come here, and we will about it without loss of time."

Joseph was summoned, and commanded to send Master Dulcimer's boy to them; immediately after which Dame Deborah and her visiter rose from their seats at the same moment, and she courteously giving him her hand, went sailing proudly along in all her finery, while he, quite as stiffly, walked at her side, and led her to a seat before the virginals.

"I charge you, Mistress Varnon, look not at this youth who is about to join in our singing," said she, addressing her niece with a most profound gravity; then, turning to her gallant companion, courtesied with a marvellous solemnity, as he bowed himself to the ground, and then, with the same deliberate stateliness, seated herself before the instrument. This had scarce been done when the door opened, and there entered a youth humbly apparelled in a suit of Lincoln green, seemingly of a great modesty; for his eyes were fixed on the ground, and he

carried his master's cittern and music so before him, that of his face but little could be seen.

While Master Dulcimer was tuning of his cittern, sitting down close beside Aunt Deborah, to whom he kept addressing frequent observations relating to the music he had placed before her, Mistress Varnon was standing behind her aunt, holding with one hand a copy of the same madrigal, which was also held in one hand by Master Dulcimer's boy, (or man he might be called by his stature), who stood at her elbow; and she appeared wondering much at the oddness of such a performance. All at once she felt her disengaged hand touched by her companion; and not being desirous of such a familiarity from one of so mean a quality as a musician's boy, she snatched away her hand with some indignation. Presently she felt it touched again, and being mightily enraged at the impudency of the fellow—forgetting the injunction of her kinswoman, she turned round to give him a look which should convince him she was not to be so meddled with by such mean persons; but scarce had her eyes fallen on his face when she uttered a short scream, and let go her hand from the music.

"What meaneth this?" exclaimed Dame Deborah, turning quickly round, at the same moment that the boy moved his face in an opposite direction, and seemed to be quietly intent on looking into his part.

"Nothing, aunt," replied Mistress Varnon, endeavoring to conceal her confusion. "That is—I only—I mean I felt—it was but a small matter, aunt—a sudden pain. 'Tis going off now."

"Let it go off, and quickly then," said her kinswoman, with exceeding seriousness; "I marvel at your want of discretion in having sudden pains at such a time. Attend to your part, and put not out the boy with any such follies."

"Here we again return to the major chord," observed Master Dulcimer, drawing her attention back to the madrigal: and she was soon so occupied with listening to his explanations that she could think of no other matter. The boy was once more at the side of Mistress Varnon, and they held the music betwixt them as before. But his impudency exceedeth all description; he took her hand, and, what seemeth equally unpardonable, she allowed him to retain it. Nay, not only did she now exhibit no sign of indignation, but she ever and anon smiled on him

as graciously as if none could be held in such esteem of her. All parties being at last ready, they commenced singing of the madrigal, the words of which are here written.

"Come, shepherds, come, and whilst our lambskins play,

And every friend and neighbor
Dance to the pipe and tabor,
We'll make sweet music with our roundelay.
Come, shepherds, come!

"Hark! how from out yon green umbrageous bower

Rise tuneful pastorals
And pleasing madrigals,
That fill with melody the jocund hour.
Come, shepherds, come!

"Now, let us rival them till they take wing,

And round about us throng,
To hear our sweeter song,
As on the daisied ground we sit and sing,
Come, shepherds, come!

"Then, with pale lady's smocks and king cups yellow,

And pansies newly blown,
We'll fashion forth a crown,
For him who singeth better than his fellow.
Come, shepherds, come!"

It so happened that Aunt Deborah, not liking to put on her spectacles before so perfect a gallant, according to her notion, as seemed Master Dulcimer, was obliged to keep her face close to the music; and so her whole attention was taken up. Perchance it was well it was so; for had she been allowed opportunity for noticing what was going on behind her, I doubt not she would have been greatly scandalized. Never were appearances more deceptive than in Mistress Varnon and the musician's boy. The exceeding innocence of the one, and the marvellous shyness of the other, must needs have been nothing better than a catch; for, during the singing of the madrigal, not only did the one allow the other to take her hand, but when he had the presumption to raise it to his lips, she cared not even to frown at him. It may well be believed that they two were somewhat heedless in their singing. In truth, they did put out the others more than once, to the wonderful vexation of Aunt Deborah; but the old gentlewoman went through her part without halting in a bar; and though her voice was none of the strongest, she sung with a correctness and expression that was somewhat marvellous at her time of life. At the end, so liked she the madrigal, or the praises Master Dulcimer did lavish on her singing, that she must needs have it gone through again, to the which all, evidently in a like humor with herself, cheerfully acceded. Now must I notice a fresh instance of most improper conduct of the

young pair standing behind; for whilst Master Dulcimer was diligently singing and playing on his cittern, and therefore could not see what his boy was at, and Aunt Deborah's countenance was close upon the music, and could have no notion of what her niece was about, that very boy who was said to be of so monstrous a shyness he could not bear to be looked in the face of any woman, had got his arm round the waist of the lovely Mistress Varnon, singing away as carelessly as you please, whilst she, with a countenance as modest as an angel's, delightedly sang her part, and seemed in no way displeased at his abominable impudency. But of all extraordinary things, was the contrast betwixt the wonderful gravity and the absolute stateliness of Aunt Deborah and Master Dulcimer, with the arch, handsome, youthful, happy faces behind them.

After this they did essay other compositions of the same nature, whereof the greater part were so singularly liked of the old gentlewoman, or else she was so well pleased with the appearance and behavior of the musician, that she must needs show him her garden, where they stayed alone together some time, and pressed him very courteously to come as oft as he desired to her, and bring his boy also; the which he promised to do; and then—the boy taking his cittern and music in as humble and shy a manner as ever was seen—with an abundance of the same respectful bows that marked his entrance, that were duly acknowledged with a like number of profound courtesies from the lady, Master Dulcimer at last took his leave of her.

Scarce had they well got out of view of the house, when the boy, again dropping of his humility and shyness, burst out into a loud laugh.

"By this hand, Master Shakspeare," exclaimed he, very merrily, to his associate, "never saw I any old woman so thoroughly deceived."

"Said I not, my Lord Southampton, I would procure you speech with your mistress before the day was over?" inquired the other, in his natural voice, who, out of all doubt, was no other than that most witty and ingenious gentleman just named.

"Indeed you did, and you have well kept your promise," replied his companion; "but I must confess I had huge doubts of your success; for who could suspect for a moment so perfect a transformation. O' my life so exquisite state-

ly were you, I more than once found myself doubting your identity."

"I am a player, my good lord," answered Master Shakspeare, with a smile; "and it is our yocation to be the very creatures of change. We are kings or beggars, priests or sinners, as there may be occasion. The bed of Procrustes, that is said to have stretched those who were too short for it, and cut down such as were too long, had much of the players' art, for we make all characters fit us whether they will or no. As for the playing of a music-master, it can be no great matter, seeing what assistance I have had from mine esteemed friend Master Dowland: nor can it be surprising I should so readily cozen the old dame, when it is remembered how much I learned of you of her particular humor."

"I did more than once fear we should be discovered," observed my Lord Southampton; "for sometimes I could scarce help from laughing at seeing how preposterous fine and proud you looked, and with what a monstrous gravity the ancient gentlewoman regarded your antiquated gallantries."

"In honest truth it was droll enough," replied his companion; "but that was nothing to my being obliged to listen, whilst in the garden with her, to the very bitterest abuse of one Will Shakspeare, who, as she said, was turning the heads of all the women of the court with his abominable vile comedies and interludes."

"I'faith that was exceeding good," exclaimed the other, laughing heartily; "but said you not a word in his favor?"

"Had he been a drunken turnspit he could not have received less courtesy at my hands," answered Master Shakspeare, in the like humor; and thus they proceeded, laughing and jesting at their adventure, till they came to a by-lane in the neighborhood of Islington, where a caroch was waiting, into which they presently got, and were speedily driven home to their lodgings.

CHAPTER XXV.

And now a wind as forward as their spirits
Sets their glad feet on smooth Guiana's breast,
Where (as if each man were an Orpheus)
A world of savages fall tame before them,
Storing their theft-free treasures with gold.

CHAPMAN.

On, on, you noblest English
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war reproof!

Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have, in these parts, from morn till even fought,
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN the morning of the next day, the city of San Josef de Oruño having been sacked of its valuables by the victors, who found great store of wealth in it, there was discovered, in a loathsome dungeon, five of the powerfulest native lords, chained, and dying of famine, after having been cruelly tortured, by the order of Don Antonio de Berrio, to make them say where they had hid their treasure. These were immediately liberated, and treated with exceeding attention by Sir Walter Raleigh. As soon as it was known that the power of the Spaniards had been overthrown in that island, the natives came flocking toward the city in great numbers, testifying, in every conceivable manner, how glad they were in their hearts that the iron rule of their oppressors had been put an end to. Sir Walter got them altogether, as many as were in the neighborhood, in a large plain outside of the city, and it was a goodly sight to behold so great a multitude of these people, all clad in divers colors, wonderfully discreet in their behavior, the most of them well limbed, and of comely faces, and regarding of their deliverers as a race from heaven. Sir Walter got the caciques about him, and then, by means of his interpreter, addressed them in a famous speech, explaining to them that he was the servant of a queen who was the powerfulest cacique in the world, and had under her more great chiefs than that island contained trees—that she had the very absolutest hatred for all sorts of oppression, and had sent him purposely to free them from the cruelty of the Spaniards, whose enemy she was on account of their treachery and tyrannical doings. Then he showed them a picture of Queen Elizabeth, on the which they gazed with wonderful veneration, and called out, in their language, that she was the mightiest princess on the earth; and it seemed as if they were almost inclined to worship the picture, so greatly had they been moved at the sight of it.

What he said having been explained to the people, there presently arose such shouts as was almost deafening to hear; and every one did exhibit his satisfaction in a manner that, however strange it might be to some of the English officers and soldiers, was as sincere as any that was ever seen. The Acarawana then made a famous oration concerning of how

grateful were the people of that island at finding that the heart of the Great Spirit had been turned toward them in the midst of the afflictions they were enduring at the hands of their oppressors, and had sent to their assistance a band of his choicest warriors for the overthrowing of their tyrants. He proceeded at some length, detailing many horrible cruelties his countrymen had suffered of the Spaniards out of their desperate thirst of gold, till all who understood were moved with wrath and indignation against such villainies; and it was resolved that the city should be burnt down forthwith: the which, when the Indians came to know, there arose such rejoicings amongst them as was quite wonderful to behold; and at the desire of Sir Walter Raleigh they hastened to set it on fire. In a brief space it was blazing away in many places, whilst hundreds of the natives danced, and sung, and shouted about the burning building like so many mad people. In the meanwhile Sir Walter did inquire of divers of the caciques, some of whom were of the main land, and had been planted in Trinidad by Don Antonio, in hopes of their destroying they that were natural of the island, such particulars of Guiana as he thought they could give; and they quickly made him acquainted with all they knew.

Having liberated those of the Spaniards as were of the common sort, retaining only the governor and his officers till their ransom should be paid, Sir Walter departed to his vessels accompanied by great multitudes of the natives, carrying boughs of trees, and singing of his praises as if he were some mighty conqueror. When he had returned to Puerto de los Españoles he found that two more of his ships had arrived, the sight whereof pleased him mightily, and he made instant preparations for proceeding in search of El Dorado. Many were the plans that were considered before one was pitched upon, that was thought to be more practicable than the others for the purpose required, that had for its object the best means of navigating the great river Orinoco, up which they were about to proceed; but it was agreed at last, because only small vessels could be used, that an old gallego boat should be cut down into a galley, in the which he thrust with himself nigh upon sixty men, beside divers of his officers, his secretary, and Harry Daring—in the Lion's Whelp's boat and wherry he had other of his officers and twenty men, in another wherry

there were ten, and in Sir Walter's own barge ten also—making above a hundred in all. These carried victual for a month, and were well armed every one of them.

They rowed very famously from the open sea till they came to a stream, being the first Christians who had ever ventured therein, and Sir Walter in remembrance of his friend Master Spenser and his poem of the Faëry Queen, did call it the river of the Red Cross. Here they spied three Indians in a canoe, and saw divers others on the banks of the stream, which were shadowed by a thick wood, gazing on them with a singular curiosity. Wishing to have speech with those in the canoe, Raleigh gave chase, and having eight oars with him was enabled to overtake them before the Indians could reach the island. By means of his interpreter he spoke to them of his desire to traffic, and those on the shore seeing that no harm was offered to their countrymen, did take heart, and straightway came and trafficked for such things as they had, with a show of such great friendliness that it induced the interpreter Ferdinando to go with his brother to a village close at hand to fetch some fruit and make acquaintance with the natives; but when he had there arrived, the lord of the island was for seizing him and putting him to death because he had brought a strange nation into his territory to spoil and destroy him, the which when the brothers saw they showed their nimbleness of foot without loss of time, and were soon seen by Sir Walter and his companions pursued by the Indians with a great cry and tumult. Ferdinando's brother having most speed quickly made for the barge, crying out that his brother was slain; whereupon an old man of the Indians who was standing close by was laid hold of at the command of Sir Walter, and told that if Ferdinando was not let free they would cut off his head; and then the man cried lustily to his countrymen to save the interpreter: but they heeded him not at all, for they set a hunting of him with deer-dogs with so main a cry that the woods did echo with the noise.

It was debated whether the adventurers should land and by force carry off Ferdinando, but none knew where he was to be found, or what force the natives had in that island, so they kept coasting along the shore in hope of rescuing him should he make his appearance; and it so happened that he was presently seen to leap out of a tree where he had taken refuge,

and swam to the barge more dead than alive. Sir Walter retained the old Indian, because he was natural of that place, and was like enough to know the navigation better than any stranger; and it was well he did, for it was soon discovered that Ferdinando knew nothing of these rivers and islands, and the old man proved them an admirable pilot.

They rowed on among many fair islands covered with an abundance of goodly trees, and having speech with the natives whenever they could find occasion, passing up the river with the flood, and anchoring during the ebb, when they had the ill hap to have their galley ground, and stick so fast she could not be moved anyhow, which made many in her fearful that they should be forced to take up their dwellings in these parts after the fashion of the natives, who build their houses high up in the midst of tall trees; but Harry Daring said he doubted not there was as exquisite fine fun to be had in trees as elsewhere; however, after casting out all her ballast, and with a monstrous deal of tugging and hauling, they again got her afloat. At the fourth day they fell into as fair a river to look on as eye ever saw, which was liked all the better for having but few windings; but when the flood of the sea left them, which it did at that place, they were forced to row with might and main against a violent current, every one of them, the gentlemen taking it in turns with the mariners and soldiers, which they did on being persuaded it was but two or three days' work. When that time had passed, the sun shining fierce upon them, and the tall trees that bordered the banks of the river shutting out the air, and the current against them becoming stronger every day, the companies began to despair; but the pilot promised them relief on the next day, and they pulled on as vigorously as they could. Notwithstanding this, many days were spent by them in the same way, till they were driven to short allowance. At last their bread being nigh the last morsel, having no drink at all, and being scorched and tired almost unto death, some did begin to speak harshly of the enterprise, and were for turning back; but Sir Walter talked to them very reasonably that it would be worse to turn back than to go on, they having no provision to look to unless they proceeded, the which if they did they would be sure to get all they wanted in a day or two at the utmost; whilst, should they attempt to return, they would either be starved on the way,

or escaping from that, be laughed at of the world for going of a fruitless errand.

Now all of them, both those in the galley and in the barge and wherries, had no victual left, and they would have been in very hard case indeed, but flocks of birds of all sorts of fine colors, carnation, crimson, orange, tawney, and purple, and some mixed, kept flying about, and by shooting of as many as they could, the people had wherewith to eat for some days more. The old Indian, who was now the pilot, seeing their extremity, offered to take them to a town of the Araucas, where they should find a store of all good things, both for eating and for drinking, but to get to it they must leave the galley at anchor, she drawing too much water to proceed up that branch of the river along which they must go; and departing at noon with the barge and the wherries, he undertook to return ere night with plenty of bread, hams, fish, and abundance of the country wines, for those that tarried behind. This upon consideration Sir Walter allowed, seeing that it was the best that could be done; therefore taking with him his secretary, two of his captains, and sixteen musketeers, he was for departing on the instant. Harry Daring did press very much to be of the party, but his commander would have him stay where he was, for this reason—that whilst divers of the companies when they were badlied off were nigh upon sinking with despair, he would keep them laughing as merrily as if they had naught to care for, by telling of them what laughable tricks he had played, and droll mischiefs he had done, when he was apprentice to the barber-chirurgeon in East Cheap; and Sir Walter thought that the men would be all the more patient if he tarried amongst them; therefore, assuring them of his speedy return to their relief, he proceeded on his way.

After six hours' hard rowing, the sun being set, and no sign of habitation visible—though the old Indian declared the town was so close at hand—they began to suspect he was betraying them, particularly as he said that the Spaniards who had escaped from Trinidad were with others of their nation in a village upon the river. As it grew toward night, and still there was no sign of any place, Sir Walter did question the pilot very closely; but he still kept saying it was nigh at hand—it was this turning and then that, at the which when they came and still finding no habitation, they were

angered; and well they might be, for they had rowed forty miles without bit or sup, and were continually forced, worn and weary as they were, to cut with their swords a passage along the stream, because the branches of the trees did so cover the water. At last they determined to hang their pilot; but he implored so earnestly for them to go a little further, that they spared him yet awhile.

Although every one of the party were exceeding faint and vexed at the great way they had come to so little purpose, and of the monstrous labor they had had to get there, they could not help admiring the beauty of the country on both sides of them. By Master Francis the sight was enjoyed more than any other, because of Sir Walter's anxiety for his followers, and their care for themselves which engrossed their thoughts, but the former feasted his eyes on the beautiful scenes that lay before him, illumined by the silvery moonlight, till he forgot hunger, and thirst, and weariness. Besides, it was a great contrast to what they had been passing for so many miles, which seemed naught but woods and prickly bushes, for what he now saw were plains of some twenty miles in length, having the grass short and green, which was marvellous refreshing to the eye, with here and there groves of trees, as if the most wonderful art had been used in the planting of them, whilst as they rowed along, the deer came down feeding at the water's side, as tamely as if they had been used to a keeper's call.

At last, about an hour after midnight, they saw a light afar off, which they made for presently, and soon heard the dogs of the village barking in full chorus. Here they quickly arrived, and though there were but few people left in it, the cacique having, it was said, gone with most of his people up the Orinoco, to trade for gold and to buy women of the cannibals, a dwelling was provided for Sir Walter and his men, where all were hospitably entertained, and promised in the morning to have as much of such things they required as they could carry with them. Raleigh and his companions retired to rest themselves as soon as they could, for to sleep off the fatigues they had endured. Master Francis did not remain long before he was in a sound slumber, from the which waking earlier than the others, and not being inclined to sleep again, he passed out of the house without waking any, being curious to see the place. Meeting with none as he

went on, for scarce any of the natives were out of their houses, he strolled along, much pleased with the comfortableness of the dwellings, and the exceeding pleasantness of the scenery around him, till he came to a grove of tall trees, many bearing sweet blossoms, and some loaded with fruit very delicate to the eye. Numberless small birds were up and tuning of their merry pipes to a pleasant harmony; and there were others of a more brilliant plumage who flew about the verdant branches, making a wonderful noise certainly: yet was there in it a great lack of music.

Having proceeded some way, enticed along by the delightfulness of what he beheld, he was bending down the more closely to examine a curious flower that had struck his eye, growing nigh unto the root of a tree, when all of a sudden he felt a huge cloak thrown over him, in the which his arms were pinioned so that he could not move them in the least, and then being forcibly gripped, he was hurried along, not knowing where he was going or what he was to be done with. He cried out as well as he could, for he was so muffled up he could scarce speak; but in a moment he heard a voice at his elbow, which, to his great astonishment he recognised as that of Padre Bartolomé, telling him to hold his prate or he should have a bullet through his head. He marvelled at this hugely, because he knew not that he had ever done him any offence; but hearing as he went along the voice of one and then of another, all talking Spanish, he surmised that he had fallen into the hands of such Spaniards as had escaped from Trinidad, and he doubted not they were going to revenge on him the overthrow they received at San Josef de Oruña.

Presently he felt himself lifted on a horse, whereon one got up behind him and held him fast; and directly after that they set a galloping as fast as they could. He could tell by the noise that there were at least some five or six horsemen. They scarce ever said a word one to another; but that was nothing strange, seeing that they were going at so great a pace. Master Francis had made up his mind that he was to be killed, but this in his own heart he cared but little for of itself; for he was of a truly courageous disposition though of a modest nature, and was more to be depended on in such a strait than they who bear it more bravely when no danger is at hand. He thought this life could be but of small value, since the

meanness of his birth took from him all hope of honorable advancement, and Joanna's ill conduct had deprived him of every reasonable expectation of happiness. Still he could not help thinking there were those he liked not the parting with so suddenly—to wit, such true friends as Sir Walter Raleigh, Master Shakspeare, and Harry Daring, whom he loved so in his heart, that he would give the world to see again were it possible. Then he took to thinking of the manner of death it was most like he should die. He could not bear that he should be hanged like any mean villain. And then he wished they had but given him time to draw his rapier, he would on no account have allowed himself to be taken alive. At last, considering that his end was drawing nigh, he thought 'twould be but Christian-like to forgive those who had done him wrong; and from his very heart he did forgive Joanna the treachery she had played him; and as he did so, he could not but grieve that a creature who had appeared to him of so superlative an excellence, should at last take to the doing of such villainies as he believed she had done.

At this time his reflections were put a stop to by the party coming to a sudden halt. He was lifted from the horse and sat down on the ground with his back leaning against what he thought was a tree. By the talking they made he could hear they did intend taking some refreshment, whilst the horses were allowed to crop the herbage around them ere they proceeded on their journey; but whilst they were sitting of themselves down, preparing to make what good cheer they might, Master Francis heard all at once a great screaming and yelling close at hand, and a noise of missiles rushing through the air, and afterwards a rush of many persons toward him. At first, he could only marvel what it all meant; but hearing the groans and execrations of the Spaniards, he guessed they had been set upon, and in a moment after he found himself unbound, with a many armed Indians gazing upon him with strange and curious looks. Taking of a hurried glance around him, he observed that all the Spaniards were slain with arrows and spears, excepting only Padre Bartolomé, whom some of the Indians were binding with cords, and talking to all at once in a monstrous furious manner; but, Master Francis, knowing not their language, could only guess they were wrath with the priest, and meant him some harm.

After the same fashion behaved they not to him; for they did converse one to another with very wondering looks, and then seemed they to put questions to him with more mildness than he could have expected of them. Thinking they were desirous of knowing what he was, and how he came there, he was for telling them in Spanish, but he had scarce uttered a sentence when their looks turned to fury, and they beat him with blows, and bound him hand and foot, and talking furious and fast, with many signs, gave him to understand they would have his life.

Believing that they took him for a Spaniard, he then addressed them in English, whereupon they again looked to one another as if not knowing what to think of it; and he strove by signs to make them understand he was an enemy to the Spaniards, and had by them been surprised and taken prisoner. Whether they understood this, or were favorably disposed toward him on account of the comeliness of his appearance I know not, but certain it is that after much talking amongst themselves, they unbound his cords; yet did they make signs to him the whilst, that if he sought to escape he should be speared on the instant. Presently they brought him some singular sort of roots, which seeing of an Indian eat before him, he took to the tasting of, and found it to be such excellent meat, that he eat plentifully; and then they gave him to drink wine of the country, which would have been all the more pleasant had there not been such quantity of pepper in it. Notwithstanding this, he felt wonderfully refreshed of the victual he had had; and had great hopes that by their treating of him so bountifully they bore him no ill will. All this while many of them came crowding round him, examining his dress very curiously, and asking of him abundance of questions, which, though he knew not the meaning of, he would strive to answer as he best might, but always in English, which never failed to set them talking to one another with such looks as proved it astonished them mightily.

He saw not Padre Bartolomé again for some days, but being allowed his liberty, though he was closely watched, he noticed that his captors were some two hundred in number, well armed with spears and other Indian weapons, and appeared to be returning from some war expedition, but this was no more than his conjecture, for he could have no certain

knowledge about the matter. Let this be as it may, he journeyed with them for the space of many days through great plains and forests, and along rivers, and over mountains and rocks, all so grand and beautiful, that it appeared to him the most marvellous sight he had ever witnessed: and sometimes he went with them a hunting the deer, wild boars, and divers savage beasts natural to those parts, the like of which he had never seen before. He had wonderful entertainment from the Indians, for they feasted him with venison and pork, and flesh of many different birds, with roots that made a right admirable substitute for bread; and with plenty of wine, so that he lacked nothing. Indeed, he might have been happy did he not often find himself a thinking of how Sir Walter Raleigh might be put to by his absence, and how Harry Daring would take on; but as he found that there was no help at present, he did wisely determine to make the best of it he could, and did so demean himself as to win the good will of all about him.

At one time whilst they were about to rest themselves for the night upon an exceeding high mountain up which they had been toiling the whole of the day, Master Francis spied the Jesuit, still in his bonds, sitting by himself upon a block of stone, and regarding him with looks so gloomy and revengeful, that the young Englishman was quite moved at it. Master Francis knew that he had done him no ill office, and he could scarce think it possible that national prejudice should go so far as to become such deadly hatred. Desirous of knowing for what cause the other looked at him so maliciously he made up to him; but he had only got to within a few paces of the stone on which the padre sat, when he found himself laid violent hold of, and dragged back by those of the Indians who had seen his intention. They then looked frowning upon him, and did threaten him, as he understood, if that he ever essayed to speak with the priest again, they would as good as kill him for it. This made him more cautious, for it may well be imagined he had no desire of getting his death for paying of any courtesies to one who seemed as though he would gladly be his destruction.

They travelled on for some time longer, amidst an exceeding wild country till they came to a goodly city, wherein they were welcomed by crowds of Indians who flocked out of their houses to meet them

with great shoutings, and clanging of noisy instruments—men, women, and children, clad in dresses of divers colors. At first there were many amongst them that did regard Master Francis with most sinister aspects, reviling and jeering of him, and seeming to triumph over him as if he were an enemy taken in battle; but when something was said to them by those he was amongst, they did abuse him no more, nor regard him in any sort than with a very marvellous curiousness. As for Padre Bartolomé, there could not be a question as to their treatment of him. They cast dirt on him as he went; they spat on him, they screamed, they yelled, they danced for very joy; naught could exceed the wonderful pleasure they seemed to find in the sight of him. But he regarded them not at all. He passed along with his fine eyes fixed upon the glowing heavens with a most pious expression of countenance, as if his spirit was in such strict communion with his Creator he could not regard for a moment the din that was going on around him. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was strictly guarded; yet walked he with a proud step, more like that of a conquerer than a captive: and looked such resignation and hope as if he would needs appear like one of the right famous martyrs of old, who did suffer extreme persecution of the heathen, even unto death, rather than give up their faith in the life everlasting.

Nothing astonished Master Francis so much as the wonderful quantity of gold that was worn by the natives. They had armlets, bands for the ankles and for the forehead; plates that hung about the joints, rings and chains, all solid, and curiously wrought; and these shining in the sun, had a singular fine and brilliant effect; but when he came into the city and saw the insides of the houses, and beheld the commonness of this precious metal, for it appeared to be made into every sort of thing that could be named, as if its abundance was beyond all comparison, he marvelled ten times the more. In this place he abode many days, being well cared for, having to eat all kinds of fish, flesh, and fowl, that could be procured, with fruit in great plenty; tortoise eggs, which he found to be a very wholesome meat; and wine of a good sort, as much as he could drink of it: and he saw nothing of Padre Bartolomé all this time, for the priest was kept close in du-rance, having scanty fare, and usage of the hardest; but at last there came a

command from the king of all these parts, that the stranger should be sent to the imperial city, where he was, for him to see the prisoners, and judge how they should be disposed of. Then Master Francis and the Jesuit were straightway set on two of the horses taken of the Spaniards, and accompanied by a strong guard to prevent escape; and proceeded on their journey to the city of the king.

After passing a great distance through a fine open country, rich with verdure, and of a most delicate aspect, when a many days had elapsed, they approached a magnificent city, which was the place they were in quest of. Master Francis could see, as he came nigh unto it, that it was a famous large place; and noticing of the vast numbers that were thronging in its vicinity, some going and some coming, he did judge that it was well populated. The first thing that did give him a proper estimation of the wonderful riches of the city, was the great gates, which, to his exceeding astonishment, he saw were made of the solid gold, and wrought in all manner of beautiful figures of men, and beasts, and birds, and flowers, with such extreme cunning that he marvelled as much at the skilfulness of the workmanship as at the costliness of the material. Discoursing with one of his guard, for he had picked up some little knowledge of the language, he learned that the riches of this city was considered to be far beyond that of any place in the world for there were in it four-and-twenty gates of a like fashion and fabric; and the quantity of the same precious metal wrought up into idols, monuments, altars, places, and the like, was beyond all calculation. Hearing this, and beholding, as he proceeded along through the broad thoroughfares, the strongest evidence that what he heard was no other than the truth, he did from it imagine that he was in that right famous place called El Hombre Dorado, or the Man of Gold; of the which divers notable commanders of the Spaniards had searched for in vain; and for the discovery thereof Sir Walter Raleigh had got together so brave an expedition; and, as imagination was strengthened into certainty by his guides telling him the city was called Manoa, it did create in him a singular curiousness to observe, as closely as was possible, this wonderful place.

As he rode onward he could not but marvel at the sight of such goodly structures, that seemed like unto palaces, all the way long. Presently he would come

to some open space, in the midst of which there was set up a huge figure of some idol, whereof he saw a great many, all wrought out of the solid gold, and the crowds of natives dressed in the costliest silks and fine cloths, some walking, and some riding on prancing steeds, the harness of which was covered over with gold and jewels, were wonderful to look upon, for the beauty and variety of their apparelling. They seemed, for people of so dark a skin, an exceeding handsome race;—the women remarkably so, having well disposed bodies and comely countenances; eyes dark and penetrating, and hair very long and black, the which, in many instances, was powdered with gold dust, that did have a marvellous shining effect; the most of them wore gold anklets and armlets, very thick, and some curiously cut and set in with precious stones, and some wore so many plates of the same metal that they kept up a constant jingling as they walked along, from the pieces knocking one against another.

Master Francis was made to halt at a building of wonderful size and stately aspect, story above story, and tower above tower, with figures upon them, all of gold, stretching out over a vast space of ground. As he approached it by one of many wide streets of goodly mansions that led to where it stood, quite apart in an open plot of ground, he observed divers companies of armed Indians, doubtless soldiers, led by their lords, or caciques, arrayed in most sumptuous fashion, marching with bands of warlike instruments, that made a monstrous clang, some going and some coming away—some of horse and some of foot; and there being a marvellous high flight of steps all around, to reach the gates of this palace, it was a pretty sight to see the foot soldiers ascending and descending, with their spears glancing in the sun, their feathers waving in the breeze, and their draperies of the very brightest colors, together with the abundance of gold ornaments they wore, looking more beautiful and costly than the most extreme cunning with the pen could describe. Having dismounted, Master Francis had to ascend the steps with his guard, which was a work of some labor, there being a hundred steps to go up; and then passing along a level way of fine polished marble, which was covered with a crowd of Indians, seemingly of all sorts and conditions, going in and out,

he entered the palace by one of the many golden gates it had, whereof he was told there were fifty, all of a like splendor and massiveness with the one he now saw, which was indeed the most magnificent thing to see eye of his ever beheld.

Here some of those he was with did have speech with a chief or officer of the guard, who stopped them; and hearing of their business, hurried them on, himself leading the way, telling them that the king was sitting in council with his wise men, and had given orders that the strangers should immediately on their arrival be brought before them, to be done by as they should think fit. After passing through vast halls and long spacious passages, and up broad flights of steps, meeting with a great crowd of the natives, seeming to be officers, priests, soldiers, and the like, appearing to be intent upon some important business or another, they at last arrived at an ante-room, which was guarded on both sides by rows of Indians, with long spears standing up much higher than themselves, where they waited till some went to announce their arrival to the king; which having been done, after a short delay Master Francis and Padre Bartolomé, uncovered, were allowed to advance into the council chamber.

Upon entering, the first thing which attracted the attention of Master Francis was a splendid throne, supported by figures of leopards, wrought in solid gold, and blazing with all manner of sapphires, carbuncles, emeralds, diamonds, pearls, and divers other precious stones; and on it, upon cushions of embroidered silk, there sat a man of a mild, yet majestic countenance, clothed in robes of the very richest sort, and wearing beside the most costly armlets, anklets, and plates of gold all about him, and rings, and chains, and rare gems, a tiara of the same precious metal, set in with diamonds and rubies of the very largest and purest kind. Round him, in a semicircle, seated on thrones, less elevated, but of almost equal costliness, were the wise men of the council, which seemed to be such as were selected for their great knowledge, for they did appear to be of a wonderful gravity, and were clothed in long robes of white cloth bordered with gold. Padre Bartolomé was desired to prostrate himself immediately upon his entering, which he did, with an affectation of great reverence; but Master Francis liked not the

behaving with such humility to a mere mortal, and could not be got to do aught save the making of a respectful bow, which it was evident angered many in that assembly, for some did regard him with stern and forbidding glances.

An interpreter being present, who was the chief priest, and was one that had lived with the Spaniards till he was as familiar with their language as with his own, the padre was asked if the other white man, meaning Master Francis, was a Spaniard, many of the Indians having asserted he talked a different tongue, and was of an entirely different nation. Then up spoke the wily Jesuit, exceedingly to his companion's astonishment, and mayhap instigated of the devil to do it, saying, that not only was he a Spaniard, although he spoke a foreign tongue, wanting to pass himself off as of a different country, but that he was the chief counsellor of the governor Don Antonio de Berrio, and had instigated him to do those cruelties against the Indians of which such loud complaint had been made. At the hearing of this, it was easily seen that the king and all his council were moved to a great wrath. Master Francis was so taken by surprise at the hearing of so atrocious a calumny that he knew not what to say or do; and, by his judges, his confusion was taken as a sign of guilt.

They then examined the padre as to what were the designs of himself and party in entering the territory of Guiana, and he answered that he was but a man of peace, and merely accompanied the others at their request, to give them such good instruction as they stood in need of; that the command of the party was intrusted to his companion, and that its object was to fall upon the Indians in some village or another, murder them, and take away their gold. At this the assembly were more wrath than at first: and when Master Francis sought to deny what had been so falsely said of the other, they would scarce hear him, and the king, having taken the opinion of his wise men, did speak with great bitterness of the inhuman cruelties of the Spaniards in their inordinate search after gold, and then adjudged Master Francis to be sacrificed to his gods, whilst Padre Bartolomé should be kept close prisoner. When the priest heard this sentence he turned on his companion a look of fiendish exultation, which the other returned only with one of wonder and pity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

He that is thy friend indeed
He will help thee at thy need;
If thou sorrow he will weep,
If thou wake he can not sleep;
Thus of ev'ry grief in heart,
He with thee doth bear a part.

SHAKSPEARE

There is no grief, no smart, no wo,
That yet I feel or after shall,
That from this mind may make me go;
And whatsoever me befall,
I do profess it willingly
To serve and suffer patiently.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Talbot. I mean to prove this lady's courtesy.
Come hither, captain! (*whispers.*) You perceive
mind?

Captain. I do, my lord, and mean accordingly.
SHAKSPEARE.

UPON Sir Walter Raleigh's rising in the morning and missing Master Francis he did marvel exceedingly. Every place was searched for him, and every inquiry set on foot, but one or two only of the natives had had sight of him as he was walking toward the grove, and after sending parties hither and thither, and finding no trace of him, Sir Walter was obliged to return to his boat, because of those who were waiting for victual. He knew not what to think. It was not likely his secretary should have been devoured by savage beasts, because there was none known to frequent those parts, nor was it probable that he had been set upon and slain by the Indians, because of their hospitable character, and of the great interest they showed when it was made known to them one of the white men had disappeared from amongst them. No man could be more downcast at anything than was Sir Walter. He offered great rewards—he spared neither trouble nor expense, but it was all unavailing; and on his voyage back loaded with provision for those of his followers he had left behind him, he could scarce speak a word. In truth, he loved Master Francis as a son; and his loss did affect him more than anything he had ever endured.

If Sir Walter was thus moved, how much more strongly did the intelligence of his friend's disappearance affect Harry Daring. He was like one distracted—he did abuse all around for a parcel of pitiful rogues and villains for coming back without bringing his true friend with them; and was for starting himself quite alone and on the instant to fetch him away in spite of everything; but Sir Walter Raleigh, though he could not but pardon the intemperance of his language, knowing of what disposition he was, and

how much he was attached to the other, would have him go on no account, because he believed it would be a fruitless and a dangerous errand for him to set out on alone, and he could not spare others at such a time; therefore he was held fast; notwithstanding which he spared none with his tongue; for he did rate them all after a fashion that must have angered many who knew not of what sort he was, and the provocation he had had. After a bit, finding that this was of no service, he appeared more tranquil, and said naught to any save the young Indian, with whom he was noticed to be frequently a whispering. His commander thinking that he was now resigned to the loss of his friend, took not so much heed of him, nor could he well, for his attention was taking up with looking after his own and the other boats, whereof the companies now, every one having feasted and drunk to his heart's content, were proceeding at a famous rate upon their voyage.

It did so happen that of a party that on the next day landed from the boats to traffic with the natives of a village on the banks of the river, Harry Daring and the Indian boy were of the number, and whilst all else were busily engaged, they two slipped away unobserved with what arms they had, and with such things as they had got ready for the occasion; and threading their way through the thorny bushes that grew along the water-side, and which completely shut them out from view, they came at last to where lay a canoe, into the which they got without loss of time, and commenced rowing away with all their strength to return the way they had come the day previous. None noticed them, either from the boats or on the land, their attention being taken up with the natives; and having the tide in their favor, they proceeded along very famously, Harry Daring in an admirable humor at having a chance of finding out his true friend, and the young Indian in as much delight with the prospect of seeing again his family, who knew not what had become of him. Though these two were boys, as it might be said, seeing that they were each scarce above sixteen or seventeen years of age, yet were they strong and of wonderful activity. The young Indian was somewhat about the tallest of the two, being a youth of a truly graceful figure, but Harry Daring was of a thicker make, and, though he had shot up since he had left England, he looked nothing better than a big boy.

They found in the canoe provisions enough for their wants and a plenty to spare, for it had been victualled for a party of Indians who were about going upon a voyage, so that they were enabled, yet not without vast labor and pains, to reach the village at which Master Francis had slept the morning he had been stole away. Here they were entertained in a like hospitable manner as their companions had been; and hearing from Harry's comrade in the adventure, upon what errand they had come, every facility was afforded them to pursue their search. Whilst Harry Daring was getting ready such things as he designed taking with him in the way of victual, a woman, who seemed to be natural of that place from her dress and complexion, did enter the room where he was, and call aside his companion, and they went out together. As many of the natives had done the same, because he alone could understand them, Harry did not much notice it, but went on with what he was a doing of. After an absence of nigh upon half an hour, the young Indian came running back to him, seemingly in a wonderful great pleasure and surprise.

"I have found where him gone to, Massa Harry!" exclaimed him, dancing about for very joy as it seemed.

"Where, where, Snowball, where?" quickly asked Harry with extreme earnestness. "Let me have sight of him on the instant. I be a longing to behold him again. Say where he is or I shall take thee to be but a sorry friend, and will presently forswear thy company."

"She tella me all, Massa Harry—she tella me all!" cried the young Indian.

"And who is *she*—and what did she tell thee?" inquired the other.

"Not know who she be, Massa Harry," replied his companion. "She one nobody know of. Very good woman for all dat. What for she come a me? She tella me secret I not tell you. What for she tella me secret! She know where Massa Francis gone, and she wisha me and you go wid her and take him away."

"A brave wench!—a brave wench!" exclaimed Harry Daring, overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his true friend. "And as for her secret, I be not at all curious, so there can be no fear of my knowing it. But where is she, Snowball? Can I not see her? Can I not have speech with her?"

"No, Massa Harry," answered the young Indian. "What for she say no? She say she no letta you see her, 'cause

in her country no woman show her face. She say she no have speech wid you, 'cause she no understanda what you say, and you no understanda what she say."

"By Gog and Magog! I care not so that she show me Master Francis," said the other. "Is he at any distance? Can I see him within a day or so?"

"She tella me he long, very long way off," replied his companion. "She get horse to ride on; and for you and for me. We go very fast gallop; by-and-by stop, horse him eat grass, we eat victual. When night come hang hamaca upon tree in forest; we go sleepa by turns. Wild beast come, Massa Harry shoot him bang, or me run him troo wid spear after fashion of my country. She sleeps very much quiet all the time."

"I'faith, 'twill be exquisite fine fun, Snowball?" exclaimed Harry; "and I don't care how soon we set about it."

"What for you call me Snowball, Massa Harry?" asked the young Indian. "My name be Pomarra, if you please, sir." "Hang Pomarra!" cried Harry. "I dislike everything that be not honest English. Snowball be much the properest name for thee, so Snowball thou canst not help being."

A few hours after what hath been here related, Pomarra, Harry Daring, and an Indian woman were galloping along the very road the Spaniards took when they carried off Master Francis. The face of the female was concealed in the folds of a thin scarf or muffler, that allowed nothing to be seen but the eyes, which seemed to be of great brilliancy. The young Indian was completely under her guidance, and he it was, when they were at all at a loss, found out the path the Spaniards had taken by tracking their horses' feet. They passed the place where these latter had been set upon by the Indians, which they easily discovered by the stains of blood, which were yet fresh; and then proceeded onward at a good pace, only halting to get such refreshment as they needed.

At night they slept in a forest after the following fashion. An hamaca was slung from the branches of some trees, and first of all the Indian woman lay in it and went asleep for two or three hours, whilst Harry Daring and Pomarra kept watch, which they did very famously, because the one would keep the other awake by telling of him all manner of laughable stories of what tricks he had played when he was apprentice to the barber-chirurgeon in Eastcheap; and then when their

female companion had slept sufficiently she would keep watch with the young Indian whilst Harry Daring slept, and when he had had enough, Pomarra turned in whilst the other two kept guard. One night a strange adventure happened to them, which had like to have put an end to their journey. Harry Daring was very intent upon the telling of how he had pulled out the old woman's two sound teeth instead of the one aching one, and the goodly rage she was in when she discovered it, when he was stopped in his narration by his companion's sudden exclamation of "Hist!" as he caught hold of his arm. Harry then noticed that the horses, which were fastened to the tree behind him, were plunging, snorting, and trembling wonderfully.

"Wild beast, Massa Harry," said his companion in a whisper.

"Spear him if I miss, Snowball!" whispered the other, as he took hold of a musket that was leaning against a tree at his elbow, and looked about him to notice where was his enemy. The night was clear and starlight, but the shadows of the trees kept a great portion of the ground around him in utter darkness. The hammock in which slept the Indian woman was elevated two or three feet from the ground, between two large trees, whereof the thick branches crossed each other, and round about were clumps of bushes, and tall grass, and weeds, much of which was enveloped in a deep shadow, but occasionally illuminated by myriads of fire-flies.

"Now, Snowball, dost see anything of the villain?" asked Harry, as with Pomarra close at his elbow, having a long sharp spear held in such a manner as to give all his force to it should it be required, he was looking cautiously about, with his gun ready to put to his shoulder upon the first occasion.

"Look in de bush, Massa Harry," whispered the young Indian, pointing to a cluft of underwood within a few paces of him. "See him big eye roll about like ball of fire."

The horses were every moment getting to be more restless, showing that one they liked not was in their neighborhood; and Harry Daring looking in the direction pointed out, and seeing something move, knew it was high time to be doing of something, so he stealthily crept a pace or two closer, that he might have all the better aim, and then bidding of his companion be ready, he raised his piece very quietly, kept his eye on the

barrel till it covered a spot between the two fiery balls that he could just see glaring at him out of the bush, pulled the trigger and fired. In the instant the report was heard, every bush in the neighborhood was in a stir; there was a rustle of wings, with screaming noises, from all the trees, and numberless figures that were scarcely distinguishable were observed stealing off as quickly as they could. At the same time an animal of a large size made a spring toward Harry Daring, as he was drawing of his hanger.

"This how Indian serve jaguar, Massa Harry," exclaimed Pomarra as, with a quick spring toward the enraged animal, he drove the spear into his heart with such a force that the beast tumbled backward, and died without a groan.

"Bravo! Snowball," cried Harry, as he stopped to examine the jaguar. "Me-thinks if the villain had once got hold of us, we should have fared but badly; and killing of such be infinite better sport than its killing of us. See! I hit him in the head, I thought 'twas scarce possible I could have missed him. But I must be after loading of my piece, in case of need."

"Ah! Massa Harry, wild beast very great plenty here," observed Pomarra, drawing of his spear from the dead jaguar, as his companion was loading his musket. "All round they come—creep, creep;—now you fire and killa him, and soon as you go bang, every fellow turn him tail and be off. What for him turn him tail? 'Cause him no like meddle with Massa Harry."

Harry Daring soon returned to his story; but he and his companion were not the only spectators of the scene just described, for at the report of the musket, the female in the hamaca started up, and stared at what was going forward with a countenance that did express wonder and alarm. Her face was uncovered, and though of a dark complexion, it seemed to be as comely as might be seen anywhere. The backs of her young defenders being toward her, they could see naught of her countenance, and she had full opportunity of noticing what they were about. When it was all over she lay down again, but she slept not any more that night. Not so the others, for when their turns came, they fell into as sweet and profound a slumber as ever they enjoyed.

They proceeded on their way, meeting with numberless adventures of a like hazardous nature, from which they were

rescued by the readiness and true valor of Harry Daring. The young Indian was also of great value to them, for he was a complete child of the woods, and when their victual run short, told them of what wild fruits they might eat, and what they should let alone. Once Harry was about to poison himself by eating of the coco de mono, or monkey's nut, which grew in those parts, had not the other stayed him; and once he was for sleeping under the manchinsel-tree, the which would have been his death, had he been allowed; for Pomarra told him it was of so strong a nature, that to slumber beneath its leaves is certain destruction, and the juice of it corrodeth the flesh like unto vitriol. He did gather for them the cassava root, which when eaten moderately makes excellent victual, whether roasted or boiled; and he pointed out a climbing plant called bejunco, with which having well rubbed his arms up to the elbows, he did freely take up sundry venomous snakes, whereof there seemed a great plenty thereabouts, and they harmed him none at all. Then had they to eat also as much of the flesh of many sorts of birds, deer, porks, and other animals they had a mind to, that Harry Daring shot, and then Pomarra, by rubbing of two dry sticks briskly, did kindle a fire, and roast after the fashion of his country, as he said. Their female companion also busying herself in getting of their meals, though she talked not, save to the young Indian, and that was only when he was at a distance from the other, and would show her face on no account. This Harry took no heed of, for he was one that troubled not his head about strange things, as long as he believed there was no treachery afoot.

They had exceeding difficulty in passing over a high mountain that lay in their path, for oftentimes they were obliged to dismount from their horses and lead them by the bridle, there was such dangerous footing; but none murmured, or were in the least fearful, and they continued to make progress. As they were descending upon the other side down a very precipitous part, which had at the bottom a black and foaming torrent, crossed by a natural bridge of rock, so narrow it seemed scarce possible to pass over it the horse of their female companion slipped as she was leading of it along, and Pomarra had just time to catch her by the waist and bid her let go the bridle, when the animal, after sliding down upon the narrow bridge, did plunge over the

edge of it, and was dashed from rock to rock, till he fell into the torrent beneath. All three looked over the precipice after him, and held their breath. It was a fearful sight to look upon, and few could have stood it unmoved. The female trembled; even the horses seemed smit with a sudden fear, for they stood stiff and still, as if they were of stone, and the young Indian appeared a little dismayed.

“By Gog and Magog!” exclaimed Harry Daring, breaking the silence which ensued. “What a fool was he to have gone that way, when had he but went as we wished him, he would have received no hurt.” From this it was evident the accident had affected *him* but little. At last, by dint of great coaxing and encouragement, Pomarra managed to get his horse along, and the other followed. The Indian woman went first, holding of Pomarra’s hand, who in a low voice seemed to be a speaking to her such comfort as he thought necessary, whilst with the other hand he held his horse’s bridle, and conducted him carefully along the dangerous pathway. This, at last, after a monstrous circuitous fashion, led them to the bottom, where the first sight that did present itself to them was the body of an Indian hunter lying close upon that of a horse both dead, and evidently, from the appearance of them, had been dashed from the rocks above. There was what appeared to be a coil of hide rope, having two or three balls affixed to it, hanging at the saddle-bow, whereof when the young Indian saw he seized upon with an exclamation of delight, and then took off the bridle from the dead horse, which he threw over his arm. Pomarra then mounted his female companion before him, and they rode together through a sort of pass having high mountains on each side.

They emerged from this into an open plain, or at least were about to do so, when they stopped of a sudden, for there was observed a scene the like of which hath not been often met with. Three or four hundred wild horses were before them; some grazing quietly, some frisking about, others chasing of and biting at each other in sport, all of the most beautiful shapes eye ever beheld, and of different colors. Pomarra whispered to his companion to dismount, which she did on the instant, and asked Harry Daring to remain where he was till he called him, and notice what he did, which the other promised to do, then taking nothing

with him but the coil of rope already described, he put his steed into a gallop and darted into the plain. As he approached, the wild horses left off what they were about, and huddled themselves together in a body with their heads turned toward him; but when he came within a few paces of them they wheeled round quick as lightning, and every one started off at so great a pace that the catching of any seemed quite out of the question. The ground trembled beneath their hoofs, and the sound they produced as they rushed along was like unto thunder. The young Indian was seen for a few minutes galloping after them at the top of his speed, with the halter of hide whirling round and round above his head. Suddenly he threw the end of the rope from him, and turned his horse round quick. A beautiful jet black colt at that moment rolled over and over on the ground, held fast by the rope which had been thrown over him, and was twisted round his body.

Pomarra then beckoned to Harry Daring to come on, who lost no time in riding up to the spot, having mounted the Indian woman before him as soon as his companion had entered the plain, and he could just notice the wild horses disappearing at the verge of the horizon, so rapid had been their pace. Both rode up to the horse they had captured, that lay as if stunned by the fall he had received. In this state the young Indian placed the bridle on his head, and then untwined the cord from about his limbs. Presently he rose from the ground, and as he did so Pomarra leapt on his back. No sooner was the horse conscious of the burthen then he exhibited the most violent impatience of it that ever was seen. He plunged—he reared—he kicked, and tried to turn round and bite his rider; then he would start off rapidly and stop of a sudden, all the while with mane and tail erect, and eyes terribly bright, snorting, and shaking, and pawing of the ground with a wonderful fierceness; yet the young Indian sat as firm on his back as if he grew there. Certes, it was a most delicate sight to see the two: the graceful animal showing the perfect symmetry of his shape in every movement, and the elegant figure of his rider displayed to marvellous advantage in the simple tunic worn by him, as his light limbs bent this way and that, according to the motion of the horse. Presently the latter started off with such extreme quickness that the eye could scarce follow him. His feet

seemed not to touch the ground, and ere many minutes had elapsed he had gone clean out of sight.

"By Gog and Magog! the horse hath run away with him!" exclaimed Harry Daring, who had neither been a silent nor an unadmiring spectator of the scene. "But if it please you, mistress, to keep your seat, I will mount the other horse, and we will be after them." The Indian woman said not a word to this; but as if she had some notion of what was meant, took the reins in her hand. "Hang me! if I have not forgot she could have no speech of me," continued he, and then added in some vexation, "A murrain on it! what a pestilent shame it be everybody can not speak honest English!" They then rode on together in silence for a brief space. At last they saw the wild horse coming toward them at a great distance with Pomarra on his back; but he returned not so fast as he went. As they rode nigher they could not but notice that the glossy coat of the animal was covered all over with a white foam that did drop from his sides most plentifully, and his eyes looked as though he were monstrously frightened. His great spirit had been conquered. He now paced along in entire obedience to the will of his rider.

After this they were riding along very quietly, only in some doubt as to whether they were in the right road, for they had lost all trace of those of whom they had been in pursuit for so many days, when Pomarra's quick eye noticed a single horseman making toward them. He hastily caught hold of his spear, which the Indian woman had been carrying for him.

"Now, Massa Harry, you see how me fight in my country," said he as he rode off very gallantly in the direction of the approaching horseman. Harry Daring, as soon as he heard the word fight, was for joining in it; but seeing that there was only one enemy, if enemy he were, he contented himself with quietly riding by the side of his companion, and watching the combatants. It was seen that the stranger was a young Indian, dressed very splendidly, as if he were of some account, and he carried with him no other weapon than a long spear like unto that of Pomarra. The two rode on as fast as they might with their weapons poised a little above the head, as if about to throw them, shouting such violent exclamations as were quite a wonder to hear. All at once, when within a few paces of each

other, they reined in their horses with looks of wonder and surprise; each uttered a cry of exultation; each cast his spear into the ground; each rode alongside of the other; and in the next moment they were grasping of each other in a close and loving embrace, and uttering all sorts of affectionate cries.

"By Gog and Magog! that be the very strangest way of fighting I ever saw!" exclaimed Harry Daring. "Dost not think so, mistress? Hang me!" he added, when he found he received no answer. "I be always forgetting."

The two expected combatants, having taken hold of their spears again, were now riding slowly toward Harry and his companion. Pomarra talking as fast as he could, and seeming in a monstrous delight, and the other listening with exceeding earnestness. As they came nigher, Harry noticed the wonderful store of gold ornaments the stranger had about his person, and the trappings of his horse. He was of a very comely countenance, and of a well-disposed body, and seemed to be nigh upon twenty years of age.

"Dis my brudder, Massa Harry!" cried Pomarra, as he came up to Harry Daring. "I never tella you who I was. What for I no tella you? 'Cause you people despisa poor Indian boy. What for you despisa poor Indian boy! 'Cause him skin be dark: heart same color for all dat. Me lika you very much, Massa Harry. 'Cause you beat big fellar when him kicka me and pincha me: never forget dat. Me now in my own country. Me poor Indian boy no longer. Me very good friend to you. My fader him king of Guiana; my brudder tella me he come dis way with great company." Sure enough a multitude of horsemen were now observed in the distance making toward them.

"Bravo, Snowball!" exclaimed Harry Daring in great delight with what he had heard. "So thou art a prince, eh? I' faith! that be droll enough too. But I don't like thee a bit the worse for't; and even now, if I saw any using of thee despisingly I would cudgel them well, I promise thee."

It was not more than half an hour after this that Pomarra had presented Harry Daring to his father, in the midst of a splendid retinue of caciques and other of his nobles who had come out a hunting; and in consequence of what the young prince said, Harry was made much of by all. He did also, in his own

language, speak favorably of their female companion, whom the king regarded with singular curiousness, and ordered to be well cared for

CHAPTER XXVII.

Yet unspoiled
Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons
Call El Dorado. MILTON.

Guiana, whose rich feet are mines of gold,
Whose forehead knocks against the roof of stars,
Stands on her tiptoes at fair England looking,
Kissing her hand, bowing her mighty breast,
And every sign of all submission making."
CHAPMAN.

While with a jovous smile she turns away
The face, that map, that deep impression bears
Of hard misfortune carved in with tears.
SHAKSPEARE.

MASTER FRANCIS was hurried away from the council chamber into a close prison, where he was left to solitariness, and his own thoughts. For some time he could do nothing but reflect upon the monstrousness with which Padre Bartolomé had behaved to him. He could scarce believe in such thorough villany. It seemed to him so utterly unnatural that one man should do such a thing to another who never did him an injury. Whilst he was in this mood there came to him the chief priest, who had acted as the interpreter before the king, and he intimated that he was sent to prepare the prisoner for his death. Now the priest was a famous punchy little old fellow, with a head like unto a ball of black worsted—nose had he of such a smallness that the least that be said of it must the best describe it; but what he lacked in nose he made up in mouth, the lips whereof looked as though they were two masses of black pudding squeezed one upon the other. He was dressed in a white tunic, that made the very blackness of his skin all the more apparent, and he looked upon Master Francis with a sort of dignified pitifulness, which at any other time the other could not but have laughed at.

"Child, thou art to die!" said he, in Spanish. "But our illustrious monarch, out of the absolute bountifulness of his nature, hath adjudged thee a death that all might envy. Thou wilt have the honor of being made a sacrifice of to the great god Singarydunkyhunkyhoonka."

Master Francis had so little opinion of the honor intended him, and such small respect for the powerful deity just

named, as most cordially to wish Singarydunkyhunkyhoonka at a place which shall be nameless.

"Child, thou art to die!" repeated the old fellow in a like pathetic tone and manner. "But our most pious monarch, out of the exceeding religiousness of his disposition, doth wish thee, before the devouring flame consumeth thy body to a cinder, to give up the god of the Christians, who, it be out of all manner of doubt hath let thee into this misadventure, and acknowledge the omnipotence of Singarydunkyhunkyhoonka, who, though he hath but one eye, seeth all our wants with it, and though he hath four-and-twenty pairs of hands, hath all of them full of good things he be continually a giving to they who worship him."

"It is my intention to die in the religion in the which I was educated," replied Master Francis.

"Oh, blind of heart!" exclaimed the priest, looking all sorts of horror and consternation. "Oh, stubborn and stiff-necked! Prepare for the fire that shall consume thee. Thou art a base wretch. Thou art unworthy to die so honorable a death. I would have thee hanged like a dog." At the saying of this away started the chief priest, pursing up his pudding lips with a look of infinite forbiddingness.

Master Francis was again left alone, and remained so for some few hours. His reflections, it may well be believed, were not of the most pleasing character. To be burnt alive was a prospect that few could contemplate without dread, but to his susceptible mind it appeared with the very terriblest features that could be imagined. Despite of his great fearfulness, his thought were soon a wandering to other subjects. He thought how great a consolation it would be at such a time could he think commendably of Joanna. So difficult is it for a sensitive mind that hath for any considerable period concentrated its thoughts upon one object with the deepest and sincerest affectionateness to regard it despidingly when that object has proved itself to be of a despicable nature. An ingenious disposition, such as was Master Francis, hath ever such confidence in the appearance of truth, that however shocked he may be at first when he findeth out the falsehood, there ever remaineth some little doubt that things be so bad as they seem, or some strong inclination that they should be of a better sort. He could not help but marvel that she had shown such

signs of excellence as had made him worship her as one of so blessed a condition her peer was not to be met with in the whole world; but such is it ever. Many a one mistaketh gilding for gold—and doth wonder famously when he findeth that all be mere brass, but the show of something sterling that was put on it.

The result of his reflections was, as he had already forgiven her the wrong she had done him, he felt he could not die in any comfort of heart if he continued to entertain against her such feelings as he had so much experience of: and then did he commence remembering of the many wonderful kindnesses she had done him, till all thought of her badness went straightway out of his mind. In this mood he remained for the whole of the day. Food was brought him of a mean sort, but he cared not for it. He paced the narrow chamber in which he was confined, or sat himself down on a bench that was fixed there, passing of his time, as I have said, with occasional thinking of such dear friends as was evident he should never see again. So went the day and the next something after the same sort. He could not help upon an occasion marvelling at the strangeness of what was to come to pass—to wit, that instead of his entering of the right famous El Dorado, in which he now was, as one of its conquerors, he should be executed in it as a criminal.

On the third day the old priest paid him another visit, in the which he stated that the Padre Bartolomé, no watch having been put upon him, had made his escape, and nothing was known of where he had taken himself: whereof the consequence was, Master Francis was ordered to prepare himself for immediate death, it being feared that he might give them the slip also. The old fellow again essayed to make his prisoner a convert unto the faith of Singarydunkyhunkyhoonka, the beneficent deity with one eye and four-and-twenty pairs of hands, but he got no more success of it than at first, and this did put him in a more monstrous passion than ever. Presently there came certain other Indians, who appeared to be officers of justice, and they gave him to understand he was to go with them. With them he accordingly went. Upon passing out of his prison into the open air, he found himself in the midst of a vast multitude, who received him with great outeries, yet were there many amongst them who pitied him the death he was to die because of

his youth and comeliness. Many a kind word was said of him as he passed along, though he knew it not. All that he knew was that he was in the midst of some vast procession passing along the thoroughfares of a great city. He could hear a monstrous clanging of instruments, and the wild discordant singing of a multitude of priests who were around him; long files of soldiers, armed with prodigious spears, encompassed him on either side, and at his elbow was the old priest opening and shutting of his ugly mouth with wonderful rapidity in praise of his omnipotent deity. Nevertheless, Master Francis heeded him not at all—and soon ceased to pay any great attention to what was going on around. He walked along with an erect carriage, and a heart disturbed but little at the contemplation of what he was to endure, for his mind was fixed upon endeavoring so to bear himself in so dreadful a strait as might command the commendation of his true friends, Sir Walter Raleigh, Master Shakspeare, and Harry Daring, were they present. On he went, with nothing that could distinguish him from what he was at other times, save a countenance somewhat more pallid than usual. The crowd increased as he proceeded, and every part of the neighboring houses and temples was crowded with spectators, anxious to have sight of what they believed to be the most cruel and crafty of all the Spaniards. Many came with revengeful feelings, who felt quite pitifully inclined toward him when they noticed his mild and melancholy aspect; but others, of a worse sort, in their language taunted him all the way he went. At last he arrived at an open space in the city, where there was a magnificent statue in gold of a gigantic size, humanly shaped, saying that it had but one eye, whilst of hands it had four-and-twenty pairs, each holding some desirable thing, as if for its worshipper. Before it was ever so much wood piled up, at the sight of which Master Francis did give a shudder, but as quickly as he might he shook off that fearfulness, and praying inwardly with fervor, he still advanced. A great crash of the instruments was made when the procession came in sight of the idol, and the shouting of the people at the same instant was so tremendous, that scarce ever was the like heard. Some did kneel down, and some threw themselves prostrate; and the priests bawled out their discordant chorus at the very top of their voices. Platforms had

been erected round about the place, on which vast companies had congregated themselves, to have a view of the execution of so notable a criminal, and all that was the greatest in so grand a city as Manoa had been drawn together about that spot.

When Master Francis came close upon the wood which was to burn him, he had to ascend a flight of steps to bring himself to the top of the pile, and as soon as he there appeared, there was presently a vast cry of the multitude. Two men ascended with him, and bound him; and then also came the old priest, mumbling away, as fast as he could, the praises of the deity he worshipped, in expectation of making a proselyte of the youth; but the latter paid him no sort of attention; and such behavior did wondrously enrage the old idolater, who thundered all manner of imprecations upon him for his exceeding stubbornness. Master Francis took no heed of this, for he was so intent upon his own devotions that he saw nothing, and heard nothing—he remembered not where he was—he knew not wherefore he was in that place. The priest descended from the pyre, and took a torch into his hand. Upon this, all the priests began a singing louder than ever; and the multitude fell down upon their knees before the great idol, and the instruments struck up a clang that would have set anybody's teeth on edge. The chief priest then put fire to the wood, which began to blaze presently; but as he was a doing it, there was a monstrous bustling behind him. The multitude were stirred in one particular part, and some voices kept crying out very lustily. All strained their eyes to see; but few could make out what it all meant.

“Hullo, old pudding chaps, get out of this!” exclaimed Harry Daring, suddenly forcing his way to the pyre in a moustrous eagerness, and giving the priest such a shove that it sent him a staggering along till he fell upon his back, distending of his ugly mouth at so rude a salutation, and staring till his eyes seemed ready to start out of his head. At the sight of such an affront offered to their chief priest, the whole multitude seemed moved to a marvellous indignation, and the soldiers were rushing forward to take the offender prisoner. He spying where Master Francis was, cried out, “By Gog and Magog, he must be nigh burning to death!” then began kicking aside the burning wood, and clambering up the steps. In a minute, drawing of his hanger, he had

cut the cords that bound his friend, and, with one arm supporting him by holding of him tightly round the waist, with the other he menaced, with his hanger, the soldiers, priests, and others of the Indians, who were hastening toward the spot, determined that their beloved idol should not be cheated of his sacrifice.

“Come on, ye worsted knaves, and I'll stick ye like so many black beetles on a skewer!” exclaimed Harry, as despite of the numbers against him, he was seeking to force a passage from the blazing pyre. It seemed as if he was like to fare badly; for he was so surrounded by enemies that it did not appear as if he could cut his way through them; and the fire was flaming around him so famously that it looked as if he would be burnt to a cinder ere he should have time to get Master Francis away. In the midst of it, however, there was suddenly a shouting of the people greater than before; and presently the king of Guiana, accompanied by his two sons, and a splendid retinue of caciques, all on horseback, and attended by a numerous guard of soldiers, made their appearance. Harry Daring and the royal party had set out from the palace at the same time, but his impatience to rescue his friend was so great he soon outstripped them, and pressed through the crowd, and conducted himself as hath been described.

It be scarce necessary to add that the omnipotent Singarydunkyhunkeyhoonka, with one eye and four-and-twenty pairs of hands, was deprived of his destined victim; whereof, at first, the Indians showed wonderful discontent, especially those of the more religious sort. But it having been made known to them that this cruel Spaniard who had done their people so much wrong, was no Spaniard at all, but one of a nation who was a determined enemy to the whole Spanish race;—that amongst them the youngest son of the king, who had disappeared unaccountably the year before, had been residing, they having taken him away, and now restored him to his family, their disappointment was turned into gratification; and on their return with the king's party to the palace, they greeted Master Francis and Harry Daring with such piercing cries of commendation, as they could hardly have given had they been the very chieftest and most prized of their countrymen. The former rode between his friend and the young prince Pomarra, and Harry, as he went along, described to the other how he and “Snowball”—

for he would call him by no other name—got away from Sir Walter Raleigh and the companies, and under the guidance of an Indian woman who had obtained knowledge of the direction in which Master Francis had been carried off, started in pursuit of him; and how Snowball met with his brother in one he was about to give battle to; and how the latter turned out to be no other than a son of the very king who had got Master Francis close prisoner; and how, finding the execution about to take place, Snowball did disabuse his father's mind of the monstrous lies which that wretched caitiff Padre Bartolomé had told; and how, by telling the king that Master Francis was of a great nation who were enemies unto the Spaniards, and had come on purpose, with others, to drive the Spaniards out of the Indian territory, he immediately gave orders to stop the sacrifice, and did himself proceed to the place, with all his principal nobles, on purpose to see his commands properly executed.

"But what hath become of your female companion?" inquired Master Francis. "Is she one of this goodly company?"

"Snowball knoweth more about her than I do," replied Harry; "for she not being able to speak honest English, I could have no speech with her, which I took in rather hard case, I promise you, for seeing of the interest she showed in you, I was ever a wanting to discourse to her of your excellent parts, that she might affect you as much as I did; but Snowball, as it seemed to me, being of her tongue, she talked only with him, and he, therefore, be the properest person to tell you all about her." Here Harry Daring turned to the young prince and said, "Tell Master Francis what you know of that female Snowball who travelled with us to this place."

"I tella you but little," said Prince Pomarra. "What for I tella you but little? 'Cause what she tella me, she bid me no say again. She very much love you, Massa Francis."

"Love me!" exclaimed the other, with unaffected astonishment. "How can that be possible? I have not had speech of any of the Indian women, and have scarce been seen of one."

"She very much love you for all dat," replied the young prince. "She travel all de way—sometimes get little victual—sometimes get little sleep. Will beast come—she no care. What for she no care? 'Cause she love you very much."

"By God and Magog, if I didn't think she did affect you in some measure," cried Harry Daring; "for it stands to reason no pretty wench would venture herself so far in strange company, and amid perils few women would like to even look on, in search of the best man that ever wore a head, had she not a monstrous liking for him. But it showeth her good sense marvellously, to cast her eye where she did; for she knoweth right well she might look amongst the whole nation of Snowballs in despair of finding any one like unto Master Francis."

"Well, let it be as it may, I can not help but be grateful," observed Master Francis. "Where is she? Where shall I see her?"

"She no see you," replied the prince; "she come all dis way to save you; but now you safe, she love you no more, and no see you at all."

"Hang me if that be not the strangest way of loving I ever heard of," exclaimed Harry Daring. "What! not see him? Not see Master Francis after she hath suffered so much to come but anigh him? She meaneth nothing of the sort, I'll be bound for't."

"At least it be exceeding strange of her," remarked Master Francis. "I know not what to make on't; but I should like infinitely to see her, to say how much I feel myself beholden to her for the good offices she hath done me."

"You no see her for all dat," replied the young prince. At this Master Francis marvelled greatly; but as they now had arrived at the palace, all thought of the subject was for a time put out of his head. A short time after he had alighted, he and Harry Daring had audience of the king, who sat surrounded by the chiefest of his nobles, and having his two sons on each side of him, all dressed with extraordinary magnificence. Pomarra acted as interpreter. The business began by the king expressing of his regret that any of so great a nation as the English, of whom he had heard from his son such accounts as made him anxious to be in friendly relation with them, should have received any treatment they liked not of any of his subjects; but for what Master Francis had suffered, none were to blame but the Jesuit by whose testimony the former had been condemned, as the very cruelest of all the Spaniards, of whom his people throughout Guiana had endured such torture and tyranny as was never before heard of in those parts. He begged that, as it was a mistake, Master

Francis would treat if as such, and allow him, in such way as he thought fit, to make him amends.

Then Master Francis, though he was a little out of countenance at first, at speaking before so many, spoke up famously, declaring the great design of Sir Walter Raleigh in favor of the Indians to abolish the oppressions of the Spaniards over them, and that he had come out of his own country with a fine expedition of many ships and a great force of men, with the sanction of his illustrious sovereign, to do what services he could to the natives of Guiana, and to all the Indians on that part of the continent; that he had already driven the Spaniards out of Trinidad, and done good service to the Indians there; and if he had not returned, by this time was venturing in his boats along the Orinoco, seeking for that right famous city, called of the Spaniards *El Dorado*. Master Francis then described how he had been entrapped by Padre Bartolomé and his companions, and carried off; and how the Indians had set upon the Spaniards and killed them all save the Jesuit, and what had since taken place. With regard to himself, he requested only that such conveniences might be allowed him, as would enable him to rejoin Sir Walter Raleigh as speedily as was possible; but of other sort of favor wanted he none.

At this the whole court was moved to a sudden admiration, as might be noticed by their looks, and one of the king's chiefest counsellors said, that intelligence had been received that many boats full of white men were now returning toward the sea, after having visited divers towns and villages, and trafficked with the natives, and behaved unto them with exceeding friendliness. After him the king spoke again, and said that an escort should be got ready without delay, for the purpose of attending the two young Englishmen, with a proper show of respect, to such place as they were like to meet Sir Walter Raleigh; but that he could in no way allow them to be quit of him without exhibiting some mark of his esteem for their country, and admiration of themselves. He then turned to Harry Daring, and expressed himself with wonderful commendation of his conduct toward his son, whereof he had been made acquainted by Pomarra; and said, that if he would stay in Guiana, and enter into his service, he would raise him to rank with the highest of the caciques, and when he came to be a man,

give him his own daughter in marriage.

"What! leave my true friend, Master Francis!" exclaimed Harry, as soon as what had been said had been interpreted to him. "Nay, that will I never do. It be the part of the most villanous knave that lives, to forsake his friend for his own profit; and I be none such, I promise you. By Gog and Magog, I should be a right scurvy fellow, if, after venturing myself so far into foreign parts for the love of him, merely because that I could better my fortune by staying here, I should leave him to find his way back as he best might."

"Think not of me, Harry: I shall be well cared for, depend on't," observed Master Francis, kindly to him. "If that your inclination lead you to stay here, I doubt not at all you will quickly arrive at that greatness your courageous humor deserveth. I should be loath to stand in the way of your advancement at so promising a time. Consider of what the king hath told you, and do what is most pleasing to you."

"I will never consider of it," cried Harry determinedly, "if the considering of it lead to the parting of me from you. What dost think I could marry one of these, and mayhap in time to come have ever so many little Snowballs round about me, and I get not a sight of you the whilst? I say again, if it be to my profit ever so, I will have none of it. Should it please you to stay here, I doubt not of your arriving at such eminence as you be most fit for; and there be nothing I should like so much as being under your command. It be not the part of a faithful esquire to think of being a greater man than the knight he serveth. I would as lief cut off my hand as think of such a thing. Remain here, I pray you, if you would have me stay in these outlandish parts."

"That can not be, Harry," replied Master Francis. "My duty to Sir Walter Raleigh requireth me to hasten to him with all despatch."

"And my duty to you requireth I should be wherever you are," said Harry Daring; then addressing himself unto the king who, with all his court, were marvelling at what the two were talking of, he added, "an it please your mightiness, I can in no way be brought to live in these parts, though I think it be exceeding kind of you to make me so fair an offer; but Snowball here will tell you that Master Francis is my true friend, than whom

there liveth not on this earth one of a better nature, and I should be prouder in being his humble follower, whether he meet with good or ill hap in the world, than I should feel in being king of all this goodly country. If it please you, my lord, what I have done in the way of friendship to Snowball here, whilst we were in the Lion's Whelp, I would have done to any other whom I saw despisingly used, and I never cared to be thanked for it; but if that you must needs be generous, though I would have naught for myself, I should be right glad to see you shower your gifts upon my true friend, Master Francis, who be one of so noble a sort, nothing can be too good for him you can enrich him with."

"Harry, Harry, you must not say such fine things of me!" exclaimed the other.

"By Gog and Magog, if there be any here that will gainsay it, I would as lief give them a cut over the pate as look at them," replied Harry with a sincere earnestness. This being interpreted to the king and his court, they did marvel exceedingly at the friendliness of the one for the other, and the king spoke much in praise of them both, and not being able to prevail on either to stay, he dismissed them with great store of presents sufficient to enrich them for life.

They stayed only a day or two whilst preparations were made for their departure, the time whereof they passed in seeing whatever was most notable in El Dorado, which they found to exceed all that had been said of it in splendor and costliness. Master Francis essayed many times to have speech with the Indian woman, who had ventured herself so far for his rescue; for not only was he curious to see her, but could not help being grateful to her for doing him such great kindness. Yet though he oft inquired where she might be met with, he never could get sight of her, which put him into a strange sort of wondering; he knew not what it could mean. At last they started with a famous cavalcade, all having horses of the choicest breed, curiously caparisoned, save those of meaner sort who formed the guard, the king himself being of the company some portion of the way, and then parting with the two young Englishmen with such exceeding courteousness that a looker-on might have supposed they were persons of quality and power above all men, instead of being, as they were, of no quality or influence whatsoever.

Prince Pomarra had the command of

the escort after the king had departed; and a famous sight it was to see that goodly company ascending and descending the mountains, or forcing their way through the forests, and galloping along the valleys to the number of several hundreds, each with a long spear in his hand, a bow slung across his shoulder, and a quiver of arrows at his back, and the prince at their head between Master Francis and Harry Daring, on the very wild horse he had caught in the plain; now so covered over with costly trappings and ornaments of gold, and so quietly behaving of himself, as scarce to be recognised for what he was; nor seemed the rider to bear any likeness unto the despised Indian boy that was aboard of the Lion's Whelp; for he was robed as became his station, very gorgeous with gold and jewels, and a dainty plume of feathers of the very brightest colors waved upon his head. His spear he held in his hand like unto the others, and like unto them did he carry his bow and his arrows. A handsomer figure could scarce be seen of an Indian youth; and one who bore himself more gallantly it would be the very difficultest thing possible to meet with anywhere.

Of what befell these as they journeyed it might seem tedious to relate, seeing that nothing very striking occurred, save only in one thing. Master Francis, once on a time, not many days after they had set out, noticed to his exceeding surprise, that a female was of their company. She was not dressed at all like unto the Indian woman who had led Harry Daring and the young prince to his rescue; for the habiliments of this female were of the richest materials, as if she were of the highest rank amongst them, whilst the other was attired as one of the very humblest sort. Her face was hid in a muffler as had been the other's; and in the hasty glance he had of it, for he came on her suddenly as she was riding along talking to Pomarra, he could only notice her eyes, which she had left uncovered, but turned from him the instant he appeared. On his coming up both seemed wondrous confused; and he thinking that it was a love affair betwixt them, which they wished should be secret, he put some trifling question to the young prince, and galloped off to the head of the escort, fancying that he should make but indifferent company if he remained.

More than once as they proceeded on their journey, upon a sudden turning of his gaze in that direction, he observed

her eyes fixed upon him with singular earnestness, which seemed strange, seeing that he had never spoke and scarce looked at her; but believing from seeing of Prince Pomarra frequently at her side, and noting that she talked to no other, that his first idea of them was true, he thought only she regarded him with such curiousness as might be natural to one of her nation at the sight of a white man, and took no further heed of her looks. It so happened that Harry Daring saw her, and would have it at first it was the same he had travelled with; but finding that she noticed him not at all, and observing how differently she was dressed, he came to the opinion that it was another, and said as much to Master Francis when they spoke on the subject. They were now nigh unto the end of their journey, for as they passed along they had speech with sundry Indians, from whom they got intelligence that the white men were proceeding down to the sea, and were but a few miles in advance of them; and this put Harry Daring and Master Francis in high spirits. They talked to one another of how delighted they should be to see again Sir Walter and the rest.

"Methinks he will be famously wrath with me for giving him the slip," observed Harry.

"That he can never be when he knoweth, as he shall, all that thou hast done to bring me back to him," replied Master Francis.

"Let it be as it may I care not so that I am with thee," added the other. "But art not glad we be returning to England?"

"The idea of it pleaseth me I must own," answered his companion.

"What exquisite fine fun I shall have when I get there!" said Harry Daring. "Methinks old Lather would be puzzled to know me I be so altered. I wonder whether he goeth on with his Latin as of old? Doubtless he would be in a thundering humor at the sight of me, I did play him so famous a trick before I left. Wouldn't big Jack o' the Turnstile and the rest of them marvel could they see me now, riding on a fine horse, and decked out in such famous trim as the king gave unto us! When I get me to Eastcheap I shall not fail to call on neighbor Sarsnet, to inquire of him and of old Dame Margery what hath become of that slippery jade Joanna."

"For what object?" inquired Master Francis.

"I should like monstrously to know the rights on't," replied the other. "I

told thee she was no good long before she proved herself such, for she could not be otherwise, using thee as she did. But let her go hang!—thou wilt find her betters anywhere. For mine own part, I have no patience with a wench who showeth such extreme cunning over such thorough baseness."

"It be a thousand pities she hath behaved herself so ill," observed his companion, with great seriousness of manner. "I can love her no more; but I have heartily forgiven her the wrong she hath done me, and sincerely hope that she may be as happy as her heart can desire."

Master Francis had scarce said these words when he turned round suddenly upon hearing of two or three hysterical sounds at his elbow. They came from the Indian woman, who he knew had for some time been riding at his side. She seemed about to fall from her horse, and would have done so had he not leaned over and caught her in his arms. The horses were stopped on the instant, and that of Master Francis being brought as close as was possible unto hers, he was enabled to hold her in a more convenient position, having her head resting upon his shoulder. He sent some of the guard forward to the young prince, who was far in advance of them, to give him notice of what had taken place; but believing her to be in a swoon as she seemed, and that the best thing that could be done for her was to let her have as much air as could be got, he presently fell to undoing of her muffler, which was tied about her face. An exclamation of surprise and wonder burst from the lips of Master Francis and Harry Daring at one and the same moment. It was the face of no Indian woman that they gazed upon. It was the mercer's daughter of Eastcheap!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Each scene of many colored life he drew,
Exhausted worlds and then imagined new.

JOHNSON.

—Whom she lifted up into a throne
Of high renown.

SACKVILLE.

It is the mind that maketh good or ill,
That makes a wretch, or happy, rich, or poor,
For some that have abundance at their will
Have not enough but want in greatest store,
Another that hath little asks for more,
But in that little is both rich and wise.

SPENSER.

Divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools believe,
But musical as is Apollo's lute.

SHAKSPEARE.

Now must I make such amends to the courteous reader for keeping him away so long from the chiefest person in this my story as may hold him in good humor until he cometh to the end of the narration, for doubtless some may think Master Shakspeare hath not been well used of me, inasmuch as so much less hath lately been said of him than of others, but it be beyond all manner of contradiction that aught of great goodness should be used sparingly, else shall it be straight lessened in value. Things that lack rareness be seldom esteemed by any man; and Master Shakspeare being possessed of excellence of so rare a sort, methinks my thrusting of him into these pages less oft than those of less note shall make him all the more liked of such who know how to prize such extreme worthiness. Albeit, though of this conceit, yet here must I say this much—to wit, Master Shakspeare did bring out his play called "The Merry Wives of Windsor," that was so much approved of by Queen Elizabeth and all her court upon its reading, at which time her majesty with a fine company of courtiers did honor the playhouse with her presence, and seemed to relish the acting of it marvellously and it met with wonderful success, as its singular merit well deserved. To mark the sense the queen's majesty had of him, his vast genius, and great honesty of heart, the next day she sent him a purse of money with a commendable message. After this he sat to the writing of other plays, whereof many were relished of the town in a like manner, and these, together with what he derived from his playing, brought him in such gains, as gave him no fear of the future, and enabled him to send loving tokens to his relations very frequently, and to invite his brother Edmund from Stratford to become a player with him in London.

His reputation continuing so to increase, he was much sought after by many noblemen and persons of worship, who took huge delight in his society for the delicacy of his wit and the honorableness of his behavior. He was held in such request of them, that no name was so oft or famously spoken of; and amongst the gay gallants of the time, not to have been in company with Master Shakspeare argued a want of distinction that was considered of all an infinite disparagement.

Of those who esteemed him most was there none so true a friend as my Lord of Southampton, for he seemed not only never to tire in doing him good service, but the more he did for him in the way of friendliness, the more appeared he inclined to do. Indeed, he was such a patron as poet hath been seldom blessed with, but this also may be said, he met with such a poet as patron never had. About this time Master Shakspeare took also to the writing of poems, whereof one was of the subject of Venus and Adonis, and the other the Rape of Lucrece, and both were very movingly writ, and full of right delicate fancies. They were dedicated by him unto his excellent good friend and patron, in token of what respect he held him in, and in grateful remembrance of my lord's manifold good offices.

It so fell out that Master Shakspeare, though he had some share in the playhouse at the Blackfriars before this, as well as that of the Globe at the Bankside, had been exceeding anxious to have greater share in them; yet lacked he the means to do it with, for it required no small sum. He had saved up but little, and could scarce expect, saved he ever so, to get for some years to come as much as he needed. This told he to none, for he was not of a nature to solicit a favor, though few writers of his time stood much upon ceremony in that respect. His friend Master Burbage knew of it only, and it was like enough he should have more knowledge of his affairs than any other, because of their being such constant associates, sharers of the same property, and fellow-players; and from its being equally the desire of one as of the other that Master Shakspeare should have a greater interest in the playhouse than what he had. For such purpose the latter was eager to increase his gains as fast as he might that he should the sooner realize his wish, therefore brought he out as many plays as he could, together with the poems that have already been mentioned.

About this time Master Shakspeare was in a large room in the playhouse at the Blackfriars, that served as a wardrobe. It had shelves and presses in it as many as it could hold, and pins against the wainscot, on which were placed a wonderful variety of different dresses, such as might be worn of the players in their different plays. There were the robes of the Ottomite and the Venetian, the swarthy Moor and the gay Italian, the

ancient Greek and Roman, and others of modern date, as well foreign as English, together with divers suits of armor, weapons of sundry sorts, hats, caps, cloaks, doublets, jerkins, and boots, seemingly out of all number. The room was so crowded with such motley gear that there was scarce space for one to sit; yet had Master Shakspeare found himself a seat, he being in the habit of using this chamber as a dressing-room; and there sat he in a deep arm-chair, resting of himself, as if after some labor he had undergone, or considering of some matter he was intent upon. He was dressed in what appeared to be a complete suit of armor, having his vizor up, and what could be seen of his face looked exceedingly pale and ghostlike, but doubtless that was from some white stuff he had put on to make it so. He was leaning back in his seat, with his legs stretched out before him, resting of his elbow upon an old table, upon which there was seen a rapier and a hat, some papers, with pen and ink, a silver goblet with a flask of wine at the side of it, and two or three books. There was a log blazing on the fire-dogs nearly opposite to him, which cast a cheerful light over the room.

Whilst he was sitting as he was, there was ever and anon heard a voice shouting out famously, which beyond all manner of doubt could belong to none other than Gib the call-boy; and at other times there was heard a noise like unto a great clapping of hands. Once the latter sounds were of so great a loudness, it roused Master Shakspeare from his thoughtfulness, and he jumped up of a sudden with a smile upon his face, that showed he found some satisfaction in them. Then he took off his helmet, and such portion of his armor as encased the upper part of his body and arms; and going to an ewer and basin that stood in a corner, fell to washing of his face, humming of a merry tune all the while, which was only interrupted by the splashing of his mouth with the water. As he was finishing of his lavation he broke out into the following pleasant song:—

“Go, happy youth, and loudly swear
That with thy Love none can compare;
And vow to own her angel hand,
Will make thee proudest of the land.
Thou hast her hand. ‘Though that be true,
I asked not for a cudgel too;
And though my own my angel be,
She now doth play the devil with me.’

‘Alack! Alack! and well-a-day!’
I heard a hapless husband say,
‘Bachelors all be not too bold,
’Tis better go hang than marry a scold.’

“Go, happy youth, and swear once more,
Thy Love all Loves be far before.
‘Troth I another wife have got,
Who never rateth me one jot.’
A month passed by—the honey-moon—
The dotting husband changed his tune;
‘O hapless wight! my wife,’ cried he,
‘Loves others quite as well as me!’

‘Alack! Alack! and well-a-day!’
I heard a hapless husband say,
‘Bachelors all be not betrayed,
’Tis better go hang than marry a jade.’

“Go, happy youth, and swear at last
That all thy travail now is passed.
‘I’faith ’tis true.’ My wooing thrives—
I’ve found the very best of wives.’
Another month went by—again
I heard the horn mad fool complain.
She doth not scold—she doth not roam—
But drinketh me out of house and home.’

‘Alack! Alack! and well-a-day!’
I heard a happy widower say;—
‘Bachelors all—seek ye no thrall,
’Tis better go hang than marry at all.’”

This sung he with such a happy carelessness, it was plain he had not much to fret him; but scarce had he finished it when he heard some one whom he knew on the instant, coming toward the door, whistling of the tune of “Green Sleeves.” Not being in a state to be seen of any, for that he was but half-dressed, he presently hied to the door and bolted it inside.

“Ope the door, Will!” cried Master Burbage from without, knocking at it briskly. “Ope the door, I prythee.”

“Tarry awhile, Dick,” replied Master Shakspeare, “I can not let thee in for some minutes.”

“Nay, why should I tarry?” inquired the other, “did I not hear thee singing like a very swan? Haste and ope the door, for I must have speech with thee.”

“Tarry awhile, Dick, I tell thee again,” said his companion with more emphasis than at first. “I can let thee in now on no account.”

“Oh thou villain!” exclaimed he on the outside in his customary jocular manner. “I see through thy tricks now. Thou art not the bird to be ever a singing to thyself. Thou hast got some pretty wench with thee—a murrain on thee for thy slyness.”

“Thou art out in thy reckoning this time, good Dick, depend on’t,” observed Master Shakspeare laughingly.

“By this hand I do not believe thee,” cried Master Burbage. “It be plain from thy singing so like unto a swan, and thy not opening the door to me, that thou art playing at Jupiter and Leda after thine own fashion. Oh, I be so monstrously shocked! I be afraid my innocency will so suffer by keeping of thy villainous company, I shall soon get me a

bad character. Dost not know that evil communications corrupt good morals, and be hanged to thee?"

"Thy good morals, Dick!" exclaimed the other in the like bantering way. "Under what bushel hast thou hid so goodly a rushlight? Thy good morals! Diogenes with his lanthorn might have met with an honest man, but if he spied thy good morals searched he ever so close, he must needs be blest with marvellous fine eyesight."

"Out on thee for a reprobate!" cried his companion. "Thou dost slander the modest nature that breathes."

"Then alack for modesty!" replied Master Shakspeare. "But I tell thee what it is, Dick—I am stripped to the buff, therefore be as patient as thou canst for a minute or so."

"I do hugely suspect thee," said Master Burbage. "Thou art not the first I have met in a buff jerkin, therefore is there no occasion to make that a hindrance." Notwithstanding of what he said, his friend opened not the door till he was ready.

"I'faith thou lookest marvellous well considering that thou hast just 'given up the ghost,'" observed Master Burbage upon his entering. "Be thy intent wicked or charitable, oh, representative of the majesty of buried Denmark! But I will see with mine own eyes whether thou hast not been cozening of me." Upon this, whilst Master Shakspeare could not but laugh, the other began to look about him with a monstrous earnestness, rummaging of every place, spying into the drawers and presses, and under the tables and chairs.

"Mayhap thou hast conjured her into the bottle," observed he very seriously, as he first took a look into the flask, and then poured out some of the wine into the goblet. "Well, if she be as good as this," continued he, upon drinking off the liquor, "then is she the very excellentest woman I ever came anigh. I'faith, she can not help being a wench after mine own heart. I drink to her better acquaintance." And thereupon he drunk off another draught of the wine.

"But how hath Hamlet gone off to-day?" inquired Master Shakspeare, as soon as he could put on him a serious face.

"Naught could go better," replied his companion. "I was in front best part of the time, and famously did I notice thy admirable performance; I tell thee truly, Will, thou art the only ghost I would care to look on a second time."

"I believe thee there, Dick," said the other with a laugh. "Nay, 'tis probable enough thou wouldst much rather turn thy back on a ghost than look on it at all."

"I will acknowledge to thee, I like not holding acquaintance with any," said Master Burbage.

"And yet they be not unsocial," observed Master Shakspeare with as much gravity as he could assume. "For I doubt not at all, that not only on its first appearance would one shake thy hand, but shake thy body for thee into the bargain."

"By this light, that be not so bad!" exclaimed his companion, laughing heartily. "But methinks thy wit be like unto a steel breastplate—the brighter it becometh the oftener it be used."

"And that be none so bad," replied his friend. "But how didst like the playing of Taylor?"

"He playeth the character of Hamlet so well, that, as far as my judgment goeth, none living can come up with him," said the other.

"I do assure thee, I took huge pains in the teaching of him," observed Master Shakspeare, as he was fastening his doublet.

"That is manifest enough," answered Master Burbage. "And he hath profited well. It was my good hap to be in a room with my Lord of Southampton whilst noticing of the play, and he was quite rapt in it as it were, and greatly commended Master Taylor. But of thy playing of the ghost he seemed to like most of all, for he said there was so awful a fearfulness in thy doing of it, 'twas quite moving to look on; which methinks is nothing more than the truth. We then fell to discoursing of thy many singular excellences, and I do assure thee he spoke right eloquently in thy praise. He mentioned the exceeding fine pleasure he had lately derived from the perusing of thy most sweet poems, which thou hast properly dedicated to him, for of all true friends I do believe him to be the truest,—and spoke of his great desire to do thee such service as might be most lasting. He asked of me concerning of thy circumstances, and pressed much to know whether thou didst lack anything he could obtain for thee. Upon this request of his, I presently told him how anxious wert thou to purchase a greater share in the playhouse than what thou hast already."

"Thou shouldst not have told him

that, Dick," said Master Shakspeare, with some earnestness.

"And why not, Will?" inquired Master Burbage.

"In truth, I like not seeming to want aught of any," replied the other.

"Seeming to want fiddlestick," exclaimed his companion. "Thou art too scrupulous by far. Dost think I would stand upon my punctilios with one inclined to do me a kindness? I be no such a wittol, I promise thee. But to proceed with my narration. My lord did inquire very particularly what sum was required—the value of the property—the advantages to be gained by a purchase of such a share of it, and the like sensible questions; to all of which, thou mayest depend on it, I gave right sensible answers."

"I would thou hadst never spoke on the matter," observed Master Shakspeare, very seriously.

"Out on thee for an ungrateful varlet!" cried Master Burbage. "Well, after this, my lord left me, courteously bidding of me good day, and I, as soon as I might, posted to thee, to let thee know how good a friend thou hast in him; for I be quite certain, though he gave me no hint of a promise that he hath most liberal intentions toward thee."

"I have seen few of so generous a nature," said the other. "Yet can I never bring my mind to take advantage of it, nevertheless"——

"Here cometh Gib's heavy foot—mayhap he hath a message for one or other of us," observed his companion, interrupting him, and sure enough a footstep was heard of the very clumsiest sort approaching the door—then there came a knock at it, and admittance being granted, certes Gib, the call-boy, made his appearance, looking in no way altered from what he was when the courteous reader had sight of him last, being just as bandy in the legs, as monstrous in the mouth, as squinting in the eyes, as carroty in the hair, as awkward in his manner, and as clumsy in his shape as ever.

"Here be a letter for Master Shakspeare," said he, and straightway Master Shakspeare took it from his hand.

"Well, Chanticleer!" exclaimed Master Burbage, hitting of the boy a slap on the back which nearly sent him off his legs. "Thou didst play thy part famously."

"Methinks, for the playing of the cock in Hamlet, there be few so apt," replied the call-boy, looking exceeding dignified.

"Thou art too modest by half," said Master Burbage with a wondrous gravity. "Thou art sure to be 'cock of the walk' wherever thou goest. I'faith, thou deserveth to be the king of the cocks and of the hens too, thou hast such a superlative talent for crowing."

"Dost think so, indeed?" cried Gib, grinning with such delight it did stretch his monstrous mouth from ear to ear. "Perchance, if such be your opinion, you will advance me in the profession of which you have said so oft I am like to be so great an ornament?"

"O' my word there would be no such an ornament amongst us," remarked the other, looking upon the uncomely figure before him with all the seriousness he could put on. "But stick to the cock, I prythee, for in the playing of that thou hast not thy peer; yet would I venture to assert that, shouldst thou make an essay in any other part, there would be none like unto thee in the performance of it."

"Doth any person wait?" inquired Master Shakspeare, after reading of the letter, whilst the two were talking.

"None, an' it please you," replied the boy. "It was my Lord Southampton who gave it to me, as I was showing of Will Peppercorn the way. I would play Romeo, were I let." At this the two players looked at each other very particularly, with something of an inclination to laugh: "and my lord bade me carry it to Master Shakspeare," continued he; "and was so civil as to give me a silver groat; and then, merely requesting of me not to delay in the delivery of the letter, he took himself out of the playhouse."

"Having done what was required of thee, we will now dispense with thy company," said Master Shakspeare.

"Get thee gone, good Cock," exclaimed Master Burbage, lifting up his foot, and lending him such a kick of the breech, as he was a turning round, that sent him, as it were, flying through the open door.

"Nay, hurt him not, I prythee," cried Master Shakspeare, upon seeing the rapid disappearance of the call-boy, though he could not help laughing.

"O' my life, I do believe he hath no more feeling in him than a stone," replied the other, who was very merry upon it. "I doubt not, if he were handsomely paid, he would allow himself to be kicked from this world to the next. He liketh nothing so well. I have seen him rejoice at having a cuff from any of us; and a kick appeareth to delight him be-

yond all measure. But what sayeth my Lord Southampton?"

"Thou shalt hear," replied his companion, and without further preamble read the following:—

"WORTHY MASTER SHAKSPEARE: To say aught of the delicate pleasure I have received from that marvellous sweet poem you have done my poor name the honor of dedicating unto me, I can not at this present, as I lack time to express all that I feel; and to do less than that, were not to do you justice. Rest you satisfied, then, that though I be silent on the matter, I am eloquent enough at heart: for well can I appreciate such things, and exceeding glad shall I be to prove how well I think of them. On the receipt of this, please you to come to me at my dwelling, for I am desirous you should do me a favor, the granting of which will be to my extreme gratification.

"H. W."

"O' my life he be but a scurvy fellow after all," exclaimed Master Burbage, jumping up from the table on which he had sat himself, and seeming in a wonderful vexation. "Instead of acting the true friend by thee, with such handsomeness as he might do, without hurt to him, he contenteth himself with asking a favor of thee. A fig for such patrons, say I: there be too many of this sort. Wonderful fine fellows are they all, who are exceeding bountiful with their praise, which costeth nothing; but when there shall come a fine occasion for showing that generousness of soul which one that hath the power should always show to him he assumeth to be the patron to, they slink away, and will do nothing."

"Thou dost grossly abuse him, I will be bound for't," said Master Shakspeare, warmly. "I do not think there breathes a better, a truer, or gentler heart, than is my Lord of Southampton. I see nothing in the letter but the kindly disposition I have ever known in him."

"Kindly fig's end!" cried the other, seemingly in no very pleasant mood; "talk not to me of kindly dispositions, that be shown in naught but mere words. I have no patience with such."

"Notwithstanding of which, I shall haste to my lord's without loss of time," observed his companion. "Whatever favor it may be that I can confer, he may depend on receiving, and right glad shall I be of the opportunity of doing it." And thereupon he proceeded to make himself ready to go out.

"Then thou deservest all thou wilt get for thy pains," said Master Burbage. "Depend on't, he intendeth only to suck thy brains for thee, which having done to an absolute sufficiency—a murrain on him!—he will be monstrous prodigal in his compliments, but as for putting of his hand in his purse, he would as soon meddle with the plague."

"I want not his purse," replied Master Shakspeare; "so he need never put his hand there for me: but of his willingness to serve me, I am well convinced. Wilt go with me?" he added, as he was making for the door.

"Nay I am bound for the very prettiest woman that lives," observed his companion, seemingly putting of his dress in the very properest order, as he stood before a large mirror nigh unto the fire. "Oh! she hath such a delicate waist, and so dainty an ankle—such lustrous eyes—so ruby a lip—so!"

"Another Joanna?" here interrupted Master Shakspeare.

"Hang Joanna!" exclaimed Master Burbage, with extreme asperity, and quickly followed his friend, who had gone laughing out of the room.

Master Shakspeare made the best of his way to the Lord Southampton's, pleased in his heart that he had it in his power to oblige one for whom he entertained so perfect a respect. He found him in his study—an elegant chamber of moderate dimensions, well furnished with books, together with some few pictures. He was sitting before a pleasant fire, having wine, and fruit, and some choice cakes on a table beside him, and was reading of a book by its light, the time being toward the dusk of the afternoon, a little too early for candles.

"Welcome, Master Shakspeare," he exclaimed, as soon as the other entered the room, quickly putting of his book down, and rising to shake him by the hand. "Sit you down, and partake of such cheer as I can give you."

"With all mine heart, my good lord," replied his companion, cheerfully complying with my lord's request; and they presently, with exceeding sociableness, fell to drinking of wine, and eating of the delicacies upon the table, seasoning them with such friendly converse as was like to pass on such an occasion between two so well inclined to each other. There could be no mistaking the expression on the features of the young nobleman, for never was benevolence so apparent in a human face; and the fine.

open, manly countenance of Master Shakspeare, whereon was writ a free heart and a noble mind, was not less worthy of admiration.

"I have been reading of your truly delectable poem," observed my lord, as he pointed to the book on the table. "Indeed, I can not help but be a looking into it at whatever time I can find the leisure."

"I hope you have gathered some entertainment from it, be it of ever so slight a kind," answered the other, with that real modesty which can only be found in the rarest natures; "for it would be a discouraging thing to me to know that the courteousness which led you to the perusal of my book, came to an unprofitable ending."

"There can be no fear of that, on mine honor," said my Lord Southampton, kindly. "Indeed, I have found excess of entertainment rather than the lack of it. In your plays I have ever met with poetry of the very choicest, wherein it was difficult to say whether the thought or the expressing of it was the most admirable. But such things came as flowers met with in a journey. They grew, as it were, on the road-side of the play; and he who kept on his way could scarce fail of seeing and delighting in them; and they enticed him forward at every step. The Rape of Lucrece must be considered in no other light than an entire garden, laid out with such prodigality of flowers, that there be scarce any getting on at all, one is so continually forced to stop and admire this and the other."

"Methinks 'twould be affectation in me were I to deny I find pleasure in your commendation," remarked Master Shakspeare. "Indeed, I would venture to assert that he who pretendeth to a carelessness of praise, be worthy of no praise at all. I write, as all must write who have any true talent for it—in hope that what I have done shall be considered of some merit. That you commend it, is at least a proof of some kindness on your part, the which can not but give me exceeding gratification, for I am assured you would not show so honorable a feeling unless you thought there was such worthiness in me as might warrant it. As to the judgment you evince in this your opinion of my poor performance, it doth not become me to speak, for every one is but too well satisfied with the judgment that be satisfied with him."

"Mayhap my judgment is but of small value," said his companion, "but at least

it hath the recommendation of being sincere."

"There are few whose opinion I should be more inclined to bow to on ordinary topics," remarked his companion; "yet in this, methinks, the friendship you have distinguished me with hath given you partial eyes."

"That can not be, worthy Master Shakspeare," replied my lord. "Every one who knoweth what true merit is, can not fail of seeing it in this your exquisite poem; and there can be no partiality in approving of that which none but the most ignorant or the most envious could fail of commending. However, let that pass for the present. The wine standeth unnoticed before you. I am fearful you make but poor cheer."

"I thank you, my good lord," answered Master Shakspeare, refilling of his glass. "But it seemeth to me I should show an infinite lack of understanding were I to make poor cheer when the cheer hath been so bountifully provided." Then for a few minutes both appeared to be intent upon enjoying of the good things within their reach, saying little, save remarks of no moment relating to them.

"Mistress Varnon hath acquainted me with a strange secret," observed the young nobleman, with a smile.

"Hath she, indeed?" answered the other. "I doubt not it was of a pleasing kind; for a pretty woman's secret is usually well worth knowing."

"That is as you may think it," said his patron, still looking exceedingly amused. "But this is it: whilst you were in the garden with Dame Deborah, the last time we were at Islington, and, as of old, had left us two to such sweet delights as I can never be too grateful for, the loving creature told me that her aunt spoke of nothing but Master Dulcimer—was ever praising his looks, his dress, his manners, his music—his everything belonging to him, with so absolute an earnestness as was a marvel to behold—that she was melancholy and restless when he was away, and seemed as if she enjoyed nothing so much as the sunshine of his presence—in short"—

"Nay, the conclusion is manifest, my good lord," exclaimed his companion, laughing very heartily, in the which the young nobleman joined. "My vanity is infinitely tickled. So, her stately ladyship loveth me? I'faith, 'tis as ridiculous a thing as ever happened. Mayhap, if she were forty years younger, I would be well content: whether my teeth be

tender or my stomach be over dainty, 'tis hard to say, but I doubt not she would now prove so preposterously tough a morsel, I should be forced to leave the dish ere it had well been tasted."

Both continued to laugh and jest on the subject very merrily, for some minutes.

"Meant you not, in your note," continued Master Shakspeare, "there was some good office I could do you? Believe me, I shall be right glad to set about it."

"'Tis a favor I would have at your hands," replied my Lord Southampton. "Indeed, I shall be wondrously vexed if you refuse me."

"Think not of such a thing, I pray you," observed the other quickly. "Be assured there is nothing I would not willingly do to give you pleasure, so that it be but in my power to perform."

"'Tis a simple thing enough," said his companion. "It hath come to my knowledge that you are exceeding desirous of purchasing a greater share in your playhouse than what you already possess. Have I been told truly?"

"I have such intention, without doubt," replied Master Shakspeare, "but it is one I mean not to put in execution for some time to come."

"Think you it would be much to your advancement?" inquired my lord.

"Greatly," said the other.

Then the favor I would ask of you is this:—I have a thousand pounds of mine own, doing no good in the world. Will it please you to apply it to the purpose you have mentioned?"

"My lord, I"—

"I will hear of no objections, Master Shakspeare," said he. "Mayhap, if you take it not, I may be tempted to apply it to some bad end; and you shall do me a great injury by having refused to give it a more honorable occupation. Whilst it lieth idle in my hands it can afford me no pleasure, but rather will be to me a source of disquiet; now when I know it hath gone for so good a purpose as the advantage of a worthy man, I can not help being infinitely content."

"Believe me, it can not be," exclaimed Master Shakspeare, who appeared so taken by surprise he scarce knew what to say.

"Believe me, it must be!" cried my lord, more earnestly. "I have set my heart upon it. I will not hear of a denial."

"Indeed, you must excuse me in this, my lord."

"I will hear of no excuses. Beside, you have already averred there was nothing you would not willingly do to give me pleasure. I hold you to it, Master Shakspeare."

"My good lord, it is so extraordinary large a sum."

"All the better—it shall do you the more benefit."

"'Twill be a rank abusing of your good nature—nay, take it not uncivil of me"—

"I do take it monstrous uncivil of you, Master Shakspeare, that you should make any demur in doing me this favor. There can be no pleasure so great as that you will afford me by your compliance."

"Then let it be but a hundred pounds, I pray you, my lord."

"I will not abate you a single groat of the thousand."

"I do assure you I can not bring myself to accept it, for I know not at what time I shall be able to pay you."

"Talk not of paying, else shall I be angry presently. I tell you, Master Shakspeare, I have received such infinite pleasure from the wondrous excellences of your genius that twenty times the sum I have mentioned would not have purchased. Shall I receive advantage and give none? I pray you no more denials. I have set my heart upon it, and it must be."

At this moment there entered a serving-man, announcing my lord of Essex and Master Francis Bacon, to whom his master gave orders for their instant admittance.

"I will send a trusty messenger to your lodgings with the money to-morrow morning, Master Shakspeare," said my Lord Southampton, as he in the very friendliest manner possible took his companion by the hand, which he cordially shook, his youthful face beaming with benevolence all the while. "And I sincerely trust it may be the foundation of a fortune worthy of your high deserts. Hush!—say not a word!" he exclaimed, seeing the other was about to speak. "My friends approach; and I would not have this breathed to any."

Master Shakspeare was silenced; but he reflected all the more. "And this is the man," thought he, "of whom Burbage spoke so slightly! Why, what a princely heart he hath! O' my life! if I can not help myself of profiting by his munificence, I will do my best to prove it hath not been misapplied." And so went he on, so lost in admiration of

the other's noble conduct, as not to perceive he was the object of very attentive observation by a stranger who had entered the room, and, whilst the two lords were conversing very earnestly, yet in a low voice, as if on some important matter, at the further end of it, and the serving-man was putting a fresh log on the fire, and some clean glasses on the table, he, drawn to him probably by that appearance of superior intelligence in his countenance which none could look on without affection or reverence, came as close as he might, and sat himself down the more nearly to observe him. This was no other than Master Francis Bacon, then coming into some note for his great learning, and afterward so highly esteemed as the very chiefest philosopher of his time.

He was dressed in no way distinguishable from other young lawyers, wearing a doublet of a sober color: indeed, his whole apparelling was a complete contrast unto the gorgeous splendor of my lord of Essex, who affected to outdo all in costliness of dress. Master Bacon was rather of a comely countenance; of a gravity that was more pleasing than severe, having a mouth of some tendency to mirth, a thoughtful brow, eyes clear and bright, and a beard well trimmed. He seemed rather younger than Master Shakspeare; but they appeared, as near as might be of a like height. There then were the two finest intellects of the age met together for the first time. Each had heard of the other; and what each had heard was sufficient to make him desirous of knowing as much more as he could.

Master Shakspeare had not been but a very few seconds reflecting upon his patron's bountiful behavior to him, when he started up of a sudden, as if conscious he had committed some rudeness in not paying more respect to my Lord Southampton's guests, and seeing of Master Bacon regarding of him so attentively, he straightway, with a courteousness that did become none so well as he, expressed how glad he was to make his acquaintance. To this the other replied to a like purpose; and they presently fell to conversing one with another with as much freedom as if they were acquaintances of long standing. Yet was there a marked difference betwixt the two in their manner. Master Shakspeare was open and cordial, like a man who is at home with the world after much knowledge of it—he was perfectly at his ease; but

Master Bacon, though not so much so as at first, looked to be in a sort of constraint. Whether he held the other in such respect as made him more reserved in his company than he was likely to be in any other, or whether his deep study of books had given him not sufficient opportunity for acquiring that graceful confidence which social intercourse alone confers, or whether his pursuit of the law had created in him a suspiciousness of any man's intentions till their excellence was proved, I can not take upon me to determine; but certes he was in some degree formal and sententious.

The two lords still kept at the further end of the room, conversing with much earnestness of look and manner, and in so low a voice it was plain they had got hold of a matter of deep interest to talk about. But of this took the others no notice. Indeed they were so taken up with their own conversation, as not to be able to heed what else was going on.

"I have heard wonderful commendation of your familiarity with the profoundest things," observed Master Shakspeare. "Of such learning know I just enough to make me inclined for a more perfect knowledge. Will it please you, Master Bacon, to give your opinion of the schools of philosophy possessed by the Greeks, that I may know, from one so qualified to judge, which may be the desirablest of them all?"

"I am but indifferently learned in such matters, believe me, Master Shakspeare," replied Master Bacon.

"Nay, you undervalue yourself I am assured," said the other.

"Indeed, it is as I say," answered his companion. "Yet of what small knowledge I may possess will I put you in possession; for I hold that he who hath learning, be it ever so little, and holdeth it back from they who have less, is as unprofitable a man as the most ignorant that lives."

"That be a sure thing," said our illustrious poet. "O' my life! I have no patience with such as do cuddle up in their brains whatever they know, whereof others be ignorant, and are so obstinately intent upon the enlightening of none, that they allow of their secrets being buried with them. Such exceeding selfishness ought never to be tolerated. There have been divers alchymists who, at least, so it be said of them, acquired famous insight into the transmutation of metals, the virtues of all manner of waters, plants, earths, and the like; yet have they kept such

things a mystery from their fellow-men, and their great discoveries, if discoveries they were, were of as little advantage to mankind as if the finders of them had never been born. For mine own part, I think that knowledge is a sort of money, which if it be hoarded up by one of these misers, and none know where it is secreted, and may not lay hand on it when they want, it shall be as good as nothing to them; whilst the more that share in the riches of learning, the less shall there be of those ignorant poor folk, whose poverty of knowledge it is the chief business of philosophy to relieve."

"Well said, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the other with some earnestness, for he was pleased at hearing of sentiments so akin to his own. "Philosophy is indeed that right admirable legislation which provideth for the poor of all countries and conditions—the halt, the lame, and the blind; and insisteth that every man who hath the means shall contribute, according to his ability, to the wants of his fellows. To describe to you the different philosophical schools that have existed among the Greeks, methinks is a labor for which I have not anything like sufficient leisure before me. Suffice it to say, it is in philosophy like unto what it is in religion throughout the world; there be a wonderful number of roads and by-paths, some more direct than others, and a few that go everywhere but in the right way; but the right way is always to be found by those who will sufficiently search for it. As for a distinct system of philosophy, anything of the sort can scarce be said to have existed before the time of Socrates; for though it be said Thales founded the Ionic, and Pythagoras the Italic schools, one might with as much show of truth call the proverbs of Solomon, or the fables of Æsop, a system, as consider that what the two preceding have said, which was naught but some few precepts or apophthegms relating unto morals and politics, should have such a name.

"It may certainly be said that Socrates founded no complete theory of ethics, but he left such materials as went a fair way toward it. He was the first philosopher who taught the sublime truth—to wit: that the principles of virtue are the laws of God, and that none may depart from such principles without suffering for it in some way or other. Plato stated that virtue could in no way be taught, but could only come as an emanation from the Divine Spirit. Aristotle,

who was a disciple of Plato, and the founder of the peripatetics, taught that virtue is either of the theory or of the practice—the one being a proper exercise of the understanding, the other the pursuit of excellence; and that there are no such pleasures as those which do proceed from virtuous actions; and that happiness is either contemplative—such as may be derived from the pursuit of wisdom—or active, such as may be gathered from external conduct conformable to virtue; that the latter is inferior to the former, because the understanding is the chiefest part of our nature, and the aims to which it should be directed are of the noblest kind; but that for a state of perfect felicity both are necessary."

"Doubtless this teaching of Aristotle cometh nigh unto the right way," observed Master Shakspeare. "It seemeth to me a very proper teaching. Before I knew aught of Aristotle, it did always appear in my mind, much the same as you have said of his doctrines. I thought the first object of existence was to live virtuously—that virtue was the doing well unto others—and that happiness was that state of pleasurable which must be the result of such well-doing. As for what he hath said of the understanding being the chiefest part of our nature, and the pleasures it affords being the choicest of all enjoyments, methinks none would dispute it. But proceed, I pray you: I should be loath to lose a particle of such excellent discourse."

"There was another sect produced by the school of Socrates, called cynics," said Master Bacon. "The most celebrated of these were Antisthenes and Diogenes, and they taught that virtue was the only wisdom, and he alone deserved to be called virtuous who could stifle his natural sympathies, and live in a thorough carelessness of the comforts and refinements of life, most of which they regarded as things that ought not to be allowed, because their influence tended to prevent that austerity wherein they supposed virtue exclusively existed."

"I'll have none of them!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare. "If men are to have no sympathy one for another, naught can result but entire selfishness in all; and if the refinements of life are not to be tolerated, all that is elegant in science and graceful in art,—in fact, all that must be most humanizing in intellect are clean lost to us, and we must needs degenerate into mere brutes. It might as well be said, a green gooseberry is more

desirable than a ripe one, as that an austere and crabbed cynic can be a better man than one of so ripe and sweetly-disposed a nature that he alloweth his intellect to exalt his humanity, whilst his humanity liberalizes his intellect."

"The next of the more celebrated sects of Greek philosophers were styled stoics," continued the other. "Amongst divers things, they maintained that nature impelleth every man to the pursuit of whatever appeareth to him to be good, and that as all animals derive pleasure from those things which be suited to them, which nature leadeth them to discover and enjoy, every one who seeth clearly into what is good, will presently take to conforming to nature in all his actions."

"That seemeth plausible enough," observed his companion. "Yet methinks it should have its limitations. To follow nature under every circumstance might lead to the hurt of some other, and a pleasure purchased by an injury should be eschewed of all honest minds; but to follow nature with justice to yourself and others, to my thinking, be to follow the very properest guide that shall be met with anywhere."

"On that point say I nothing at this moment," said our distinguished philosopher. "When the time cometh for speaking, believe me, I intend not to be dumb. But return we to the stoics. Their idea of happiness is to this effect—that no external thing can affect the happiness of any man—that pain, because it belongeth not to the mind, is no evil—and that a virtuous man must be happy in all manner of torment, for that virtue is no other than happiness."

"Nay, I can not hold with them there!" cried Master Shakspeare. "Indeed, it seemeth to me clean contrary to common sense. Any one who doth observe at all, knoweth that a man's happiness is almost ever in the power of circumstances—any one who knoweth what pain is, must feel convinced it be an evil—and as for what they have said of virtue being happiness, it hath no truth in it, for there are few so ignorant who know not that the misconduct of others, let alone numberless other causes, may make the most virtuous person that breathes, in a state of monstrous unhappiness."

"Then comes the Cyrenaic school, with Aristippus for its founder, and Democritus and Protagoras for its chiefest supporters," continued Master Bacon, without seeming to heed what the other had said. "They preached that the dis-

inction between virtue and vice is nothing more than arbitrary—that no one thing can be sacred or profane, just or unjust, but as it shall be agreeable or contrary to established laws and customs, for that what is considered lawful to-day, human authority may make improper to-morrow; and that present pleasure is the sovereign good of man."

"O my life, those doctrines be more preposterous than the other!" exclaimed his companion. "The true distinction between virtue and vice must needs be immutable. Men's ideas of them may alter, but the qualities themselves never change—at least so it seemeth to me. For instance, if a man do whatsoever good lieth in its power, and committeth no wrong to any in the doing of it, he can not but live virtuously, no matter what may be the laws or customs where he dwelleth; and if he do the reverse of this he must live viciously under any circumstances or laws whatever. But what other system had these Greeks?"

"Among others they had the system of Epicurus, which was in excellent repute of them," replied Master Bacon. "He taught that the ultimate good is happiness, which is a state in which man may be said to exist, when he enjoyeth as many good things, and endureth as few evils as may be possible to be met with in human life. He calleth pleasure good, and pain evil, which be not only good and evil in their own natures, but must be taken as the measure of whatsoever is good or evil in every object of desire or aversion, because we expect pleasure, in pursuing of one, and apprehend pain in avoiding the other. He maintaineth also, that any pleasure which preventeth the enjoyment of a greater pleasure, or produceth a greater pain, is to be eschewed; whilst that pain which removeth a greater pain or procureth a greater pleasure, is to be endured. He elsewhere proveth that temperance in the enjoyment of pleasure is no other than a state of virtue, and that virtuous conduct steadily pursued, produceth the greatest quantity of happiness human nature hath the capability to enjoy. These maxims, with sundry others of a like sort, with wonderful force of argument he putteth together and buildeth into a system."

"And a right famous system it must needs have been," exclaimed Master Shakspeare. "That happiness is the real aim of existence, surely none can doubt, and that the enjoyment of pleasure produceth the possession of happiness

seemeth to me as little questionable; but methinks that there is greater happiness in the pleasure we afford to others than there can be in that which the individual enjoyeth exclusively, and were I inclined to set others in the pursuit of the greatest felicity, I would say, go and create the pleasure of as many as you may, without injustice to yourself or any. But as these systems of philosophy appear but so many different ideas of virtue, and of the distinctions between good and evil, and their natural results, happiness, and misery, I pray you, Master Bacon, let me know what may be your opinion of these matters."

What Master Bacon's opinion was I can not here relate, as just at that moment the two lords left that part of the room where they had been staying, and came to the table, where, after a stately greeting from my Lord of Essex to Master Shakspeare, the four did sit down and partake of the cheer that was before them; but this omission can be no loss to the courteous reader, for if he turn to the many commendable volumes of excellent philosophy Master Bacon hath writ, he shall behold his opinions clothed with such fine arguments as I despair of being master of.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Don Pedro. By my troth, a pleasant spirited lady.
Leonato. There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord: she is never sad but when she sleeps; and not even sad then: for I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamed of unhappiness, and waked herself with laughing.

Don Pedro. She can not bear to hear tell of a husband.

Leonato. O, by no means: she mocks all her woers out of suit.

SHAKSPEARE.

Fair angel of perfection, immortality
Shall raise thy name up to an adoration;
Court every rich opinion of true merit,
And saint it in the calendar of virtue.

FORD.

"WHY dost take on so, Bess?" asked the merry Alice, as she sat with her cousin in a fair chamber looking out into the open country at their house in Sherborne. "By my troth, thou art but little credit to womanhood. I will give thee up. I will forswear all relationship to thee if thou continuest to mope after this fashion. Well, if ever I be caught fretting after any man-animal, the world must needs be as good as at an end. I would as soon think of taking to the making of simples for consumptive puppies. Nay,

o' my life, I would sooner begin the digging of my own grave with a pap-spoon."

"How thou dost talk, Alice!" exclaimed Dame Elizabeth, who seemed indeed exceeding sad at heart, as she sat with her cousin working of some satetry, whilst a beautiful little boy, doubtless her own, was riding a cock-horse round the room upon an old sword in its scabbard, with such shouting and gladness of look as showed it was wonderful pleasant sport to him. "Thou knowest he hath been gone away so long a time I can not but doubt of his safety."

"Nay, he be safe enough, I'll warrant him!" replied the other laughingly. "He knoweth that if he were to get any hurt and so vex thee I would as good as do for him. But these husbands be marvellously inclined to take care of themselves—took they as much heed of their wives now, there should be no falling out betwixt them. What a monstrous difference lieth in lovers and husbands! There is no more likelihood in the two, than may be found in a sparrow and a cod-fish. The one is always a chirruping, and billing, and hopping about one, as pleased as ever he can be—the other layeth his length where he may, careth as much for his wife as if she were a stone, and if he approach her at any time, seemeth like a very fish out of water. By my troth, methinks the difference betwixt wooing and wedlock be a difference indeed."

"I have not found it so," observed her companion. "Walter hath been ever the same to me. I do so wish he would come back! Alack! I can not but be wretched, when day after day passeth by and bringeth me no tidings of him. Surely it is better to know the worst than to live in this state of uncertainty."

"I tell thee thou hast no worst to know," answered Alice, and then turning to the boy, who was shouting lustily, she cried, "Walter! if thou makest not less noise on the instant, I will kiss thee within an inch of thy life." The child stopped a moment in his course, turned his laughing face toward his pretty kinswoman, shook his curly head with a famous archness, and proceeded on his way shouting more loudly than ever. "Ah, that is so like all man-animals, be they big or little," continued Alice. "For a contrary humor there is not their like in this world. Dost believe it, Bess, that once upon a time one of these would needs be after caressing of me, for truly some are of so monstrous an impudency it can scarce be guessed what they would be about; but

I pretty sharply gave him to know I would put up with no such thing, and threatened him with all manner of dreadful punishments made he but the slightest attempt at it. And what dost think the villain did?"

"Nay, I know not," replied her cousin.

"He kissed me on the instant!" cried her merry companion, with a voice and look of such extreme solemnity, that the other could not but smile.

"And what saidst thou to that," inquired Dame Elizabeth.

"What said I?" exclaimed Alice, seemingly in a great astonishment. "By my troth, my breath was clean taken away at so horrid a villany—I could say naught: but worse cometh to be told; for ere I could recover myself, the catiff was for doing of it again. At that moment I fetched him so absolute a box on the ear, that ever since then he can no more hear on that side of his head than can a dead pig whistle a coranto." Here both jumped up quickly from their work, the boy in running round the room having tripped and fallen heavily on his head, and Dame Elizabeth, with a face marvellously pale, hastened to pick him up.

"Be in no sort of fear, Bess," said Alice consolingly, as the other took the child into her lap as she stood by, "he can not be hurt at so little a fall."

"But he is hurt, Alice," replied the mother, regarding the motionless child with a wild sort of fearfulness; "he moveth not a limb, and his little lips have no color in them."

"There!" exclaimed her cousin, as she noticed that he moved his arms up to his head and opened his eyes, looking as if in some way frightened, "I told thee his hurt could not be much."

"Oh, there hath gone a weight off my heart which was nigh pressing me to the earth," said the other with much earnestness, as she caught the child to her breast, and then kissed him over and over again with as true a love as ever woman showed. Upon examining of him carefully, it was seen he had been but a little stunned, and could have received but a slight bruise or so, for he presently went to sleep in his mother's lap, never crying in the least, as if he had been none the worse for his tumble.

This had scarce been done before there entered at the door Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, with as much mirth in his face as ought to content any honest man, and with this there was a sort of mystery, as if he was upon some trick or another that required secrecy in bringing it about.

"They are come, Alice," exclaimed he in a low voice, and seemingly with a monstrous disposition to laugh outright.

"Who are come, uncle?" inquired she.

"Why, thy lovers, wench, to be sure!" cried the old knight, bursting out into a famous chuckle. "Stephen hath much ado to keep them in their chambers, they be so furious to have sight of thee."

"Oh, I did forget," said Alice laughingly, "I promised my lovers that this day I would give them an answer; and so hither have they come, each one, doubtless, fully convinced he shall be chosen of all the rest. Now will I show them such sport as they have no notion of."

"A mad wench! a mad wench!" exclaimed Sir Nicholas, giving free vent to his mirth. "Thou wilt be the death of me some of these days, thou wilt, thou pretty rogue."

Now, I tell thee what, good uncle," observed his merry kinswoman unto him, "if thou hast a mind to see what sport I will make of them"——

"That wish I of all things," cried the old knight, interrupting her quickly, "for in truth it seemeth such excellent fooling I would miss it on no account."

"Then get thee to the dining-room and hide behind the arras," replied Alice.

"That will I straight," answered he, and was going out chuckling mightily at the thought of what fine pastime he should have.

"I will be with thee anon," continued the light-hearted girl. "But make no noise, else shalt thou spoil all presently."

"Trust me no mouse nigh unto a cat shall show greater quietness." Then out he went, and made haste to the room she had said.

"Wilt go and see how I will use these lovers of mine?" inquired Alice of her cousin.

"Prythee ask me not," replied the other, in some sorrowfulness of heart; "I be in no humor for such scenes. Besides, the boy demandeth all my care: I am not sure yet he hath escaped hurt."

"Indeed he hath, Bess—there can be no doubt on't," said her cousin, more seriously; "but let it be as thou wilt. I must see these man-animals, now they are come here; but as soon as I have got rid of them I will hurry back to thee. So tarry awhile, dear Bess, and put a better heart on it. I am certain sure he will return soon, and then will he win the queen's favor, and everything will be as thou wouldst have it."

Dame Elizabeth only sighed in reply to this, and Alice, kissing of her cheek affectionately, hurried out of the room. At the bottom of the stairs she met with Stephen Shortcake, who was evidently, by the waggish expression of his countenance, one of the conspirators. To him she whispered something, and then entered the dining-room. There was a large arm-chair on each side of the fire, and into one of these she presently sat, with a monstrous demure face, looking exceeding dignified and sedate.

"Prythee breathe not so hard, uncle," said she, in a whisper; "thou wilt mar all else."

"Nay, I will scarce breathe at all—but hush! here cometh one," replied Sir Nicholas, popping of his head out of the arras behind her, and as quickly popping it back again; for at that moment Stephen Shortcake opened the door and announced my Lord Wisecare: and sure enough my lord made his appearance, with a face as formal and severe as ever; and making of a low bow, walked up to the now solemn Alice with a gravity of deportment that might have become his great-grandfather's ghost.

"How fareth it with you, Mistress Alice?" inquired he, exceeding seriously and took hold of her hand with the air of a doctor about to feel her pulse. "Be it the cold breezes that make you look so bloomingly? Truly is it said, it be an ill wind that bloweth nobody good."

"Methinks what you have said is indisputable," replied Alice, very gravely; "and that which can not be doubted must needs be true."

"Indeed, and so it be," observed my lord, with a look of wonderful sagacity, as if it was a truth he was not before aware of. "It doth give me exceeding pleasure to hear you talk so profoundly; but understanding delighteth better than all things, and a wise woman is more precious than gold."

"Believe me, I affect not the vanities of youth," said she, in a gravity of tone and manner that did almost exceed his. "I have done with such frivolities. There is a time for all things. I mean now to devote myself to the acquiring of what I think most precious in this world; for is it not said, 'Wisdom is better than house or land?'"

"That is it out of all manner of doubt," answered the young nobleman. "Wisdom is a thing that—that is to say, wisdom is—in short, it be beyond all contradiction that wisdom is better than house

or land, as you have justly remarked. But there shall be no wisdom without experience, and therefore if you lack experience, it be plain you can not have wisdom. Now this experience have I, in some measure. I make no boast of it, Mistress Alice; yet do I say I have as much experience as any man of my inches. And this be the reason. Experience ever came to me naturally, and with little trouble in the learning of it. It hath grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. I have lived upon it from my youth upward. Indeed, though I be in no manner given to boasting, I may assert no man that hath lived as I have, hath more experience than have I."

"In good truth be you so experienced as that, my lord?" inquired his fair companion, in a seeming astonishment and admiration. "What a marvellous share of wisdom, then, must be yours!"

"Mayhap I am better off than many in that particular," replied he; "but, as I have said, it is not in my nature to boast. 'Brag's a good dog, but Holdfast's a better.'"

"Is the moon made of green cheese, my lord?" asked she, very innocently.

"There hath been some dispute about it," answered my lord, looking as he thought monstrous philosophical. "For mine own part, I doubt it. It seemeth to me, that were it a cheese, there should be mice at it presently; for it be in the disposition of these animals to have an appetite for cheese; and did they ever get to the nibbling of it, it standeth to reason that before this the moon would have been clean nibbled away."

"Indeed, and so it would!" exclaimed Alice, with great earnestness. "Yet is it exceeding strange I saw it not in that light before: however, we are never too old to learn. Now doth it strike me how wonderful is your wisdom! It be impossible after this to doubt you have the great experience you spoke of."

"That have I, you may depend on," replied the other, evidently excellently well satisfied with the commendation he was receiving. "Therefore am I the best fitted of all your suitors to take you to wife. Should you give me the answer I have now come for, and which our similarity in disposition inclineth me to expect you will, you can not help leading a very pleasant life with me; for is it not written, 'A wise son maketh a glad father.'"

"How infinitely you talk to the pur-

pose!" exclaimed his fair companion, more gravely than ever. "By my troth, the woman that gaineth you will gain a treasure indeed."

"Dost think so, sweet Alice," inquired my lord, with a look of such thorough satisfaction as defieeth all description.

"How can I do otherwise?" answered she. "Have you not acquired such superlative experience, there be no doubting of your infinite wisdom?"

"Then wilt wed with me, fair Alice?" asked he.

"That dependeth very much upon circumstances," replied his companion. "You know well I can not abide such men as are not of a ripe age, and of the very gravest discretion. As for yourself, my lord, you seem as nigh unto that which I would have, as I have yet seen. You look of a very absolute old age enough, only I would rather you had a sufficiency of gray hairs."

"By this hand, I will wear me a gray periwig, if you will like me the better for't!" exclaimed the other with extreme urgency.

"Then had you a fair stock of wrinkles, doubtless you would be more to my taste," said she.

"Wrinkles will I have in plenty, after we are married, sweet Alice," he replied, with a like fervor.

"Mayhap, if you had lost your teeth, I could the more affect you. It seemeth strange to me you should have such marvellous wisdom and yet have so many teeth. Methinks such experience as you possess, should have never a tooth in his head."

"In truth, fair Alice, I have that experience in spite of my teeth. Indeed, between ourselves, I expect not they will last long, for one or other of them, be ever troubling me with the most pestilent aching, tooth ever gave."

"Of what age are you, my lord?" inquired she.

"I look much younger than I am," replied he, hesitating awhile to say of what age he might call himself. "Yet, though I look it not, depend on't, I am just upon thirty."

"Just upon thirty—only just upon thirty said you!" exclaimed Alice, as if in a great astonishment.

"Nay, I mistake—nigh upon forty, I meant," answered he quickly.

"No more than nigh upon forty?" cried Alice in a greater wonder than before.

"Indeed, I scarce know exactly mine

own age," replied my lord, as if in some perplexity. "But I doubt not at all, I can not be far short of fifty."

"Oh, I am ruined and undone!" exclaimed his fair companion, looking utterly disappointed. "I have been deceived in you, my lord. Never was poor woman so cozened before." The young nobleman seemed as though he knew not what to make of it. "O' my life, I took you for threescore and ten at least," continued she. "Your excessive gravity only accordeth with that time of life. Men at fifty be but mere boys. They can not have the great experience you boast of. I will not put up with one so young. I will have none of you. I pray you, never let me have sight of you again!"

At the hearing of this, the face of my lord got like unto that of a fat man seen upside down in the bowl of a spoon, it became of so marvellous a length, and of so singular a gravity. He seemed at first inclined to speak, but, as if seeing it would be all to no purpose, he presently stalked out of the room as solemn as a judge.

"Oh, thou mad wench!" exclaimed Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, showing his head from behind the arras, and laughing as if his sides would crack.

"Hide thee, good uncle!" cried the merry Alice. "Here be another of them coming." The old knight concealed himself as quick as he could, and as soon after as might be, the door opened, and Stephen entered ushering in Dr. Bashful.

The young divine, after making of an awkward bow to his fair mistress, who courtied to him, and then sat down very demurely, advanced seemingly in some sort of trepidation, to a chair at the opposite side of the fireplace and sat himself on the edge of it, putting of his hat and stick on the floor by the side of him. He spoke never a word, but looked around the room seemingly examining of everything in it with extreme curiosity. His gaze next fell upon his companion, but finding that she was looking at him, in a moment his eyes were fixed upon the floor, and his face became of such a redness it was a marvel to see. In a minute or two he gave a sigh so profound, it did appear to have come from the very bottom of his heart, then, as if aware of what he had done, his complexion became of a deeper crimson than ever. All this time he removed not his eyes from the floor. Presently he coughed a little, like one who is about to speak. Alice thought

he had summoned up sufficient resolution to ask of her whether she would have him or not. Mayhap he would as soon have asked her to hang him. Though he had come for that purpose, it was the last thing he could have brought himself to do. After a bit he coughed again.

"Now 'tis coming," thought she.

"'Tis a fine day, Mistress Alice," observed he, still keeping of his look upon the floor.

"That is it beyond doubt," answered she, as gravely as she could.

"Indeed, methinks, it be a very fine day, Mistress Alice," said the other.

"Indeed, methinks so too," replied Alice.

"Dost not think to-day be a finer day than yesterday?" inquired Dr. Bashful, with an infinite earnestness.

"It hath something of the appearance of it," answered his fair companion.

"That it hath certainly," said he. To this she replied not, having no answer to make; and there consequently ensued a pause of some minutes, that the young divine employed in considering of what he should say next. It was plain, upon the fineness of the day nothing more could be added. Should he speak of the appearance of the country? or rather make some observation upon Master Shakspeare's last play? or inquire after her health? or ask her opinion of the sermon he had just published? He hesitated—and knew not what to be about. What he had said had made him a little more at his ease, but the silence was becoming irksome. He began to wonder whether she was looking at him, and the very imagination of such a thing brought the color into his cheek again. Then he thought he would take a look at her. But such was more easy to be thought than done. He remained some moments before he could bring his mind to it. At last, raising of his eyes from the floor, he turned them to the corner of the room the farthest from her, and with a sort of trembling in his limbs, praying, in his heart, she might be looking another way, he glanced slowly round the room toward the place where she sat, to his inconceivable confusion she was looking at him, and what he liked worse than all, there was a twinkling in her eyes that made him exceeding uneasy, added to which, she was holding her handkerchief to her mouth in what he thought a monstrous suspicious fashion.

In a moment his look was fixed upon the floor as if it was nailed there, and his

face was as fine a crimson as was ever seen. Was she laughing at him? thought he. His seat felt marvellously uncomfortable. He changed his position, and in a minute or so altered it again, yet felt he none the easier. Presently he heard sounds which had a wonderful resemblance to a suppressed tittering. At this he was more uneasy than before. He would have given anything to have been anywhere but where he was; and, if he could have done it, he would on the instant have taken himself off never to have come near the place again: but it seemed to him as if he were chained to his seat. During this time his face felt like the fire beside him, and he could no more have taken his eyes from the floor than ventured to fly. To his horror the tittering became louder, and all at once he could plainly distinguish that there was some person behind the arras striving to smother his laughter, in which it was evident he succeeded not at all. The knowledge that he was brought there only to be laughed at, gave Dr. Bashful something of a preternatural desperation, so seizing of his hat and stick, with a face that seemed like to scorch his ruff, it looked so burning, and with eyes that glanced half angry and half frightened, scarce daring to look anywhere, as quick as he could, and without opening of his mouth, he darted out of the room.

"Oh, these man-animals! what goodly fools they be," exclaimed Alice, now giving free vent to her mirth.

"Thou wilt be the death of me!" cried her kinsman, holding of his sides and laughing right heartily.

"Back good uncle to your hiding," said she in a whisper. "Here cometh Stephen with another of the lost sheep." And sure enough scarce had Sir Nicholas concealed himself, when Stephen Shortcake ushered in Master Aniseed. He was not in such fine feather as he was wont, for in truth the expense he had been at in keeping the company of gay gallants who only cared for him as long as they could fleece him at play or borrow his money, which, with a remarkable regularity they ever forgot to return, had so wasted the fortune the old miser had left him, that he saw nothing but a return to the catching of rats unless he married the heiress he had been so long in quest of. He knew that the result of his present interview would seal his fate, and he came with the determination of exercising all his powers of pleasing to obtain the so much desired end.

"Ah, what ecstasy is mine!" exclaimed he, as he advanced toward her with a mincing face and a lackadaisical air. "Here sitteth my arbitress throned like some famous goddess of old in supremest elysium, and I, of all her manifold worshippers, alone allowed to gaze my soul away upon her very infinite beauty, and find a new existence in her most absolute sweet speech. In truth, I do feel as much delight as a rat escaped from a trap." And thereupon, he took her hand very tenderly, and looked in her face as though he were about to die.

"Ah, Master Aniseed, methinks you do but flatter," observed Alice, somewhat coyly, as it were.

"Nay, by this light I do not, delectable fair creature!" cried he, with a marvelous deal of affectionateness. "Believe me, I flatter none; and, least of all, could do so unto one whose incomparable delicate charms putteth all flattery at defiance. Speak, then, dainty sweet Alice! speak my doom—am I to be in the enjoyment of the extremest felicity which appertaineth to this terraqueous globe, or be thrust down in such intolerable misery as hath never been known out of Tartarus."

"Is your family of any note, Master Aniseed?" inquired she, with as much seriousness as she could put on. At this he seemed a little confused, for he expected not such a question.

"Indeed, some have been exceeding notable," replied he, at last; doubtless, at that time remembering that his grandfather had been a knight of the post of great celebrity.

"Said you not the Aniseeds came in with William the Conqueror?" asked his fair companion.

"O' my life, I can not but think they came in a long time before," answered the other; although he knew nothing particular of his family beyond the hanging of his grandfather at Tyburn, for a robbery on Gad's Hill, which, as may be supposed, he liked not to tell of. "But why speak of this matter. I pride not myself on my genealogy, believe me; I care only for the incommunicable rapture I seek in the gaining of the incomparable fair Alice. Surely it seemeth in some sort a strange lack of affection in you to question me on a matter so unimportant, at a moment so critical to my exquisite sweet hopes."

"Nay, it showeth no lack of affection, Master Aniseed, as I will prove to you anon," replied Alice, evidently forcing of

a serious look upon her laughing countenance.

"Wilt prove your affection, heavenliest creature?" exclaimed Master Aniseed, sinking on one knee.

"That will I, beyond the possibility of doubt," answered she. "It hath come to my uncle's ears that you are not what you have given out; and he hath it from such authority as hath proved it to his satisfaction."

"Ha!" cried he, looking amazing confused.

"It hath been said," continued Alice, "that instead of being one of an ancient family, as you have said, that came in with William the Conqueror, or a long time before, many of whom have been exceeding notable, you are nothing better than the son of a pitiful poor rat-catcher, and have yourself lived by the catching of rats, till a miserly kinsman left you his property, and you thought of passing yourself off for a gentleman born. Now, although the catching of rats be doubtless an honorable occupation, my uncle is in a very tearing rage with you, for not having let him know you had aught to do with it; and mayhap it shall be thought notable enough to have one's grandfather hanged for the cutting of a purse, yet my uncle is in a monstrous ugly humor with you for keeping him in ignorance you had any such in your family. Whereof the consequence is, that he hath ordered two of our serving-men, with cudgels as thick as is my arm, to wait for you upon your leaving this room, and not to leave you till they have broke every bone of your body."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" exclaimed the now terrified rat-catcher, after having listened to Alice's statement with a countenance expressive of the absolutest alarm that ever was witnessed. "Oh, Mistress Alice!" continued he, now dropping on both his knees, seemingly to implore her clemency, "save me from these villanous serving-men! Everything you have said be as true as that rats will not be caught if they can help it. Save me, I pray you, Mistress Alice!"

"They have cudgels as thick as my arm, I tell you," said she.

"Oh, where can I hide me!" he cried, looking about him in a terrible frantic manner.

"I heard him tell them to be particular in not leaving a bone unbroke in your whole body," replied Alice.

"Alack, I shall be clean murdered! How shall I escape? I pray you, assist

me, or these bloody-minded villains of serving-men will be the death of me."

"Canst get up the chimney?" asked his fair companion.

"Nay, the fire would scorch me to a cinder presently," answered he, in an infinite moving voice. "Is there no closet I can creep into?" And then he ran about the room distractedly, poking of his head here and there to see where he could hide himself.

No, Master Aniseed, there is no place of any kind where 'twould be safe to conceal yourself in," observed the other.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! If ever I get myself out of this with a whole skin, I will straightway give up playing of the gentleman, and take again to the catching of rats. Oh, how can I escape?"

"Canst jump out of this window?" inquired Alice, throwing open a window that looked into the park.

"'Tis a fearful height!" replied he, as he gazed upon the distance that lay between the room and the ground, which was some ten or twelve feet. "I must needs break my neck if I attempt it."

"Alack! there is my uncle's voice!" cried she. "I hear him nigh the door, urging the serving-men to enter the room and seize on you." Alice had scarce said the words when Master Aniseed, without venturing of another word, jumped himself out of the window, and finding himself unhurt when he got to the ground, he sat off at such a tearing pace that he was soon far enough out of sight.

"Oh, Alice! Alice! what a mad wench thou art!" exclaimed her uncle, at her elbow, looking as if he had found wonderful amusement in what he had heard. "But how didst come to find this out?"

"That it matters not you should learn, good uncle," replied she shutting down the window with an exceeding arch look. "But haste back to your hiding; there is another yet to come, who is the goodliest fool of all the lot, and methinks I hear him approaching." Sir Nicholas made two or three hasty strides and retreated to the arras. The door opening at this time, Stephen announced Sir Narcissus Wrinkles. "Ha!" cried he lustily, hitting of his hand against his leg, as soon as he stood within the door, "by Cerberus and his three heads, you look lovelier than ever I saw you. But my young blood will not allow me to stay at this distance when so tempting an object can be approached as closely as may be." And straightway flinging of his hat in a chair, he gave a short, quick run, like

unto a cow's gallop, was at her side in a moment, and instantly took her hand very gallantly, with a look so marvellously tender she was obliged to turn her head on one side—she could not look upon him seriously.

"By Erebus and gloomy Styx!" he continued, "my heart be overflowing with extreme love for you, exquisite Mistress Alice! By day you do engross my thoughts, and by night all my dreams be of you and of none other. My youth is wasted away in sighs. I shall grow old before I can well call myself a man. In truth, my delicate sweet creature, if I am not this day made as blessed as I expect to be, I can not be long for this world. I must needs die in my prime, like a bud stricken with the worm."

"How is your sciatica?" inquired Alice in some sort of earnestness.

"Eh? what sayest?" asked Sir Narcissus, looking as if he was striving to appear not to understand the question.

"How is your sciatica, Sir Narcissus?" repeated his merry companion still with a famous gravity.

"Sciatica? sciatica? what sciatica, I pray you?" inquired the old knight, reddening a little in the face, for all his seeming to be unconcerned.

"I did hear you were lately laid up with the sciatica very badly," replied she.

"A good jest! By Castor and Pollux, an excellent good jest!" cried Sir Narcissus laughing, as if he really had something to laugh about, "an excellent good jest indeed. The sciatica! I have the sciatica! At my time of life too! Well, it be infinitely droll." Then he laughed again more famously than at first. "Now it is well known that for a strong back and loins there is scarce my match to be found. *There*, Mistress Alice—is that a back for the sciatica?" And thereupon he turned his back upon her, which was certainly of a more than ordinary breadth. "I should like to see the sciatica which could touch such a back as that."

"Methinks of late you have shown yourself monstrously afraid of stooping," observed Alice, still keeping on an exceedingly seriousness.

"I afraid of stooping!" cried the old knight in a seeming wonder. "By Apollo and all the Nine, better and better! Why, it can be scarce a week since, for a trifling wager with a few youths about mine own age, I did gather up a hundred stones planted a yard apart, and stooped and picked up every one separately, and did place it in a basket nigh unto the

first. Nothing but the marvellous fine back I have could have stood such infinite stooping."

At this moment Alice dropped her pocket-handkerchief on the floor as if it was an accident. Sir Narcissus Wrinkles presently stooped to pick it up, but he had bent his body but a little way before he suddenly drew himself up again, putting both his hands to his back, and making a face as if he had swallowed vinegar by mistake for wine.

"My handkerchief, Sir Narcissus," said his waggish companion as gravely as she could.

The old gallant stooped again, bending himself very slowly, and evidently with extremest difficulty and pain, and got his hand within a few inches of the handkerchief, when with a long-drawn "whew!" he drew himself up more quickly than before, showing of a face that outglowed the poppy in redness, and distorted into an expression so painful, it was moving to look at it.

"I marvel you should keep me waiting, Sir Narcissus!" exclaimed Alice, as it seemed a little out of temper, though it was apparent in the corners of her eyes she was in as fine a humor as ever she was.

"Believe me, I have the terriblest stich in my side, Mistress Alice!"

"Are you sure it be not the sciatica?" inquired she, interrupting of him with a wonderful seriousness.

"By Pluto, that be utterly impossible!" exclaimed he in a great urgency. "The sciatica troubleth only old men, and the stich attacketh none but the stronger and more youthful sort."

"Well, if it be not the sciatica, get me my handkerchief, I pray you," said Alice.

Sir Narcissus once more stooped down, but more slowly than ever, and doubtless with an infinite share of suffering. It was evident he was straining famously, bending of his back and stretching out his arm to reach what he sought to have hold of. There it lay, within an inch or two of his fingers, and for the soul of him he found he could not bend his back another inch. It appeared to him as if a river of molten brass was rushing into his head, and a thousand imps of darkness were amusing themselves by sticking red-hot skewers into his loins. Feeling that to endure this another minute was beyond the power of human forbearance, and believing that if he failed in picking up the handkerchief the truth would be known, and he should lose his mistress, he summoned up all his remaining strength

into one great effort, and made a sudden dart at the object he was so desirous of gaining. That he grasped it firm is most true, but alack! he lost his balance, and the next moment lay his length upon the floor.

"Why, Sir Narcissus! methinks you have had a cruel tumble!" exclaimed Alice, doing all she could to restrain her mirth.

"Nay, it be only the slipping of my foot," replied the old knight, striving to take it very indifferently. Sir Narcissus by means of his hands raised himself upon his knees, and then began earnestly attempting to get upon his feet, but the first essay he made down went he upon his hands and knees again with something very like a groan.

"Oh, I have the cursedest stich in my side that!"

"To me it looketh exceeding like the sciatica," observed his merry companion.

"A thousand furies!" cried the old knight in some vexation. "I tell you, Mistress Alice, the sciatica troubleth old men only. It can have naught to do with us youth."

"Well, get you up quickly then," said she as seriously as she might. "Yet it seemeth marvellous strange to me, that one who hath so lately stooped to pick up a hundred stones can not now do so easy a thing as pick up himself."

"Nay if it were not for this villanous stich, I would have been up on the instant," replied he, and then he began again seeking to raise him. For all that he seemed to take such wondrous pains to succeed in what he was about, down he came the moment he sought to get footing on the floor. He tried once more, with more care than at first, and again he tumbled. At this he swore most vehemently by divers pagan names, and recommenced his labor with all the vigor he was master of, and down came he again with such force it seemed enough to knock the breath out of his body.

"Said you not a moment since, that for a strong back and loins there was not your match to be found?" inquired Alice, as innocently as you please. The question appeared to have put Sir Narcissus in a perfect fury, and he commenced so desperate a scramble to get his footing that he was like unto a madman. No sooner did he tumble than he essayed to rise; the instant he thought himself on his legs down tumbled he on his hands; and there he continued puffing, and groaning, and sighing, and swearing, till he

heard such sounds as made him desist of a sudden. He turned himself round, and to his extreme confusion he beheld his fair mistress laughing at him to her heart's content; and her uncle close at hand twisting of himself about with so excessive a mirth that the tears did run down his cheeks. Certes, if there ever was a sight to laugh at in this world, Sir Narcissus Wrinkles, as he then sat on the floor, was of that sort. In his furious scrambling he had knocked his periwig on one side, which gave to his face, which was of a very fiery color, so ludicrous an expression, that the rage he was in only made the more laughable.

"Oh! these man-animals!" cried Alice, seemingly half choked with excess of mirth.

"Alack, Sir Narcissus!" exclaimed Sir Nicholas; but what more he would have said was stifled in a fit of laughter. The old gallant uttered not a word, nor moved from his position; but looked on the two with a countenance so exquisitely foolish, that the gravest could scarce have gazed on it unmoved.

"Now, Sir Narcissus, what think you of yourself?" said his fair companion, endeavoring to recover her gravity. "Is it not most preposterous in you, at your time of life, to affect the gallant, and seek to pass yourself off for one scarcely arrived at years of discretion? You must needs be my husband, forsooth, when you are nigh old enough to be my grandfather; you would attempt making love when you ought to be saying of your prayers. You would swear you were monstrous strong, and of so fine a constitution, the like was never met with, when you can not stoop without tumbling, and have so confirmed a sciatica, you can not raise yourself from the floor strive you ever so. By my troth, I thought not there were such old fools in the world! But I beg I may see no more of you. I would as soon wed a superannuated baboon as take for my husband so monstrous a piece of folly as yourself. Fare you well, Sir Narcissus, and be sure not to stoop!"—Here she was stopped in her speech; for the old gallant had, since she spoke, began to make so ridiculous a face, which grew more ludicrous every minute, that she could gaze on him no longer, and hurried out of the room in a violent fit of laughter.

Leaving Sir Narcissus to be lifted up by Stephen and Sir Nicholas, which was done without his saying ever a word, he was so crest-fallen he scarce attempted

to breathe till he got out of the house, the courteous reader must follow the merry Alice to the chamber in which she had left Dame Elizabeth. There she found her, with the boy still asleep in her arms, and with tears straggling upon her delicate countenance.

"O'my life, Bess, it be exceeding unkind of thee to fret in this way," exclaimed her cousin, as she hurried to her, wiped away her tears, and affectionately kissed her cheek. "I tell thee he will return anon: there can not be a doubt of it."

"I feel assured some harm hath happened to him, else would he have been here long since," replied the fond wife, very dolefully.

"Believe it on no account, dear Bess," said the other, "it be the very falsest, wretchedest stuff that ever was thought of: it doth not deserve credit of any. I would not put trust in it, were it ever so. The rather believe that he is speeding back, after having met with wonderful success in his expedition, and that he careth for naught so much as the sight of his dear sweet excellent good wife."

"I wish I could think so, Alice," exclaimed her companion, with a profound sigh.

"And why not think so?" inquired her merry cousin. "Methinks it be far better thinking than the other. For mine own part, I would be hanged before I would allow of such paltry poor thoughts to fret me as thou hast. It can not be other than I say, so no more of this moping. Be happy as I am. I tell thee what, Bess, I have got rid of all my lovers, and they were every one of them so excellently well served of me, sight of any of them shall I never see again, I will be bound for it. Oh! it was such exquisite fine sport! I will tell thee how famously I managed." Here the promised narration was completely put a stop to, by Dame Elizabeth giving a loud scream, which awoke the child out of its sleep, and her countenance became all at once lighted up by a wonderful exultation.

"Bess! Bess!" cried Alice, looking upon her in some alarm, "what aileth thee?"

"'Tis *his* voice!" exclaimed the other, gasping so for breath she could scarce speak the words.

"O'my life thou art crazed," replied her cousin; "there is no voice of any kind as I can hear."

"Oh! I would swear to it," cried the devoted wife, with a very touching emphasis; "there can not be such another.

Here, take the boy. I will see. I can not tarry here a moment longer."

"Bess! Bess! if thou goest on at this rate, thou wilt break my heart," cried Alice, who was fully convinced her companion was distracted. "Whose voice dost fancy thou hearest?"

"His that I love better than all voices in the world," said Dame Elizabeth, fervently, as she stood up with her boy in her arms. "'Tis Walter! 'tis he beyond all doubt. I hear him in the hall, greeting Stephen and my uncle."

"Methinks I do hear something now," observed her cousin; "but be calm, dear Bess. If 'tis he, he will be here on the instant."

The words had scarce been said, when a quick footstep was heard, and in another moment Sir Walter Raleigh was locked within the embraces of his wife and child.

CHAPTER XXX.

Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,
Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow,
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.

SHAKSPEARE.

Alas! the snow, black shall it be and scalding,
The sea waterless, and fish upon the mountain,
The Thames shall back return into his fountain,
And where he rose, the sun shall take lodging,
Ere I in this find peace or quietness.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

My suit is,
That you would quit your shoulders of a burthen,
Under whose ponderous weight you willfully
Have too long groaned—to cast those fetters off
With which, with your own hands, you chain your
freedom.

MASSINGER.

"'Tis exceeding strange, this story of Joanna," observed Master Shakspeare, as he sat in his lodging, with Master Francis, opposite a famous fire. "I scarce know what to think of her: but how behaved she upon the discovery of herself?"

"More strangely than ever," replied Master Francis. "When she recovered consciousness, I had got her off her horse, and she was reclining in my arms, as I stood upon the ground; and the moment she found she was known, she tore herself from me, with an appearance of extreme confusion, and as it did appear to me, in some sort of horror. Upon this I did use no lack of entreaty she would be calm, and allow of my showing her such attentions as my affection for her prompted; for in truth the knowledge that it was to her I was indebted for my deliverance from being made a sacrifice to the

Indian idol, put every feeling of resentment against her out of my heart, and I could on the instant have loved her as madly as ever. But when I attempted to approach her, she put up her hands, and averted her face, and begged of me not to come nigh her, with so wonderful an earnestness, that I was quite moved at it. Still imagining only that she did this on account of the attempt on my life, to show how ashamed and horrified she was with herself for the acting of so monstrous a thing, I assured her I was willing to forget all that was past; and believing from what she had lately done, that I had misjudged her, I told her, if she would allow of it, my future conduct should prove the sincerity of my affection. I was approaching to take her hand, when, as if in a very monstrous alarm, she fell on her knees before me, and implored me not to touch her. I knew not what to make of it; and whilst I hesitated, she, in the same wild manner, seeming as if she knew not what she was saying, prayed I would not come nigh her, or seek to have speech with her till the morrow, when she would acquaint me with all I had a mind to know. Seeing the dreadful state of excitement she was in, and that to persist in my intentions would only the more increase it, I agreed to what she said, and on leaving her to the care of the young prince, I presently mounted my horse, and rode forward at the head of the escort, leaving the others to follow.

"Most religiously did I keep my promise; for I never so much as looked toward where she was the whole of the day, but rode along marvelling at her conduct more and more every minute, and thinking of what she must have suffered in travelling so far for my rescue, and wondering and imagining till I got myself into a complete perplexity. Toward the evening we arrived at the very village nigh which I had been kidnapped by that villanous Padre Bartolomé. We were as well entertained of the natives as formerly, and as soon as I could I took myself off to rest; but sleep got I none all the night for thinking of Joanna, and from the very absolute impatience I was in to see her, and hear the explanation she had promised me. In the morning, as soon as might be, I hied me to Pomarra, that he might get me speech of her. Upon inquiry, I heard of my exceeding trouble and astonishment, she had gone from the village, and that I must never expect to meet with her again."

"Left she no message?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"Indeed did she," replied his companion. "Her message was that 'twould be useless my attempting to follow, or make any inquiry after her, as it was her determination never to see me again; and though she wished me every blessing that this world could give, she assured me that nothing was so like to secure my happiness as the complete forgetting that there ever existed so miserable a creature as was herself."

"That is marvellous strange!" exclaimed the other, and he seemed to be considering the matter very intently.

"I questioned the young prince and Harry Daring, what they knew of her," continued Master Francis. "From the former I found that she had told him how much I was in her regard when she sought his assistance to go in search of me, at which time she had begged his secrecy, the which he kept with all possible caution up to the last moment; but Harry had never had the slightest suspicion that she was any other than an Indian woman, till I took the muffler from about her face, though he could not help believing, from her ready seeking of such perils as they encountered in their journey, that she had a wonderful liking for me."

"And you know not how she got into the country?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"Not a word of it," replied his companion. "That morning, hearing that Sir Walter Raleigh had been the day before at a village a few miles above where we were, I, thinking my duty to my patron ought to be the first consideration, took measures for my immediate departure, and parting with Pomarra with great regret, because of his many commendable qualities, and the exceeding generousness of his behavior, I and Harry Daring got into a canoe with two strong Indians and such things as we had given us of the king of Guiana, and a famous plenty of victual of all kinds, and rowed down the stream till we came into the great bed of the Orinoco. There we had scarce got when, to our wonderful contentment, we observed the barges and the wherries all lying pretty close unto each other, approaching us at a fair rate. That Sir Walter was glad of our coming, whom he had long given up for lost, is to say too little. No father seemed so pleased at the return of a dear son after the absence of many years; and so little diffi-

culty had I in making Harry's peace with him for his desertion, that he was taken into greater favor, and promoted to a much higher rank than what he had held. When we got to our ships, I was so constantly with Sir Walter, he asking of me what I had seen, and telling me what had befallen him since we parted, and I writing at his dictation whatsoever he thought necessary for the goodly work concerning of the expedition that is now about to be published, I had but little time to think of Joanna, and when that I did think, I got myself into so strange a perplexity, that methinks, for all the good I had of it, I had as well let it alone."

"Hast never heard or seen aught of her since?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"Never," replied the other. "I know not where she is or what hath become of her. What dost think of it, Master Shakspeare? I would be loath to condemn her without good warrant, seeing that she hath ventured so much for my safety; but there hath been such a strangeness in her proceedings that I like it not, however grateful I may be for the peril she hath undergone for my sake."

"Her behavior is involved in some mystery, certainly," replied his companion, with such concern in his countenance as showed he had his young friend's interest at heart in what he was saying, yet wished to make the matter appear better than he thought it was, knowing of the extreme sensitiveness of the other's nature. "From what I have seen and heard of her, I can in no way be brought to approve of her conduct. Perchance there shall be found such reason for it, as may give it a different coloring to what it hath possessed in my mind. I hope it may. It appeareth to me that she is of a disposition that delighteth in violent extremes, and one that no man could be happy with for long. In this is there no sense of justice either for herself, or for any other; and that nature can not be of any real goodness where such a sense be absent. As for her perilous journey in search of you, and many other things you have told me of, done previously by her, they doubtless exhibit a greatness of soul which might counterbalance much behavior of a meaner quality; yet, as it is evident she desireth you to forget her, for which it be reasonable enough to imagine she hath some sufficient cause, I would advise you to think of her no more. In my mind, it is much the properest thing you can do."

"Ah, Master Shakspeare! I would it

were the easiest!" exclaimed Master Francis.

"Of its difficulty am I well convinced," added the other. "When the heart hath fixed itself upon one, and hath for any length of time lived in the express conviction that the one so loved is the chiefest of all for excellence, it be in no sort an easy matter to throw off all thought and feeling upon the subject. Yet where it must be evident upon the very slightest consideration that no good can come of any further affection, or there be no longer cause for such honorable opinion, methinks it is the part of every wise man to endeavor to free himself from the dominion of such unprofitable impressions. Occupation, perhaps, more than any other thing, tendeth to this end. I am glad to find, notwithstanding your labors for Sir Walter Raleigh, you have used such opportunity as you had for wooing of the Muses. I know your talents to be of no ordinary kind; and I do anticipate from the play you have brought me for my opinion, such gratification as I have not received from the perusal of any."

"I am fearful you will be disappointed," observed Master Francis modestly. "It is true I have taken what pains I could with it; but after reading or seeing of any of your productions, what I was about seemed to them of so poor a character, that I left off more than once in despair of ever doing anything that would be fit to be seen by you. To-day it did strike me there could be no harm in letting you have sight of it—knowing the wonderful liberality of your nature—therefore carried I the manuscript in my hand with me."

"I am heartily glad you have done so, and will lose no time in its examination," replied Master Shakspeare, and then added he in a manner that showed he felt great concern in what he said—"Excuse me if I be trespassing, but I have an exceeding desire to know whether you have yet learned anything authentic concerning of your father?"

"I know no more than I have told you of," answered his companion. "I have long wished to have speech with Holdfast, or at least to know in what circumstances he is, for it be like enough I might now do him some service; yet save his being a preacher among the puritans, and doth occasionally hold forth in Moorfields, I have heard naught of him to this day."

"I can not but applaud your desire to better him, if bettering he wants," observed the other. "Yet must I say, he

deserveth but little at your hands. It is plain enough he hath deserted you most infamously, and that he at all troubleth his head about you, I can not believe."

"No matter, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed Master Francis. "Though he hath been no father to me, methinks that should not release me from being a son to him; beside, if he be conscientious in the opinions he hath embraced, he may have become a good man—such as would be a pleasure to me to own as a parent. Mayhap though, he would be all the more inclined to think it a disgrace to own me as a child."

"Nay, it must be impossible for any man, were his rank of the highest, to feel disparagement in acknowledging one of your merit," replied Master Shakspeare affectionately. "I know not the father who ought not to be proud of such a son."

"'Tis your infinite kindness that leadeth you to say so," observed his young friend with a heartfelt look of thankfulness.

"O' my life, I would be right glad indeed, and proud too, were you son of mine," cried the other.

"And what pride would be mine to boast of such a father!" exclaimed Master Francis with marvellous earnestness. "Indeed, Master Shakspeare, I know not whether it be a weakness or what it be, but I have grown up in the belief that I was of honorable birth. What little I knew of my parentage, fixed in me from mine infancy a hope that the mystery which enveloped my father's name would one day or other be cleared to my own satisfaction and my mother's credit, and that I should then obtain such a name and station as might content my ambition. I can not help it, but it humbleth me to the very dust, to think that my father hath been but a paltry cheater, and my mother a"—He was stopped in his speech by a sort of choking which made him unable to finish his sentence, and his face became strangely pale and distressed.

"Heed it not, Master Francis, I pray you," said his companion as he went up to him and kindly took him by the hand, laying of his other hand upon his shoulder whilst he stooped over him. "Though they who seek the reputation of the world must usually search after it with such helps as the world affordeth, his fame be much the most lasting and the most worthy that hath had no other help to gain it by than his own merit. There

are many persons of worship in the place of my birth who, because of their high lineage and great possessions, have hitherto looked down upon me who have none. Now it hath ever been my hope to make my writings of such a sort, that in the after time, the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon, shall be considered of the learned to have such greatness as the greatest cities could not boast of, whilst its persons of worship shall be held of no account, and I, whose humbleness they have despised so much, shall be thought the source from which all that giveth honor to the place shall flow. Try you, Master Francis, to have some such a hope, and I doubt not in the least, you will presently care no more about your lineage than do I."

"I should not care so much as I do," added Master Francis, "were it not for thinking that they among whom I now associate on a footing of equality, may sometime or other find out the meanness of my birth, and then treat me with indignity for presuming to mingle with those above me, and for seeking to be thought of some note when I was but little better than an impostor."

Here the conversation was broken in upon by the sudden appearance of Harry Daring entering at the door, seeming, from the laughing face he had, fresh from some mischief. Certes, there was now a wonderful alteration in him from what he was when he was apprentice to the barber-chirurgion in Eastcheap. Though he could not be called a man, he had grown from the boy to be a youth coming nigh unto manhood—albeit he had no beard as yet. Still was he more than a head shorter than Master Francis, who for gravity of deportment and elegance of manner, was more a contrast to him than otherwise. For all this his free-heartedness and his fearless look were the more pleasant for a spice of roguery that might oft be observed in it, which made him quickly liked of all who met with him. His countenance, from constant exposure to the sun in a hot climate, had become almost as brown as a berry, and for strength of limb, it looked not as if he were soon likely to meet with his match. He was clothed in a handsome doublet with a rapier at his side; with other of the appurtenances of a gentleman, and a hat and feather worn saucily on one side of his head.

"Oh, Master Francis, I have had such exquisite fine fun!" exclaimed he, casting his hat on one side and making him-

self quite at home by drawing of a chair near the fire, on which he sat himself down, chafing of his hands and looking in a famous merry humor.

"What fun hast had, Harry?" inquired Master Shakspeare, who took a huge delight in him.

"Oh, the very capitalest fun that ever was," replied Harry.

"Prythee let us know of it," said the other.

"That will I and gladly, Master Shakspeare. You must know then, I started off this forenoon from Durham house intent upon calling on some of my old acquaintances to show they were still remembered of me. Well, I made straight for Eastcheap, and entered the well-known shop where I was apprentice as I have told you, and there I beheld everything as if I had but left it yesterday, with old Lather in it looking as pensive as ever, holding of a disputation with Master Tickletoby the schoolmaster, upon the merits of one Holdfast, a famous preacher among the puritans, as I understand from them."

"Ah! Didst say Holdfast, Harry?" inquired Master Francis earnestly. "Dost know where he may be met with?"

"No, not of mine own knowledge; but I doubt not it may easily be found," replied Harry Daring.

"It shall be inquired into anon, Master Francis, be assured of it," said Master Shakspeare. "But proceed, Harry." At this Master Francis seemed satisfied, and Harry continued his narration.

"Master Tickletoby thinking me to be a stranger, presently took his leave; but not before he had, with an abundance of thanks for my courtesy, accepted an invitation to dine with me at twelve o' the clock, at the Mitre tavern in Fleet street. Then sat I down in the old arm-chair, and requested of old Lather in the courtliest phrase I could think of, because I wished not to be known of him, to do his barber's office in the cutting and dressing of my hair. He appeared not to have the slightest suspicion as to who he had got hold of, but evidently imagined me to be a new customer, and was striving his best to make me pleased with him. It would have done your heart good, Master Shakspeare, to have seen the absolute gravity with which I sat at my ease whilst he attended to me with as much formality as if I had been one of the aldermen, ever and anon treating me with some of the choicest of his Latin phrases, with which he favored me with a trans-

lation that was, I will be bound for't, as much unlike the original as his extreme ignorance of the matter could make it. To this I usually replied as gravely as you please, with some fine Latin of my own making, to the which I appended such a translation as I thought fit to give; and it was right famous sport to hear how the old barber did commend my scholarship."

"I doubt not it was droll enough," observed Master Shakspeare, looking amused at the idea of it.

"Then he fell to telling me the news," continued Harry Daring. "And a famous intelligencer he proved himself. What dost think he told me, Master Francis?" inquired he, seeming as though he could scarce ask the question for laughing.

"Indeed, I can not tell, Harry," replied his friend.

"He said that Sir Walter Raleigh had returned from his adventure in search of the famous El Dorado," added the other. "And that he knew for certain, for that a creditable friend of his had had speech with divers of the sailors, that besides Sir Walter bringing home so much gold the ships were like to have been sunk by the weight of it, and conquering such a multitude of kingdoms there was no naming of them all in a summer's day, he had met with a strange people that had two heads, one upon each shoulder, so conveniently placed that every one man among them could see before and behind him at the same moment of time, and some of these he had brought with him to show the queen's majesty, together with two mermaids that could play marvellously well on the cittern—a real basilisk that killed people by looking at them—sundry parrots as big as a Michaelmas goose, that could speak several languages; and a monstrous kind of nondescript that was half a crocodile and half a monkey, and was covered over with quills full of deadliest poison, that it would discharge against all such as provoked it, and was of so ravenous a nature that it would eat a man at a meal."

"Truly, a horrid monster!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare with a laugh.

"I listened to him as seriously as I could," continued Harry, "and a famous job it was to keep my countenance; for he did lay such stress upon the credibleness of the person who had told him these wondrous tales, that I had much ado not to laugh in his face. However, I not only managed to hear it all out with a gravity

equal to his own, but at the conclusion of it I assured him I had no doubt of its truth, for I had heard much the same from another quarter—a person of the strictest integrity, who was of the expedition, and he moreover stated that in his travels far into the interior of that wonderful continent, he fell in with a nation who were all barber-chirurgeons—divers of the boys being found pricking of cabbage-leaves, by way of learning to breathe a vein—others wrenching the teeth out of some jaw that did belong to a calf's head they had cooked for dinner, to be for them a lesson in the extracting of teeth—some were seen curling of old mops, and others shaving of dead pigs' faces, which were to afford them a proper familiarity with the offices of barbering: and then the men were engaged as brisk as so many bees in trimming of each other's beards, drawing of each other's teeth, breathing of each other's veins, and curling, and shaving, and physicking of each other after a fashion that was a marvel to look upon. Oh, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the young rogue, joining heartily in the laugh of his companions, "never saw you a face in all your days so astonished as looked that of Master Lather upon the hearing of what I had said."

"Methinks he had good cause for it," observed Master Francis.

"His spectacles seemed ready to hop off his nose with sheer wonder," continued Harry, "and mayhap had they done so they would have taken themselves down his throat, his mouth stood so invitingly open. 'That exceedeth in strangeness aught that hath been told me, honorable sir!' exclaimed he as soon as he could speak. 'But, as Cicero hath it, *'Vox populi, vox Dei,'*—which, as it must be known to you, meaneth, *'wonders will never cease.'*" True, Master Barber, I replied; and is it not writ in Aristotle, *'hoppeti kicketi corum hic hæc hoc cum tickle me,'*—that is to say, *'when barbers live at peace with each other the world shall stand still to look at the marvel.'* 'Ay—I remember that passage well,' exclaimed he, 'I have read it in Aristotle scores of times.'" Here again the mirth was loud and general. Indeed it could scarce be otherwise, Harry Daring did take off his old master after so droll a fashion.

"After that I began to talk of apprentices," added he, "and innocently enough inquired of him whether he had any. Then he replied he had one, an excel-

lent quiet lad, who was out on an errand, whom he liked the more for that he was of so different a sort to one he had before had, who was ever a doing of some vile mischief or another, that he became quite the plague of the neighborhood. Upon further questioning of him, he in the most pathetic manner possible described what he and others had suffered by what he styled my pestilent humor, dwelling most of all upon the villanous trick I had done him before I quitted his dwelling, of mixing his pharmaceutical preparations of the most opposite natures, so that on examination of them it did puzzle his wits to find out what he had hold of; and placing of a shelf of gallipots so insecure, that on his going to take one they all tumbled down on him, and not only broke themselves, but broke his head into the bargain."

"That was too bad of you, Harry," observed Master Shakspeare somewhat reprovingly.

"So think I," said Master Francis.

"And so thought I," replied Harry Daring, with more seriousness than he had hitherto used. "Though I took it to be good sport at the time it was done, being exceeding thoughtless and mischievous, it oft struck me after, it was a great injustice; for, to say the truth of him, old Lather had never been a bad master to me; and it was because I felt I owed him amends for my many mischiefs, I had then paid him a visit. Thereupon I began telling of him that in my travels I had fallen in with this once mad apprentice of his, whose conscience allowed him not to rest easy because of the wild pranks he had played upon a kind and worthy master, and that from a desire to remove the loss Master Lather had suffered on account of them, he had sent by me a purse of twenty gold pieces; which I then and there put into his hand. At the sight of this, and at what I had said, the old man looked as though he could scarce believe his eyes and ears. He stared at the purse, and then at me, and then at the purse again; and then broke out into such commendation of me, vowing that for all my continual tricks he had ever loved me as a son, that my heart was touched, and I presently declared to him who I was. This made him so beside himself with joy and affectionateness, that in hugging me in his arms he burned my ear with the curling irons, till I cried so lustily he jumped away from me in a complete fright. The end of it was, before I left

him I made him promise to dine with me at the Mitre."

"That was well done you, Harry," exclaimed Master Shakspeare, who appeared to be wonderfully pleased at what he had heard.

"Indeed it was," added Master Francis with the like cordiality. "But notwithstanding of Harry's reckless mischiefs, I would have vouched for the goodness of his heart at any time."

"It be wondrous kind of you to say that, Master Francis," replied Harry Daring. "But the very truth is, I never took any consideration of what I did; and if it promised to afford sport, I could not fancy there could be harm in it. However, to return unto my story. I crossed from old Lather's over to Geoffrey Sarsnet's. Instead of finding the jolly mercer passing of his jokes with his own ready laugh amongst three or four customers, as of old, there was he, sadly reduced in flesh, marching up and down the shop, wringing of his hands, looking as dismal as a dainty gallant in a shower of rain, and swearing he was about to end his days in the compter. He quickly told me of his troubles, saying how his daughter had deprived him of his chiefest customers by her undutiful leaving of the house, and hinting that the ruining of herself would have been no great matter, but to ruin her father was most unnatural and devilish. Having put him in a better humor by purchasing of him a few things I required, and letting him know who I was, I made him also promise to dine with me at the Mitre. I then started off after some of my old cronies. Peter Periwinkle, our neighbor the chandler's apprentice, I found making of farthing rushlights down in the cellar; and when he first caught sight of me in my fine apparel, he was so wonder-struck he let all the rushes fall into the tallow. I got a holiday for him without much to do, and bidding him put on his Sunday jerkin, I told him to be sure to be at the tavern by twelve, which he readily promised. Then posted I to long-legged Tom, the tailor's son round the corner, upon whom I came whilst he was being whapped by his father for ill-stitching of a doublet. Nevertheless, I soon managed to make peace betwixt them, and was promised Tom's attendance at the dinner. After that I hied me to big Jack o' the Turnstile, whom after some painstaking I found sadly out at heart, and out at the elbows too, because of his parents having lately died and left him to shift for himself as

he best could—which in truth seemed to me to be of the worst kind of shifting. As soon as I heard his pitiful story, I took him to a shop where clothes were to be had ready made, and had him fitted with a buckram suit, in the which he looked to be so taken with himself I thought I should never have got him away from the glass."

"Be he so much a Narcissus, then?" inquired Master Shakspeare laughingly.

"By Gog and Magog, he was as ugly a fellow to look upon as you may meet with anywhere," replied Harry. "He was pimple-nosed, wall-eyed, and bull-headed, and had a twist in his mouth that was as good as a joke to laugh at. It may be supposed I had but small difficulty in persuading him to dine with me, seeing that for some time past he had been made to forget that such things as dinners had ever been invented. Coming back I spied a wretched old fellow clothed in rags picking up some sticks in the road. I made up to him and gave him alms. On his turning round to thank me, who should it turn out to be but Gregory Vellum."

"Is he so much in want?" asked Master Francis.

"Nay, he be in no want at all," answered Harry. "On my making myself known to him, he made a pathetic lamentation upon the extravagance of people leaving such fine pieces of wood to rot in the streets, and straightway put the sticks in one pocket, and the money I had given him in another. Thinking to have some sport, I did invite him also to the tavern, of the which he eagerly availed himself."

"Asked he not after me?" inquired his nephew.

"Not one word," replied Harry, "his speech was all a lamentation upon his own poverty—that I and many others know to be nothing better than a sham. Well, from him I went straight to the Mitre, where there was a drawer of my acquaintance, and him I ordered to get ready as famous a dinner as the house could afford, which was done to the infinite satisfaction of all I had invited, not one of whom failed to attend. It did amuse me famously to notice the attentions paid to me by Master Tickletoy, whom old Lather had informed who I was, as they came along. He seemed striving, by his commendations, to make me forget he had given me the birch so oft. However, there I sat, king of the feast, making every one enjoy himself to his heart's content. Old Lather could eat but little, he was so pleased. Geof-

frey Sarsnet seemed to forget he was so nigh to the compter. Gregory Vellum ate as if he meant to put provision in him for a month, notwithstanding which I spied him, when he thought none were looking, stuffing what he could in his pocket, to serve for another meal. Big Jack o' the Turnstile, long-legged Tom, the tailor's son round the corner, and Peter Perriwinkle, our neighbor the chandler's apprentice, rarely opened their mouths save to put something in them. Indeed, they looked wonderfully shy. But when the wine had been on the table a sufficient time (and though I took but little myself, I caused it to be drunk of others without stint), they three were the noisiest of the whole lot. The jolly mercer now became as jolly as ever, and had his jest as ready as any, and his laugh the loudest of all. From joking they soon proceeded to singing. At first it did require some pressing to get a song out of either, but before long every one was shouting of some ditty at the top of his voice. Still I made the wine flow down their throats as brisk as it could. At last there was a scene which for exquisite fine fun beateth all I ever met."

"By your description of it, it must have been a droll company, indeed, Harry," observed Master Shakspeare.

"But the best comes to be told," said Harry Daring, laughing so he could scarce get on. "There sat Master Tickletoy, bolt upright in his chair, staring at me as though he thought I was a ghost. Geoffrey Sarsnet was snoring by the side of him; Big Jack o' the Turnstile was for drubbing Peter Perriwinkle because he would not allow that the son of a blacksmith was a better gentleman than a chandler's apprentice; but on his getting up to have at him, he measured his length on the floor, from which he made no effort to rise. Long-legged Tom was crying like a babe, and must needs think of going home to his mother; but on making for the door he stumbled over Big Jack o' the Turnstile, and there *he* lay, unable to move; and Peter Perriwinkle, hastening to pick him up, in a trice was as badly off as the others. Old Lather knelt in a corner of the room, saying of his prayers over a basin, and Gregory Vellum was singing of the hundredth psalm whilst draining of an empty bottle under the table."

"O my life, a ridiculous scene!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, who had been famously amused by Harry's description of it, as was also Master Francis.

"Then paying of the drawer, I took myself off," continued the other, "and laughed right heartily the whole way I came here, thinking of what sport I had had with those I had left behind me. Indeed, had you caught sight of Big Jack o' the Turnstile, in his fine buckram suit, looking as though he thought himself a lord, you would not have forgot it in a hurry, I promise you. Then he would commend the wine as being the best he had ever tasted; which was true enough, for of such drink hitherto had he known about as much as doth a blind puppy of daylight."

"In truth, Harry, I would have given something to have been of the party," observed Master Shakspeare. "But I must now have you both with me to the playhouse," he added, as he rose from his seat. His companions jumped up immediately, and in a few minutes they were proceeding together in the direction of the playhouse in the Blackfriars.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ye have no cause to fear—be bolde,
For ye may here lie uncontrold,
And ye in this have good avauntage,
For lyeng is your comen usage.

JOHN HEYWOOD.

Be of your patron's mind whate'er he says,
Sleep very much, think little, and talk less;
Mind neither good nor bad, nor right nor wrong,
But eat your pudding, fool, and hold your tongue.

PRIOR.

Noble friend,
You bind me ever to you; this shall stand
As the firm seal annexed to my hand.

WEBSTER.

It was some few weeks after the conversation related in the preceding chapter, Sir Robert Cecil sat in the armory at Burleigh house, intent upon the perusing of a goodly quarto volume. There sat a devilish sneer upon his countenance the whilst he turned over the pages, as if he saw in them naught but matter for to be despised; and as he proceeded, he read not as a student who hath any liking for his subject, and goeth through it regularly, but as one who dippeth into a book only to find something he might cavil at, and careth not to know more of it. In this mood, and in this employment was he, when the door opened and in walked my Lord Henry Howard.

"Ever at study!" exclaimed he, as, upon closing of the door carefully, he advanced cheerfully toward him. "Methinks, one so learned in the natures of

men, need care but little for the learning of books."

"I am but looking into this precious work of Raleigh's," replied Sir Robert, somewhat contemptuously.

"Ha!" cried the other, with a like feeling. "What hath this right famous discoverer of nothing to say for himself? Hath he described all the fine kingdoms he meant to have conquered, had he been allowed, or spoke of the wondrous riches he would have brought home had they fallen in his way?"

"I'faith you are not far off," answered Cecil. "The book, as much as I have seen of it, is filled with nothing better than marvellous descriptions. Here you may meet with an exceeding tempting account of some famous rich city—there whole pages concerning of an open country that beateth everything for fruitfulness—a little further, gold and jewels lie thick as blackberries in a hedge—and by, you shall come to a plentiful lot of monsters, and in the next place, countless multitudes of Indians, all sick to have the queen of England for their ruler."

"But what hath he *done*?" asked my lord, sarcastically.

"Why, he hath spent all his money," replied Sir Robert, and thereupon both laughed heartily. "The book seemeth to me to have been writ for the purpose of bolstering up his reputation at court, and to induce others, by its alluring representations, to embark with him in another adventure to the same place."

"As for his reputation at court," observed his companion, "the result of this expedition hath done for him in that quarter. I have just left a circle of those that have most constant access to the queen, and rarely have I heard any one so mauled as was this once-powerful Sir Walter Raleigh. To be called a braggart, an imposter, a mere adventurer, and a writer of the very impudent fables, be the smallest part of what they said of him. It is evident enough her majesty holdeth him now in wonderful small respect. As I have heard, she doth scarcely notice his many cunning attempts to get himself again into her good graces."

"'Tis plain he would give his ears to be in favor again," said the other; "he hath here writ a pitiful dedication to my lord admiral and myself, because we contributed somewhat more largely than others to his adventure. Little knoweth he how much the queen had to do in it.

As I told you, he now taketh me to be the powerfulest friend he hath, and would willingly move me to exercise my influence in his behalf, to get him again to court. This would I willingly do, seeing my own interest in it, but at present it is scarce practicable; for my Lord Essex hath got such exceeding power with her majesty, she careth not for Raleigh's presence, and there are many about her who, thinking to be in favor with her favorite, miss no opportunity of speaking in disparagement of his rival."

"To say the truth, my Lord Essex hath become so pestilent proud, there be no bearing with him," observed the Lord Howard. "Disliked I Raleigh less for assuming so much of the oracle, I would willingly assist in putting down the other."

"That anon," replied Cecil significantly; "he seemeth to hold me of but little account, yet have I managed so with the queen, that she could not do without me if she would; and I doubt not, before long, she will give me such a place of trust as may in some measure reward me for my painstaking."

"I'faith that be good news—but how didst manage it?" inquired his companion.

"I made myself useful to her," said Sir Robert. "By means of my agents abroad I gave her intelligence of what was going on, before she could have a notion of it from any other quarter; and this made her well pleased with me, for she delighteth above all things to astonish her ministers by seeming to know more than they do, and thereby make them the more on the alert to get knowledge of such things. And then I have been ever ready to do her bidding in matters in which she could not safely have trusted others. I have gone on secret messages—I have ridden hard and fast on long journeys—I have endured fatigue of body and trouble of mind—ventured into peril, and suffered contumely, with as much apparent cheerfulness of heart, as if I took wonderful pleasure in it; and all to obtain the queen's confidence."

"I heard say a short time since you were gone on a special mission from her majesty to the famous Dr. Dee," remarked the other; "some said it was that the cunning man might consult the stars as to whether it was propitious to attack the Spaniards; others knew for certain you were sent by the queen's command to know if it would be safe for her to be let blood; and a few would have it, that it

being well known he had discovered the philosopher's stone, her majesty was monstrous eager to have the use of it."

"They knew but little of the matter," replied Cecil. "The truth is, although her majesty hath had great faith in the knowledge of this wonderful astrologer and alchemist ever since she commenced her reign, when she had him consult the stars for a propitious day for her coronation, his greatest value lieth in his excellence as a secret intelligencer."

"Ha!" exclaimed my lord, in some surprise, "doth the old conjuror play the spy?"

"None so well," answered his companion; "his reputation for hermetical learning giveth him great facilities for acquiring information wherever he goeth; and this he turned to good account in his visit to the court of Maximilian—during his travels in Germany—while he stayed with the palatine of Siradia, the king of Bohemia, and a certain rich noble of his, to all of whom the fame of his skill in the transmutation of metals, the drawing of horoscopes, the conversations with spirits, and other of the like marvels, recommended him; and without exciting of the slightest suspicion, he was enabled to send such intelligence to the queen of what was being done in these parts, as was of infinite service to the state, and proved of considerable advantage to himself. Somewhat in acknowledgment of his scholarship, which out of all doubt was more than the ordinary, and somewhat to show the queen's appreciation of his services, which are considered to be of the chiefest importance, he hath lately been appointed warden of Manchester college; and it is there I have been, by her majesty's order, to have his opinion on how stand the stars affected toward the French king's government."

"How mean you to work upon Raleigh?" inquired the Lord Howard.

"'Twould be impolitic at present to move for his return to court," replied Cecil. "I have a surer plan. I find that the queen is bent upon some expedition against the Spaniards which was suggested to her some years since by Raleigh, from the which it is not probable Essex will be kept—indeed, I know he is exceeding eager for it;—and Raleigh of course will be among the commanders, for the queen well knoweth his value on such an occasion, and, in spite of any prejudice she might have against him, or favor for his rival, would see that he

had his proper place, well aware how much it would tend to her advantage. Now it may either happen in this way—Essex, by his notorious rashness, may have the hap to get knocked on the head, and so I get rid of him; or Raleigh, by his superior knowledge and discretion in warlike matters, may get such fame over the other, that the queen could not avoid having him again in favor. The latter taketh me to be the best friend he hath, as I expected; and whilst I raise no suspicions of my real intentions, I doubt not of being able to lead him as I please, till such time as I may think it profitablest to get rid of him. But the extreme haughtiness of Essex maketh it impossible for me to have any firm hold of him by seeking to appear his friend; therefore there can be no way so certain of producing his downfall, as allowing it to come of his own rashness in battle, or by the natural hastiness of his temper, that will exhibit itself in some way offensive to the queen, if Raleigh be taken much notice of by her.”

“An excellent good plan,” exclaimed his companion; “but how, if, during their voyage together, they become great friends?”

“I have made them too jealous of each other for that,” replied Cecil: “beside which I would take care Essex had round him such persons as should, with as much subtleness as might be possible, excite and foster in him, who is easily worked upon, an enmity of the other.”

Thus these two crafty men proceeded. Cecil, whose great cunning was not to be equalled, developing his plans to my Lord Howard, who was at all times his willing agent and thorough parasite; and both determined to pursue those plans with no other object than the advancement of their own interests. After some further parley upon the like confidential matters, the Lord Howard took his leave, to go on a message to the Lady Howard of Walden. He had scarce gone when a serving-man announced Sir Walter Raleigh and Master Francis.

“Ha!” cried Sir Robert Cecil, rising quickly from his seat, and with an appearance of extreme cordiality, hurrying toward Sir Walter to welcome him. “Of all men living, you are he I most wished to have sight of. I knew not you were in London, else would I have called at Durham house. Be seated, I pray you.”

“I arrived but last night,” said Sir Walter, with a like friendliness of man-

ner, but with much more sincerity of heart; and then added, drawing his attention to his companion—“allow me to present to you my friend and secretary Master Francis, whose worthiness I think of so highly, that I would fain have others prize it as much as myself.”

“Master Francis, believe me I am infinitely glad to make your acquaintance,” observed Cecil, seemingly with an earnest courtesy. One so famously commended from so truly excellent a source, must needs deserve all my regard; and I shall feel hurt if you do not make use of my poor influence, if that it can advantage you in any way.”

“I thank you heartily, Sir Robert,” replied Master Francis, modestly.

“You see,” cried Cecil to Sir Walter, pointing to the open book on the table, “I have been feasting my mind on your right admirable work.”

“Like you the matter of it?” inquired Raleigh.

“I like it so thoroughly that, in its perusal, I have been bound, to the complete forgetting of the most pressing things,” answered the other. “Indeed, never read I anything I was so charmed with. It containeth the very wonderfullest accounts that ever were writ; and proveth, beyond all I have known of you, your perfect fitness, above any, as a commander and discoverer of strange countries. Methinks *we* have a Columbus now; and I shall not rest satisfied till I see you acknowledged as such. O’ my life, it putteth me to the fret to see the envy of base minds, that be ever busy in undervaluing of your merit.”

“If they find any pleasure in it, let them,” replied Sir Walter. “I heed them not. Nay, I look upon it as a sort of justice, knowing there be some who praise me greatly beyond my merits, that there should be others who will allow me no merit at all.”

“But then to hear the things that be said of you by such persons maketh me clean out of all patience,” added Sir Robert.

“O a fig’s end for them!” cried Raleigh contemptuously. “If any say aught against me to my face my mouth shall reply; but if they must needs mutter their slanders at my tail, I will answer in such fashion as be good enough for them.”

“Ah! ’tis but fitting they should be despised of you,” observed the other.

“Doth the queen stand in any way better affected toward me, think you?” asked Sir Walter.

"I have lacked nothing in zeal, depend on't," answered Cecil. "Indeed, I have more than once done some hurt to myself in becoming your advocate; yet that I cared not for. What grieveth me so much is to see my honest pains come to naught because of the shameful jealousy of some, who being in favor at court, are ever prejudicing the queen against you, out of fear you should come and supplant them."

"Who are these you allude to?" inquired Raleigh. "If they be worthy of any notice from me, I will presently let them know what I think of them."

"Nay, I will name none," replied Sir Robert. "I like not being a breeder of mischief. I would rather assist in making you friends with all than foes with any. I doubt not that before any very long time, despite of the malice of your many enemies, I shall succeed in my constant endeavors to get you placed in such nearness to her majesty as your superiority in all gallant accomplishments, and your unrivalled experience in war and state affairs deserve."

"I am infinitely bound to you for the many great kindnesses you have done me," said Sir Walter earnestly. "I should certainly feel more than ordinary satisfaction in returning to the place I held at court, were it only to prove to you how grateful a sense I have of your extreme friendliness."

"Mention it not, Sir Walter, I beg of you," answered the other with an affectation of marvellous disinterestedness. "What I have done hath been from love of your notable fine qualities of heart and mind." Then turning to Master Francis, who was examining a curious piece of armor, he added—"Dost not think that suit of chainmail exceeding singular, Master Francis?"

"Truly, it doth seem of a most curious fabric, Sir Robert," replied he.

"It belonged to a famous gallant warrior," continued Cecil. "His great bravery and his wonderful knowledge attracted general attention, and he was so much prized that he became the particular associate of the prince he served, and of his chiefest nobles. Although his many excellencies made him every man's praise, none knew for certain of what family he was, and as he had ever kept a mysterious silence on the matter, it was supposed of some he was related to one who had drawn odium on his name by treason or sacrilege. All believed him to be of high birth, because of the princely manner in

which he bore himself, and the equality with which he appeared to associate with the prince and his nobles; but upon its being discovered that he was nothing better than the base-born offspring of an intrigue between two vulgar persons, the scorn and contempt with which he was immediately treated even by the very lowest man-at-arms, was such as his proud spirit could not endure, and he presently made away with himself with his own dagger."

Master Francis heard this account with the very deepest interest, which increased as it proceeded. He tried to look indifferent, knowing that the gaze of the speaker was upon him; but the sudden burning of his cheeks, and the quick flashing of his eyes, would have betrayed him to the most unobservant spectator. He felt convinced Sir Robert Cecil knew his history, and made up the story he had told only to remind him of his disgrace; and this conviction made him feel more ashamed of himself every moment. Sir Walter Raleigh saw the confusion of his secretary, and knew the cause of it, and drew off the attention of Cecil as quickly as he could by inquiring the history of some other piece of armor, and then kept him in talk in a distant part of the room till Master Francis had recovered himself. Soon afterward, to his secretary's extreme comfort, Sir Walter took his leave.

Cecil was again alone. A smile of peculiar satisfaction was visible upon his features as he sat for some minutes apparently absorbed in thought. His quick eye had noticed the change of countenance in Master Francis, and he in a moment had a shrewd suspicion of the truth; but he soon dismissed the subject as one unworthy of his consideration. His thoughts were now fixed upon matters of far more moment to him, which were no other than the different intrigues in which he was engaged for the obtaining of political power for himself, that now, after so much patient plotting, seemed about coming to a successful issue. Whilst he was thus engaged, he heard a tapping on the wainscot, that made him hurry to the sliding panel elsewhere described; upon opening of which there entered no other than my Lady Howard of Walden, closely wrapped in a dainty cloak, with a close hat and muffler.

"This is wondrous kind of you!" exclaimed Sir Robert, now casting aside the absorbed politician for the devoted lover, as he led the lady to a seat.

"I doubt you deserve I should have such regard for you as to take this step," replied she with an air of wonderful seriousness, as if she was in no way satisfied with what she was about.

"O' my life, adorable sweet creature!—you speak but too truly!" cried Cecil, gazing upon her with most enamored eyes. "What high desert would suffice for so inestimable a thing as a proof of affection from one of so delicate a beauty as my Lady Howard—the admiration of the whole court of England—the envy of her own sex, the delight of the other, and the object of the very fondest idolatry to him who is allowed the supreme felicity of calling himself the humblest of her slaves."

"Fie on you, for a flatterer!" exclaimed her now smiling ladyship.

"Never was truer word spoke," replied her lover, lowering his arm from her shoulder, where it had rested a moment since, to her waist, which it presently encircled, as he knelt down on one knee before her, and with his other hand took one of hers and passionately pressed it to his lips. "By this fair hand! woman have I never seen in any way fit to be compared with you. For indeed, where else shall I meet with eyes of so lustrous a fire—the glance whereof melteth one's very heart away in gazing?"

"Methinks you shall easily find some of a brighter kind," said his fair companion, looking upon him with all the brilliancy her eyes possessed.

"Be sure nature hath formed none such," answered the other; then, having both arms round her waist, he added with increased fervor—"And where shall I find me a form of such exquisite proportions as this I hold in my loving embrace? Oh! what rapture is mine thus to press to my most devoted heart a creature whose every limb hath such perfect grace in it that angels might be drawn from Heaven but to have sight of her perfections."

"Nay, in good truth you can not think so," replied she, smiling upon him in such a manner as showed she took huge delight in what he had said.

"I swear it!" exclaimed Cecil very fervently, and then raising of himself gradually, he continued with more fondness than ever—"And where shall I meet with lips so deliciously smiling, and of so tempting a ruddiness, that he who looketh on them unmoved must needs be little better than a stone. Indeed, there is in them so powerful an attraction that with an influence it be impossible to re-

sist, I find mine own drawn toward them—ay, even upon them!"—

"O' my word now, Sir Robert!—this must not be!" cried his fair companion, looking to be somewhat offended at the liberty he was taking.

"Dear—sweet—excellent Lady Howard!"—

"Nay, I can not allow it!"

"Most charming—most admirable of women!"

"Have done!—or I shall be vexed with you presently."

"Believe me it be nothing but the excess of my passion that no reason can chain, no consideration destroy. I love you, beautiful Lady Howard!—and whilst I gaze on such incomparable charms as those I press within my eager embrace, I find exquisite cause for all I can say or do. It could never be meant that such a paragon of womanly grace should be the monopoly of one who hath no proper appreciation of your value. 'T would be the grossest injustice ever thought of were it allowed. Throw not away so precious a gift as yourself in such a manner I implore you. I who long have worshipped you—I who have sighed in secret for you year after year—who live but in your presence—who think of naught, care for naught, and wish for naught but your own dear self—I best deserve you. Therefore, it be but in common justice, you should make the treasure mine."

"Indeed, I must not suffer any such a thing," replied her ladyship: nevertheless she did suffer it. It may to some seem strange that a man like Sir Robert Cecil, of exceeding unprepossessing appearance, dwarfish in stature, and noted for no gallant accomplishments, should play the lover successfully with so attractive a woman as my Lady Howard of Walden. But he had so beguiling a tongue that an angel might have been deceived by him; and it is a known fact that there be some women of so base a nature (of which sort was her ladyship out of all doubt), that with them the fame of honorable deeds, a true heart, or a mind gifted with the rarest knowledge, would have no chance; whilst a wily tongue that would sufficiently flatter their self-love, no matter how crooked the body, or how evil the disposition with which it was accompanied, would win any such with little trouble. The Lady Howard had managed to conceal an intriguing nature under a vast affectation of prudery so well, that she was not suspected of any; and by her husband she was looked

upon as the only truly virtuous woman of his acquaintance. He was much older than herself, yet was he ever playing the gallant of some pretty woman, all the while living in a monstrous fear that his wife should get knowledge of it. She and Cecil had been much together of late. Each knew the usefulness of the other: each was equally ambitious and unprincipled. The one played the lover to get the queen's confidante in his power; and the Lady Howard saw her own advantage in having as her slave a man evidently so bent upon raising himself to greatness as was Sir Robert Cecil.

These two were very lovingly engaged when all at once the lady jumped up in seeming great alarm. "That is my husband's voice!" exclaimed she. "Let me out quickly! I would not have him see me here for worlds."

"There is no time to get out at the panel, as I hear him approaching the door. Hide behind here, I pray you."

The Lady Howard had just time to get concealed behind the figure of a man in armor that stood in a corner of the room, when the door opened and in walked her husband, as Cecil was very fervently wishing him at the bottom of the Red sea.

"This is an unexpected pleasure!" cried Sir Robert with a famous cordiality, as the other with the gait of a dancing monkey came smirking toward him.

"By this hand! I thought I should take you by surprise," replied my Lord Howard of Walden affectedly. "I'faith!—I am ever surprising of my friends that be the truth. But I have come, having a secret of marvellous importance, which I can not rest without telling you of."

"I feel infinitely honored by the confidence you would place in me," replied Cecil.

"But mind you say to none the slightest breath of that I mean to acquaint you with," said my lord with a monstrous earnestness.

"Of that be well assured, Lord Thomas," answered his companion.

"It be such a secret as I should not like to have known of any," continued the other. "But I would as soon die as my wife should know of it."

Sir Robert Cecil had much difficulty to restrain from smiling, knowing, as he did, that the Lady Howard was so close to her husband she could hear every whisper he uttered; and that therefore the secret, whatever it might be about, and he knew of what character it was

most like to be, could not help being known by her the moment it was said.

"The fact is, these women will be my ruin," added the Lord Howard with a truly wonderful complacency. "For mine own part, I know not why it is, for I see not I am a properer man than others, but I am ever a finding of some pretty woman desperately in love with me, and I can not help being like to get myself into some scrape with my wife, who is one of so rigid a virtue she can not abide the thought of anything unlawful. Indeed, I believe her to be the very purest wife that breathes."

"You have much occasion to congratulate yourself, my good lord," observed Sir Robert.

"Ay, that have I," said her husband. "But what am I to do? These women no sooner have sight of me than they straightway get furiously enamored. Mayhap, if I should appear indifferent to the many tokens they afford me of their attachment, they would go upon violent courses; and I should have their deaths upon my conscience, which I assure you, would make me infinitely miserable all my days."

"Doubtless, to occasion the death of a fair creature is by no means a pleasant source of after reflection," remarked Cecil with an excellent gravity.

"I could never exist with it," replied my Lord Howard. "In honest truth, I am of so mild a heart, that the knowledge of a pretty woman being in any sort of suffering for me, maketh me as pitiful as a child. So if any love me, I must needs love them in return. Methinks I could do no less without the very absolutelest cruelty. What think you?"

"It be a delicate matter to pronounce judgment on," answered his companion. "Yet, being possessed of so incomparable a wife, it seemeth to me an injustice to her, that you should seek the love of any other."

"That is the very devil of it," exclaimed my lord. "Yet, if you will believe me, seek I the love of none. Do what I may they be ever after me. For my lady's sake I would fain avoid them if I could; but the more attempts I make to be true to her, the more violently do they persevere in their affections toward me. Never was man so besieged. Go where I will, I meet them. I can turn no way without finding some fair dame furiously intent upon loving me whether I will or no. O' my life, it be the difficultest thing possible to keep my Lady Howard igno-

rant of these matters. By this light, I know not what she would do came she to get acquainted with any part of what I have told you."

At that moment Cecil observed her ladyship peeping from behind the figure of the man in armor which was now at the back of her husband, and the expression of her countenance was a mixture of exceeding curiosity and anger. What to do he scarce knew, for he expected something would happen; but knowing that such women are never at a loss under the most embarrassing circumstances, he left the management of the matter to her.

"But now for the secret I would you should know of," continued my Lord Howard of Walden, with an air of mystery, as he drew Sir Robert closer to the corner of the room where his wife stood concealed. "I beg of you keep a strict silence. Should you drop a hint of it to another, mayhap it would come to my lady's ears, who hath such extreme horror of unlawful love, there be no knowing what mischief it might do, she would be so shocked."

"Unless you tell it her yourself, Lord Thomas, be sure she can never hear of it," replied his companion.

"I tell it her!" exclaimed her husband in a famous astonishment. "I would no more dare breathe a syllable of it to her than fly. She is so marvellous chaste a wife that were she but to suspect of such a thing, I doubt not she would have no more to do with me; and then the queen coming to know of it, with whom she is wonderfully familiar, I should not be able to show my face at court. So I implore you, be cautious. By this hand, I would not repose this confidence in you, but that I do believe you to be of so trustworthy a disposition, there is nothing you would rather not do than that I should receive hurt at your hands."

"Indeed, you but do me justice, my lord," answered the other with his usual affectation of sincerity. "It will ever be my happiness to serve you in any way in which my poor ability lieth; and from the admiration I can not but entertain for my Lady Howard, in consequence of the wonderful goodness of her nature, in anything in which she is concerned, you may always count upon my instant good offices—out of very absolute affection I assure you."

"Now, that be exceeding kind of you!" cried my lord, shaking his supposed friend by the hand very cordially. "It doth my

heart good to meet such friendship. I would do you such another turn at any time."

"I doubt it not, I doubt it not, my lord," replied Cecil, returning the other's shake of the hand with infinite earnestness.

"But about this secret," continued his companion, dropping his voice a little, and assuming a greater mysteriousness than ever. "You must know there hath lately come on a visit to my wife, as sweet a young creature as eye ever beheld. To describe to you her charms of feature and person, could I never with any justice. In honest truth, her comeliness is of such a sort that none could gaze on without loving. By this light, I tried all I could not to be enamored with her. I would scarce look at her. I avoided being left alone with her at any time. I gave her such a lack of civil speech as must have offended any other. Yet it was easy to see from the beginning she had taken a desperate liking to me. She possesseth the most moving eyes woman ever had; and these she should fix on me for such a length of time, and with such an extreme tenderness, I could not help knowing what her thoughts were about. Still was I mightily circumspect in my behavior. Finding this of no avail, she would, ever and anon, fetch such woful sighs as were quite pitiful to hear; and give me such sly glances as would have set any man in a flame. However, I kept thinking of my lady, and regarded her with as little attention as was possible. Afterward she took to showing me the loveliest passages out of Master Shakspeare's most sweet poem, the Rape of Lucrece, and asked me, with a look that shot a thousand arrows into my heart and liver, if I did not believe them to be monstrous delicately writ. I must confess, at this I began to be somewhat moved. By this hand, there can be no man living who could read of such things pointed out to him by a sweet young creature, and remain indifferent. I could not help acknowledging, with some emphasis, that they were writ with a very infinite delicacy. Thereupon she smiled on me after so loving a fashion, that my heart could not avoid dissolving of itself away like a lump of sugar in a cup of wine. The next time I handed her to dinner she squeezed my hand. O' my life, she did squeeze it so tenderly I was forced into doing of the same; I could no more help it than I could help any other thing that I must needs do; for, to say the truth, she hath

the plumpest, delicatest hand I ever held; and no mortal man could have his fingers pressed by such a sweet young creature and feel it not.

"Still I tried not to love her. By this light, the more I tried the less I succeeded! There was she, day after day, giving me the lovingest looks, the touchinest sighs, and the movinest squeezes of the hand, that ever were known. I did all that could have been expected of me. But to hold out with an indifference of such things was more than I could have done had I been as virtuous as a pickled herring. My humanity would endure it no longer. I straightway fell to loving her as famously as I might. My heart is now filled with her night and day. I know that she is enamored of me to that extent she can not eat, drink, or sleep, with any comfort; and I, having knowledge of this, can not but be in the like way affected. All that troubleth me is the fear that my Lady Howard should suspect me. I am in a constant alarm at the thought of it. It be beyond all manner of doubt that she is the very virtuouslest of wives; yet, betwixt you and I, when she hath been put out at all, she hath a look with her of so terrible a sort, that—oh Lord!" exclaimed he, breaking off on a sudden in his narration, and starting back in as complete a fright as ever was seen; for, to his utter confusion, there stood his wife before him: and, as if to show he had in no way exaggerated the terribleness of her looks, she had fixed on him a gaze so threatening, gloomy, and indignant, as must have made her appear to him a very Medusa.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Now, gentlemen, I go
To turn an actor and a humorist.

BEN JONSON.

Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on;
Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild. MILTON.

Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood,
And melancholy is the nurse of phrensy,
Therefore, they thought it good you hear a play,
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
Which bars a thousand harms, and lengthens life.
SHAKSPEARE.

"COME, Master Francis! Prythee let us tarry no longer! Master Shakspeare bade me tell you to be sure to be at the playhouse early, as there was a new play, which he wished you to see from the beginning."

"I shall be ready on the instant, Harry."

The two young friends were in a room fitted up as a library, that stood in a turret of Durham house, looking over upon the river, and Harry was leaning out of the casement, taking note of what sort of persons were upon the water, on whom he would make all sorts of droll remarks, and occasionally turning of himself round to hurry his companion, who was now fastening on his rapier. In a few minutes they were both speeding together in the direction of the playhouse in the Blackfriars. There was a marked difference between the two young men. Harry Daring was full of spirits, talking and laughing as he went, as if he cared for nothing in the world; but Master Francis looked with as absolute a melancholy as ever was seen in him, and took heed of nothing that was said of the other, or of any one thing or person that he passed. In truth, what had been told him by Sir Robert Cecil had made a wonderful impression on his sensitive nature, and had created in him with increased force those humiliating feelings regarding his birth that had oftentimes before made him so miserable at heart. He fancied that it had been said by design, but this was merely the result of the state of suspiciousness and fear in which he felt when any allusion was made to this distressing subject; and which made him conjure up all manner of evils, when he thought it possible his fine acquaintances might find out that he was of such low origin. He had long since entertained a desire to see his reputed father, but now he was determined on it. It appeared to him that if this Holdfast was a good man, and would not be ashamed to acknowledge him as a son, he should be enabled to care the less for the contumely of those to whom he had used to look as the conferrers of that honorable reputation he had been so ambitious to acquire.

In these different moods Master Francis and Harry Daring entered the playhouse, and took their seats in one of the rooms. The lower part of the playhouse was nearly full, the scaffolding quite, and that in which the more genteel sort of the audience sat, was rapidly receiving company. The opening and shutting of the doors as the people were let in, and the hum of those who were talking in different parts of the house, were the chief sounds that were heard. Harry amused himself before the play began by noticing

the great variety of hats and caps which were worn by those beneath him; and certes there seemed to be some of every kind and shape under the sun. Master Francis was still engaged in pursuing of his melancholy thoughts, when all at once he was roused from his reflections by a sudden uncovering of heads and a great cry of, "The queen! the queen!" and true enough, upon looking opposite to him, he noticed Queen Elizabeth, clad in such splendor as he had not seen her in before, with a famous throng of lords and ladies entering one of the rooms, which was hung very richly with embroidered velvet. Before she took her seat, she came forward and courtesied several times, with a dignity and becomingness that did win her all sorts of commendations from those of her loving subjects who could get a sight of her. Upon the subsiding of the tumult one of the players came forward and spoke the prologue, which was well received, and then the curtain which divided the stage from the groundlings, slowly rose. All in the house presently directed their entire attentions to the players.

Master Francis now, for the first time, felt some sort of interest in what he came to see. He had not the slightest knowledge of the subject of the new play, or by whom it had been writ, but as Master Shakspeare had been so particular in wishing him to see it the first time it was played, he had no doubt it would be found of some merit. At the beginning he could hear but indistinctly what was said on the stage, which he noticed as having been fresh strewed with rushes, but on something reaching his ear he listened more attentively.

"No! Surely it can not be!" he exclaimed, and his face became so flushed, and then so pale, and he looked so wonder-struck, and felt such a quick beating at his heart, as he had before had no experience of.

"Eh? What can not be, Master Francis?" inquired his friend.

"Nothing—Harry, nothing," replied the other, as well as he could, for he felt as though he could scarce breathe.

"Silence, fellow!" cried my Lord Dimple, who was in the same room with him.

"Dost call my friend 'fellow?'" asked Harry Daring, turning sharp round upon the last speaker; but my Lord Dimple answered not. Mayhap he liked not the resolute look of the youth who questioned him. Master Francis pulled Harry by

the sleeve, who, though he seemed wonderfully inclined for a quarrel, presently turned his attention to the stage. As for Master Francis, he seemed as though he could not sit still a moment. Now he was bending forward to see the players, and anon throwing himself back in his seat with a flushed countenance and anxious look that showed he took in the play a deeper interest than common. Whenever there was any applause from the audience he appeared more moved than ever; yet his eyes brightened up famously all the time as if he was as well pleased as any. Sometimes when no approbation was exhibited his cheek grew pale, and his whole appearance exceeding uneasy; but directly there was any clapping of hands his color came as vividly as before, and there was an extraordinary excitement in his look.

The subject of the new play was "The Right Tragical Story of Hypatia." It may not be known to all that in the early part of the fifth century there lived a lady of wonderful virtue, beauty, and learning, who was the daughter of the mathematician Theon of Alexandria; and was of so gifted a mind that she presided over the school of Platonic philosophy taught in that city, with such marvellous ability that she drew crowds of scholars, philosophers, and statesmen, from all parts, to hear her lectures; and was the chief adviser in matters of importance of Orestes, the governor of Alexandria, by whom she was held in the very greatest estimation. Now the patriarch of the city, Cyril—or, as he hath been since called by many who were about as little worthy of the title as he, St. Cyril—was an arrogant, turbulent, and bigoted priest, who, surrounded by a mob of worthless monks, as furious and fanatic as himself, was ever creating of some disturbance by aiming at the destruction of all such who would dare to worship God after any fashion save what he would allow; and he, envious of the superior reputation of the wise and beautiful Hypatia, and suspecting that she influenced the governor in his behavior to him—seeing that Orestes would not tolerate his mischievous conduct—caused Peter, a preacher, together with a party of his clergy, whom he had infuriated against her, every one of whom were priests of the devil rather than of God, to seize her as she walked along the streets, which they did like so many enraged demons, then dragging her into a neighboring church with violent outcries and fierce execrations, they strip-

ped her to the skin, when having satiated their eyes upon the beauties of her person, they tore her limb from limb, carried the mangled body in horrid triumph through the city; and at last made them a famous bonfire, and therein had her consumed to ashes.

A very moving play was made out of this doleful tragedy, and the players seemed intent upon exerting themselves as much as was possible, that it might be well liked of the audience. Burbage played the part of St. Cyril, and got abundance of applause for the wonderful striking picture he did give of this priestly Richard the Third. Lowing was exceedingly dignified as Orestes, the governor. Demetrius, a young philosopher, in love with Hypatia, was very admirably played by Taylor: and other of the players had parts allotted to them in which they could best display their particular skilfulness. There was one part, though of but minor importance in the tragedy, that did require no ordinary ability in the performance of it, which was the character of Cleon, the father of Hypatia, and he found so able a representative in Master Shakspeare that nothing could exceed the admiration with which it was looked on by the spectators. In fact, though each player seemed doing of his best, none could have put his whole heart into what he was about as did Master Shakspeare.

Master Francis only appeared to get the more excited as the play proceeded. He took a hasty glance around him, and observed every part of the playhouse thronged with persons, all of whom, from the queen's majesty to the very humblest serving-man who had treated himself with standing room upon the scaffold, looked absorbed in the progress of the play. At this his heart beat more quickly than before, and he leaned himself back in his seat with a countenance in a constant flush, marked with a continual anxiety and fearfulness.

"Harry!" whispered he at last.

"Nay, prythee speak not to me," replied his friend with some little impatience, "this be the capitalest play I ever saw, and I be so taken up with it I can have no ear for anything else."

This rebuff, instead of offending him as it might have done others, appeared the rather to please him much, for he smiled in such a sort as showed he found some satisfaction in it. Presently the curtain fell to mark the close of the act. "Now, Master Francis, what would you with me?" said the other.

"This is *my* play, Harry," whispered his companion. He spoke in the lowest voice he could, for though he thought 'twould be a pleasure for his friend to know this, he could not bear that any of the strangers around him should have suspicion of it.

"Your play, Master Francis? Said you your play though, indeed?" asked Harry Daring, his honest face in a wondrous exultation.

"Speak not so loud," replied the other, in so little a voice he could scarce be heard. "This is the very play I did take to Master Shakspeare for his perusal the day you treated my uncle and others at the Mitre; and he hath got it acted by the players without letting me know anything of the matter, thinking for to surprise me when I should see it played."

"By Gog and Magog, what excellent good news!" cried Harry, seemingly in as great a delight as he could be. "I did like it infinitely when I knew not by whom it was writ, but now I like it a thousand times better than ever."

After this nothing could exceed the interest which Harry took in the progress of the play, save the zeal with which he applauded such passages as met with the approbation of the audience. What Master Francis had said of it was true. Master Shakspeare, on its perusal by him, saw of what merit it was, and after revising it with great care, he had read it to the chiefest of his brother-players, by whom it was so liked they would have it brought out as quickly as was possible; thereupon he gave to each the playing of such characters as he knew best suited their abilities, taking to himself one of less importance, which he studied with all the care he was master of; and took such pains that all should be perfect in their parts as he had never done even for plays of his own: then, when everything was ready, he did prevail on his patron, the Lord Southampton, through his influence with my Lord Essex, to get the queen to come to the playhouse the first time it was played, knowing this would be the means of procuring for it as favorable an audience as play could have; after which, having kept Master Francis in entire ignorance of the matter, he sent for him in the manner as hath been described.

It has been shown how desirous Master Francis was none should know he was the writer of the play. Indeed, he had ever been of so modest a nature, that he liked not at all being made the gaze or

the talk of those around him, and although the greater intercourse with society he had had of late years had taken from him much of his natural shyness, the situation in which he found himself placed, made him now painfully anxious to escape observation. With these feelings, it can be no difficult matter to imagine what he experienced when he heard, at the close of the fourth act, a famous fat old dame who, with a daughter as fat as herself, sat close to him, inquire of Harry Daring, if he knew by whom the play was writ.

"Ay, that do I, mistress," replied Harry quickly; "it be writ by my true friend, Master Francis here, who for an honest heart hath not his match anywhere."

Master Francis heard not what followed. He felt as if he would have given everything he possessed to get out of the playhouse, but he was well aware that if he attempted to move, all eyes would be upon him, so there he sat in a state of confusion impossible to be described, knowing but too well, that not only were the eyes of the portly dame and her portly daughter fixed wonderingly upon him, but that every one in the room was whispering remarks concerning his being the writer of the play. Even my Lord Dimple was heard to tell another lord who was beside him, who was now his true friend in place of my Lord Simple, with whom he had lately had a dreadful quarrel because the other would have it he was the truer friend of the two, that he thought the play must be a good play if, when it came to the end, no fault should be found in it. To take off his attention from these, Master Francis turned to look at the spectators before and around him. In a moment he drew back his head with more confusion than ever. It seemed to him, by the hasty glance he took, as if every eye in the playhouse was directed toward the place where he sat. In his mind there could be no doubt that it was generally known he was the writer of the play, and his sense of shame became every moment more overpowering at finding of himself put forward with a conspicuousness he had ever such dread of. In this belief he had somewhat deceived himself. As he leaned forward to gaze on the players, his youthful handsome face had attracted some attention, which, from the singular way in which he behaved, his restlessness, the ever-varying expression of his countenance, and the marked anxiety he exhibited, soon increased, and at last became so general, that during the interval between the acts, he was the

subject of observation of nearly all who could get sight of him.

The last act having the deepest interest in it soon took off from him the notice of the spectators. He then found he could look up without being observed of any, and could not help feeling wonderfully gratified at the sight of so noble a company—the queen—her court—the many beautiful dames, and proud gallants that filled the rooms around him—the throng of groundlings beneath, and the crowd of those above, all with eyes fixed upon the stage, and ears so attentive to what was being said by the players, that you might have heard a pin drop. As the play proceeded toward its conclusion a more powerful feeling influenced him and quickly took possession of his nature. This was a fear that the spectators might not like the catastrophe. As yet no disapprobation had been shown. The applause was right hearty on numberless occasions, and seemed to increase the more at every scene. The players seeing that their exertions were probably appreciated, now took all the more pains with what they did, striving what they could that the play should be well liked to the end; but Master Francis, seeing how strongly the feelings of the spectators were excited, as the tragedy approached its termination, had so overpowering a dread that the ending would disappoint the general expectations of it, that at last he could gaze no more upon the stage, but sat himself as far back as he could, trembling with the most fearful anxiousness; and his heart beating with such marvellous quickness as made it quite distressing. The crisis came. He could only hear, beside the voices of the players, the half-stifled sobs of some fair creature in whom the deep tragic interest of the conclusion was exciting her powerfulest sympathies. All else in the house seemed as silent as the grave. He felt as if he could scarce breathe. The play had ended. For a second or two nothing was heard but the sobbing of several; when, all at once, as if by a general impulse, there burst forth such a torrent of tumultuous applause as seemed like to shake the playhouse to its very foundations.

"Ah, Master Francis, this be a play indeed!" exclaimed Harry Daring, clapping of his hands as if he would never have done, with the tears running down his cheeks in a very shower. Master Francis could not have uttered a word if it had been to save his life. He felt proud and happy: so happy it seemed as though

naught of what had plagued him so long, had now power to hurt him in the slightest—so happy, he could think of no one thing but the infinite gratification he enjoyed in finding his play so liked of such a noble company. Alack, his happiness lasted not long. Upon raising his eyes, in the room opposite to him, which, he had heard my Lord Dimple tell his friend, contained the French ambassador and a party of foreign gentlemen and ladies, he beheld no other than Padre Bartolomé dressed in a very courtier-like fashion, and close behind him gazing intently on Master Francis, sat the beautiful Joanna. He would have hurried toward her on the instant, but seeing her in company with such a thorough villain as he felt convinced the Jesuit must be from the baseness of his behavior to him, made him pause some minutes, the which time he employed in perplexing thoughts of how she got acquainted with him, and in wondering if they had knowledge of each other whilst he was with the expedition in Guiana. Upon again looking up he noticed that the room was empty of all its company.

“Come, Master Francis! the queen hath gone, so methinks we had best follow,” here exclaimed Harry Daring, who, unnoticed by his friend, had hitherto been commending of the play to the portly dame and her daughter. “I warrant me you are monstrous glad at heart now because of your play succeeding so well. I can only say, never felt I such delight as I have this day.”

His companion replied not, but he was anything but glad at heart. An uneasiness upon the subject of Joanna’s mysterious behavior, had taken away all the pleasurable feelings he had enjoyed but a short while since. However, making a violent effort, he accompanied Harry Daring out of the room, and made direct for that part of the playhouse where he expected to meet Master Shakspeare, for he could not think of leaving the place without thanking him for the pains-taking and loving kindness he had shown in performing of his play. He had scarce put his foot upon the stage when he was met by his old acquaintance Gib, the call-boy, who, as soon as he recognised in the handsome gallant before him, the youth whom he had been so desirous should “do the women,” shuffled round him, scratching of his head, with his eyes staring in all sorts of ways, and his mouth extending of itself to its greatest dimensions.

“Hullo, Beauty!” exclaimed Harry, laughingly, as soon as he caught sight of the call-boy, “did your mother feed you with the fire-shovel?”

At this moment Master Shakspeare came up, and gave very cordial greetings to both the young men. Master Francis, though he sought his friend with the express intention of expressing his gratitude, now found he could not say a word. All that he could do was to press the hand he held in his own, and look the infinite thankfulness he felt; and this appeared to be as well understood of the other as if he had said all it was possible for him to say. Master Shakspeare hurried him along, saying that some friends of his were waiting for him—Harry Daring following, till they entered a goodly room filled with a worshipful company, like unto that previously described in the chamber of the actors at the Globe playhouse, on the Bankside.

“My masters!” exclaimed Master Shakspeare, addressing them, as soon as he had come in, “I have brought you here one to whom you owe great store of thankfulness for the absolute gratification received of you to-day from the playing of that most sweet, very moving, and admirably-writ piece of tragedy, upon the doleful history of Hypatia, that hath been so well liked of the queen’s majesty and a noble concourse of spectators. Of the excellent fine genius this play showeth, methinks it be scarce necessary for me to speak. I doubt not all here are as willing and as able to do it justice as am I. What further I would say is, that the writer thereof, to my certain knowledge of him, is of as courteous, as modest, and as sweet a disposition as ever it hath been my good fortune to meet.”

Master Francis had but an imperfect knowledge of what took place after this. The handsome manner in which Master Shakspeare had spoke of him before so many of the chiefest wits and gallantest spirits of the age, had so bewildered him he could make no reply to the fine compliments and hearty congratulations of those who came thronging round, seemingly anxious to show their commendation of a writer in such repute of so notable a critic. His shamefacedness though won him such good opinion of many, as he could never have gained by the completest impudency that ever was exhibited. Master Shakspeare behaved throughout with so entire a friendliness as was truly delightful to look on; answering for the youth when there was any neces-

sity, just the exact sentiments he felt at his heart; and with pleasant jests, and kindly assurances, seeking all he could to make the other feel at his ease. It so happened Master Francis had managed to bring himself to some sort of composure when a new source of disquietude appeared. This was no other than my Lord Southampton coming in all haste into the room, saying the queen was so taken with the new play she would have the writer present himself before her without delay at her palace at Whitehall. Of those who heard this intelligence, there were none so well pleased as Master Shakspeare and Harry Daring, the latter of whom expressed his gratification in no measured language, with a perfect carelessness of the persons of worship by whom he was surrounded.

Master Francis, placing himself under the guidance of my Lord Southampton, started off for the palace. It is not to be denied that his thoughts now took somewhat of that ambitious turn he had once so loved to indulge himself with. But as the wind is impelled, so it will go. The knowledge that the queen had so liked his play as to send for him, was a sufficient basis for the most famous dreams of honorable advancement, to the entire forgetfulness of all other things; and on he went, building up his hopes higher than ever he had done. Nor was the conversation of his companion at all likely to make him less sanguine. The latter had heard from Master Shakspeare such accounts of his young friend as interested him greatly in the success of his play; and the little he had seen of him, in conjunction with the singular fine talent the play exhibited, so increased that favorable impression that he would gladly have done whatever lay in his power to serve him. What he said by degrees wrought in the other such confidence that, when he entered the presence-chamber, he was more at his ease than he expected to be.

Her majesty stood in the centre of a brilliant circle, the most conspicuous of whom were my Lord Essex, dressed very gorgeously, and looking as if he were king of them all; my Lady Howard of Walden and her lord, with whom, after a great to-do, on the part of Sir Robert Cecil, whom he ever after regarded as the honestest nature that ever lived, she was reconciled; Lady Blanche Somerset, and many ladies of her court; my Lord Henry Howard, my Lord Bumble, and divers other nobles and gallants. My Lord

Southampton pressed forward, and with a very famous courtesy introduced his young companion to the queen's notice. It was evident that Master Francis's well-disposed features and elegant figure, set off to the fairest advantage by a dress that was at once simple and gentlemanly, created for him a favorable impression amongst all there. Some of the ladies whispered their commendations to one another, the gentlemen stared in some sort of curiosity, and Queen Elizabeth, who had a notable liking for men of a proper stature and comeliness, could not help gazing admiringly on the handsome youth before her. He stood with a very natural modesty at some little distance, his heart beating high, and his pale thoughtful face a little more flushed than ordinary.

"This play of yours, young sir, hath pleased us mightily," observed the queen at last, in her most condescending manner. "Out of all doubt it is a marvellous proper play. You seem scarce of ripe age enough for a play-writer; and for a play so well writ, disclosing of so excellent a judgment, it seemeth strange indeed it should be writ by you. Hast writ other plays?"

"Others have I writ, please your majesty; but this be the first I have had the good hap to get played," replied Master Francis, in a wonderful delight at hearing of such pleasant words from so honorable a source.

"And who is he that hath writ so admirable a play?" inquired her majesty; "as yet we know naught of the writer, save that we see him."

"I am the secretary of Sir Walter Raleigh, please your majesty." At this acknowledgment there was a dead silence, and many of the courtiers thought, however clever Master Francis might be as a writer of plays, he lacked judgment wofully in saying he was in any way connected with a disgraced favorite. My Lord Essex was the first to speak.

"Methinks Sir Walter Raleigh is exceeding fortunate in having such a servant," observed he.

"Had he showed as much wit in other matters as he hath in the choice of a secretary, mayhap there would be but little fault to find in him," added the queen. To an observation so shrewd the courtiers thought no reply could be made. Her majesty then turning to Master Francis said, "We asked you not of what office you held, but of what name you were." This was a question he seemed perfectly

unprepared for. Since his remembrance he had been called "Master Francis," by some, because he was a gentleman-like youth, by others, because such they had heard him styled. Not knowing of his father's name, he had himself used no surname. He liked not to call himself of the same name with his mother, fearing it might injure her reputation; and after he had heard of Holdfast's relationship to him, he had as little liking for his name, knowing it was that of a paltry cheater; so "Master Francis" he had still remained.

"We wait your answer," observed the queen, somewhat impatiently, for she would put up with no dallying.

"I am called Master Francis, please your majesty," replied he, in some confusion.

"Master Francis, is it?" observed his interrogator, sharply; "but hast no other name than Master Francis? Of what name was your father called?"

Master Francis hesitated whether to say Holdfast or Vellum. He dreaded telling a lie, and he liked not speaking the truth. He got more embarrassed every moment, and knowing that the eyes of the whole assembly were fixed upon him, only increased his uneasiness. The queen looked as if she was displeased at his delay in answering of her questions.

"Odds pittikins!" exclaimed her majesty, "by the backwardness of your replies we are inclined to think, with the old proverb, that it be a wise child who knoweth his own father." The laugh which followed this remark of the queen's did increase Master Francis's confusion to such an extent, he scarce knew what to do or say.

"Dost keep the queen of England waiting for an answer, sirrah?" angrily asked Elizabeth. "We asked of you the name of your father. Who was he?"

"I believe his name was Holdfast," stammered out Master Francis; who now felt he would be glad enough had he never entered the place.

"You *believe* his name was Holdfast!" exclaimed the queen, with marked emphasis, and then added, with her face in a sudden flush of indignation, and her voice expressing all the bitterness of scorn and disdain. "But we now see the cause of your so delaying us an answer. You must needs be the offspring of some low intrigue; and we wonder at your villainous impudency in entering our presence. Get you gone, sirrah! This be no place for the encouragement of bastards."

Master Francis felt at that moment as if all the blood in his body had rushed into his face. His heart throbbed so he was obliged to gasp for breath. His throat seemed as if tightened with a cord, and his temples were as though fire burned within them. He saw not the looks of contempt with which the courtiers regarded him, the surprise of my Lord Essex, or the pity of my Lord Southampton, as the queen haughtily turned upon her heel, saying to one of the gentlemen-pensioners in attendance, "Remove that fellow!" and heard not the cutting sarcasm of my Lady Howard of Walden, as she shrunk away from him as though he were a leper, or the many rebukes of my Lord Bumble, whilst he helped to lead him from the presence; and how he got out of the palace and made his way to Master Shakspeare's lodgings, he never could explain.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

My free drift

Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of wax: no levelled malice
Infects one comma in the course I hold,
But flies an eagle flight, bold, and forth on.

SHAKSPEARE.

These are the youths that thunder at a playhouse,
And fight for bitten apples; that no audience
But the tribulation of Tower Hill or the limbo
Of Limehouse, their dear brothers are able to endure.
IBID.

Mercy o' me, what a multitude are here!
They grow still too—from all parts they are coming.
IBID.

"OH, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the young secretary, in a voice scarcely articulate for emotion, as he caught hold of his hand and stood pale and trembling beside him. "For the love of Heaven, counsel me, or methinks I can not but go mad." His friend marvelled greatly to see him in so terrible an excitement; and after talking reasonably, and with a sincere affection, he drew from him what had happened.

"To be buoyed up unto the highest pitch of expectation," continued Master Francis, still giving evidence, in his look and manner, he was exceeding moved. "To have the fairest hopes a sanguine nature ever had—to stand in the presence of the queen of England, and of a right noble company, and to be admired and commended by all—and then to have so gross an insult cast on me that my heart boils at it, and to be thrust out of the royal palace with such scorn as the basest

of wretches could scarce have deserved—indeed, Master Shakspeare, I can not—can not bear it.”

“Regard it not, Master Francis,” observed his companion, who seemed famously vexed his young friend should have had no better treatment. “Remember you are in no way to blame in this. The disgrace is theirs who put so infamous a wrong upon you.”

“Knew you how earnestly I have sought an honorable reputation,” added the other, “how, night and day, I have toiled that my name might be in some repute; with how great a love I revered those of admirable fame, and how anxiously I strove to gain for myself some of their excellence, that I might live to be thought as nobly of by others as I thought of them, you would know how deeply I feel the contumely that hath been cast upon me by the queen and her court! All hope is lost to me now—nothing but shame and contempt can be my portion.”

“You wrong yourself mightily in thinking so, and you wrong the world more,” answered Master Shakspeare. “Mayhap the queen is as good a queen as any; but that she hath either delicacy or feeling, will I never believe: as for the trumpery of the court, I have had sight of them. They will live, die, and rot, and be no more heard of. The good opinion of such be no more worth having than is the cackling of so many geese. Look abroad. There be thousands of honest hearts and manly intellects in the streets and the fields, the chamber of the student, the workshop of the artisan, and the warehouse of the merchant. ’Tis the breath of their voices that hath the establishing of a reputation. The opinion of courtiers be of no worth, and liveth but for a day; but the judgment of the nation soundeth the trumpet of fame, that hath its echoes from generation to generation, unto the ending of the world. Fear not you shall not have justice done you. I doubt not at all your merit standeth as fair a chance of honorable distinction with the world, as any that live. My advice to you is, let not what hath passed trouble you. Come with me to find out this Holdfast. If he be of any reputation he shall own you as a father. If he be of a different sort, heed not his relationship. Come what may, I will be as good to you as any father that breathes; and right happy and proud shall I be to be thought of kin to one of so estimable a nature.”

The result of this truly honest speech

on the part of Master Shakspeare, was the proceeding of the two toward the barber-chirurgeon’s in Eastcheap. For all that Master Francis was so moved at what had lately taken place, upon coming nigh unto the house of Geoffrey Sarsnet he could not help recollecting of what sweet pleasure he had there had, and how it had all at once been dashed with bitterness, the taste whereof had since made his life a perfect misery; and from this he presently took to thinking of the strangeness of his seeing Joanna and the Padre Bartolomé together in the room with the French ambassador. However, his thoughts on this matter were quickly brought to an ending upon his entering the shop of his old acquaintance. Master Lather was standing with his spectacles on his nose, and his stick in his hand, intent upon the putting on of his hat, whilst giving some directions to an exceeding tall, spindle-legged, hatchet-faced boy, his new apprentice, whose dull look and awkward bearing made him a famous contrast unto the spirited and quick-witted Harry Daring, his predecessor. Noticing the entrance of two gallants, the barber-chirurgeon turned from his apprentice, and with his hat in his hand, with some courtesy, mixed with a marvellous fine gravity, he made up to them and asked them of their pleasure. It was plain he knew not Master Francis, though he had seen him frequently. Master Shakspeare took upon himself the business they had come about, believing he could best manage it.

“Know you, good sir, whereabouts dwelleth a worthy man of this neighborhood, one Master Lather?” inquired he, putting on as monstrous serious a face as ever was seen.

“I be Martin Lather, may it please you, sweet sir, and there be no other of that name hereabouts,” replied the other, wonderfully pleased to be inquired for in so courteous a fashion, by so noble-looking a gentleman.

“I am infinitely glad so easily to have found one of whom I have heard such good report,” added Master Shakspeare, at the which old Lather looked to be in a greater delight than before. “I have come to you on a matter of some moment to this my friend and me, in which none but you can avail us anything; and from the honorable account we have heard of your great learning, your admirable skill, and your extreme worthiness, we have made bold to wait on you for your advice.”

"I shall be proud to serve you, sweet sir, in anything wherein I have ability," answered the chirurgeon, bustling eagerly to put seats for his visitors. "Seat you, good sirs, I pray you; for is it not writ in Esculapius, 'requiescat in pace,' which meaneth, 'much standing tireth the legs'?" Master Shakspeare would have smiled, but he knew what depended on the keeping of his gravity, so he took the offered chair without moving of a muscle. "I am much bound to those who have so commended me to you," continued old Lather. "As for my worthiness, I would it were more than it is; for as that shining light of the age, Master Tribulation Holdfast, declareth, we are all but as pitch that defileth they who touch it."

"Alack, we are *very* pitch!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, looking as doleful as if he were about to be hanged.

"As for my skill, mayhap it is something more than the ordinary," added the chirurgeon with some complacency. "I have studied my art but ill, lack I any knowledge in it. It be true enough I can not recover one dead of the plague, or fit a bald man with a periwig without stuff for the making of it; yet in aught which can reasonably be done appertaining unto barbering or chirurgery, methinks I can do as well as the best in the land."

"Better, I will be bound for't," said the other.

"It pleaseth you to think so," replied Master Lather, looking in no way displeased with such an opinion. "And as for my learning, I have ever been diligent in the studying of books; and perchance, I shall be found as good at the making of verses, or the quoting of Latin, or other clerk-like accomplishments, as some of our chirurgeons who pretend to greater scholarship. My painstaking hath been constant, and there be no becoming learned without wonderful trouble. Indeed, Aristotle himself sayeth that the chiefest aids to wisdom are, 'Pallor et genæ pendulæ, oculorum ulcera tremulæ manus,' the which rendered into the vulgar, is, 'late hours and early, thumbing the properest books, and discoursing with they who be more learned than yourself;' the which I have done this forty years."

"I am well convinced of it," remarked Master Shakspeare as gravely as he could. "But the business upon which we come is of such moment as requireth your instant attention. Listen, I pray you, worthy Master Lather." The old barber-chirurgeon was in a moment look-

ing as attentive as any man could, whereupon the other proceeded. "We two, sick of the vanities of this most heathenish world, and long having scruples of conscience concerning of certain things belonging unto the faith as by law established, desire to enter into a more strict society, where we may be comforted by the hearing of some famous preacher, capable of ministering to our spiritual wants. We have heard of your being one of such a community as that we wish to enter into, and the manner in which you have been commended hath made us marvellously desirous to ask of you to render us your assistance in the hearing and having speech with such a preacher as you, in your superior judgment, may think best qualified to do us the service we require."

"That will I and readily," quickly replied Master Lather. "When you came I was on the point of attending a meeting of the faithful, where, if you will now come with me, you shall hear Master Tribulation Holdfast, who be, according to my thinking, the very searchingest preacher that ever expounded text."

This was exactly what Master Shakspeare wanted; and presently the three were proceeding together under the guidance of the barber-chirurgeon, who all the way kept sounding of the praises of the person they were so intent upon seeing. It was a difficult thing for any who were not of that sect to get admission among a congregation of puritans, as these being frequently oppressively used of the government, and contemptuously treated of the court, would retaliate with some disdain if they could; and this Master Shakspeare knowing, made him have recourse to stratagem. The anxiety and uneasiness of Master Francis had greatly increased. He was now about to see his father, of whom he had been kept in entire ignorance, and of whose affection he had been debarred for so long a time. From his earliest boyhood he had been of that affectionate nature which ever requireth some natural source upon which to pour out its sympathies. For his uncle he could have no feeling in common; his affection for Harry Daring though sincere was not powerful enough to satisfy him: nor was his young friend of such a disposition as could create in him any kinder feeling. At one time his devotion to Joanna was of so fond and exclusive a kind as left no room in his heart for love of any other. When he discovered this was not reciprocal there

was a void which all that he felt for Master Shakspeare and Sir Walter Raleigh could not fill. The shame that, to his sensitive nature, seemed to cling to him, made him despair that he should meet with any of a like disposition with his own. Indeed, it was not probable he would; for there was somewhat of an effeminate softness in it which no man that had not the fondness of a parent for him could regard him with; and though he had formed in his own imagination the most pleasurable pictures of fatherly regard, when he heard the character of this Holdfast, he felt the conviction that such a father he could neither love, or be loved by; and his heart again sunk within him. Now he listened attentively to all that was said by old Lather, and most fervently hoped that Holdfast might have become as good a man as he was deemed excellent a preacher.

They arrived at last before an old house with projecting casements running all along, one above another, which was in Houndsditch, and, the barber-chirurgeon leading the way, they presently entered a chamber of spacious dimensions filled with people. These were chiefly men, clad in formal cut suits of coarse material, and without ornament. They had usually stern forbidding visages, and famous grave-looking beards. Some women were there; but they were old and by no means comely. In the middle of the chamber, standing upon a barrel with a book in his hand, was a tall man formally clad, and with a very absolute sanctified countenance. He was preaching with a monstrous fierce gesticulation, and with a loud voice that was not the more tunable for having of an audible nasal twang in it. Now he would threaten terribly, his dark fiery eyes flashing the very gloomiest glances, and his long bony arms waving about in the air in a wonderful awful manner; and then his congregation would groan, and sigh, and look exceeding moved; anon he would call them the vilest names he could lay his tongue to, and bid them repent of their sins quickly, or every one of them should suffer the horridest torment that ever was endured; and then there was amongst them the making of such solemn faces, and such turning up of their eyes to the ceiling as was quite pitiful to look upon.

Upon the entering of Master Shakspeare and his young friend they were regarded by such of the assembled puritans as could get sight of them, with the

gloomiest scowling glances ever seen—mayhap taking them for some idle gallants who only came to make sport; but when that they had noticed Master Francis's pale and melancholy aspect, still looking to be infinitely uneasy, and turned from him to gaze on his companion, who had put on him as long a face as any there, they thought not they could have any such intention. Still some continued to watch them very suspiciously. Master Francis, as hath been said, was becoming monstrously uneasy. He had heard old Lather point out the preacher as Holdfast, and at the first glance he liked him not at all. His appearance and manner were too repulsive for him to anticipate he should find in him that affection for which his heart yearned. At the conclusion of his sermon the preacher made a powerful appeal to his auditors on behalf of certain persons he styled "the suffering saints," who were, in fact, divers puritan divines who had been mulcted or imprisoned by the government; and with sundry famous arguments held forth the necessity of each contributing according to his means, toward the acquiring for them such assistance as their necessities demanded. Then descending from his elevation, he took his hat and went round with it among the congregation. Some put in it a groat, some a sixpence, some a shilling, and others what they could, and then went their way.

Master Francis trembled when Holdfast approached him. He felt some fear of he knew scarce what. He had listened and had observed attentively, and he fancied, from what he had noticed, that there could be no affection in one so severe as he seemed. Indeed, he began to doubt the other would even acknowledge him. Neither had Master Shakspeare been an inattentive spectator; but his scrutiny was assisted by a more perfect knowledge of character than was possessed by Master Francis. As the preacher came nearer, Master Shakspeare noticed his features more closely. From the impudent expression of the eyes, the extended nostril, and large mouth, he suspected him to be nothing better than an unreclaimed profligate. The look of sanctity imposed not on him. He saw that the countenance before him was one the comeliness whereof had been spoiled by riotous ill-living. The skin was coarse, of a purplish hue on the cheeks, and had the wrinkles and the crow'sfoot famously conspicuous. It was plain such a father would do no credit to his young friend;

indeed, had not the latter seemed so confident of it, he should have doubted there was any relationship betwixt them. Notwithstanding of what he thought, he had made up his mind how he should act.

It so happened that Holdfast did not come to old Lather and his companions till nearly all of his congregation had taken their departures. Upon seeing of what he took to be two gallants, he looked upon them with a sort of sneer, yet presently put his hat before Master Shakspeare, who, taking out his purse, dropped among the contributions of the others, a ryal of Henry the Eighth. At the sight of the gold, the yellow eyeballs of the puritan did glisten again.

"Here is another for my friend," said Master Shakspeare, dropping a second into the hat, "and heartily do we both wish the suffering saints out of the power of their tyrannical persecutors."

"I thank you in their names—and the Lord thanketh you also," replied Holdfast looking wonderfully gracious. "Verily, I took you to be of the ungodly, for the vanity of your apparelling did mislead me."

"Indeed, worthy sir, it hath misled you hugely," observed the barber-chirurgeon. "These be two very honorable gentlemen of my acquaintance, who, repenting of the blindness in which they have lived, are desirous of entering into our community, that they might profit by the discourses of such an absolute searcher of hearts as yourself; therefore have I brought them here—for is it not written in Aristotle"—

"Mind not the heathen," said the preacher, with a monstrous grave face, interrupting old Lather in his speech. "Speak ye of any written thing, let it be the word of the Lord: for therein lieth all comfortable knowledge, and all understanding worthy to be known of the faithful."

"Could I and my friend have private speech with you, worthy sir," said Master Shakspeare to Holdfast. "I doubt not 'twould be to the wonderful comforting of our disturbed spirits; for what we have heard this day, so ably delivered as it was, hath come home to us. Your marvellous eloquence hath touched us mightily. We can not help wishing to be of the flock of so truly admirable a shepherd."

"Verily, I am in the Lord's hands," replied the preacher, with his usual nasal twang, as he lifted up his eyes to the ceiling. "What I have is of his giving; what I do is of his performance."

"Should you bestow on us your invaluable counsel, you would not find us ungrateful for your pious office:" and here Master Shakspeare, as if by accident, jingled his purse, which the puritan knew to be well filled, by the sound of it.

"Wait you but till I dismiss the congregation, with the Lord's help, I will give you whatever consolation you stand in need of." The preacher then went round to such as remained, and after the barber-chirurgeon had taken his leave of them, Master Shakspeare and his young friend were led into a little room adjoining the chamber used as a chapel, where there was a bottle of wine and a pasty on the table, as if waiting to be partaken of. Master Francis took a seat. He was in such a state of anxiety he could say nothing. He felt that the crisis was approaching that was to determine his future happiness or misery.

"It is the Lord's work," observed the puritan, as he was placing the money out of his hat into a bag, the which he seemed to do with an infinite satisfaction. "It is the Lord's work, and blessed be the name of the Lord. He hath sent you unto me to be his instrument for withdrawing you from the ways of perdition to enter into the paths of holiness. Verily you have determined on a wise thing. Join the brethren. Fly from the allurements of the devil, and the lusts of the flesh. There is no peace out of our holy assembly. Fly from false teachers, and ignorant villanous pretenders to be of God's high ministry. I that am but as a worm like to be trodden under foot, by the influence of an especial grace have become a light among the Gentiles. I will lead you out of your darkness—I will!"

"Dost think any one can overhear us?" inquired Master Shakspeare, going close up to Holdfast and interrupting him in the midst of his preaching.

"There be none nigh enough," replied the other, seeming somewhat surprised at hearing of such a question. Master Shakspeare again produced his purse, which he laid on the table. The preacher stared at the gold with an exceeding avaricious eye, yet did he look as if he marvelled in some measure.

"Let us understand each other," added Master Shakspeare. "The contents of that purse are yours on condition you answer truly such questions as I shall put to you. Be assured, that although they relate to yourself, you shall receive no hurt amongst your friends by the faith-

fulness of your replies ; but the rather expect to have such ruin brought upon you as the exposure of your early life must needs produce, speak you not honestly and to the purpose. I ask not out of any idle curiosity, believe me ; but for a good and honorable end, which, if I find it necessary, you shall know of." The puritan listened with a countenance of wonder, not unmixed with some dread. Master Francis attended with an increasing anxiousness.

"You are called Tribulation Holdfast?" said Master Shakspeare.

"That be my name beyond all doubt," replied the preacher.

"Is not your proper name Francis Holdfast?" inquired his interrogator.

"When I was one of the ungodly I was known by such a name," replied the other.

"By such a name you were known at least some twenty years since?"

"Ay, that was I."

"Remember you about that time being acquainted with a young female, to avoid a marriage with whom you went to the wars?"

The puritan hesitated awhile, but his eyes happening to light upon the purse on the table, he presently answered, "I do remember me something of it."

"Were you married to her at any time?" inquired Master Shakspeare, fixing on the other a very searching glance.

"No—that was I not at any time," replied Holdfast. Upon hearing which Master Francis did utter a sudden groan, and covered his face with his hands.

"The birth of a child was the consequence of your intimacy with her?" continued Master Shakspeare. The preacher again paused before he would answer.

"Verily I was then among the backsliders," replied he at last very demurely. "I was sorely tempted of the devil, and fell headlong into the snare: but lo! the Lord hath disentangled me—He hath raised me up—He hath"—

"Died not the mother soon after?" inquired Master Shakspeare, interrupting the other with very little ceremony. Whether Holdfast liked not to confess the truth is not known; but he delayed answering of the question so long that it was repeated with a look and manner that did command attention.

"She died within a short time of its birth," answered Holdfast, with something of a tremor in his voice, and a look that showed he was ashamed to make the acknowledgment. Master Francis

sat trembling like a condemned criminal.

"Know you what became of the child?" asked Master Shakspeare. The puritan again hesitated, but observing from the severe scrutiny of his gaze that his interrogator would have an answer, he replied in more evident confusion, "She lieth buried with her mother at St. Mary Overy."

"Ha! ha! ha!" screamed Master Francis, as he started up of a sudden with a look of frantic exultation, and ran and shook Holdfast heartily by the hand, as if he was the very dearest friend he had, though a moment since he would have shrunk from his touch. "You have saved me from the horriest misery—I am indebted to you beyond all measure."

"The purse is yours, Master Holdfast," observed Master Shakspeare, almost in as great a delight as was his young friend, "I need ask you no more questions." The puritan stared at one and then at the other, believing both of them to be crazed; but he hesitated not in taking possession of the purse.

"We must now to your uncle's, Master Francis," said his friend, as they were making their way from Houndsditch. "It seemeth to me he hath been playing the villain with you."

"I will go wheresoever you please to lead," replied the other, in a famous cheerful humor. "Indeed, I feel so infinitely joyful at heart I have no care about anything." And this was exactly the case with him. In truth, Master Francis was of that nature—which be common enough in the young and imaginative—that he was ever jumping from one extreme to the other. What Sir Robert Cecil had said, had plunged him into a wonderful melancholy—the success of his play had delighted him beyond all measure—the sight of Joanna with Padre Bartolomé had filled him with a very monstrous uneasiness—the hearing he was sent for by the queen put him in so extreme a cheerfulness, he could do nothing but imagine the honorable things he expected would come of it—the gross insult she had put upon him before all her court, made him feel himself degraded into the lowest depths of shame—and the hope that his supposed father was of a reputable character—the fear he would not acknowledge him as his son—the dread he felt when he saw Holdfast and noticed what manner of man he was, and the delight he experienced upon finding that thorough hypo-

erite to be of no kin to him, were as powerful in their effects upon him, as sudden in their changes. Now all the weight of fear and the deep sense of shame which had laid so heavy on his spirit, appeared to be utterly cast off, and he again gave himself up to the indulgence of those ambitious and romantic dreams which, in early years, he had taken such huge delight in.

By this time they arrived at St. Mary. Axe the evening was so far set in that the shops were closed, and many of the more industrious sort of citizens had retired to their beds. Master Shakspeare knocked at the house of Gregory Vellum several times before any sign appeared that it contained any living creature. The tenement seemed in a dreadful dilapidated condition, and the windows were covered with mud and dirt, having most of the glass broken, with the holes in some places stuffed with old dirty rags. At last a casement was thrown up, and, by the light of the stars, Master Francis and his companion observed the old scrivener looking cautiously out of it, projecting before him the barrel of a rusty harquebus.

"What want you, knocking so loud at this late hour?" inquired the old miser in his shrill treble.

"It is I, uncle," replied his nephew. "I would fain have speech with you on a matter of some importance to me."

"Uncle, me no uncles!" exclaimed Gregory Vellum querulously. "I know you not. Get you gone quickly."

"Open the door to us on the instant! We have pressing business with you!" cried Master Shakspeare.

"I will open my doors to none," answered the other. "Mayhap you be thieves, as I do indeed suspect you of being."

"I assure you, we are nothing of the sort," said Master Shakspeare. "I have come here with Master Francis, your nephew, to hear some certain intelligence concerning of his father."

"Get you gone for a couple of knaves!" cried the old man sharply. "You be thieves out of all doubt, I will fire on you stay you at my door any longer."

"Open the door, you old fool!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, getting to be somewhat out of temper. "I do insist upon your giving us the information we need of you, else shall you presently repent it."

"Watch! Watch! Here be villains a breaking into my house. Watch, I

say. Come quickly, or I shall be spoiled and undone!" Bawling this as loudly as he could, Gregory Vellum banged down the casement, and left the two friends no wiser than they came.

"If you be true men, stand!" exclaimed a rough voice close at their elbow, and on turning round they observed one of the city watch—a famous stupid-looking pudding-headed sort of a fellow, coming up to them, holding of his bill in his hand in such a manner as showed some intention of making their bodies acquainted with it. "I charge you stand in the queen's name. I apprehend you as vagrom men, going upon exceeding dissolute courses, and will straightway bring you before Master Constable to give an account of yourselves. Come on in peaceable fashion like well-behaved villains, as I doubt not to find you, else will I raise my brethren of the watch, besides giving you some terrible wounds with my bill. It be flat felony to resist one of the watch. You can not escape hanging for it. Come on, then, in the queen's name."

"You bade us stand in the queen's name but this moment," replied Master Shakspeare very gravely, and moving not a foot. "Therefore will we stand till doomsday like true men, as we are."

"Nay, that be against the law," cried the other authoritatively. "No vagrom, men must be allowed to stand when they be told to move on, nor move on when they be told to stand, for so saith Master Constable, who knoweth the law better than any man in our ward. I charge you, first of all, to stand, if you be true men"——

"And I charge you, next of all, to run away if you be a villain!" answered Master Shakspeare, quickly drawing of his rapier; at the sight of which the other left his speech unfinished, and took to running away as fast as he could, bawling murder with all the strength of his lungs. Scarce had Master Shakspeare had his laugh out, and put up his weapon, when he noticed the same man coming toward him with some five or six of his brethren of the watch.

"There be the villains, Master Constable!" cried he. "I caught them about to break into a house, and upon charging of them to stand, one did draw his tool upon me, and would have done me some deadly hurt, had I not showed what speed of foot I had."

"That be murder with intent to kill; or manslaughter at the least," observed

one of his companions, a fat old fellow with a famous red nose, and a marvellous grave countenance.

"Let us be upon them, else will they escape, Neighbor Braddle," bawled one into his ear, as if the old fellow was deaf.

"If we stab them with our bills and they die of it shall they have their action of battery upon us?" asked another in a loud voice.

"No, for we shall have the law on our sides," replied he that was called Braddle. "If you kill a man in the execution of your duty he shall not have his action against you—that is, if he resist none. If he do not resist and you kill him, he shall be entitled to have you cast for the murder."

"Then, methinks, it be best to meddle not with these," remarked a third. "Perchance we might come but badly off, Master Constable?"

"So stands the law," said Neighbor Braddle, with as much of the look of an oracle as he could put on him. "If we kill them, save upon resistance to our authorities, we shall be judged to be malefactors, and not get off without hanging."

"What, if they kill us?" inquired one.

"Then shall we have the law on our sides, and may kill them again," answered the other.

"But I like not being killed, I promise you, Neighbor Braddle," observed his companion with an inconceivable serious look.

"Let us speak them fair," said another. "Mayhap we shall be able to lay hold on them without a brawl."

"It shall be done," answered the constable. "I will to them myself." Thereupon, he and his companions walked up to Master Shakspeare and his friend, who had been so amused with what the others had said, whereof they had heard every word in consequence of their talking so loud, that both stayed to see what would come of it.

"My masters," exclaimed the constable, presenting himself before them with a famous consequential look, whilst his brethren of the watch kept close upon his heels. "On your allegiance, stir not; as you are true men, answer what I ask of you; and as you hope to be saved, speak up, for I be monstrous hard of hearing."

"What would you do with us honest men?" inquired Master Shakspeare; but he had scarce let the words out of his mouth, when he found himself firmly

seized by two of the watch, and at the same time two others had fast hold on Master Francis.

"If you resist us it be lawful to make an end of you," cried one.

"Hold them fast, neighbor, for they be such thorough rogues, I doubt not they would escape if they could," said the first.

"Now I look on you closer," observed the constable, poking his red nose as near as he might to the faces of his prisoners, who held themselves very quiet. "Now I look on you closer, two such absolute cut-throats never saw I in my days."

"Especially he with the villainous high forehead," exclaimed another.

"I pretend not to know aught of reading or writing," remarked a third; "but hanging be written so plain on the countenance of that varlet that methinks none need learn his horn-book to find it out."

"I doubt not but that this be as great a villain as the other," observed one of his companions, who had hold on Master Francis. "Indeed, if I be not hugely deceived, I have already had him in custody for cutting of a purse."

"For all their fine apparelling, I know them to be the very rascaldest pair of knights of the post that live," cried another.

"It be plain, then, that you are the villains I took you to be," said Master Constable, looking upon the prisoners with extreme severity. "Now, answer me, as you wish to escape hanging—carry you any money in your purses?"

"I have neither money nor purse," replied Master Shakspeare.

"Dost think to escape hanging, varlet, and have no money?" exclaimed the other, sharply: "O' my life you be the shockingest villain I have met with this many a day."

"It be plain they be vagrom men," cried the first, "for it be well known of all, vagrom men be a horrible pennyless set."

"I have money, Master Constable," exclaimed Master Francis.

"There be some hope of you," quickly replied Neighbor Braddle: "saving that you have fallen into abominable bad company, I would not utter a word to your disparagement. I doubt not it will be found upon inquiry you be a youth of a very marvellous honesty. Let me have the keeping of your money, honest youth, else it will stand a good chance of being stolen."

"I thank you, I would rather keep it myself," answered Master Francis.

"Out on you for a hardened young villain!" cried the other, looking exceeding wrath. "There can be no doubt of your being a couple of as infamous cutpurses as ever were put in the compter. Bring them along, neighbor Sheepface—to prison with them—they can not help swinging for't."

Master Shakspeare and his young friend were dragged along the whole length of the street, and they began to think their situation somewhat unpleasant. They attempted to remonstrate with their captors upon the wrong they were doing, in hurrying to prison persons of their respectability for committing of no offence, and threatened them with the severest penalties of the law, were they not released on the instant; but they received nothing but abuse in reply. They had scarce got into the next street when the whole party were met by four young men, who were coming along singing and catterwauling, and making of such a terrible racket, that some of the citizens were seen in their nightcaps looking out of window, to know what horrible noise it was.

"By Gog and Magog, Big Jack o' the Turnstile, here be two honest gentlemen in custody of the watch!" cried a well-known voice, as he approached within sight of them. "To the rescue, Peter Perriwinkle!—to the rescue, Long-legged Tom!—they be my true friends," shouted Harry Daring, as he recognised who they were. In a minute all four hurried toward the spot, evidently in that state in which legions of watch would have been cared for but little. "Ha! what Barnaby Braddle!" exclaimed Harry, in some sort of astonishment, as he stood before Master Constable; "take *that* for old acquaintance sake!" and the next moment Barnaby Braddle measured his length on the ground, knocked on the pate by his own bill, which Harry had wrested from him.

This appeared to be the signal for a general fight. Master Shakspeare and his young friend were soon out of the hands of their captors, having each of them tripped up the heels of such of the watch as held them; and laying hold of the weapons of those who fell, they assisted Harry Daring and his companions with such good will, that in an exceeding brief space, their opponents took to their heels, or were laid with broken pates on the ground. However, the noise of the disturbance and the outcries of those who ran away, soon fetched such numbers of

the city watch, that, for all that they fought with the most determined resoluteness, every one of them, Master Shakspeare and his party would have been overpowered, had not Harry Daring all at once raised the cry of "prentices! prentices! clubs! clubs!" in which he was so vigorously assisted by Big Jack o' the Turnstile, Long-legged Tom, and Peter Perriwinkle, that there presently were seen running in all directions some score of young men and boys, every one with a cudgel in his hand, who began laying about them so famously, it looked as if they were used to it. More of the watch continued to come, but the apprentices who had already taken part in the conflict soon drew such a number to their assistance, by shouting as loud as they could, "prentices! prentices! clubs! clubs!" that the street became filled with them and the watch to the amount of some hundreds, all fighting with one another as fiercely as dragons, with such furious outcries, that it brought the citizens, frightened out of their wits, to their windows.

It can not be doubted but that Harry Daring was in the thickest of the fray. Indeed, though he got a few famous thumps from the bills of his opponents, he ceased not till he and his companions had driven them to seek safety in flight; and after seeing of Master Shakspeare to his lodgings, and bidding good-night to his old school-fellows, he went home with Master Francis, overjoyed that he had again participated in such "exquisite fine fun," as he had ever found in beating of the watch.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

What things have we seen
Done at THE MERMAID: heard words that have been
So nimbly, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest!
BEAUMONT.

But that which most doth take my Muse and me,
Is a pure cup of rich Canary wine,
Which is THE MERMAID'S now—but shall be mine;
Of which had Horace or Anacreon tasted,
Their lives, as do their lines, till now had lasted.
BEN JONSON.

Come, let us go while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time.
HERRICK.

THE next day Master Shakspeare proceeded, with Master Francis to the scrivener's, determined, if it were possible, to

make the old miser declare what he knew of his young friend's parentage: but Gregory Vellum was obstinate, nay, quite rude on the matter. He would have it he knew no more than he had already said; and could not be ever a wasting of his time in answering questions concerning the birth of one that was base born. In vain his nephew implored him to say all that he was acquainted with; he only laughed at his prayers, and bade him about his business; in vain Master Shakspeare threatened him with legal proceedings told he not the truth: he set him at defiance, and accused them both of coming to him with no better purpose than to extort money. After receiving from him nothing but abuse, and finding he could not be brought, either by threats, or bribes, or entreaties, to declare any one thing, they, with a very evident reluctance, took themselves away. Master Francis now found that his birth was involved in as much obscurity as ever; yet as he was not deprived of hope, he was less uneasy on the subject than he had been a long time. It was a great relief the getting rid of all idea of relationship with that wretched hypocrite Holdfast. Could he as perfectly convince himself of his own legitimacy as he could that he was no son of that man, he would have cared but little. Even were his father some honest poor man, he would now be satisfied, provided he had been bound in marriage with his mother. In fine, he felt he could humble his ambition to any lowness, to secure his mother's honor from suspicion.

The success of his play, for it seemed to take with the town more and more every day, set him to the writing of other things, and he began to be considered of the critics one of the most promising poets of the time. Save Master Shakspeare, none exhibited such interest in the success of his writings as did Sir Walter Raleigh. He had been delighted with the tragedy, and took every occasion to bring the young author into notice amongst such of his friends and acquaintances as possessed rank or influence. What had passed betwixt his secretary and Queen Elizabeth had vexed him as much as the knowledge that the youth was in no way related to such a paltry cheater as he had known that Holdfast to be, had given him pleasure. His own affairs looked not to be in the most flourishing condition. At the earnest solicitations of his devoted wife he had strove to the utmost to get himself restored to

the queen's favor; but, as Cecil insinuated, my Lord Essex and his friends had such influence at court as prevented all approach to a reconciliation with her majesty, though he was unceasing in his efforts to bring it about. For all this the queen did often send him comfortable messages, which did give him some hope he should make his peace with her before long. An expedition against the Spaniards had been talked of, and though it met not with the approbation of her lord-treasurer, who liked not anything that cost much money, and seemed to be attended with more risk than profit; as it was warmly supported by the lord-admiral and my Lord Essex, it was thought, among those supposed to be in the secret, my Lord Burghley's opinion would go for naught. The expedition had been originally proposed by Sir Walter Raleigh, some years since; and as the queen had lately sent frequently to consult him on the matter, Dame Elizabeth did imagine he would have some command in it; and this thought of hers pleased her mightily, for she did argue from it he would have such opportunity for distinguishing of himself as must needs end in his being restored to the honorable place he had lost by his marriage with her.

"Put you on your hat and cloak, Master Francis, and come with me," said Sir Walter to his secretary, as they sat together, after the labors of the day were ended, in the library at Durham house, that was in the turret overlooking the Thames, "I wish you to meet certain friends of mine, in whose society I doubt not you will find infinite pleasure."

Master Francis was not long in complying with his patron's request, and shortly afterward they walked out together till they came to a tavern of excellent great repute, called "The Mermaid," in Friday street. It seemed to be a goodly structure, being of some size, with a famous porch in the centre, having casements from the ground floor projecting into the street further than the ordinary, each story above story, with quaint carvings round about them, and a huge sign over the door, representing a mermaid in the sea, daintily combing of her hair with one hand, and having a looking-glass in the other, into which she appeared to be gazing. There were two or three gentlemanlike men loitering about the entrance, conversing with each other.

"Ha! Master Donne!" exclaimed Sir Walter, cordially greeting a young man,

dressed very soberly, yet of a simple good-natured countenance. "How goeth the world with you?"

"Indeed, it goeth but ill with me, Sir Walter," replied he, "yet why should I repine? It be true enough, I have lost most of my property; yet my dear wife hath been restored to me. Methinks I should be exceeding content."

"I hope all will end happily at last," remarked Raleigh. Now the reader must know that this Master Donne having been secretary to a certain Lord Elsinore, with whom he had travelled in Spain and Italy, fell in love with my lord's niece, who was the daughter of Sir George More, and upon finding they were both of one mind, privately married her; which did so enrage her father when he came to know of it, that he took away his wife from him, had him dismissed from his office of secretary, and then cast him into prison. He got his liberty presently; but he got not his wife again till he had recourse to law proceedings with his father-in-law, that nearly consumed all his substance.

"My kinsman, Sir Francis Whalley, with whom I am living, is exercising of his best means to get Sir George to be reconciled to me," added Master Donne. "I know not what will come of it, but will hope for the best. Then there hath been my true friend, Dr. Morton, that very excellent and truly good divine, advising me to enter into the church, and offering me a benefice if I would."

"And surely you will do as he advises you, the more especially as your fortune is so low?" remarked Sir Walter.

"Indeed, I can not," replied the other. "'Tis a great temptation at this time certainly, the offer of a fair benefice when I have nothing to look to, and a sweet young wife to provide for; but I have such scruples against entering the priesthood, because I am not of that holy disposition methinks it should require, that I can not bring my conscience to the doing of any such thing."

"O' my life! I do most truly believe you would do the church infinite honor in becoming one of its members," said Raleigh. "I wish all were as conscientious and as worthy." Then turning to another he exclaimed, with a like cordial manner as he had used to Master Donne—"And how speedeth Master Cotton in his labors? Hast found any more rare manuscripts and ancient records, such as your laudable industry hath already put you upon the discovery of?"

"Indeed have I, Sir Walter," replied he, who was one of a famous staid demeanor, and in great repute for his knowledge of, and eagerness after, all manner of ancient things. "I have had the good hap to get hold of a marvellous number of such wonderful, curious, and valuable manuscripts, charters, records, and the like precious documents, as scarce any in these kingdoms have met with, the which I shall be proud to show you, call you on me at any time."

"I will not fail to pay you a visit soon," answered Sir Walter. "Master Selden—well met!" exclaimed he to another—"And Master Martin too," he added to a fourth. "Pray tell me who are come?"

"There are Master Beaumont and Master Fletcher," said one.

"Arcades ambo!" cried Raleigh laughingly.

"Methinks they be the very 'Gemini' of our literary zodiac," observed Master Martin in a like humor. "They look to be ever so closely coupled."

"Then there have lately gone up Master Shakspeare and Master Jonson," added another.

"If Beaumont and Fletcher be 'Gemini,'" said Master Selden, "surely Shakspeare and Jonson be 'Pisces;' for, o' my life, never saw I such fish for drinking!" Thereupon there was a laugh among them all.

"Not a long while since Master Carew passed me, and went in," remarked Master Donne.

"Doubtless inventing of some new ballad," said Master Cotton, "with such a monstrous fire of love in it as might dissolve all the ice between this and the Frozen ocean."

"Master Constable and Master Sylvester are also there," added another.

"Master Sylvester came before the other in a monstrous haste," observed Master Selden in the same merry humor. "But that can be nothing out of the ordinary; for he be famous for outrunning the constable."

"Well, let us up and join them, my masters!" exclaimed Sir Walter, laughing with the rest; upon which the whole party moved on through the spacious doorway with its fantastic carvings about it, passing a notable fat landlady in the passage, who left off rating one of the drawers to drop her guests a courtesy, and make some courteous inquiry, as every one said a civil word before they went up stairs. As they were entering the room

above, they heard such shouts of laughter as showed plain enough there was no lack of good humor among the company; and so it appeared, for upon their coming in they noticed that every one was laughing as heartily as he might; and Master Shakspeare and one of a right merry aspect, whom Master Francis knew to be Ben Jonson, were in the midst of them, evidently causing all the mirth they had heard. The room was long, and of a fair height, having a long old oak table with rounded legs put in the centre, on which a drawer appeared to be setting things ready for supper. The compartments in the wainscot were elaborately carved with all manner of foliage and griffins' heads; and the chimney, which was of a more than ordinary height and capaciousness, was ornamented in a like manner. There was an open cupboard on one side, in which was a rare display of glass and china, and one or two parcel-gilt goblets; and a goodly silver tankard, curiously wrought with a scene of persons going a hawking; and the tapestry round the room was worked with rude designs descriptive of the destruction of the Spanish armada, with labels coming out the mouths of the principal commanders in the ships, saying of certain things attributed to them.

Master Francis upon first coming in did as he saw others do, put his hat upon a peg, and then turned to see who was of the company. Most of them he knew; for they were the chiefest wits of the time, that he had often met in the chamber of the players, and these greeted him kindly. Whilst looking about him, he could not help observing the drawer, who was a youth marvellous spare of flesh, with long legs and long arms, in a white canvass doublet and saffron-colored hose, and an exceeding innocent countenance, in which the sense of respect for the company in which he was, seemed to be having a sore struggle with the desire to laugh at the right admirable jests that ever and anon broke from one or other of them.

"Here cometh our king of El Dorado!" exclaimed Ben Jonson good-humoredly, as he noticed the entrance of Sir Walter Raleigh and those who came with him. "Mayhap we shall have something sterling now. O' my life! I be wonderful like good money kept with bad. Methinks, by this time, I must needs have so suspicious a look with me, on account of the rubs I am getting among these base ones, that I can not help being thought as brass as my company."

"Verily, thy company be brazen enough, of all conscience," replied Master Shakspeare in a like tone and manner. "I will put thee up to a good thing, Ben. When the next lord mayor's day comes round, offer for a reasonable sum to play the part of one of the men in armor. Nature hath provided thee with such a complete suit of brass, thou art sure to be able to do it cheaper and more to the life than any."

"Away with thee!—thy wit be all of a quality with thyself!" cried the other, whilst his companion laughed as loud as the rest. "Not only art thou brazen beyond all denial, but thou art a very brazen bull of Phalaris; for thou dost 'roar' at the expense of thy victims."

"I'faith be I the bull of Phalaris, thou must needs be the Colossus of Rhodes," replied Master Shakspeare. "Mayhap it would be greatly to somebody's profit, who would break thee up and sell thee by weight, as was done with that ancient image. But heard I not that the worshipful company of braziers had made thee a handsome offer at so much per pound, wishing to melt thee into candlesticks, hand-irons, stew-pans and the like famous utensils? I hope 'tis true, for thou wouldst then come to a goodly use, which be more than I can hope of thee at present."

"Oh! would I had the *lapis philosophicus*," exclaimed Ben Jonson, "I would, with what speed I might, transmute the abominable baseness of thy humor into something more creditable to thee."

"Use it on thyself, Ben, I prythee, for thou wilt find it more to thy profit," answered the other, laughingly. "Had such transmutation been done, and thou hadst been one of the children of Israel that were hastening away from Pharaoh, there would have been no occasion for them to have melted the trinkets they had filched from the Egyptians."

"And why not, my *Œdipus*?" asked his companion.

"Because they would have had a golden calf ready at their hands," replied Master Shakspeare. At this the company laughed louder than ever, and the drawer turned his head on one side, to hide the grin that made its appearance on his countenance.

"Well, my masters," exclaimed Sir Walter Raleigh, fearing that the liveliness of their wits might, if not interrupted, lead them to loggerheads, "there can be no doubt you are both 'men of

metal; and if the nature thereof hath an inclination for the brazen, 'Corinthian brass' it must be at the least."

"That is a pretty compliment, o' my word," cried Master Cotton, "and in honest truth I take them to be of such choice metal, if brass they be, that had they lived in Rome, under either its consuls or emperors, I doubt not at all they would both have been coined into 'asses.'" "

"Nay, hang it, Master Cotton!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, good-humoredly, "travel not so far as Rome to make asses of us. I would take no such trouble in such a case, I promise you; for were I so inclined, I see no reason for doubting I could make an ass of you on the spot." Thereupon the laugh was as general as ever, and the drawer put his hand to his mouth to prevent others from seeing he could not avoid joining in it.

"Barnaby!" cried Ben Jonson, winking at some of those around him, as if to intimate to them what he would be at, "what hast got for supper?"

In a moment the drawer had on him as grave a face as ever was met with in a drawer, and gazing steadily on his fingers, he began with the finger and thumb of his right hand to touch the points of the thumb and fingers of the other, as he slowly named the following dishes:—

"Turkey pullets, venison pasty, two roasted capons, cold"——

"Art sure they be capons, Barnaby?" inquired one, interrupting him.

"Ay, master," replied he, "brave capons, I promise you."

"Art cock sure on't?" asked another.

"Ay, master," answered the drawer.

"Now how canst pretend to be cocksure on a matter of capons?" said the first, with an infinite gravity. Barnaby scratched his head and looked puzzled, and the rest took the question very merrily, as may be supposed.

"Well, and what else hast got for supper?" asked Master Shakspeare. The drawer again, with a monstrous serious countenance, began counting of his fingers as, with the same voice and manner, he repeated the following list of good things:—

"Turkey pullets, venison pasty, two roasted capons, cold sirloin of beef"——

"Dost not think the sirloin would have been all the better had it been hot?" asked Ben Jonson, very earnestly.

"Mayhap it would, master," replied

Barnaby, with a wonderful innocence; "yet I know not for certain. Peradventure asked I about it of mistress, she could say."

"It matters not—proceed with what you were stating," said the other.

Again Barnaby took to the counting of his fingers, and the naming of the dishes, with more steadfast a gravity than ever,—beginning as at first:—

"Turkey pullets, venison pasty, two roasted capons, cold sirloin of beef, boiled coney, stewed lampreys." Here he made a stop, and seemed to think very intently for a minute or so; then began counting of his fingers again—after he had counted out the left hand, making use of it to count the right with, and renamed what he had mentioned in a lower voice, as if it was to himself.—"Turkey pullets, venison pasty, two roasted capons, cold sirloin of beef, boiled coney, stewed lampreys—stewed lampreys—stewed lampreys," repeated he, looking from his fingers to the ceiling with a stare so wondrous hard, every one supposed he saw there something marvellous. "Stewed lampreys—odds pittikins! now my memory will not serve me to name what cometh after the stewed lampreys, though I said all the dishes to mistress not an hour since." None interrupted him, though every one looked to be exceeding inclined to laugh, he appeared to be so famously perplexed; but many could keep their gravity no longer when they observed him, though he spoke not, evidently from the moving of his lips repeating what he had already said, as with a gravity mixed with some little furiousness, he once more took to the counting of his fingers. "Boar's head!" shouted he at last, amid the boisterous laughter of all present. "Alack that I should forget the boar's head!" Then he continued as intent upon his fingers as ever. "Boar's head, marrow pudding, two dishes of roast apple-johns, three of stewed prunes, and a custard with plums in it."

"It be plain enough, Barnaby, thou wilt not have to go far to bring us our supper," observed Master Beaumont.

"No farther than the kitchen, master," replied the drawer very innocently.

"Surely there can be no occasion for your going to the kitchen," said Master Beaumont. "It seemed but now you had it all at your 'finger's ends.'" Amid the laughter which followed this, the voice of a woman was heard crying out, "Barnaby!" as loud as she could.

"Anon, mistress!" replied he.

"How long hast been a drawer, Barnaby?" asked Ben Jonson.

"A year since Pentecost, master," answered he.

"Barnaby! Why, thou idle varlet!" screamed the voice from the bottom of the stairs.

"Anon, anon, mistress!" cried Barnaby, evidently anxious to get away.

"Dost like thy business?" asked the other.

"Ay, marry do I, master," answered the drawer, looking toward the door as if in some dread his mistress would be coming.

"Prythee tell me what dost get by thy business?" inquired Ben Jonson with an infinite seriousness, as if the question was one of great moment.

"Twenty good shillings a year, besides vails; and"—

"Barnaby! Barnaby! Thou knave, must I bawl here all day?" shouted the hostess.

"Anon! anon, mistress!" cried he again with his countenance in some alarm; and then added hurriedly, "and a suit at Lammas and Shrovetide."

"Prythee detain him no longer, Master Jonson," said Sir Walter, though he could not help laughing at the anxiety of the drawer to attend to his mistress, whilst he seemed fearful of taking himself away from his interrogator too quickly, from the likelihood there appeared in it of giving him offence. "Let him to his duty; else shall we have Dame Cannikin so put out, our supper may chance to suffer for it."

"Nay, I would not allow of our supper suffering on any account," replied Ben Jonson laughingly, as the drawer made his escape.

"How tender of heart thou art!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare. "But for all thy fine professions, I doubt not in the least thou wouldst act toward it the part of the wolf to the lamb—thou wouldst make a meal of it."

"I own what be my intention," said Ben Jonson, joining in the mirth that then became general. "There is some likelihood of its suffering from me to some extent, after that fashion; for at present I must plead guilty to a cruel appetite."

"At present!" cried Shakspeare with marked emphasis. "Certes, it be modest of thee to speak but of 'the present' in relation to thy appetite; for thou remindest me of a certain mæstrom I have heard of, which be ever at work swal-

lowing all things that come within its reach."

"It be a thousand pities thou hast never gone that way," observed the other. "But I forgot. There are some people that an old proverb declareth will never be drowned."

It is probable some reply of a like nature with what had been already said by these two of one another, would have been spoken by Master Shakspeare; but at that moment, evidently to the huge satisfaction of the company, the door opened, and there entered no other than Mistress Cannikin herself, carrying of a dish of roast capons, which she placed on one end of the table. Master Francis, when he passed her in the passage, fancied he had had sight of her portly person and fair florid face before, and now, on a more careful scrutiny he, to his no small surprise, recognised her as the famous fat dame, that with her equally fat daughter, had been in the room with him at the playhouse at the first playing of his tragedy. She was, on this occasion, apparelled very stately in a dress of flame-colored taffeta, cut low, and with a monstrous fine ruff to it, wearing a goodly bunch of keys at her girdle, besides a pair of scissors and a pincushion. After her came her daughter with another dish, who was decked out as daintily as her mother, in a dress of the same material; which made Ben Jonson, as he saw the two coming along enveloped in the steam of the dishes they carried, call them personifications of the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Next to mine hostess's daughter came Barnaby, then another drawer, then a tall stout woman with a countenance that outflamed the taffeta—then a clumsy scrub of a girl with a black face and red elbows—and then a still greater scrub of a boy scarce half her size, in a leather jerkin a mile and all too big for him,—all bearing in their hands dishes as much as they could carry.

"Now, Kate!" exclaimed Dame Cannikin addressing all of them in turn; "put you the turkey pullets in the centre.—Barnaby! lay the boar's head at the top of the table, where the noble Sir Walter Raleigh is used to sit. Humphrey! the venison pastry here for Master Shakspeare. Mary Cook! the boiled coneys on this side. Dorothy! the stewed lampreys opposite. Dick Turnspit! the marrow puddings next the turkey pullets—and now get you gone all of you for the rest of the things, whilst I fetch the tank-

arks and glasses from the cupboard." Whereupon all departed, after placing the things as she directed, saying never a word, and presently returned with what else was intended for the supper, as she got what she wanted from the cupboard. During this time her guests were placing of themselves at the table, where every man found his knife and his napkin ready for him, Master Francis being at the right hand of Sir Walter and Ben Jonson on the left—Master Shakspeare at the other end having Beaumont on one side and Fletcher on the other, and the rest of the party sitting themselves on each side of the table as they could.

Mine hostess as she helped in putting everything in proper order, seemed to notice whatever was going on around her, and kept not her tongue still a moment; addressing one or other of her guests in some courteous speech, or rating the drawers, or apologising for whatever she thought was deficient in the serving of the supper.

"Good Master Donne, I am heartily glad to see you," she exclaimed. "You have been a stranger of late."

"Much against my will, depend on't, fair hostess," replied he.

"Then, forsooth, you are not to blame," added she. "Worthy Master Cotton, you are welcome as a rasher of bacon in peascod time. Kate! dip not your sleeves in the stewed lampreys. *There* lieth the carver, noble Sir Walter, by the side of the dish! By my troth, Mary Cook hath forgot to put the lemon in the boar's mouth. Go you and get a lemon, Barnaby! Sweet Master Shakspeare, I live in hope the pastry will be to your liking."

"Where the hostess is so greatly to my liking, what is of her providing must needs be as desirable," answered the other gallantly.

"La, forsooth, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed she, looking exceedingly pleased. "Well, for a prettily spoken gentleman never met I your peer."

"Wilt say grace, Master Shakspeare?" inquired Sir Walter from the other end of the table.

"Nay it be useless asking of him," cried Ben Jonson. "For he be the most notorious *grace-less* varlet that lives."

"O' my life, he cares only to avoid saying it himself," replied Master Shakspeare, in a like jocular manner. "For there can not be in this world so infamous a '*scape-grace*.'" After the laugh had subsided which followed these witty sayings, the latter, with a monstrous se-

rious face, repeated the following couplet:—

"With these good things before our sights,
Grant us, good Lord, good appetites."

"Mayhap, if our commons were to become as short as our grace, our appetites would stand but a poor chance of being satisfied," said Master Selden.

"Indeed, the grace be of a singular fine brevity," observed Mistress Cannikin, seating herself at the centre of the table, whilst her daughter placed herself opposite to her at the same time, as if they were accustomed to it. "But methinks it be all the better, for then shall the meat stand the less chance of getting cool. Now, Master Carew, let me help you to a leg of this coney," she added, as she began dividing the joints of it—still seeming to have her eyes everywhere, and talking by turns to all. "Please you, good Master Donne, to carve those turkey pullets. I pray you, worthy Master Cotton, look to the capons. Kate, serve you lampreys. Well, forsooth, if there be not Master Francis! I am right glad to see you at the Mermaid, sweet sir. You are heartily welcome, I assure you. Indeed, that was a most moving tragedy of yours. Sauce to your capon, Master Fletcher? I cried not so much any time since the day my last husband died. Take you no boar's head with your pullet, Master Beaumont? I pray you, what will you have, sweet Master Francis? Let me commend the pastry to you. Barnaby! prythee make more speed with Master Carew's trencher! Ah! thou awkward varlet, Humphrey! thou wert nigh spilling all the gravy upon the noble Sir Walter's ruff. Alack! Master Francis hath no bread! A manchet for Master Francis, Barnaby, on the instant! And how is the sweet young gentleman your friend, Master Francis, who spoke so commendably of you it did my heart good to hear him?"

Master Francis felt he would have given anything to have escaped her observation, for he thought it would draw on him the notice of others, but to his great relief he found the good dame waited not to have any of her many questions answered, for she went on talking without ceasing, and the company were too well employed to heed him.

"Shall I help you to some of this pastry, my fair hostess?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"No, forsooth, kind sir, help yourself, I pray you," replied Mistress Cannikin, "you have not put bit in your mouth

yet. Noble Sir Walter, I hope the supper is of your liking? O' my life, these varlets of mine have forgot the ale! Haste, Barnaby, and draw it; and mind, secure the spigot. Kate! what wouldst have?"

"Indeed, la! I have no choice," drawled the girl, who appeared to be somewhat of a simpleton.

"Say you that to all, you will never get married, fair Kate," observed Master Shakspeare.

"Tilly vally! she will have choice enough I warrant me when the time comes!" exclaimed her mother, laughing till her fat cheeks seemed to shake like a jelly. "Sauce to your pullet, Master Jonson? Humphrey, you idle varlet, look to Master Jonson's trencher. Forsooth, if she taketh after her mother, her mind may soon be known when a husband be in the way, I promise you."

"Indeed, la! I care not for a husband," said Kate very demurely.

"Say that when thou hast one, wench. It will be soon enough to care not for one then, I warrant me," cried the hostess of the Mermaid, again shaking herself all over like a very aspen. "Noble Sir Walter! there is a right delicate wing of a capon on the dish. Master Cotton, I pray you prevail on Sir Walter. Lack you anything, Master Francis? The ale will be here anon. Humphrey, thou heedless caitiff! see'st thou not master Carew looking for the salt?"

"Can I not prevail on you, fair Kate?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"If you be wise, let him not prevail on you, sweet Kate!" cried Ben Jonson laughingly.

"Heed him not, I pray you, sweet Kate," said Master Shakspeare, in a like humor. "He would do you some wrong if he could—not I, believe me; for it be well known of all men living he hath the very greediest tooth for 'sweet cates' of every kind."

"O' my life, Master Shakspeare, that be as good a thing as I have heard this many a day," exclaimed the portly dame, joining as heartily as any in the general laugh. "Sweet cates, forsooth! Barnaby! ale for Master Francis. It be a famous jest indeed. I pray you, Master Donne, stand not upon being asked for anything. A truly excellent jest, by my troth."

"Hast heard of that new-fangled invention called 'forks'?" inquired Master Constable of Master Cotton, as he was diligently fingering of his meat.

"It comes from Italy," replied the

other. "Your gallants there are so monstrous fine they can not be brought to touch their victuals, so they have got them a steel thing with prongs to it, with the which they lift what they would eat into their mouths."

"That looketh to be nothing better than flying in the face of providence," observed Master Donne very gravely. "Of what use, I pray you, can be our fingers if not for laying hold of our meat? I could never be brought to tolerate such atheistical inventions."

The supper proceeded much in this way; with an occasional joke from Ben Jonson or Master Shakspeare, which was sure to create famous mirth among the company. The face of the portly hostess looked as warm and as round as the sun at harvest-time, whilst that of her daughter, sitting opposite, seemed like unto a reflection of it. Both at last were prevailed on to eat; but Dame Cannikin, though ever so much engaged in the eating of her own supper, still appeared to have her eyes everywhere, still talked with little intermission to all; and still continued to shake her fat sides at every jest that was uttered, either by her guests or herself.

When all had eat what sufficed them, Mistress Cannikin giving her daughter a look which the other quickly interpreted, rose from her seat.

"I hope the supper hath pleased you gentlemen? Barnaby, get you the voider ready, and sweep the table," observed she; and as soon as she spoke commendations broke from all.

"Indeed, it was most admirably provided," said Sir Walter.

"It be said that some mermaids are to be avoided," added Master Shakspeare, "because of their beguiling men to their destruction; but they who relate this tale never met with the mermaid of Friday street, else would they have told a clean contrary story."

"Yea, forsooth, and indeed most truly and prettily spoken," replied the portly hostess. "Barnaby! heed how thou holdest that dish! Our mermaid shall harm none, I promise you. Humphrey! take up the trenchers carefully! And what wine please you to have noble Sir Walter? Stand to the carrying of the dishes into the buttery, Kate! Shall it be the Gascoigne, the Bastard, the Ipcras, the Muscovadine, the Canary, the Sherris, or the Charneco?"

"What say you, my masters?" inquired Sir Walter. "Methinks the Canary

is of so good a quality we can not do better than give it another trial."

"In truth it be exceeding good," replied Master Shakspeare. "Mayhap 'twould be as well though were we to have with it some Ipcoras."

"And some sack also, good hostess!" cried Ben Jonson. "The sack of your making be of so delectable a sort, I would I could swallow a butt of it."

"Then would you make but a sorry sack-but," observed Master Shakspeare with a laugh, in which he was joined by all.

"Nay, but the sack-but be a famous ancient instrument," exclaimed Master Cotton. "I doubt not were it well played on 'twould discourse most excellent music even now."

"Let me catch any playing on me," replied Ben Jonson, seeming to be a little out of humor. "I promise you I would give them a tune to dance to."

"'Green Sleeves,' or 'Light o' love,' perchance," said Dame Cannikin merrily. "Master Francis, I hope you have found proper enjoyment in your supper. They be the movingest tunes I have ever met with, and many a time and oft have I danced to them by the hour. Barnaby, mind you let not the dish slip! Then it shall be my choice Canary and Ipcoras; and you shall have some sack too of my very delicatest brewing." Whereupon the portly hostess took herself out of the room, talking all the way she went.

After Barnaby had swept, with a long wooden knife, the bones off the table, into a basket, called the voider, the wine was brought upon the table, with sundry sorts of fruits and cakes, and very quickly the whole party got to be more merry than ever. Jests flew about like hailstones, hitting everybody; but there was nothing like unto the sayings of Ben Jonson and Master Shakspeare, which for sparkling wit exceeded all that had been heard. These two were continually letting off some smart thing against each other, which was sure to be retaliated, till mayhap, Ben Jonson getting the worst of it, or not being of so pleasant a temper as was his antagonist, did get so nigh upon quarrelling, that Sir Walter Raleigh was obliged to interfere to keep peace between them. Master Francis held his prate like a modest youth as he was; or spoke only when he was addressed by any of those around him, for he could not bring himself to attempt bandying jests with the choicest wits of the age.

Presently there returned Mistress Can-

nikin, carrying the huge silver tankard that had stood in the cupboard, closely followed by the buxom Kate with a plate of figs and another of oranges.

"I have brought you the sack, Master Jonson," said she, placing it before him, with her full round face all radiant with smiles. "It be made of the choicest sherris, and I have used all my cunning in the brewing of it. Barnaby, place the baked pippins and comfits nigh Master Francis, and the marchpane closer to Sir Walter."

"Say not so, good hostess, I pray you," replied Master Jonson, "for if you have used *all* your cunning, you must needs be at your wit's end for the next brewing."

"Yea, forsooth, and so I should," exclaimed the portly dame, laughing very merrily. "That be a famous conceit of yours. Kate! put you the figs before Master Jonson, he may chance to like some. Well to be sure that be most wittingly said of you."

"What wine would you please to take with us, good dame?" inquired Raleigh.

"Excuse me, I pray you, noble Sir Walter," replied Mistress Cannikin; yet, for all her denial, looking as if she would comply on a little pressing: "methinks women should not be wine-bibbers.—Kate! those oranges to Master Fletcher."

"What! doth our sweet hostess of the Mermaid refuse to drink with her guests?" cried Master Shakspeare, seemingly in some surprise. "Indeed, that can we never allow. We shall drink with a greater zest when your cherry lips have been bathed in the wine."

"By my troth, Master Shakspeare, that is prettily spoken of you," cried the portly dame, smirking famously, as if she was well pleased with the compliment. "Cherry lips, forsooth! as I am a true woman, those be most fair words for my time of life. Try you one of those pippins, Master Donne, they be in excellent good repute. Well, then, sweet Master Shakspeare, since you are so pressing, I will take just one cup of canary." The wine was given to her without loss of time,—and she then added, standing up with it in her hand,—“Gentlemen all—I drink your good healths, and wish you a hearty welcome to the Mermaid,” after which she tasted the canary, sipping it very daintily at first, and then finishing it at a draught.

"And now, fair Kate, what say you to a cup of canary?" asked Sir Walter.

"Indeed—la! I would rather not," said the girl, looking somewhat abashed.

"Tilly vally, wench! one cup will do thee no hurt," exclaimed Mistress Can-nikin.

"No harm in the least, sweet Kate, o' my word," cried Master Shakspeare. "Nay, we can not excuse you, pretty Kate. I would I were the cup that should be kissed by so delicate a mouth."

"Who would be after *sweet cates* now, and be hanged to thee!" exclaimed Ben Jonson, throwing a fig's end at Master Shakspeare.

"Heed him not, sweet Kate; but drink a cup of wine, I pray you," said Master Shakspeare: "we can judge by what he hath thrown at me, that he careth but a fig's end about the matter; so to the canary, and quickly, sweet Kate."

"Indeed—la! it seemeth monstrous to drink wine with so many brave gallants all at once," exclaimed Mistress Kate, seemingly with a wonderful innocency.

"Take a cup with each of us, then," observed Ben Jonson; "I doubt not *that* would satisfy you."

"Yea, forsooth! but *I* should not be satisfied, I promise you," replied the portly hostess. "She would be 'in her cups,' indeed, were she to drink so many."

"Nay, I think the cups would be in her," rejoined the other.

"Like enough she would have both cups and hiccups," added the dame, in the same humor. "Come, wench, drink the wine: I warrant me now thou art as eager for it as a brood of ducklings for the water. I mind not taking another cup just to keep thee company, for I doubt hugely thou wilt do it unless, for all thy eagerness—thou art so monstrous shy in such matters."

It may not appear quite incredible that the portly hostess and her portly daughter drank of the Canary, soon after which they took themselves out of the room.

"Shall we not have a song, my masters?" inquired Sir Walter. "Are there so many notable sweet choristers here, and yet not inclined for a carol? Fie on you, Master Shakspeare! Is your voice out of tune, or doth your memory fail you? Master Jonson, you are not used to be so tuneless. Master Beaumont! Master Fletcher! Master Carew! what hath become of your admirable minstrelsy?"

To these inquiries there were presently some excuses; but Sir Walter would take none. Then some said they would sing presently.

"Why ask you not Master Cotton?"

said Ben Jonson, "I doubt not, were he pressed upon it, he would sing you a famous song."

"Indeed, I have the most pestilent hoarseness," replied Master Cotton.

"A murrain on thy hoarseness!" exclaimed the other. "Thou canst sing like a very swan, if thou hast a mind: or, if thou hast no voice for singing, croak like the frogs of Aristophanes. But, come, tune thy reed. Give us a wonderful moving ditty on the loss of some musty old manuscript; or a right laudatory ballad, made upon the discovery of Cleopatra's jordan."

"I have no such songs, I promise you," replied the antiquary, joining in the mirth of his companions; "but, provided you excuse all defects, I will essay whatever my poor ability will allow."

"Bravo, Master Cotton!" cried those around him; and soon after, in a famous merry humor, he sung the following ballad:—

MASTER COTTON'S SONG.

I sing of a friar—a barefooted friar,
As brawny a fellow as heart could desire,
With his shaven crown, and his corded gown,
And his rosary counting from town to town;
Oh! he'd shout forth a psalm with such absolute
grace,
That the folks cried 'God speed to your rosy round
Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
Let us sing in the praise of this excellent friar.

He preached not of fasting—not he—by the rood!
For he knew that short commons did nobody good:
Instead of denouncing a flagon of wine,
He swore that good liquor made good men divine;
And as for the kissing a wench on the sly,
He would do it himself—or at least he would try.
Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
Let us sing in the praise of this saint of a friar.

'Twas a marvel to hear how well he his beads told,
Whenever he had nothing better to hold,
And out of his mouth how his prayers made a din
When any choice morsel he could not put in;
Or at his devotions how strict he had grown,
If not to "Our Lady"—doubtless to *his own*.
Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
Let us sing in the praise of this capital friar.

Brave-hearted knights hath he shrined with his prayers,
Buxom fair dames hath he blessed with his cares;
He hath christened the babe on the mother's fond
breast,
And scores of young virgins to him have confessed.
Of the penance he set surely none could complain,
For they got absolution again and again.
Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
Let us sing in the praise of this excellent friar.

He talked not of tithes—for Pope cared not a fig,
Whilst he dined off a capon or dainty fat pig;
But the fame of his doings—his frolics and feasts,
Excited the wrath of the rest of the priests:
They vowed he'd be damned, as the worst sinner
should,
But he boldly swore he'd be — if he would!
Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
Let us sing in the praise of this resolute friar.

Now one luckless day this good friar he died,
Whereat all the women most lustily cried;

There was wringing of hands—there was shedding of tears,
 There were lots of long faces, and no lack of fears.
 Old Nick might have broiled every saint on his fire,
 Had he only but spared them their barefooted friar.
 Oh the friar! the marvellous friar!
 Let us sing in the praise of this wonderful friar.

“Oh! oh!” quoth the devil, at meeting his soul
 Nigh the gate of purgation, a taking a stroll,
 “Though some score of sinners you’ve got out of
 here,
 I have you fast for this many a year.”
 “By the mass,” said the friar, “if here I must stay,
 I’ll be hanged if I’ll go till you show me the way.”
 Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
 Let us sing in the praise of this valorous friar.

Master Satan, who’s learned some civilities now,
 Led the way to the gate with a smile and a bow,
 When lo! ’mid the damned did he presently shoot,
 With a kick of the breech from the friar’s broad foot:
 Away sped the friar—his foe followed quick;
 But heaven opened for him, and shut out Old Nick.
 Oh the friar! the barefooted friar!
 Let us sing in the praise of this saint of a friar!

“An excellent good song and a merry,
 Master Cotton!” exclaimed Ben Jonson;
 and similar commendations flowed from
 others of the company. “Said I not, my
 masters, we should have famous singing
 out of him?” continued he, “and have
 I not proved myself a true prophet?”

“Indeed, methinks you spoke of songs
 in no way like unto that we have just
 heard,” answered Master Constable.

“No matter,” replied the other. “If
 I have not touched the bull’s eye, I have
 hit the target.”

“I can now commend thee with a
 good conscience, Ben,” observed Master
 Shakspeare, “thy conceit, like thy shoot-
 ing, is not a *miss*.”

“Ah, thou sweet wag! thou wilt give
 me no rest,” cried Ben Jonson, laugh-
 ingly.

“There be no rest for the wicked, Ben,”
 said Master Shakspeare, in the same hum-
 mor.

“Callest thou me one of the wicked?”
 inquired his companion, seeming to be
 greatly shocked.

“Nay, thou shalt not be of the wicked
 this time,” added the other, “because it
 happeneth thou art one of us; and if
 thou art of the wicked, then, mayhap, I
 am like to be nearly half as bad as art
 thou, which is a thing so horrible to ac-
 knowledge, I could never be brought to
 do it.”

“Oh, thou aggravating varlet!” ex-
 claimed Ben Jonson, good-humoredly;
 “thou abominable, facetious villain! May
 I never taste sack again if I do not think
 thee the most superlative, prevaricating
 piece of vanity that ever associated with
 true men. What, thou wouldst be afraid to
 confess thyself half so bad as am I? Thou
 art right there, for no one would believe

the confession when ’twas made. I tell
 thee, I would find more virtue in a bad
 oyster, than is to be met with in thy
 whole body.”

“As thou wilt, Ben, as thou wilt,” re-
 plied Master Shakspeare. “If thou art
 for finding anything commendable in bad
 oysters, I have done with thee. My stom-
 ach will endure no such unsavory similes.
 Keep whatever virtue thou discoverest
 under such circumstances; for though it
 must needs be but little, ’twill be some-
 thing for thee to boast of—and that, me-
 thinks, ought to be a great object with
 thee at present.”

Shortly after this, Master Cotton did
 call upon Sir Walter Raleigh for a song,
 which presently brought forth the ballad
 that is here given:—

SIR WALTER RALEIGH’S SONG.

A comely young knight went out to the fight,
 And he was the pattern of chivalrie;
 For so boldly he went through the tournament,
 And in hall and in bower so courtouslie.
 Each damsel she uttered a benison, [John.
 And sighed when she thought of the knight of St
 With sword or with spear, he had not his peer,
 In England, in France, or in Germanie;
 And at singing, so choice was his lute and his voice,
 That there never was heard of such minstrelsie.
 Then the heart of each damsel went galloping on
 When she glanced on the face of the knight of St.
 John.

His eyes were as bright as rivers of light,
 His cheek like a rose from the east cuntry;
 And he stood up so tall and so gallant withal,
 None could gaze on unmoved at his excellencie.
 Then ev’ry fair damsel, cried when he was gone,
 “What a love of a knight is the knight of St. John.”

He Paynims had slain, a hundred or twain,
 In Palestine and in Arabia;
 Yet ten times a day would he kneel down and pray,
 As though he had lived in great infamie,
 And loudly each damsel proclaimed when ’twas done,
 “What a saint of a knight is the knight of St. John.”

But when it was told that his heart was as cold
 As coldest winter in Muscovie;
 That he was above ev’ry feeling of love,
 And was bound by a vow unto chastitie.
 “Alack!” cried each damsel whose heart he had won,
 “What a wretch of a knight is the knight of St.
 John!”

This song also met with exceeding
 commendation; and the wine having
 been circulated pretty briskly, all seemed
 to be in the very best of spirits, and ready
 to praise anything that showed the
 smallest sign of worthiness, so that it
 proceeded from any of their company.
 Jests became more general. Master Shak-
 speare and Ben Jonson, however, still
 uttered the best, and the greatest number
 of them; as at first, usually choosing
 each other to be the subject; but it is
 utterly impossible I could put down one
 half of the choice things they said; and
 much afraid am I that the choicest have

escaped me. At this time, Beaumont and Fletcher were engaged with Master Shakspeare in some friendly talk concerning of a play of theirs that was to be performed at the Globe. Master Selden was leaning forward over the table, listening attentively to an account given by Master Cotton, of the finding of certain curious manuscripts in an ancient chest, the which Master Donne and Master Martin seemed also intent upon hearing. Master Constable and Master Sylvester, with Master Carew, were laughing merrily to a droll anecdote told by Ben Jonson; and Sir Walter Raleigh was relating to Master Francis an adventure that he had had in the wars.

"I have prevailed on Dick Burbage to play the principal character," observed Master Shakspeare to his brother playwrights, "but it hath so happened there must be a delay of some few days before it can be played. Dick went the other night to visit an alderman's wife by appointment, and his worship, her husband, returning sooner than they expected, Dick leaped out of the window, and had the ill hap to sprain his ankle; since when I can get him to talk of nothing but the monstrousness of such husbands, who be ever a coming home when they should stay abroad."

"That is so like him," observed Master Beaumont, laughingly. "He doeth an ill thing, getteth himself into a scrape for it, and then with a famous impudency none can help laughing at—abuseth not himself, who must be the only one to blame, but the very party he was striving to do hurt to."

"For his drolleries methinks he shall be found nearly as wild as Green," added Master Fletcher. "There is a good story of him I heard him tell to-day."

"Ha! prythee relate it," said Master Shakspeare.

"Green walking nigh upon St. Saviour's, met a funeral," continued the other. "He was struck with the miserable countenances of all who made part of the procession. The undertaker and his men seemed determined on looking more mournful than the mourners, and the mourners appeared to be vying with each other who should look the most wo-begone. Green could not abide such awful long faces. He said the sight of them was so exceeding pitiful he could not but feel for their hapless conditions; and this made him resolved to strive if it were possible to make them all in a better humor. Thereupon, upon coming up to

them, he put on one of his comical faces. In a moment, undertaker, bearers, mourners, and all, relaxed somewhat in that severity of visage that had so moved him. If they did not smile, they were on the point of it. Seeing this, after passing them, Tom made a short cut, and met them at the corner of the next street, with a face more comical than he had put on before; at the sight of which there can be no doubt in the world every one set up a palpable grin. The next thing he did was to fix himself at the church door, and when they came up he looked into every man's face with a countenance so marvellously ridiculous that it was impossible to say whether the undertaker or the mourners laughed the loudest; and as for the bearers, they shook their sides so heartily, that the coffin went jog, jog, jog, upon their shoulders, in imminent danger of being pitched upon the parson, who, as was very natural, looked awfully scandalized at their behavior."

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, bursting out into a famous laugh, "that is Tom Green all over."

"What art making so much noise about? a murrain on thee!" cried Ben Jonson from the other end of the table. "Dost find so few to heed thy sorry jests thou art forced into laughing at them thyself. Well—had I wit of any sort, it should be such as might move the mirth of my company."

"Thou art right, Ben," replied his ready antagonist. "Hadst thou wit of any sort, doubtless thou couldst make a goodly use of it; but I see thou art aware of thine own deficiencies, so I will say no more on that head."

"Thou canst say as much as thou wilt on that or any other head—saving thine own," retorted the other. "And, as thou knowest full well, it be very proper policy of thee to be silent on so barren a subject."

"Nay, my head can not well be barren," said Master Shakspeare good humoredly, "seeing that it hath its labors continually. But as for thine, Ben—I do wonder thou art not ashamed to look in the face, thou doth it so little credit. Thou wilt bring shame upon thy head, depend on't. Some power thou hast there, no doubt, for 'tis well known thou art *head-strong*."

"Out upon thee!" exclaimed Ben Jonson, whilst those who heard the jest were laughing very merrily. "Thou art like a bad oyster—that openeth its mouth only to show how worthless it be."

"Bad oysters again, and be hanged to thee!" cried the other. "Why, what a villanous taste hast thou! Well, if thy humor runneth on such garbage, let it; yet would it be but civil of thee couldst thou refrain from thrusting such unwholesome conceits before those of weaker stomachs."

"Mayhap there shall be found more likeness betwixt you and a bad oyster than you think can exist," observed Master Fletcher.

"O' my life I see not any resemblance," replied Master Shakspeare. "Prythee say how dost thou make it out."

"Because it seemeth to me that he that biteth at you be like to get the worst of it," answered Master Fletcher, "and so it be with your bad oyster."

"Ah! he is villanously unpalatable!" cried Ben Jonson in some bitterness.

"There is another point that bringeth the resemblance still closer," added Master Beaumont.

"Alack, is it brought so home to me!" cried the other very pitifully.

"'Tis the bad oysters that produce all the pearls," continued his companion.

"Ben! thy bad oyster be not so bad a fish after all!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare very drolly, amid the laughter of all around him.

"Away! I'll have none of thee!" cried Ben Jonson, seemingly a little put out, whilst he appeared intent upon the paring of an orange. "Thou art intolerably conceited. Thou takest none to be so good as thyself. I doubt not for all the airs thou dost give thyself, there shall easily be found thy betters in scholarship, and thy equal in all things."

"A song, Master Shakspeare, I pray you," exclaimed Sir Walter Raleigh, seeing a quarrel was at hand, unless he had skill enough to thrust it aside. "It be monstrous of you to have remained all this time and sung nothing."

"Ask Ben for a song," replied Master Shakspeare. "He is the capitalest singer of a good song among us all."

"I be not in the humor. I can not sing. I have forgotten such songs as I used to attempt," said Ben Jonson, still a little out of temper, but not so much as he was.

"Surely thou hast not forgot that most sweet song of thine, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes?'" inquired the other. "The sweetest, truest, delicatest verses I have met with this many a day; and I be thoroughly convinced of it, they will live in the reputation of the world as

long as there shall be found hearts and minds capable of appreciating their infinite beauty."

"Dost really think so, Will?" eagerly asked Ben Jonson, his features gradually changing from a very evident sulkiness to a most glowing pleasure, as he took his eyes off what he was intent upon, and fixed them upon Master Shakspeare. "Dost think them of any goodness? Dost fancy they will live any time? Art sure the song pleaseth thee?"

"There can be no doubt of it," replied the other. "'Tis as proper a song as ever was writ: and I should show an infamous lack of judgment were I not to give it the praise that be its due."

"At least it showeth a wonderful noble heart in thee to say so," said Master Jonson earnestly. "The more especially, because thou hast written a score or two of songs of a merit I despair of attaining; and I do take some little shame upon myself for appearing out of temper with thee, because thou dost sometimes press me, as I have fancied, somewhat too hard."

"I can not press thee too hard, Ben," answered Master Shakspeare. "When I meet with thee I know I have my match. I like mightily to find so able an opponent; and if I seek to give thee a hard rub or so, 'tis to rouse thee to put forth all thy strength—that I may admire thee the more for it."

"I'faith you are just like two of the very skilfulest masters of fence," observed Sir Walter in an excellent good humor. "They know of each other's cunning at the weapon, and are ever a thrusting away to prove which be the better man; and although both get no lack of hard pokes, they can not part without being in famous admiration at the other's skill."

"That is it, true enough, Sir Walter," replied Ben Jonson, in a like merry mood. "We never meet without a duello of quirks and quiddities. Mayhap he cometh at me with a jest, and o' my life I can not help having at him again."

"You combat not with blunt foils, as I am a witness," added Raleigh laughing, "for there is ever a very fine point in your weapons."

"Ha! ha! Perchance there be!" cried Ben, joining in the laugh. "But 'tis my humor—'tis my humor."

"That is just what I wish," said Master Shakspeare. "Thou hast known for some time how infinitely I like 'Every man in his humor.'"

"Ah, that have I, sweet Will," replied the other with a very sincere friendliness. "Nor have I forgot that it was thy kindness, when I was unknown and uncared for, that got my play to be taken up by the players."

"I pray you, Master Jonson, favor us with your song," said Sir Walter Raleigh. "The night is drawing in, and if things go on at this rate, we shall be forced to take ourselves away with such a lack of harmony as is not usual amongst us."

"I sing not before my master. I know myself better," replied Ben Jonson good-humoredly. "When that sweet facetious varlet has delighted us sufficiently, I will strive what my poor wit can do to amuse you in an humbler way."

"Disparage not thy ability, Ben; else must my judgment be called in question," observed Master Shakspeare in a like mood. "But that there shall be no wasting of time in the matter, I will give you what I know of a merry ballad I heard in Warwickshire when I was a boy."

This announcement was received with exceeding satisfaction by all; and shortly, after a monstrous diverting fashion, he sung the verses here given.

MASTER SHAKSPEARE'S SONG.

Gaffer Gosling arose on one fine summer's day,
Donned his best Sunday jerkin and hosen of gray,
And with staff in his hand, and his hat on his head,
Right out of his threshold he presently sped.
He told unto none on what he was intent,
But in truth, 'twas in search of the cuckoo he went;
For of late, let him go anywhere, far or near,
The note of that ill-omened bird met his ear.

"Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!"

And all the year through,

Gaffer Gosling was mocked by the villain cuckoo!

He went a few steps, in no mood to rejoice,
He stopped to take heed and again heard the voice.
Now this way, now that—now a little way on,
Now close at his elbow, now far away gone.
He looked up to the housetops, and down to the ground.

But never a trace of a cuckoo he found;
A few folk of the village he met in his way,
And they all smiled upon him and wished him Good-day!

"Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!"

"There, I hear it anew!"

Cried the Gaffer. "I must find this villain cuckoo!"

He hid to his gossip, and him he addressed,
To know where the cuckoo had builded his nest;
Who told him he kept quite unseen and unknown,
And preferred any pretty bird's nest to his own.
There tarried the varlet whilst he had a mind,
Then fed 'he, and left a young cuckoo behind;
And the pretty bird fed it and tended it well,
And amongst her own brood oft allowed it to dwell.

"Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!"

"Gog's wounds! he's here too!"

Said the Gaffer, and searched for the villain cuckoo.

Then hither and thither, in every place,
He poked his gray head and his old plippin' face;
For still was he certain the bird was close by,
Though wherever he turned he was mocked by the cry.

He got in a rage, but his rage was in vain;
For wherever he turned still it mocked him again.
He stamped and he struck the hard ground with his stick,

Crying, "Where dost thou hide thee, thou slanderous chick?"

"Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!"

"Drat thee and thy crew!"

I could wring thy young neck—oh, thou villain cuckoo!"

Through the lane, through the wood, o'er the common he hies,

Yet in vain for the sight of a cuckoo he tries;
Although from each tree, every hedgerow and wall,
As plain as could speak, he heard the bird call.

Then came home dull of heart and as gloomy in thought,

Because that he'd had all his trouble for naught;
But he there met a sight that nigh robbed him of life—

'Twas the priest, cheek by jowl with his pretty young wife!

"Cuckoo!—Cuckoo!"

Gaffer Gosling looked blue.

He had found out the nest of the villain cuckoo.

"O' my life, a good song, Will!" cried Ben Jonson, laughing as loud as any there. "A right exquisite song! By this hand! I have not heard so droll a song this many a day."

"Indeed, 'tis a most merry conceit," said Master Constable.

"I like the humor of it hugely," added Master Sylvester; and all said something to the same purpose; for, out of all doubt, there was none there that did not relish exceedingly both the drollery of the song, and the infinite drollery of the singer.

"Commend you not so liberally, my masters," observed Master Shakspeare, after emptying a cup of wine. "Ben Jonson will presently give you better cause for praise."

"Nay, that can never be, sweet Will!" replied Ben Jonson. "I know not anything so truly laughable as that which thou hast so diverted us with, nor could I put such provoking mirth in it as thou hast, knew I songs of ever so comical a sort. But such as I have remembrance of you shall hear if it please you to listen." This intimation produced a proper attention amongst his companions, and in a few minutes he commenced singing of the following ballad:—

BEN JONSON'S SONG.

Once Old Father Time walked along,
A journey to take at his leisure;
When a group of fair nymphs there came up in a throng,

All moving in gracefulest measure.
"He shall tarry awhile," did they laughingly say;
"We will hold him with us, and then dance Time away!"

But although bound with garlands they made him advance,
They soon found that they could not keep Time in the dance.

"Alack, silly nymphs!" then he cries,
"Whilst ye all dance so gayly, TIME FLIES."

Then off Father Time again set.

The dust from his scythe gravely wiping;
Till a party of skilful young shepherds he met,
Passing Time most melodiously piping,
Some sought to hold Time with a vigorous gripe,
Some bade him to listen how well they could pipe,
They played, but ere long found their pipes would
not chime,
They held not the tune, and they could not keep
Time.

"Alack, silly shepherds!" he cries,
"Whilst ye all pipe so gayly, TIME FLIES."

Again the old fellow set out,

Without a companion to cheer him;
But was stopped in his way by the laugh and the
shout

Of a crowd of gay Bacchanals near him.
With his scythe the wild youths cut the grapes
from the vine,
And seizing his hour-glass soon filled it with wine.
"We with drinking *kill Time*!" cried they all, in
great glee:

But whilst merrily quaffing, Time set himself free.
"Alack, silly toppers!" he cries,
"Whilst ye all drink so gayly, TIME FLIES."

So, my masters, drink freely and fast,

Time coming looks wondrously pleasant;
Let us merrily find our pastime in *Time past*,
As we make the best use of *Time present*.
Then crowned with fresh roses let's pass round the
bask,
And the sunbeams of wit on our pleasures shall
bask;
For he may all heed of Time's progress resign,
Who quaffs—freely quaffs of the rosy red wine.
Old boy, we thy hour-glass despise,
We care not a whit how TIME FLIES.

This song was well received of all, especially by Master Shakspeare, who seemed much taken with the conceit of it; and it appeared to give a fresh zest to the conviviality of the company; for more wine was brought in, more sack made, and the laugh became louder, and the jest more frequent. The table now lacked much of the pleasant appearance it had. Certes, there was a great show of empty bottles, glasses, cups, tankards, and lighted candles; but of the dishes, mayhap there was a pippin in one, two or three prunes in another, half an orange in a third, and in the fourth nothing but parings of apples and shells of walnuts. Many more songs were sung: a love ballad by Master Carew, and ditties of a like kind by Beaumont and Fletcher. Master Donne and one or two others, the which have gone clean out of my memory, as well as sundry droll catches and exquisite madrigals which were then and there sung by divers of the company. In truth, nothing could exceed the mirth and harmony that prevailed, the which Sir Walter Raleigh at one end of the table, and Master Shakspeare at the other, sought to preserve with an exceeding pleasant humor and courteous free-heartedness. Every one looked moved by the spirit of good-fellowship, and although

Master Cotton being in a grave discourse to two or three attentive listeners on a matter of some antiquity, did ever and anon get slyly pelted by Master Shakspeare on one side, and Ben Jonson on the other, with orange pips and nutshells, to the infinite mirth of those around, he took it in good part, till a prune-stone from the latter hit him so sore a blow on the nose, that he suddenly caught hold of the half orange that lay in the dish before him, and flung it at Ben Jonson with so true an aim that it smashed against his head, whereupon the laugh was louder than ever, and Master Jonson joined in it as merrily as the rest. All at once there was a great cry for Master Francis to sing a song. He felt he had scarce confidence to attempt such a thing before so famous a company, and begged hard to be let off; but none heeding his excuses, and Sir Walter Raleigh and Master Shakspeare pressing him on the subject, he, after some to-do, and with a voice somewhat tremulous, began to sing the verses here set down.

MASTER FRANCIS' SONG.

Forbear, sweet Wanton! Go your ways!
I heed no more your dainty smiling:
Your sugared words—your thrilling gaze—
And matchless craft in heart-beguling.
For though your beauty may be bright,
If all may in its splendor bask,
Now bid my love a fair "good night!"—
I will not con a common task.

Forbear, false Syren! Strive no more!
Your tuneful voice hath ceased to charm me:
Your power hath gone—your reign is o'er,
Those witching sounds can no more harm me—
For though the strain was honey sweet,
Its honey sweetness all allowed;
And I like not the poor conceit,
To be but one among the crowd.

But give to me the steadfast soul
Whose love no selfish care can sever,
And I will own her fond control,
And throne her in my heart for ever.
But till such golden maid I find,
(And fondly hope I such exists);
The love that changeth like the wind,
May, like the wind, go where it lists.

"Truly, a most sweet song, Master Francis," exclaimed Ben Jonson, who had listened to the young singer, as had all, with an entire attentiveness.

"And of an exceeding proper spirit," added Master Shakspeare; who fancied it was writ by Master Francis in relation to Joanna—in which he was in some way right, for he had composed it soon after his quarrel with her.

"'Tis indeed, very admirably conceived," said Sir Walter Raleigh; and from others round about him, Master Francis received such praise, that although it

pleased him mightily to be so commended of so many good judges, it somewhat disconcerted him.

"Now, my masters, for a parting cup, and then for our homes," cried Sir Walter, rising, and presently all filled up their cups with what liquor they had, and drinking it off jovially, each took his hat and made himself ready to go. But it so happened that Master Cotton was seen fast asleep in his chair, and Ben Jonson spying this, and having enough sack in him to be in the humor for any sport, cautiously approached him—the rest looking on, curious to see what would come of it; and fully expecting some famous jest or another.

"Fire! fire! fire!" bawled Ben Jonson in the ear of the sleeper.

"Ha! what? eh!" cried Master Cotton, jumping up suddenly and rubbing his eyes.

"Your house be burning to the ground!" cried Master Jonson.

"Save my manuscripts! Save my books!" shouted the antiquary, as he rushed hither and thither in as complete a fright as ever was seen—but he was quickly called to his senses by the shouts of laughter that broke from every one in the room; and then finding matters were not so bad as he had feared, he took the jest as merrily as any.

"And now, good dame," said Sir Walter, as he, with the others, entered a little room furnished with a goodly show of all sorts of drinking vessels and bottles, and things appertaining to a tavern, among which the portly hostess and her daughter were sitting; "If you will reckon the pay, we will pay the reckoning."

"That will I, noble Sir Walter, and quickly," exclaimed Mistress Cannikin, laughing loudly at the conceit, as she proceeded to the back of a door on which sundry curious marks were chalked; then making her calculations, she cried out in the midst. "Humphrey! put out the lights in the Dolphin. Kate, take the money of such as I name. Barnaby, ask the gentlemen in the Half-Moon, if they lack anything. Indeed Sir Walter, 'twas an exceeding droll conceit. Ten and six-pence if it please you, noble sir."

"See that we get into no scrape—we are reckoning without our host," observed Ben Jonson in a manner that afforded much mirth to his companions.

"The hostess shall bear you blameless," added the portly dame, laughing heartily. "I thank you, noble Sir Walter. Good, upon my life! Worthy Master Jonson, your reckoning cometh to

just six shillings and a groat. Kate! take of Master Cotton five shillings and three-pence. An admirable conceit, by my troth."

"The reckoning must needs be in very good hands," observed Master Shakspeare gallantly. "Every one knoweth our hostess be so exceeding fair."

"Ha! ha!" cried Mistress Cannikin, displaying her double chin to famous advantage. "Sure never was so witty a thing said. Nine and eleven-pence, sweet Master Shakspeare. At my time of life too! Kate, seven and a penny to Master Donne. And yet it was so prettily spoken."

"And now, sweet hostess, for a salute at parting," exclaimed Master Shakspeare, as he threw his arms round her portly person, and snatched a caress.

"Heaven prosper you!" cried the old dame, taking it very good-humoredly. "Eight and a penny halfpenny, good Master Fletcher. An excellent-hearted gentleman, and a courteous. Kate, five and six-pence to Master Beaumont."

"Indeed, la! Master Jonson, it be monstrous to be kissing of me!" drawled out the hostess's daughter, as she was faintly struggling in the arms of him she had named.

"Tilly valley, wench!" exclaimed her mother, laughing to see what was going on. "A kiss from a gentleman be no great matter—especially if he payeth his reckoning handsomely. Seven shillings and two-pence if it please you, worthy Master Constable, and two shillings and a penny left owing at the last time."

"Now, sweet Kate," whispered Ben Jonson.

"Ben! Ben!" called out Master Shakspeare, shaking his head very reprovingly. "Thou art still hankering after the *sweet cates*, I see."

"Cater for thyself, then," replied the other in the same humor. This sort of scene proceeded till the reckoning was paid, and then all started into the street as merry as crickets.

CHAPTER XXXV.

O, for a muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention!
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry like himself
Assume the port of Mars; and, at his heels,
Leashed in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire
Crouch for employment.

SHAKSPEARE.

Convey thee from the thought of thy disgrace
Steal from thyself, and be thy care's own thief.
But yet what comfort shall I hereby gain?
Bearing the wound I needs must feel the pain!

DANIEL.

What bloody villain
Provoked thee to this murder?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MASTER FRANCIS was again upon the wide seas in as goodly a ship as ever ploughed the waves, with his true friend Harry Daring, and his kind patron Sir Walter Raleigh. I have already made mention of the likelihood of an expedition against the Spaniards, and this had come to pass. At the time when England was threatened with an invasion by the boastful armada, which, by God's good help, was turned into a laughing stock, Sir Walter Raleigh counselled the sailing of an expedition to destroy the Spanish fleet in their own harbor, and although it was not acted on at the time, now, after a lapse of eight years, as it was known Philip was engaged in similar desperate enterprises against England, Queen Elizabeth resolved on giving him such a blow as should make him repent of his villany. For this purpose, at an expense to Elizabeth of fifty thousand pounds, and of great sums to many who did contribute toward it, a fleet of a hundred and fifty sail were equipped at Plymouth, of the which were seventeen of the navy royal, eighteen men-of-war, and six store-ships supplied by the States, and twenty-two ships-of-war furnished by the Dutch, under the command of their own admiral—the rest being tenders, pinnaces, victuallers, and transports—and these, carrying nigh upon fourteen thousand soldiers and seamen, beside one thousand gentlemen-volunteers, were making what speed they could for the Spanish coast, every ship with sealed orders not to be opened till a proper time, under the direction of my Lord Essex and my Lord High Admiral, assisted by a council of the queen's chiefest officers, of which, to Dame Elizabeth's huge delight, Sir Walter Raleigh was selected as one, appointed rear-admiral, and put in command of the Warspite, a ship of the first class.

Nothing could be more in accordance with Raleigh's humor than this expedition. At the urgent entreaty of his devoted wife, he had sought all means to restore himself to the queen's favor, and all means had failed; but although his very good friend Sir Robert Cecil, as he believed him to be, had, before his start-

ing, done all he could to impress him with the notion of my Lord Essex's hostility, and he could not help observing, that Essex relished not at all that he should divide his authority, or control him in any way, Sir Walter saw that there was now a noble opportunity for him to distinguish himself, and he doubted not he should make such good use of it, as should recommend him to his sovereign, and win the friendly opinion of my Lord Essex, and all whom he had been taught to regard as his enemies.

By Master Francis the expedition was looked upon as an adventure in which he might gain such honor as would give him a fair credit with the world, despite of the mystery attached to his birth. Although he was greatly rejoiced at the issue of his interview with that wretched hypocrite Holdfast, and did build many pleasant dreams in consequence, more than once there came into his mind the possibility of his being that abased thing Queen Elizabeth had called him; and then the recollection of the shame she had put upon him before all her court, and the likelihood there was that such scenes might again occur, did fill his heart with so entire a wretchedness, that he felt he could endure anything rather than suffer similar treatment again. It is not to be imagined he got rid of all thoughts of Joanna. Frequently since he had caught sight of her at the playhouse, had she formed the subject of his reflections, to the exclusion of every other. The appearance in her company of such a thorough villain as he believed Padre Bartolomé to be, made him infinitely uneasy; and though he tried to dismiss any unfavorable inference, by fancying they might be strangers, the knowledge he had that both had been living at Guiana whilst he was there, more than once gave him the suspicion that they might be better acquainted with each other than he liked. He would probably have been careless of the matter had he believed what he had at his quarrelling with her: but ever since his finding she had done so much to rescue him from the Indians, notwithstanding the extraordinary manner she had behaved to him on his discovery of her, and all that he had heard and seen before—there ever lingered in his mind a doubt that she who could act so nobly was of so base a nature as he had been led to imagine: and living in the hope that she would one day prove herself to be all he could wish, whatever fresh thing he knew of her likely to discourage that hope,

gave him a very monstrous inquietude. Imagining she was in London, he had made every inquiry, and sought every place in search of her; and when he found the pursuit fruitless, upon Master Shakspeare seriously counselling of him to give up all thoughts of her, he had sought the society of such young gentlemen as his intimacy with Sir Walter Raleigh gave him access to: and though many were exceeding comely—and though there were few who did not look upon him with a more than ordinary kindness, he found, after all his endeavors, he could like none of them as he had liked the mercer's daughter of Eastcheap.

But who could enter into the expedition with more spirit than did Harry Daring? To him nothing could come more in the nick of time, or more completely to his mind. Ever since his return from El Dorado his restless humor had employed itself in all sorts of mad freaks, leading of such apprentices as he could get together (who looked upon him as a very prince of a fellow, he was so careless of his purse) into frequent encounters with his old opponents, the city watch, that the worthy citizens knew not what to make of it. All Eastcheap was in a constant uproar. There was scarce ever a night passed without some scuffle and tumult; and the barber-chirurgeons were kept in constant employ getting simples and plasters for the wounds, broken pates, and bruised limbs, of such of the watch and apprentices who got hurt. But amid all this wildness and prodigality, Harry Daring was ever doing of some generous action. He got Big Jack o' the Turnstile in a comfortable berth in the very ship of which his patron Sir Walter had promoted him to be one of his junior officers. To those who had suffered in any way by his tricks, he had made what amends he could. Even the old dame whose jaw he had so despoiled at his first essay in the extracting of teeth, meeting by accident, he gave such recompense to as nearly put her out of her wits with joy; and to Stephen Shortcake he and Master Francis behaved so liberally as quite to win the old man's heart. Not one of the serving-men were there that did not taste of his bounty; and those that he had drubbed the most were the most rewarded.

As the fleet sailed gallantly along, spreading themselves about, and the best sailors going ahead, they intercepted every vessel likely to convey intelligence of their coming to the enemy, so that not

so much as the least pink could come within sight but was taken; and after a prosperous voyage they entered St. Sebastian's bay, within a league of Cadiz, whilst the Spaniards dreamed not of the English being out of their ports. When they arrived before Cadiz it was in the early morning, the sea went marvellous high, and the wind was exceeding large nevertheless it was designed by the lord admiral to land some companies at the west side of the town, in divers long boats, light-horsemen, pinnaces, and barges: but in the attempt, one of the barges, having in her fourscore good soldiers, was sunk, out of whom eight were drowned, though great exertions were made to save all; and by the advice of Sir Walter Raleigh, who hastened to my Lord Essex on board of his ship, the Repulse, to show how injudicious it was to attack the town before the enemy's ships in the harbor had been mastered, the land forces were recalled, and little was done that day, save discharging at the enemy certain great pieces of ordnance, which they replied to in a like manner, but in consequence of the distance both parties were from each other, no great damage was done on either side.

The bay in which the English and Dutch fleet were riding looked large and amazingly beautiful, being in one part six or seven miles over, or thereabouts, yet having in it so many rocks, shelves, sands, and shallows, that the proper sea-room is not above two or three miles, and not so much in some places, so that it would be somewhat hazardous for many ships, of great burthen, such as those of the navy royal to be thrust in there, the more especially when the position of the enemy was considered. No sooner had the English presented themselves than four of the largest galleons of the Spaniards placed themselves to defend the numerous merchantmen which were lying there ready bound for the Indies, and seventeen of their galleys, all armed to the teeth were speedily got (under the walls of the town) in a position in which they might face the enemy with their prows; also keeping in such order and so together, that they could defend the town, the castle and the forts. The harbor was defended by Fort St. Philip, and by many pieces of ordnance, placed so as to rake the channel; and Fort Puntal guarded the strait leading toward Puerto Real, along the curtain upon the ramparts.

It having been agreed that the Spanish

fleet should be attacked—to the wonderful satisfaction of Harry Daring and all in the expedition—between five and six in the morning of the next day, it being the twenty-first of June, the English ships bore down upon their opponents, immediately upon which the merchants run up the river with as much speed as they could, the galleys betook themselves to the defence of the town, and all the powerfulest ships moored themselves head and stern, to have their broadsides to bear upon the advancing English. The four principal galleons of the Spanish fleet anchored under the guns of the fort of Puntal, placing three frigates on their right, two Portuguese galleons and argosies at their back, with the galleys by three and three, at intervals, in the choicest situations; and the admiral of New Spain, with forty sail of huge merchant-ships richly laden, defending the entrance, by stretching across it like a bridge. It was originally planned that Sir Walter Raleigh, he having been appointed rear-admiral, should lead the van; but although the honor of it was claimed by the vice-admiral, who was no other than Lord Thomas Howard, Sir Walter at the sailing of his squadron, took the start of all, and bore gallantly into the midst of the enemy, to the great admiration of the whole fleet. At first, the garrison let fly at him their artillery; then bellowed the cannon on the curtain, and next the seventeen galleys poured into him their great and small shot; but he answered them only with a flourish of trumpets; and amidst the loud cheering of his men and officers, he anchored beside two of the largest galleons, and presently poured all his heavy ordnance into them; the which he continued to do without intermission, though he was exposed to so raking a fire that the Warspite got dreadfully shattered. Sir Walter being well supported by other of the queen's ships, amongst whom was my Lord Essex, the fight soon became exceeding hot.

At this time, whilst the conflict was raging very terrible and hideous, on account of the quick flashes of fire and roaring thunder of the many culverins and cannon, one of the Dutch fly-boats, containing about a hundred fighting men, who had behaved themselves very valiant, by some negligence, set its powder afire, and blew up with a dreadful explosion, to the dismay of the English and Dutch, and to the wonderful contentment of the Spaniards; but their content was of

no long continuance. They were so sorely pressed by such of the English ships as could get nigh them, though these were but seven in number, that they began to like it not at all. The scene on board of the Warspite was marvellous to look on. The wonderfulest enthusiasm prevailed both amongst mariners and soldiers, because of Sir Walter setting them so valiant an example; and amidst a most destructive fire, every piece which could be brought to bear against their gigantic enemies, the galleons, was cheerfully served by the crew; and the only desire expressed by all was, to come to closer quarters. Sir Walter having waited, hour after hour, for the coming up of the fly-boats, which ought to have gone in and boarded the enemy, and none coming, he went on board my Lord Essex's ship, and stated to him the necessity he was in, from the condition of his vessel, to board from the Warspite, did not the fly-boats instantly arrive; and my Lord Essex, who had greatly admired his gallantry throughout, for all that my Lord Howard of Walden and others of his company, being creatures of Cecil, did try to excite a jealousy in him, answered, in most friendly fashion, that whatever Raleigh would do, he, on his honor would second. This made Sir Walter row back to his ship with all the speed he could; but the other commanders taking this to be a signal to run in upon the enemy, made preparations on the instant, and before he could get on board several had passed him. This, however, Raleigh was not in the humor to allow of, and presently so manœuvred that he again had the first place, having anchored within twenty yards of the San Felipe, a large galleon of fifteen hundred tons, in such a position across the channel that no ship could pass him. Finding he was prevented by the wind from getting close enough to board, although his officers and men were monstrous eager for it, he laid out a warp "to shake hands with her," as he said; and those of the English fleet nighest to him following his example, the great galleons, in the utmost fright and hurry, slipped their anchors and run aground; and the soldiers and mariners were presently seen tumbling out of them into the sea by hundreds—some getting drowned, others choked in the mud, and a vast number mortally wounded.

Whilst Master Francis and Harry Daring were, with divers of the officers, observing this strange tumult from the quarter deck of the Warspite, all at

once flames were seen issuing from the lower deck of the *San Felipe*.

"The villains have fired her!" exclaimed Harry, seeming to be greatly vexed about it. "By Gog and Magog, it be infamous so goodly a ship should be destroyed!"

He had scarce spoke when, with a wonderful explosion, the mainmast of the burning galleon shot up into the sky like an arrow, together with such a shower of blazing timbers that the air seemed on fire with it. With the huge ship were blown up vast numbers of the Spaniards, who had not got out of it in time, so that it did make a very hideous spectacle to see their bodies scorched and blackened, falling into the sea in the midst of numberless burning planks, whereof some fell as far as the *Warspite*, and put her to great peril, which was promptly guarded against by the vigilance of the officers and crew.

"Alack, if there be not another of them a burning!" cried Harry, in greater vexation than before, pointing to a ship from which flames were seen to issue.

"'Tis one of their argosies!" observed Master Francis.

"And, o' my life, here is another with the like sign of fire in it," added his young friend. "It be monstrous, such goodly ships should be in the charge of such careless villains."

And, sure enough, another of the galleons and an argosie caught fire from the *San Felipe*, and the sight became more dreadful than ever, for the flames spread with wonderful fury; and whilst some of the Spaniards were clinging with frightful cries, to the rigging, many drowned themselves—some burned, some wounded, flung themselves into the sea, and strove to swim for their lives—some hung by ropes over the ship's side, up to the lips in water, but as the fire continued with increased fierceness, either the discharge of the great ordnance from the galleons as the flames reached them, or the blowing up of the ship, when the powder caught, soon put them out of their pain. By the marines and soldiers on board of the *Warspite*—indeed, by all throughout the fleet, this sight was looked upon with exceeding disappointment, for they expected to have made these monstrous vessels their prize; and the men and officers might be seen crowding wherever a sight could be got of the blazing ships, and expressing their lamentations with famous long faces. Sir Walter Raleigh had been carried below some

short time before, to have his leg dressed, he having been wounded by a splinter; but whilst Harry Daring and Master Francis were looking so woefully upon the destruction of the galleons, there came an order from him to make haste after the other two, so that they should not escape, or be set on fire; and in an instant all was hurry and scurry in every part of the *Warspite*, the sailors running nimbly up the yards at the boatswain's call, to make such alterations in the sails as the sailing-master thought necessary; others cheerfully raising the anchor, shouting their pleasant chorus; the trumpets sounding for the gentlemen-volunteers to muster on deck in readiness to board the Spaniards, and the officers shouting their orders to get their men in proper order.

Three of the *Warspite's* largest boats were in the meantime being filled with soldiers and sailors, armed to the teeth, on the side of the ship farthest from the Spaniards; and whilst the *Warspite*, moved by the wind which at that time sprung up, bore gallantly down upon the huge galleons, the boats were rowed round the blazing vessels, avoiding as well as they might the showers of burning wood that fell into the sea, to board the galleons on the other side. Of one of these boats Harry Daring was the second in command; and he was all impatience to be at the enemy, and so encouraged the sailors that they strained every limb in plying of their oars, with such good effect that they soon got ahead of the other boats. When they were within musket range of the *San Mateo*—the highest of the galleons, each of which were of twelve hundred tons burthen—a discharge of small arms from the lower decks of that ship killed his superior officer and several of his men.

"For death or victory!" shouted Harry, standing up as nigh the helm of the boat as he could, waving his hat over his head very gallantly. "Ply your oars merrily, my hearts of oak! Be ready with your pieces, soldiers, and pick me off these villains at the portholes and lower deck." He was answered by the cheers of his men, responded to by the cheering of those in the other boats, who seemed making every exertion to get up with him; and the soldiers under his command discharged their muskets with so true an aim, that presently there was scarce a Spaniard to be seen on that side of the ship.

"Now, my masters!" cried Harry Daring, as he drew his sword, "every man

that hath the honor of Old England at his heart, follow me." Again the men cheered with greater heart than ever,—each grasped his sword or his pike firmly, and prepared himself to follow to the death their gallant leader; but Harry, when he came to the ship's side and saw the huge wall of timber that rose before him, with scarce anything about it that presented a fair hold or footing, he felt a little puzzled what to be at, but hearing the rattle of the musketry and a huge shooting from the other side of the galleon, which proved she was being boarded by the Warspite, and observing that the other boats were close upon him, as the next wave dashed his boat against the San Matéo, and the sailors hooked her on, he boldly flung himself into an open porthole, rapidly followed by some score or two of his men, who came tumbling one after another, as if they had been shot out of a sack, the others thrusting in their pikes, arquebuses, swords, and such weapons as they had brought with them, as quick as they could.

Every man upon getting his footing looked for his weapon, and then for his enemies; but they found themselves in a low chamber, wherein there was just light enough to see a few Spaniards, some dead, some dying, and to discover by the furnishing of the place, that they had got into the victualling-room. None stopped to taste any of the good things that were around them; and Harry Daring seeing that all his men had their pieces loaded, and everything in proper order, commanded silence and great caution, made toward a door, upon opening which he saw instantly he was in the powder magazine, for there was a man with his back toward him, stooping over a barrel with a lanthorn at his side, near a basket nearly full of gunpowder. The man turned round upon hearing footsteps, and seeing who were behind him, seized upon the lanthorn, as if with the design of firing the powder, and so blowing the English, whom it is supposed he believed to be in possession of the ship, and the San Matéo up together, but before he could execute his villanous intention, Harry had run him through the body.

Here the young officer placed a guard to prevent all access to the powder, and then hastening out at another door, found himself in a broad passage, having doors on each side. Heeding none of these, and seeing a flight of steps a few yards ahead, he marched his men there. Whilst they were mounting these steps they

spied a party of Spaniards coming down, carrying divers of their wounded, who no sooner caught sight of them than in a famous fright they dropped their burthens, and with terrible outcries took to running away as speedily as their legs could carry them. The noise brought some soldiers to see what was the matter; but a well-directed fire killed the most part and dispersed the rest in all directions.

"On, my gallant hearts, and this huge galleon shall be our own!" cried Harry Daring, pointing with his sword up the steps as he led the way a little in advance of the rest. His followers looked as if they were delighted to be so bravely led.

"There be none here likely to lag astern when such as you lead the way, Master Harry!" responded old Simon Mainsail, who was one of the foremost of the party. "Make all sail, my masters!" added he to the soldiers, "there be shoals of these villain Spaniards yet left for us to be a killing of." He was cheerfully answered by his companions, and all pressed forward after their gallant leader. Harry Daring presently found himself on the aft part of the lower deck. He gave a hasty glance around him, and noticed on his left the decks of the Warspite, with scores of her mariners and soldiers pouring down upon the galleon's fore-quarter, amid such a tumult of shouts, cries, groans, firing of pieces, and clashing of swords, betwixt them and the Spaniards, as made a complete Babel. On the opposite side he heard the cheers of those in the other boats, who were intent upon boarding on that quarter; where a company of soldiers were drawn up ready to resist them.

"A Raleigh! a Raleigh!" shouted Harry, leading on his men sword in hand, who charged the soldiers with such good will, and they being quite taken by surprise, that they made but a feeble resistance. Some threw down their arms and cried for quarter, and others fled hither and thither, wherever they fancied there was safety. The way being clear, Harry Daring and his party quickly enabled their comrades below to get footing on the deck, and up they came scrambling as fast as they could, to nigh upon a hundred in number. These then made for the fore parts of the galleon, where the Spaniards had crowded in great numbers, because there they were being boarded by the Warspite; and fell upon them with such vigor that they who could were glad to retreat to the upper decks; but now a panic seemed to have seized them,

and wherever the English appeared, as they soon did in some force, following up the advantage they had gained with such spirit as not to leave their enemies breathing time, they threw themselves into the sea in crowds, hoping to swim to the shore: and then it being given out amongst them that the galleon was taken, every one sought to save himself in the same manner, jumping out of the cabin windows, off the decks, and out of the portholes, like bees issuing from a hive.

The other galleon was carried in a similar manner. This struck a terror in the whole Spanish fleet. Many of the ships run ashore, the merchants made off for the roads of Puerto Real, and the galleys went creeping along the coast to where there was a bridge called the Puente de Zuazo. Thus was a glorious victory achieved over this formidable array upon land and water, with no more than seven ships on the part of the English; but great as the triumph was, it satisfied not the valiant hearts who had gained it. Master Francis in the Warspite, and Harry Daring in the boat, had been exceeding conspicuous in their attack upon the San Matéo, the former having disposed of himself very courageously in boarding the galleon from his own ship, and the latter having behaved as hath been described, in heading the party in the boat. It so happened that these two met sword in hand at the winning of the Spanish ship.

"Well!" exclaimed Harry, after shaking his friend heartily by the hand, and exchanging congratulations upon finding each other unhurt. "For exquisite fine fun commend me to the taking of a galleon."

"I can not say much for the fun, Harry," replied Master Francis. "But it certainly hath in it a wonderful excitement."

"Excitement!" cried the other, taking off his hat and wiping his hot forehead and face with his handkerchief. "I take it, excitement and exquisite fine fun be much the same thing."

"Hast lost many of your party?" inquired his friend.

"Not above five or six," answered Harry. "Old Simon Mainsail hath got shot through the arm, but he taketh it in very good heart now we have got the better of these villains. What a wonderful fine ship, though, this be! Never saw I anything of the like bigness—save the others. It be a thousand pities any should have been burned, for I doubt not

we could have taken them all as easy as we have this."

Master Francis glanced at the dimensions of this gigantic vessel, and could not but acknowledge it merited all the admiration it had excited in his companion; but he soon turned to notice the appearance of the English and Dutch fleet in the bay. Those that had been engaged in the conflict bore on them numberless marks of its fury, and of these the Warspite seemed to be the most roughly handled of all, for she was shot about in every direction. In the distance were seen fly-boats and other vessels making for that part of the bay where the galleons were, and on the land side were the Spanish fleet, some dispersed, some run aground, some scorched and burning to the water's edge, and the San Matéo and San Andrés—another galleon of a like size, were in prize of the English. The soldiers of the Warspite were busy in securing their prisoners, and the mariners were going in parties under divers of their officers, to different parts of the ship to inspect their prize, and to guard against treachery on the part of the Spaniards. Master Francis and Harry Daring were upon the chief deck with a company of their men keeping guard upon such officers and soldiers of the Spaniards as they had secured; but this Master Francis was not allowed to do long, for there came a message from Sir Walter Raleigh to the intent, that he was to take a boat well manned, and make all speed to my Lord of Essex to acquaint him with the victory; and this he hurried to do.

Upon getting on board of the *Repulse*, which lay but a little way from the Warspite, he found my Lord Essex on the quarter-deck surrounded by his officers. He had seen Sir Walter's messenger before, both in Sir Walter's company, and when he had been so insultingly used of Queen Elizabeth, and liking his gallant appearance, and having heard much of his valiant behavior, he received him with a very pleasant courtesy: but when he heard the good news brought by him, it put him in as agreeable a humor as might be seen in the sociablest gentleman that ever lived; and gave instant orders for the landing of three thousand shot and pikemen to assault the town. Whilst the officers were getting their men into the boats, my Lord Essex detained Master Francis, inquiring of him particulars of the taking of the galleons; to which he answered modestly as regarded himself, but with plentiful com-

mentation of all others who had been engaged in that enterprise—the which seemed infinitely to the satisfaction of his noble listener.

“And how fareth my gallant friend, Sir Walter?” inquired he.

“He is badly hurt in the leg, my lord, from a splinter,” replied Master Francis, “else doubtless would he have been here himself.”

“He hath sent a right proper representative,” said my lord. “Yet I hope his wound be one of no great moment, for I doubt not we shall have hot work presently, and we can not well spare so valiant a commander at so critical a time.”

“If it please you, my lord, I will hasten back to the Warspite and tell him this,” observed the young secretary. “I am quite sure he would like nothing so well as sharing, with your lordship, in the glory of this noble enterprise.”

“Nay, Master Francis, I can not part with you just yet,” replied Essex. “I will send a messenger to Raleigh, requiring of him to support me, if his hurt will let him, with what force he can get together; and state to him I have kept you to be officer of mine for the present.”

“If it so please you, my lord,” answered Master Francis, who was not dissatisfied with this design of the lord-general’s. “Quite sure am I Sir Walter will hasten to support you, even if he be carried to the field, for I have oft heard him speak in so friendly a manner of your lordship’s valiant disposition, that I am sure he hath that regard for you that would hasten him into any enterprise by which he might do you a service.”

“Dost think so?” inquired my lord, looking into the other’s face somewhat incredulously. “Hast heard him speak in such friendly manner as should warrant your saying this.”

“That have I out of all manner of doubt,” replied his companion.

“By this hand, I have heard the clean contrary,” exclaimed Essex.

“Then such who told you, my lord, did most grossly belie him,” answered Master Francis with such exceeding earnestness as carried conviction with it. “I have had better opportunities of knowing his true nature than have many, and I do affirm, it be utterly impossible he would not appreciate such qualities of behavior as your lordship possesses. Believe me, my lord, they have most vilely slandered him who have said otherwise, for one more ready to acknowledge the merit of another did I never know.”

“’Tis likely enough,” said the lord-general. “I can not imagine that one who hath behaved with the notable true valor he hath shown to-day, and on divers other occasions, should be given to such poor passions as envy and maliciousness.”

“I will answer for his true-heartedness with my life!” replied his companion eagerly.

“I doubt you not at all, Master Francis,” answered the other. “I shall think of him all the better for what you have said. But I pray you attend me in my barge. We will talk more on this matter when opportunity allows.”

My Lord Essex then sending a messenger to Sir Walter Raleigh, proceeded to the barge which was waiting for him, in company with Master Francis; and the latter found himself putting to shore with three regiments of soldiers well appointed, filling a little fleet of barges and boats, rowed by the mariners. They landed in a sandy bay, close upon Fort Puntal, the garrison whereof waited not to come to blows with them, but abandoned it as speedily as they might upon their first appearance; whereupon Essex took possession of the fort, and finding he could only be annoyed from the mainland by the Puente de Zuazo, despatched at least one half of his force under able officers to take that bridge and at the same time sent a message to my lord admiral, to attempt the Mexican fleet lying at Puerto Real, to prevent their escape or burning; and then with the remainder of his regiments advanced in good order toward the town which lay at about three miles distance; but the road being all of a deep sliding sand, and the day hot and dry, made the march wonderfully fatiguing.

At some slight distance from the town they found a force of some five thousand foot and eight hundred horse, and although my Lord Essex had with him but fifteen hundred men in all, these attacked the Spaniards with such fierceness that they abode very little fighting, and did make their retreat with such speed that when the English came up to the walls of Cadiz they found the fugitives safe within them, and the gates closed. Whilst some of the assailants were striving to break through the gates, others, among whom was Master Francis, by means of an unfinished work, mounted the walls and leapt down as fast as they could; and the gate having been forced, the rest entered in good order, with their flags flying and

trumpets blowing, and charged at all they met. But now the struggle commenced; for they found every house turned into a fort, its flat roof having been made a magazine for weighty stones, which women as well as men let fall as they advanced—others of the Spaniards annoying them with firearms in the meanwhile.

Some houses were so offensive in this way that the lord-general was obliged to detach small parties of his men under commanders of most approved courage to take them by assault; and to one which seemed to be a church or religious house of some kind he sent Master Francis against, with a force of fifty men, whilst he sought to make his way to the marketplace. The young commander, after an obstinate opposition, carried the place by assault, which proved to be a nunnery; for, upon his forcible entrance at the head of his men, he noticed the nuns flying before him, screaming and calling on the saints for assistance. Taking care that none such should be hurt, he followed on briskly till he came to the cloisters, and, greatly to his surprise, perceived at some little distance from him a man in the habit of an ecclesiastic dragging along by the hair of her head a female in the dress of a novice.

"Turn, villain!" cried Master Francis, hurrying toward him with his sword drawn. "Thou art but a coward to use a woman so. Let go thy hold or I will cut thee to the chine."

"Ha!" exclaimed the man turning toward him the well-known face of the Padre Bartolomé, looking more malignant than ever he had known it.

"Art *thou* here, accursed heretic! Then this to thy heart, wanton!" In the same moment, to Master Francis's horror and surprise, he saw the Jesuit snatch a dagger from his vest, and bury it in the breast of his female companion, who sunk with a scream at his feet; and then with a fiendish laugh was seeking to make off by a side passage; but the young officer was upon him too quickly.

"There, thou abhorred murderer, and damned treacherous villain!—take thy reward!" shouted he as he ran the priest through the body. The thrust seemed to have gone home; for the padre fell on his back and spoke not afterward, but fixed on his assailant so hateful a glance that the other was glad to turn away his eyes. His men had by this time come up, and looked wondering to see a nun slain by a priest.

"She moves!" cried their commander, hastening to the prostrate novice, who gave some evidence of life. "Mayhap the blow the villain gave her was not deadly." She lay on her side, with her long glossy hair streaming over her face, and a stream of blood issuing from a wound a little below her breast that had stained her garments down to her feet. Master Francis gently raised her from the ground, and gazing upon her pallid face, beheld there the idolized features of the mercer's daughter of Eastcheap.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Lo! here the hopeless merchant of this loss,
With head inclined, and voice damned up with woes,
With sad set eyes, and wretched arms across,
And lips now waxen pale. SHAKSPEARE.

Oh, where have I been all this time?—how friended,
That I should lose myself thus desperately,
And none for pity show me how I wondered?
There is not in the compass of the light
A more unhappy creature. Sure, I am monstrous!
For I have done those follies, those mad mischiefs,
Would dare a woman. Oh, my loaden soul!
Be not so cruel to me; choke not up
The way to my repentance! Oh, my lord!

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

"DISTURB not yourself, I pray you!" exclaimed Master Francis earnestly, as he bent with an anxious countenance over the form of Joanna. She now reclined upon a pallet in a narrow cell, furnished only with a small table, on which appeared to be a missal or breviary, a rosary, and a crucifix; and he was sitting on a chair close beside her, holding of one of her hands. Her face looked marvellous pale—that settled pallor that betokeneth approaching dissolution; and her eyes, though still turned toward him with all the affectionate tenderness that had once dwelt in them, looked with wonderful languor and uneasiness, and lacked much of that extreme brilliancy by which they had used to be distinguished.

"The churgeon hath told me I have but a few hours to live," replied the mercer's daughter in a low voice. "And I would fain devote such short time as is allowed me to make my peace with God and my conscience, by a confession which methinks be equally necessary for you to hear as for me to state."

"Nay, trouble not yourself about the matter now, I implore you," cried her lover. "I would not have you make yourself miserable at such a time by allusion to what I would willingly wish buried in oblivion."

“’Tis imperative,” answered the other firmly. “Justice calls for it. I feel within me an influence that maketh it a thing absolute and not to be set aside. I conjure you listen. Hear me, Francis; and hear me with whatsoever patience you can bring to the hearing; for, indeed, the tale I have to tell requireth much endurance of you.”

Master Francis made no further objection; and with considerable wonder and some curiousness attended to the following narration:—

“I trace all the evil that hath happened to me to the want of a mother’s careful control in my bringing up,” said his companion. “She died in my early childhood. I was thus left to the entire care, if care it might be called, of my other parent, who soon showed how unfit he was for any such duty. Being considered a child of some comeliness I was ever petted by him—the commendation I received of strangers making him proud of my appearance. I heard naught from him and his associates save such flattery as taught me to imagine there could be nothing in the world of so much value as the attractions of the person. Vanity early took possession of my character; and the love of admiration which it engendered grew the stronger the more it was fed. I got but little education deserving of the name, save occasional schooling in the neighborhood, which when I liked not I gave up, and when I fancied I took to again; but I quickly acquired all sorts of cunning and deceit, from mingling with my father and his chief friends, who looked upon craft as nothing else but cleverness; and my passions which were exceeding violent even when young, were fostered in every conceivable way by the indulgence and harshness equally misapplied.

“As I grew toward womanhood, and my features and person began to assume something of that appearance they afterward acquired, the admiration I excited became greater, and my vanity the more intense. I lacked not suitors: no girl could be more followed. I was the favorite of all the apprentices round about; and many an honest citizen’s son vowed he loved me dearer than all the world beside. My father had early impressed me with a distaste for becoming a wife, drawing fearful pictures of the misery, drudgery, and insignificance of such women as married; and then, in more glowing colors, painting the consequence and happiness enjoyed by a girl of wit enough to

draw plenty of fine gallants round her all ready to be her slaves, that I thought only of how I might place myself in the enviable situation of the latter. I liked flattery too well to turn away from it, let it come from any, so I encouraged all who spoke after such a fashion as long as it pleased me so to do; and if they became importunate, or pressed me on the subject of marriage, gave them such answers as might hold them on, if I liked not to give them up, or send them away if I cared not for their company. As for studying the feelings of any of them, I never knew of such a thing. Being perfectly selfish myself in these instances, I believed all to be much like me, and cared nothing when I found it otherwise; for when I heard that any worthy youth had taken to heart my behavior, it moved me not at all: indeed, so utterly heartless have I been, when I had, by the cruel disappointments I put them to, reduced some to be nigh unto death’s door, I have boasted to my female confidante of the time that so many were dying for me. In fact, I looked upon such things as great triumphs that showed the power of my beauty.

“That you must sufficiently despise me for conduct so despicable I feel assured. In truth, I do despise myself most heartily; and the only excuse I can bring forward in extenuation of such baseness is, that it was taught me, and encouraged by those who ought to have inculcated in me honester principles. I may add, so little seemed my father to care for my morals, that he scrupled not in allowing me to associate with women living in great disrepute, if they happened to be good customers to him; and would have such to dwell with him in the house with as little shame or compunction. In fact, he cared for nothing save the increasing of his gains, so that he might have such companions as he chose, and live in continual feasting and jollity. It so happened that the selfishness which made me so regardless of the feelings of others whilst I could gratify my own vanity, secured me from anything like moral danger. I knew not anything that did deserve the name of love—whatever I might have professed—so that the ardor of the most devoted lover might with as much profit have been cast on a stone as on me.

“The admiration of apprentices and young citizens soon ceased to content me. Many brave gallants and young noblemen coming to my father’s shop, and getting

sight of me, liked me, or professed to like me, with so monstrous an affection, that they were ever besieging me with the sweetest of flatteries; and my father finding his advantage in it, afforded them every facility for seeing me when any of them had a mind. The report of my comeliness brought others; and all, to get my father's assistance toward having speech with me, had dealings with him, whereby he got great gains. Here then, was I, a woman—young, and, by report, lovely—exposed to all the arts of some of the most dissolute men about the court. They tempted me with costly presents—they strove to cajole me with the most delusive speeches; but I had too much cunning not to perceive their designs; and though it did delight my vanity famously to be so admired by so many brave gallants, and my selfishness allowed me to take freely what they freely gave, to none did I give better encouragement than an occasional caress—the which I had ever been taught to consider as a thing of no sort of moment.

“This continued till I knew you, and then my whole being seemed changed of a sudden—the barren rock seemed struck by some holy hand, and there gushed forth a stream of the purest and sweetest feeling. Before, everything was for myself—now, everything was for you. Although the love of admiration was implanted too deeply in my disposition to be readily eradicated, I made it subservient to the most generous purposes. I learned how you were situated with your miserly kinsman—I noticed your inability to supply that thirst for information which distinguished you. Love not only taught me liberality, but instructed me to use such delicacy in the application of it, as enabled me to supply all your wants after such a fashion as could be least objectionable to one of so modest and retiring a nature as I found you to be. You were then but a mere youth, and I a woman of some six or seven years your senior; the delight I felt in affording you facilities for improving yourself in study, and the gratification that arose in me as I observed the rapid progress of your mental faculties in consequence, I am altogether unable to express; but the affection I felt was of so different a sort from anything I have heard or read of, that I can not fancy such was ever felt before.

“The fact was, you seemed so entirely thrown on my protection—there was such a sweet purity and entire excellence in your disposition, and you were so young,

and perfectly free from guile, that the feelings with which I regarded you mingled the deep devotion of a fond woman for the object of her early idolatry, with the sweet tenderness of a mother for her most cherished offspring: but when in the overpowering eloquence of your full-heartedness you began to pour forth those passionate ecstasies so delicious for an attached woman to find she has excited in her lover, and developed those bountiful gifts of mind you were possessed of, in writing in my commendation the most endearing and graceful poetry, I have known transports so sweet and refreshing, that all my heart melted in my eyes, and I then felt I could endure every evil, and would willingly make any sacrifice the securing of your happiness required. Oh! would that these exquisite sympathies had continued their generous influence! Would that they had destroyed in me that wretched vanity and contemptible cunning, which, to my shame be it spoken, were called into action as frequently as ever!

“’Tis true my love of admiration still allowed me to listen to the flatteries of every gallant I met, with a sensible satisfaction, and put forth numberless little arts—I then thought nothing of, but now consider sufficiently contemptible—to excite their adulation; but though I liked the flattery well enough, it was rare I did not despise the flatterer, and easily perceiving the selfish object had in view, it was not possible I should care much to excite hopes in them I never meant they should see realized: but I did more than this, I encouraged all such as were so inclined, to the giving of me presents, the which, as soon as might be necessary, were applied to the sole profit and advantage of one, whose profit and advantage I had ever at heart.”

“Gained I what friendly assistance I had of you by such means?” inquired Master Francis, looking with infinite seriousness.

“I pray you disturb me not with questions,” replied the mercer's daughter faintly, “I have much yet to say, and I feel exceeding faint;—as though it were not possible for me to go through it all. But I must on. Ah! where was I?” asked she, and hesitated a moment, and then proceeded. “Suffice you to know I had no other means of doing you such service as it was my good fortune to do, for of my father's bounty had I never known, he scarce letting me have enough for mine own necessities, and seeming to

care for nothing but constant indulgence of himself in riotous ill-living. Though I had no scruples myself about procuring sums of money this way, knowing the thorough worthlessness of nearly all those from whom I had it—indeed it did appear to me a laudable application of what was offered with evil intentions—I had looked so well into your disposition, I knew you would not tolerate such a thing on any account, and I therefore did put forth all manner of artifices to deceive you, not only as to the source whence I derived what gains I had, but in everything relating to my true character. I strove all I could to keep from your knowledge that I knew of any such gallants, and ever behaved to you in such a sort as might convince you I cared for pleasing none other than yourself: for I had noted you to be sudden and of a quick temperament, and I did hugely suspect, gained you any knowledge of how I was proceeding, you would think the worst of me, and quarrel on the instant.

“About this time I made the acquaintance of a gallant of exceeding prepossessing countenance and manner, and of a right noble person, whom I had met at Paris garden, a place my father often took me to. He appeared, by his look and language, to be foreign-born; and there was about him so courteous a dignity, that I doubted not he was also nobly born. Finding his advances not ill received, at the conclusion of the entertainment he must needs be seeing of me home, to the which my father not only made no objection, seeing that he was gallantly apparelled, but presently took himself away, and left us together. His admiration was evident, yet he spoke not, save with exceeding respect, and did conduct himself with a gentleness of behavior that flattered me more than all. This meeting led to private interviews at my father's dwelling, throughout which he behaved with the same delicate courteousness as at first. When our intimacy had more ripened, I learned from him, in confidence, that he was a Spanish noble, styled Don Santiago de Luz, though he called himself Count de Blanc on our first acquaintance; and he further stated, that being a Spaniard, he could only remain in England in disguise, and therefore had passed himself for a Frenchman, which, by his skill in languages, he could readily do. At one time after this he came to me apparently in some little alarm, stating that suspicions of his true character having been excited in some of the queen's govern-

ment, he could not visit me unless it was by stealth, after dark, for he found a watch was set upon him, that made him not inclined to stir out in the day.

“In consequence of his saying this, I let him in at what hour of the night he chose to come, and very willingly too, for the confidence he placed in me I found agreeable to my vanity; and the sweet courteousness of his conduct, and his avowal of the grateful sense of the favor, he was pleased to call it, I did him, were equally acceptable to me. All this time he spoke not a word of love—no sort of passion was exhibited in his behavior—he made me no costly presents—he breathed no delusive flatteries; his bearing had in it more of the attached and respectful friend than the gay and noble gallant. He was ever the same mild and gracious gentleman, delighting me with most entertaining discourse of the foreign countries he had visited, and seeming to have so serious an interest in my welfare that he took to teaching of me the Spanish language, as he said it might be of advantage to me hereafter. Though I could not doubt of his admiration, it was shown in too pleasing and too respectful a manner to cause the slightest wish in me for its discontinuance, or create a single apprehension for its consequences.

“At no time felt I anything like affection for this Don Santiago. I liked his society well enough. I felt sufficiently pleased that so noble a gentleman as he seemed to be, should pay me the attention he did; and having been brought up in the way I had, I could see no harm in allowing of his visits, even though I was professing, and did feel, for you a most fond and entire devotedness. About this time I met Master Shakspeare, though I knew not who he was till some days after. I had behaved to him much as I had done to other gallants that sought me; but he, upon finding I was the Joanna whom he knew you to feel such true and exclusive affection for, did reason with me very seriously on the injustice and impropriety of my proceedings; but selfishness and vanity had taken too firm hold of my nature to allow myself to be in the wrong; and I went on as before, caring only to keep from your knowledge that I associated with any other than yourself.

“There were times when I felt I was unworthy of you. For you were so pure-minded, and perfectly free from craftiness of every kind, and of so different a sort to such men as I had had acquaintance with, that I looked up to you as to a su-

perior creature; and the fear of losing you not only led me into the practice of a thousand deceits to disguise what I imagined you would take alarm at, in my natural character; but I deceived you to the same extent in other things, that I fancied the knowing of might lessen the affection you had for me. I would restrain my feelings as much as I could, and appear to you no other than a kind protectress; believing, from my experience of lovers, that but little encouragement bindeth the attachment stronger, whilst the appearance of much fondness hazardeth an early satiety: and when I found you, as you oft did, lavishing on me, with so bountiful a heart as you possessed, the affectionate impulses of your impassioned nature, I checked their too evident warmth, fearing that so great a fire could not but quickly burn itself out. So absolute an effect had your youth and innocence of soul on my maturity and great knowingness, that when enjoying such sweet endearments with you as I sometimes would allow, I have felt myself a different being—all selfishness, all vanity, all deceit, all cunning, seemed to have left me—I have wept like a child, and loved with all the entireness of a woman's devotion."

Here the mercer's daughter paused for a few seconds, as if her feelings would not allow her utterance. Master Francis had listened with considerable disquietude to the account she gave of the vanity of her behavior; but for all this, at her stopping in her narration, he, mayhap involuntarily, pressed the hand he held in his own.

"Alack! it lasted not long!" exclaimed Joanna. "The next hour I might be with some gallant or another, as heartless and as full of artifice as the meanest wretch that breathed. One thing only did I do, and continue, that proved I was not entirely regardless of what was due to you. I never would suffer your caring of me when any other had done so. However earnestly you pressed it, and however greatly you took the refusal to heart, I could on no account endure your sweet endearments should fall where the idle or the profligate had lately sought a hurried gratification. I endured such from others when it could not be avoided, partly because I had been taught to think of it lightly, and partly not by refusing to seem rude, and so offend such gallants as sought it of me; by which means, because they were his chiefest customers, I should hugely have angered my father.

They afforded me no pleasure beyond the satisfying of my self-love at seeing nobles and princely gentlemen seeming to be so intent upon having such a favor of me; but on receiving such precious gifts from you, all that was good of me was stirred into exercising of its influence, and I felt such exquisite enjoyment as I have found in naught else in the world.

"I come now to the fatal hour of our first and last quarrel. I had rejoiced in your good fortune in meeting with such a friend as the noble Sir Walter Raleigh, and however I might in my letters to you have seemed to lack affection, I loved you as tenderly as ever, and wished for nothing so much as your prosperous voyage and speedy return. One luckless day I had gone, by desire of my father, to the house of my Lord Cobham, with an account for payment, my father having found out that when any of these noble gallants settled not their bills as quickly as he wished, he had only to send me, and they not choosing to appear niggardly before a woman they pretended to have great admiration of, paid presently, and with some show of handsomeness. My Lord Cobham having done what was required of him, did himself courteously conduct me to a door leading from his dwelling into the gateway, where perchance you were at the time. There he would needs have a kiss of me before parting, and though I made some resistance to him, it was more for form sake than aught else, for I cared not much about the matter. By what dropped from you afterward, it was plain you heard us; and you had also gained knowledge of my allowing of Don Santiago's visits at night, and letting him out in the early morning, which moved you to say the harsh things of me you did.

"My passions had ever been uncontrolled, and when you spoke in such cruel language as you used on my return from my Lord Cobham's, it stung me to the quick. Selfish as I was, vain as I was, deceitful as I was, I was not the base thing you would have made me out. It did enrage me mightily to hear myself so abused, and all that was vile in my nature rose up in arms to revenge the wrong. But what then took place requireth not further allusion. Bitterly repented I afterward; and when I found that I had lost you, I woke at once to a sense of the shamefulness of my behavior, and felt in my inmost heart the truth of all Master Shakspeare had stated. The violent fury of my passions brought

me to the brink of the grave ; and my slow recovery, gave me ample time and opportunity for the examination of myself. Right heartily did I then despise those false dealings by which I had repaid your sincerity ; and yet, though knowing how worthless I had been, you were so completely the object of my best sympathies, I could not give you up without a struggle. I felt you were necessary to my existence. I would have gone barefooted over the world to have obtained your pardon. I, the proud, the selfish, the heartless Joanna, would have lowered myself to any humility, and sacrificed everything most dear to woman, to have been restored to your affections. Ah me ! all was unavailing. You rejected every overture—you would not forgive ; and I was left with a despairing heart and a broken spirit."

"Indeed, I have forgiven you long since," replied Master Francis, kindly. "And now I do consider myself much to blame in having so spoken to you without better warrant. Dear Joanna, believe me it is all forgiven." And again the hand was tenderly pressed.

"Hush !" hastily exclaimed his companion. "Call me not 'dear.' But everything seemeth to press hurriedly upon me now. I can scarce collect my thoughts in order. Still I will proceed as I best may. Let me return to Don Santiago. I saw him not till I was convalescent, when he seemed so exceeding concerned at my illness, and expressed himself so much more like a friend than a lover on the subject of my evident unhappiness, that after infinite pressing on his part to know the cause of it, I told him so much of our attachment, and your behavior as I thought necessary, and I conjured him to assist in endeavoring to bring about a reconciliation betwixt us. This he readily promised to do ; but at the same time expressed monstrous indignation at your conduct—vowing you knew not how to appreciate so rich a prize—a prize worthy of the proudest noble in the land—and much more to the same purpose. He went with a message from me, requesting of an interview, and returned, stating that you rejected such a proposal with scorn and contempt—that you spoke most disgracefully of me ; and that he had found out, upon inquiry, you were diligently seeking the affections of a fair damsel in your neighborhood."

"I saw no Don Santiago !" exclaimed Master Francis in some surprise and indignation. "Never spoke I in my life to

any one disgracefully of you—and never have I sought the affections of any save yourself."

"I believe you," replied Joanna. "Don Santiago now showed his admiration of me more conspicuously ; and spoke with such persuasiveness of the injustice I was doing myself by thinking of one whose conduct proved he deserved not the slightest consideration, whilst some of worthier station, who would be but too happy to show the earnest love they felt for the marvellous excellence I possessed, obtained no sort of regard, that I strove to care not for you, and endeavored to make myself content with the increasing devotion and affectionate attentions of this foreign gallant. Don Santiago had hitherto behaved himself with an appearance of so much delicacy and disinterestedness, that I felt myself perfectly safe with him at all times. 'Tis true, his language became more fond, and his manner toward me more impassioned, but his love came mingled with such exceeding respect, that I could never imagine any sinister intention in him. This good opinion of him led me to allow him such favors as I had allowed others. Ever the most honorable sentiments were on his lips, and his look and bearing were of such a sort as seemed to the full to express the same noble meaning. I suffered his frequent endearments without the slightest alarm. This apparent yielding of myself, the more emboldened him in his advances. Alack, I knew not the villain he was ! I had no thought of the danger I was exposed to. All looked honor and sincerity of heart. All breathed of love and the very deepest respectfulness. Miserable degraded wretch that I became, little knew I, with all my cunning ; what monstrous craft was arrayed against me ; or how soon it might come to pass, that she who had duped so many should herself be the completest wretchedest dupe that ever breathed ! I fell—the victim of such base treachery as I dreamed not the existence of."

"Not by any consent of mine own !" exclaimed Joanna more vehemently, as Master Francis drew away his hand and averted his face. "I thought not—suspected not the nearness of such dishonor. 'Twas a vile trick—an unmanly stratagem—a very atrocious piece of villany !"

"Francis !" she cried with increased wildness, her eyes lighted up with such extreme excitement they looked more brilliant than ever they were ; and by clutching at his arm convulsively, raising

nerself from her pallet till her head came on a level with his shoulder. "Francis! I feel the hand of death is on my heart. I could not tell a lie at such a time. On my soul—now going to judgment—there was a drug administered in some wine without my privity, and I woke from the torpor it put me into, to find myself in mine own eyes as loathsome as a leper. I pray you, in pity's sake, think not so meanly of me as I see you do. Francis! Francis! this is worse than death!" Saying this in the most heart-moving accents, she sunk on her face upon the pallet; and nothing was heard from her but violent deep sobs, at intervals of a minute or so, that seemed as if they were ringing of her heart in twain.

Master Francis had listened to what hath been stated, with a flushed and uneasy countenance; and the quick heaving of his breast and perceptible loudness of his breathing expressed how much he had been moved by the narration. His look, however, had more of pain than distrust in it; and, suddenly, as if he could bear it no longer, he buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Joanna!" he exclaimed, after a silence of several minutes, looking upon her with a grave and melancholy gaze. "It can not be unknown to you, that I loved you in all truth and honesty, and believed you to be the perfectest creature that ever blessed this earth. You appeared of a nature so bountiful in goodness, that I regarded you as a ministering angel sent to be my constant guide and protectress, and I could look forward to no felicity you did not either share or create. My happiness depended on my thinking as I did of you. The moment I discovered or believed you to be other than I had thought, there seemed to be nothing in store for me but wretchedness. Still, however, angered as I was by your behavior, and miserable at heart at it, I have oft entertained a hope that, had as appearances might have been, at some time or other you would prove yourself guiltless of any dishonesty. To find you untainted was all I prayed for. The consequence of this feeling of mine maketh what I have heard to shock me greatly. It is intelligence of so horrible a sort, that it hath come like a withering blast upon me, and taketh from me all sense and sympathy. But I will not—I can not dwell upon it. Proceed with your narration, I pray you."

Joanna did not answer on the instant, and when she did turn her face toward

him, it was more pale than before, and was impressed with such anguish as was pitiful to look on.

"You can not condemn me more than I condemn myself," she replied, speaking as if with some difficulty. "As soon as I became aware of what had happened, I grew frantic with rage and horror; and a sense of shame fell upon me that weighed me to the dust. I saw in a moment, I was irrevocably lost to all honorable affection, and dared no longer regard you with the slightest feeling of love. Don Santiago strove all he could to mollify my anger: and made such protestations and excuses, and seemed to regret so exceedingly what, as he said, the ungovernableness of his passion had led him into, that he pacified me in some measure. But what was I to do? You were lost to me for ever; and when the Spaniard pressed me to accompany him to his own country, I thought now it must be all one where I went; and as he earnestly swore he would make me his wife on our arrival in Spain, I trusted in his honor, and embarked on board a ship bound, as I thought, for that country. We had not been out at sea many days, when the behavior of Don Santiago toward me completely changed. From mild and respectful, he gradually became haughty and uncivil. He rated me for my melancholy as if it was a crime; and continually got into monstrous passions of jealousy, swearing I was ever thinking of you. One day he completely threw off the mask. He acknowledged he was no Don Santiago de Luz—he confessed that the ship was not bound for the Spanish coast, and bade me think not of marriage with him, for he was a Jesuit. He was Padre Bartolomé."

"Ha!" exclaimed Master Francis, starting up with his face famously flushed. "I had seen him then before. I remember me now, he did call upon me at Sherborne, but with no such name as Don Santiago, and when I saw the villain at Trinidad, I had some faint recollection of his face, but could not call to mind where I had met with him." Master Francis paced the narrow cell for a minute or so, looking very disturbed and angry.

"But the caiff hath gone to his account," said he, as he flung himself back into his seat. "'Tis useless allowing of his villany to move me. Proceed you, Joanna, with what remaineth to be told."

"I afterward learned from him and from others, that he was a sort of a spy in the service of the Spanish government,"

continued the mercer's daughter. "For this employment his wonderful talent in dissimulation, and great accomplishments, must have well fitted him. He cloaked his real character under so fair an exterior, that there could be no suspecting any craft or treachery. Having managed to obtain intelligence of Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition in search of the famous El Dorado, which he presently forwarded to Spain, he engaged the ship in which he had put me, and sailed direct to South America, and gave the governor of Guiana the most minute information of its force, and plotted with him for the destruction of all concerned in it. As soon as I knew him for what he was, I hated him with all my heart and soul, and the more earnestly for his throwing out mysterious hints of your speedy death, with such apparent satisfaction, as none but so black a villain could have known. Wishing to be quit of such a wretch, I endeavored to make a friend of Don Antonio de Berrio, in whose guardianship I had been left during a temporary absence of the padre, and who quickly professed himself my lover. From him I learned the arrival of the expedition, and that you were of the party. On that very evening the city was taken by assault, and I found you were an inmate in the same house with me. The padre had concealed himself in my apartment, vowing the horri- blest vengeance, and believing him capable of doing any villany he had a mind, I kept a strict eye on his movements. I was fortunate enough to come upon him as he was about to stab you in your sleep, and quickly forced him to leave the room with his wickedness unperpetrated. Upon finding you once again before me, and in the great joy I felt at having rescued you from death, there was a sudden rush at my heart of such powerful sweet feelings, that you seemed to me again as we were once to each other; and I was just on the point of clasping you in my arms to pour out the fulness of my heart upon your breast, when I remembered the degraded thing I had become—I shrunk from you in the wretched belief that my touch would be pollution, and with a racking anguish turned away and left the room. Alack! alack! the misery I then felt, language hath no name for."

Joanna was for some time unable to proceed, and seemed to breathe with exceeding difficulty: at last, as with a great effort, she thus continued her narration:

"I escaped the same night with the

padre to the mainland. We sojourned with others who had fled from the island, at a village nigh upon the Orinoco, and seemed to be in safety and in some comfort; but one day, the padre having gone early with a party to a village some leagues off, to procure provisions for our little settlement, there came back one of them with the news, that whilst they were carrying off a young Englishman the padre had set them upon, they had been attacked by a tribe of Indians, and all killed save only the padre and the captive Englishman, who had been taken up the country by the natives; and the fugitive had escaped only because he was at some distance when they made the onslaught, and on the first alarm climbed up a tree. On their departure he caught one of the horses that had strayed from the rest and made for the settlement with all the speed he could. I was sure, from the description of the Spaniard, whom I questioned closely, that it was you Padre Bartolomé had sought to entrap, and the Indians had now hold of. I was in such fear for your safety I scarce knew what to do; but expecting some pursuit would be made, I got of an Indian woman, to whom I had done some kindness, a dress such as she usually wore, and staining myself so as to be of her color, I started under her guidance to the village whence you had been taken, having got all the information I could of the Spaniard and others, of the direction the Indians were supposed to have gone, intending to offer myself as a guide to such as would be looking for you. I found your true friend and the young Indian; and desiring not to be known of the first, and much liking the appearance of the other, I told the prince, under promise of secrecy, such of my story as I had a mind to tell. My confidence had all the effect I wished. Pomarra, during my stay with him, treated me with such true respect and delicate courtesy as might have put to shame the behavior of the most finished gallant. What followed is sufficiently known to you.

"I did all I could to keep myself from discovery. It was a delight to me, however little I might deserve it, to be so near you, and to know of your safety. I shrunk instinctively from such familiarity as might betray me; but hearing you speak of me as you did took away from me every faculty I possessed, and on my swooning I was discovered. I left you as quickly as I could after that, and hastened to our little settlement, where I

had left what property I had. This taking with me, I proceeded to a part of the coast where I was told a small vessel was lying at anchor. I saw the captain: his ship was bound for France. It mattered not to me where I went so that I escaped from that villain Spaniard. I bargained for a passage, and the very first person I met on board was Padre Bartolomé, who had engaged the vessel for his own use.

"It would be to no good purpose to tell you how he misused me, or to say how I hated him, or how I strove to get myself away from his villainous company; but wherever he went he seemed to have such wonderful influence that all I did was only to put myself the more in his power. We stayed in France but a short time, and then proceeded to England, where we lived at the French ambassador's, with whom the padre appeared on marvellous good terms. He passed me off as his sister; but kept me under such jealous watch, that I never went out of the house, save once to go to the play with him. There I saw you again, and marked you well; but though I noticed your uneasiness, and the interest you took in the play, I had no suspicion of the cause till I gathered from the signs and looks of those around you that you were the author. The next day we took ship for Spain, and after a prosperous voyage landed at Cadiz. Here the padre left me to the care of some in whom he placed confidence, and went to Madrid; but I managed to escape from them, and took refuge in this convent, wherein I intended passing my life in meditation and prayer. The Jesuit, on his return, finding me escaped, lacked no exertion to discover my retreat, the which he at last found; and my noviciate not having expired, he sought by the most moving entreaties to get me to desist from my purpose; and these availing him nothing, took to the horriest threats, which I regarded with the like indifference, bidding him be gone and trouble me no more. He went, but during your assault upon the city, he got admittance into the convent, and finding me out, thinking none would heed him in the tumult, as I treated him with the scorn and hatred he deserved, he took to dragging me by force in the way you saw.

"I care not for having fallen by his dagger," continued Joanna, her voice getting fainter every moment. "'Twas a mercy rather than a punishment. I doubt much had I lived I should have done any

credit to the whole community among whom I had taken refuge; for I found, though I strove ever so, I could not become so religious minded as seemed necessary. My meditations were all of you—my prayers were all for you. Yet, in the solitary contemplation of my own unhappiness, I had ever one consolation. It was the belief that you were in the enjoyment of that prosperity your many excellences deserved. Francis, this was indeed a pleasure! I could think of no other pleasant thing. Miserable and degraded as I was—an outcast and an alien—with a mind almost maddened, and a breaking heart—after wearing out the long night on my knees, beseeching every blessing might be showered upon you, Francis!—I felt the sweet conviction steal upon me that you would be—*must* be—happy; and it brought with it a comfort that left me naught to wish for but the grave."

Master Francis again took the hand he had before held, and his eyes looked humid as he turned his gaze upon his companion. Although Joanna seemed quite exhausted, and was gasping for breath at the close of her speech, the moment she felt his hand pressing her own, she snatched it to her lips, and covered it with her caresses, with such sobs and tears as would have moved a heart of stone. It was evident he was also in tears. He looked a moment irresolute; and then, as though the influence of old impressions were not to be resisted, suddenly bent down and caught her up in his arms. "Francis!—*dear* Francis!" she exclaimed in a faint voice. "Now I also am happy!"

Master Francis was too much moved to speak. Indeed, his feelings were of that tumultuous character that left him not even the ability to think. He was aware only that the heart of the being he had loved was beating against his breast, and remembered only the many noble things she had done in his behalf. For a few minutes he lost all sense of surrounding objects; and was first awakened to consciousness upon finding that Joanna's heart did *not* beat against his own. On unclosing of his arms, he saw at a glance he had embraced the dead!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Who dares, who dares,
In purity of manhood stand upright,
And say, This man's a flatterer!

SHAKSPEARE.

And now I will unclasp a secret book,
 And to your quick conceiving discontents
 I'll read you matter deep and dangerous :
 As full of peril and advent'rous spirit,
 As to o'erwalk a current roaring loud,
 On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

IBID.

He endures beyond
 The sufferance of a man.

MASSINGER.

THE English armament was now on its homeward voyage, being nigh upon Cape St. Vincent. The victors brought with them, beside the two galleons and the spoil of Cadiz, divers wealthy prisoners, and forty hostages, for the due performance of the ransom; and afterward having landed at a town called Faro, which they took, did bring away with them the library of a famous ecclesiastic—one Osorio, Bishop of Sylves. Master Francis and Harry Daring were sitting together in a secluded part of the main deck. There was, as often happened, a marked contrast between the two; the face of the former being paler than usual, and of a settled melancholy, whilst the features of the other were lighted up with a wonderful animation. Harry carried his arm in a sling, showing that he had a wound of some kind; but to look at the cheerfulness of his countenance, none would have believed it was any great matter—yet it had been cut to the bone with a halberd. It appeared he was relating to his friend what he had seen of the taking of Cadiz.

“It was a horrible march that over the sands,” exclaimed Harry; “but at last, I being with Sir Walter, who was carried on men’s shoulders till my lord-admiral lent him a horse, entered the town with our colors flying very gallantly, and soon came up with my Lord Essex, who was fighting in the market-place surrounded by enemies. As ill luck would have it, the villains made but little resistance after we came. I managed however to get into the thick of the fight before it was all over, and got me this thrust in my arm; whereupon I paid the cuttiff who did it so handsomely. I doubt not he was as thoroughly satisfied as ever a dead Spaniard could be. The town now being our own, Sir Walter, who had hitherto rode with us on horseback, suffering much from his wound, returned to the fleet, but I was left with the rest to help keep possession of our conquest. Then came the sack. Now I did think the taking of the galleon was as exquisite fine fun as could be known; but the sacking of Cadiz beateth it hollow. Methinks

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all the houses in the place in the twinkling of an eye were turned inside out into the streets; and our men began a plundering away like a troop of half-starved mice just broke into a malthouse. There was such shouting and laughing as I never heard before;—some guzzling rare wines with as little discretion as an apprentice might swallow small beer—others devouring the choicest cates as greedily as a litter of pigs taketh to a feed of grains. They who cared not so much for eating, stuffed their trunks with whatsoever valuables came highest to hand, and then filled their hats, and then loaded themselves with as much as they could carry. Perchance coming away and meeting with something they liked better, they disgorged what they had about them, and took to burthening themselves with the choicer commodity. Here you might see one fellow wrapt up in the costliest silks knocking out the head of a cask of raisins, and a little way on, another in a famous robe of gold brocade, diligently sucking of a wine-barrel. In an incredible short time the principal streets were covered with almonds and olives, figs, raisins, and spices, which were kicked about and trampled under foot, and mixed with streams of wine and oil, left running out of casks that had been broken to see what they contained: and upon these were bales of stuffs and articles of furniture of great value, that had been abandoned for less bulky or more attractive plunder. But the next day I saw a sight that put me into such a humor I could take pleasure in nothing.”

“What was that, Harry?” inquired Master Francis.

“This was it,” replied the other. “Sir Walter had sent at day-break into the town to get orders from the lord-general that he might go and secure the Indian fleet—which might easily have been done—but he got no answer; and whilst my lord admiral and others were disputing with the Spaniards about the ransoming of these ships, the monstrous horrible villains set fire to them all; and there were burned nearly forty sail of as excellent fine vessels as Christian might wish to see, laden with choice merchandise for Mexico. Well, it be a certain sure thing that they who set them afire will get a like burning themselves some of these days—that’s one comfort.”

His companion did not answer to this. Indeed he was too intent upon his own contemplations to pay it any regard.

“Hast noticed this Colonel Harquebus,

Master Francis, that Sir Walter hath taken so much to lately?" asked Harry Daring.

"In truth no, Harry," answered his friend; "I can not say I have taken of him any great notice."

"Methinks he behaveth exceeding uncivil to you," observed his companion.

"I have noted no such behavior in him," replied Master Francis.

"Why he looketh at you with a perpetual frown," added Harry; "and when he, in company with Sir Walter, passed us to-day on the quarter-deck, I heard him mutter the words 'paltry secretary,' with a visage sour enough to turn all the wine in the ship into verjuice."

"There can be no harm in that," observed his companion, carelessly.

"No harm!" cried Harry Daring, in some astonishment. "Let any of my quality frown at me, or say or do anything despidingly, I warrant you I could not be easy till I picked a quarrel with the varlet, and taught him to carry his sweetest looks next time we came in sight of each other. Now you be fully as good a gentleman as is any Colonel Harquebus of them all, and next time he seeketh to put on you any such indignity, I would have you call him a villain, and if he draweth upon that, have at him, and show him what brave stuff you be made of."

"That I can never do, Harry," replied Master Francis: "Colonel Harquebus is so far my superior, as to render such a course out of the question. Besides he hath done me no offence, nor do I think he would affront me wantonly and without any provocation on my part, for I have heard he is one of marvellous great magnanimity, and of exceeding singular fine gallantry in warlike matters. Indeed, he hath been looked upon by many as one of the completest soldiers in all Christendom: added to which, his many laudable good virtues have made him Sir Walter's particular friend."

"Were he the devil's particular friend I would care not!" exclaimed his companion. Here the conversation ended, by a messenger coming from Sir Walter for Master Francis to attend him in the state cabin. Thither then hurried he on the instant, and found none there but his patron and Colonel Harquebus, socially quaffing of their wine after dinner. The latter seemed to be a man of some fifty years or so—his hair and beard gray, or rather, grised—his face brown, and marked with a famous scar along the right

cheek and another over the forehead, his eyes were piercing and severe, and his features, though not uncemely, were so stern and haughty as almost to be repulsive. It was evident, from the great breadth of his shoulders and size of his limbs, he was of exceeding vigor; indeed, he had been one of the tallest and properest men of his time and even now appeared scarcely to have passed the very prime of his age. His dress was of extreme plainness, carelessly put on, having a dagger at his girdle, and a Spanish rapier of great length at his side. He was talking when Master Francis entered, whom he only noticed with a stare, somewhat of the rudest.

"Sit you down, Master Francis," said Sir Walter kindly to him. "There is some of the enemy's wine before you, and of very choice quality. Drink you our safe and speedy return to our own shores." Master Francis did as he was bid, the colonel all the time seeming to scrutinize his appearance with so searching and severe a look, that others beside Harry Daring might have supposed from it he was monstrous uncivil in his manners.

"The fight commenced," said Colonel Harquebus to Sir Walter in a quick sharp voice, and as if in continuation of what he had before stated—"Enemy strongly posted. Met us with a galling fire, and the action soon became sharp. Right wing engaged with a superior force. Held their ground well. Enemy's cavalry tried to turn our left, were charged by our own horse. Desperate conflict—slashing work—as excellent good fighting as ever I saw! Our horse forced to give way, were reinforced by another regiment, and then they charged the enemy with such wonderful fine vigor, they retreated behind the village in a presently. Enemy's guns annoyed our centre. Shifted ground and took up better. Splendid manœuvre, by this hand! Enemy's pikemen and muskets, five thousand strong, strove to break into us upon passing the wood. Received them steadily—desperate sharp fire!—battalions moving in line—horrible difficult ground!—got broke—reformed—wheeling up into line at last, obtained a marvellous fine position. Enemy kept gaining strength at this point. Charged again and again, and were beaten back. Monstrous hard work! but a singular, admirable piece of good fighting. Went with my regiment to take the village. Every house a fortalice—and a windmill at the entrance strongly garrisoned, that

opened on us a dreadful villanous fire—took it by assault. Forced the Spaniards out of the village at the point of the pike. Pushed on to take the guns. Were charged by the enemy's cavalry—fell back upon the village in exceeding creditable order. Enemy's foot in great force advanced to retake the village. Magnificent fighting! Wonderful fine heavy fire! Admirable famous slaughter! Received a shot in the shoulder. Dreadful hard pressed by numbers. Got separated from my regiment. Killed a few of the enemy. Had my sword knocked out of my hand—was overpowered and taken prisoner."

"I remember that battle well," observed Sir Walter, "'twas right hotly contested."

"Odds wounds! that it was, I promise you," continued the colonel, after a quaffing a goodly cup of wine: then looking with some contempt at Master Francis, who was absorbed in his own reflections, added expressively, "But we had *men* about us, Sir Walter! Proper fellows of their inches. No pale-visaged varlets in fine doublets. No popinjays. No chamberers. Men were they, Sir Walter—men of the true breed, that looked on the barrel of a musket as the best pouncet-box, and preferred the flashing of a row of pikes to the wanton glances of a bevy of idle women. There were no scribbling skip-jacks amongst them. They consorted not with a parcel of trumpery rhymesters. They were excellent brave fellows, Sir Walter—gallant hearts, every man of them."

"I doubt it not," observed Raleigh. "But what became of you after you were taken prisoner?"

"I was known," replied the colonel. "The enemy knew me well. By this sword! I had given them infinite good reason for it! I doubt much had I been a mere absolute fine gallant my name would have been so famous amongst them. I was none such, I promise you—can't abide them—fit for nothing. Well—the Spaniards were mightily rejoiced at having got hold of me. I was taken to the rear. Chirurgeon came to dress my wounds. Didn't like his treatment, for he probed my shoulder and put me to the very horriblemest torture I ever endured. Wouldn't wince. Next time he did it, tweaked his villanous nose for him. Saw no more of *him*. Another chirurgical knave came—approaching me trembling like an aspen—handled me as tenderly as though he took me to be a dragon.

After that, was carried with a strong escort to Spain. Horrid roads—long journey—escape impossible."

"How fared you during your captivity?" inquired Sir Walter.

"Pretty well at the first," answered the colonel, occasionally glancing at Master Francis during his speech such looks as seemed to show he liked not his appearance. "A soldier wanteth not to have his delicate flesh pampered with dainties, no more than he careth for silk and satin for his apparelling. I was content with what I could get. Ate—drank—slept, as I might. Was marched to Cadiz, more strongly guarded than ever. Had I been but noted for my skill with the pen, doubt much they would have so cared for me. People stared at me as I passed, like rustics at a conjuror. Was lodged in the castle. Wounds got well. Every one came a visiting of me. Marvelled to find so many priests of the number, all a praying away from morning till night. Not one of these knaves had any skill in warlike matters, I'll be bound for't. Asked what they came about. Found 'twas to make a papist of me. Began a kicking of them all out of my company on the instant; which, when they saw, none stopped to cover the retreat of the rest. A panic seized on the whole detachment; and they made for the door with all sorts of fearful exclamations, whilst I hung upon their rear, doing them what damage I could."

"Methinks that was but uncourteous treatment for religious men," said Raleigh, but not without seeming somewhat amused.

"Hang them for villains!" exclaimed Colonel Harquebus. "They thought of making an apostate of me. Got thrust into a dungeon after that, and fed on bread and water. Didn't care. A soldier careth for naught. All the beggarly monks, friars, and the like contemptible set in the town, were preaching a crusade against me. Wanted to have me burnt as a heretic. People furious. Officers of the garrison in a fright. Gave out I had throttled myself. Priests satisfied—mob quiet. Had I been but a paltry secretary, the Spaniards would have cared but little whether I lived or died." And here he glanced again at Master Francis.

"But sought they not to treat with you about your ransom all this time?" asked Sir Walter.

"Wanted a thousand ducats," replied the colonel. "Hadn't a maravedi. When I quitted England had left all my dispo-

sable property in the hands of a citizen of London, in great repute for his honesty and frugality. Could write little else save my name. Hate writing. A soldier can employ himself better. Got one of the garrison to pen me a letter to my honest citizen. Put on it my seal and signature. Forgot it had been writ in Spanish, of which my honest citizen had no knowledge. Sent it by a Hollander trading to London. No reply. Next got one writ in English. No reply. Next got the captain of a Dutch merchant to call on my honest citizen, requesting of him to send the money for my ransom. Honest citizen swore he had never heard of my name. Wretched villanous caitiff! hath got in plate, money, and jewels, some ten thousand marks of mine—besides my deeds and papers. Mean to cut his weas-an for him on my return."

"Nay, I would do the knave no violence," observed Raleigh. "Give him to justice—the law will right you, and see he hath fit punishment."

"Let the law go hang!" exclaimed Colonel Harquebus. "What be the use of a lot of scribbling, prating, poor rogues of lawyers, but to set honest brave men by the ears? There be no law like unto the law of the sword, and no such lawyers as soldiers expert at their weapon. I will cut off his ears at least—a murrain on him! But he was one of those intolerable monstrous clerklime varlets, from whom no better behavior could be expected: fellows that live by penning, engrossing, and such like villanies. I would the world were well quit of such—'twill never be fit for brave men, till all craft of penmanship and monkish bookishness be driven out of it at the point of the sword. Detest such vocations. Can't abide scribblers. Hate books."

"How kept you your health during your imprisonment?" asked Sir Walter.

"Famously well," answered the colonel. "I cared not a jot how things went. I ate my bread—drank my water—prayed to God to confound my enemies—and went to sleep in my dungeon with a safe conscience. Had I been one of your famous fine gallants, now, who must needs dress themselves up in silk doublets, and look as melancholy as a woman without a lover, mayhap I should have been all the worse for the treatment I had whilst a prisoner, but I was of no such trumpery sort, I promise you; and the only thing that vexed me was, when I heard the firing of the great guns of the castle and the other ordnance and learned for what

it was, I could not get to have any share of the fighting."

"I would you had been with us," observed Raleigh, "some of our commanders had wonderful need of your experience. There hath been famous blundering, and monstrous loss of excellent great profit to the queen in consequence."

"Alack! for me not to have been at the taking of Cadiz is a thing to grieve at all my days," replied the colonel in some dejection, and then swallowed a cup of wine, as if to wash down his disappointment.

"I see not why you should so much lament it," observed Raleigh. "You have been at so many important actions, that methinks having no part of one only should be of no moment to you."

"But it is of exceeding moment to me!" exclaimed Colonel Harquebus sharply. "To have missed seeing so much excellent fine fighting is monstrous to think of. 'Tis abominable—intolerable, villanous!"

"I must now to the captain of my ship," said Sir Walter, rising from his seat. "And to see how go on the wounded. Master Francis, remain you here till I return."

Master Francis had noted but little of the preceding conversation, for his thoughts had the most of the time been engaged upon the melancholy death of Joanna; but what he had seen and heard of his companion did not make him feel in any sort of comfort when he found himself left alone with him. There was something so stern in his look and uncourteous in his manner his heart felt chilled at it. A silence for a minute or so ensued after Sir Walter had left them. Master Francis felt too humbled to speak, and the other appeared not inclined for conversing. The colonel seemed scrutinizing more severely than ever the appearance of the young secretary, who was of too modest a disposition to find himself so rudely stared at without looking somewhat confused. He imagined that his companion might have heard from some one in the ship what gross affront the queen had put upon him before all her court, and believing there was sufficient cause for it, was determined to use him despisingly. Colonel Harquebus drank off another cup of wine, and seemed to be in some impatience. He beat the table with his knuckles—coughed a little—made two or three slight hems as if he were about to speak, and ever and anon glanced frowningly at his companion.

Master Francis wished that Sir Walter would return. Still never a word was spoke by either. Presently the colonel rose, stalked haughtily from the table, and just as he passed the other, he put on his face the scornfulest look he had yet used, and left the cabin muttering with a most contemptuous expression the words, "paltry secretary!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It is a work of charity, God knows,
The reconcilment of two mortal foes.

MIDDLETON.

Hold my heart-strings, whilst contempt
Of injuries, in scorn may bid defiance
To this base man's foul language.

FORD.

Peace, dammed enchantress—peace! I should look
on you
With eyes made red with fury; and my hand,
That shakes with rage, should much outstrip my
tongue,
And seal my vengeance.

SHAKSPEARE.

"I LIKE it not, Master Bacon," observed my Lord Essex, as he flung himself into a chair in a spacious and well-appointed chamber in his own stately mansion, with a countenance that showed he was chafed at something. "I like it not, I promise you. Here the first thing I find on my return is this fellow Cecil appointed secretary of state; and on my telling of the queen how little it pleased me, seeing I had wished Sir Thomas Bodley should have the place, he being much the properer man, she rated me soundly for questioning of her appointments, and said haughtily, she would have for her servants such as she liked."

"I do not see how your interest can suffer by this," replied Master Francis Bacon, looking up from a huge volume he had in his lap. "Sir Robert Cecil doubtless knoweth what be his best policy. The man who hath his fortune to make beginneth not by setting of himself against one whose fortune is established."

"Nay, 'tis not for that I care," answered my lord disdainfully. "I heed not a rush any of these Cecils, busy as they make themselves; but I looked to have the place for my friend; and it vexeth me monstrously to find, after perilling myself so often as I have done—put myself to great charges, and borne with her humors—whilst I was fighting of her battles, the queen should put such a slight on me as to appoint this fellow to the neglecting of Sir Thomas Bodley, whose

fitness and worthiness I had earnestly spoke to her upon."

"I pray you make the best of it, my lord," said Master Bacon. "Though Sir Thomas hath not been made secretary, it was not from lack of zeal in you for his advancement: therefore have you naught to complain of yourself. And now that Sir Robert hath been appointed to that office, it must be to little purpose your seeming vexed in any way; for your vexation will in no way serve your friend, or disparage his rival. All that can be said of it amounteth to this—that the appointment is a disappointment."

"And a miss-appointment, or I'm hugely mistaken," replied the other in some bitterness.

"Then shall no blame be attached to you in the appointing," added his companion.

"But it be monstrous of the queen to have used me thus!" exclaimed my Lord Essex sharply, as he left off playing with the gold buttons upon his green velvet doublet, and threw himself back in his chair, looking more discontented than ever. "It seemeth that every fool must have influence with her now, whilst they who have perilled life and limb for her are to be slighted at every turn of her pestilent humor."

"My lord," replied Master Bacon, gazing upon the other with exceeding seriousness. "It hath pleased you to take me to be your friend and counsellor—more from your infinite sweet nobleness of heart than from any merit of mine—therefore must you excuse any seeming over-boldness in me seek I the proper performing of the counsellor's part. It must be apparent on the very slightest reflection, that her majesty hath been a most bountiful mistress to you. Mayhap she hath some qualities of temper you approve not of; but where will you find any one human creature, more particularly a woman, still more a sovereign, that hath so happy a disposition naught could be taken away to better it? I know not of the queen's majesty's ill qualities of mine own knowledge, but I know of her very many princely virtues; and have seen with how singular admirable friendliness she hath been disposed toward you on divers occasions, to the making of you the chiefest in her court. That your marvellous great worth, excellent valor, and very perfect discretion, deserved no less of her, be true enough; but it speaketh famous things of her discrimination that she should have found

out your truly noble excellences; and she deserveth the like praise in proving she knew how to appreciate them. Touching this appointment of Sir Robert Cecil, it must be known unto you, the queen's majesty must needs have a voice in the matter. She hath used it; her will is absolute, and all opposition fruitless. Perchance Sir Thomas Bodley was the properer man; and having recommended him as such, you should reconcile yourself to another being preferred in his stead, by remembering you have done your duty as a subject in stating to your sovereign who was the fittest person, and fulfilled all that your friend could have expected of you by lauding and bringing forward his qualifications. The thing is ended. Now you can neither serve your friend in the matter, nor yourself by making any stir in it; and if Sir Robert Cecil hath any ill will against you, or any of his family—I say not they have, for I should be loath to attribute bad feelings to any honorable person—they would like nothing so well as seeing you setting of yourself against the queen's pleasure, which they know well enough can only end in your discomfort, and their further profit. I pray you, pardon me, my lord, if, in my earnest zeal for your welfare, I may have seemed to put myself too forward in saying what I have; but no consideration for mine own interests would allow me to see you risking your favor with the queen, without giving you proper caution."

My Lord Essex had listened to what fell from Master Bacon rather impatiently at first—looking haughtily, pulling down the sleeves of his doublet, adjusting his cloak, and changing of his position; but toward the end of it, he seemed better satisfied, and looked with a more pleased aspect. The reasoning was too convincing to be disputed; and it was so properly put forward, that one even of so proud a nature as was my Lord of Essex, and spoiled child of Fortune as he was, could find no offence in it.

"I will endeavor to think no more of the matter," observed he, rising from his seat and proceeding to the window. "But I like not these Cecils. My lord treasurer seemeth to be ever opposing me: and I would rather any man than Sir Robert had been made secretary."

My Lord of Essex stood a few minutes silently looking out into the court-yard, and Master Bacon quietly returned to the perusing of his book.

"Ha!" exclaimed the former, in a note

of pleased surprise, "here cometh Raleigh." At the first hearing of this intelligence Master Bacon closed the volume he held and placed it on the table before him, looking also in some degree gratified.

"I can say naught of his ability as a commander," observed he, "that not being of my province; but a riper scholar than Sir Walter Raleigh have I rarely met with."

"And a famous gallant commander is he," added my lord, "and I do believe a truly noble gentleman. Mayhap he hath sometimes presumed somewhat, and took on him too much of the oracle, but his showing of the valiant spirit he did at the attacking of the Spanish fleet, hath made many by whom he was hugely disliked for his presumption, to speak of him more worthily than they used."

Presently, preceded by a serving-man in a gorgeous livery, to announce him; Sir Walter Raleigh made his appearance, and the reception he met with was wonderfully cordial.

"Master Bacon, I am heartily glad in meeting with you again," said Raleigh, turning courteously to the other; "'tis an infinite pleasure to have an argument with so able an opponent—nay, not a pleasure only, but as great a profit; for although he who disputeth with one of such marvellous learning and perfect judgment must needs come off but second best, still what he heareth of the other bringeth such additions to his own knowledge, that he gaineth by his loss."

"That could not be with one who argueth after the fashion of Sir Walter Raleigh," answered Master Bacon, "even supposing it could be with any other: for in the first place, I have ever found you to have such mastery of your subject, I have felt at my wit's end to answer you with any sort of discretion; and, in the next place, what you could get from my poor ability I know not, seeing you are a perfect Croesus in learning, and I but a mere beggar, as it were, who must needs put in his wallet what he getteth of others."

"I would there were a few more such beggars," observed Raleigh, with a smile; "poverty would then be more desirable than wealth, and they who now bestow their alms so sparingly would be forced to seek alms for the supplying of their own wants, and be taught the generous lesson they know not how to practise. But what news have you, my lord?" in-

quired Sir Walter, suddenly addressing my lord of Essex.

"Little of any moment," replied he. "The queen beginneth to grumble about the little profit she hath had of her fifty thousand pounds, and hath rated me and my lord admiral for inducing her, by our tempting speech, to embark so great a sum in the undertaking."

"Had we taken the Indian fleet, now how famously had we pleased her majesty," said Raleigh.

"But the Indian fleet having been burned of the Spaniards, it standeth to reason we could not bring them away with us," replied Essex, somewhat sharply, for he liked not the subject to be alluded to, he having been charged with remissness in allowing of their destruction.

"Methinks, under the circumstances, we did the best we could," added Sir Walter; "and the advantages we have gained are neither few nor slight. We have shown to the world how little we care for the power of Spain, for we have carried the war, as it might be said, into the braggart Philip's private chamber, and, with small loss on our sides, annihilated his fleet—prevented him from sending any supplies to Mexico for this season at least—took from him the power of injuring our commerce for some time to come, and—beside the two galleons and much other profit we deprived him of—took by assault one of the chiefest and strongest of his cities."

"I would we had kept it, as I wished," answered my lord. "Could we have got victual from Morocco, or elsewhere, in sufficiency for our force, I doubt not we would have held Cadiz till Philip had offered us Calais in exchange."

"I'faith that would have been to us the greatest advantage of the two," said Raleigh, "seeing that it be so much more commodious; and having been in our possession for so long a time, and then lost, the regaining of it would have been exceeding satisfactory to the queen and all her loving subjects. But let us be content with what we have done. Methinks it deserveth to be considered a glorious triumph."

"And so it doth, out of all doubt," replied Essex; "but some are never satisfied, do what you would. There hath application been made to my lord treasurer for the payment of the soldiers and marines, which hath caused all this dissatisfaction of the queen concerning of the expending of her fifty thousand

pounds; and she declareth the men have been well paid by what they gained in the sacking of the city."

"Mayhap some of them," observed Sir Walter, "did then and there get such handsome wages as might have justified my lord treasurer—in his own eyes, doubtless—of refusing further payment. At least there lieth a consolation for us, let my Lord Burghley be as little satisfied as he may, in knowing with what extreme satisfaction the whole realm regardeth the issue of our expedition."

"Indeed, it seemeth to me so," said Master Bacon. "Every one talketh of it. Even in the courts, when I go to hear some knotty question decided, I find the young lawyers are as full of galleons and argosies as ever was any port in the king of Spain's dominions; and question I any how speedeth the plaintiff in his action, they will answer me, he took fire and blew up with a monstrous thundering report, and did terrible damage by discharging of his heavy ordnance."

The two commanders laughed heartily at this conceit, and it appeared to have put my lord of Essex in entire good humor, for he began conversing cheerfully on the matter with both of his companions.

"I would fain have your company to dinner with me, my lord," observed Sir Walter to Essex, as they stood jesting and laughing together at the window. "Durham house would gladly open its gates for your entertainment."

"And I would as gladly enter them," replied my lord, in the like courteous spirit. "I doubt not of meeting a right hospitable reception; and I know not where I would sooner go in the expectation of being honestly entertained."

"O' my life, my good lord, you do me but justice," said Raleigh, earnestly. "I lack not sufficiency of good will in the matter, believe me; and therefore shall I be the more inclined to give you good cheer, that it may induce you to honor my poor dwelling with your company as often as your convenience will allow."

"You shall not find me backward, I promise you," answered Essex. "I will taste of your cheer this day, if it please you, Sir Walter, for a beginning, and after, whenever you may be in the humor."

"I thank you, my lord—I desire no better good fortune," observed Sir Walter. "But there is a certain friend of mine I much wish you to meet at my house to-day, who hath had the ill hap to offend you, in a matter whereof he pro-

testeth his entire ignorance; and I have set my heart upon reconciling you to him."

"Then should I be loath to disappoint you," replied my lord. "If the gentleman hath done me no great offence—no wrong to mine honor—naught impossible for me to hush up—and professeth that he hath offended me in ignorance, consider your desire accomplished."

"It delighteth me infinitely to hear you say so," said Sir Walter. "And well convinced am I, Sir Robert Cecil will be as much gratified as am I, at hearing of your readiness to live with him on terms of greater friendship than you have of late."

"Nay, I will have none of him," cried the haughty noble, as soon as he ascertained he was to meet the new secretary; and turned away.

"But, my good lord"—

"He hath an exceeding meddlesome disposition, Sir Walter,—a most pestilent busy nature, and is ever thrusting of himself where he should not."

"He hath stated to me that this appointment was forced on him by the queen," observed Raleigh. "And moreover declareth, that had he known at the time you were seeking of it for your friend, he would have been eager to excuse himself, and recommend Sir Thomas Bodley's greater fitness."

"He putteth himself ever against me in whatsoever I would undertake," continued my Lord Essex, still looking gloomy and dissatisfied. "These Cecils be ever at it."

"He hath sworn to me, in as moving terms as ever I heard, he was your very true friend and servant," added Raleigh. "And vowed there was no man living for whom he would sooner do a service, was it within the compass of his ability."

"I want not his services," said my lord, haughtily. "I doubt not I could serve myself, at a pinch."

"He who serveth himself, rarely complains of a hard master," observed Master Bacon, in a manner somewhat between seriousness and jesting. "Yet, however well qualified some may be to do without assistance, there is generally a time when they shall be glad enough to have another's aid. A man prideth himself on the excellence of his legs—he could walk through the world upon them—by-and-by he shall be forced to take a stick or a crutch to help him to his neighbor. I say not, my lord, there can be a likelihood of your requiring any such propping, save

as regardeth the natural decay of strength, which is common to all men; nevertheless, when, in a spirit of friendliness, any help may be offered, methinks the policy can not but be bad which, by a churlish and discourteous refusal, because it is not needed at the time, preventeth its coming to you, should you afterward sink into any extremity."

"Trouble me no more about it, Master Bacon—I like not these Cecils," answered my lord of Essex, though not so haughtily as before. "They are ever professing of themselves my true friends, yet find I them every day striving to thwart me in some way or other."

"Pardon me, my good lord, seem I too earnest in this!" exclaimed Sir Walter. "I pray you, remember, that both of you being much in her majesty's confidence, and engaged in the duties of the state, it is absolutely necessary there be no differences or dislikes betwixt you; else must the queen suffer for it to some extent—for no government can act with efficiency when the members of it are at variance with each other; because one being ever ready to oppose the other, nothing can be accomplished by either."

"A government can not stand long under such circumstances," observed Master Bacon, finding my Lord Essex made no reply to what Sir Walter Raleigh had stated. "You two stand in the state as are the arms to the body—if each pull contrary ways, there existeth a great chance you neutralize your own strength, or tear in two that which you pull at; but pull you together bravely, your united force shall move whatever you have a mind."

"That seemeth plain enough," said my Lord Essex, "and I should not like the queen's government should suffer by my dislike of any one. In honest truth, Sir Walter, I bear him no malice."

"That will I readily believe, my good lord," replied Raleigh, as if spying his advantage and anxious to follow it up. "I have seen such signs of a princely disposition in you, that I can not imagine a mere feeling of prejudice against Master Secretary, should lead you into allowing the realm to be ill governed."

"Nay, o' my life, I would not, Sir Walter!" cried my lord.

"I will answer for him in that," observed Master Bacon. "So far from his bearing malice, I have known him, out of his gracious and admirable magnanimity, give up a just resentment for the better furthering of the queen's interest."

"That was noble of him," answered Raleigh, with extreme earnestness. "Indeed, 'tis a most convincing sign of a truly great and gallant nature."

"It scarcely deserveth mention," said my Lord Essex, looking to be in a much better humor. "By this hand, I would do such any day."

"I doubt it not, my good lord," replied Sir Walter. "And if you knew with what deepness I have this reconciliation at heart, knowing how much her majesty may be benefited by it, I am certain, from all I have seen and heard of your bountiful sweet virtues, you would put aside whatever unkind feeling you entertain against Sir Robert Cecil, as something your noble nature disdaineth, and come with me to meet him at my house, without another word said."

"As you will, Sir Walter," answered my Lord Essex, very courteously, "I am ready now. If it please you, we will go this very minute."

Leaving Sir Walter Raleigh and my Lord Essex to proceed to Durham house, I must request of the courteous reader, that he follow me with Master Francis, who was leaving the lodging of his true friend Master Shakspeare, at the Bank-side, and was making for his uncle's dwelling in St. Mary Axe. The truth was, the behavior of Colonel Harquebus had become so unpleasant to the young secretary, that it made his life perfectly miserable. He would have taken the advice of his true friend Harry Daring, and challenged the colonel for the indignities he was continually putting on him, but imagining that that officer knew of the queen's behavior to him, which was ever in his mind, and believing he would treat with scorn and contempt any proceeding of the kind from one of such obscure origin, Master Francis shrunk from drawing upon himself greater contumely than he received, which seemed like enough to come to pass, were he to attempt calling his insulter to account for his conduct. Another reason weighed greatly with him. Colonel Harquebus was Sir Walter Raleigh's particular friend and companion in arms; and the kindness Master Francis had received from his patron made him feel exceeding delicate about quarrelling with one for whom he ever expressed great admiration and attachment. His position becoming so peculiarly uncomfortable, because the colonel had taken up his residence with Sir Walter, and had constant opportunities for affronting him, whereof he let

none escape, made him more anxious than ever to know something certain of his birth. Upon acquainting Master Shakspeare with all that had transpired since they last met, the latter had advised him to go alone to his kinsman who, it was thought by both, knew more of the matter than he chose to tell; and offer such a sum of money for his giving up the secret as would be sufficient to tempt his avaricious disposition; and upon this counsel Master Francis was now acting.

He had stepped out of a pair of oars on to the Blackfriars' side of the river, and was going on his way, lost in his own melancholy meditations, when he was roused from his revery by hearing himself accosted in a loud pedantic voice in the following words:—

"Behold me here, divine Zenocrate,
Raving, impatient, desperate, and mad,
Breaking my steeled lance, with which I burst
The rusty beams of Janus' temple doors,
Letting out Death and tyrannizing war,
To march with me under this bloody flag."

Master Francis saw before him a man with an exceeding dirty face and ragged apparel—the perfectest specimen of a vagabond he had met with a long time—having his right arm stretched out, holding, what seemed to the young secretary, to be a rolling-pin, the other arm being akimbo, but occasionally changing its position to wave a cabbage-leaf, which he did with a look of the heroic cast so ludicrous, that serious as was Master Francis's humor at the moment, he could not help smiling. It was some few minutes before he recognised in this odd compound of dirt and drollery, his old acquaintance Ralph Goshawk, the young haberdasher of the Strand; and believing, from the neglectedness of his appearance, he was in great poverty, he questioned him upon the matter. With considerable difficulty, the young secretary understood from the other's blank verse and tragedy manner, that play-going had been his ruin. His customers liked not being addressed in ends of plays, and all by degrees left him to have their wants looked after by haberdashers more attentive to their business. Want followed—from bad he fell to worse; and now lived as he could, which was as vagrant a life as ever was known—but so powerful was his passion for the seeing of plays, that got he a penny or two-pence of any one, he would be off on the instant to one of the cheapest playhouses, though he wanted food ever so. Master Francis bestowed on him a handsome sum, telling Ralph to put himself

in a better doublet, and when he wanted greater assistance, to seek for him at Durham house. The play-mad haberdasher first gazed with a famous wonder in his look, at the money, the which he presently put in a place of security; then turning out his toes, whereof the better part had already turned out of the shoes which should have covered them, and placing himself in his favorite position—in a monstrous melancholy visage, at first fixing his glance on the person he addressed, and afterward on the heavens above him, he spoke these lines very movingly:—

“Durst I presume to look upon those eyes,
Which I have tired with a world of woes,
Or did I think submission were enough,
Or sighs might make an entrance to my soul,
Yon heavens! you know how willing I would
weep,
Yon heavens can tell how glad I would submit,
Yon heavens can say how firmly I would sigh!”

At the concluding of the last line, and before Master Francis had the slightest expectation of such a thing, Ralph Goshawk threw his arms around the neck of his benefactor, embracing him with an abundance of most heart-moving sighs; and then stalked away, pathetically wiping of his eyes with the cabbage-leaf.

Master Francis had scarce parted with him when he was accosted by an old woman in a dark cloak, whose sallow and wrinkled physiognomy and querulous voice he easily recognised as those belonging to Dame Margery.

“Odds pititkins, how you be changed!” exclaimed the old gossip with a look of prodigious wonder. “Marry, were not your countenance so familiar to me, I doubt hugely I should have known you. By my troth, you must needs have made your fortune!—and who deserveth it so well, I should like to know! Indeed, never saw I a more comely and gallant gentleman—and never knew I one of so bountiful a heart when he had wherewithal to give, and an old acquaintance who requireth it as badly as do I, nigh at hand, to thank him for his largess.”

Master Francis would gladly have avoided the old dame, for she awakened in his mind associations of an exceeding unhappy character. He brought out his purse to bestow a liberal gift, that he might the sooner get rid of her.

“Oh, Master Francis, we have had such monstrous doings since you left us,” cried Dame Margery, glancing wistfully at the well-filled purse. “Master Sars-

net be running as fast as he can to the devil as I would away from him—he is ever in his cups, and his business be going to rack and ruin, whilst he giveth himself to riotous ill-living. I served him faithfully for many a long year, but latterly he got to be so profligate in his courses, that my virtue could abide it no longer.” Master Francis had got a piece of gold in his hand, at the sight of which, the old woman looked to be quite in a fidget to be fingering of it.

“By my troth, you have had a narrow escape,” continued she, rubbing her thumb and forefinger together, and staring at the gold as if she could not take her eyes away. “A narrow escape, indeed. For of all shameless horrible wantons that breathe, that Joanna was the worst. Her infamy exceeded description. Master Francis! Master Francis!” bawled out Dame Margery upon finding him of a sudden move away from her as hastily as he could, without giving her the piece of gold her mouth had been watering at so long; but the slanderous old gossip bawled to no purpose. Master Francis quickly placed himself out of sight and hearing, leaving her in such a complete vexation and disappointment she had never known since her worthless existence commenced.

Upon Master Francis reaching his uncle's he knocked for admittance, and after some little delay, to his extreme surprise, knowing his uncle kept no attendant, the door was opened by a stout varlet with a monstrous searching look with him, that the young secretary remembered at a glance to be the very watch that had sought to take Master Shakspeare and himself to the compter, but noticing the gallant young gentleman who wanted entrance, Neighbor Sheepface fell back respectfully to give him way.

“They be all up stairs, an it please you, noble sir,” said the man. Master Francis entered, puzzled to know who could be up stairs, and why Neighbor Sheepface was there. On coming into the office he observed Barnaby Braddle with as red a nose and as punchy a body as ever, sitting upon the very same stool whereon he had so oft sat himself when attending to his kinsman's business, with a right famous knowing aspect, laying down the law to some brother-constables; and they were so intent upon what they heard, that they noticed not the entrance of Master Francis.

“You see, my masters,” observed Bar-

naby Braddle, pressing the forefinger of his right hand into the palm of the other. "This can be no other than flat burglary."

"No doubt on't, Master Constable," cried one into his ear.

"Which—so runneth the law—be an offence so heinous the malefactor can not help being hanged for't."

"The caitiff deserveth no better," added another, in as loud a voice.

"Now—mark you this, my masters—cutting a purse be one thing, and burglary be another thing; therefore cutting a purse be not burglary."

"There be no denying that, Master Constable," exclaimed a third.

"Again—forgery be one thing—and burglary be another thing: yet forgery be not burglary."

"Indeed, no—I thought as much," said the first, very gravely.

"And murder be one thing, and treason be one thing, and rebellion be one thing; and burglary be another thing. Yet, as it hath been judged by the law, burglary be neither murder, nor treason, nor rebellion."

"You have laid it down like a counsellor, Neighbor Braddle," observed the second.

"But what be burglary, Master Constable?" inquired the third, with exceeding earnestness.

"There be divers kinds of burglary, Neighbor Calfskin," answered the other, putting so profound a gravity on his foolish fat face, it was laughable to notice it. "To wit—burglary with intent to kill, and burglary with intent to rob. Now, burglary with intent to kill, is when a man is *felo-de-se*; and burglary with intent to rob, is when he becometh a malefactor."

"Never heard I a thing more scholarly stated!" cried Neighbor Calfskin.

"I would I had so studied the law," exclaimed another: and every one expressed his admiration of Master Constable's marvellous fine wisdom; and did regret he possessed not similar advantages. Master Francis left these unnoticed, and proceeded up stairs; but had not gone far when he was stopped in his progress by hearing the voice of Colonel Harquebus, very loud and sharp, and seeming to be in a great anger.

"Out with it all!" exclaimed he, "Make speed, for the constables are at hand. The money—the plate—the jewels—the title-deeds! Disgorge thy spoil to the utmost farthing, or I will have thy villainous old carcase hanged on the highest gallows that can be built."

"Good sweet colonel! be not so hasty, I pray you," cried the shrill voice of Gregory Vellum, imploringly. "You shall have whatever I possess of yours. O' my life, I meant not to deprive you of aught."

"Thou liest, for a knave," shouted the other—"a villainous scribbling knave!—a parchment rascal! Didst not tell my messenger whom I sent to thee for money for my ransom, thou hadst never heard of my name?"

"Nay, sweet colonel, he hath belied me, said he so," replied the scrivener tremulously. "Truly, your name be a most honorable name—a name in famous excellent repute—a name I have ever held in most especial reverence and affection."

"Away with thee!" cried his companion. "I will be dallied with no longer. The constables are in reserve. They shall lodge thee in the compter. 'Tis fit such a caitiff should be hanged."

"Alack, be not so severe with me, noble colonel," exclaimed the old miser in wonderful piteous accents. "It be no fault of mine that thieves broke into my dwelling, and despoiled me of the chiefest part of your property."

"Thou liest again!" shouted the colonel, seemingly more enraged than ever. "They took from thee nothing. They destroyed each other whilst squabbling upon the division of their booty. Wilt deliver up my chattels? Wilt refund? Wilt disgorge?"

"Nay, I meant not to say they took everything," replied Gregory Vellum, his voice faltering more as the other's grew the louder. "It was a mistake. Francis knew they took nothing. A good youth! an admirable sweet youth! I have been more than a father to him."

"My money! my plate! my jewels! my papers!" thundered out the colonel.

"You—you—you shall have them, noble colonel," cried the scrivener more tremulously than ever. "They shall be safely restored to you anon. But there be certain charges, good sweet colonel—amounting mayhap to a matter of two hundred crowns or so, for my infinite pains, and labor, and honest stewardship!"

"Honest!" shouted his companion sarcastically. "Didst say honest? Honest stewardship?—honest devilship! Dost not blush at using such a word? Art not ashamed of thy villainy? Why thou abominable, cheating, pitiful old rogue!"

Dost think I am ignorant of how thou hast misused the confidence I reposed in thee? Dost think I know not to what extent thou hast strove to dishonor the dead, and rob the living? All thy tricks are familiar to me! I have made inquiry, and discovered thee to be the horrible villain thou art. By this sword, I have a great mind to hew thee in pieces—but thou art only fit to be banged like a mangy cur. Here, Master Constable!" cried he in a louder voice, "take me this caitiff to prison."

"Say not so, good colonel, I pray you!" exclaimed the miser in marvellous moving accents. "All your property lieth secure in yonder chest." And then the old miser began wringing of his hands, and crying out in a wonderful pitiful voice, "Alack! Alack! I am ruined! I am ruined!"

At this moment entered Master Francis, who had till now hesitated whether he should come up or turn back, and he beheld Gregory Vellum sinking into a chair, trembling like an aspen, whilst Colonel Harquebus was giving directions to certain of Sir Walter's serving-men to take away a chest, the young secretary remembered was the one wherein his uncle had put such store of treasure.

"Francis! Francis!" cried the old man very movingly, as soon as he noticed the entrance of his nephew, and was making toward him—"Sweet—excellent!"—What more he would have said I know not, but his utterance was at that moment completely stopped upon finding himself swung to the other end of the chamber.

"Breathest thou another word to that fellow, I will kill thee on the spot!" exclaimed the colonel with a fierce look, as he drew his dagger out of its sheath, the sight whereof appeared to have taken the miser's breath away: then turning to Master Francis, who looked as if he marvelled exceedingly to see what he did, added somewhat contemptuously, "See'st thou not, sirrah! we are on private business? Hast forgot thy manners? We want no intruders. Prythee get thee gone!" Master Francis made a hurried apology, in the midst of which the colonel turned on his heel, muttering the words "paltry secretary!" Master Francis involuntarily put his hand to his rapier, but in the same moment remembering what obligations he owed Sir Walter Raleigh, he forbore taking notice of the affront; and with a courteous bow, yet with a dreadful aching

heart, he left the room, and as quickly as possible the house.

"Ah me!" thought Master Francis, as he hastened dejectedly along the street, "this Colonel Harquebus putteth my patience to sore trials! I would he were far away from me. I fear me I can not abide these indignities much longer: but if I could get to know my parentage be honest, and I come of a creditable family, I could bear them without their moving me a jot. I will to my uncle's as soon as I may, and I doubt not, with proper temptation, now his dishonesty is found out, I shall get the secret from him." It so happened Master Francis never could get an opportunity to go to St. Mary Axe, he was kept in such constant employ by Sir Walter Raleigh on matters that would stand no delay; and in a few days he was suddenly obliged to start for Sherborne.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

To make some sire acknowledge his lost son,
Found when the weary act is almost done.

RETURN FROM PARNASSUS

How now!
Even as quickly may one catch the plague,
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections,
With an invisible and subtle stealth,
To creep in at mine eyes.

SHAKSPEARE.

Where did I leave? No matter where, quoth he,
Leave me;—and then the story aptly ends.

IBID.

"HEIGHO!" exclaimed Alice, as she sat at work with her cousin in her tiring room at Sherborne.

"What aileth thee, coz?" inquired Dame Elizabeth, "it be something strange to hear thee sigh; yet of late 'tis a fashion thou hast taken to marvellously.

"What I?" asked the other, in a seeming monstrous surprise. "What I sigh? Nay, Bess, that must be clean impossible. I'd be hanged if I'd sigh." And the merry Alice commenced very briskly humming of a tune, as if to show how careless of heart she was.

"Nay, but I have noticed thee to be in a most sighing humor of late," continued her kinswoman, "and thou hast looked melancholy—hast ceased to be ever breaking of jests—and art monstrously given to solitary walks. Thou art the last person I should suspect of unreasonable sadness, and that thou art sad in reality I feel assured. Prythee tell me why thou art sad, Alice?"

"I tell thee I am not sad, coz," replied

the other, attempting to laugh at the idea of such a thing. "'Tis an excellent good jest indeed to say *I* be given to sadness, and melancholy and solitary walks forsooth! By my troth, an infinite fine jest! Why, there can not be so merry a cricket in the whole realm," and then she hummed her tune louder than before.

"If thou art sad, it is not kind of thee to keep the cause of it from me, dear Alice," observed her companion affectionately. "Methinks too 'tis somewhat strange thou shouldst be sad at all at such a time as this—now that I am so exceeding happy." It may here be mentioned that Sir Walter having reconciled to each other my lord of Essex and Sir Robert Cecil, and for his right gallant behavior at the taking of Cadiz, was called to court at the queen's express command, and had been restored to all his dignities and his place in the queen's favor. "I marvel thou art not as happy as am I," added Dame Elizabeth.

"*I am* happy, dear Bess," answered her cousin, but there was a slight tremulousness in her voice which seemed to deny the truth of her statement. "Very happy—wonderfully happy."

"It delighteth me to hear thee say so," said the other, "for I was beginning to fear thou wert vexing thyself at something or other. For mine own part there is nothing on this earth I care for possessing, now Walter hath again acquired the queen's countenance, which he lost by the nobleness of his behavior to me, who but little deserved it of him; and though I was the cause of such deep mishap, never gave he me one cross look or impatient word, from first to last. Truly, a more kind husband fond woman was never blessed with; and to notice his extreme satisfaction now he is again all I wished him to be, giveth me such perfect pleasure as I never felt before. Surely there can not be greater happiness than is enjoyed by Walter and I."

Here Alice sighed again, and her pretty face looked singularly thoughtful and melancholy.

"By my troth, there is another sigh!" exclaimed her cousin, "and it came so from the heart, I am half inclined to think thou art in love."

"In love!" cried her companion in some amazement, yet blushing up to her eyes the whilst she spoke. "In love, Bess? why what man-animal thinkest thou I would be in love with?"

"In truth I can not say, dear Alice," answered the other, "for thou hast so

turned thy lovers into ridicule, no man dare accost thee affectionately. Yet glad at heart should I be could I meet with some proper match for thee."

"Proper fiddlestick!" exclaimed Alice quickly. "Dost think I be such a fire-lock I can not go off without a proper match? Well—Heaven help them that can't help themselves, say I. Matched quotha! am I a coach-horse that I am to be thought nothing of unless I have my fellow? or so odd a fish that like a sole I can not be taken save as one of a pair?"

"Nay, Alice," observed Dame Elizabeth more gravely; "this is the way thou hast ever treated the subject. If I press thee on the matter thou art sure to answer with a jest. I would thou wouldst grow more serious."

"Alack, Bess! how difficult it be to please thee," answered her cousin. "A moment since I was blamed for my gravity, and now I am rated for my mirth."

There was a silence of some minutes after this. Mayhap Dame Elizabeth liked not the other's speech, and felt too hurt to reply; or, perchance, Alice found there was no more to say on the subject: however, let the cause be what it may, both plied their needles and held their prates, and Alice again got to look marvellous thoughtful and reserved. Presently she stopped in what she was doing of.

"Dost not take Master Francis to be a most gentleman-like youth, sweet Bess?" inquired she. Immediately upon hearing of the question, her cousin fixed on her a glance of mingled wonder and curiousness; at the which Alice's eyes, albeit though she looked famously unconcerned, appeared to shrink a little.

"Indeed, he appeareth well enough," replied Dame Elizabeth, in such a tone as seemed to show she thought not much of him.

"Well enough!" cried Alice, laying down her work, and darting a look at the other of extreme astonishment. "Only well enough! I doubt much thou wilt find, search the world through, so proper looking a gallant."

"Why, what dost see in him, Alice?" asked her kinswoman carelessly.

"What do I *not* see in him?" replied her companion with increasing earnestness. "Didst ever see so noble a carriage? Dost note elsewhere limbs of such just proportion, or of such infinite gracefulness? Where canst meet with features so delicate and lovely? Doth not Sir Walter speak everlastingly of his

valiant spirit, his modest nature, his excellent fine talent in the writing of plays and the like, and his wonderful great learning in all profound matters? I tell thee, Bess, never saw I so noble a figure, or so admirable a countenance. He hath eyes that be very stars, and a mouth so small, so rosy, and of so gracious a smile, 'tis a pleasure to look at it. What do I see in him?" added Alice with more emphasis, her pretty dimpled face lighted up with a wonderful animation. "I see in him the sweetest, bravest, comeliest, gallantest, noblest, wisest, worthiest, young gentleman ever saw I in all my days!"

Dame Elizabeth smiled, but said never a word.

"Then to hear his voice," continued her cousin, who had stopped only to take breath; "there can be no such music in this world. What mellowness it hath!—what richness it hath!—what expressiveness it hath! O' my life! every other singing hath seemed to be the very absolutest paltry poor stuff ever attempted, since I heard Master Francis singing a love-ditty, sitting by himself under the elms in the park one midsummer noon. I shall never forget hiding behind the trees listening to that love-ditty. There was he lying of his length on the grass, looking as youthful and handsome as a very Cupid, resting of his head on his arm, whilst in the other hand he held an open book; and so filling the air with exquisite sweet melody that the very birds held themselves silent the better to hear his singing. Some time after this, upon pressing of him very much—for never knew I a creature of such exceeding shyness—I got him to sing me that love-ditty when we were together in the grove, and methought it sounded more exquisite sweet than the time before. All the love-ditties I had ever heard seemed such wretched paltry nonsense I would as soon have given my ears to a fool as listened to them; but what Master Francis sung, to say naught of the moving manner in which he gave it, was a love-ditty indeed. By my troth, I could listen to such the whole day long!"

Dame Elizabeth smiled again; and, as she had done before looked with a peculiar arch meaning in her beautiful countenance.

"And then to hear how wisely he discourseth," added her pretty kinswoman with greater eagerness. "He hath spoken so of some little flower, its marvellous beauty, and wonderful excellent virtues,

that I would have given all I possessed to have been that little flower, that he might have spoken so eloquently of me. And he hath described to me on some fair night we have been taking of a moonlight walk, the bright stars that were shining over our heads, in language so choice and noble, and in a manner so earnest and moving, that many a time I have envied those bright stars for having such rare things said of them. But he discourseth not of flowers and stars alone in so admirable a style: there can not be a subject ever so profound, or a thing of ever so little account, that I have not known him dilate on with such bountiful store of learning it was a marvel to hear. Indeed, I do believe there is not so wise a man living."

"Wise man!" exclaimed Dame Elizabeth, archly. "Wise fiddlestick! In what is he wise? Doth he not talk admirably? So doth a parrot if he be well taught."

"Ah, Bess!" cried Alice, endeavoring to hide her confusion under an assumed carelessness. "I knew not Master Francis when I said that."

"Wise calf!" continued her companion, in the same humor. "Why there is more philosophy in a forked radish than ever you will find in your wise man."

"When I said that, I had not seen Master Francis," observed the other with increased embarrassment.

"And what be this same animal called man?" added Dame Elizabeth, mimicking her cousin's voice as well as she could. "A thing to laugh at. A joke that goes upon two legs. A walking piece of provocation for women to break a jest upon."

"So be all men but Master Francis," replied Alice, gravely.

"As for me," continued her kinswoman, "if there be any that would have me at mine own valuation, then shall they coin all the man's flesh that is above ground into rose nobles, and lack the greatest portion of what I would go for after all."

"I tell thee, Bess, I knew not Master Francis when I said these things," answered the other, looking frowningly, as if she liked not to be reminded of them.

"If the sky were to rain lovers, I'd keep under shelter," said her cousin, in the same tone and manner.

"So I would ere I had known Master Francis," replied Alice, sharply, and evidently getting to be a little out of temper with her cousin's raillery.

"Before I marry a man I'll give my virginity to an owl!" continued Dame Elizabeth.

"*Bess, I hate thee!*" cried Alice, in extreme earnestness, flashing such an angry look upon the other she seemed quite hurt at it, and then suddenly burst into tears.

"Nay, Alice—dear, sweet Alice!—I meant not to vex thee!" exclaimed her kinswoman affectionately, as she threw her arms round her neck; "I did it but to tease thee a little for having been so secret with me about this. And dost really love Master Francis?" inquired Dame Elizabeth, after she had succeeded in quieting this sudden burst of passion in her pretty cousin.

"I do believe I love him right heartily," replied Alice, hiding her blushing face on the bosom of her companion—for she was no longer afraid or ashamed to acknowledge the truth.

"And how came it first about?" asked the other.

"Nay, I know not, for a certainty," answered her cousin. "Mayhap it was when I was so besieged by suitors upon their getting knowledge of what Aunt Dorothy had left me, I had him play the lover to me, to make the others jealous; and he played the lover in jest, so well, I had a mind he should play it in earnest."

"A goodly beginning, o' my word!" exclaimed Dame Elizabeth, with a smile; "but hath he ever shown any such earnestness of affection thou didst desire to see in him?"

"From first to last—never, dear Bess," replied Alice, dejectedly; and that hath made me oft so dull at heart."

"And didst give him any sort of encouragement, Alice?" asked her companion. "Didst show him any sign of regard? Was it likely, from thy behavior, he could guess his company was not distasteful to thee?"

"I know not the encouragement I have not given him," answered the other. "I have shown him all sorts of signs—my behavior hath ever been of the kindest to him, whilst other suitors were used with extreme uncivility. Yet all hath been to no manner of profit. He treateth me with a very gentlemanlike courtesy, certainly, but in every other thing appeareth as indifferent to me as is a beggar to the stocks. I never meet him save with a welcome smile, and he straightway accosts me with a bow. I ask affectionately how he hath fared of late, and he will reply by inquiring, with a

like affectionateness after my dog. I get him to talk of love, hoping it will embolden him to discourse lovingly to me; and thereupon he entertaineth me with a famous account of Æneas and Dido, or Hero and Leander, or some other people I would as lief hear of, as of my grandmother. This perfect carelessness, and monstrous lack of affection in him, doth make me fancy he hath given his heart to another; and that, dear Bess, driveth me into an utter despair."

"'Tis marvellous thou shouldst have gone on regarding him as thou hast done, and he so indifferent," observed Dame Elizabeth.

"O' my life, 'twas that which so provoked me," replied Alice. "Had he addressed me with such fine phrases as had others, I doubt much I should have cared for him at all; but noting how insensible he was, let me do or say what I would, put me upon using greater efforts, and taking more interest in my endeavors, till he possessed all my thoughts, and I was no better off than at first."

"Thou hast played a very gambling game with thy affections, dear Alice," said her kinswoman, seriously; "thou hast lost a little, hoping to make a great gain; and kept losing till thou hast nothing more to stake. I would give thee comfort if I could: but, supposing Master Francis to be attached to some other, which looketh to be exceeding like, thou hast but a sorry prospect of it."

"Alack! say not so, sweet Bess!" cried Alice, very movingly.

"As far as mine own wishes go, I should like nothing better than to see Master Francis a lover of thine," added her cousin; "for I have marked what excellent good disposition he hath, and how rare a nature; and knowing Walter holdeth him in huge esteem, I can not think he would object to it in any way. I will acknowledge I have observed in him all the commendable qualities thou hast spoken of, and do take him to be as noble and gallant a young gentleman as any that breathes."

"Indeed is he," cried Alice, her eyes again becoming brilliant with animation, and her rosy-dimpled cheek expressing all its pleasantness, "hadst thou seen him as I have, and heard him as I have, thou wouldst say as I do—there can not be another in the world like unto Master Francis."

"Possibly he thinketh his condition to be too low to allow him to have any thoughts of thee," continued her kinswo-

man, "and that may keep him respectful and unassuming."

"I would thou wouldst give me some hope, dear Bess," said the other earnestly.

"I will give thee not only whatever hope, but whatever aid I can in the matter," answered Dame Elizabeth, with a sincere affection. "There existeth nothing I would not do to secure thy happiness. Nevertheless I must consult with Walter as to what is best to be done."

"Nay, prythee let him have no hand in it," exclaimed her cousin, looking to be in some alarm.

"And why not, Alice?" inquired the other.

"Oh! he will so jest at me," replied her companion. "I doubt not he will so laugh on the occasion, I shall scarce be able to show my face for him."

"Indeed I will not suffer it," answered her kinswoman. "Besides, I know Walter too well to think he would offer thee annoyance in such a case as this."

"Then as it pleaseth thee, dear Bess," added Alice, affectionately caressing her companion. "Do all that thou canst for me, like a good, sweet, kind coz, as thou art; for in honest truth I do believe I shall break my heart if Master Francis will have naught to say to me."

It was two or three days after what hath just been described, that Master Shakspeare—who had that day come on a visit to Sherborne—and Master Francis were walking together in an alley of tall trees in the park. They were in earnest conversation, and did keep pacing to and fro in that umbrageous alley, intent upon what they were saying, and for so long a time, it was plain they took great interest in their discourse.

"I do think it exceeding wrong of you to give yourself up to these melancholy humors," observed Master Shakspeare, seriously. "'Tis natural enough to lament the loss of any one we have greatly loved—and that you most truly loved Joanna is beyond all question. Alack! there is no small reason for regret, I must allow; for hers was a noble nature spoiled in the rearing—a rich soil that, for lack of proper culture, hath been choked up by unsightly weeds. Had her mind and heart had proper schooling, to the full development of those excellences she undoubtedly possessed, I hesitate not in saying, she would have proved as glorious an example of womanhood as ever existed: but, as divers singing-birds catch the tones of those nigh whom they are caged, yet will sometimes break forth

into a sweeter minstrelsy of their own—Joanna caught up her father's wretched cunning and selfishness, till love for you woke in her some impulses of her own natural humanity. It should be a source of rejoicing to you that she at last understood the evil she had practised, and learned how to appreciate the truth and honesty she had been so ignorant of. It should be a still greater source of rejoicing to you that your behavior to her hath been ever that of a sincere and honest heart—that you stooped to no meanness, and lent yourself to no dishonor, in the seeking of her affection. Now all regret is unavailing. It would be just as wise in you to make yourself miserable because a goodly tree had been cut down, as to fret yourself into a continual melancholy for her loss. You can not make the tree to grow again, nor recal the dead to life; and instead of benefiting yourself by this sadness, it be much more like to lead to your destruction. To what sensible purpose, then, go you on in this way?"

"I can not help being sad at heart at times," replied Master Francis; "but you know I have other things besides the melancholy death of Joanna that create my unhappiness."

"Naught that I can consider of sufficient moment to vex any man that hath in him a proper philosophy," said his friend. "'Tis true enough your mind is of no common order; yet is your nature wonderfully sensitive; and I have studied too long and deeply not to know that intellect hath but little power over disposition: but you must be disposed to tutor yourself into more refreshing thoughts and feelings. Remember you the consolation of Joanna in her last extremity? Was it not the conviction of your perfect happiness?"

"Indeed it was," answered the other.

"And yet, knowing this, you can show so little respect for her wishes, as to live in the pleasureless way you do," said Master Shakspeare, seemingly as if he marvelled greatly.

"From what can I derive pleasure?" inquired Master Francis.

"From all things, be you so disposed," answered his companion; "and surely there lieth enough of the agreeable around your path to balance whatever can be of another sort. Have you not what you will at your command—a liberal patron—and a circle of admiring friends? You lack nothing—you are honored wherever you go; and being in the confidence of

one who is now so great a man at court as Sir Walter Raleigh, you may consider your fortune as made. Can you not find pleasure in these advantages?"

"But I lack something that these can not give," replied his young friend, somewhat dejectedly.

"Ah! now I think of it, 'tis reasonable you should," observed Master Shakspeare, with a smile of peculiar meaning the other did not see. "You have a void in your heart that requireth filling up, and the sooner it shall be done, the sooner shall you be the happier."

"What mean you, sweet Master Shakspeare?" asked Master Francis.

"Know you no pretty damsel in these parts who could teach you such pleasant lessons as might lead to the forgetting of all your troubles?"

"In honest truth I know none such."

"Hast associated with none whose company you could prefer to that of all others—whose disposition you could approve of before any—and who hath shown you such kindness of manner as showeth she holdeth you first in her regard?"

"There is Mistress Alice whose company I should ever make choice of before any living; for she hath a most sweet disposition, and hath shown me infinite kindnesses, the which I can never forget: but that she holdeth me in any particular regard is not to be imagined; for, in the first place, my outward behavior could not have induced her to it; and, in the next, she doth nothing but jest at all such things as love and the like."

"Hath she jested on such matters lately?"

"I think not so much as she did."

"And have you noted any change in her appearance or behavior to you?"

"She seemeth never in so merry a mood as she used, and sometimes looketh to be vexed with me, though I sing to her when she asks, and discourse to her of such things as she hath a mind to know of."

"And of all women you have had acquaintance with, you would prefer the pretty Alice for a wife?" inquired Master Shakspeare.

"Nay that is clean out of the question," answered Master Francis: "there be such difference betwixt us in fortune and quality that 'tis an idea I can not entertain for a moment."

"Now answer me at once, and to the purpose. Provided all parties were willing, and she so disposed, could you regard her with such affectionateness as

might give her a fair chance of leading a happy life with you?"

"I doubt not I could; for, from the first, I have liked her exceedingly, she hath evinced toward me such marvellous goodness of heart. But why speak you of this? She hath given me no warrant for drawing of any such conclusions."

"Hath she not, indeed?" asked Master Shakspeare, with much emphasis. "Hath she not taken hugely to your society?—hath she not made a jest of all men but you?—hath she not got you to sing her love-songs again and again?"

"Truly she hath," replied Master Francis; "and as for the singing of love-songs, she seemeth to like nothing so well."

"And yet you have had no warrant for imagining she doth affect you?" said his friend. "I tell you she hath loved you all along with a most sincere affectionateness, and you have caused her many an aching heart by your monstrous indifference."

"O' my life I never saw it in that light," answered the other, looking famously surprised; "and I am wonderfully grieved at hearing I have occasioned her any uneasiness. I could not help it. I saw not she took to me in any way but in friendship. But tell me truly, Master Shakspeare, hath she such regard for me as you have said?"

"What else could have made that change in her you have stated?" asked his companion. "She is not in so merry a mood, because she believeth you care not a whit for her; and she seemeth angry with you, because of your ungrateful indifference to all the infinite kindness she hath lavished upon you."

"Nay, I do assure you I am in no way ungrateful," exclaimed Master Francis, earnestly. "But think you not her friends would look upon it as exceeding great presumption and impudency in me, used I any endeavor to attach her affection?"

"I do believe they would like nothing so well," replied Master Shakspeare; "and for mine own part, I should be infinitely delighted to see you wedded to Mistress Alice, for nothing can be so like to cure you of your present troubles as a union with so sweetly-disposed a creature. And she having such excess of mirth as will correct your excess of melancholy, there can not be a doubt but that you will be as happy a pair as any that live."

"I hope I shall love her well enough," observed his young friend, looking very thoughtful; and then added, with more

seriousness—"Mayhap some will say I only sought her for her money."

"A fig's end for what any say, save her, and her friends," answered Master Shakspeare. "But let me tell you, Master Francis, that your apparent unkindness is leading to the breaking of her heart—she is pining—and 'tis very evident to me, go you on in this way any longer, you will have to answer for the death of the cheerfulest, sweetest, excellentest young creature that ever smiled upon a lover."

"Alack, do not say so!" exclaimed Master Francis, movingly, and with an exceeding anxious countenance. "I would on no account be the cause of suffering in any, much less in one who hath ever exhibited toward me so bountiful a heart. I will strive as earnestly as I may to love her."

"Then lose you no time about it," said his friend; "for I see her coming out of the garden gate, and entering the avenue." Master Francis looked up, and sure enough Mistress Alice was coming toward him. Her step seemed not so buoyant as it was wont, and her look had lost all that laughing gayety for which she had used to be distinguished.

"Yes I will speak to her on the instant," said he, turning to where the other had stood when he last spoke: but Master Shakspeare had darted in amongst the trees upon the first sight of the fair intruder, and Master Francis found himself alone. He advanced toward the lovely Alice in a wonderful disturbed state of mind, half doubting Master Shakspeare had sufficient warrant for what he had stated concerning of that damsel's love for him; and yet with a remembrance of numberless acts of something more than kindness he had received from her, that made such a thing have the look of probability. He had intended saying of something without delay; but when they met he found himself, he knew not why, at such a loss for words as he had never experienced before; and his heart began to throb more quickly than he had known it in her company since he had been acquainted with her. He was just able to reply to her salutation, and then walked by her side under the shadow of the leafy elms, striving in his mind to form some speech as would be sufficiently apt, and to the purpose; but the more he strove, the less seemed he to succeed; for sometimes the words appeared not to express as much as they ought, and so were rejected; or, at other

times, they looked too like presumption in him, and lack of proper respect, and he could not bring himself to give them utterance.

As for Alice she knew not at first what to make of his disturbed countenance and silent manner, and did hazard a jest or two on the subject in her usual humor; but it so happened she succeeded, not at all in her attempts. She spoke falteringly—her laugh had no heartiness in it, and she soon found herself embarrassed in her speech, and so moved by a sort of anxiousness and fear, she presently became as reserved as Master Francis. Yet it was out of all doubt she did like this silence of her companion better than all the eloquent discourse he had used to entertain her with. Upon taking a glance at his handsome features, their eyes met, and it was no easy matter to say which, on the instant, looked the most confused of the two. After that Alice seemed to be in a monstrous uneasiness, and having a rose in her hand, began plucking of it to pieces, leaf by leaf.

"Nay, spoil not so goodly a flower, I pray you!" exclaimed Master Francis involuntarily, upon seeing the destruction of the chiefest of his floral favorites.

"Indeed, I did forget your extreme fondness for roses," said Alice in a voice scarce to be heard. "I shall not forgive myself doing so wrong a thing—but in truth I knew not I was at such ill employment."

"If it would not be thought somewhat over bold of me, sweet Alice, I would ask that flower of you," observed her companion, yet in a tone that evinced considerable embarrassment. Alice, with a sensation of pleasure she had never before experienced, noticed that till that moment Master Francis had always called her "Mistress Alice," and he, as if he had styled her "Sweet Alice," without knowing it, presently looked more confused than ever, thinking he had taken too great a liberty. Now Alice Throckmorton, the liveliest and wittiest of the maids of honor at the court of Elizabeth, who had never been at a loss for a reply, let whatever might be said to her, amongst crowds of nobles and gallants, and boldly jested at everything in the shape of love and lovers, lost all confidence in herself, and became as timid as a child. Spying of a seat in a turning of the walk, she very gladly made for it, and sat herself down, finding it difficult for her to proceed further, in the present strange excitement of her feelings.

"I have spoiled you this rose," said

she as well as she could speak, "'tis not worthy your accepting. Let me gather you another as I return through the garden."

"I doubt not I should prize that above any," replied her companion earnestly. Alice stretched forth her arm to give it to him, and thereupon Master Francis—not without some slight embarrassment—took the flower with one hand, and her hand with the other. Immediately she felt her hand pressed by his, the once confident and careless Alice began a trembling as if she were seized with a sudden fear; and though the action had been done hundreds of times by others, and she looked upon it as a thing of no note, no sooner had Master Francis raised her hand to his lips, than she blushed as if she thought there was something wrong in the doing of such a thing.

"Alice! Sweet Alice!" exclaimed Master Francis tremulously, as he still held her trembling hand in his own. "I do remember me some time ago you did ask of me to play the lover to you in jest." His fair companion answered not; but sat with downcast eyes, flushed cheek, and heaving bosom—such a picture of maidenly love, diffidence, and anxiety, as none could have expected to have met in the once witty and fearless Alice.

"I pray you now, if it please you, let me try how I can play such a part in earnest," added he with increased fervor. At this Alice did tremble more than ever, and did seem in a greater confusion; but she answered him never a word. In truth, she felt so full at heart that she could not have spoke had it been to save her life. Presently she lifted up her brilliant eyes, and they flashed upon Master Francis a look of such exquisite sweet affection as all the language that was ever writ or spoke could never express. *Master Francis did play the lover in earnest*, and so marvellously to the satisfaction of his fair mistress, that she appeared well inclined to have stayed where she was the livelong day, to behold the playing of it. At last, after the passing of better than an hour in this way, it was put a stop to by the hearing of footsteps close at hand. Alice sprung from her seat, and turned the corner toward the house, bidding her lover follow; and this Master Francis was about to do when he was stopped in his progress by the sudden appearance of Colonel Harquebus close upon him, coming from that direction. He would rather have met any one—in fact, he would have

given anything in the world the colonel had been fifty miles away, for he could not help looking exceeding confused at seeing him so unexpectedly.

"Humph!" exclaimed Colonel Harquebus in his usual sharp voice, and looking more scornful than ever. "Pretty conduct this! Honorable behavior truly! Get into the confidence of a family—Scribble your way into their good graces—They treat you well—Reward you handsomely for your labors—such as they be. In return, you steal into the affections of a young gentlewoman of the family, knowing she hath a fortune."

"Colonel Harquebus!" said Master Francis, greatly annoyed by the insinuation conveyed by the other, "methinks it would be as well were you to confine your interference in matters wherein you have a right to meddle; and not impute ill motives to one of whose character and conduct you must be ignorant."

"Why, you impudent young jackanapes!" cried the colonel contemptuously, "dost think to come the secretary over me in this fashion? Is it not palpable? Am I blind? Dost suppose you can manage your manœuvres so secretly an old soldier such as am I can not detect them? I tell you 'tis exceeding paltry of you—But what better could be expected from a varlet who gaineth his living by scribbling and the like worthless employments?"

"Colonel Harquebus!" replied Master Francis, getting to be somewhat angered, "I know not why it is, seeing I have given you no offence in my life, you should be ever putting of some affront upon me: but I can endure it from you no longer. I would have you remember I wear a sword."

"Indeed!" answered the other, with a very evident scorn. "I have had my doubts of that. Wear a sword do you? I did suppose you had only a scabbard, for I have found you marvellous chary of showing the blade."

Master Francis put his hand to his rapier on the instant.

"No," exclaimed he, making a struggle to put down his anger, "you are the friend of Sir Walter Raleigh."

"A good excuse o' my life!" cried the colonel, with a look of derision, "a famous good excuse. But cowards are never at a loss for excuses, and your wretched scribblers and paltry secretaries be ever the errantest cowards that live. Know you not I am the best swordsman in Europe?"

"I neither know nor care," replied his companion, yet still striving to put down his indignation at the continual provocation he was receiving. "Coward I am not nor ever was, as Sir Walter Raleigh, under whose eye I have fought, can sufficiently assure you. Neither am I a braggart—so aught of what I have done you will not know from me. I seek not to quarrel with you. I will add, let you impute it to what motive you please, I would rather avoid it; but not from any fear of your skill in the weapon. That you are a brave soldier, I have heard; but 'tis a pity your long experience in matters of war hath made you forget there was also a necessity of your being also as brave a gentleman."

"Say you so, my fine secretary fellow?" said the other in the same insulting tone and manner he had used from the first. "Fine talking, o' my life! Brave words! An excellent good speech! Out of what book didst steal such holiday phrases? Alack, it be a pitiful thing methinks that your fine talkers should ever be such poor fighters. So, forsooth, your worship doth not take me to be a gentleman! How infinitely vexed am I! I will on the instant get me a fine doublet. I will study the courtliest phrases out of book. I will stifle my valor and take to scribbling. Why, how now, varlet! What dost mean by such impudency! What know *you* of gentlemen—a paltry poor fellow, of no note or quality, that can not say who was his own father?"

Master Francis had been much moved before—but now he became exceeding agitated. He breathed hard—he pressed his teeth upon his lower lip so firmly that the blood oozed from it, and his cheek, which had hitherto been famously flushed, now grew wonderfully pale.

"Colonel Harquebus!" exclaimed he, looking proudly and angrily at his insulter, "I have borne more from you than ever I endured from any man in my life. As the friend of one for whom I feel the affection of a son, you have had in my eyes a claim to my forbearance, which I should be loath to set aside. But forbearance hath its limits. Urge me not any more, for were you fifty times the skilful swordsman you are, give me such another affront, I will die but I will avenge it on you with my sword. Colonel Harquebus, I would pass you." Thereupon Master Francis bowed haughtily to his companion, and seemed intent upon taking himself away.

"Never saw I such thorough cow-

ardice," replied the colonel, scornfully; at hearing which the young secretary stopped of a sudden, and looked on the other with knitted brows and a fearless gaze. "It be palpable. No sun at noon-day ever was seen so clearly. Go to! you are contemptible! You are paltry! You are vile! I have suspected your worthless origin with sufficient cause. Such base behavior proveth you to be the base offspring of some wanton woman." In an instant the rapier of Master Francis flashed from its sheath.

"Thou liest!" shouted he, trembling with irrepressible rage, his eyes glancing with a brilliancy they had never till then exhibited, and his countenance, though pale as death, expressing extreme anger and defiance. "Thou liest, for a foul-mouthed calumniating villain. Draw, if thou hast the spirit of a man, and I will prove that thou art a slanderer on thy villainous body."

"Not so fast, Master Secretary," coolly replied the colonel, as he slowly drew forth his weapon. "All in good time. I like not to be hurried, I promise you. Right glad am I, however, to see that you wear something beside a scabbard. 'Tis a pretty blade. I hope you are tolerably skilled in the use of it, for I like not killing one who is ignorant of his defence. Put forth your cunning. Live as many minutes as you may. But I would fain persuade you to the saving of your life. You know what a master of fence I am. Be wise in time. Sheathe your weapon and go your ways."

Master Francis only replied by throwing his hat on one side, and making a demonstration of readiness to attack his opponent. Colonel Harquebus very unconcernedly put his hat at the foot of a tree close by; but he looked not so scornful as he had done; indeed, he seemed to be setting upon a conflict of life and death, as though it were a marvellous pleasant pastime to him.

"Then you accept not of my clemency, Master Secretary?" said he, advancing toward him. "Life is sweet. Death endeth all scribbling. I pray you have pity on yourself, and sheathe your weapon."

"Heed not me!" replied Master Francis, in no way lessening his rage. "I am loath to draw in a quarrel; but I sheathe not my weapon till I have had satisfaction for an injury."

"Then look to yourself, Master Secretary," added Colonel Harquebus, as he made a flourish of his rapier, "I must

needs kill you. Yet I like not making a hole in so fine a doublet."

The sarcasm contained in the last sentence seemed to have increased the anger of Master Francis; for he instantly crossed the other's weapon with his own, and began a brisk assault. The colonel took it at first very coolly, scarcely exerting of himself at all, as if he believed he had so poor a swordsman to deal with there was no necessity for his putting forth any particular skill for the vanquishing of him; but this contemptuous behavior the more stirred up the indignation of the young secretary. Still, however greatly angered he was, he bore in mind his adversary's reputation with his weapon, and used such caution as would give him as little advantage as was possible. Presently, the colonel found himself so pressed, he was by little and little forced into the using of all the cunning he possessed. Now their weapons flashed against each other with such marvellous rapidity the eye could not follow their movements. The colonel looked not so cool as he did. In a minute or two the colonel found himself obliged to give ground. I know not whether it was Colonel Harquebus was not such a master of fence as he had said, or that increased excitement led Master Francis to the using of a greater vigor; but the colonel was now so hotly assaulted he had to employ all his vigilance, all his strength, and all his skillfulness in his own defence; and having his attention fully employed by his adversary, could not notice where he was retreating to, till his foot came against the root of a tree that projected somewhat above the earth, and in a moment he measured his length on the ground.

"Hold thy hand, boy!" shouted he, upon seeing the point of the other's weapon coming direct upon his breast. "*Wouldst kill thine own father?*"

Master Francis dropped his rapier on the instant, and stood with clasped hands, and looks of wonder, fear, and horror, gazing upon his prostrate antagonist. As for the colonel, all trace of any ill feeling had vanished from his features, and he looked now with a sort of half-ashamed and half-pleased face.

"Well, colonel—art satisfied?" inquired Sir Walter Raleigh, coming up with Master Shakspeare unseen by the combatants, followed by Dame Elizabeth and Alice, and Harry Daring and young Raleigh, all excepting the first looking as if they marvelled exceedingly.

"Satisfied, quotha!" replied the other as he sprang upon his feet, and began wiping of his hot face. "O' my life, I had nigh been satisfied after such a fashion as would have left me naught to desire in this world! A valiant young villain!—a very Hector! As pretty a fellow at his weapon as ever I met. You have seen something of my skill at the sword, Sir Walter: I have overcome the best masters of fence in Christendom. But, my by troth! though I sought with all my cunning to disarm him, that I might then say who I was, and acknowledge him as a son of mine, the varlet not only would not allow of such a thing, but pressed on me with such a furious valor, I had great ado to keep me a whole skin."

"You will take my word next time," said Raleigh with a smile; then turning to Master Francis, who was gazing on one and on the other, so bewildered it was evident he scarce knew what to say or do, he added—"Master Francis! or, as you must henceforth be called, Master Francis Harquebus, it is now my business to tell you, and I would gladly have told you before had I been allowed, that, from the likeness you bear to your most virtuous and excellent mother, the colonel, on the first sight of you, did suspect your relationship to him, and did question me very closely upon your history, the which I told to the full extent of what I knew. Thereupon he acknowledged himself your father, stating that he had secretly married your mother, and soon after left England for foreign wars, to escape being forced into a marriage he liked not, as I told you before; but, finding you were my secretary, and hearing you were much given to studiousness and writing, which he hath a most unreasonable contempt of, he would on no account have you made aware of your kindred to him. It was in vain I related such instances of your courage as had come under mine own eyes: his dislike of scribblers and mere gallants would not allow him to think otherwise than that I was partial in my commendations of you, and stated his resolve to make trial of your valor, that if you proved yourself of such gallant spirit as would make him glad to own you as a son, his son you should be immediately acknowledged; but if, as he imagined, you had no such spirit in you, nothing should be said about the matter; for he said he would never be brought to own relationship to a pitiful fine milk-sop. Upon this he tried to affront you, expect-

ing you to call him to account for it. Your forbearance he took for fear, and vowed he would have none of you for a son. I said what I could to create in him a different opinion; and he continued to put upon you such insults as he thought most offensive and intolerable. I do believe you endured till nature could endure no longer; and now you have convinced him that learning, and taste in appareling of oneself, can do no hurt to true valor."

"O' my life! I do begin to believe they be not so bad as I have thought," observed the colonel good-humoredly, as he sheathed his rapier.

"One thing more," continued Sir Walter. "You must not suppose, from the harshness of his behavior to you, that your father is of the crabbed nature he hath seemed. I have known him long, and have seen him oft; and do in all sincerity assert there liveth not a kinder, heartier, and more sweetly-disposed gentleman in this world—as far as I know of it."

"O' my life!" exclaimed the colonel. "I do believe he hath taken such offence at my behavior, and knowing once I would have none of him for a son, he will turn the tables, and now have none of me for a father."

Master Francis had no such idea in him. He was lost in a sort of pleasing wonder; and his feelings were overpowered at remembering that the parent he had been so anxious to meet, the ignorance of whom had occasioned him such extreme unhappiness, he was a moment since on the point of running through the body.

"Wilt shake hands and be friends, Son Francis?" inquired his father. "Wilt have peace after all this famous fighting? Dost care for owning an old soldier for thy father, thou valiant young villain? Heed not what I have said; care not for what I have done. Thou art of my blood I could swear by the way thou holdst thy weapon. I am proud of thee. I will be hanged if ever I affront thee again, thou desperate little Hercules! Thou hast thy mother's look and thy father's spirit: so if thou wilt, become a son to me in my old age, and I will love thee as well as I loved thy mother."

Master Francis, with a heart too full for utterance did hasten to his father, who, after shaking of him cordially by the hand, presently pressed him in his arms with such show of affection as was delightful for the others to look upon.

"By Gog and Magog, this be the

happiest day of my!" exclaimed Harry Daring, whose honest face beamed with joy at his friend's good fortune; and every one of that party seemed to be as greatly rejoiced.

"And now, Master Francis Harquebus," said Sir Walter Raleigh; "I must needs dismiss you from my service: the colonel will not allow you to remain my secretary. But I part with you with the less regret, as I here place you in a situation of equal confidence, with one whose service I doubt not you will find far more pleasant than mine." Thereupon he took the hand of Alice and placed it in that of her lover.

"And hark you, Master Francis!" cried Master Shakspeare, looking to be in his merriest humor. "If from this time forward I catch you wearing of a melancholy visage, I will do my best to have you smothered in sad-colored taffeta, or sent to become an undertaker's apprentice."

"And look you, Mistress Alice!" exclaimed Raleigh with the like good nature. "If from this time forward I catch you breaking your wicked jests upon man-animals of any sort, I will do my best to have you shut up in a mouse-trap, or put in a cage like a tame raven, and hung where you shall not have sight of a man for the rest of your days."

All laughed at these sallies; and Alice turned away blushing very prettily, still holding her lover by the hand, and they two turned their steps toward the house. Master Shakspeare and Dame Elizabeth followed; then came Sir Walter Raleigh and his companion in arms Colonel Harquebus; and lastly, Harry Daring and the child: and it was no easy matter to say of these which wore the happiest countenance, or who had the gladdest heart.

All the goodly chambers in Durham house were filled with company. Crowds of fine gallants and beautiful dames were moving to and fro. There had been feasting in such prodigality that it was the marvel of all. There had been such delicate sweet music as seemed never to have been heard till then. Dancing had there been of such a sort the oldest there remembered not anything so commendably done; and pageants of such wonderful excellent conceits had been performed which eclipsed all things of the like kind that had ever been seen before. So brilliant a company it was thought by all, at no time had met together upon one occasion; for here were all the chiefest

nobles of the land; here were all the most famous commanders of the age; here were all the loveliest ladies of the court; here were all the greatest wits of the time; and such splendor of appareling, such bountiful show and infinite variety of all manner of rarest fabrics and costliest jewels were there to be seen, that a stranger gazing thereon might have said there would be no occasion for any one going to distant parts in search of an El Dorado, here it was at his hand. But more magnificent than all, on a rich throne placed upon a raised dais, in the fairest chamber of the mansion, sat Queen Elizabeth, looking to be in such sweet content as was the admiration of her loving subjects.

And for what occasion had this noble company been brought together?—To do honor to the marriage of Master Francis Harquebus to Mistress Alice Throckmorton. The nobles had come out of respect to Sir Walter Raleigh, who, since his return from the expedition to Cadiz, had grown to be wonderfully popular amongst them, and was now in greater favor with the queen than ever he was. And who so proud as he—who, having just danced with her majesty a coranto, to her infinite delight, stood close at her side, arrayed with that exquisite taste and costliness she so much admired, ever and anon breathing into her ear such courtly phrases as he knew she most affected; and she answering him with smiles and pretty words, and tapping him playfully with her fan, and doing a hundred things that proved on what excellent terms he was with her.

The commanders came out of respect to their gallant associate, Colonel Harquebus, who was in great reputation with them for his approved good soldiership; and who so proud as he, as he received the congratulations of the Howards and the Veres—the Monsons—the Carews—the Cliffords—and scores of the like brave spirits, who thronged around him. The fair dames and lovely young gentlewomen had come out of respect to Dame Elizabeth and her pretty cousin, who had received such gracious behavior from her majesty as no ladies of her court had ever been known to be honored with before. And who so proud as Dame Elizabeth, seeing her husband, after being disgraced for her sake, now in such estimation with her sovereign and all England, as he had never reached till now. Alice was proud of her husband also, but she was more happy than proud.

The wits had come out of respect for Master Francis, by whom he was considered one of themselves; and famous compliments he received, and heartily was his good fortune hailed by them. And who so proud as he, at sight of so gallant a company, all met to do him honor; but I doubt not, when his eye glanced toward the dimpled rosy cheek of his exquisite sweet bride, he was also more happy than proud. The courtiers came because the queen was there, and they now rivalled each other in showing of their devotion to the reigning favorite, and marvelled any one should ever have thought ill of so princely a gentleman. My Lord Essex was not of the party, he had excused himself on the score of illness; but some did say he was only indisposed to come. The new secretary of state was there, with others of the queen's chief officers, and all were wonderful courteous to the captain of the queen's guard. None seemed more friendly than did Sir Robert Cecil; but an observer, had he paid strict attention to him as he was in earnest conversation with his coadjutor and parasite, Lord Henry Howard, in a corner of the chamber of state, where were her majesty and Sir Walter Raleigh, might have noticed in the sneer upon his lip, as he eyed the two, that Master Secretary was devising of some crafty scheme to mar the good feeling that existed between them.

Master Francis was in one of the rooms in the midst of a circle of cheerful friends, amongst whom were Master Bacon, Ben Jonson, and divers of his old acquaintances of the Mermaid, diffusing around him such pleasant wit and courteous good humor, it was delightful to look upon the scene, when he was accosted by Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, stating that the queen was desirous of seeing him on the instant; thereupon he hurried away in company with the old knight, who amused himself as they passed along, by informing his young friend that her majesty was in a very monstrous passion, and having got hold of the sword of her captain of the guard, was about performing of some bloody tragedy upon one Master Francis Harquebus and his father—they having been proved to be exceeding traitorous and disloyal subjects. Master Francis could easily perceive, from his merry countenance, that the old knight was jesting; but still he could not help entering upon some speculation on the cause of the queen's sending for him. As he proceeded through the splendid crowd

that thronged the rooms, the eyes of all turned in admiration upon his right handsome countenance and gallant figure. He was clothed in a peach-colored velvet doublet, ornamented with pearls; and trunk hose of delicate white satin, with white rosettes in his shoes. Many a fair damsel of rank envied Alice her good fortune. In truth, though Sir Walter Raleigh might have been the nobler-looking, Master Francis was the very handsomest man in the whole company; and as he moved along, he won the gracious opinion of all, by his courteous behavior and modest deportment.

Upon entering the royal chamber and passing through a circle of nobles, gallants, and lovely dames, who gladly made way for him, he heard a buzz of admiration, and noticed his father rising from a kneeling position, with the queen holding of a sword in her hand, by his side, having Sir Walter Raleigh and all the chiefest of her court about her. "Master Francis!" exclaimed her majesty, evidently scanning the perfections of his graceful person with a famous admiration, "we do remember putting on you some affront, the which you deserved not; and we are now anxious to make you some slight amends for it, which we do with the greater pleasure, having heard wonderful commendation of you from our captain of the guard. We command you to kneel." Master Francis knelt on one knee at the queen's feet, in a strange tumult of proud and happy feelings. He felt something touch his shoulder, and her majesty say, "Rise up, Sir Francis Harquebus!" and then followed some courteous speech from the queen, and congratulations from the splendid circle around him; though of what was said he had but an indistinct knowledge; he felt in so great a surprise and wonder, and admiration.

A short time after this, as he was turning from the proud and happy Alice, and the equally delighted Dame Elizabeth, with a pleasure equal to their own, and proceeding out at the door, lost in the sweet bewilderment of his own thoughts, he was roused from his ambitious reverie by a well-known voice.

"Remember you not, when we two were at Master Tickletoby's, and we talked of what we should do when we grew to be men, how I said that you should be a famous gallant knight, and I your esquire?"

"I remember it well, Harry!" replied Sir Francis, cheerfully, as he gazed

upon the honest happy face of his true friend.

"I *knew* you would be a knight," added Harry Daring, with great earnestness; "I always said you were a gentleman born. How glad of heart I am I forswore barbering to follow you to the wars."

"Indeed, Harry, I am infinitely glad also," answered the other. "I can not forget what extreme goodness and marvellous noble behavior you showed toward me when I had no other friend than you."

"By Gog and Magog, I could not help it!" exclaimed his companion, "I loved you; that is the honest truth; and you were always of so excellent sweet a disposition, it was clean impossible I could do aught else."

"Desire you to go to the wars again, Harry?" inquired Sir Francis.

"What, against those villanous caitiffs, the Spaniards?" asked Harry Daring, quickly. "Ah, that should I, Master—Sir Francis, I mean."

"And what say you to the having, some short time hence, a goodly ship of your own?" added his friend.

"O' my life, I should like nothing so well!" replied the other, with increasing animation. "Then would I go cruising in the Spanish Main after those same rich galleons and argosies, and I doubt not I would make prize of some."

"That you shall do, Harry," answered Sir Francis.

The conversation was here broken in upon by the coming up of divers persons of worship, to congratulate Sir Francis upon the distinction just conferred upon him.

But of all this noble company there was not one so greatly noticed as was Master Shakspeare. This was owing, in some part, to his own excellent reputation, and partly to the respect and friendliness shown toward him by Sir Walter Raleigh and his young friend, Sir Francis Harquebus. The queen having spied him among the throng, had been exceeding gracious in her behavior to him, keeping him for a considerable time engaged in agreeable converse; and then, after much courteous speech, she removed a ring from her finger and gave him to wear in token of her admiration of his genius and character. This being whispered from one to another, and much talk ensuing concerning of the many wonderful fine plays and poems he had writ, wherever he went he was regarded with

a singular curiousness and respect; and the chiefest of the nobles thronged up to him as though they were proud to be considered among the number of his friends.

"All is settled, sweet Master Shakspeare," whispered the young Lord Southampton to his friend, as they stood together toward the close of the evening in a corner of the room. "I have prevailed on her at last to risk a marriage with me."

"I wish you joy, my good lord," said the other with a very earnest sincerity. "I do believe Mistress Varnon to be in every way worthy of you, and I hope you will be as happy as both your hearts desire."

"I thank you, with all my hearts," replied his patron with a look of exceeding affection. "And there liveth none to whom I feel myself so deeply indebted. Indeed, I know not what I should have done had you not stepped in so opportunely to my rescue, and with your excellent rare wit set at naught the tyrannical devices of those who would put asunder two young hearts that love had joined. Surely no man ever had such true friend as I have found in you."

"Nay, my good lord, you overvalue my poor service," observed Master Shakspeare in a kindred spirit.

"That can never be," exclaimed my Lord Southampton. "But I can not trust myself to say more on that head now. I will wait a better time."

"Faith I am right glad to find I could turn the singing of madrigals to such good account," said his friend merrily. "Yet, I must say, 'twas not without infinite painstaking, I acquired the dignified approbation of Aunt Deborah; nevertheless, I have been so well repaid by the amusement I have had in noticing of her antiquated humor, I would cheerfully go through the same trouble to procure me the like sport."

"Alack, what a very absolute rage she will be in when she discovereth her niece hath given her the slip!" said the young noble. "But I do shrewdly suspect her greatest grief will be for the loss of her gallant. I have heard it said that she doth continually sigh for Master Dulcimer in a manner so profound, that it is quite pitiful to hear her; and when she doth fancy herself unseen of any, she will pace up and down her chamber, putting her embroidered handkerchief to her eyes, and turning up her eyes to the ceiling, and clasping of her hands together, and ever

and anon singing snatches of madrigals in the most delicate moving manner ever known."

"O' my life, 'tis wonderfully pathetic!" cried the other, laughing heartily, "but as I have no taste for antiquarian matters, methinks 'twould be as well were I to turn her over to Master Cotton, who, I doubt not, will make much of her, as he holds nothing in such estimation as ancient pictures and the like, and I will warrant her as old a piece of painting—judging from her complexion—as he shall find anywhere out of a frame."

"Ha, sweet Will!" exclaimed Master Burbage coming up with Ben Jonson, as the other two were indulging themselves with their mirth. "Of what jest hast thou just been delivered? for I see there hath another been born of thy most multitudinous family."

"Mayhap, it shall be nothing better than a new version of the old story," observed Ben Jonson. "Mons parturiens, nascitur mus."

"Nay, good Ben, I will not have it that way," said my Lord Southampton. "A mountain he may be—Olympus itself was scarce such another, but what is born of him hath nothing of the insignificance of a mouse."

"I would say here as many a tender housewife hath said before—let the mouse go," answered Master Shakspeare good-humoredly. "Perchance my jests are but mice. Yet are they such as have too much wit in them to go into a trap. As for any disparaging words that may be spoken of this facetious varlet, mind them not, my good lord. Ben is like unto one of the heathen gods—he hath grown famous for devouring his own offspring."

"Go to!" exclaimed Ben Jonson, joining in the laugh of the others. "Thou hast done nothing of the sort I will be bound for't, with regard to thy words, for thou knowest well enough what poor eating they would make."

"'Tis hard to say what hunger would do," remarked Master Burbage in the same merry humor. "Bears suck their own paws for lack of better victual; and if Will was reduced to a like strait, mayhap he should be found driven to his 'wit's end' for a meal."

"Good, by my troth," cried Master Shakspeare.

"He would not be the first that had come to the extremity of living by his wits," said my Lord Southampton.

"I wish him no such bad fortune," remarked Ben Jonson. "Doubtless famine

is a great evil; but to get starved to death so rapidly as he must needs be, having come to so sorry a shift, is pitiable to think of."

"Save thy sympathy for thyself, Ben," replied his opponent. "Wert thou in such want, I have a huge suspicion thou wouldst discover that there could be no jesting with an empty stomach; for it is allowed I *have* wits to live upon, albeit there be no great provision—but that thou canst find diet of however poor a kind in a like circumstance, I have no such assurance."

"You are merry, my masters!" exclaimed my Lord Howard of Walden, who, with two or three noblemen of his acquaintance, now came up, attracted by the evident mirth of Master Shakspeare and his companions. "I warrant me you have said some choice conceit or another. I pray you tell us what was the jest."

"Indeed, it was scarce worth repeating," observed Master Shakspeare, now with a monstrous grave countenance. "We were but admiring the infinite conscientiousness of a certain prudent gentlewoman, who, having in a fit of anger, called her husband 'a brute'—the which at that time she knew he was not, did as speedily as might be, verify the accusation because she would on no account acknowledge to the telling of an untruth."

Upon this the laugh became louder than ever, and my Lord Howard did join in it as heartily as any, with a perfect innocence of the jest having been directed at him, although it was well known of the others to what it alluded.

"If we may judge of the firing of the report there must needs be a sharp engagement here," said Colonel Sir Francis Harquebus, joining the circle with several of his friends, who had also been drawn there by the seeming good humor of the group. "I trust there may not be many wounded on your side?"

"Nay, good colonel, stay you with us but a brief space you will find there be no need of any *serious* apprehension," replied Master Shakspeare in the same pleasant mood, whereupon the mirth broke out afresh. "Our ordnance doeth the clean contrary of that you have been used to. Perchance we shall keep up a constant fire when we enter the field, yet instead of lessening the forces engaged, we shall be continually adding to our numbers." And so it proved—for the frequent loud laughing of these few, every moment brought to them others of the company—many of whom were the

most distinguished in the land—and as Master Shakspeare had ever ready some excellent fine conceit or another which did infinitely tickle the fancies of such as were within hearing, the mirth became louder, and the throng about him increased so prodigiously he could scarce move for the crowd.

"It is Master Shakspeare!" said one; and as soon as it got whispered about that he was uttering his notable witty sayings, the singers, and the musicians, and even the masquers and dancers were left unheeded; and these, beginning to know the cause they were so abandoned, with as absolute a curiosity as any, thronged as quickly as they might, toward the same scene of attraction. It happened when the crowd was at its thickest, a message came from the queen's majesty, who had noted the flocking of the company to one place and had been told the cause of it, for Master Shakspeare to appear before her forthwith.

"We charge you, Master Shakspeare, with high treason!" exclaimed Queen Elizabeth, when he presented himself according to her bidding, whereupon he began to be somewhat alarmed, and others nigh unto the presence were exceeding curious to know what he had done to bring upon himself so weighty an accusation.

"Please your majesty, I"—

"The offence hath been proved to us," said the queen, interrupting of him very quickly, and then the courtiers looked marvellous serious. "You have drawn away divers of the subjects of this realm from their duty to their lawful sovereign, which is treason of the very greatest magnitude. Is it not so, Master Bacon?" inquired Queen Elizabeth, seeing that excellent fine lawyer in the circle before her.

"Please your majesty, there can be no doubt of it," replied he with a smile, for he saw into her majesty's humor—though few of the others were so quickwitted.

"You have by sundry sorts of jests and other pointed weapons," continued the queen, "very dangerous when not in discreet and lawful hands, excited numberless of our nobles, and officers, besides others of lower quality, into violent disturbances against the peace of the realm. We charge you on your allegiance, confess what hath led you into this notorious misbehaving." As soon as they heard this speech, the courtiers seemed struck with a wonderful admiration of her majesty's conceit, and with very different

faces to those they had put on awhile since, they waited the issue.

"Please your majesty," replied Master Shakspeare, looking in no way daunted at the charge. "Before I enter on my confession, let me humbly represent to you, that this is the first time any sovereign hath made treason a laughing matter."

"If such it be, methinks it is like to make the offender laugh on the other side of his mouth," exclaimed the queen merrily, at the which the mirth became general.

"That I dispute not, believe me," answered he. "I plead guilty of the offence of which your majesty hath justly accused me, but I would venture to say in extenuation, that although I might perchance succeed in the shaking of your majesty's sides, it hath never been my intention in any way to disturb your majesty's crown."

"Odds boddikins!" exclaimed the queen—an oath she much affected when in a pleasant humor—and laughing very

heartily, as did her courtiers also. "We believe you, and willingly admit the innocency of your intentions, but we let you not off a fitting punishment, and a heavy, proceed you not on the instant to tell us what caused the loud burst of laughter that made us send to you our messenger; and if there seemeth to us to have been sufficient provocation for it, you shall be allowed to depart from our presence free and unharmed."

"Your majesty's gracious condescension I can not sufficiently express my appreciation of," replied Master Shakspeare very respectfully. "But in honest truth, the cause was in indifferent proportion to the effect. However, of that your majesty shall judge. This was it:—

" 'I called my Rachel 'Plain-face' In a pet
She vowed she'd never speak to me again;
She frowned, she pouted, and she sulked—and yet
My Rachel hath a face—that's very plain.' "

Methinks it be scarce necessary to add, that the offender was allowed to go from the presence unpunished.

HERE ENDETH THE STORY OF

SHAKSPEARE AND HIS FRIENDS.

NOTE.—Should the courteous reader, from what he hath here perused, desire of me some further account of this inestimable rare and sweet-minded gentleman, and to know what befell Harry Daring in his adventures in the Spanish main, and to become acquainted with what happened unto my Lord Southampton in his wooing of the loving Mistress Varnon, besides learning the doings of others of whom mention is made in this story, I say unto him in the words of the drawer of mine hostess of the Mermaid, "Anon—anon, sir!"



THE
SECRET PASSION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE YOUTH OF SHAKSPEARE,"
"SHAKSPEARE AND HIS FRIENDS,"
&c.

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit.

SHAKSPEARE.

New York:
BURGESS, STRINGER & CO.

222 BROADWAY, CORNER OF ANN ST.

1848.

J. W. ORR, Sc.
NEW YORK



TO
THE ADMIRERS
OF
"Honie-Tong'd Shakspeare,"
AND OF THE OTHER ILLUSTRIOUS SPIRITS OF
THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENGLAND,
THESE VOLUMES,
WITH TRUE HUMBLENESS,
AND ENTIRE DEVOTEDNESS TO THE SUBJECT,
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY
THEIR FELLOW-WORSHIPPER,
AND VERY OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



HERE BEGINNETH THE STORY

OF

THE SECRET PASSION.

CHAPTER I.

What sport do I make with these fools! what
pleasure
Feeds me, and fats my sides at their poor inno-
cence!

Hang it, give me mirth,
Witty and dainty mirth: I shall grow in love,
sure,
With mine owne happy head.

THE WILD GOOSE CHASE.

He that will not, now and then, be a Cala-
bingo, is worse than a Calamoothe.

THE VIRGIN MARTYR.

But do you know what fooling is? true fool-
ing?

The circumstances that belong unto it?
For every idle knave that shows his teeth
Wants, and would live, can juggle, tumble, fid-
dle.

Make a dog-face, or can abuse his fellow,
Is not a fool at first dash; you shall find, sir,
Strange turnings in this trade.

THE MAD LOVER.

If laughter may be taken as a sign-of
happiness, then right happy were the boisterous,
free-hearted merry-makers that were
causing the goodly rafters of Dame Hart's
kitchen to ring with their exceeding mirth-
fulness. Peal followed peal, and shout
burst forth after shout, with so little show
of dilatoriness, that, ere one was half spent,
t'other was in full force. Had any listened
to it but ever so small a space, he could
scarce help being assured that the wanton-
est wits and very drollest varlets in all
Stratford, ay, and for miles round, had

thronged to the threshold of their good gos-
sips, the jolly hatter, and his no less jovial
spouse, and were there, with their famous
tales and excellent good jests, intent on
having the walls about their ears, from the
effect of the huge tempest of laughter they
must needs be provoking.

Yet had little Tommy Hart and his af-
fectionate little helpmate no such company.
In very truth, they had but got about them,
as was their wont ever since the two had
been made one—which was no great time—
one or two neighbors and acquaintances of
some standing, who were most of their hu-
mor, in a readiness to join in all lawful
pleasures, to speak a jest in season that
hurt none, and promote whatever of singing,
or telling of stories, or other goodly frolic,
that promised amusement sufficient for the
wants of the hour and the company.

Hugely did folk of more serious sort mar-
vel at the wondrous appetite for, and enjoy-
ment in, matters of drollery of Joan Hart;
a laugh seemed as necessary to her as is
water to a fish; and, to look into her
admirable clear eyes, and into the corners
of her pouting lips, you would be ready to
take oath on it she had such provocation to
mirth at her commandment, nought should
reach her, however remote from lightness,
but her smiles should break out at it as
bright and gladly as though, under its as-
sumed gravity, there was jesting of the
very exquisitest kind.

Our Joan was small in stature, it is true,
but her heart was of an exceeding bigness,
containing, as it seemed, whatever was most

pleasant in all humanity, and in such measure, it looked to be in a constant humor of overflowing. But of this sort she had been from her earliest years. Never did Fate look so frowningly but she could make 'as though the frown was a smile of most covetable import. When she came to have lovers, she laughed famously at them all, which none could take so pleasantly 'as 'twas meant, save only little Tommy Hart, an honest chapman of her native town, of a like size, of a like humor, and of a like age as herself, who laughed at her with as true a zest as did she at him. Ere any long space was passed, they laughed at each other—in perfect truthfulness, it may be said, with all their hearts—and, in the end, the daughter of the honest woolstapler, to the vast contentation of the whole neighborhood, became the wife of the waggish maker of hats.

And now were they keeping the anniversary of that very wedding, in their holiday bravery, with no lack of jollity, as may be expected, the which, if example could bring a sufficiency, there was like to be the prodigal display of it ever beheld. For there was Joan, with her face as brown as any berry, and as full of laughter as is the sun of fire, and looking nigh upon as warm withal, standing in the midst of a group, sitting round her; whereof there was no one whose visage indicated not all the mad frolic in the which they were then engaged. There were they, a group of some twenty or so of divers sorts, conditions, and ages; old and young, fat and spare, servant and master, alike enjoying themselves to the most absolute contentation ever known.

Prominent among these was seen the unwieldy form of Winifred Poppet, in a fair miniver cap, a dainty partlet of white thread, and a stamel red petticoat of a most choice fashion, as intent on the sport as if she took no heed of such braveries.

Nevertheless, this was by no means the case, for a careful observer might have noticed that ever and anon, however busy she seemed with the game that was going on, she turned a sly glance to some part or other of her gay apparel, and twitched a fold here, and smoothed a rumple there, with a look of as infinite contentation as ever brightened up the visage of threescore and ten.

By her side was seen the well-known figure of Jonas Tietape, in excellent favor among the burgesses' wives at Stratford, as a woman's tailor. That it was the cunning in his craft that made him so well liked of his customers, seemed evident enough, of all conscience; for gifts of person or counte-

nance, for the obtaining of a fair woman's approval, had he none at all, seeing that his features were by no means comely, his height so dwarfish, that an ordinary boy of some twelve or fourteen years, might, with no great difficulty, have glanced over his shoulder, and his head, arms, and feet of a bigness out of all proportion to the length and size of his limbs.

With these defects in him, Jonas was in such huge favor with his customers—ay, and with whoever were of his acquaintance—as was no woman's tailor in the whole county. And how came so marvellous a thing to pass, seeing that women, of all persons, are only to be taken by comeliness? inquireth of me the courteous reader. Thus was it: He had so comic a manner with him, you could scarce look him in the face but you must needs laugh outright. So many droll antics and grimaces had he, such odd sayings, so great a multitude of quaint, diverting tricks, and such an infinite fund of good humor at his disposal, that you might as well expect a hungry dog to be indifferent to a full platter, as that man, woman, or child, in his neighborhood, could hear him, or look on him, and carry on any melancholy or ungracious humors.

Yet it must also be recorded, he had gifts of some sort. Of a surety, as hath been said, they were not of person; nevertheless, I doubt not they did him more true service wherever he went, than could he have gained had he been ever so proper a man. There was no game known or heard of betwixt John O'Groat's house and the Land's End, he had not as pat as though he had played it all his days. Hot-cocles, or chuck-farthing, loggets, tick-tack, seizure-noddy, barley-break, cross-and-pile, pick-point, shove-groat, and a lot more I cannot stop to name, were as familiar to him as his fingers and thumbs.

There was no sport at which he was not so skilled, it was rare indeed he met with his fellow at any. Cunning at the bow was he, as though he had sought to be held as a rival to Clym o' the Clough, or even to Robin Hood himself; and at quarter-staff none had dared touch him since he had cudgelled Sandie Daredevil, the big drover from over the border, who had made mocks at him, and called him scurrilous names, and threatened him most villainously, till—though no seeker of brawls—he took him to his weapon, and, with such earnestness, the rude Scot got so ugly a knock on the pate, he was fain from that time forth to take up his hostel in the churchyard. Then

at mumming was there ever so monstrous a dragon? or in the May games, who had eyes for any thing, but his most delectable hobby-horse? He roared so dragonish, it looked as though he would swallow a whole parish at a mouthful; and his curvetings, his neighings, and his paces, were so to the life, there was never a natural horse of any sort that was thought able to do them half so well.

But Jonas Tietape, in a suit of motley! Then was there famous shaking of sides! Of a Christmas or a New Year's Eve, perchance, when the spacious hall or kitchen was thronged with some of the merriest hearts in Stratford, he would don the cap and bells and parti-colored suit, and so choicely play his part, that the very wisest of the lookers-on could scarce help lamenting he had such lack of the fool in him.

Then, how brave a musician was he! 'Twas a marvel to hear him play the bagpipes. He blew them with such exceeding spirit, all the dogs in the parish would join in full chorus whenever he headed a wedding party, playing up "Light o' Love," as was his wont; and when he was in the humor of taking to the pipe and tabor, the morrice would be danced with such vehemency, the lookers-on could scarce help thinking all in it had no less sufficiency of wings to their legs than bells.

These gifts caused him to be held in such esteem, that his misshapen condition was never commented on by any save some few malapert, uncivil grooms, who, whenever they had sight of him, allowed their rude wits to run riot at the expense of his person and his calling, till they got cudgelled into more honest behavior. By those he was used to come among, nought amiss was seen in him. They had got so familiar with the strangeness of his fashioning, they had acquired a sort of affectionateness to it. His dwarfishness they got a liking to, far more suitable stature in other men failed to create. His large head had become an object of singular approval; and what else was in him unseemly or objectionable to ordinary persons, to them was a feature of matchless interest.

His apparelling was as little like that of common persons as was his visage or figure. He ever arrayed himself according to some conceit or other; and, being his own fashioner, and having usually a fine choice of materials, he failed not on any occasion of mirth to be clothed in the most ridiculous garb eyes ever beheld.

At this present showing, he had on a jerkin of divers colors, made of pieces as vari-

ous in shape as opposite in fabric; for linsay-woolsey and Genoa velvet, taffeta and broad-cloth, fustian of Naples and Welch frieze, Norwich satin and Yorkshire kersey, were most disorderly mingled together; and as for the suitableness of the colors, what could be said of an arrangement where iron-grey and scarlet, murrey and sadnew color, watchett and russet, black and Lincoln green, were in closest neighborhood? Below this was seen a singular kind of breeches, of which one leg disclosed French sail-cloth of the coarsest sort, and the other painted arras, as ridiculously fine as the limner's skill could make, having so goodly a subject as the Queen of Sheba's stomacher. These had monstrous great pockets; and as amongst his sundry several ways of getting a living was the breeding certain little dogs, much affected by his richer customers, he was wont to carry one in each. One leg wore hose of orange tawny, the other purple; and the feet had on them severally, a boot of undressed leather, and an embroidered pantofle.

Laughing at the droll antics and smart sayings of Jonas Tietape, till the tears made themselves channels down his floury cheeks, sat Cuthbert Dredger, the stout miller of the Seven Meadows, in his well-worn leather jerkin, high boots, and well-stuffed gallegaskins as famously covered with meal as was his ruddy face, beard, and hair—whilst on one hand of him stood the good dame, his wife, and on the other his stalwart son—as like to his father in all externals as is one peascod like another—in their homely suits, showing such signs of the dusty miller, that even the shaking of their sides filled the air with myriads of motes.

In close neighborhood to the stout miller's son sat, spic and span as a new-coined groat, the youthful Margaret Hippocras, better known of the good folk of Stratford and thereabouts, as Peg o' the Twiggen Bottle—her father keeping a hostel in the town so called—though, by some of her familiars, she was often entitled Blinking Peg, because of a slight infirmity in her vision, approaching nigh unto what some unmannerly people said was a squint.

Next to her again lolled, almost at full length, the burley figure of Jasper Broadfoot—the ploughman of a rich farmer in the neighborhood—in the hugeness of his pleasure, his mouth stretching open as it were from ear to ear, and his freckled face half hid by the liberal show of sandy locks, that curled in straggling masses around it. Two old maiden sisters were close adjoining, sitting up as straight as darts, and seeming

to be almost as spare; their sharp noses and chins showing a manifest longing for a nearer acquaintance, and their apprelling scrupulously neat and clean, as though put on for the first time; nevertheless, they had been holiday suits with them any time these twenty years. They were screaming and clapping of their hands in infinite contentation at the passing scene; and, indeed, as absolute was their content at all such merrymakings in the which they had entered together with the same zest since they had been girls, making mutual monstrous exertions the live-long day to earn a decent subsistence as sempstresses, and, after working hours, enjoying themselves wherever there was a fair promise of creditable pastime.

Last of all was a smart little varlet, with a pair of merry dark eyes, lighting up as pleasant a face—albeit the complexion was of the darkest—as ever the sun shone on. His well knit limbs were famously displayed in his plain russet suit, and he seemed as though he could never tire of their employment; for, with all the quickness of an eel, he was thrusting himself now here, now there, with an intent as though he would on no account fail to share at the fullest in the sport that was going on.

This was no other than the jolly hatter, the laughing husband of the merry Joan: and, whilst she was now stooping down in the circle around her—they being all engaged in the monstrous pleasant game of “hunt the slipper”—swearing most earnestly the lusty Goody Poppet had got the slipper behind her ample person, Tommy Hart, who had cleverly contrived to get hold of it, unexpectedly gave his buxom dame so sore a smack where there was an excellent fair mark for such a purpose, as to make her regain her perpendicular ere you could count one, amid the loud laughing of the whole party, in the which she precisely joined, with a heartiness exceeded by none.

“Beshrew thy hand, Tom,” exclaimed she, with a sort of mock anger in her laughing; “and I do not complain to the Third-borough of thy monstrous heavy blows, I am a shotten herring.”

Here, catching a glimpse of the slipper gliding behind the backs of divers of the circle, she made a sudden pounce upon the tapster’s daughter, but, by some trick of the woman’s tailor, her foot slipped, and she came against Jasper Broadfoot with such force, as to send him against the two ancient sisters, who, in spite of their exceeding uprightness, were speedily put on a level with the floor.

“A murrain on thee, wench!” cried her laughing husband. “In seeking for the slipper, thou must needs be a slipper thyself. Where were thine eyes to lead thee so far from the object of thy search? Perchance, an thou canst not see, thou canst feel?”

So saying, with the slipper again in his hand, he took her smartly over the toes.

“Oh, thou villain!” exclaimed she, of a sudden throwing herself upon him, grappling him with both arms to secure what she wanted; but, lo! ere she was well down she felt a tap on the shoulder, and, directing her gaze that way, she beheld the point of the slipper resting there, as if held by some one behind her. She was up on the instant, and was just in time to see it, as it looked to her, disappearing down the gaping throat of Jonas Tietape. It was a feat of conjuring, such as he was wont on an occasion to amuse his wondering gossips with, but the simple Joan thought she could not miss having it, and grappled her acquaintance by the throat, to make him disgorge the desired mouthful, till he was getting black in the face, and she distinctly saw it in the hands of the young ploughman, flourished within an inch of her nose. Before she could recover herself, it had disappeared she knew not whither.

“Never saw I the like o’ this, gossips!” cried Joan, somewhat scant of breath, and looking in a huge perplexity. “It hath been said there are few quicker at this pastime than am I, and yet have I been toiling to no profit this half hour or more.”

This speech elicited no more sympathy than might be gathered from a general laugh both loud and long, to which many of the company added famous commendations of the poor woman’s patience and agility.

“I do think thou couldst teach a horse to eat his beans with a toothpick, dame,” observed Jonas, in his drollest manner; “thou hast so persevering a way with thee.”

“Slow and sure, Joan,” exclaimed her husband, approvingly.

“Nay, good fellow,” quoth the old miller, who was as ready as any at a jest, “had she taken such time to discover a husband as she hath to find a slipper, I doubt much thy fair commodity of hats would have seen a mistress in her this side of domesday.”

“A husband, quotha!” cried Joan, cunningly taking a sharp scrutiny of the circle around her. “They require no such horrible painstaking to get a hold of—Heaven be thanked! Had I thought my Tom had been so difficult of possessing, I would as

soon have gone for counsel to a Bedlam beggar, as have looked beyond my nose for him. Ah, goody, I have thee this time!"

But goody, with a chuckle that made her chin quiver like a goody aspen tree, exhibited to the disappointed Joan her two empty hands.

"By my halidom, I could have sworn I saw it!" exclaimed she, in some little emphasis, as she narrowly watched a very suspicious movement behind the two ancient spinsters. As a cat looketh after a mouse, did she continue to peer at their motions, slyly affecting the whilst to have nothing so far from her thoughts.

And thus it continued some little time longer, with a vast expenditure of jests from all, and such antics from the frolicsome woman's tailor, as helped the general mirth hugely. It so happened at last, however, that Peg o' the Twiggan Bottle, being intent upon a complete concealment of her defect of vision from hearing some pretty flatteries poured into her ear by the young miller, had got her eyes modestly fixed as it were upon the floor, and was so taken with the attentions of her companion, that she neither heard nor saw the efforts of her other neighbour to induce her to pass the slipper. Joan, whose looks were sharpened by repeated failures, detected the impatient pokings the inattentive Peggy was receiving, and unexpectedly dashed upon the possessor of the slipper before she had time to remove it, and, with a shout of exultation, which was swelled by that of all the circle, she caught hold of the long-sought prize, and waved it over her head in triumph.

The first use she made of it was, though with infinite good humor, to repay her husband the smacks she had had of him, and, malgre his attempts to escape behind others of the company, she desisted not till all was returned with a handsome interest, to the exceeding good entertainment of her several guests. Jonas Tietape must needs put his unshapely person in the way, making of such grimaces as would have unsettled the solemnness of an owl, but the slipper spared not him any more than his host: certes he got it in places quite opposite to what the giver intended, for with his antics he so flung himself about, that what was aimed at his head lighted on his heels. He was as nimble at his tricks as a kitten—now with his heels in the air and his hands on the ground, or each following the other like the sails of a windmill, whilst the head seemed to be shifting of itself into all sorts of unnatural positions, with such ridiculous looks upon the ungainly counte-

nance, all around laughed till their sides ached. And this of a surety did not lessen when the heads of two little dogs, doubtless made in some way uncomfortable by his strange movements, were seen suddenly to emerge from his pockets, with looks half of curiousness and half of alarm, making a sharp angry yelp, as if they liked not such uneasy motion.

The chamber in which these famous gambols were going on, albeit no other than Dame Hart's kitchen, was as proper a one to sit in as might be found in dwellings of greater note than that of the jolly hatter of Stratford. There were huge rafters went across the top, whereon was fixed a rude rack containing divers fitches of bacon. The chimney was of exceeding capaciousness, projecting far into the room, having within on each side, a commodious bench for the lovers of the chimney-corner, to whom the close neighborhood of the fire-dogs offered most choice attractions. Above, was an old crossbow, a rusty helmet, a stout sword and buckler, and a quarter-staff worthy of the Miller of Mansfield.

On a shelf were arranged an excellent show of clean platters, and on another divers cooking utensils as bright and clean as scrubbing could make them. Bunches of dry herbs were swinging in one place, and a bag with seeds close upon it. A goody bundle of corn, in the ear, and a fair bough of hawthorn, full of berries, were seen not far from them; a skin or two were stretched out and drying on the wainscot; there was no lack of blocks and irons such as appertained to the hatter's trade, but they were evidently put away for the nonce, wherever good room for them could be found; and a space, nigh upon a yard square, near the chimney, was covered with the choice ballads of the time.

A large oak table had been thrust on one side to allow the revellers more space, and a liberal show of stools were huddled together in another corner. A huge iron pot was swinging over the fire-dogs, to which a stout, middle-aged woman, with bare arms, and a face that rivalled them in ruddiness, ever and anon came out of some adjoining chamber to look to.

On one occasion she was accompanied with an exceeding ragged boy, who looked not to be more than some six or eight years old. He helped to carry a log from the wood-house to the kitchen-fire, which he seemed intent on with so monstrous an earnestness expressed in his fat, foolish visage, that it drew upon him the good-humored jesting of divers of the company

whilst, on a sudden, Jonas took him by the seat of his soiled and worn-out slops, held him at arms' length above his head, and made such monstrous mouths as though about to make a meal of him without any grace said. The boy struggled somewhat, to the great endangering of his sorry garments, that were so patched there was no telling of what color they might have been, and he bawled most famously, but only as it seemed to the heightening of the mirth of the lookers-on.

The woman observed this with a huge indifference, that some might have thought argued little of the mother in her; though out of all doubt the chubby, dirty, and ragged little urchin, on whom the frolicsome Jonas was playing off his antics, was her child. She continued her attentions to the cookery, notwithstanding the boy occasionally set up so main a cry she must have been monstrous hard of hearing had she not known of it somewhere nigh upon the end of the street. At last it so chanced, his tormentor, by some odd contortions of all his limbs, thrust his unseemly head exactly upon the very opposite extremity to where nature had originally placed it, and hopped around the room on his two hands like a bird, supporting the frightened boy on his legs, which were standing above his head like a pair of monstrous horns. The shouts which this feat created made the mother turn from the pot she was so intent on.

"Heart o' grace, here's a sight to see!" exclaimed the woman, in no slight astonishment, and with some small spice of ill-nature. "Launce, lad! o' my life, thou ridest in a strange fashion: but fair and softly, and the worst beast may be made to go its best paces."

Notwithstanding this consolation, the boy, who from the ordinary state of his apparel was known by gentle and simple as Ragged Launce, cried more lustily than ever: yet was his fright so ludicrous it was clean impossible for any to care about releasing him from his unpleasant position: and the merry knave continued his leaping till he was tired.

"I have put thee to most unblest extremities, friend Launce," said he, as he gravely placed him again upon his legs, and with a mock interest appeared to arrange in the best fashion the boy's dilapidated garments. "But thou hast bad habits, friend Launce," he continued, pulling the poor boy's linen out of the wide rents in his several garments—"bad habits, which, albeit neither parson nor pedagogue, it is my vocation to mend. I prythee come to my

dwelling when thou hast ceased to be wanted as a scarecrow, and I will do thy elbows all the service my craft can compass."

"In sooth, his apparelling be none o' the best," said his mother, with a show of gravity in the laugh she heartily joined in with those about her, "nor could it well have been so, seeing that after Dickon o' the Close had worn it seven year, he gave it to his ploughman Robin, who died the next sheep-shearing of the sweating sickness; and my poor husband, that's also dead and gone, had it on him in all seasons, thatching or ditching, felling or weeding from the Martinmas Master Gosling's brindled cow tossed Goody Skillet into the horse-pond, till that very Allhallows when Sir George Carew's Irish hound was drowned in the well; a matter of three year and a half: and since then Launce hath had them for lack of better."

"A fine choice of masters, o' my life," cried Tom Hart to his guests, merrily. "I trust there may be no danger of hats serving so many."

"Nay, Tom, that would suit us but ill, I promise you," answered his ready helpmate, as she was assisting to get the supper in proper forwardness. "Of the two, I would liefer a lack of heads for the hats, than a lack of hats for the heads. For mine own part, were I a sovereign princess, I would make it felony, without benefit of clergy, for any one to shelter his crown in any covering whereof another man hath already had honest advantages."

"That is to say, dame," observed Jonas Tietape, with a grin of surpassing drollery, "an a man must needs take to other men's hats, he should have no head to support his own withal."

"Odds pigs, Jonas!" exclaimed the stout miller, "that would not be a law to break on a sudden. However ill-lined a man's purse may be, methinks he could better afford to lose his hat than his head."

"Ah! feyther, that would I for one at all times," answered the younger Dredger, breaking off for a while from his dalliance with the fair tapster.

"I warrant you," observed Jasper Broadfoot, opening his huge mouth with a horse-laugh such as might have disturbed the repose of all the steeds in the neighborhood.

Jasper Broadfoot had not much to say; but Jasper Broadfoot had at times a monstrous deal to laugh, and his little say was ever the prelude of a burst of mirth, of which the end seemed more problematical than all the pages of that famous master of figures, Master Euclid.

"Prythee heed not such idle fancies, good gossips," here observed Goody Poppet, with an air the while that spoke an infinite satisfaction with her fine apparel, the greater portion of which was of other people's wearing. "There be no harm in putting on a thing that fitteth you—the more especial if it cost nothing—though it hath been worn of another."

"Truly I think not," added the miller's wife, who did not disdain a cast gown from the lady of the manor, or any other worshipful person within five miles of her, which she appeared in with slight regard of the laws made and provided against the commonalty wearing what was allowed only to their betters.

"Dear heart, doth say so, indeed!" exclaimed Penelope Tressle, the elder of the two spinsters, with a smile of some ambiguousness on her spare visage. "For mine own part, I either mislike others apparelling hugely, or it misliketh me, for of other than mine own gear have I never donned since I have known the use of homespun: and Honour hath been afflicted with the like foolishness."

"Ay, that have I," said her younger sister, innocently, "and I thank God for it."

"And what art thou thankful for, thou scarcecrow?" cried Tommy Hart, as he caught Ragged Launce up by the arm, and placed him on one of the stools, where in the light of the fire, he stood half abashed, with one finger to his eye, and the other hand grasping the tattered remnants of his lower garment. He was silent for awhile, even though all around him were busy making the very bitingest jests they could think of at his expense; and laughing seemed a privilege it was evident none cared to be deprived of.

"Thou hast monstrous cause for thankfulness, friend Launce," said Jonas, as he was soberly intent on making the boy's jerkin—which was a world too large—sit upon him with some pretensions to the court style; ever and anon standing at a distance, as though to admire the sit of it, and looking on the bystanders with that air of satisfaction with which an admirable workman is wont to shew his handicraft.

"What art thankful for, I prythee?" cried Tommy Hart, once again.

"Methinks I have no great call for thanks at this present," observed Ragged Launce, looking steadfastly on the cuff of his jerkin; then, suddenly lifting up his eyes to his questioner with a famous shrewd look, added, "but an thou let me have a fair new cap to my head to wear on holidays, I will

have such notable cause for thanks, I cannot help being thankful the rest of my life."

"Why, thou cozening rogue, thou!" exclaimed the merry hatter, joining heartily in the laugh this speech raised at his expense. "But, out of goodwill to thy father, to whom I owe some thanks, the fair new cap thou shalt have, and with it such a suit withal as thy mother Maud and that grinning varlet Jonas can provide for thee out of one of mine."

This announcement was received with infinite contentation; and, as may be supposed, none were so well content with it as Maud and her ragged boy, of whom the latter was so in especial, and minded not a whit the many rough tricks the merry knave kept playing upon him. In the meanwhile, Maud, assisted by Dame Hart and her more matronly gossips, had finished her cookery, and got it spread on the table ready for the now hungry company, who, nothing loath, sat themselves down to it in a presently, and were soon wondrous busy in essaying the several dishes. Nevertheless, busy as they seemed every one of them, their mirth scarce slackened an instant. The woman's tailor appeared to have a greater commodity of tricks, jests, strange grimaces, and odd distortions of himself than ever he had, whereof he displayed a most choice store, till some could not eat for laughing; and others could not laugh for choking; and, as for drinking, none dared so much as put a cup to his mouth in his sight, for, after the restless, ludicrous grimace that was sure to come of it, a hogshead was as likely to be swallowed as a mouthful.

The first to begin, and the last to leave off every laugh that was set a-going was Tommy Hart or his fair helpmate; and so excellent an example was not like to be lost sight of in such a company; whereof the consequence was, the black-pudding cooled on the trenchers, and the porridge was like to be sent away scarce touched by any, had not some space intervened between the fits of mirth that were so general.

Of all those present there was but one who looked as if taking any interest in the meal before him, and that was no other than Ragged Launce. He sat on a stool cross-legged, with a smoking bowl of porridge in his lap; and though such excess of mirth, shrieks, and shouts, and frantic gesticulations proceeded from every one about him, Launce continued at his porridge as grave as a lawyer making a will at the death-bed of his client, blowing every burning spoonful with an intense energy that puffed up his dirty fat cheeks as big as those of a trump-

eter at the sounding of some monstrous high note; yet, in his eagerness taking of it so hot, the tears ran down his eyes in streams as he gulped the scalding morsel. But, when he had finished the bowl, there was a change, I warrant you! In an instant he was as alive to the fun as any, and, of the various voices that burst forth at every fresh piece of exquisite fooling on the part of Jonas, the shrill treble of Ragged Launce was far above the loudest.

In a short space, he was called upon to help to remove the trenchers, which he did with an exceeding readiness, taking care, as he turned his back to the table, to empty into his gaping jaws whatever eatable was left thereon.

"Launce!" shouted Jonas Tietape, in a voice that made the boy drop the trencher he was then carrying away. He turned round short, and picked up the fallen vessel, but answered not, for a reason doubtless sufficiently to the purpose. "Launce, I tell thee, come hither!"

The boy slowly approached—albeit with a countenance of some irresolution. "My trencher, sirrah! What made thee remove it without any request so to do?"

Launce seemed suddenly suffering from some convulsive action of the face, part of which looked afflicted with an awful swelling. He twisted his mouth about in an exceeding odd manner; but instead of answering, stared very hard at the questioner, and returned the trencher to the table.

"Ah, this be it out of all doubt!" exclaimed Jonas, "but what witchcraft had conjured away the goodly portion of exquisite dumpling that was on it but a moment since?"

Launce looked as though making desperate efforts to answer. The corners of his mouth were seen to move with violent twitches; the swelling shifted a bit, but did not diminish. Nothing, however, came of these movements, but a stare more fixed and of less meaning than the former one.

"Hast lost the use of thy tongue, knave!" No, it was his teeth he had lost the use of. In transferring the contents of the trencher to the capacious cupboard, that had already received the unfurnishing of sundry others equally well provided, he had on the sudden sent his teeth with such force into the thick piece of dough, that he could not withdraw them, and he could neither swallow the unwieldy mouthful, nor disengage his jaws for the purposes of speech. In short, his mouth was as firmly closed as though a padlock had fastened it.

"Alas, gossips, this is a sad business!" cried Jonas, looking wondrously doleful.

"The loss of my dumpling I care not so much. Though I do affirm it to be as delicate eating as dumpling ever was. Yet the loss of this poor boy's gift of speech is as deplorable a thing as can well be thought of. But I must needs essay a touch of mine art. I do hope to recover both these losses."

Ragged Launce was getting more uneasy every minute. His face had become marvelously hot and red, and his grimaces horribly violent. The company looked in silence it is true, but with looks of such meaning as any language at their commandment could not half so well have expressed.

The tailor with great gravity drew the boy towards him, muttering a strange jargon in a rapid voice that made Ragged Launce tremble to his shoes. Suddenly laying the boy's head in his lap, he caught hold of his nose with one hand, and his chin with the other, and drew open his mouth, exhibiting to all the huge lump of dumpling that seemed to fill the whole space within.

"Behold the virtue of mine art, my masters!" cried Jonas exultingly. "Lo! I have found my lost dumpling." A laugh long and loud testified the general acknowledgment of his skill as a conjuror. Launce made one desperate effort—a swelling rose in his neck of a size awful to look on—his eyes became red with straining—tears gushed over his dingy cheeks—he gasped as though like one taken with a sudden fit, and then drew a strong breath. "O my life, I knew not but you had done with your trencher!" said he, in a monstrous eagerness.

"Behold the virtue of mine art, my masters!" again exclaimed Jonas, in the same exulting tone. "Lo! I have found the lost speech."

In the midst of the roar of mirth which came on the heels of this marvellous discovery, there was heard a loud knocking at the outer door, at which all started, some with astonishment, some with alarm, and some with wonder. Ragged Launce in very fear slunk away and hid himself under the big settle, but failed not as he went to take with him a huge roasted pippin with cloves in it, that lay with others close at hand on the table; but, quick as he had done it, it escaped not the eye of his busy mother, who on the instant pursued him with the ladle she had in her hand, and, as he was ducking under the settle, hit him so sore a stroke with it on his pole, he set up a cry loud enough to alarm all the watch in town. Nevertheless, seeing he was likely to have no worse usage, as the enraged Maud forbore any further proceedings, hearing a re-

petition of the rude knocking more violent than before, he quitted his crying, and with one hand rubbing his bruised pate, with the other he thrust the pipkin into his mouth, and soon lost all sense of pain, or fear either in its enjoyment.

"Who can it be?"

"What can any seek here at this untimely hour?"

"It cannot be thieves surely."

"Pray Heaven it be not fire!"

"Hath any ill-mannerly rogue been set on to disturb our pleasure?"

"Some drunken varlet mayhap, who has mistaken his lodging."

"Perchance it be some one for me."

"Nay, I expect 'tis I who am wanted."

"As I live, it was an awful knocking!"

"An it should be anything not of this world."

"Alack! do not say so, I prythee!"

"Mercy on us, there it be again! Oh it cannot help being a warning for us to prepare for our ends."

And thus every one cried out something, and every one imagined something, but none looked inclined to see what something it was. This state of things was made a thousand times worse by the woman's tailor suddenly assuming an aspect of the most absolute affright ever witnessed, whilst at the same time he uttered a cry so terrible all the women shrieked, and rushed into the arms of the men nearest them with such wondrous force, more than one was borne to the ground, and the rest were so jostled together, a flock of timid sheep set on by a dog could not have got in so small a compass.

Jonas stood aloof from the fear-struck throng with his hands on his hips, and his mouth at its utmost stretch, giving vent to so boisterous a peal of laughing as even those old rafters, familiar as they were with such sounds, had had no knowledge of.

"Why, thou intolerable faint hearts!" exclaimed he, as soon as he could get proper command of his speech. "If it be any thing less substantial than Goody Poppet's stout wench, with her lantern to see home her mistress, I have no more brains than a three-hooped pot." Whereupon the merry knave threw open the door, and flying like a wheel, turning round upon his hands and feet, he passed with a mischievous chuckle through the next chamber to the house-door, though the way was so dark you could not see your hand in it.

This declaration somewhat pacified the affrighted company, whereof the male part seemed the readiest satisfied—the most

scared being by far the quickest to assume an air of indifferency—the miller and his son boldly saying they were assured all along it could be no other than their gossip's handmaid; but Tommy Hart honestly said, he had not been in so horrible a fear all his days, and vowed he would never rest till he had served that "sniptaffeta fellow," as he styled the tailor, with such another trick.

As they were rapidly gaining confidence, and Goody Poppet was preparing for putting herself under the guidance of her usual attendant in dark nights to return home, the door opened. Every one expected the stout wench so well known to them, but there presently entered one who was no more like unto her, than is the golden sun to a Banbury cheese.

The hood with which her delicate sweet face was enveloped was suddenly thrown back from her shoulders by the hand of Jonas Tietape, who had entered with her, and there was displayed the features of a young girl, of not more than twelve years, flushed as though with some great exertion, and wearing withal a troubled air, that did give to its surpassing loveliness an expression so touching, the horriddest villain could not help feeling its exquisite influence.

"Susannah!" cried Joan Hart, evidently in a wondrous amazement as she recognized her youthful visitor. "Why, what hath brought thee here at this untimely hour?"

"Truly a great need!" replied as musical soft a voice as ear ever heard this side of heaven; and then she wrung her dainty little hands, and looked so pitiful, all present felt their hearts melt within them. "An it please you, good, sweet aunt, you return with me to Shottery on the instant."

The tender-hearted Joan stopped not for questioning. Leaving the child to the sympathy of her guests she flew for such things as were needful for her to put on for the journey, and before the more inquisitive of the company had extracted, from amidst her tears and sorrowful exclamations, aught beside her having run all the way over the fields, without any companion, in so dismal a night, Joan had returned ready to start. Her husband grasped his cudgel, and, having quickly lighted a lantern, and put himself in a like readiness, he bade his guests "good-night," and was soon anxiously accompanying the fair child and his excellent helpmate into the street.

CHAPTER II.

All I have done is little yet to purpose,
But, ere I leave him, I will perceive him blush;
And make him feel the passions that I do,
And every true lover will assist me in't,
And send me their sad sighs to blow it home,
For Cupid wants a dart to wound this bosom.

THE LAWS OF CANDY.

Fred. She's free as you or I am, and may have,
By that prerogative, a liberal choice
In the bestowing of her love.

Lod. Bestowing?
If it be so, she has bestowed herself
Upon a trim youth.

THE CAPTAIN.

THE musician sat turning of his cittern, close upon where sat an ancient gentlewoman, with whom it was evident he was not only upon terms of some intimacy, but, if looks and courteous words denote aught, the exquisite and very vehement gallantry of his manner towards her had touched her affections somewhat. Of a verity, he was a man like enough to impress a woman's heart with a sense of the most absolute affectionateness, for not only had he in visage and person such gifts as are usually all-powerful with a fair lady, the which were set off in a very gallant, peach-colored suit, with a cloak of murray velvet, faced with fur, and all corresponding appurtenances; but there was that in his look, in his voice, and in his every motion—albeit there was a marvellous stiffness in the homage and tenderness with which he appeared to regard his companion, that smacked of an age gone by—that spoke him to be of no common sort.

Certes, the tall, antiquated, stately dame, who looked into his eyes with so manifest a conceit of ecstasy, was not of that proper condition that would in ordinary cases attract so admirable a gallant. She lacked youth most abominably; and of charms had she no more than would serve to show she was not quite a dressed-up-anatomy. Her parchment visage—albeit there was paint enough on it to have done some service towards creating any Red Lion or flaming Phoenix worthy of being the pride of the whole city—only gave signs of life in the constant trick she had of forcing her mouth, which resembled a hole in a hose that had been horribly boggled in the mending, into the fashion of smiling; and in the no less continual habit of hers, of raising her sunken eyes from the edge of her robe, that stood out all around her stiff as any board, unto those of the handsome musician, and then

as suddenly letting them fall to renew their long acquaintance with the fading pattern of her dress.

Her close vest and round ruff, her long waist and stiff farthingale, her lace cuffs and trimmings, with her gown of faded satin, looked as though done on stone; and, had it not been for a sort of palsy, which she strove to disguise by keeping her chin fixed in her left hand, as though it were in a pillory, that gave her head an inconstant humor of motion, the curls of her perriwig—set with streamers in the old Venetian fashion, with a feather at the side—might as easily have passed for a cunning piece of statuary. Her right hand, however, partook not of such stillness; for, though it was close on winter, and a pleasant fire of logs was burning on the fire beside her, she kept it beating the air with a huge fan very vigorously; ever and anon furling it quickly, and tapping of her companion playfully, or shaking it at him, when his compliments seemed to her to have a meaning in them which appealed somewhat too directly to her too susceptible nature.

"Nay, Master Dulcimer, thou must indeed," exclaimed the dame, with an exceeding earnestness, furling her fan briskly, and then as rapidly opening it to the full display of a most moving scene from the romance of Launcelot du Lac, painted thereon.

"By those divine and love-darting orbs, I am in no voice," replied the musician, in a tone of exquisite melancholy, as he struck two or three tender chords upon his instrument.

"Oh, thou silly flatterer, thou!" cried she, shaking her closed fan at him, though with a smirk on her visage that would have assured a less observant spectator she was well pleased at such language. "But, pry-thee, tell me not thy voice is like to fail thee, for I have set my heart on hearing this ballad."

"A villainous cold, an it please you, sweetest lady," said the gallant, bending over his cittern to the complete hiding his face for the nonce from the keenness of her looks, as he added, in a sort of passionate whisper, "Sooth to say, the foolish liking I have for singing o' nights under the chamber that holds such a pearl of price, hath occasioned me so monstrous a hoarseness, I doubt I have more notes than a cuckoo."

"Dear heart, thou shalt have a posset on the instant!" exclaimed the enamored dame, rising with as much state in her movements as tenderness in her looks.

"Nay, by this heavenly light, I will never

allow it, sweet Mistress Deborah!" cried the musician, suddenly rising with a famous humility in his countenance. "I am scarce fit to be noticed of such excellence."

"Thy hoarseness must be cured, Master Dulcimer," said the lady, curtsying to the very ground to the low bending of the gallant before her, as he with the deepest air of reverence took her hand to lead her back to her seat, from which she had got a pace or two. "Believe me, Master Dulcimer, 'tis the exquisitest posset ever made—the sovereignest thing on earth for a hoarseness. Her gracious highness Queen Mary, of glorious memory hath oft applied to my poor ability for the concocting of it, and hath expressed wonderful comfort ere she had scarce swallowed a mouthful."

"I should scorn myself ever after, could I suffer my humbleness to be raised by such matchless goodness, to taste what the highest of the land must have been but too proud to have enjoyed at such fair hands."

"They were well pleased enough doubtless, Master Dulcimer. Not only her late Highness, who honored me with many tokens of her most princely regard, but that puissant and most excellent sovereign Henry the Eighth, and his sweet son, the young King Edward, who is now a saint in Heaven, as likewise her present Highness the Queen's Majesty, hath granted me many precious favors; for, as thou art I know well acquainted, I have lived among princes and nobles all my days."

"Of a surety, that accounteth for the princely and noble air thou possesseth so completely."

"In sooth I know not," said the lady with another majestic bend to the ground, in return for one of a like kind which followed the civil speech of her gallant. "But thy hoarseness, Master Dulcimer, getteth no remedy all this while. As it hath been got in my service, I cannot but endeavor its cure with all speed."

At this she was again, in all the dignity of a queen, sweeping forward to procure the promised posset, when the musician once more, with a reverence even more respectful, and a concern more absolute than he exhibited on the previous occasion, took her hand with many fine spun expressions of humbleness, and led her back to her seat. A little more stately colloquy followed, full of flattery on one side, and of vanity on the other. But as the speech of Master Dulcimer was evidently getting terribly thick, till it became more like the croaking of a raven than the voice of a gallant, she became monstrous eager the posset should be tried.

At last when she found the flattering humility of her companion was in no way to be moved, and possibly in some measure tired of the many bendings to the floor, her notions of proper ceremony bade her make in return for the many equally lowly her gallant honored her with at every fine speech, a thought seemed suddenly to have entered into her head, the which, had she not been so intent on the sweet things she heard, would have found a place there at the very first.

"By my fay, I had clean forgot!" said she; then raising her voice to a pitch somewhat of the sharpest, she cried, "Mistress Varnon! haste, I prythee, and make a posset for worthy Master Dulcimer."

This speech was directed to a most comely maiden, who stood concealed from view in one of the deep windows. Possibly she had gone there for the better seeing some music she held in her hand; and perchance the youth at her side was offering what assistance he had at his commandment in the proper understanding of it, but methinks, if this had been the case, there had been no such need as there seemed for the passionate words that one gave the other, and the deep fondness which shone in their looks, and in their exceeding closeness. Surely, it needed not the youth's hand locked in that of the maiden, whilst the other arm encompassed her girdle with so firm a pressure, her little ruff ever and anon seemed like to be crushed against his jerkin, for the proper understanding of music of any kind; but this was not all. These two, it was evident, had been as regardless of the antiquated dame and her formal gallant, as were that goodly pair, of them. Their loving dialogue, for such it was out of all doubt, so filled every sense, not only were their companions lost sight of, but of the whole world were they in a like forgetfulness.

"Methinks it cannot but be wrong, my dear lord," murmured the blushing maiden, her heart beating against her lover's breast, like a bird newly caged fluttering the bars of its prison-house. "'Tis true aunt Deborah useth me with exceeding harshness, but I can scarce reconcile me to the part your friend is playing, which cannot but end in her great unhappiness, and to leave her in a state of such terrible disappointment as must needs come of it, when all is discovered, looketh to me cruel and unmaidenly."

"Tush, sweet heart!" exclaimed the disguised gallant, pressing her to him more fondly. "The usage you have at her hands is such, that for it nothing can be too great a punishment. She hath employed her ut-

most for the complete marring of your happiness, merely because the Queen liketh not my Lord Southampton to marry, and so leave her with one servant the less, of whom she can command attentions that in her old age she should have never thought of; and to be in favor with her Highness, Dame Deborah, hath not only done me all manner of ill offices with the Queen, but hath spoke of you to her in so horrible, infamous a manner, as your pure heart can have no notion of."

"In very sooth now, dear Wriothesley, hath she done me this huge unkindness?" earnestly inquired his indignant mistress, whilst big tears trembling on the long lashes of her fair eyes did most eloquently speak her sense of her kinswoman's injustice.

"As I live, my sweeting, 'tis so!" replied the youth with a like earnestness. "I was told of it by one who was present, and I shortly after received of the Queen a sharp rating, with numberless proud peremptory terms, for paying any sort of heed to one so discreditably spoken of."

The lashes of the fair listener became so heavily laden with those most choice pearls, that they could no longer have footing there, and came stealing over her downy cheek as if well inclined to linger upon such dainty ground.

"Sweetest life!" whispered her lover with increased vehemency of love at the sight of her tears. "There is no bearing this monstrous tyranny. Will's stratagem is the very properest stratagem that could have been devised, for without it how could I have had access to thee, my life! my heart! for a single instant?—and 'tis her own unconscionable vanity that is to blame, if she take to heart at the discovery, the being made so absolute a gull. But I am assured no harm will come of it. Her heart is as stiff as her stomacher, and she hath about as much feeling as hath the oak floor she passeth over with so stately a step."

Mistress Varnon wiped away the tears that rested on her cheeks, as though they meant to settle there all their days; but she attempted not any sort of reply.

"On the knees of my heart, I beseech thee secure my happiness!" continued the devoted lover, pressing the trembling girl to him with a greater shew of affectionateness than ever. "I have all things in readiness; it needeth but thy consent to be free for ever of the infamous slanders, and continual tyrannies to which thou hath of late been subjected."

The looks of Mistress Varnon were fixed on the floor, and an expression of indecision

appeared to linger over her exquisite sweet countenance, but her heart was beating faster than she thought any heart had done, since the world was made.

"Do I not love thee, a thousand times better than life?" murmured the young nobleman in a tone of tender melancholy, it was scarce possible for one of her loving nature to listen to unmoved. "In honest truth, my whole soul is so wrapt in thy infinite perfections, if thou deny me the precious gift of them, I shall take such a hatred to my miserable life, I will to Ireland on the instant, in the hope some rebellious kern may help me to a speedy riddance of it."

"Nay, that thou shalt never do," replied the loving maiden, in tones so soft and low, and trembling withal, they could scarce be heard.

"Wilt consent, then, my sweeting, to what I have in my exceeding love for thee proposed?" asked her lover, with a look that spoke how much depended on her answer. Her lips just opened, and at the same moment her head drooped upon his shoulder. The reply can only be guessed by the manner in which it was received. The lover pressed his fair companion in an embrace, that seemed not likely to be ended shortly; and he only raised his lips from the rosy resting-place they had found without any effort at resistance, when her name, repeated in her aunt's sharpest tone, and a warning cough from Master Dulcimer, awakened the devoted maiden from a sense of bliss to which she had given herself up, heart and soul.

Recovering as quickly as she could the music that had dropped from her hand in the ecstasy of her feelings, she was busily pointing out to her lover, seemingly equally intent on the notes as herself, a passage which they were trying in a low voice, when the tall figure of her kinswoman, handed along by the disguised music-master, with a formality that made any great speed impossible, came upon their hiding-place.

"Excellent proper scholars, o' my life!" exclaimed the pretended Master Dulcimer. "Mistress Varnon proveth herself worthy of the lessons of her most admirable sweet mistress."

Here followed the courteous bend that closed every such sugared compliment—the which of necessity was acknowledged by another from the lady equally ceremonious.

"In sooth, Master Dulcimer, I must needs own she is a close scholar, and an apt," replied the antiquated virgin; the suspicions excited, and the sharp reproof she had pre-

pared, changing, in consequence of the timely flattery, into smiles and good will. "And she hath of late so liked the singing of madrigals, she is no less impatient than am I for the coming of yourself and boy to help us in the indulgence of this exquisite rare pastime. But I must not let aught interfere with the curing of your hoarseness. Go, Mistress Varnon, use thy utmost skill in the making of my choice posset; prepare it with all proper speed; and take with thee Master Dulcimer's boy into the garden to help thee gather the herbs that are necessary in the making of it."

It is doubtful whether the young lovers were more pleased to escape from the room, than was the stately spinster to get rid of them. She had a little scheme in her mind, intended to force her companion into a confession of the unconquerable passion she fancied she had inspired him with, for, though he had said many tender and gallant things, she had heard nothing of a sort to be compared with the intensity of her own affection; but his reservedness she attributed to his modesty. She could not believe him to be no better than a poor musician. In her own mind there was no conviction so perfect as that he was some prince or other, so smitten with her attractions, as to willingly seek disguise to obtain the pleasure of her sweet society. His appearance, his manners, and his language, she had for some time passed, pronounced to be as a long acquaintance with courts could alone obtain; and in this rare delusion she fooled herself to the top of her bent.

She considered that he wanted encouragement, and that nothing could afford it so well as a declaration of her feelings in his favor. How to bring this about in a discreet and maidenly manner she had long thought of, and at last satisfied herself she had conceived a plan excellently well adapted for her purpose. She had scarce well rid herself of her exquisite fair niece and her disguised lover, when she turned a gaze upon her companion of such infinite affectionateness, as no language can do justice to, whereupon, meeting his bright glance, in the which lurked—though she saw it not—a look of sly pleasantry, she as suddenly cast her eyes to the ground, and sighed as though her heart must needs break in a presently.

The seeming musician regarded her for a moment with some sort of compassionateness, as though loath to carry the deception further; but the very absolute ridiculousness of the love-sick anatomy before him, together with what he knew of her infamous

behavior to her gentle kinswoman, and a remembrance of how completely the happiness of two young and amiable people depended on his successfully carrying on the jest, satisfied his conscience for the nonce; and furnishing his looks with the proper gravity, and his carriage with the customary starchness, he bowed himself upon her hand, which he took into his own with a monstrous show of gallantry, and in words of the movingest sort, requested, as he was denied the most sweet delight of entertaining her with his voice, she would, out of her marvellous condescension, lap his spirit in that rapture he never failed to enjoy to an exquisite excess, when listening to her incomparable performance.

The only reply she gave was conveyed in a sort of hysteric sob—a sudden casting of her eyes to the ceiling, as sudden a clasp in both her own of the hand of her gallant—then a look at him brimming over with affectionateness—and lastly, a sudden movement with stateliest steps, her eyes fixed on him all the way—to the virginals.

"Oh, Master Dulcimer!" exclaimed she, in a most perturbed voice as she sunk on the seat that stood before that instrument.

Master Dulcimer said never a word; for, having seated her, and made his leg with the gravity expected of him, he was diligently employing himself in turning over the leaves of Thomas Morley's "First Booke of Ballets to five Voyces," which, with various other madrigals, pastorals, roundelays, ayres, and catches by John Bennett, Thomas Wheelkes, John Farmer, William Bird, John Dowland, and John Wilbye; with a goodly heap of older works by Sheryngham, Davy, Browne, Sir Thomas Phillips, Fairfax, Cornish, Turges, Tudor, and Banister, were partly on the virginals, and on a stand adjoining.

Whilst thus employed, Aunt Deborah had time to recover in some measure from the intense pleasurable bewilderment into which her gallant had thrown her, and, with an exceeding audible sigh, and a marvellous loving glance, she began a few bars of quaint and pleasing symphony. Ere she had proceeded far, however, she stopped.

"In sooth," she murmured, with a smile that might have been becoming enough some forty years before; "in very sooth, I know not what to sing."

"Such exquisite sweet singing as thou singest at all times," replied her companion, somewhat enamoredly, "rendereth the choice of but slight concern. Be assured, whatever pleaseth thee to sing, shall infinitely please me to hear."

"Excellent Master Dulcimer!" exclaimed his antiquated mistress, in a very fervor.

"Hast thou no moving ballad, most admirable Mistress Deborah—no touching ditty that should express, with a natural force, the desperate passion of some love-lorn heart? Hast thou—"

"Have I not, sweetest Master Dulcimer!" replied the lady, clasping her hands powerfully together, and taking another sharp scrutiny of the ceiling.

"A song of such ravishing sort must needs command my very deepest attentive-ness," observed the disguised musician.

"But it is one of my poor contrivance," whispered Aunt Deborah, her look again downcast. "A trifle, a very trifle, dear Master Dulcimer, which thy superior skill cannot but despise."

How the gentleman protested the greatness of his opinion of any production from such a source, may readily be imagined; and the modest depreciation with which the lady spoke of her performance ere she could be got to commence the singing of it, it needeth no great stretch of fancy neither to have a proper notion of. Suffice it, that, after many delays, a wonderful display of affection in her looks, and with a constant fire of sighs that ought to have melted the most obdurate heart, Aunt Deborah betook herself to her instrument, and, in a voice of the shrillest, commenced the following words:

AUNT DEBORAH'S DITTY.

"Honey-sweet lips!—Most tempting fruit that groweth,

Fain would I taste, if tasting there might be:
Honey-sweet lips!—Most rosy flower that bloweth,

Fain would I own, if such might bloom for me.

Oh, doleful strait!—The tree doth grow so high,
I might o'er-reach, would I such fruit devour;
Oh, sad mischance!—The plant so low doth lie,
I fear to fall stooping to pluck the flower.

Honey-sweet lips!"

It was with a great to do the disguised master of music kept the grave and deeply-attentive visage he had all along commanded; for, in sober truth, the very monstrous passionateness put on by the starched and ceremonious maid of honor to Her Highness Queen Mary, of sanguinary memory, was so extremely ridiculous, that any ordinary man might have laughed his head off ere his mind would have well got rid of the humor it would have put him into. Such turning up of eyes—now to her companion,

and anon to that part of the ceiling that was directly above her head—such sugared looks that no conserve could have been half so sweet, had not the vessel that furnished them had more in it of the fashion of the empty gallipot than of any such tempting cates as good housewife's do put in them—such smiles of infinite love as must have penetrated the very core of a millstone, had they beamed on any thing human, of whatsoever sort, more desirable than the shrivelled-up lips from which they originated—such blushes of modest bashfulness, a tittle of which would have sufficed the wants of St. Ursula's eleven thousand in any extremity—such sighs as no undone church-organ ever gave, whereof the bellows lacked wind beyond all toleration—such devotion, such prudence, such longing, such coyness, such hope, such doubt, and such fear, were never exhibited in the singing of any ditty since the beginning of time.

Nevertheless, the assumed Master Dulcimer leaned on the virginals over against the singer, beating of the time as it were with his hand, and seeming to be quite rapt with such bewitching minstrelsy—albeit, his midriff was in extreme jeopardy with his efforts to restrain his mirth. Peradventure, he dared not trust himself to speak, though he had no lack of encouragement so to do, for speech gave he none at all; yet the suffusion of his eyes, which arose from his powerful struggle to preserve his gravity, was regarded by the love-sick Aunt Deborah as a sure sign her ditty had touched him to the quick, and after a short pause to allow time for it to produce its due effect, she proceeded:

SECOND VERSE.

"Tempt me no more!—With excellence so winning,

Scarce can I look, and not as soon be won;
Tempt me no more!—Though knowing nought of sinning,

With such sweet sin I needs must be undone,
Oh, sunless joy!—Methinks these sugared baits
Do hold to me an unresisting lure;
Oh, nameless bliss!—Methinks there honor waits,

With honest bonds to make my wish secure.
Honey-sweet lips!"

Nature could hold out no longer. The assumed Master Dulcimer was just on the point of giving way to those powerful inclinations he had with such huge difficulty withheld, when, as the singer, with amorous sighs, and looks, blushes and smiles, a thousand times more exquisitely ridiculous

than those which accompanied the singing of the first verse, closed her ditty—as if the pent-up passion she had so long kept within proper bounds had now burst its barriers—she had no sooner got to the last note than, with an energy that nigh pressed the breath out of his body, she on a sudden threw herself forward into his arms, and doubtless would, if she had dared, have helped herself right liberally to the tempting objects that had formed the burthen of her song.

The gallant was so taken by surprise, he could do nothing against such an assault but struggle as he best could to get free; certes, Aunt Deborah had got so close a hold of him, and he was placed in so exceeding awkward a position, his liberation looked to be no easy matter. At last it came with a quickness he had hardly dared to hope.

Whilst he was tugging and twisting with more vigor than gallantry to rid himself of the embrace of his antiquated mistress, the door of the chamber was suddenly burst open, and there rushed into the room, seemingly out of breath with the speed he had used in getting into it, the long-legged, iron-visaged, ancient serving-man, that was at once her steward, groom of the chambers, gardener, bailiff, cellarer, clerk of the kitchen, running-footman, and a good score of other callings, and had been so ever since he could clean a trencher, empty a flask, or grow a salad.

That he was intent on the saying of something of the very utmost consequence there could be no manner of doubt; nought but the most absolute necessity could ever have induced a serving-man, used to the rigorous formalities of so stern a mistress, to break into her privacy in so rude a manner as he had done. He would himself have thought the world was at an end, had he dared to do so on any common occasion. But, whatever was his intent, of a surety he said nothing, for he had scarce got well into the room, when he stopped short in his speed as though he had seen a basilisk.

He, who had ever regarded the stately Aunt Deborah with an awe scarcely less than that he would have felt standing in the presence of the Queen's Highness, and would as soon have expected to have discovered the grave Lord Burghley cutting purses in Tothill Fields, as his proud and formal old mistress allowing of the most innocent familiarity from an individual of the opposite sex, even had he been a prince, beheld her in a situation with so mean a person as a singing-master, which, to put on it the most charitable construction, was exceeding equivocal. He was struck dumb

with surprise and consternation, and stood with mouth wide agape, and eyes staring with all their power.

But how did Aunt Deborah take this untimely interruption? At sight of her serving man, from whom she had exacted the respect due from one having absolute power and empire, she was nigh ready to die with rage, vexation, and pride. She who had set herself up as so immaculate, of such wondrous dignity, of such unparalleled perfection in all things, as one so infinitely superior to those around her—she was not to be approached without every possible show of humility and reverence; to be detected by her own serving-man in an act so opposed to her former bearing, as having tender dalliance with a gallant, was shame unspeakable. The offence of finding her under such circumstances would at any time have been beyond forgiveness—bearing the rude character the old man's intrusion did, it was deadly.

The affectionate old spinster resumed her starched appearance with what facility she could, and livid with shame and anger, she glared upon the bewildered and terrified domestic. "Begone, rascal!" cried she, in those deep tones that express, much more than violent, loud exclamations of any sort, the powerful feelings under which the speaker is laboring. "Out of my house! Pack, on the instant! An I see thy villainous visage another hour, I will have thee scourged out of my presence!"

"But, mistress!—prythee my lady!" exclaimed the serving-man, trembling, and pale with fear.

"Dost dare speak to me?" replied the enraged dame, stretching out her arm in the direction of the door; then adding, in a higher key, "Begone, knave!"

But to do her bidding the poor man had not the power. His knees knocked together, his hands and head shook as with the palsy, and he looked as one about to give up the ghost.

"Strip off my apparelling, and the badge of the Varnons, and get thee hence for an unmannerly, meddling jacknapes."

"But Mistress Varnon hath run off with the musician's boy, an it please you my lady!" stammered out the serving-man, as well as his fear would allow him.

Aunt Deborah gave a sudden start at this intelligence, and her paleness was visible, in despite of her paint.

"What sayest, fellow?" demanded she solemnly. "Dost dare to say a Varnon is capable of such infamy?"

The man, as he gained courage, told his

tale ; which was to the effect that, as he was working in the garden, he spied the musician's boy and Mistress Varnon in a wonderful loving humor, and thinking their behavior marvellous strange, he kept an eye on their movements. They seemed for a while to be gathering of herbs, but made no great progress in their labor. In their rambles they at last came to the wicket at the bottom of the garden, and they were so loving and so intent on each other's discourse, they took no heed that they were watched. They presently opened the gate and went out, and, on the man's going there to see what they could be at, which he did not like doing too quickly, he beheld them both galloping away on fleet horses.

Aunt Deborah listened in a state of breathless amazement, evidently in such a rage with her gentle kinswoman, her anger against the serving-man was clean forgot. She was uttering the bitterest denunciations against her for bringing such shame upon her family by her intolerable infamousness in running off with so low a person as a musician's boy ; when her attendant having obtained some slight sense of security, ventured to say that he believed the musician's boy was no musician's boy at all, nor any thing of the sort, for, as he was looking after the runaways at the gate, a swash-buckler-looking knave, in a terrible swaggering mood, came up to him, and bade him tell his mistress to be under no concern for the disappearance of the young lady, for my Lord Southampton had her safe, and that they would be married within five minutes of their leaving the house. Moreover, he had given him a tester, to tell one Master Dulcimer to join his friend instantly.

"Master Dulcimer!" screamed his mistress, looking around ; but if she sought that admirable master of music, her eyes must have been of a very choice sort to have seen him, considering that he was then on a swift horse, on the track of his young friend, and the lovely partner of his flight, having made the best of his way out of Aunt Deborah's house, as soon as he found himself released from her too affectionate embrace.

The love-sick virgin now saw that she had been cozened. She had managed to regain her huge fan, and had employed it, in its wonted manner, with great diligence, when she suddenly furled it, with a look as full of hate and rage as might have belonged to a Medusa, broke it over the head of the astonished menial, and stalked out of the room, desperately intent on vengeance.

CHAPTER III.

Beware, delighted poets, when you sing,
To welcome nature, in the early spring,
Your numerous feet not tread
The banks of Avon ; for each flower
(As it ne'er knew a sun or shower)
Hangs there the pensive head.

D'AVENANT.

Here I lay, and thus I bore my point.

SHAKESPEARE.

"Now, dame, prythee put forth thy best housewifery, for amongst our company this day will be one for whom I have an especial respect."

"'Tis Master Shakspeare, then, I lay my life on't."

"Ay, that is it, dame ; and one more worthy of all honor either amongst such as be players, or with folk of any condition, distinction, or goodness, whatsoever, we are not like to see in our time, I promise you."

"Marry, he shall have the best entertainment we can give him, and with such heartiness of good-will, as he may, perchance, lack in a braver feast. But who have you provided to meet him, sweet heart ? for, methinks, there should be some choice in the company which one so esteemed is required to grace."

"As for that, dame, I can but ask mine own fellows of the Fortune, most of whom must depart with me, on the morrow, for Windsor ; and, though they may not be so approved in their art as those he hath been used to at the Globe, I doubt not at all he careth for Ned Allen sufficient to be content with the fellowship of such humbler spirits as he is wont to have at his board."

"Heaven be good to him, for he is a most sweet gentleman, and his great deserts are not like to suffer discredit from an honest woman's prayers. But it is fit we should have no brawlers nor breedbates, nor ruffling braggadocios amongst us to disgrace him and ourselves ; for, if I mistake not hugely, there are such to be found among our friends of 'The Fortune ;' and it will as little credit you, dear heart, who, I am proud to say, hath as honest a name in his calling as hath any man, and, moreover, hath as fair a provision for his living as might satisfy some of higher estate, as it will honor a guest who, of his eminent qualities, demandeth at your hands whatever respect and affection it may be in your power to afford."

"Well said, sweet heart ! O my life, an excellent proper speech ! And as it regard-

eth my state and prospects, what you have said be as true as truth itself, and I thank God for it, and will never abuse his favor, be assured. But as to our fellows, there be some, I am afraid, of rather a graceless sort; nevertheless, I think not of them so ill that they will show their unworthy humors before so true a heart as Will Shakspeare. I must needs have Ben Johnson for one."

"I should like him the better, could he better govern himself; for he can be, at times, as excellent good company as might be desired. But he is not free from envy of another's greater good-fortune, however assured he may be of his worthiness, and hath a boisterous, rude way with him, at times, that looketh to be ever intent on a quarrel."

"Nay, dame, speak of him not so ill. Ben is a king, in his way."

"A king, i'faith, that, ever and anon, must needs be using of his sceptre by way of cudgel, for the better showing of his authority."

"Like enough, dame; nevertheless, he is too great a personage amongst us to be slighted, and he is, besides, well known to Will, so that we can have no cause for omitting him."

"For mine own part, husband, I have no wish that way; indeed, I have oft found infinite pleasure in his company; so let him come, o'God's name, only I would be more content were I assured he would come in a fitting mood. But who else shall you have to meet sweet Master Shakspeare?"

"Why, dame, I cannot but have Will Byrde; he hath a most exquisite throat for a ballad, of any one of my acquaintance; and Humphrey Jeffes, he playeth the viol like a master; and John Shanke, he telleth a good jest with a marvellous proper spirit; and Tom Downton, he knoweth tricks of conjuring that would surprise you mightily; and Ned Colbrand, and Francis Grace, and Samuel Rowley, they sing a three-part song in a manner which is a delight to hear; and Gabriel Spencer——"

"Surely that is he who broke the constable's head."

"Ay, but none of us are constables, sweet heart! so *our* head will be in no danger."

"I warrant you. But if he be so violently disposed, one head is like to be no more respected by him than another."

"Fear nought, dame. Gabriel would not harm a mouse; but there doth exist such an antipathy between a constable and a player, that if a cracked crown come of it, it is no marvel; and, peaceable man as I am, if, of the two, one is to be hurt, me-

thinks he should be the constable—therefore Gabriel deserveth no blame. Besides, he hath many commendable gifts, which should make him good company. Possibly I may chance to fall in with Armin, or Massye, or some other choice spirit, whose tricks and jests cannot fail to garnish our entertainment right pleasantly."

"As you will, dear heart; but fail not to have sufficient recourse to your lute, which, in my humble thinking, be as delicate garnish for a friend's banquet as any honest heart need desire."

"But it is not reasonable all should be so good a wife. And now I must needs be going. I have pressing business. I am ordered to bring my dogs and bears to court, for her majesty's games. Spare neither pains nor pence, Joan. So God be with you!"

"Good bye, sweet heart; and if you see my father, I pray you give him my love and duty."

"I will not fail, and will strive to bring him with me to dinner; for I know he will be right glad to meet Master Shakspeare."

The foregoing dialogue had been spoken by persons aiming at no great pretensions in any of those things most commonly assumed. They were simple of heart, and simple in manners; had been married long enough to know how to appreciate each other's good qualities, and to conform completely to each other's tastes. So contented a couple was not often to be met with. They had no ambition in dress, in great company, in fine furniture, or in gay living; they cared only to be a comfort to each other, and a source of pleasure to those around them. Edward Allen had lately built a playhouse in Cripplegate, which, as with a prophetic eye to its results, he named "The Fortune;" and, having married the daughter of Phillip Henslowe, who had realized a fortune by his gains, as the master of a company of players, and of a collection of dogs, bulls, and bears, which seemed in equal favor, Allen found himself obliged to take a prominent part in both performances, and was now hullooing on one of his four-footed company at Paris Garden, and anon applauding as favorite a biped at the Fortune playhouse.

These different pursuits, at times, made strange confusion in his speech. They would then so mingle in his thoughts, he could not mention them with the qualities that were singular to each and every one, but would speak of one of his best bears as of a most moving tragedian; whilst he, who had drawn floods of tears from a crowded

audience, was mentioned as the bravest dog at his game that had been seen any time these ten years.

His wife, though she had been bred, as it were, in one continual scene of worrying and biting, had a monstrous dislike of all quarrelsomeness; but the baiting of bulls and bears she had been so used to look upon, that she could no more regard it as strife, than could a miller decry as noise the turmoil of his mill-wheel. She could see, with infinite contentation, a bull pinned to the ground by a savage dog, whilst some of his fellows were being tossed in the air, yet would not allow the cat to be catching of mice, she so hugely disliked dumb innocents to be harmed. Amongst her friends she was universally esteemed, as more than ordinarily grave in her humor, charitable, pious, discreet, and kind; and if her husband thought her face or person not so good as those of many women of his acquaintance, there could be no doubt of it he found her heart a wondrous deal better than them all. So, as it must needs be, Edward Allen and his yokefellow led an exceeding happy life.

Leaving his fair helpmate to play the part of the good wife, which she was wont to perform with such perfectness there was not room for the finding of a single fault, the courteous reader must a while with the husband, whose excellences of disposition were no less admirable; for, having, under the care of his fair partner, been getting himself ready for a journey, the whole time of what hath been set down of their discourse, he started off in his best suit and cap, and making forth from the liberty of the Clink, where he had his dwelling, he proceeded across a field lying towards Lambeth Marsh, called Pedlar's Acre, wherein were some buildings, towards which he made. These proved to be the ordinary habitations of certain of his company of beasts before they were suffered to make sport at the Paris Garden. Here he remained not long, ascertaining from an old woman remaining there, that his father-in-law and partner had gone off with his best bears and dogs to the Queen's Majesty, at Somerset House. Making his way from thence to the water-side, he jumped into a boat, and was soon crossing the river with as much speed as a pair of oars could make for him.

On landing at the stairs, he was allowed to pass the yeomen there on guard, for they knew him well, and shortly found himself greeted by a bullet-headed, bald-pated, old fellow, with legs like nine-pins, a body like

a barrel, and a face as glowing as the flaming cinders in a blacksmith's forge. He was surrounded by a motley group, some holding dogs and some bears, and there were with them certain officers of the queen's household, who appeared to be exceedingly intent on what was going forward. They were in a part of the courtyard, where a post had been set up over-against the window of the queen's privy chamber, where she was wont to regale herself with a sight of the sport. At other windows that commanded a view of the games, were groups both of ladies and of gallants; whilst, surrounding the spot which contained the bear-keeper and his beasts, was a throng of curious people, young and old, who thought themselves fortunate in being able to see the queen witness such royal pastime.

The new comer being addressed as "son Allen," in a rough but not unfriendly voice, by the person just alluded to; this pointed the latter out to be no other than Phillip Henslowe, the most approved master of the sports of the Paris Garden all London could produce, and a long-established favorite with its good citizens.

After a few words of cheerful greeting, and an affectionate inquiry after his daughter, which elicited the loving message she had sent, the old man set his son-in-law to fasten one of the bears to the post, he giving directions the whilst to him and the holders of the dogs, and ever and anon addressing the beasts themselves, that they should, on account of their having such noble spectators, exhibit such nobleness of sport as should make them worthy of so much distinction. Then he would turn to some of the queen's officers about him, and lament the irreparable loss he had sustained, in the last winter, of two of the very cleverest bears that had ever come out of Muscovy. He told how they had been brought over to him when cubs, and what absolute pains he had taken with their education, till they had become the most accomplished bears that had ever hugged the breath out of a mastiff. And then he digressed to certain of his dogs, whose qualities he vaunted as excelling that of the best that had ever been known in the memory of man, either in the baiting of bulls or bears; nay, for the matter of that, they were of such unmatchable courage and fierceness, they would as lief fly at a lion or a tiger as at more accustomed prey.

Old Henslowe did not want listeners, and he talked with the air of one who takes the

subject of his discourse to be of such high consequence it can admit of no rivalry; and though, like all his fellows, he had his jerkin and cap off, and his shirt-sleeves tucked up above his elbows, and his appalling was in every way the reverse of the courtier, he lacked not attention, nor, it may be added, respect; for he was an oracle in these matters, and they were in such fashion, there were few at court who desired not to have some knowledge of them. His son-in-law was busily engaged in fastening up the animal that was first to be baited—a huge, shaggy brute, that stared about him with a solemnness of visage as of a justice of the peace at the least.

He had scarce done this, when a stir in the crowd gave notice that the queen was approaching; and, sure enough, her highness appeared in great splendor, closely attended by the noble Sir Walter Raleigh, then first in her favor, and surrounded at a convenient distance by her courtiers and ladies in waiting. Even, at that distance, the marks of age and decay were but too visible in her visage; and, moreover, she wore an expression of inquietude, which, despite of the efforts of her courtly companion who stood at her side, after she had seated herself on a chair of state placed for her at the window, to entertain her with such discourse as he knew she most affected, scarcely left her an instant. On her appearance, all heads were uncovered, and an huzza set up, which caused the dogs to bark, and the bears to growl, as if they must needs testify their loyalty, and the satisfaction they had in being set by the ears for the entertainment of such exalted company.

Presently a clear circle was made round the bear at the stake, none being allowed to come within it, save only those engaged with the dogs. Old Henslowe took by the neck one of the powerfulest of his mastiffs, and showed him to Bruin, which set him to growling and struggling furiously to get at him; and Bruin turned his solemn visage towards his enemy, with a glance from his eye and a glisten of his formidable teeth, that savored of any thing but affection. The old man aggravated the dog by shaking him at his prey, and sohoing him on, not forgetting to remind the beast that the eyes of the Queen's Highness were upon him, and that it behoved him to show of what high blood he was, and who had been his master.

At a little distance his son-in-law was encouraging another dog to the attack by similar means, and others were being held

in readiness, all of which looked desperately eager at the sport. Presently, old Henslowe let loose his dog, and went direct at his prey, like a hawk at the quarry; but Bruin was an old hand at the game, and, standing on his hind-quarters, looked ready for his assailant, let him come as savage as he would. The mastiff flew at his throat, but the bear knocked him aside with one of his fore-paws, like a dexterous fencer. He made another spring, which would have succeeded better, had not Bruin got him in his arms with so fierce a hug that it made him squeak for it. Before, however, he could do any serious hurt, the other dog was let at him, and Bruin was fain to let go his hold of the first to defend himself from the second.

The game now became wondrous exciting, for the dogs were eager and fierce, and the bear marvellous quick in his movements, and snapping and pawing off his foes with a dexterousness that baffled their attacks and won him great applause. The audience seemed to take great interest in the combat; even her highness looked as though she regarded it with more attentiveness than the sugared compliments of the noble gentleman at her side. Hitherto all had looked on, with too much respect for the great personage in whose company they were, to attempt any interruption, save some hearty commendation now and then from one or two of the more privileged; but old Henslowe, in the intensity of his honest pleasure in the fight, clean forgot under whose awful eyes he was, and made the air resound again with his plaudits, which, with even-handed justice, he bestowed with equal vehemence now on one party and now on the other. Now it was "Brave dog!"—anon "Brave bear!"—then was heard, "Well fought, Jowler!—a good grip, Pincher!—closely hugged, Bruin!" and the like encouragements, which seemed to have vast effect, for the dogs worried the bear with a spirit that increased every minute, and the bear seemed every minute to put forth a more valiant opposition. Edward Allen looked on with quite as great a satisfaction, though he was not quite so boisterous in giving it words; yet he could not forbear once remarking to a bystander, that Bruin's action was of the true, high, Roman dignity; and Jowler's delivery pointed him out as the first tragedian of his time.

When it was thought the bear had been sufficiently worried, and the dogs appeared to tire of the sport, they were put on one side, and another bear and other dogs were brought forward to supply their places.

As this fight was but a repetition of that already described, methinks there be no need of giving here any account of it. Nevertheless, it afforded as abundant contentment as the other.

It so chanced an odd accident put an end to the entertainment in the most summary fashion. As the second bear was being released from the stake, he slipped his collar, and made a sudden rush at the crowd around. After so much fighting, it was not supposed he could be in any very amiable mood, so his unexpected attack threw the whole company into the horriblemst fright the eye ever beheld. In endeavoring to get themselves out of his way, they tumbled over each other by dozens: in the confusion, the dogs broke from their keepers and flew at their liberated prey. Old Henslowe and his son-in-law rushed forward to part them; but, in the press, they were knocked down, and bear, dogs, and men were presently seen struggling on the ground in one undistinguishable mass, whilst such as had the use of their legs were making their escape with no less haste than alarm. Her majesty and her courtiers got themselves to a place of safety with much more speed than dignity; but in a few minutes, the uproar ceased, Bruin was recaptured, and the dogs severally secured. It may readily be believed there was no more bear-baiting before her highness that day.

Henslowe saw his beasts depart to their habitations with their attendants, and then, putting on his jerkin, accompanied his son Allen to look for his expected guests. Much they discoursed by the way on the state of their affairs—now dilating on their doings at the Fortune, and now at Paris Garden; and, from what passed betwixt them, a goodly lesson might have been learned of the relative value of interludes and bear-baiting; of players and play-writers, and bulls, bears, and dogs of divers kinds and qualities. Apparently well satisfied with these matters, as far as they were concerned with them, they at last arrived at a small way-side inn, near the Pimlico fields, as you go to Chelsea, much frequented by honest citizens with a taste for the country, and a proper enjoyment for curds and cream, hot cakes, and a game at bowls. Instead of going through the house, they entered at an open gate, which led them through a shady avenue into a sort of garden, having bowers all round for the accommodation of the company. Here was a swing, and several other rustical pleasures, and beyond was a smooth bowling-green, in great repute for the neatness with which it was kept.

Old Henslowe and his son became aware as they approached, of some persons being in hot and violent dispute. People were seen leaving their favorite bowers, some with alarm, and some with curiosity. The swing was deserted; the climbing-pole, the skittles, and the butts for the shooters completely neglected; and all were hastening to look into the cause of the huge uproar which was existing in the bowling-green. Among a throng of persons, some of whom affected a display of greater bravery than was usual amongst the regular frequenters of "The Shepherd and Shepherdess," whose sharp speeches and ready answers had more than once drawn attention to them from the more quiet part of the company, there was seen, more prominently than all others, a sturdy, broad-faced, stout-made man, not ill apparelled, yet seeming to be careless of such things, his features inflamed with passion, and both by voice and gesture showing, as plainly as such things could, that he was in a very monstrous, tearing humor with some one. Around and about him were two or three of his companions, evidently striving all they could to pacify him, most prominent among whom was one who, by his appearance, was a person of worship, though this arose as much from his having so goodly a presence as from wearing handsome garments.

A little in the rear of these was another group, surrounding a man of a middle height, yet of a well-knit frame, whose face was pale with passion. It might be seen, from his manner and language, that he was quite as violent as the other, and that he paid as little attention to the representations of his companions in their endeavors to restore him to good humor. An indifferent spectator could easily have ascertained, from what fell from these different persons, that there had been a violent quarrel during a game at bowls betwixt two of a party of players who had met together at "The Shepherd and Shepherdess" for the enjoyment of those innocent pleasures the place afforded. The two, it appeared, were Benjamin Jonson and Gabriel Spencer, both of "The Fortune;" the former, besides, being a writer of plays of singular merit, as witness his admirable "Every Man in his Humor." Both were of marvellous hasty tempers, and exceedingly intolerant of the slightest opposition. After taunting each other with terrible provoking words, they got so inflamed, that they were for running each other through where they stood; but they were separated by some of their more peaceable companions, and made to put by their rapiers ere they had done any

mischievous—yet not without the giving and receiving of a challenge to settle their quarrel the next day in Hoxton Fields. It was hoped, by those who strove most to reconcile them—particularly the person just spoken of, who was addressed sometimes as Will, and sometimes as Master Shakspeare—that the matter in dispute might be adjusted without any recourse to weapons; and they labored assiduously with that object in view.

It was in this stage of the proceedings that old Henslowe and his son-in-law approached them. The later thought it wisest to take no notice of the dispute; and, therefore, in a cheerful manner, he accosted them all and severally, which behavior of his was immediately responded to by the greater part with every sign of welcome and good humor, for the purpose of calling off the attention of the disputants from their quarrel; and they even put aside their squabble, and replied to their salutations in something like a friendly spirit. An invitation was shortly after proffered to them by Edward Allen, which was as heartily received as given, and in a presently there was such a vast expenditure amongst them of harmless frolic and pleasantry, that it appeared to the peaceful Allen harmony had been completely restored. He was, however, about the only one in the company under that impression, which doubtless arose from his entire ignorance of the bitter, taunting speeches that had passed betwixt Ben Jonson and Gabriel Spencer, which, it was well known, from their turbulent dispositions, neither would overlook.

Nevertheless, in the full belief that the quarrel was a trifling one, which must, of course, be entirely forgotten whilst they were enjoying themselves under his roof, he readily joined in the mirth that was going on around him, as they strolled towards Westminster, for the purpose of taking boats to Southwark. They engaged two boats; and it was so managed, that Gabriel should proceed in one, and Ben in the other, and there were about either, one or two judicious friends who tried to reconcile them. It did not appear they had much success, for both parties continued in the same dogged humor—without doubt entertaining feelings against each other not readily to be removed.

They all arrived, without further adventure, at Edward Allen's house in the liberty of the Clink, and met with the most friendly of welcomes from the good dame, who, in her extreme pleasure at seeing of her father, seemed determined to be pleased even with those she least liked to see. She had got two or three good gossips of her acquaint-

ance of her own sex to meet her husband's company, and had greatly excited their expectations by anticipating the monstrous satisfaction they were to find in the society of some of her expected guests, particularly dilating on the marvellous sweet qualities of her husband's fast friend, Master William Shakspeare, of "The Globe," whom she made no disguise in averring she liked with all an honest woman's partiality. At the entrance of her husband with his company, she singled out Master Shakspeare, and made him known to these her friends with such warmth of gratification, as no doubt would have rendered somewhat uneasy a husband less satisfied with his wife's worthiness of nature, or his friend's honorableness of mind, than the well-contented Ned Allen.

The reception, and the efforts they were obliged to make to renew an acquaintance or to establish one with the fair companions of their fair hostess, for awhile took off the attention of the associates of Ben Jonson and Gabriel Spencer; and the securing of their places at dinner, the satisfying of their several appetites, and the attentions they thought it necessary to pay to their female fellow-guests, prevented them for some time noticing their behavior. Nevertheless, some time before the meal was finished, they could not help regarding, with very considerable alarm; the exceeding strangeness of their conduct. Gabriel sat pale and stately, with a sinister, restless look glancing from his grey eyes. He was wont to be a good feeder and a loud talker, but all marvelled to see he ate little and talked less: Ben, with his broad, red face, sat over against him, looking all the less pleasant for the gloomy frown which seemed to sit on it immoveably. He had never been wont to neglect either his meat or his liquor; but now he had not a maid's appetite in courting time; nevertheless, he neglected not the good wine, of which there was abundance, but poured it down as though he was laboring under a thirst that could not be quenched, or made his throat a funnel for the purpose of noting how quickly good liquor would run down it. The excellent housewife had put forth all her skill in the making of dainty dishes to entertain her husband's guests, as she believed they deserved; and the result was a banquet that should have pleased the most critical.

There certainly was no lack of commendation from the well-pleased guests. Even the dame's good gossips eat and praised, and praised and eat, as though desirous of doing the fullest justice to their entertainment. And well were they qualified for this, for they were no flaunting madams too proud

and ignorant to trouble themselves about domestic matters. They were simple, honest, city dames, of excellent reputation, than whom none knew better the proper ordering of a house, and all that showeth the notable true housewife, in the best and kindest fashion. Dame Allen, in her duty of a good hostess, was diligent in seeing that all fared well, and were well satisfied with their fare. Whilst engaged in this office, she was struck with the uneasy air and strange, unsocial manner of the quarrellers; but, as neither of them were of her esteemed acquaintance, she contented herself with an occasional pressing to partake of her dainties, and then directed her attention to such as she regarded with more esteem. Still, ever and anon, she glanced at the two with a curious inquietude, and busied her mind with marvelling what it was that made them appear so ill at ease, in the midst of such general contentation.

At last the meal was over, the table cleared, and again spread with tankards, and glasses, and wine, and sack, and cakes, and comfits, and the like after-dinner cates; and every one seemed to be inclined to talk to his neighbor; some ventured upon a jest, and all looked to be inclined for pleasantry and good fellowship after the bias of their several humors. Old Henslowe talked of the notable bulls and bears he had seen in his day, and entered into some spirited accounts of the dogs they had been matched with. His daughter chimed in with anecdotes of the savagest of these animals, speaking of their fiercest encounters as familiarly as might another of her sex of the sportiveness of kittens. Her worthy husband, as was his wont, divided his discourse so much between quadrupeds and bipeds, that there was no knowing, for certain, which had the advantage of his commendations. Others spoke of news from court and gossip concerning the ill-repute into which, it was said, the Earl of Essex had fallen with the queen. Shakspeare was dividing many gentle courtesies and compliments amongst his fair hostess and her fair friends, as it seemed, infinitely to their contentation. Each appeared to have something to engage himself withal, and some means of affording entertainment to himself and his neighbors.

Yet, of the company, there must be excepted two, for Gabriel Spencer still continued his sullen reserve, and Benjamin Jonson kept up his wild manner and frequent recourse to the tankard; in addition to which he began, in a fierce, taunting manner, to make remarks which, though riddles to most

of the guests, were easily seen by Gabriel, and a few others, to be levelled at him. The flashing eyes and increasing paleness of the latter warned the observant that there would be mischief anon, if they had not the wit to ward it off; and so they presently took measures that should direct attention elsewhere. They chose to be pressing on their host for a taste of his skill on the lute, which, after some backwardness, he was induced to afford; and, of a surety, he well earned the praises so liberally bestowed on his admirable handling his instrument. Then was enjoyed the sweet throat of Will Byrde; and his exquisite ballad was scarcely ended when Humphrey Jeffes was enforced to show the goodly quality of his violdi-Gamba. John Shanke's ready jest was equally at their bidding; and Tom Downton's tricks of conjuring were as little called for in vain. Ere the last of these marvels had exhausted the astonishment of the company, the three-part song of Ned Colbrand, Francis Grace, and Samuel Rowley, was heard in all its grateful harmony.

The thoughtful few who so judiciously sought to render ineffective the evil humors of their unfriendly companions, noticed, not without much alarm, that neither the tasteful playing on the lute, the exquisite ballad, the famous performance on the viol, jest, conjuring, or three-part song, had any effect on the angry and unsocial spirits who sat amongst them; and they began to experience a creeping dread, that chilled their own efforts to keep the rest sufficiently amused. Of these, Master Shakspeare had been all along the most active. He had seen that mischief was brewing under the cloudy brows of his two angry associates, and sought all means at his disposal to bring them into pleasanter and more commendable feelings; but the evident uselessness of his labors began to be painfully conspicuous, for, resembling the strange looks and behavior of Ben Jonson and Gabriel Spencer, Dame Allen and her gossips had, one after another, stolen out of the chamber. The newsmongers sat silent, gazing with no small share of anxiousness, at the singular bearing and behavior of their turbulent friends. The singers forgot their voices, and the musicians their instruments; the jester had ceased attempting to raise a laugh at his quirks and quiddities, and the conjurer seemed to have taken an entire leave of his art—so wrought upon were they all with the strangeness of the conduct of their fellow-guests. Old Henslowe and his son-in-law appeared to be the only persons who knew not the feelings that were nourished by their implacable friends;

and they were so intent upon a discussion respecting the best age at which bears should be first brought to the games, as to have no thought or care for anything else.

Shakspeare, who had omitted nothing that might reconcile the hostile parties, or make them forget their quarrel, saw, with alarm, the offensive conduct of the now half-intoxicated Ben Jonson; and at last ventured, in an under-tone, to make an impressive remonstrance to him. At this, the other, striking his fist on the table, loudly exclaimed, with a contemptuous look and voice, "Let him go hang! Who cares for such a white-livered hound?" The words were scarce out of his mouth, when Gabriel started up, his long pent-up passion no longer to be restrained, and, catching in his hand a heavy tankard that stood before him, he sent it, with so true an aim, at the head of the insulter, that it knocked him off his stool. A violent scene followed, every one springing to his legs in confusion, all asking questions, or making comments, and crowding round either the prostrate player or his adversary. Henslowe and his son-in-law seemed as greatly astonished as though all their bears, bulls, and dogs, had joined in general fight; and the rest, if their astonishment was less, their anxiety was equally painful.

At the first outcry, Dame Allen and some of her gossips had rushed to the door, in as much a fear as women are wont to fall into on such occasions, to learn the nature of the disturbance; and their exclamations, as may well be believed, did not tend, in any manner, to lessen the uproar and confusion. Poor Dame Allen! terrible was her disappointment at the result of an entertainment, to enjoy the superior attractions of which she had invited so many estimable persons of her own sex; and it was not till the worthiest of her guests, in her thinking, had had come to assure her that there was no cause to be under any alarm, for his friend had only been stunned, and was in a fair way of perfect recovery, that she grew to be in a more tranquil state.

Whilst some of the company were busy raising the fallen man, a few assembled about the other, and, partly by persuasion, partly by force, got him out of the room, and thence into the street. On coming to himself, Ben was monstrous furious, and at first could not be pacified in any manner, when he found his adversary had gone away; but in the end he became less violent, and finally took his leave of his host as though he thought no more of the matter. At this all the company went their several ways, with an abundance of friendly good

wishes from their kind and cheerful entertainers. They, in the simplicity of their hearts, fancied that the quarrel would go no farther; but in that they were in as great error as ever they were in all their days.

Early on the morrow, two men were seen walking rapidly together in the direction of Hoxton Fields. It was a fair morning in September, with a fine cool air, and the hedges were in full foliage, showing a rare crop of berries, and a no less pleasant stock of the latest flowers of the season; and the herds, which stood in groups, hither and thither, were breaking their fast with what looked to be a most absolute enjoyment of their meal. Flocks of sparrows and finches were flitting from spray to spray, and numerous bands of larks were whirling over the open pastures. The distant report of a gun from the stubbles, which were plainly discernible in the landscape, showed that the sportsman was abroad, and busy at his vocation. The two men walked on at a brisk pace, as hath been said, the one looking exceedingly fierce and sullen, the other wearing a melancholy expression, with a visible tinge of uneasiness.

"I think, Ben," exclaimed the first, in a serious tone of voice, "it would be as well, your honor well cared for, to settle this unhappy dispute, betwixt you and Gabriel, without the shedding of blood."

"Tush, Will; dost take me for a craven!" exclaimed the other, fiercely. "Am I to be knocked o' the pate by every scurvy knave that lists, and care for nought but to patch up my quarrel! Zounds! shall I, who, as it were, have served apprenticeship to the profession of arms, and that, too, with some small credit to myself and respect of mine enemies, shall I be a mark for so worthless, contemptible a fellow as this Gabriel Spencer; to be flung at when it suited his humor, and, when I have had my brains nigh upon knocked out, present my service to him with his morning draught! Nay, I'll put my tongue in pawn to the first cur who seeketh a breakfast, ere it shall give its assent to anything so odious."

"I admit that the blow is an affront not to be endured," observed the other, whom the understanding reader will have no difficulty in discovering to be Master Shakspeare. "But surely he had exceeding provocation."

"Provocation be hanged!" sharply answered his friend, who was no other than Benjamin Jonson. "Was it like, after what had passed that I could sit tamely by

and see so vile a fellow making mouths at me, like a sick ape after physic! Fore George, I had a month's mind to cudgel him as he sat. I tell thee, Will," added he, in a decided tone, "the knave hath crossed me often. I like not his humors. I am earnest in my quarrel, and with the help of my good rapier, which hath done me yeoman's service before now, I will bring it to a proper ending."

Master Shakspeare knew Ben too well to expect any approach being made to the amicable settling of this difference in his present mood; therefore, he wisely held his speech, and the two continued to walk on in silence till they turned the end of the lane, which bordered on the fields to which they were proceeding. As they were advancing along the path that leads across one of the larger fields, they became aware of two persons waiting under a clump of trees, down in one of the corners of it, for whom they made. They were so intent on their discourse, that they did not discover the approach of Ben and his friend, till they came close upon them, and overheard the following dialogue.

"Of a truth, Captain Swashbuckler, you speak monstrous temptingly of your rapier."

"A right Toledo, as I live, worthy Master Spencer. But that I have confidence in your discretion, I would not have told you the name of the great grandee of whom I had it."

"The Duke de Medina Sidonia, I think you said, to whom it had been presented by the King of Spain."

"And in consequence of my pressing necessities, and of my exceeding friendship for you, I reduce my demand of forty crowns, which is not a quarter of its right estimate, to five, which I would not of any one else take for the loan of it."

"I am bound to you, Captain Swashbuckler, for your consideration, and for standing my friend in this quarrel; and I willingly pay you the sum you require."

"Thanks, worthy sir; but concerning of this little matter of dispute betwixt you and that hectoring bricklayer, Benjamin Jonson, be you under no manner of concern as to its issue. Remember you my lessons—forget not your punto reverso—of all things bear in mind the secret thrust I took such pains to inform you of—and you shall have his weapon at your command and his life at your disposal, ere you have exchanged half a score of passes with him. I remember me, as well as if it was but yesterday, when I taught the noble Earl of Leicester this same matchless trick of fence; and I

know not how many of his enemies he overthrew by employing it in the duello with them. But, by the god of war, here come the very men we look for!"

Saying this, Captain Swashbuckler advanced, and, taking off his hat with the easy assurance of a cast captain, saluted the persons who approached him. His broad, bronzed face was not made a whit handsomer for the patch over his eye, and his ungainly shape was not more prepossessing than his aspect. He was dressed in a faded suit of cinnamon, with a goodly ruff, wore his soiled beaver with the air of a commander, and strode in a pair of worn-out buff shoes, with crumpled roses, as though there could not be so great a man in the world.

After salutation and mutual introductions, Master Shakspeare and he stood a little apart to arrange the business of the meeting. It was the earnest desire of the former to bring things to an amicable settlement, but the other must needs show himself to be a man of war, and talked so overpoweringly of the affront his principal had received, and entered so learnedly into the proper proceedings of the duello in such cases, that, with a sad heart, Master Shakspeare found he could not prevent the fight both parties were so bent upon.

It chanced, however, that previous to the combatants being set against each other, or the seconds measuring their rapiers, "the right Toledo," which Captain Swashbuckler had sold his friend, was found to be several inches longer in the blade than the sword of Ben Jonson. Master Shakspeare lustily protested against such a weapon being used, and was in hopes this inequality would put an end to the combat; but Ben insisted that his adversary should have his own weapon, which he strongly commended as having befriended him on many a pinch and he would take that worn by his friend Will Shakspeare, which was of the same length. The latter strove to prevent this but all his objections were overruled; and at last Ben Jonson and Gabriel Spence found themselves opposite each other with the naked blades, as the former had ruled crossed in front of them.

Captain Swashbuckler appeared even less pleased with this arrangement than Master Shakspeare, but they both drew a little of from the combatants, to watch and wait the issue of the fight. Ben Jonson looked determined, yet with the quiet steady glance of an old swordsman; and Gabriel Spence though he was somewhat disconcerted at the disappointment he had to endure in

being deprived of the advantages he might have derived from so choice a weapon as that which had had the honor of being conferred by the King of Spain on so distinguished a grandee as the Duke de Medina Sidonia, felt such confidence in the lessons he had received from a master of fence so well known at Paul's as Captain Swashbuckler, as to be perfectly free from apprehension for himself. But, most unfortunately for him, it so chanced that, in the very beginning of the duel, after a few passes only, and before he thought of applying to the famous secret thrust that had so befriended the great Earl of Leicester, his own weapon was turned aside, and at the same moment the other passed through his body. Poor Gabriel! he uttered but one groan, and fell dead at the feet of his adversary.

Master Shakspeare was greatly shocked, but he saw at a glance no human aid could avail. Ben Jonson seemed no less distressed; it was evident he was terribly moved, and he vowed very earnestly he would willingly give all he was worth in the world such a mischance had not happened. He called to Captain Swashbuckler to help to bear his friend out of the field, but the noble captain had thought it much better to bear himself out, as soon as he beheld the turn things had taken, and was no longer within hearing. He, however, did not forget to take with him the goodly rapier, which he had so lately sold at so poor a price, in the fullest conviction that its matchless character must be of much more advantage to a living teacher of fence than to a dead pupil.

With the assistance of some laboring men from an adjoining brick-field, the body of Gabriel Spencer was removed to a fitter resting-place; and his death was so much spoken of, as soon as it became known, that Ben Jonson found it necessary to remove himself as far from the scene of the fatal quarrel as was possible for him.

CHAPTER IV.

Let me crave
Thy virtuous help to keep from grave
This poor mortal, that here lies
Waiting when the destinies
Will undo his thread of life.

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.

INTO a certain tenement that was in the village of Shottery, must we now introduce the courteous reader. Certes, this same

dwelling was none of the stateliest, yet had it very fair accommodations for those who dwelt therein, and an exceeding inviting appearance from the highway before it, when the twining woodbine which covered the porch, and clung round the casements, and about every part, up to the eaves, with infinite luxuriousness, was in its fullest bloom—the more especial when there was a fair posy of freshest flowers standing in some convenient vessel on the window-sill, and through the open door there could be seen a glimpse of the fruit-trees in the garden, in fullest bloom, or with store of pippins and cherries on their pleasant boughs, while, before the door, two rosy-cheeked girls sat with an exceeding fair show of diligence—the one knitting of hose, and the other, evidently, scarce a year older, spinning at her wheel, ever and anon looking from her labors to regard or give some sage admonitions—marvellous for one of her tender years—to a laughing, shouting, lovely boy, twinned at a birth with her sister, who was romping and rioting with a young hound of a noble breed, at a little distance, the two rolling over each other on the grass with admirable good fellowship on both sides, and a huge outcry of mingled barking and shouting; and presently the dog, breaking away from his companion, and standing at some little way off, uttering many a short joyful bark, and wagging of his tail very famously, watching the movements of his lovely playfellow, and bounding off again as the boy sought to lay hold of him, and repeating these antics till he graciously allowed himself to be caught.

Then broke out afresh the noisy play with so wild an uproar, that it would bring out the alarmed mother from her household-work, and thereupon she would rate the boy and the dog, for their blameableness in creating so horrid a din, and, more than all, rate the elder sister for having allowed it. Whereof the result would be, the dog would presently look as grave as dog ever looked when found at fault, and, spying of a beggar at the end of the village, would set off with a monstrous eagerness down the road to show his extreme watchfulness; the boy would return to the task he had been conning, ere weariness made him fling it aside for choicer entertainment; and the elder girl, after many loving words, endeavoring to impress on the truant the exceeding profitability of book over play, would continue her spinning, and her discourse with her sister on divers matters seeming to be of the most absolute importance, which had been so rudely interrupted.

By the time the matron had left the door, the dog had returned to his accustomed place before the house. At first he put on an exceeding discreet behavior, only venturing to cast a wistful glance at his fellow culprit, when tired of scratching at his ears, biting at his tail, snapping at the flies that ventured in his neighborhood, or following any of those employments most in request among dogs of all degrees, when not inclined for sleep, food, or other occupation. For awhile the head, so rich in shining curls, of his playfellow, was not raised from his task; but ere long it was slowly lifted up.

As soon as the child's eyes met those of his fast friend, the latter left off what he was then about; his tail was in motion on the instant; at first slowly and softly, then beating of the ground with monstrous vigorous thumps, as he ventured on a subdued bark. Anon, some little encouragement covertly given by the boy, set him leaping around him, at a short distance, making it less and the bark louder as the other increased, the evidence he could not avoid showing of the pleasure with which his playmate's proceedings were regarded. It was rarely the temptation was long resisted. The task was again cast aside, and they were presently frolicking together with more noisy enjoyment than ever.

Such was the scene, with occasional trifling variations, that had every sunny morning for the last year or two, been presented to the ordinary wayfarer when passing through the quiet village of Shottery. Did it appear he was a stranger in these parts, and, struck by the singular beauty and intelligence of the children, must needs inquire to whom they belonged, he was sure to hear one of two monstrous different stories—perchance both.

One was, that the mother was the daughter of an honest yeoman, whose sons lived in the house higher up the road, where the family of the Hathaways had dwelt time out of mind, and that Anne, instead of marrying some person of substance and repute among her neighbors, as was expected of her, and as she might have done, had she so desired—there being no lack of such anxious to be connected with so worthy a man as John Hathaway—had taken up with a young fellow from Stratford (whose father was as poor as a church mouse), so wild in his courses that, after stealing of Sir Thomas Lucy's deer, beating his men, and numberless worse offences, he abandoned his wife and his three children, and joined the players in London, where he had since

been leading a horrible ungodly life, in all sorts of riotous ill-living—taking little note of his poor wife and sweet young family, save once in a way or so coming to see them.

Then, if the intelligencer were a woman, which was like enough, and a careless and unthrifty wife, which was not impossible, she would be monstrosly indignant at the barbarousness of husbands, saying that, as far as she knew, one was not a whit better than another; wives were to be slaves forsooth, and to be cast aside like old garments not fitting to be worn when the occasion served, while their dissatisfied partners did nought but find fault and give trouble.

Much more to the same purpose was like to follow, was her companion inclined to listen, but it most frequently happened she was brought back to the proper subject of inquiry, and then proceeded to communicate numberless interesting particulars relating to the persons whom she had before mentioned; and the stranger, unless he sought other information, went away with the impression that of all the base, idle, careless, profligate husbands, unnatural fathers, and intolerable worthless varlets, one Will Shakspeare was the worst, out of all doubt.

But the other tale was of an exceeding different complexion, inasmuch as it described the said Will as being the son of a respectable Burgess of Stratford; some time since Alderman and High Bailiff of that town, a youth well esteemed of many for his singular fine talent in the writing of ballads and plays, who was inveigled into a marriage ere he was eighteen, by an artful cozening jade nigh upon old enough to be his mother, whose temper was of that intolerable sort he was forced to fly his native town, rather than endure any more of it, and seek his fortune in London, where his marvellous skill and learning so wrought upon the Queen's Highness, it was said she would have had him right willingly to have been her husband, had he not had already a wife of his own. Nevertheless, this stood so little in the way of his advancement that his fortune was made presently by her Highness, who would scarce let him out of her sight, and it was with much ado he could escape from her to attend to the wants of his young family, who with their mother he maintained with so liberal an exhibition, taking for her the house in which she then dwelt, and filling it with comforts such as no woman of her condition had experienced, that she was envied of all the wives in the village.

Should the teller of this tale be a man

as is not unlikely, and had a thriftless idle baggage, with a goodly spice of the shrew in her, for a wife, which many men have had before now, he will at this point of his discourse speak terrible bitter things of the wretchedness of husbands that have such vile jades for to be their helpmates, and if the stranger check him not, it is like he will be monstrous moving upon his own grievance in this particular, till he do.

He will then straightway be ready to take his oath on it, so loving a husband and tender a father as Master Shakspeare never lived in this world; that, despite his dame's crabbedness, artfulness, and folly, he had tried all things to induce her to be a good wife to him; and that on his children he so doated, he lavished his whole gains in the bringing of them up tenderly. The boy in especial he had such proud hopes of, it was said he had writ a play wherein he was made to be no less a person than the Prince of Denmark. Thereupon the stranger would quit the place in the opinion that the said Master Shakspeare was made up of every wonderfullest excellence, and was so fortunate withal, save in the matter of his wife, that he could not but envy him his gifts.

Whereabouts lyeth the truth betwix these contrary statements, the courteous reader will doubtless be able in some sort to determine.

It hath been discovered by some prying, impertinent jackanapes or another, that the bright source of all that we have of splendor, clearness, and excellence in things visible, hath on it divers unsightly spots. If that face which is of such wondrous brilliance no gaze can be fixed on it for long and not blinded, be so disfigured, it is utter foolishness to expect the fairest and perfectest thing in nature to be free of speck or flaw.

The sun throweth out his golden beams with so unmeasured a prodigality that none save such poor inquisitorial critical knaves, who, if allowed to see a hair's breadth beyond their noses, must do so only to find fault with what most helpeth them in the use of their sight, would be so horribly ungrateful as to point out any small defect, in him visible only after intolerable prying and searching, quite regardless of the prodigious heap of benefit all derive at his hands.

Wherefore, in portraying of certain spots in this our intellectual sun, or rather such as do so appear when viewed in ignorance of the circumstances which produced them, the which becometh proper and necessary for the full understanding of the subject—it

behoveth all who read, to be mindful of the incalculable advantages placed at our disposal by the infinite generousness of his nature, and if there should be any grievous error mixed up with such bountiful store of good, let us straightway regard with a proper humility the knowledge that the sweetest, gentlest, noblest of God's creatures could not escape the debasing touch of evil.

Peradventure, this blemish, if any there be, shall be none so great—at least it must needs leave good warrant for the exercise of our charity.

In the blooming daughter of the honest yeoman of Shottery, of a surety, there was no lack of womanly tenderness. Yet so frequently did her womanly vanity under evil counsel get the better of her better qualities, it was rarely the latter were allowed their natural influence.

To one of so sensitive a sort, as he to whom the church had given her, whose aspirations pointed to such fine issues, and whose affections could embrace only what was most choice, such intractableness as she exhibited must needs have produced in him a sense of intolerable discomfort.

In the very flush of youth, possessed of all those personal gifts that do most attract a loving woman's eye, and having such prodigal graces of mind and heart withal, as woman never yet resisted, it is like enough his nature was as ready to meet the love he had sought so earnestly with such little profit, as were the natures of all such fond and loveable creatures with whom he chanced to associate, eager to assist him to its attainment.

Directly it chanced he had the means at his commandment, his thoughts turned towards a suitable provision for his wife and young family. He had the pleasant cottage in which they had since dwelt at Shottery taken for them, and furnished with all things useful and proper in abundance, and their several wants were so fully considered, no family in the village were so well cared for.

He never allowed a year to pass without paying them a visit, at which times, as may well be imagined, he was not like to come empty-handed. Indeed, so prodigal was he in the giving of such things as children most desire, and so many other ways had he of winning their young hearts, his coming was looked for by them all with monstrous eagerness; but not more anxious were they for his return, than was he to be amongst them, for so loving a father was he, it mattered not what pleasures and honors awaited him among his many excellent noble patrons and friends, when the time approached

for his customary visit, he was as impatient to be on the road, as ever was lover to meet his mistress.

That he loved them all was most manifest; but of his three children, there was one whom he loved with so infinite and absolute a devotedness, it moved every heart that saw it. This was his only son Hamnet. The helpless infant, the tottering child, and the romping boy, were regarded by him, as the fond father year after year saw him take on himself these several characters, with an intensity of interest, such as none but a doating parent can have any thought of. His affection became a passion—the powerfulest impulse of his existence. His thoughts seemed to tend in one direction with a constancy that was rivalled only by the ever-steady compass.

Fame, wealth, friends, and all the other covetable enjoyments of life he sought for only as a means of elevating this lovely boy into a manhood that might find its place among the proudest of the land, and insure for many generations living evidences, readily obtaining high fortune and distinction, that the name of Shakspeare was not of a perishable sort.

Of and oft would his musings take unto themselves shapes whereof the purport was his son's greatness in some one way or another; and he would further delight his humor by imagining such glorious scenes whereof this most precious boy was the chief feature, as one of such wondrous qualities of heart and mind could alone conceive.

As he grew up, so grew the love with which he was regarded by his proud, affectionate, and exceeding sanguine father. His wants were ministered to with a hand that left no room for an unsatisfied desire of any sort to have a moment's existence. The anxious parent, when he last parted from him, not only charged divers his zealous friends at Stratford and thereabouts, to watch over his safety and happiness, as was his wont on such occasions, but provided that his education should be carried on with all possible advantages, having secured as an instructor for him that excellent ripe scholar, the learned Vicar of Stratford, Master Richard Bifield.

Hamnet, now—no longer the romping child who loved far better than aught else in the world beside a tumble in the grass with Talbot, who had been his faithful friend and ready playmate from earliest infancy—was a thin tall boy, in his thirteenth year, who, as regularly as any clock in the parish, might be met on the road to Stratford every

morning and afternoon with his satchel strapped over his jerkin, intently conning of a book that was in his hand, halting not, nor turning to the right or left, let there be what attraction for one of his age there might, but proceeding direct to the vicarage, there to say his daily tasks to Master Bifield. And on his return home—it was not as other boys would, when let loose from school, in disorderly rioting—and, like enough, any mischief that looked easiest to do, but walking the same serious pace, and as earnestly studying his book as on his leaving home. Even when, on approaching the village, his old favorite came bounding towards him with his well-remembered joyful bark, the only recognition he had of the studious boy was an affectionate pat or two from his disengaged hand, as the dog leaped on him, and, without moving his gaze from the page, he would continue his walk to his mother's door, his hand resting on his four-footed friend, who now walked sedately at his side, ever and anon casting a glance at the pale face of his once rosy playfellow, and giving a low whine, that seemed to express a very monstrous concern at the change that had taken place in him.

The amusements to which his sisters invited him, with abundance of sweet entreaties and caresses, and the sharp dissatisfaction of his mother, at ever finding him poring over some book or another, were as little efficacious in making any alteration in his excessive studiousness. The commendation he had of his excellent instructor, for his diligence and forwardness in all manner of learning, and the exceeding pleasure as Master Bifield told him frequently, it would be to his loving father to find him so good a scholar, made him so exert himself to advance rapidly in his studies, that, morning, noon, and night, he seemed intent on nothing but the learning of everything he could be set at.

Proud was the master of such a pupil. In truth, he was too proud of him to be sufficiently discreet. He had been a scholar all his life long—poor in this world's gear, but rich in virtue, learning, and all good gifts; and so conspicuous were his merits, that, when the former schoolmaster was summarily sent from an office he had too long disgraced, such recommendation of his fine parts was made to the patron of the vicarage, as caused that very estimable, pious gentleman to bestow it on him, to the great and lasting profit of the parishioners.

Long and severe study had made sad inroads in his health, ere he commenced his new duties; and the heavy labors he set

himself, to undo the many mischiefs caused by the disreputable acts of his predecessor, wrought on his constitution still further evil. He disregarded severity of weather, and all other inconveniences whatsoever, in the doing of the various pious offices he might at any time or season be called upon to perform. This, in time, reduced him to a mere skeleton in appearance; and, though yet in the prime of life, so feeble in body was he, he was scarce ever able to do more than the least laborious of his customary duties. As he complained not to any one, and was ever of a cheerful disposition, none took him to be in so bad a case as he was; but the sunken cheek and eyes, emaciated frame, and constant teasing cough, were signs that ought not to have been disregarded.

At last he got so much worse, he was fain to take to his bed. Nevertheless, such was his love for Hamnet, he would have him say his tasks at his bedside with the young scholar's accustomed regularity, and commend him, and set him further lessons, and discourse with him on all matters wherein he lacked intelligence, though the sick man was scarce able to move a limb, or use his voice above a whisper. Surely such a sight hath rarely been seen as presented itself every morning and afternoon in the vicar's antique chamber.

Perchance, on his first entering, the boy would have with him some choice fruit of his own plucking, or dainty posie of his own gathering, or some other choice thing or another to please the sick man's eye or palate, and with these in his hand he would first dutifully present them to his master, not forgetting the while to ask earnestly whether he was mending; and then, having received all proper thanks and the necessary reply, he would put the flowers, or whatever it might be, where he thought his master would be best pleased to have them, and then take his accustomed place and begin his proper task. In sooth, it then became a scene of no ordinary interest.

There was the zealous master, pale as any ghost, lying supported by pillows, one shrunken arm and bony hand resting on the coverlet, his eyes brightening as he noticed the exceeding aptness of his diligent scholar, who, with visage having but little more warrant of health in it, stood by the sombre tapestry at the bed's head, affectionately and reverently regarding his excellent instructor, as he repeated without a fault the various lessons he had been tasked with. This done, Hamnet would seek to do the sick man all manner of loving offices, which the other took as though he would have them

done by none other than he; and, when there was nothing left to do, the scholar looked as loth to go as was the master to have him depart. But at last came an affectionate fear, expressed by the sick man, that the boy's mother would needs be made more anxious for his safety than was right he should make her, delayed he his departure any longer; and, with heartfelt blessings on the one side, and as fervent prayers on the other, the two would separate for that day.

This went on for some weeks, Master Bifield making some small progress towards recovery, though still too feeble to leave his chamber, when it chanced that one morning, at the usual hour, marvellous as it was, the punctual scholar made not his appearance. The worthy vicar at first thought he might have been stayed by his mother; then he fancied he had gone with his sisters to some distance, and had not got back in time to get to the vicarage; and then made for him some other excuse equally reasonable. But still he came not.

Hour after hour passed by, to the prodigious surprise of the good priest, and almost to the exhausting of a very plentiful stock of reasons for Hamnet's absence, and yet the boy was no nearer his place by his master's bedside than at first. Thus proceeded the day—a most uneasy one to Master Bifield, and it was succeeded by as restless a night.

The morning found him not less sanguine of the coming of his beloved scholar than he had been the day previous; but, when the school-hour arrived, and Hamnet came not, his master became exceeding troubled, and at once despatched his attached, but somewhat too querulous, domestic to Shottery, to inquire the cause of the boy's extraordinary absence.

Master Bifield had been lying in his bed, monstrosly troubled in his thoughts concerning the absence of his diligent and affectionate young scholar, waiting with prodigious anxiety the return of Esther, when he heard a step he knew to be hers; but, to his huge disappointment, the lighter and more welcome sound of Hamnet's footsteps, did not accompany it. Presently the door of his chamber opened, and there entered thereat the tall, gaunt figure of Esther, clad with her usual extreme neatness, and wearing a visage of more than ordinary seriousness and melancholy concern.

As soon as the vicar caught sight of her, he raised himself up a bit, with a look of exceeding alarm. "Hast seen him? Why doth he not come? Doth aught ail the boy?"

Prythee sit down and rest thyself, good Esther, after thy walk; and let me know, as speedily as thou canst, what keeps Hamnet from the vicarage. When will he come? Hath he his lesson ready? I trust he will be here anon."

Esther did not sit. She saw something in the arrangement of the things nearest her master she liked not. She busied herself awhile in putting them more conveniently, and of all the questions asked of her, she replied but to the last, and that was with a shaking of the head, that looked of such bad import to the sick man, he seemed struck with a sudden fear.

"Nay, I trust in God's love no ill hath happened to him!" cried he, with all the fervor of the excellent, proper Christian he was; but seeing that his messenger continued her employment as though she would delay uttering what she liked not to say, and that her aspect took on it a more painful shade of seriousness, he caught her by the arm, and added, in the most moving accents ever heard: "I prythee, good Esther, tell me what aileth the boy? Some slight thing or another of which he shall be well presently? I may expect his coming a week hence at the farthest?"

This elicited not the reply he wished, for Esther was too moved to commence her task as an intelligencer. The anxiety of the sick man mounted to an agony, and, with features blanched with affright, he gasped out "Esther, Esther! prythee tell me not that sweet boy is dead!"

"Nay, master, it hath not come to that yet," replied she, in a tone she intended should be consolatory. "But," she added, thinking, now it had come to this push, it were better the truth should be known at once, "an if I know aught of such matters, the poor boy's days are numbered in this world. God help him!"

She then proceeded to state how evident to every one's observation the young scholar's health had been rapidly sinking under his too great study, and that, after getting wet to the skin in a sudden rain, on returning home, he sat in his damp things studying his morrow's lesson, till he was taken with a terrible shivering fit. He was put to bed, but in the morning he was in so bad a state, the apothecary was sent for from Stratford, who pronounced him to be in the most imminent danger, since when he had been getting worse every hour, and, to all appearance, could not live many days.

"This is all that is to be got of poring over books," added Esther, emphatically. "And this, Master, hath brought you to a

bed of sickness, and hath been this many a year wearing out your life by inches, as I have warned you so oft. But, alack! alack! my painstaking hath been to such small profit, that you have not only been destroying of yourself with such pestilent things, but have allowed this poor boy, under your own eyes, to waste his sweet young life away, after the same horrible fashion."

Hitherto the sick man had kept staring at his companion, too bewildered at the sudden blow to have the use of any sense save that of hearing. But, as she finished her speech, the truth of what she had stated flashed upon his mind, and the enormity of the mischief he had done presented itself to him so overpoweringly, that he, with a sharp cry, clasped his hands together and sunk in a swoon on the bed.

Esther flew to him on the instant, and with the tender interest of a mother administered such remedies as she knew were of most efficacy in such cases. As soon as he recovered his senses, he seemed to have a strength he had not known a long time, and called for his apparel. In vain his faithful attendant attempted to dissuade him from his intention, but he would attend to no suggestions or apprehensions. Dressing himself as quickly as he might, talking the while as though to himself, now bitterly condemning his own negligence of Hamnet's health, and then breaking out into the fondest praises of his promising scholarship, he took his staff in his hand, left his chamber, walked out of the vicarage with a step he had not known any so firm these ten years, and proceeded the directest way to the cottage at Shuttery.

CHAPTER V.

If thou be scorn'd,
Disdain it not: for preachers grave
Are still dispis'd, by faces hornde,
When they for better manners crave.
That hap, which fails on men divine,
If thou feele, doe not repine.
A GLASSE TO VIEW THE PRIDE OF VAIN-GLORIOUS
WOMEN.

"A FEW words, John, and we must needs part. Heaven only knoweth whether it may be our fortune to meet again; but, however it shall chance, I am fully persuaded—I thank God very heartily for an assurance so comfortable to a mother—you will do no discredit to your bringing up. In sooth, you are a notable good youth, and seem like enough to keep your honored fa-

ther's name—blessed be his memory! in fair repute as long as it shall be in your keeping."

"I trust so, good mother. I will do all that I needs can that you shall have not one minute's discomfort from my behavior."

"I doubt it not, my dear boy. In sooth, the knowledge of your well-disposedness is my great solace and contentation in this trying hour. I have provided you, without sparing cost or care, with such learning as you had the greatest liking for; and you, having made choice, of your own free will, of the calling or profession of medicine—as excellent proper choice as could have been made—I have, as is already known to you, entered into such arrangements with one of the notablest London physicians, for your sojourning with him until you have completed your necessary studies in the treating of diseases, in the nature of simples and the like—for the which I think it but right I should tell you, I have taxed my means to the utmost, that you may use whatsoever diligence you have, they be not rendered unprofitable."

"That will I, rest assured. It would be a villanous ill return, methinks, for your exquisite sweet goodness to me at all times, were I to be amiss in any thing."

"You know not what temptations may assail you in that great city whereto you are going—the which, I grieve to say, hath the horriblest bad character ever heard—for you have been brought up so homely, in these retired parts, no bruit of such could have reached you."

"I' faith, it mattereth not, sweet mother. You have taught me—I give you my very heartiest thanks for it—to know good from evil, to follow the one and eschew the other; and that will suffice, let me go where I will."

"I hope and trust, with all my heart and spirit, it may."

Thus spoke mother and son on the eve of a parting that seemed like to be of some duration; and, after entering more into particulars in the way of cautions, the anxious parent allowed her son to receive her last caress and her blessing; and, in company with a steady, middle-aged, serving-man, that had, in better times, lived at livery at his father's board the best part of his life, he was allowed to go his way.

Simon Stockfish had managed to get the loan of two steeds for their journey; one for his young master, and the other for his own riding. He had done all that he could to make them worthy of the occasion, but with exceeding small profit, for Dapple and

Jack were two as worthless and misshapen brutes as were ever rode. Dapple—the one his master chose, was an iron-gray, as ancient a piece of horseflesh as you shall see any day, rising nigh upon sixteen hands, and so bony withal, the poor youth looked to be striding a tombstone; and his head was so long and narrow, his ribs so prominent, such a goose-rump had he, and his tail was so short and stiff, for it was nothing but a stump with two or three hairs, it may well be imagined the horseman was not envied of other equestrians.

Simon followed, on Jack, a little, black, stiff-necked, rough and ragged cart-horse's colt, with long mane and tail, pretty well off for flesh, but so heavy and unwieldy withal, that when he trotted—which seemed his only quick pace, and one not easily to get him into—his hoofs clattered on the ground like monstrous hammers on an anvil. As Simon was a sturdy knave, whose belt encompassed a fair rotundity of body, his weight was not like to make his steed's paces any the lighter, added to which, he carried behind him his master's wardrobe, at his holsters a brace of heavy pistols, and at his side a formidable rapier; but the jolting he got, and the unseemliness of the animal he bestrole, seemed not to inconvenience him in any manner.

He retained an immoveable visage of such dignity as he thought best became one who was entrusted with the guardianship of his young master, and riding at a respectful distance, yet near enough to be at hand when need required it, he cultivated his ordinary humor of taciturnity whilst cogitating on the constant attentiveness necessary on his part to secure his old master's only son from the dangers which, he believed, were sure to beset him on his journey to London.

But all this time, what were the reflections of John Hall? The young student of medicine was now fairly on his road to fortune. Was he anticipating his career, and seeing a brilliant prospect of court patients, and liberal fees? Was his mind turned the other way, recalling the many admirable pleasant hours he had enjoyed in the familiar scenes he was now leaving; perchance, never to see again? Was he regretting the parting with his fond mother, or fixing on his attention the excellent advice he had just heard from her, touching his behavior with such young persons of her sex as he might be about to associate with?

He was neither thinking of the past nor the future; lamenting his separation from a doating parent, nor caring in the least

whether he was or was not to mingle with women of any sort. In honest truth, he was merely intently questioning of himself whether mustard, made with verjuice, very sharp, and somewhat thick, was the properest remedy for a quartan-ague.

Thus proceeded the two for sundry miles, not without exciting some curiousness from every one they met, and a few jeers from such rude and rustic persons as are sure to be found in every highway, conducting of themselves as though they had a patent for sauciness. The young physician was often roused from his deep studies by some unmannerly waggoner, or insolent groom, shouting out certain inquiries as to the number of years that had elapsed since his steed had had a feed of corn; and a sturdy beggar clapped his dish on his head, and fell on his marrowbones, in a seeming ecstasy of devotion as the youth passed him, crying how blessed he was in being allowed a sight of one of the very cattle with which Nebuchadnezzar had gone to grass.

At first, John Hall had given no thought of the appearance he cut on so sorry an animal; and, as regarded his own apparelling, was well content with the cap and feather, the sober suit of russet, and the stout boots and gloves he had on; but at last, hearing of so many scurvy terms applied to his horse, he got ashamed of it, and would have preferred going the journey on foot, had it been possible. He knew, however, there was no help for it, but to make the way as short as possible; therefore he put his spurs to the lank sides of the poor beast, and urged him to the top of his speed.

If it was ridiculous to see the tall, gaunt, misshapen thing that had been provided for the young traveller's riding, proceeding at a walk, it was a thousand times more so when he was displaying his anatomy in his awkward attempt at a canter, rendered the more ludicrous when Simon Stockfish came after on the ugly brute he had under him, the which he was urging him to use his heavy heels with such expedition as would serve to keep him at a convenient distance from the other. Whether it was the clattering of this brute's iron hoofs, or the loud shout set up when passing them by a miller and his wife going together on one horse to market, that startled the old grey, is not known; but certain is it he took fright, and put his old bones to such good use, as made all who held him marvel exceedingly.

Simon Stockfish, in no small alarm, strove he could to get nigher to his master; d, what with the spur and the horrible discordant noises set up by all who were in

sight of the travellers, the young horse got as much frightened as the old one, and set off after him, striking fire from his hoofs every time they came on the hard ground, and making such a din with his heels as was deafening to hear.

Simon pulled his statute cap over his brows, that it should not fall off his head; and then, digging his knees into Jack's fat sides, and grasping his long mane with one hand as the other held the reins, kept his gaze fixed upon the figure of his young master, who sat firmly in his seat. The increased clattering behind him, and the shouts and screams by which he was assailed on all sides, did not, as may easily be believed, serve to lessen Dapple's fear; and, therefore, the two continued their course to the huge amusement of some, and the no less alarm of others, for many miles.

As they passed through the villages, the casements were thrown open, and aspects of alarm and wonder projected through them. The pigs rushed one way, the geese fled another. The parish bull galloped bellowing to the gate that looked into the road, with the cows at his heels. The sheep huddled together to what they thought the safest corner of the field. The tinker's ass set up a hideous bray, as he rose affrighted from his bed of nettles, in the pound, and the fowls took refuge on the top of the cage; whilst the children got out of the way with all possible speed, and, when the danger was passed, saluted the cause of it with the full energy of their lungs, and, like enough, the more mischievous sort took to throwing of stones ere the horsemen were well out of their neighborhood.

At last the travellers came to a wide heath, through which was a road that continued for several miles. And now, as they were not assailed by the screams and shoutings which accompanied their flight, because of their not meeting any one, save an old woman, driving her pig to the next town, who fled opposite both ways over the heath, as soon as Dapple and Jack became visible, and both the horses, being horribly tired of the exertions they had made, never having being so put to it all their lives before, they gradually slackened their speed till each resumed the sober pace with which he had started.

John Hall looked for his attendant, and spying him at the customary distance, without a word said, for from a natural shyness he was not much given to speech with any one, he returned into the train of studious reflection the running away of his goodly steed interrupted. Simon Stockfish beheld

his charge in safety; and he was so content, he also, without any manner of difficulty, and with as little commodity of phrase, fell again into thinking of the dangers that threatened his young master, whereof the imminent one, from which he had but now escaped, he marvelled hugely he had not expected.

So intent did they soon become in their several thoughts as to be totally regardless of all around. The student of medicine was canvassing, in his mind, the question whether Galen or Hippocrates were the better authority in the treatment of fevers, when, of a sudden, he felt himself rudely seized by the arm and leg, and in a moment was on the ground, and completely in the power of two exceeding suspicious-looking tatterdemalions. Simon Stockfish, at the same time, was cudgelling of his brains to find the best method of securing his young charge in safety to his journey's end, when he was pounced on in a like manner; and, ere he could touch a weapon, was completely at the mercy of his rude captors.

The incautious travellers looked monstrously astonished, as may readily be supposed, at finding of themselves in a situation so little to be coveted. They had not noticed that darkness was fast approaching, and they seemed to have been quite regardless of the many miles of desolate heath they had to pass ere they could arrive at the place appointed for their night's lodging. It standeth to reason also, that they were equally ignorant of the neighborhood of the rude knaves who had so suddenly sprung upon them out of a hollow made by digging for sand, that was close upon their path, where they apparently had lain in ambush.

Neither spoke a word, their ordinary poverty of speech being in no way improved by the unexpected peril in which they found themselves, but gazed with looks made up of astonishment, doubt, and fear, at each of the scowling, villanous countenances of which they had just made the unwelcome acquaintance. Nothing there were they likely to find to afford them comfort of any sort; nor, from a glance of their soiled, patched, and rent appareling, could it be supposed they would gain any greater degree of contentation. And when their eyes met the threatening weapons, each villain held over them huge knives and heavy clubs, they presently gave themselves up to be as dead men as ever were measured for their coffins.

It was not long before their rude captors proved to them what little benefit they were like to receive at their hands; for, with di-

vers horrible oaths and demands to each, which were but too intelligible to them, and with sundry strange phrases to each other, neither Simon nor his young master could tell the meaning of, they took to plundering them, the which they did with such famous expedition, that in a minute or so, man and master were as naked as ever they were born.

After some discourse, however, amongst themselves, the robbers made them put on garments they threw off for that purpose; and when the young physician had got his legs into a pair of greasy slops big enough for a Hollander, and a tattered jerkin, that looked to have been measured for the Colossus of Rhodes, and Simon Stockfish had placed over his limbs a suit of faded velvet, exceedingly ragged, patched, and soiled, that might have suited one half his size, they were savagely bid to go with their plunderers, on their peril making any noise or attempting to escape.

All then left the ordinary road, and struck into a narrow track, numbers of which appeared to traverse the heath, crossing each other in all directions; and this they followed, through the innumerable windings whereof it seemed to consist, for a good mile, keeping a perfect silence the whilst. To prisoners so surrounded, escape was out of the question. They came, at last, to a stagnant pond, whereat they halted a moment; and one of the knaves, on whose visage gallows was written in as legible characters as ever were met with, put his knuckles to his mouth and blew so shrill a whistle, it seemed to Simon and his master to pierce their very ears. This had scarce been done when, at a great distance, another was heard in reply. John Hall looked in the direction whence it came, but nothing met his eye but a wide expanse of heath, all beyond being wrapped in mist that looked as though it would shortly shroud the whole neighborhood in darkness.

At this the thieves turned into another bye-path, two of their company, as before, riding the tired steeds of their disconsolate captives, and the others keeping close to their elbows. Having proceeded thus, nigh upon a quarter of a mile without sight or sound, beyond what hath already been described, Simon Stockfish was startled by the sudden rising from the ground close behind him, where he had hitherto lain concealed in the thick fern that grew there, a boy, who appeared scarcely to have reached his tenth year. His visage was exceeding dusky, with piercing black eyes, and having an abundance of dark hair hanging confusedly

about his neck and shoulders. His feet and legs were bare, his head without covering of any sort, and such pitiful rags as he had on could barely be called garments.

Saying something which was very Hebrew to the captives, but was answered in a like jargon by one of their dishonest companions, the child instantly made a loud noise so like the barking of a shepherd's dog, that the young student of medicine imagined some animal of the sort was at his heels. He had not done this a minute when a like cry was heard at a distance—the boy then dropped at his length into the fern as quickly as he had risen from it, and the rest proceeded along a path scarcely visible. They met with no one, and little likelihood was there, as it seemed to the poor distressed prisoners, of such meeting; when, as they came under an ancient tree whereof a few branches bore leaves its withered stem gave no sign of, a shaggy grey head and grizzly beard were thrust out of the rotten trunk, and the leader of the party was addressed in the same strange language that Simon Stockfish and his young master had so recently heard.

Some conversation followed betwixt the confederates, whereupon the person in the hollow tree took to hooting like an owl, which he did so to the life, any one might have believed an owl was close at hand. The sound had hardly been uttered, when it was replied to as though a similar bird was not far off, and then, with a few unintelligible words, which doubtless comprised some direction, the grizzly head and beard were withdrawn into the tree, and once more the party proceeded.

They went not a hundred yards before they approached a deep sand-pit, concealed from view till any one came close upon it, by thick brushwood growing all around the brink. The leader pushed his way through this, by a track it looked impossible could be discovered by any who knew it not. All at once a voice demanded something, and so close at hand was it, it appeared to come from amongst them, yet was no one visible, notwithstanding both the captives glanced in all directions. A reply was given by the one who had acted as leader, and shortly after John Hall and his serving-man found themselves descending a narrow zig-zag path of great steepness. The barking of dogs below became now audible even to the deafest of the party; and then the deep voice of a man calling them roughly to hold their peace.

As they got lower down, they might have beheld two or three tents of soiled and

patched canvas, rendered almost black by long exposure to all sorts of weathers. Then in one place there was perceptible a huge fire burning, with a monstrous kettle over it, and several figures grouped around; further off, a large mastiff-bitch chained to a stake, with two or three meaner dogs at large close by, barking with all their might, till a terrible tall fellow left the fire, and with a huge whip belabored them so heartily, it stopped their tune presently; nevertheless, as the strangers approached, they one and all kept ever and anon snapping, snarling and growling, as though, as they dared, they would do them some horrible mischief.

Upon reaching level ground, the thieves and their prisoners were welcomed with a riotous chorus of shouts and acclamations, sundry scurvy jests were passed and answered, but no violence was offered to the captives save by an old hag, who was superintending the cookery, and hit Simon Stockfish a smart blow over his pate with a wooden ladle she held in her hand, because he replied not to some question of hers, he could not understand a word of, the which seemed exquisite pleasant sport to divers of her associates of both sexes, for they set up a loud laugh. The clamor they made suddenly brought out of the bettermost of the tents a person who had evidently some authority over them, for, as soon as they heard his voice, as it appeared abusing them for creating of such a din, they at once became as dumb as fishes, and slunk out of the way as quietly as they could.

This man by his look and bearing assumed to be of a superior sort. He was of a dark visage, somewhat of the Moorish cast, with beard and hair of a deep black, and eyes of a like tint, but so terribly piercing, the horriblemest swaggerer that ever was seen in Finsbury Fields must have been awed by a glance of them. In figure he was as well limbed as the finest gallant at Court, and though his apparelling was nothing more than a stout suit of buckram, it sat on him better than did the prodigalest show of braveries on many of greater state. He looked not to be more than thirty at the most, and was in the full pride of vigorous manhood, tall, stout of limb, with an eye like a hawk, and the tread of a conqueror.

Examining the strangers with a searching glance, as he approached them, he sharply addressed the man who had appeared the leader of the party by whom they had been attacked. The answer he received seemed only to set him on a severer scrutiny, and he regarded the student of medi-

ciné for a few moments in silence. His black brows at first were knit fiercely, and his swarthy visage wore an aspect of mistrust and disquietude; but as his gaze rested on the pale, thoughtful countenance of John Hall, his look grew gradually less threatening, until there appeared in it so much of sympathy as would have given confidence to the youth had he observed it. This, however, he could not have done, seeing that, with a sense of apprehension his situation gave some warrant for, as soon as he beheld the flashing eyes of the person so intently observing him, he fixed his own on the ground.

The other then turned his gloomy visage towards Simon Stockfish, but the honest serving-man shrunk not from his fiery gaze, as his master had. He put his ordinary grave face on the matter, as though he was as much at home under such sharp glances as under the mild looks of the studious youth beside him. Nevertheless was his mind exceedingly busy.

"How now, knave!" exclaimed he of the dusky visage, finding the man kept a countenance under his scrutiny, as if it was iron or stone, and took not his eyes off for a single moment. "I'll warrant thou'lt know me again after this long perusal of me." Simon still steadily gazed on the terrible bright eyes before him, but said never a word.

"Fool!" continued the man, savagely enraged as much at Simon's taciturnity as at his indifference to his threatening looks. "Hast never a tongue in thy head? Speak, fellow, or I'll have thy coxcomb mauled in such fashion as will make thee have cause to hold me in remembrance thy life long."

"What dost want of me?" asked the other, in a quiet tone without altering his features a jot.

"I faith, not much, seeing that my hawks have left not a feather on thee worth plucking," replied his questioner, a smile passing over his comely features. "I merely seek at thy hands some small intelligence, which thou hadst best give, and give quickly. Whence comest thou, and where art going?"

Simon Stockfish paused ere he answered. He thought that the safety of his beloved master's only son now depended on his prudence, and was determined to be wonderfully cautious, that nothing he said should bring the youth into any jeopardy.

"I came whence I was sent," said Simon, very quietly, "and I am going on a lawful journey."

"Why, thou peremptory slave, dost dare give such words to me!" exclaimed the

other, his dark visage instantly becoming a thousand times more gloomy.

It was evident that Simon's notions of prudence were of a strange sort. However, he now thought to anger a man in whose power his young master was, ought to be avoided, and, by a plan that looked to him wondrous politic, he sought to put himself on better terms with him.

"I ask not thy business, and see not why thou shouldst demand mine," observed the serving-man, with his ordinary gravity, "notwithstanding there be divers thy very worshipful good friends, to whom any certain intelligence of thee would be right welcome, or I am hugely mistaken."

"Ha! dost know me, fellow?"

"Exceeding well," answered Simon, disregarding the angry scowl now fixed on him. "Thou art Black Sampson, king of the gipsies—at least, so thou wert called at the 'sises, where I saw thee tried for sheep-stealing—but I was heartily glad afterwards when I heard, by the Hue and Cry, that thou hadst broke prison the day before they were to have hanged thee."

Simon Stockfish was not a whit happier in his notions of what was politic, than he found he had been in his ideas of prudence. The scowl of the recognized gipsy grew every moment more threatening, and his eyes flashed fearfully, when he heard the ignominious fate alluded to, which had so nearly overtaken him. With a horrible imprecation, he seized the astonished serving-man by the throat—and it looked at first terribly as though he would throttle him, but he suddenly gave him a swing that sent him forcibly to the earth, several paces distant from where he had stood, and, after shouting in a savage mood, some directions to his lawless associates, Black Sampson turned on his heel, and presently disappeared within the tent whence he had come.

The command was obeyed almost as soon as uttered, and the hapless travellers found themselves rudely seized, and their hands tightly bound behind them by a group of the most villanous, hang-dog, rascal thieves that could be met with any where. John Hall had heard all that had passed, but was so taken by surprise, he could make no interference in behalf of his thoughtless companion, and suffered himself to be roughly handled by the gipsies without either complaint or resistance.

CHAPTER VI.

Why, thou simple parish ass, thou, didst thou never see any gipsies? These are a covey of gipsies, and the bravest new covey that ever constable flew at.

BEN JONSON.

For, when Dame Nature first
Had fram'd hir heavenly face,
And thoroughly bedeck'd it
With goodly gleames of grace,
It lyked her so well;
Lo here, quod she, a piece
For perfect shape that passeth all
Apelles' work in Greece.

GASCOIGNE.

THE two sat for some time on the ground in silence, with reflections none of the pleasantest. All the gang appeared to have left them, when they had grown tired of the pastime they had found in their unresisting victims. Jeers unanswered, and ill-usage unresisted, soon becomes sorry sport: and, after the roughest of their company had put them within the length of the savage mastiff-bitch, saying of certain words to the brute—which she seemed to understand on the instant, for she crouched down and fixed her eyes on them, as though, moved they an inch, she would tear them to pieces—they drew off, all of them to another part of the pit.

The young student, by degrees, recovered from the amazement and fear in which he had been thrown, and began to consider the perilous situation in which he was placed. He had ascertained that he was a prisoner in an encampment of the Rommanes, or gipsies. Of their leader he had heard, for his name was the terror of all the country round for twenty miles. He was called Sampson, from his huge strength, and Black, from his dark visage; and this name was as well known in cottage and hall as Guy of Warwick, or Robin Hood. He had the subtlety of the fox, and daring of the lion; and so skilfully did he commit his depredations, that nothing could be traced to him, although there never was any hesitation in pronouncing Black Sampson to be the malefactor.

There was much of mystery and romance in the tales that were circulated over the country about him, which his handsome features, noble figure, and courteous bearing of himself, whenever at fairs and wakes he chose to mingle with the villagers and townfolks such festivals always brought together, were sure to increase. He won all the prizes at cudgel-play, wrestling, and all country sports whatever; and he had ever borne

his good fortune with such exceeding good-humor, it seldom gave umbrage to any. It so chanced, however, that his ordinary good fortune once forsook him—not in games, for that would not have mattered so much, but in crime.

There was a shepherd on a neighboring farm named Wattie Elliott, from over the border, as fine a fellow of his inches as the race of Elliotts ever boasted of. He had missed one of his flock. Nothing could exceed his vigilance and care, yet it was barely a week when he missed another.

Wattie had many reasons for wishing to capture the depredator of his master's flock. His own honesty might be suspected, were the knave allowed to escape with his booty a third time. He was as certain Black Sampson was the thief as he was of his own existence, and his inclination to catch him was wonderfully sharpened by the recollection of the broken head he got of him at the last cudgel-play. Wattie was a shrewd fellow, and feared nothing in human shape, and he had a son now close upon manhood, as strong, as active, as sharp, and as bold as himself, on whose crown Black Sampson had left a similar token of his mastery at cudgelling.

The father and son kept watch almost day and night, and put in practice certain notable, clever schemes for the detection of the sheepstealer; but the king of the gipsies was a match for both of them; and tired, as it were, of their useless labors, they seemed all at once to slacken in their vigilance. They gave out they were going that night to the next town to bring an addition to their master's flocks he had purchased of a farmer there, leaving their place to be filled by a lad, whose carelessness was well known, and were seen at dusk proceeding in the direction they had stated.

Two hours afterwards, whilst the boy was intently amusing himself hunting water-rats, a man was stealthily approaching the folded flock. Nothing could exceed the caution he exhibited as he crept along the shadow of the hedges, stopping frequently to listen. Save the bleating of the sheep, he could hear nothing but the barking of the dog, set on by the boy to catch the vermin, and his occasional shouting—but both boy and dog were completely hid from view.

After awhile, he lightly threw himself over the gate, and discovered his prey in the adjoining field, to get at which there was but one way—by leaping the only part of the fence that was not impassable. He was the best leaper in the whole country round; but the high thick hedge and deep

ditch that surrounded the field, except in this place, was not to be attempted.

Before leaping it, he seemed to think it necessary to examine the other side, and, by great difficulty, attained such a place on the bank, that he had a full view of the place where he must alight, and the sheep close at hand, in the most convenient place possible for abstracting one without attracting attention. After, as it seemed, satisfying his extreme caution, he went a few paces back, took a quick run, and sprung over the gap without touching a twig; nevertheless, on coming to the ground, the turf broke from under him, and he found himself in a pit that had with extreme cunning been prepared by the vigilant shepherds.

"Hurrah! We ha' gotten him at last!" shouted the elder Elliott, springing from his concealment in the branches of a pollard, close on the spot, at the same moment with his equally active son; and then both flung themselves upon the athletic gipsy. "Hold thee grip, lad! Hold'n fast! Body and bones, keep'n under thee!"

There was a fearful struggle. The gipsy was taken at a disadvantage; but never was his immense strength seen so palpably as in his efforts to throw off of him his two powerful assailants. They held him as dogs do a bull—the father encouraging his son, and the son putting forth all his strength to assist his parent. A few imprecations only burst from the detected sheep-stealer, as he strove with the force of a giant to free himself from the grasp of the shepherds. The perspiration stood in big drops on his dusky forehead, and every limb was strained till the flesh seemed to take on itself the hardness of iron.

Young Wattie Elliott appeared to discommode the struggling gipsy the most. He had obtained a powerful hold, in which he commanded both his captive's arms, and the tremendous exertions the latter made to roll over him, and free his pinioned limbs, were baffled by the young man's caution and strength.

"Ha! Sampson, my mon," said old Elliott, "thou art in the grip o' the Philistines, and if thou dost ever get free, except with the hangman's help, thou mayst split thy wame with laughing at all o' the name o' Elliott."

"Ha! ha!" shouted the gipsy, in tones like some devil incarnate, as the scream of death from the youth, who had held him so long and well, mingled with it. "That laugh thou hast now heard!" He had at last, by one desperate effort, disengaged his right arm from the young shepherd's em-

brace, and in the next moment the knife the sheep-stealer had in his girdle was buried in the heart of his brave opponent.

But the homicide was not free. The hold young Elliott had had of the gipsy was still unloosened, and all in vain were the tremendous struggles the latter made to shake it off, that he might have the better chance of escaping from the father, which he doubted not he could now easily do. Old Elliott, as he caught a glimpse of his son's blood, raised a piercing cry of agony, and sprung upon his murderer with the fury of a maniac.

He struck at him with his clenched fists, tore his hair, dashed his head against the earth, as regardless of the severe wounds he received from the villain's knife as though they inconvenienced him not at all. Perhaps, loss of blood might at last have weakened his efforts, but the fearful cry he had uttered brought to his assistance some hinds who were, according to the plan he had devised for the capture of the sheep-stealer, on their way to join him, and the murderous efforts of Black Sampson were at once put a stop to by a stunning blow on the head from the heavy staff of the first who reached the spot.

The living Wattie Elliott was with great difficulty drawn from the unequal conflict, and he had hardly been placed on level ground when he swooned away: but it was a still greater difficulty to move the dead Elliott, whose hold was as a vice. The strength of all there could not unclasp the embrace of the corpse, and it was not till they took unusual means that they succeeded in their endeavors. The youth had done his father's bidding in a terrible earnest fashion. He had held so fast, Black Sampson could not have released himself of his own means had he strove ever so.

The gipsy was tried for the murder, not for sheep-stealing, as Simon Stockfish had said—perchance thinking the truth might be unpalatable—but, as the serving-man had rightly declared, had escaped from prison the day preceding that appointed for his execution. Wattie Elliott recovered of his wounds, but when he heard the murderer of his son had escaped, he swore a deadly oath he would hunt him night and day until he had had his heart's blood.

Black Sampson, previous to this, had been, as hath already been stated, popular with every one; but now he dared not show his face, so general was the execration in which his name was held. In truth, he had become a changed man. He had lost his cheerful humor, that had made him such

pleasant company, and had grown gloomy, savage, and distrustful of all around him. Occasionally, to those he affected, he would appear in a better mood; but he was ordinarily sullen, capricious, and given to fits of ungovernable passion.

John Hall had heard what hath here been stated, and kept ruminating on these matters without drawing from them anything of pleasure or consolation. Simon Stockfish had heard all this and much more to boot. The gossip of the whole country round, concerning certain marvellous adventures of these Rommanees, in which figured a most lovely creature of that strange race, and was, as may be supposed, the subject of infinite speculation to such as could get the slightest knowledge of her. Simon's thoughts were busy with a thousand strange stories, and the unpleasantness they created was not a whit lessened by the behavior of the savage brute that kept guard over him and his young master.

There seemed such a fascination in the snake-like eyes of the mastiff-bitch, that he could not take his own eyes off her. To the curious spectator, the brute might have seemed to have been carved out of the marble stone, so motionless did she stand; but Simon could see something in the steady glare of her organs of sight he felt assured might in a moment prove—in a manner he liked not at all—that not only was *she* flesh and blood, but those she kept watch over were of a like material. In sober truth, Simon was horribly afraid the fierce-looking animal would spring on him and tear him to pieces; therefore, for a wonder, his thoughts kept no longer any account of his young master's peril—his own seeming so imminent he could regard nothing else.

During this interval, the night had been gradually closing in, and the only light which illumined the scene was from the huge fire, where stood the caldron already alluded to. This was at some distance from the prisoners, who might have considered themselves, but for the watchful mastiff so unpleasantly close to them, quite unregarded by the gipsy brotherhood, whom they could see in various groups; some sitting, some standing, some lying their lengths on the ground, eating, drinking, playing of cards and tric-trac, but all taking no more heed of them than if they had been stocks or stones. They could also hear the murmur of their conversation one with another, now shouting, anon laughing, with presently a silence broken only by one a whistling a

morrice, or some other murmuring of a passionate ballad.

How long this state of things might have remained, God only knoweth; but to the huge comfort of Simon Stockfish, it was suddenly put a stop to by the re-appearance of Black Sampson, who strode from the tent, now wearing a slouched hat, and carrying in his hand a stout cudgel, and made direct to his prisoners.

"I am sorry you have met with molestation, young sir," observed he, directing of his speech to John Hall, with a courteous manner, "but my rascals are rough and rude, and are like enough to meddle with other folks' goods in a way that, I am willing to believe, is none of the civilest. Perchance, some amends may be made for the hindrance you have experienced."

Here he busied himself awhile in unfastening the chain of the mastiff, who by many canine demonstrations testified her delight at her master's presence.

"I would be right glad," gravely observed the young student, "to be put in a way for the pursuing of my journey to London."

"Ah, that he would, worthy Master Sampson—God he knows," exclaimed Simon Stockfish. His fears relieved by the attention of the mastiff being drawn off him, his thoughts turned at once to a consideration of the proper means to be employed for the liberation of his young master, and he thought it would be admirable policy to take advantage of Black Sampson's present amiable mood.

"Hold thy malapert tongue, knave, or I'll give thee such a rubbing down with this goodly napkin, as shall make thee infinitely careful to avoid such napery the rest of thy days."

This ominous speech from the murderer of Wattie Elliott, assisted by a significant flourish of the very formidable weapon he had in his hand, and a menacing growl from the mastiff, who seemed waiting only for a signal from her master to be at his throat, made Simon Stockfish quake in his shoes.

"Nay, I meant no offence, o' my life!" cried he, in as humble a tone as he could put on, "and, for mine own part, I am satisfied you are of no such crabbed disposition as I have been told you are, and that Wattie Elliott's murd—"

A heavy blow on the head stopped the incautious serving man's speech, and laid him at his length at the feet of the enraged gipsy.

"'Sblood!" exclaimed he, looking to be in a monstrous passion. "Dost think I will be bearded by such a sorry ass as thou?"

Then, turning to divers of his company, who were approaching the spot, attracted doubtless by their leader's violence, he shouted, "Keep me these hated Busne in close prison till I return; and, mark me, an they seek to escape, cut their villainous throats." A moment after he had unloosed the dog, and was seen with her rapidly bounding up the path that led out of the pit.

It was some time before Simon Stockfish recovered from the stunning blow he had received, and then he found himself stretched on his back, on a rude sort of bed made of fern, that was in one of the tents, his head bound up, and his arm bandaged. There was a dull, aching pain in his head, and a strange feeling of sickness, but this was all the inconvenience he experienced. As he opened his eyes, they fell on the anxious countenance of his young master, who was standing over him in his own proper garments, feeling his pulse. The only other person in the place was an old crone, who, by the lamp she carried in her hand, he could observe was of the peculiar dark visage of the wandering people, into whose power they had fallen, and was dressed somewhat in the Eastern fashion, though her apparelling was of the coarsest. She, too, was regarding him; and with an exceeding curiousness.

"I doubt not, with my teaching, thou wouldst in time become a skilful leech," observed she, turning to John Hall, on noticing the signs of recovery in his fellow-captive.

"I doubt it not, good dame!" courteously replied the young physician. "Thou seemest especially well versed in the treatment of green wounds, and in the employment of simples of all kinds."

"I warrant you," said the other, with a very evident satisfaction in herself, "and where wouldst seek such knowledge, if not from Rujia, the mother of the Rommanees, to whom for three-score years the heavenly influences have been made more familiar than to any other of our tribe, since we wandered from the sunny clime wherein, as our traditions tell, we were a mighty people. But thou hast thyself not been unattentive to the marvels that are continually around thee. It was well for this poor Busno thou wert by, or the stroke of our chief would have spoiled him for this world. As the stars may witness for me, though I have had to mend much of his marring, I have not had one instance of such eminent mischief as this looked to be."

At this moment, a gipsy woman hastily entered the tent, looking wondrously disturbed, and, after some few words passed

between them in their strange language, she, who had called herself Rujia, placing the lamp in the hand of the young student, and bidding him give the wounded man a posset she had just before made for him, followed the one who had summoned her out of the tent.

John Hall quietly put in practice the directions he had heard, and Simon Stockfish as quietly submitted to them; but the one could not keep from reflecting upon the knowledge he had got of simple surgery from the ancient gipsy-woman's discourse, as she assisted him in dressing the wound of his luckless attendant; and much he marvelled that neither Hippocrates, nor Galen, nor Mathias Carnax, nor Alexius Pædomontanus, nor Canonherius, nor, in short, any writer of his acquaintance, ancient or modern, had given any note whatever of such things; whilst the other marvelled to find himself in that strange place, and to hear the grave discourse that had just passed between his young master and a gipsy beldame. After indulging in all manner of inward questioning as to how these matters came about, he arrived at the interesting discovery that he had got his head broke, for not being sufficiently mindful of his tongue, just as the posset began to have its proper effect upon him, and thereupon he fell into a sound sleep.

John Hall sat himself down on a stool that was there, over-against his patient, and was deeply intent on a volume of Aristotle he had long been in the habit of carrying about with him—it was so especial a favorite—when his studies were suddenly broken in upon by his being seized by the arm, and urgently desired to go on the instant, with his so recent instructress, in a case of life or death.

The book of the young physician was in his pocket in a moment, and he in readiness to go wherever he might be wanted. After certain hasty injunctions, seemingly of a mysterious import, which did not in any way enlighten him as to the nature of the case that demanded his assistance so urgently, his guide led him out of the tent, and in a few minutes he found himself in another, in all respects a direct opposite to the one he had left.

It was furnished not only with all manner of comforts, but there was in it even an air of luxury, that, as may be supposed, surprised him greatly. There was a floor of boards, with a small yet rich Turkey carpet in the centre, a handsome bedstead quaintly carved, with chairs of a like pattern covered with velvet. On a table near the bed, both of

which had the goodliest covers eye ever beheld, were a silver lamp burning, of very ancient make, as was also the deep dish of the same metal close to it with dried fruit, and the flask which stood by a tall Venetian glass. On one of the chairs was a lute, and a theorbo stood in the corner. An ewer and basin of antique china, with sundry articles for the toilet, were on a further table, having on it the whitest of naperly; and an empty cradle, with furniture of a like whiteness, was close against it. Some few articles of wearing apparel were scattered here and there, and on a large oak chest were a quarter staff and a long rapier.

But the object on which John Hall's attention was quickly engrossed was a very beauteous and very young creature, seeming in age to be but a child. Yet it was evident she was a mother, for none but such could exhibit such terrible deep grief over the babe she held close pressed to her breast, ever and anon unclosing of her arms to gaze at the pallid rigid aspect there presented to her, and then, uttering a wild cry of distress, and pressing the senseless infant still closer to her breast, frantically paced about, making of all manner of moving exclamations.

A profusion of dark glossy hair fell in disorder about her dusky neck and shoulders; she was divested of her outer garment, and wore but a sort of loose jacket and petticoat, whereof the only thing worthy of note was that the materials were exceedingly fine and white. Yet did all this negligence the greater set off the perfect loveliness of her countenance and person. Her full dark eyes brimming with tenderness, her exquisite rosy mouth, delicate pearly teeth, her dainty snail hands, her rounded arms, and tender swelling bosom, were all apparent to the enamored gaze; added to this, she showed a pair of dusky feet, of such marvellous beauty, the sight whereof would have ravished an anchorite.

The young physician was sufficiently amazed at what he saw. He gazed curiously, and with no slight interest, but he would have done the like had this exquisite object been created of marble or wood. A few words from Rujia quickly put his indifference to a hard trial, for scarce had they been uttered, when the young beauty suddenly rushed to him, knelt at his feet, and, in the absolutest passion of tears and prayers, besought of him to restore to her the babe.

At this he felt wondrously moved. Indeed his heart beat quicker, and a moisture came into his eyes; and he was so confused by the suddenness and energy of the appeal, he scarce knew what he would be at.

Nevertheless, he presently became himself like a grave and careful physician, made certain inquiries, and closely examined the state of his little patient. As the mother feared it was dead, infinite was the contentation of her, when he pronounced the child to be in a fit only; and, when he bade her to be of good cheer, for he would recover it presently, he had such prodigal store of blessings, the remembrance of them brought him comfort all his life after.

Thereupon he issued his orders promptly, and spoke so convincingly, yet so modestly withal, his directions were followed without a question or doubt, and the still senseless child was given into his hands by the young mother, with the trust of her entire heart, to be done with as he thought proper. She watched him, however, with an earnest attentiveness, that looked as though her own life hung on the issue, and when, after the child had been placed in a vessel of hot water for some minutes, he fetched his breath, she seemed herself to breathe for the first time.

How delightedly she beheld the color returning to the pale lips, and animation to the fixed eyes, words have no power to tell. Her joy, however, at last became so excessive, that on the young physician's declaring his little patient to be fully recovered, she caught hold of the astonished youth by the hand, and pressed it to her heart; then she fetched from off her finger a ring of curious workmanship, with a fair stone set therein, and placed it on one of his, with wondrous great heaps of thanks and blessings, and finally she snatched her child, now crying lustily in the arms of Rujia, who was intent on dressing it, and, after a prodigious deal of crying, laughing, and caressing, she stilled its cries with that sweet nourishment, which Nature, out of her very infinite bounty, bestoweth on every tender mother.

Whereupon there was a silence of some few minutes. John Hall was so bewildered, he seemed to have lost all power of speech; Rujia busied herself in striving to put the place in some order, muttering all the while; and the fond young mother was in too happy a mood to speak. After a few minutes the young physician became aware that an animated conversation was going on betwixt his two companions, and, although he understood never a word that was said, the youth could perceive by many signs that he was the subject of their talk.

Presently he was courteously asked his name, and bid to show the palm of his hand, whereupon much note was took of it by both women; the younger in especial tracing the

lines upon it with as much attentiveness as concern.

"Thy palm telleth but a sad story," observed she. "Sore trials await thee. Thy heart will be fiercely wrung; but, take courage, sweet heart; though there be much deep suffering denoted in these lines, there is happiness in an ample measure at the end. Nevertheless, be assured, whatever ill betide thee, Xariqua is thy fast friend, and with all her heart will help thee at thy need. I prythee take my best wishes, good Master Hall, and be not overcast when thou and misery become bedfellows. When thy time cometh, thy good fortune will be so great, all thy previous suffering must be considered as of no account."

Before he could recover from his surprise, the old gipsy woman had led him out of that tent into the one he had previously quitted.

There he found Simon Stockfish just awaking from a refreshing sleep, and when Rujia bade them make haste as they loved their lives and liberties, the faithful serving-man sprang from his couch, put on his own garments, which, like his master's, had been restored, and declared himself ready to start that moment. He had experienced such uncivil treatment since he had fallen into the hands of the bold outlaws, that he was right glad to take advantage of any opportunity that offered to get his young master away from such rascally company.

Neither was John Hall loath to go. Nevertheless, from some strange cause or another, he felt exceeding desirous of knowing something concerning the young and beautiful creature with whom he had by such singular chance become acquainted. He at last got so much the better of his natural timidity as to express his surprise, that one so very young and comely should be a gipsy.

It would doubtless have been better had he held his peace, for it brought on him so fierce a torrent of abuse from the old hag, for the most part in her own language, and she looked so savagely, he would have been right glad had he not been so bold; but when she bade them, as they valued their wretched lives, keep close on her footsteps, for she was about to put them in the way of escape, adding something in her own jargon which, had they known its tendency, they would have hesitated trusting themselves with her—they gave themselves, without a word said, entirely to her guidance, and she led them quickly yet cautiously from the tent, out of the pit by a path different from the one by which they had arrived. They saw not a creature of any kind, nor heard sign

of such, till, after threading a very narrow and intricate path, they came to a green hollow, wherein, to the infinite great joy of Simon Stockfish, they beheld their two goodly steeds, Dapple and Jack, whose loss had added marvellously to the uneasiness his master's capture had created in Simon's mind.

Their somewhat uncivil guide showed them where their harness and other property were hid, and assisted them to bridle and saddle,—the while giving them directions as to the road they were to pursue; then, bidding them to use their utmost speed, if they wished to save their worthless lives, she disappeared behind a clump of brushwood. Simon Stockfish had just finished fastening the belt round his body which held fast his master's stock of apparel, and had got one foot in the stirrup, when, hearing a savage growl, he quickly turned round, and there, but a few yards from him, looking in the moonlight more ferocious than ever, he beheld the mastiff bitch that had so lately put him in such imminent bodily fear.

He was paralysed. He felt sure his more brutal master could not be far off, and the fate of Wattie Elliott stared him in the face in all its horrors. Uttering two or three sharp clear barks that rung on his ears like a death knell, the dog was bounding in all its savage fury towards him, when, ere half the distance was passed, she was seen to spring in the air, with a piercing howl of agony, as the loud report from an arquebus close at hand burst upon the ear, and she fell to the ground horribly mangled and dead as a stone.

Almost at the same instant there appeared at the opposite sides of the hollow, two persons—one was quickly recognized by the alarmed travellers as their unpleasant acquaintance, Black Sampson,—who no sooner caught sight of the man over-against him, than, as if seized with a sudden panic, he turned quickly round and ran off at his utmost speed; whereupon, the other muttering distinctly the words, "Blood for blood!" flourished his weapon over his head, and started at a desperate rate in pursuit.

The latter was Wattie Elliott. Neither the young physician nor his companion cared to watch the result of the race, but instantly sprung into their saddles; and their steeds, alarmed at the report of the piece, put themselves to their swiftest pace.

CHAPTER VII.

If your worshippe vouchsafe to enter the schoole doore, and walke an hour or twaine within for your pleasure, you shall see what I teache, which present my schoole, my cunning, and myselfe to your worthy patronage.

THE SCHOOLE OF ABUSE.

THE pretended Master Dulcimer was rejoicing, as such noble hearts only can, at the success which attended his efforts to secure the heart's wish of his young friend and patron, having just witnessed his secret marriage with that admirable fair young creature, Mistress Varnon. He had also another source of satisfaction, having succeeded in effecting the liberation of his friend Ben Jonson, who had been put in prison for the death of Gabriel Spencer, and was proceeding intent on his ordinary duties at the playhouse in the Blackfriars, amusing himself monstrously by the way in imagining the distress of that exceedingly starched and antiquated damsel, Aunt Deborah, on discovering she had not only been deprived of her beautiful kinswoman, with whom she had so long been wont to play the terrible tyrant, but had lost her sworn servant also, who had obtained entire possession of her virgin heart.

Truly, if ever man looked in a contented mood, that was he, and it shone in his worshipful sweet countenance with such exceeding brilliancy, that such of the wayfarers who took note of him as he walked, who knew not his extreme worthiness, either by personal knowledge or general repute, set down in their minds, on the first glance, he must needs be as thoroughly happy as any man this side of Heaven. But few men of his day were better known both amongst the citizens and gallants; and, as he had quitted his disguise of the master of music, he was recognized as he passed along the crowded streets; and the courteous, cheerful manner in which he doffed his beaver to simple and gentle; the blushing girl and the wrinkled dame, and in sooth to persons of all conditions who looked as though they were well pleased at the sight of him, assured them of his infinite happiness and contentation.

Marvel not, gentle reader, they were in some measure deceived. It is not so huge a wonder as it may appear; for divers instances have occurred where the face hath been dressed in smiles, and the heart in sackcloth and ashes. We cannot be said to be masters of ourselves when we are not masters of our affections, and these are matters the mastery whereof the wisest men have not

been able to obtain. There hath been notable instances of minds framed in the best school of wisdom, teeming with good intent, and full of virtuous resolution, that by a combination of ill circumstances have been forced into the surrendering of their natures to an attachment which cannot be openly encouraged without a sensible disrespect of the world and of themselves. Such feelings, of a surety are not to be justified, are not to be tolerated; yet do they come about in such a manner as often to make such as have the ill-fortune to entertain them, more to be pitied than blamed. Methinks there can scarce be any object more worthy of commiseration than a noble nature enslaved by an unlawful passion, struggling betwixt the extraordinary admirableness of the fair creature he cannot but devote himself to heart and soul, and the natural self-condemnation which he must feel in allowing the existence of a state of things of such infinite unprofitableness to either party.

Whether Master Shakspeare had got himself entangled in this hopeless mesh, our information at this time doth not state. It is but known that occasionally he was given to long fits of perfect abstraction, when his features wore a sad and troubled air; and he would act as though he were but an accountable creature, given to wild fancies, and exceeding strange resolves. Anon he would burst out of the gloom which these humors created, and exceed all warrantable grounds in lightness of behavior, endeavoring to excuse his late sadness by affirming he slept ill o' nights, and was tormented by fearful dreams.

Of a surety he had dreams, and they might well be considered by him of a fearful sort. In part, they were the dreams of his early youth; but the loving faces that haunted his sleep many a midsummer day by the stream side, beneath an antique tree, or on some mossy bank retired from the public eye, though they wore the same features of everlasting beauty, possessed an expression of the very deepest sorrow; the exquisite sweet harmonies which of old were wont to intoxicate his mind with unutterable joy, now, by their mournful and melancholy cadences, filled him with a most painful sadness; and instead of the floral treasures which, with every cheerful hue and pleasant form, threw around him an atmosphere of light and perfume, he beheld nothing but rue and rosemary, willow and cypress, nightshade, and the like sort of plants, the gloomy posies of death.

When he woke, it was with an apprehension of impending evil he could not readily

divest himself of; yet, not caring to be thought superstitious, he would strive to cast it off by giving himself up to the very wildest flights of an untameable spirit. That he had some secret source of huge disquietude, a shrewd observer might have predicted from these premises; albeit, his behavior was ever of so noble a sort as to win the hearts of all around him, and his admirable cheerful temper did so often and so pleasantly make itself manifest.

However this may have been, it is certain that the mood in which Master Shakspeare went on his way to the playhouse, after a friendly leave-taking of the young Lord Southampton and his loving bride, was, to all appearance, as contented a one as any happy man ever had. After sufficiently amusing of himself with thinking of his antiquated mistress, he fell into a train of pleasant anticipations of the prodigal heaps of happiness in store for his estimable kind friend, and marvellous was the contentation it gave him. From this he presently took to considering of his own affairs; and, in the happy humor he then was, it was in no way surprising his thoughts should light upon the most comfortable part of them—his sweet young son.

He recalled the great solace and pride he had taken in the handsome boy at his last visit, what rare gratification he had experienced in noting his aptness for study, his warm affectionateness and well-disposedness in all things; and, after he had sufficiently basked in the sunshine of the past, he would find for himself a still more sunny future, and enjoy its glowing horizon with more intense transports than he had yet known.

It so chanced that as he was proceeding through Cheap, nigh unto the conduit, quite regardless of every one thing in the world, save his own pleasant thinking, on a sudden his waking dream was broken in upon by some one seizing him by the arm, and accosting him in a strange, wild, and confused manner. On turning round, he beheld a man of decent apparelling, for all it seemed slovenly put on and travel-stained, with an aspect which, though marked in strong lines with exhaustion and alarm, bore in it so much of native benevolence, that the worthiness of the owner scarce admitted of a doubt.

“Master Bifield!” exclaimed his old acquaintance, looking on him with a famous surprise and pleasure, “O’ the dickens, what hath brought thy reverence in this ungodly place?” And thereupon he shook hands with him very heartily, and expressed, in his

exquisite manner, his gratification at the sight of him, swearing he should have no other inn than his own dwelling, in the Clink Liberty, and that not an ordinary in the city should boast of having entertained him, for he would share with none living so covetable a pleasure, and much more of the same courteous sort, seasoned with all manner of choice jests and excellent pleasant conceits; the priest the whilst saying never a word to all his numberless questions and courtesies, for, in truth, he was so bewildered at finding him in so happy a mood, he knew not how to begin the task he had set himself.

“And how goeth on the schooling?” cried he, in his most joyous tone; “and, more especially, how goeth on the scholar?” The worthy priest winced at the question, and, in huge confusion and distress, commenced stammering out a few unintelligible words.

“Heart o’ me!” exclaimed the happy father, slapping his companion familiarly on the shoulder, “’tis the old story. Hamnet is a prodigy and a phœnix, and promiseth to be wiser than Solomon, and worthier than the best saint of them all. Well, if it must needs be, I would as lief see him a bishop as any thing. He shall to Oxford anon, where I have friends willing to do him any service in getting him snug quarters with that most admirable, bountiful hostess—holy Mother Church. But,” added he, “dost not think the profession of arms better becometh the name of Shakspeare than that of a clerk? His ancestor did yeoman service at the bloody field of Bosworth: if Hamnet have a like spirit, which I doubt not at all, I see nought to prevent his becoming a captain. Perchance, if he be one of a greatly adventurous disposition, he shall take to seeking new lands in the far ocean, and, as likely as not, come home a mighty admiral. What dost think—eh, man? Why, thou art mute as a fish!”

“Oh, Master Shakspeare!” at last exclaimed the other, in accents that seemed to come from the uttermost depths of his heart.

“Why, how now, my old friend!” said his friend. “Were I not used as I am to thy pale visage, I would swear something aileth thee. O’ my life, thou lookest as melancholy as the stuffed owl in Sir John Clopton’s blue parlor. But come with me to my lodging, and I doubt not, ere we have empyied together a flask of my choice Canary, I will have the owl, so thoroughly washed out of thee, thou shalt be glad to forswear melancholy ever after.” Thereupon, Master Shakspeare seemed intent on dragging

the vicar by the arm, the which seemed only to make him the more distressed.

"Nay, worthy sir, excuse me, I pray you," replied Master Bifield. "I have other business. I am in no humor—I—I—"

"A fig for thy humor!" cried his companion, his face irradiated with the spirit of good fellowship, as he still strove to pull him along. "If I cannot, of mine own accord, make thy humor fit the entertainment, the which I have done so oft, why there is Will Kempe, against whom the most unsocial of humors standeth not the tittle of a minute; and Ned Allen, who is good company for my Lord Justice and I know not how many more choice ones, who shall be as familiar with thee as sworn gossips. Prythee, come at once."

"I would to God there were no reason for my denial" muttered the vicar, in increased trouble of mind.

"That there cannot be," answered his friend, "for thou hast no unreasonable scruples, and thou mayst be assured, where I lead thee, there shall be nothing discreditable. Come, I am in haste to drink Hamnet's health, which I know thou wilt pledge as fervently as myself."

"Oh, Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the good priest, as he, in a sort of frenzy of grief, convulsively seized the parent of his beloved scholar by the hand, and pressed it between both his own. "I pray you call to your aid all the philosophy and patience necessary for the hearing of ill tidings."

"Eh, what dost say?" cried Master Shakspeare, hurriedly. "Ill tidings? thou canst have no ill tidings for me."

"In honest truth, they are the worst a loving father ever heard."

"On thy life, man, speak," said the other, as if oppressed with some desperate fear. "Keep me not on the rack. Surely, nothing hath happened to my sweet son?"

"There hath, indeed. He hath been ailing some time, and—it wringeth my heart to tell it—I saw not that the closeness of his pursuit of learning was secretly undermining his health. I knew not that every triumph he achieved over the difficulties of study was at the expense of his precious life. Perchance, my neglect was culpable. Believe me I shall never cease to accuse myself for my fatal remissness; but had I observed anything likely to excite apprehension, I would have sacrificed my own worthless life a thousand times rather than any harm should have come to him. Alack! alack! he was heedless, and I was blind. He having missed school a whole day, and hearing he was sick, I lost no time in get-

ting to Shottery. Oh, worthy sir, I saw a terrible moving sight. I beheld the best, the sweetest scholar master ever had, stretched in a raging fever, with a strange and unconnected speech, pale as a corpse, and wasted to an anatomy. I got me a horse as soon as I might, to bring you to him; for the doctors assured me he had not many hours to live. Master Shakspeare, my excellent good friend!" here suddenly exclaimed the vicar, in a monstrous state of alarm, "I pray you stare not so wildly at me! What hath so blanched your cheeks and lips? Alack! alack! the heavy news hath broken his noble heart. Help, masters, help! I have not strength to save him from falling."

Assistance was quickly rendered, but it was long before the unhappy father recovered sufficiently from the shock to be sensible of what was required of him; but when he did, he lost not a moment of time. The swiftest saddle horses were instantly sought for; and, accompanied by Master Bifield, in as hapless a mood as himself, he rode day and night on the road to Statford, at the top of their speed.

He spoke scarce a word the whole way. His faculties seemed to be stunned by the terrible intelligence he had heard, and he appeared to be animated but by one wish—that of getting to Shottery in time to see his son before he died. The good vicar watched him anxiously; performing all friendly offices, but forbearing from speech, seeing how completely his humor lay towards silence.

How different was this to all former journeyings of his to the fondly cherished scenes of his early griefs and pleasures! There was scarce any noticeable part of this oft-traversed road that could not have called up whole hosts of pleasant remembrances, and many a fellow-traveller had he entertained with admirable choice stories, of strange adventures he had had, or curious scenes he had witnessed in those parts in former times. Not a village but had its narrative, and hardly an inn of any repute, all along the road, but was made to furnish most excellent entertainment; and his fortunate companion at last could not help fancying he had either fallen in with a second Boccaccio, or a twin brother of that exhaustless teller of stories, whose invention supplied continuous amusement for a thousand and one nights.

The case was now altered with a vengeance. Master Shakspeare was company for no one, not even for himself; and he passed by every familiar place as though he

were in a strange land, that had not in it a feature worthy of remark.

But though he was so scant of speech, is it to be presumed he had a similar lack of thought? Perchance, and like enough, his mind was monstrous busy with all manner of miserable reflections, touching the lamentable state of his dear son. The most subduing fears might have got possession of him, and the imminence and unexpectedness of the danger have given to such fears a profound and entire sway. Mayhap he might allow himself to hope things were not so bad as they were represented, and then, as in the usual course, small hopes leading to large ones, his thoughts would presently make for themselves a prospect as fair as that which he had at various occasions so fondly regarded. But his aspect was not one that hath a reasonable familiarity with agreeable anticipations. It expressed a settled grief, such as cannot hold any acquaintance with consolation.

It did not escape the eye of his watchful companion, that he suffered greatly; and, desirous of shortening the sway of his unhappy friend's reflections as much as was possible, he made most strenuous exertions to bring their journey to a quick ending. His endeavors met with such success, that, in a space which then appeared incredible, the exhausted travellers reached the cottage at Shoterly.

As he drew near the object of his deep love, the agitation of the miserable father became so great that it was with much ado the worthy priest could keep him in any sort of governance; and, when they were on the threshold of the sick chamber, Master Shakspeare, though but a minute since so terribly impatient, felt as though he dared not enter. He was overpowered with his apprehensions. A sickness of the soul smote him so terribly, the strong man was subdued, and all the father in him seemed to lay with so heavy a load upon his heart, he could neither breathe nor move.

His excellent pious friend saw in how sad a taking he was, and administered to him such cheering encouragement, that, in a brief space, he felt sufficiently invigorated to proceed. The latch was raised, and, like one embarking on a perilous venture, he entered the chamber of his sick child. A glance at that wan face would have assured any but a doting parent that death had there set his seal, and was nigh at hand, waiting to place the instrument in his greedy coffers: but, seeing him alive, after such dreadful agony of fear as he had scarce a moment since experienced, appeared to

render Master Shakspeare unconscious of his son's imminent danger; and, as Hamnet, immediately his father approached, recognised him with a joyful cry, his apprehensions left him, he dropped down beside the bed, took the outstretched little hand, and, with an exhaustless prodigality of fond exclamations, covered it with kisses, whilst tears of exquisite sweet pleasure rushed from the fountains of his love, and did freely force their way over his manly cheeks.

The poor fond father was for awhile left to the full enjoyment of such feelings, and was only roused from them by noting something strange pushing against him, and his hand quickly after touched by something warm. It was the faithful hound, Talbot; who, seeing his master, instead of the riotous demonstrations of joy with which he was wont to greet him, by that wondrous instinct often shown by these sagacious brutes on like occasions, had noiselessly moved towards him, and began licking of his hand, soon after which he showed the same affectionateness to the hand of his attached playmate—the whilst, as though he knew the misfortune that was impending, he wore the pitifullest look eye ever saw—now turning it towards Master Shakspeare, and anon towards Hamnet.

“Poor Talbot! Brave Talbot!” exclaimed his master, patting him on the head—for, in very truth, that was all he could say or do, he was so moved.

“Poor Talbot!” murmured the sick child, the only words he had uttered, that showed he was conscious of what was going on around him, since he had been ill; and, at hearing which, the faithful dog seemed marvellously disturbed, for he whined in a low voice, once more licked the hands of the father and son, and then proceeded slowly to the foot of the bed, where he placed himself so that he could see the faces he had regarded with so fixed a sorrow.

Ever since his playfellow had been confined to his chamber, Talbot had fixed himself in that place, whence neither threats, nor caresses, nor temptations of any sort, could remove him. He refused his food, he took no notice of any of the family, or of the different visitors who entered and went out. His eyes were upon the visage of his fast friend and pleasant associate in so many rare sports, with a disturbed and anxious expression; and, though all this time the sick boy had taken no manner of notice of his devotion, in consequence of not being sensible of his presence, he continued his vigilant watching, night and day, as though

he were as handsomely rewarded as his fidelity had so often been.

After this long disregard of him, it may easily be imagined with what feelings he heard himself recognized by the sick boy, and the exceeding comfort with which he returned to his place of watching: nevertheless, though he wore for a moment a look of infinite contentation, as he continued to gaze upon the features he loved so well, whereon the animation that had been given to them by the entrance of Master Shakspeare was rapidly disappearing, and they were assuming an aspect of the most terrible sort, it was easy to see the poor brute was getting fearfully anxious, and his look, no less strongly than his movements, bespoke the greatness of his distress.

This change in Hamnet had not been regarded by his fond parent; for his attention had been taken off his son by his weeping mother, who, with a total abandonment to sorrow, had thrown herself into his arms. Such passionate lamentations broke from her as soon as she could find her speech, that, though her husband strove with all the affection of better times to bring her to reason, it was to marvellous little profit.

To add to his trouble, at this trying moment, he found himself in a like manner called upon by the no less lively sorrow of a fair young girl who was with her, whom he could not fail of recognizing as his daughter Judith, the twin sister of his beloved Hamnet. He pressed both of them in his arms, and strove to console them with the best arguments at his commandment.

He looked about him as though he missed some one, and his gaze presently lighted upon the lovely countenance and graceful person of his elder daughter—the same who made the acquaintance of the courteous reader, at the dwelling of her kinsman, little Tommy Hart, in Stratford. She stood at some distance, with no other sign of grief in her than a most anxious countenance; regarding, with deep attention, the sallow visage of a little man in a threadbare suit—no other than the Stratford apothecary—who was in another part of the chamber, conversing with Master Bifield; and it was easy to see, from the effect of his speech on the worthy vicar, that what he heard troubled him exceedingly.

Pothecary's stuff had done him no manner of good, and though he was nursed by his sister Susanna with untiring love and attention—his mother and Judith being so overpowered with their fears for him, as to be incapable of rendering any useful assistance in the sick chamber, it advantaged

him not at all. Susanna appeared the least moved at her brother's illness of any about him, but, young as she was, she saw the necessity of keeping her feelings under control, that she might the better be enabled to tend him with that care his case so much required. Therefore, had she been his careful nurse, never leaving the chamber, an never closing her eyes, from the first moment she had been made aware of the danger of the case.

Hearing her name called by her father, she hurried to receive his caresses, and returned them with a most devoted heart, though with as sorrowful a one as any present. She had been as anxious to receive them as her sister, but had stood aloof, that her brother might have all his attention, knowing how much he needed it. She now spoke not a word of lamentation; indeed, her young heart was too full for speech of any sort, but her straining embrace and tearful gaze touched her father more deeply than did the noisy grief that Judith and her mother continued. This was not the first time he had observed in her signs of a truly feminine nature—exceeding delicacy, the truest affectionateness, and the noblest self-denial—and these had endeared her to him exceedingly. The measure of her own affection for her father was of the prodigal sort—the remembrances of his smiles and commendations feeding her love, till it took on it a strength marvellous at her early youth. It may, therefore, be conceived with what absolute affection they mingled their caresses at a time so trying.

But the intense gratification Susanna experienced whilst receiving such sweet proof of her father's love for her, could not for a moment render her forgetful of her beloved patient, whose features now getting of a deadly paleness, were for a very brief season enlivened with a faint smile, as he gazed on his father and sister; and she had just succeeded in drawing his attention to Hamnet, when the eyes of the sick scholar turned towards his revered master, who at that moment was directing towards him a glance of the terriblest distress and anxiety, and there seemed a meaning in them, which the good priest quickly interpreted, and as speedily sought to act upon.

He advanced to the bed with a solemn and distressed air, and knelt beside it. At this moment it was that Master Shakspeare looked again upon his son, and the terrible change his countenance had undergone in the last few minutes his attention had been taken off it, seemed to pierce his soul like a barbed arrow. He saw now he must hope

no more; and, with an agony that appeared to be crushing both heart and brain, he fell on his knees, still clasping the little hand, that all this fearful time had rested so quietly in his own. The attention of the rest of the family was by this movement directed to the countenance of the dying boy, on seeing which his mother covered her face with her apron, and sunk in a swoon on the nearest chair, and Judith fell on her knees before her, hiding her face in her lap.

Susanna had softly and quickly made her way to the other side of the bed, where, kneeling down, with the remaining hand of her beloved brother clasped in both her own, she joined fervently in the fervent prayer Master Bifield had commenced. How moving was the scene the chamber of the sick scholar then presented! There were on two or three shelves he had himself fixed on the panel, the books he had conned with such loving, yet such fatal diligence. It was as simple a chamber as scholar ever had, having nought in it but the truckle-bed whereon its poor occupant then lay, a small table at which he was wont to write and study, now having on it in divers vessels certain medicaments of the apothecary's compounding, and a chair whereon the child sat during his long studies.

The only casement it had looked into the orchard, where he had got many a task by heart, poring over it at the foot of a tree; and the door opened into his mother's chamber, wherein were now several relations and friendly acquaintances, some of whom were peering in with grave and distressed visages. Hanging upon a peg was his satchel, and nigh it the gay cap and feather his fond father at his last visit had brought him for holiday wear. The rest of his apparelling had been neatly folded up by his good sister Susanna, and put away in a chest that stood at the furthest corner of the room, from which the apothecary had gone to take his hat and stick, seeing the case of his patient was now beyond all remedy, but, on hearing the solemn words of Master Bifield, he reverently bent his knees, and stayed where he was.

The countenance of that excellent good man was elevated, and bore the expression of a martyr passing from life to immortality, with a joyful hope that holdeth pain at defiance. The light fell full upon it, and the ravages that disease and care had made there were painfully visible. Yet, as with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, he implored the Divine custody for the spirit that was about to pass away, his passionate moving

eloquence appeared so to excite him, that to those who beheld him from the next chamber, he seemed to possess a greater degree of strength than they had seen in him for many years past.

Then with a still greater heartiness he prayed for forgiveness for the great sin he had committed by his negligence, and broke out in a confused passion of grief and self-condemnation, whereof the burthen was, he had sacrificed the sweetest excellent scholar master ever had, and thereupon the tears ran down his cheeks—the pitifullest sight eyes ever looked on—and, lastly, he finished his discourse with a like urgent appeal as that with which he had commenced it, dilating on the child's worthiness of Heaven, with such a power of language, that at last it became evident his feelings were overpowering him. He could only at intervals, and with a sort of frenzied earnestness, utter a few words of loving praise, which became fainter and fainter, till at last his head sunk on his hands, and he seemed to be continuing the prayer in silence, too exhausted for further speech.

There had been no other sounds during this discourse, but the sobbing of some of the women, and the laborious breathing of the sick boy. His look had been cast upward from the first moment Master Bifield's voice became audible; as it grew interrupted, the breathing grew less distinct, and as the former ceased, there was heard in the deep silence that then reigned throughout the chamber, the horriblem of all sounds, *the death-rattle*. Master Shakspeare uttered a cry of agony, and took to be so frantic, three strong men were necessary to tear him from the chamber, and at the same instant, the faithful Talbot set up a long and piercing howl, which never left the remembrance of those who heard it.

Yet the saddest thing of all remains to be told. After the chamber had been cleared of the afflicted relatives, Master Bifield still remained in silent devotion, which, as might be supposed, none liked to disturb. At last the apothecary said something to one of Master Shakspeare's friends who was present. On this hint they both approached to where he knelt, and, not receiving any answer to certain words with which they addressed him, they each took him by the arm, and held back his head.

A long and wasting illness, followed by several days' violent exertion to both mind and body, had brought him to so low a state that the suffering and labor he had put himself to during those last few moments, had sufficed for the utter extinction of his feeble

life; and, as it looked to those who witnessed, the master so honored, and the scholar so doted on, concluded their loving studies by taking their way to heaven hand in hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

We present men with the ugliness of their vices to make them the more to abhor them; as the Persians use, who, above all sinnes loathing drunkenness, accustomed in their solemn feasts to make their servants and captives extremely overcome with wines, and then call their children to view their nasty and loathsome behaviour, making them hate that sinne in themselves, which shewed so grosse and abominable in others.

AN APOLOGY FOR ACTORS.

WHETHER Dapple and Jack liked as little the neighborhood of the gipsy encampment as their riders, there is no knowing for a certainty; but, judging by the unaccustomed pace at which these two goodly steeds went, and the extraordinary long time they continued it, there seemeth some grounds for so thinking. It may readily be imagined no effort was made to check their fleetness. In sooth, if ever horse and man were of one mind, the old grey and the youthful physician were, out of all doubt, and in this agreement of opinion they were closely copied by the stalwart serving-man and his rough, heavy-heeled colt.

They made so huge a clatter in the dead of the night, as to cause infinite alarm to some of the rustical sort of people whose habitations they passed by, divers of whom fell readily into the conceit that it could be no other than an army of bloodthirsty Spaniards intent on ravaging the whole kingdom. Others took it to be a rising of the Papists for the cutting of Protestant throats. A few were no less certain that it was no other than an army of thieving Scots; whilst certain, who affected a greater wisdom, put it down to witchcraft, and shook in their beds for an hour after.

Whilst passing through one straggling hamlet, an alarm-bell was rung by the sexton, who happened to be returning from a roaring carouse with the parish clerk, at the neighboring sign of "The Foaming Tankard;" and these worthies took their oaths on it, a few hours after, before the borough reeve and his equally frightened partners in authority, that they had witnessed a host of horsemen, nigh upon a thousand or two, dashing along with full speed, armed to the teeth, on the highroad to Lon-

don, which place, it was like enough, they intended surprising; whereof, the consequence was, a hue and cry was presently despatched to the Privy Council, describing the appearance of the enemy in the most imposing array, and messengers sent to alarm the district for miles round, and take measures for its defence.

Perfectly unconscious of the sensation they were creating, the travellers continued their course; their desire to place themselves out of the reach of Black Sampson occupying their thoughts, to the exclusion of all other things whatsoever; and they did not begin to feel secure till, just as the day began to break, they rode into the yard of "The Golden Dragon," at Uxbridge.

A lame ostler was perceived, with the assistance of a lantern which he carried, grooming a horse. A heavily-laden waggon stood at the bottom of the yard, and divers goodly packages, with pack-saddles, and other stable-gear, lay about. Doubtless the whole inn was in as peaceable a state as ever inn was a minute since; but, directly Dapple and Jack rushed clattering over the stones, all show of quiet was at an end.

Half a dozen carriers' dogs began barking and yelping, as though trying against each other the fierceness of their noise, and, presently after, out rushed their several masters at different doors, each with a lantern and a heavy cudgel, fearing nothing less than that their bales were being rifled. The shouting and uproar they made had the effect of bringing into the gallery which went round the yard, and at every one of the doors and casements, mine host and hostess, with all their guests and servants, with spits, guns, rapiers, and various other deadly arms—some but half-dressed, and others with nought on but what they were sleeping in—here and there one carrying a light, believing they were about to be robbed and murdered at the least. But, when the carriers held up their lanterns to the intruders, who were as much astonished at the strangeness of their reception as were the people of the inn alarmed by their sudden appearance, and saw in what peaceable guise they came, and, moreover, when they heard the chorus of loud laughter, and the various rude jests which came from the carriers, as they observed the goodly specimens of horseflesh on which the travellers were mounted, they presently returned to their beds, assured of the safety both of their purses and their lives.

Simon Stockfish was by no means of a quarrelsome humor—perchance the perils his young master had already escaped im-

pressed the more deeply on his mind the necessity of keeping out of broils—so that, whilst John Hall, under the guidance of mine host, went his way into a comfortable chamber, the careful serving-man, unheeding the taunts that were levelled at his skill in horseflesh, proceeded to get his beasts the nourishment and repose they needed equally with their riders.

The young physician soon found himself discussing a pleasant meal, and relating to a circle of marvelling listeners of both sexes the strange adventure that had befallen him with the king of the gipsies. Thereupon arose amongst them much curious talk relating to Black Sampson and his comely leman; and many marvellous things were said of both, and the outlaws also, which greatly increased the astonishment Master Hall had experienced from the knowledge of them he had himself with so much peril obtained.

In the end, a soldier-sort of man, who had a patch over one eye, and a complexion like unto the bark of a tree, and whose pate was as bald as though it had just been cleanly shaved, though his grey beard was as ample as need be, promised the youthful traveller his protection on the remainder of his road, vowing, fore gad, he would make any villainous Rommanee meat for dogs, who should venture to touch a hair of his head whilst in his company. This being said with a terrible fierce air, and a blow on the hilt of his rapier that sent the blade into the scabbard with a great noise, as the captain turned on his heel, and marched with imposing strides to his own chamber, was not without its due effect. Although this personage was a stranger to the travellers, he was none to the reader.

In the meanwhile, Simon Stockfish was doing his best for the comfort and convenience of Dapple and Jack, apparently prudently heedless of the sauciness of his rude associates. It may here be remembered that his having had his crown so recently cracked by his endeavoring to show his notions of what was most prudent and politic, had a wonderful influence towards shaking his opinion of the excellence of such notions, to say nought of the little good they had done the object for whose peculiar benefit and security they were entertained: therefore, he held his peace, as a secure means of offending none, and in no slight degree prided himself on the subtlety of such behavior.

Alack-a-day! such subtlety appeared to be poorly estimated by his unmannerly companions, who, enraged by what they

called his sullen humor, at hearing of their merry jests at his expense, one jostled him, and then another jostled him, and in a moment they all commenced pushing him violently from one to another, with a huge uproar of sportive shouts and cries, till there seemed no spot where he could be allowed to stand, and every bone in his body was as tender as an over-boiled chicken. Then a tall strapping fellow emptied upon him a huge bucket of water, and, after fixing the vessel on his head, the carriers, one and all, set up a loud horse-laugh, and led their several beasts, as quickly as they might, out of the inn-yard.

Poor Simon, soaked to the skin, and sore in every limb, whilst drying of his garments at the kitchen-fire, and breaking his long fast on the goody meal provided for him, was sadly puzzled at the difficulty he found in behaving so as to scape harm, and was fast inclining to the conviction that he was living in a villanous world, where no honest serving-man could hope to exist with whole bones.

As the valiant personage alluded to in a preceding page intended leaving the Golden Dragon by nine of the clock that morning, that he might be in the good city of London at a convenient hour of the same day, for the transacting of a certain important business, with no less a person than the Lord Mayor, on which he was bound, our tired travellers were allowed a fair rest; and whilst one is sleeping in the chamber set apart for him, and the other is obtaining as sound a slumber stretched on a hard bench in the chimney-corner, methinks it will be an admirable opportunity for making this worthy better known to the courteous reader than he is, which cannot, in common policy, be let pass.

Titus Swashbuckler, sometime an ancient, above which dignity he never rose, notwithstanding it hath been his good pleasure nigh upon a score of years to be styled captain, was as well known in every ordinary in the city as the conduit in Eastcheap. How he lived was oft a mystery to many, but that he did live, and with very tolerable accommodations, the many who beheld him on his customary stool, in one or other of these houses of entertainment, eating and drinking evidently to his heart's content, were satisfied there was no manner of doubting.

Certes, his apparelling never looked to be of the newest, and his linen often showed a marvellous inclination for the buck-basket, but as he took on himself the character of a cast-captain, these signs were never regard-

ed as marvellous, and as he had the faculty of making himself agreeable to any one who seemed capable of paying his reckoning, and never attempted to offend such as looked in good odour with the rest of the company, he grew speedily to be as well liked as any one of his calling.

It is said that his principal source of subsistence was teaching the use of the rapier and dagger; for in Paul's Walk his bills might often be seen, offering to teach any kind of weapon, and challenging all comers at fence for a thousand crowns. Where he was to find a thousandth part of this sum was, six days out of seven, as complete a puzzle as ever was the sphinx to the learnedest scholar in Christendom, but greater difficulties never troubled the valiant captain. His challenge was repeated as often as it got defaced and torn down; and as none of the celebrated swordsmen in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, to whom it was particularly directed, seemed desirous of obtaining the said handsome wager of him, he, doubtless very disconsolately, was forced to content himself with teaching the youth of London, for the trifling consideration of sixpence a lesson, those marvellous tricks of fence which had got for him so exceeding terrible a name, none dared enter the lists with him.

This teaching, therefore, was considered to be his chief means of living, though it had been noised abroad that the cast-captain, whenever there was a likelihood of gain, would have recourse to numberless other arts in less credit with the world. He pretended to teach all the delicate mysteries of the duello, as practised in the first courts of Europe, and was ready, for a proper recompense, as had been the case with the unfortunate player, to be the second of any gentleman desirous of showing the most exact familiarity with these important observances: nay, if he had fitting remuneration, he would be glad to take up any man's quarrel, no matter how bad a cause he had.

Then, should any gallant want a blade of exceeding good repute, he would have one ready at your hand in a presently; one of a thousand, so sweet a temper, so rare an edge, neither Damascus nor Toledo had seen such choice metal; indeed, on his honor, it was given him in such a famous battle, by some great general of the enemy, whom the fortune of war had made his prisoner, and he would not part with it did he not estimate your worth and valour so highly. Thereupon he would ask, perchance, fifty gold pieces, swearing the whilst it was of inestimable value, and, noting your indiffer-

ence to purchase, would speedily bring down his demand to a matter of a few shillings, insisting on it he'd let you have it at so poor a price out of pure affection. Mayhap, you are at last induced to buy it, and in good time discover this matchless weapon to be as good a blade—for toasting cheese withal—as any you are like to meet with.

Such was Titus Swashbuckler, as he rode out of the yard of the Golden Dragon by the side of John Hall; after having, as a matter of especial favor, allowed his new acquaintance to pay his score of two shillings and eightpence, at the inn, protesting, very heartily, on the honor of a soldier, he had not so much as a doit in his purse, he having thoughtlessly, the night before, on being applied to, emptied its contents into the hat of a poor fellow, who had fought by his side at the taking of Cadiz, and was then in the utmost extremity of want.

As they jogged on together, the captain entertained his young companion with the most wonderful tales of battles and sieges; in the which nothing appeared so evident as the narrator's exceeding valor. Among other things, he stated how he had lost his eye, when with a few other daring spirits he was in the act of boarding a galleon in the Spanish main—a villanous Spaniard having thrust it out with a pipe—but, finding his listener did not enter into these spirit-stirring recollections with the interest he expected and desired, and did not show the least anxiety to become possessed of the incomparable weapon that had been the favorite rapier of no less a hero than Sir Philip Sidney, and had been presented by his widow to her deceased husband's brother in arms, Captain Titus Swashbuckler, at that hero's particular request in his dying moments, the valiant captain felt a wish to learn something more of his fellow-traveller than the little he at present knew, before he expended any more of his eloquence upon him.

Such an inclination was easily gratified, being directed upon one so candid and unsuspecting; and the young student of medicine, in a few words, told the valiant captain who he was, for what object he was travelling, and whither he was going.

"By this sword, this is strange indeed!" exclaimed the master of fence, with every appearance of excessive astonishment. "How exceeding fortunate it is that I have met you on your journey, Master Hall."

"Why so, good Captain?" inquired the youth.

"Fore George! if there be one man with whom I am more familiar than another, it is

mine estimable worthy friend Master Doctor Posset. Why, we are sworn brothers! Many a gay carouse have we had together, I promise you; for the Doctor, i'faith, be-longeth to the fraternity of jolly dogs, and doth the order no small credit."

The young student did not think this character any recommendation; for his opinion of what a skilful physician should be did not harmonize at all with the impression made by his companion's description of the man with whom he was about to commence a finishing course of study in medicine, previous to seeking a degree.

"I tell you, my worthy young Esculapius," continued the valiant captain, "you have met with especial good fortune in having made choice of so admirable proper an instructor. He is a rare fellow, this Doctor, and one in as absolute repute for his skill with the sick, as for his pleasantness with the hale. Many a bottle have we cracked together, and shall again as long as there shall be any virtue in good wine."

"Hath he many patients?" inquired John Hall, very coolly.

"By this sword, he hath such store of patients, I know not they who have not, at some time or other, sought to obtain benefit at his hands."

The young student began to feel more reconciled.

"You cannot help being wondrous content with your condition, my young friend," remarked the ancient. "You will find the Doctor such excellent company, and one so learned, withal, in the flavor of choice wine, you are not like to meet, search where you will."

"I do not much need such knowledge," answered the young physician, gravely; "and, methinks, a practitioner of physic ought to have studies of a very different sort."

"Fore George, well said!" cried the soldier, who was of so amiable a disposition, he never differed with a person on whose purse he had any design. "This same drinking must needs be of huge detriment to the proper study of medicine; and, for mine own part, I cannot believe one jot of what the idle world reports concerning the doctor's fondness for good wine. Indeed, this world's so villanously given to lying, it must needs be the safest policy never to believe a word one hears. On mine honor as a soldier, I take the doctor to care as little for wine, as the gravest physician of them all. He would scorn to take more than became him. But if you are not like

to meet temptations to intemperance, you will find in his house seductions less easily to be withstood."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the youth, in some alarm.

"Out of all doubt, Master Doctor!" cried the other, in a joyful tone. "This learned physician, let me tell you, hath a daughter just of an age, a form and countenance that would make a man's heart melt within him, were he ever so little given to the dear sex. And the little fiery god play not the very devil with you ere you have been a week under the same roof with her exquisite lustrous eyes, I am no master of fence."

"I care little for these things," quietly replied the student, on whom his mother's grave entreaties touching his behavior, which were almost the last words she spoke to him, now exercised their fullest influence.

The valiant captain stared with all his solitary eye. To meet with a young man for whom martial stories had no interest, wine no attraction, and who was indifferent to the charms of woman, seemed so extraordinary that he could scarce credit his senses. Believing that no good was to be got by exercising his talents upon such insensible materials, he was about to entertain the idea of getting rid of such unprofitable society, when the remembrance of the two-and-eightpence he had already pocketed induced him to continue his exertions.

"I doubt not you are a master of your weapon," observed the cast captain. "Nay, that warlike look and bearing you have with you telleth me you are as perfect a swordsman as any one of your years. Fore George, here is a pretty soldier spoiled!"

Now, John Hall had as little of the soldier in him as you might hope to find in an apple custard; and, instead of a warlike look and bearing, wore the peaceablest air possible.

"Perchance, you have killed your enemy now already," added his companion. "Heart o' me, I am sure on't!"

"In sooth, you misjudge me hugely," replied the student. "My vocation is to cure, not to kill; and so little do I know of the soldier's art, that I am as ignorant of the sword as the babe that hath not yet seen the light."

"This is strange indeed!" observed the captain, as though monstrously astonished. "As I live, I would not have believed a tittle of it, had you not told it me yourself. Why, how dost intend to live, sweet sir? A youth of your goodly appearance, that must needs associate with gallants of the court, and young citizens who are as familiar with their

weapons as with their toothpicks—why you cannot but be a lost man, know you not how to stand on your defence.”

“I will take heed I give offence to none; then, of a surety, I must escape harm.”

“Fore gad! such a thing was never known,” added the master of fence, vehemently. “It be as necessary for a man to know his weapon as to know his alphabet; nay, in mine opinion, the weapon deserveth to be considered the most essential of the two, for with it a man shall not only be able to keep his life secure, but shall carve for himself a way to fortune, reputation, and his mistress’ favor, which the extremest cunning in letters cannot effect.”

The young student rode on, apparently but little interested in his companion’s argument, but he offered no opposition to what he had just advanced.

“I will give you an instance, Master Esculapius,” he continued, “of the exceeding importance of being skilled in noble swordmanship. When I was in Spain, with the forces of my very excellent good friend and admirable commander, the Earl of Essex, who with that valiant admirable Sir Walter Raleigh, the thrice noble Sir Philip Sidney, and in short nigh upon all our chiefest officers, had of me their well known cunning of fence, I was sent on a mission of importance, being considered one of the few fit to be employed on such high occasions, as much for my daring valor, as for my ripe experience in martial affairs. I was proceeding alone through the outskirts of Cadiz, intent on the performing of my mission with credit, when, as I turned the corner of a convent, I became aware of an ambuscade of villanous Spaniards—nigh upon a dozen—in sooth, I will not assert there were not thirteen—but they were the horriblest cut-throat dogs I had ever met. I promise you my rapier was in my hand in a second, and ere you could count one, I had stretched two of my assailants at my feet.”

“Still your foes were too numerous for one man to combat with;” said John Hall, innocently. “Methinks there could be no great difficulty in some of them taking you from behind, whilst you were defending yourself in front.”

“Under ordinary circumstances, I grant you,” readily returned the cast-captain. “But you should take into consideration my wonderful mastery of my weapon, which hath enabled me to triumph over all the most distinguished swordsmen from every part of the civilized globe, whom I have overcome by a secret stroke it is not possible

for any one to withstand, however great a master of fence he may be.”

“I knew not that, valiant captain,” observed the young physician, seemingly in some surprise.

“Fore George, I could have guessed as much!” replied the redoubtable Swashbuckler. “But to the telling of my tale. Such was the quickness of my eye, and the excellence of my guard, that my opponents could not touch me any one of them, and their numbers, by their jostling together, made them unable to defend themselves, as they otherwise might, against my quick and fatal thrusts. One by one they dropped around me, till three only were left, when, feeling somewhat tired by my great exertions in this unequal fight, I sought some mean or another of bringing the combat to a speedy close. And what think you, sweet sir, I did?”

“In sooth, I know not,” said the student.

“This was it,” answered the ancient, with a very commendable gravity. “I employed all the strategy of which I was master to set my assailants in a line, and then, sudden as a flash of lightning, with one terrible lunge, I pinned my three Spaniards against the wall.”

“That was marvellous indeed!” exclaimed John Hall, with a tone and look of prodigious surprise.

“By this sword, I held them as easily as so many larks on a skewer,” added the master of fence. “Now this sheweth how absolutely necessary it is for every one to have a perfect knowledge of his weapon. I must needs have the teaching of you, Master Hall. It must not be allowed that one who holdeth himself so handsomely, should be at the mercy of every lewd fellow, who chooseth to pick a quarrel with him. When you have so little chance with one, if you should be set upon by numbers, as was I, you would be cut to pieces presently.”

“Methinks, I am little likely to be in such peril,” said the youth, “seeing I am not a valiant captain like yourself, and, having no intention of voyaging to Spain, I must needs be safe from Spanish ambuscades.”

“I doubt it not, Master Hall, I doubt it not;” quickly replied Swashbuckler. “But a man who hath not a proper degree of skill in the handling of his weapon, standeth no better chance in England than elsewhere. The highways are beset with villanous cut-purses—desperate unruly thieves, who get together in companies and despoil the traveller, both of his life, and of whatever he hath about him.”

“Can skill with the sword avail the travel-

ler if these cut-purses be armed with pistols?" inquired the young physician.

"Out of all doubt," answered the other, with as perfect a confidence as ever was seen. "If you will be taught, I will show how one may defend himself at any odds against such rascal fellows, and run every one through the body, by my infallible secret stroke, ere he have time to pull a trigger."

"I knew not the use of the sword could be made of such advantage," observed the young physician.

"Truly, there is no telling the marvel the skill I teach can be made to perform," gravely asserted the master of fence. "One fact is worth a volume of discourses. I have so often stretched these cut-purse villains in the dust, when they have set on me in a body, that, be they ever in such great numbers, they durst not come a near me. The last acquaintance I had of them was in Tot-hill Fields, when two sturdy knaves set on me with a sword and dagger, and two more took to their pistols, seeking to get a sure aim. What think you I did in this strait?"

"It seemeth to me past telling," said the other.

"Like enough, good youth;" answered Swashbuckler. "I thought a long time how I could with great dexterity escape from these miscreants, and made use of a master-stroke of policy for that purpose."

"After what fashion, valiant captain?"

"This was the manner of it, Master Hall. I did so skip and so jump, and so dodge about, that they with the pistols could get no aim at me, without putting their fellow rogues to imminent danger: so they all spread themselves to have at me, and were, as I could see, exceeding eager for my destruction. Seeing they with the pistols right over-against each other, I gave them good opportunity for aiming, whilst I allowed the sword and dagger men, whom I had got in a like opposite situation, to prepare a fatal spring at me. Watching my time, on a sudden I jumped clean away from them. And what think you followed?"

"Perchance, they made after you."

"Fore George, they were in no case for moving a step! The sword and dagger men fell thrust through by each other's hands at the same moment of time they with the pistols shot each other through the head."

"As I live, a most strange thing!" exclaimed the youth very much astonished.

"But what sort of company have we here?" he added, pointing to some men who seemed to be making towards them in the direction they were proceeding: "now, if they chance to be cut-purses, valiant cap-

tain, methinks they had best away with themselves as they are wont to do at the sight of you, as quick as they can—else your exceeding skill with your weapon must needs be their entire destruction."

Captain Swashbuckler at this directed his gaze where he was required, and, after a few minutes sharp scrutiny, suddenly put spurs to his horse and turned at full speed down a bye lane; but whilst John Hall was marvelling at this strange behavior, he noticed the men who were approaching quickening their pace towards him, and seeing they were armed and of a very vagrant-like appearance, he looked to his weapons. As they rushed towards him with threatenings and imprecations, he had just time to be on his guard, and, one of the villains attempting to seize his bridle, he let fly at him presently, and, doubtless wounded him, for he fell back into the arms of one of his associates.

It was evident that neither Dapple nor Jack had ever so slight an acquaintance with the munitions of war, for, as in a previous instance of a similar sort, on the instant they heard the report of the pistol, they started off with a desperateness that rendered futile all attempts on the part of the cut-purses to lay a hold on their riders; the old horse giving one of the rascals so sharp a kick as sent him to the ground, yelling like a dog that hath got his tail jammed in a door-way.

Simon Stockfish had not passed unprofitably the time taken up by the discourse of his master with the cast-captain. He had been thinking with a wondrous intentness on the best means of securing his young master's safety till he got him securely housed in the dwelling of the famous Doctor Posset, in Barbican; after imagining all sorts of evils it was possible for him to meet during the remainder of his journey, and every possible kind of remedy for one and all of them, he had just come to the sage conclusion, founded on the little profit he had got, of the ability to help him in his need, that it would be discreetest to let things take their course, when the firing of the pistol and the uncontrollable fury of his steed put an end to his reflections. For some time, he had quite enough to do to endeavor to keep his seat, and probably this inability to interfere secured his master's safety and his own.

They pursued the rest of the way without any adventure worth naming; not, however, without Dapple and Jack creating a vast deal of attention wherever they appeared; and, after some difficulty, the young physician found out the place of his destination. Those goodly steeds were at once sent to proper stables, that they might have a suffi-

cient rest previous to their return to their owners the next day, in the careful custody of Simon Stockfish.

John Hall was so fortunate as to meet his instructor in the art and mystery of medicine, within a few doors of his dwelling. Dr. Posset appeared to be a little man, of a lively temperament, having grey hair, growing very thin, carefully curled; his short beard being looked after with equal affection. His eyebrows were very thick, and jutting out exceedingly, under which were a pair of keen, hawk-like eyes. A thick and mishapen nose, and a mouth of a moderate size, drawn in by loss of teeth, completed the list of his principal features. His dress was a sober suit of plum-colored cloth, with falling band and ruffles; hose of the same color; a velvet cap, without a feather; and square-toed shoes, without roses; and these, with a long staff in his hand, tipped with ivory, made up the distinguishing marks of his apparelling.

On first spying him, Dr. Posset, as though in no manner of doubt as to his man, gave him a hearty welcome, inquired after his good mother, and how he had borne the journey, and hoped they should be excellent friends, and that the youth might find with him as pleasant a home as the one he had left.

The house wherein the student was about to find a dwelling seemed to him a fair edifice, though bearing an antique and somewhat gloomy aspect. The chambers above the ground floor projected into the street, and much rude carving was observable round the door and over the lower casement; a rude figure representing the goddess Hygeia, carved in oak, was displayed at full length, with all her proper attributes, in a prominent place above the door; whilst a head of Galen, in monstrous dingy colors, was slung in an iron frame in front of it. Above the front story projected another, with much the same sort of wide casements, all black with time and weather stains; and in the shelving roof, there seemed to be one or two more, though of a much smaller sort.

The houses adjoining were of the same respectable sort, belonging to persons of substance and credit, most of them having some sort of sign to distinguish the calling of the tenant; and, as bravely-apparelled gallants, discreet gentlewomen, and citizens of fair repute, were seen going in and out of them, there could be no manner of doubt but that Barbican was a place peopled by thriving and respectable citizens.

John Hall followed his conductor through the door, which he opened with a latch, and

found himself in a capacious hall, having chambers to the right and left, distinguishable by the open doors which led into them; and there was a staircase at the further end, the lower part being seen through another open door at the left, corresponding with a closed door, or rather wicket, at the right, formed in an oaken partition of some eight or ten feet high; the upper part of the staircase being visible above it; the wicket leading to the back premises, and the other door to the chambers above.

John Hall had scarcely time to notice these particulars, when his attention became completely engrossed by a number of persons grouped about the foot of the stairs. Stretched at her full length on the steps, her head supported in the lap of an elderly female of a monstrous sharp visage, a younger one sitting at her feet, whilst a stout youth had firm possession of her arms, lay a girl, evidently just entering upon her career of womanhood.

She appeared rather of a tall stature, with limbs somewhat large, though by no means ungraceful, well-rounded arms and bust, being in a low, tight bodice, were at least sure of being regarded admiringly; and her dainty farthingale disclosed sufficient of her ankles to prove they were no less commendable. Her features bespoke nothing of a singular comeliness, but they were seen to no sort of advantage, the eyes being fixed, the nostrils dilated, the mouth opening and shutting as though with sudden spasms, and the complexion pallid, whilst the abundance of her glossy hair strayed in confusion over her forehead and shoulders.

She made a strange mumbling sound, and threw out her arms by sudden starts, which he who grasped them—albeit he did not seem to lack strength—had much ado to keep under his commandment. Anon she would strive to overthrow those who held her, by some prodigious effort of strength, which it was with exceeding difficulty they could withstand; and failing in this, burst out into a monstrous passion of laughter so long and loud, it was as though all Pandemonium were moved by some devilish jest; and, after this, straightway commenced talking eagerly the strangest stuff ever heard, the which was only brought to an ending by a sudden and mighty dashing of herself as though to escape, which was soon followed by another wild scream of laughter more fierce than ever.

Near her stood one with a vessel of water, which was being sprinkled on her face, whilst another held burnt feathers to her nose, and a third was approaching with

some kind of medicine in a glass. Other remedies were suggested by her distressed companions, but she minded them none at all, for she struggled, and screamed, and gabbled, and laughed with increasing fury.

Whilst John Hall gazed on this scene with the most absolute astonishment, it seemed to fill his conductor with nothing but vexation, for he spoke impatiently, now wringing his hands and casting up his eyes, and anon pacing up and down with his hands behind him.

All at once she seemed to be in a less tearing humor. At this the young man bent his head near the ear of the sick girl, and, whispering with an impressing earnestness, as though calling to her, the name of "Millicent." He had scarce done so, when she replied, in a faint and languid voice, and thereupon commenced a dialogue between the two, the one asking how she felt, and what she would have done for her; and the other answering she was better, and desired nothing so much as to be taken to her chamber.

Preparations were soon made for carrying her wishes into effect, the youth seeming to take nearly all the burthen of her conveyance upon himself.

It was easy to guess that the sick girl was the physician's daughter; the elder female was a neighbor, following the trade of a capper, in Golden Lane; the other was a young friend; the youth was an apprentice to Dr. Posset of more than a year's standing; and the others were certain acquaintances of the physician's—neighbors and gossips—invited by him, to welcome amongst them the young scholar, whose studies he was about to superintend.

As the young physician watched the retreating form of the fair Millicent up the stairs, was he recalling the seductive character of the one who was about to be his near associate for a long period, which he had heard from the estimable Captain Swashbuckler? It did not recur to his mind, for a single moment. He thought only of what was writ in a certain part of Galen on the subject of epilepsy.

CHAPTER IX.

You neede not goe abroade to bee tempted: you shall bee intised at your own windowes. The best counsell that I can give you is to keepe at home, and shun all occasion of ill speech.

THE SCHOOLE OF ABUSE.

We may not tarry with the bereaved fath-

er longer than will suffice for the reader's proper understanding of his unutterable sorrow. By the death of his so deeply beloved son, Master Shakspeare's heart was smote as though the king of terrors had dealt therein his fiercest dart. He recovered so far as to follow to its last resting-place all that remained of the form which had so long been the chiefest object in every ambitious dream, with a seeming marvellous calm and patience; but when he heard the clods of earth rattle against the little coffin, there rushed into his mind so vast a sense of the sunless love there buried and lost for ever, that his oppressed brain could not bear the burden of it, and he straightway fell into such a passionate frenzy, it was with a monstrous to do he could be got home; and only with many strong men's help, day and night, could he be kept to his chamber. How wildly he raved; how piercingly he called on the remorseless tomb to give up its youthful tenant; how fiercely he waged war on divers shadowy powers, which, in his fantasy, kept from him his heart's best treasure; and how urgently he prayed to what seemed to him the unnatural callous natures that set at nought a father's agony, and could not be moved by a father's love—it passeth the skill of my rude pen to say. Perchance, of those whose eyes wander over these pages, there shall be some whose affections have been uprooted after the rude fashion which marked the love of this noble gentleman for his sweet Hamnet, and can readily conceive the manifold workings of so terrible tempestuous an earthquake of the heart; but, doubtless, there shall be many who know nothing of these things. God keep them, to their lives' end, in so proper an ignorance!

We must, however, state that, partly from the sympathy which this huge affliction created for miles round, now directed to the promising scholar, anon to the diligent and well-pleased master, and then to the doting father, and, from the respect felt generally for one of such blameless life as the deceased vicar, and for one of so many admirable qualities as William Shakspeare, there was at the funeral so numerous an assemblage as had never been known before to have congregated on such an occasion.

Not only did the gentry of the neighborhood attend, but every one of the corporation of Stratford, from the high bailiff to the humblest of the burgesses, with every proper sign of mourning, joined in the melancholy procession. Honored with the sincere regrets of rich and poor, and such a bountiful

store of tears from man, woman, and child, as though their deaths were regarded as a public calamity, they, who had been so long and intimately connected by a mutual love of learning, were on the same day consigned to their narrow homes. Though it may be said of them, that they brought their studies to a most sorry ending—that their eager pursuit of wisdom led them only to that unmatchable dreary state where alone wisdom hath no privilege—who shall aver that, in those groves of everlasting verdure, which hath in so many good men's minds been considered the abiding-place of all intelligent spirits that have passed away from this lower world, that diligent and affectionate scholar is not at this very moment of time enjoying the inestimable lessons of the master by whom he was so truly loved?

It was long after the churchyard was deserted, when every one of that goodly assemblage by whom it had been filled were in their own more enviable homes, reflecting on the affliction that had visited the cottage at Shottery, one mourner still lingered about the grave of Hamnet Shakspeare. It was Talbot.

The poor hound had managed to escape from the outhouse—where, since the death of his young playmate, he had been carefully yet kindly confined—by taking advantage of the absence at the funeral of the affectionate creature who had shewn such friendly heed of him. Talbot never failed to recognize the attentions and caresses of the gentle Susanna, but the food she brought was left untouched, and the tears with which the sorrowing girl mingled her persuasions to take the tempting morsels she put before him elicited no other sign of his attention than an uneasy whine.

By what singular instinct it was, on breaking from his bonds and displacing a loose board, he made direct for the churchyard, cannot be explained any more than his immediately selecting the exact spot beneath which lay all that remained of one with whom he had had such heaps of pleasant sport. A short time after he was discovered howling the piercingest tones ever heard, whilst making prodigious efforts to tear up the soil that rested on Hamnet's coffin. To drive him or coax him out of the churchyard was found impossible, till Susanna, having discovered his escape, on her proceeding at her return home to tempt him once more with some nice morsel, hurried in search of him, and, with infinite trouble, at last succeeded in getting him away.

It was only by the constant care and exquisite loving kindness of this gentle girl that the

life of the poor hound was saved. For a long time Talbot looked but the skeleton of what he was. Deeply must he have grieved for the loss of his fast friend and playmate. He never again ventured near the churchyard; but, when allowed to wander where he chose, he would take every possible pains to avoid it. And, after the lapse of many months, having accompanied some of the family in that direction, he stopped at one of the gates, and set up so pitiful a howl, it moved all who saw him.

Advancing somewhat in time, it must now be stated, that, stretched on a bed in a chamber, the which may readily be recognized as the one in which young Hamnet died, although it had since seen divers alterations, lay the heart-broken father, slowly recovering from the moral and physical effects of the fatal blow at his happiness he had so unexpectedly received. His eyes were open, and, though dimmed by sorrow and long sickness, still shone with that fine spirit whereby so many worthy actions of his had been influenced: his face was exceeding pale and much wasted; but the benevolence that might be read in its expression, like a written language, was as visible as ever; and the intelligence that spoke as intelligibly from his noble forehead as though it were the powerfullest eloquence ever heard, was such as neither grief nor illness had any power over.

He gazed about him somewhat strangely, leaning his head upon his hand, perchance for obtaining a better survey of his chamber, and his eyes wandered over all its objects, but could not be said to rest on any, till it fell upon a plot of pansies that grew in a box outside the open casement, and were then in full bloom. A yellow butterfly—that common sign of summer and sunshine—was hovering over the pretty blossoms, on which it presently descended.

These familiar shapes, that speak, too, so cheerfully of life and its most exquisite sources of enjoyment, did not present themselves to the mind of the sick man without bearing with them those marvellous lessons with which Nature, in her exceeding love, refreshes the weary and heals the wounded spirit. Though the goodliest edifice that dotting affection ever raised out of the most excusable feelings of pride and ambition had been overthrown to its very foundations, and the poor architect stood overwhelmed and stunned with the completeness of his ruin, scarce had he recovered the faculty of seeing, when he became sensible that life had still hopes, and Nature bounties, and with such help more secure fabrics might be built

up of nearly as fair proportions and lofty elevation.

As he continued his gaze on the pansies, Master Shakspeare's thoughts fell out of that disordered state in which they had so long been left to wander, and gradually grew into a wholesome regularity. That they led him to the pleasant mossy banks, and the sweet shady nooks where, in times past, he had first sought to indulge that sympathy for the beautiful which had linked so indissolubly all his exquisitest feeling to nature, can be no marvel; that they convinced him that all the enjoyments sought by him out of the wide range of unrivalled pleasures she offers to such as devote themselves to her service, were not only profitless, but deeply mischievous, is likewise no more than natural: and that, at last, they directed him for the future to place his whole reliance on those means of happiness still at his disposal, as having in this pursuit neither vexation nor trouble of any sort whatever, is the probable thing that could be thought of.

Whether this happened or not, certain it is that a more cheerful aspect took possession of the sick man's features. He seemed, by some effort of his will, to lift his mind from the earth, and, extricating it from the fearful wreck which death had made of his affections, elevate it on those proud aspirations which had so often borne it out of sight of base earthly things. Then it was that the fluttering insect rose from its flowery resting-place beside the casement, and soared into the air, rising gradually before the sick man's eyes, till it had gone out of sight, as though aiming at the very highest heaven.

Whilst pondering on this apparent promise, Master Shakspeare was aware of a door opening, and with a step so soft, she seemed to be treading on the very air, and a look of deep interest, that gave but another gentle touch to the gentle expression of her beauty, Susanna entered the chamber. At the first glimpse he had of her he recognized the graceful form that had been wont to present itself in so many affectionate ways to his bewildered senses, but he could not have known the admirable attentive nurse she had been.

It was marvellous to behold the exceeding care with which the fond girl had watched over her parent throughout his terrible malady; of a truth, he owed his recovery to her patient and unceasing regard of him. A conviction of such an obligation entered his mind as she carefully approached the bed, and with it came the consoling thought, so much love would go far to replace the monstrous loss he had sustained.

As she took note of the improvement so visible in her patient's appearance, she smiled in such sort as plainly proved how greatly it was to her contentation. The father unclosed his eyes—which he had shut at his child's approach—and the affectionate joy that shone so brightly in her sweet countenance had so powerful an effect on him, that he presently threw his arms round her, and pressed her in a fond embrace. Although Susanna was somewhat taken by surprise, the endearing expressions she heard soon assured her, and she speedily gave herself up to the full enjoyment of those delicious moments.

To be loved was all her gentle nature desired, but had hitherto desired in vain. Her mother's affection was fixed exclusively upon her sister. Judith appeared to love no one, not even her too indulgent mother. Hamnet's whole soul was engrossed by his books, and her father, though always kind, seemed to have no affection to spare out of the heap he lavished on her brother. Failing in these quarters, she had strove hard to endear herself to Talbot, but the heart of the noble hound was so entirely that of his playfellow, that she found her exertions to win him to herself were fruitless. Disappointed though she was in her desires, it made not the slightest change in her disposition; whilst every one seemed cold and careless to her, she was gentle and kind to all.

It may, therefore, be imagined, that the pleasure with which she received the caresses of her father was of as perfect a sort as ever existed. She had not dared to hope to be made so happy. Indeed, she had almost despaired in her pursuit, knowing how little was to be expected from her mother and sister, and believing her father's affections to be buried in the coffin of his beloved Hamnet. But the conversation by which the well-pleased parent now skilfully brought out his daughter's disposition, assured her, by the commendation of her it elicited, that there was at least one heart in the world whose love she might obtain.

After this he mended fast, and bid fair to be a whole man again speedily; which, to be sure, was in a great measure owing to the loving care and heedfulness of his daughter Susanna—the only one in the house who troubled herself about him in any way worthy of notice. To be sure, her mother did, at times, pay him some attentions, and Judith would stay with him awhile when there was no great temptation to entice her away; but to a heart such as his, affection of this sort gave him anything but satisfaction.

It was about a week or so after this colloquy, that three old dames, each equally short of stature and stout of flesh, with visages alike in the marvellous fieryness that shone in them, like so many yulelogs in a blaze, and a similar showiness in their several apparelling, sat in the kitchen of the cottage at Shottery, as though they had just come in, and were intent on resting themselves after a walk. These were near relatives of Master Shakspeare's wife; three sisters, somewhat notorious for causing strife wherever they went.

Susanna was making bread at a goodly sized dough-trough on one side of the chamber, standing on a stool the while, and her mother and sister were tiring of themselves as though about going on a journey. But though the old dames were resting their limbs, their tongues got no rest, I promise you; nay, it more than once chanced, they all talked together, and so fast withal, it looked as though they had each got so much to say, Aunt Prateapace in especial, and so little time to give it utterance, all must needs out at once. In this chorus they were, ever and anon, joined by the mother and daughter, Susanna alone holding her peace; and she, too, continuing her labors apparently as little regarded of the rest as though she were a good thousand miles away.

"By my halidom, Anne, an I had a husband, I'd see him hanged ere I would be plagued by his humors!" said she in the yellow bodice with a crimson kirtle, tossing up her pincushion nose in a monstrous disdainful manner, as though she had smelt carrion. "A fine thing, truly, for a poor woman to be the slave of every tyrannical tearing fellow it may be her ill hap to have married! It is fit a wife should have her recreations and her pleasures, and have ever about her those who are her true friends and gossips, and engage in all manner of sports and revels she can get to; and in no case is it proper for her to be kept to her home like a rat in a trap, making herself a worthless, pitiful, poor drudge from day to day, and from year's end to year's end. All saints' days and holidays, and all manner of festivals and merrymakings, she ought to enjoy to her heart's content; and, if any pragmatical, peremptory husband sought to prevent it, she should value him no more than a cracked flea—that's *my* thinking," and the old dame laid an emphasis on her last words, slapped her closed fist against her open palm, and, looking as fierce as a ferret, turned short round on her stool towards her associates, as though there could be no appeal to so famous an argument.

"Truly, Aunt Gadabout, we poor women are hardly used," observed the still fair Anne, eyeing her comely features complacently in a small mirror she held in her hand—an observation they had heard from her when on the same subject any time this dozen years.

"Hardly used, quotha!" mumbled another, as, with her hands resting on her knees, and her body bending forward on the settle where she sat, she shook her head, as though it was took with a sudden ague. "Had Peter Prateapace ventured on such unbearableness, I'd a used him, i' faith!"

"Now it should be known that the said Peter, whilst he was in the flesh, would as soon have ventured on taking on himself the very slightest appearance of a husband, as of claiming kin with the Pope. It so chanced, however, that once having grown valiant by sitting over-late at his cups, with a noted scorne of scolds and termagant shrews, he came home, and dared to bid his wife bring him a pot of small ale, and, on her refusing, bade her go hang for a jade. The next morning, on his coming to his sober senses, the consequences looked so terrible, he went and incontinently drowned himself in the mill-stream.

"Hardly used, quotha!" she continued, in the same triumphant strain. "Lord warrant us! an all women had my will, Anne, they should follow their own humors with such infinite perfectness, they should have nothing to wish for in that matter, and snap their fingers on all men whatsoever. By'r lady! methinks 'tis a good thing for wives to be held in subjection of their husbands—to be thwarted, and vexed, and put upon as though they were fit for nought but to bear fardels enough to break their backs, whilst, forsooth, their precious helpmates are to look on and find fault. Were the best man that ever wore a head to attempt ordering of me, or interfering with my pleasures, ere he were a day, an hour, a minute older, an his face were not as well scratched as though it had been thrust through a bramble-bush, it should be a marvel indeed, I promise you—I warrant he should be in no mood for a second attempt of the sort."

"But I have such an infinite lack of spirits," added Anne, "and am so weak and fearful withal, such violent courses would only succeed in doing me a mischief."

"Alack, poor lamb!" cried the other, in a commiserating mood. "But this is the real grounds of it all. Were she not of such poor health, she would be more kindly used, but he taketh advantage of her weakness to treat her scurvily. I never could affect the fellow. He was ever a proud, bombastical,

fustian knave. I protest I liked him not from the first hour I saw him; and, since he hath been a player—save the mark—he hath become so intolerable fantastical and indifferent, and putteth on himself so monstrous nice a behavior, and so smooth a discourse, I would as lief lie in a butter-woman's basket as within earshot of him."

Susanna heard this disparagement of one whom her young heart regarded as the kindest and best of human beings, with pain;—but she said never a word, continuing kneading of the dough as though she had no interest in the discourse—even her mother seemed to like not such plain speaking.

"Nay, Aunt Breedbate, you do him wrong," she said, "I have seen no such behavior in him."

"Ah, child! I warrant me there is a good deal thou hast not seen of his goings on," replied the old dame, with an air of exceeding mystery. "Wished I to speak, I could say something on that matter marvellously to the purpose; but I am not like to cause mischief betwixt man and wife. To be sure, it is said, 'What God hath joined let no man put asunder,' which hath no allusion of any sort to women, so they may be left to do as they please in it. Nevertheless, I am so great an enemy to evil speaking, I hate any one who cannot keep what they know of another's ill deeds to themselves. Monstrous mischiefs have come of the idle employment of slanderous tongues, and the fair fame of the best are at the mercy of such. For mine own part, ere I would take to speaking ill of any one, albeit, though he were as villainous as a Jew, and there should be no other subject for speech, I would be dumb for a week. Therefore, the horrible wickedness your notable fine husband has fallen into must go untold for me."

"What horrible wickedness hath he done, Aunt?" inquired Anne, in a tone of alarm. "Prythee, let me know it. Nay, I will not stir a step till I have heard it all."

"'Tis but sailor's news, child," observed Aunt Gadabout, consolingly. "Knewest thou men as truly as do I, thou wouldst marvel at no news of this sort, were it ever so black. There is no treachery they will not act to the spoiling of us poor women—there is no injury they will not do against us. One and all, they are a vile, abominable, uncivil, abandoned set of profligate monsters and wretches—that's my thinking," and again the old woman twisted herself half round her seat with a slap against her palm, and a look that conveyed in it her conviction that what she had stated there could be no gainsaying.

"But I must and will know what he hath done amiss," exclaimed Anne, determinedly—a mood by no means unusual to her.

"What matters it?" cried the relict of Peter Prateapace, as she again poked her body forward, and commenced shaking of her head with an air of wondrous meaning. "Be assured, Anne, that there never yet was any thing done by our precious partners worth a woman troubling her head about. I warrant you they know better than to be doing of any mischief. Marry, an any such essayed to play his tricks upon me, I would so maul him he should not know whether he stood on his head or his heels for the rest of his days."

"A plague on you all!" cried Anne, vehemently. "Tell me, on the instant, what hath been done, or I will have no more to say to either of you from this hour." Thereupon in her passion she tore her dress, after several idle attempts to make it please her. Susanna still continued intent on her bread-making, but she was terribly ill at ease.

"Well, if I am so commanded, I cannot get off saying it," observed Aunt Breedbate, with a look of as absolute indifferency as ever was seen. "But it must on no account be bruited that you had your intelligence from me, for I would not have it thought I could speak ill of any one for mines of wealth. Though I like him so little, I should be loath to set you against him. For my own part," she added, with a marked emphasis, "I hate meddling and mischief-making."

"Marry, yes, and so do other folk, Sister Breedbate, quite as much," observed Aunt Prateapace, rather sharply.

"Sister Prateapace," exclaimed the other, evidently taking some offence at the interruption, and regarding the interrupter with a monstrous severe look.

"Ay, I maintain it!" cried Sister Prateapace, so little abashed as to meet the gaze with one of a like severity. "I hate meddling—perchance, a wondrous deal more than they who are ever a boasting of their misliking it, and yet all their lives long are in the constant humor of meddling."

"Why, thou slanderous jade thou, how darest thou affirm I am in a constant humor of meddling?" screamed Sister Breedbate, her red face turning purple. Here seemed a great likelihood of quarrelling betwixt the two sisters; nevertheless, no one interfered. In truth, these squabbles were such everyday matters betwixt these two, that had they met without disputing, it would have been accounted a marvel.

"Prythee hold thy peace, Sister Prateapace!" said Aunt Gadabout, turning round

towards her, with a sour visage. "Thou art ever making words." Sister Gadabout, whenever these squabbles took place, was famous for sitting still, and ever and anon saying something to one or other, which added exceedingly to the existing ill feeling betwixt them. Mayhap, this was as pleasing to her as was the constant quarrelling agreeable to the other two; for, it cannot be imagined, they would take so much trouble to find a cause of strife, preferred they a more peaceable living. "I know not, in this world," continued she, "one of so cursed a temper."

"Cursed enough, truly!" added Aunt Breedbate. "Heaven preserve me from such shrewishness, say I!"

"So said Goodman Breedbate a week after his marriage, when he could no longer abide the horrible misery he had fallen into," replied Aunt Prateapace, with a familiar nod of her head to her angry sister. "Doubtless, since his precious helpmate drove him away from his home, by her intolerably violent tongue—forty year come Lammas—he hath had no inclination to return, and have more of it. Truly, he hath had a blessed escape!"

"Blessed escape, quotha!" cried the other, scarce able to speak, she was in so deadly a rage. "Methinks thou hast had a blessed escape of the hangman. It is not all wives who push their husbands into mill-streams, who are so fortunate."

"I marvel, Sister Breedbate, thou shouldst utter so horrible a slander," exclaimed Aunt Gadabout, turning as sharply to her as she had a minute since, to the other. "Of all villanous traducers, thou art surely the worst."

"There cannot be a doubt of it," said the widow of Peter Prateapace, as coolly as you please. "But as it is in her nature, it cannot well be helped. Nevertheless, it is greatly to be lamented she should be so intent on mischief as to injure her nearest of kin, rather than refrain from evil speaking. If she must needs have some villany to talk of, I doubt not she would find enough for her complete contentation in certain scandalous proceedings that took place, I know not how many years since, wherein one Barnaby Rackstraw, a club-footed thatcher, of no great repute, from Wilmington, was engaged with a notable shrew, well known in these parts, who drove her husband from his home, and——"

"Why, thou horrible malefactor, thou!" screamed the other, jumping off her seat as though bitten sharply by some hungry cur, and shaking her clenched fist so furiously, it

seemed like to loosen her knuckles for the next month to come. "Dost dare to say such monstrous things of me. Had I been as familiar with Barnaby Rackstraw as wert thou with Ephraim Clods, the one-eyed delver——"

"Ephraim Clods!" observed her sister, like one who is striving to recollect something. "Ah! I remember me. The poor man hath been dead this thirty year. A worthy soul and an honest. He liked a race of ginger in his ale as well as ere a man in Warwickshire, and was smothered by the falling of the earth when he was digging a well for Sir Hugh Clopton, at the New Place. What of him, good sister?"

"What of him!" cried Aunt Breedbate, getting more passionate from observing the other's composure. "What, is it not notorious——"

"His one eye?" inquired Aunt Prateapace. "I' faith, yes. It was almost as much talked of as a certain club-foot after it had been seen in the grey of the morning——"

What further scandal might have been said cannot now with any accurateness be ascertained, for a stop was suddenly put to this sharp speech, and to the sharp reply which it was easy to see was on the point of breaking forth, by the opening of the door, and the appearance there of a noble-looking, soldier-like gentleman, very bravely apparelled. He seemed to have passed the best of his years—his hair and beard being plentifully sprinkled with those tokens of age to which the rich are subject equally with the poor. Nevertheless, his eyes had a merry, wanton twinkle in them, which, with the careless expression of his fine mouth, and somewhat prominent nose, showed such tokens gave him no manner of uneasiness.—His visage was of a fresh, sanguine complexion, and wrinkled somewhat—but of all doubt belonging more to the court-gallant than to the country gentleman—the which looked more apparent when the observer regarded his goody hat and feather, with a jewel set in it of the last fashion; his handsome doublet, and rich satin trunks, with other bravery of a like sort, not forgetting the very soldier-like quality of his rapier and dagger.

In his company was a fair youth, of some sixteen or seventeen years, nearly as tall as he, and quite as bravely clad. Nevertheless, though so young, his look lacked the bashfulness and ingenuousness which are wont to be seen in a youthful face.

"With your leave, mistress!" cried the elder, very gallantly, as he stepped up to

Anne, then fully equipped for her journey, and gave her a right courtly salute.

"With your leave, mistress!" cried the younger, quite as gallantly stepping up to Susanna, and favoring her in a like manner.

"By Ovid, mistress, thy lips are very sugar!" exclaimed the old gallant, in a seeming passionate manner.

"Worthy Sir George, I am much bounden to you," respectfully replied Anne, with her best courtesy. Thereupon the knight proceeded, with the same courteous manner, to salute her three aunts, who were standing up, all smiles and courtesies, striving as hard as they might to look as innocent as so many lambskins; and, at the compliments Sir George uttered, dropping a courtesy to the ground, and each, as simple as a maid, spoke her thanks.

"By mine own captive heart, mistress, there is no honey like to those most ravishing sweet lips!" exclaimed the young gallant. The gentle Susanna, however, took not her salute as quietly as did her mother. Her face and neck were presently the hue of the rosiest flower eye ever beheld; and, instead of acknowledging the compliment in some simple maidenly phrase, she stood as if ready to sink into the ground with shamefulness, and fixed her beautiful, fair eyes on her taper fingers as though the flour which clung to them was some villainous thing or another that might witness against her very disparagingly.

"What, Cousin Hugh!—art planet-struck?" cried Sir George, slapping the youth on the back, as he approached the abashed maiden, doubtless with the intent of behaving to her in the same courtly fashion as he had used to the others. "I' faith, but methinks thou hast good cause for it," added he, gazing on her blushing beauties with no less admiration than had his young cousin; then, addressing her with more show of sincerity than he had employed towards the others, he continued, "I pray you suffer an old soldier, who hath just returned from a long and arduous service amongst barbarous Irish kerns and gallow-glasses, as a fit recompense for all the dangers he hath passed, to taste so tempting a cate as that most delicate rosy mouth." Thereupon the knight drew Susanna towards him, and, stooping down as he took off his jewelled hat, saluted her with as great an air of respect as she had been the daughter of a sovereign prince.

"And who is this tercel gentle?" inquired Sir George.

"An it please you, Sir George, she is no

other than mine own daughter," replied Anne.

"What, a child of my excellent worthy friend Will?" asked he, turning to her again with a pleased astonishment.

"Indeed is she, an it please your lordship's goodness," said Aunt Prateapace, bustling forward with some officiousness; "which cannot be gainsayed of any man, gentle or simple, seeing they be as like as are two peas in the same pod."

"He must needs be a marvellous happy man," observed the knight.

"Ay, that is he, I'll be bound," here put in Aunt Gadabout with some eagerness.—"Your honorable worship doth not know the happiness he hath. I' faith, he shall be as happy as a sand-boy, an it will be your worship's desire."

"Truly, my good dame," answered Sir George, "if he be as happy as he deserves to be, he can have nothing to wish for."

"Lord warrant us, there is a notable sweet saying now!" exclaimed Aunt Breed-bate, her harsh features subdued as nearly into an expression of cheerfulness as was possible. "I would the worthy man were here, to hear your honor's estimation of him."

"Tell me where he is, I prythee, for I must needs have speech with him," said the knight.

"Judith!" cried Anne to her younger daughter, who stood at her side, striving in vain to court the notice of either of the gallants, "show those noble gentlemen to the orchard, where your father is."

But Judith seemed not inclined to do any thing of the sort. Indeed, fancying herself to have been neglected, she immediately determined not to stir a step. She was again requested by her mother, but seemed as though she heard it not, for she kept making folds in her dress, as though that should be her only employment.

"Nay, an it be your good pleasure, dame," said Sir George, observing the child's reluctance, "let our guide be our sweet acquaintance here."

"An it please you, noble sir," murmured Susanna, who had recovered somewhat of her confidence, and was desirous her sister should be noticed, "my sister Judith will willingly fulfil your honorable wishes."—She had, however, scarce uttered the words, when the spoiled child no less rudely than briefly, put a negative on her assertion. Susanna then, to take off all attention from such uncivility, at once led the way out of the house, and, opening the wicket of the orchard, pointed to a figure seated reading

beneath a tree at some distance, and with a humble yet graceful courtesy, returned to put her bread into the oven.

The two gallants proceeded quickly towards the tree, and there assuredly was Master Shakspeare, and there also at his feet was Talbot, each apparently, in the other's society, forgetful of the great loss they had sustained. Both rose at the appearance of strangers, with a manner as though, in their secret hearts, they took their coming as an unseasonable interruption to their meditations, the poor hound retiring backward a little as though he was in no mood for any familiarities: a touching contrast to the cheerful manner with which he was ever wont to welcome any of his master's friends.

"Sir George Carew!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, his pallid features brightening under the influence of the most cheerful of smiles, as he seized the hand that was stretched out for him, and shook it very heartily.

"And your fast friend, be assured, Will," said Sir George, with a famous sincerity; "and here is cousin Clopton, who is going with me to court, and, if it please her majesty, he shall smell powder anon—that is, if he hath stomach for fighting, and liketh his kinsman for his commander."

"I am assured Master Clopton will do credit to his ancestors," observed Master Shakspeare, courteously; "and, with so notable an example before him for all the qualities of good soldiery, as he hath in Sir George Carew, his career in arms must needs be a glorious one."

"That is kindly said, Will," replied the knight, "and kindly meant, I will wager my life for it, else it would not have been spoken by so generous a spirit as Will Shakspeare. But cousin Clopton must to the wars, and endeavor with his sword to gain what divers of his family have lost. Here hath 'the New Place' been sold that hath belonged to them since old Sir Hugh built it in the reign of Henry the Seventh, all for the lack of a little pestilent coin. There is strange news at court, Will," added Sir George, taking Master Shakspeare by the arm, and walking with him apart. "My Lord Southampton—"

"What of him?" eagerly cried the other.

"He hath been so rash as to wed Mistress Varnon, despite her Highness's commands to the contrary."

"Well?" said Master Shakspeare, impatiently.

"And the Queen in great wrath hath lodged them both in the Tower. I fear me

neither will escape easily, for it is said she is more furious against them than was she with Raleigh for a like offence. I grieve for the sweet lady he hath chosen, and I grieve for him also, for in truth I liked him well."

"He had a heart, Sir George, as noble as his name!" cried his companion with a deep earnestness.

"Ay, that he had, I am assured. And he was a true friend to you, Will, for I have oft heard him speak of you, as though no other man was so well esteemed of him."

"He had a most princely disposition, and ever acted towards me no less worthily than he spoke," said his friend.

"Well! I wish him well out of his present lodging!"

"Amen, Sir George, with all my heart!"

"There is the most singular business connected with this marriage that ever was heard of," added the knight, in a livelier tone. "It is said my lord could not have succeeded in his measures, had he not got important assistance from a certain master of music, who—mark the exquisite policy of it, Will—got admittance to the house of the lady's kinswoman—as ancient a piece of goods as ever was met with; and, what think you? by this hand, he brought my lord with him, and by means of some disguise passed him off as his boy; and, to keep the old gentlewoman's attention from the lovers, did pursue a suit of his own to her with such vehemency, that speedily she had neither eyes, heart, nor tongue, for any but the master of music. She hath made such bitter complaints to the Queen of the jest that hath been played her, that her Highness became in a towering passion, and issued orders for his instant apprehension—vowing he should smart for it; but the wonder of it is, search hath been made throughout the kingdom with a most minute description of this Master Dulcimer's person, manners, and dress, and there hath been no such a musician seen or heard of."

Master Shakspeare had a great to do to maintain the unconcern and gravity of his aspect, during this speech. At last he mastered his inclination for mirth, and quietly inquired if those who had been in search of the master of music had found trace of him.

"None, and the mystery is such, it hath been shrewdly hinted, my lord hath had recourse to the powers of darkness, and the ancient damsel is now frightening herself out of her seven senses with the horrible apprehension she hath been enamored of the devil."

At this Master Shakspeare could contain himself no longer, but he burst out into as hearty a laugh as ever was heard, in the which Sir George Carew joined in as perfect an abandonment, and they too continued for some time longer making light of Aunt Deborah's passion. Nevertheless, one was more concerned than he appeared, for the news of Lord Southampton's imprisonment in the Tower, with the exquisite sweet creature he had married, was exceeding ill news to him, and he scarce heard of it, ere he fell to considering the best means for securing his liberation.

The penalties he had already drawn upon himself in seeking to secure his friend's happiness, he thought not of for a moment. He remembered only the prodigal kindness with which that friend had regarded him, when such behavior was of the highest consequence to the advancement of his fortunes, and that the generous spirit to whom he was so indebted was chafing within the miserable compass of four stone walls.

All this time Master Clopton was striving earnestly to be on good acquaintance with Talbot, but for a long space his commendations and pappings were little heeded. Indeed, as though the poor beast wanted no such company, he more than once removed himself from the young Squire's neighborhood; but the latter would by no means be so easily kept at a distance, for he liked the noble appearance of the dog. Talbot had too good a heart to resist long any seeming kindness where he suspected no ill, and at last the "Ho Talbot!" "Brave Talbot!" was listened to with the wave of the tail which denoteth satisfaction in such animals, and a little while after he allowed himself to be handled with more familiarity than he would previously have suffered. In the end, the two seemed to have come to a tolerable understanding.

After Sir George Carew had—for he would take no denial—made Master Shakspeare promise to join a few friends on a certain day, who were coming to eat venison with him at Clopton Hall, ere he returned to the wars, they walked leisurely to the house, young Clopton and Talbot following at a little distance. They were in the garden, when they were suddenly stopped by hearing through an open casement close to which they had approached, a musically sweet voice carolling the following ditty.

THE BEGUILING OF THE BIRD.

"What ho, silly wanton! why would'st thou
away,
With thy feathers so glossy and fine?

Here are cates of the best, come and taste them
I pray,
Come enjoy this brave feast whilst 'tis thine."
So spoke a bold fowler—in sooth a fair speech)
His nets the while spreading with care;
But the bird 'mongst the branches kept out of
his reach,
And would not be caught in the snare.

"Ah me, what a carol!" he cunningly said,
As her throat gave its tones sweet and clear.
"Oh, I would, matchless singer, thou wert not
afraid,
Half thy skill now escapeth mine ear."
Well pleased with his praises, now closer she
drew,
Her song in his hearing to get;
As he flattered, still nearer and nearer she flew,
And, lo! was enclosed in the net!"

Sir George peeped through the casement. There was no one in the chamber but Sussanna. She was left alone as usual, whilst her aunts and her mother and sister were gone a-pleasuring and there was she solacing herself at her spinning-wheel with a spirit as blithe as her voice was melodious.

CHAPTER X.

Eche is not lettred that nowe is made a lorde,
Nor eche a clerke that hath a benefice:
They are not all lawyers that ples do recorde,
All that are promoted are not fully wise,
On suche chauce now fortune throws her
dice.

BARKLAY'S SHIP OF FOOLS.

Oh! sister An, what dremes
Be these that me tormente! Thus afraide,
What new come gest unto our realme ys come!
SURREY'S VIRGIL.

"LAUNCELOT!" bawled a sharp voice, in as loud a pitch as ever angry woman used. No reply followed. "Launce, I say! thou lazy varlet," continued she, lowering of her key not a jot. "Here it be five o'clock, and thou abed. An thou art not a stirring in a presently, I'll cudgel thee within an inch of thy life!"

"Coming, mistress!" replied a boy, raising himself on his elbow from a heap of rushes and shavings in the corner of an upper chamber in the roof of the house, lighted only by a small window. The coarse coverlet that fell from his shoulders disclosed to view the same fat, foolish visage, that was made known to the reader in the opening chapter of this volume, as belonging to a boy known throughout Stratford as Rag-

ged Launce. His mouth now was extending itself in a yawn which threatened to make the little nose above it—the point whereof, by nature, had a singular inclination upwards—dissolve into the chubby red cheeks, that with no particular show of cleanliness pressed against it on either side. An arm, wrapped in a shirt sleeve, no less soiled than ragged, was about the same time drawn out, and the hand commenced scratching, with a lazy motion, a head, evidently unused to other comb or brush than the owner had store of at his fingers' ends.

There was scarce light sufficient to distinguish the candle-end stuck in a bottle that was upon an old box, the ballads against the wall, or the rude drawings, with a bit of charcoal, that covered every side of the room, whereof the principal seemed to be that of a woman in divers ridiculous attitudes, and undesirable situations. Nevertheless, besides these, a few articles of wearing-apparel lay in disorder upon the floor, with a goodly commodity of nut-shells, apple-cores, cherry-stones, small bones, bits of crust, cheese-parings, and the like, doubtless the remnants of sundry feasts gone by, which the sole inhabitant of the chamber had enjoyed in solitary contentation.

Launce still reclined on his elbow, in a state half asleep and half awake. Yawn followed yawn with little intermission; and the scratching of the head was only occasionally varied by a slight rubbing of the knuckles against the eyes, or a stretching out of the arm to its full extent. In short, he went through all the manœuvres of one who hath been disturbed in his slumber ere he hath had enough of it, and is marvelously inclined to obtain the deficiency. In the last yawn, his elbow slipped from under him, and his head quietly dropped upon it; the outstretched arm sunk at his side, and in a moment he was in as deep a sleep as tired apprentice ever had.

Mayhap he was dreaming of some good sport with his fellows, in a holiday stroll to Pimlico Path, or a famous pennyworth for his own particular delectation all among the pleasant fields of Islington. Yet it mattered not of what his dream might be, for he was scarce well into it when he was disturbed with so main a cry that he jumped clean out of the coverlet, to the manifest disclosure of certain lower garments of coarse texture, much the worse for wear, of the which he had not taken the trouble to divest himself when seeking of his proper rest the previous night.

"Launce! Launce! thou lazy catiff!

I'll rouse thee, I warrant me, ere thou art a minute older."

"I be tiring myself, mistress, and shall be down straight, and it please you," replied the boy, in a mild, deprecating kind of voice, as he left off awhile scratching, and rubbing, and stretching of himself—ever and anon giving a slight shiver, as though he were none of the hottest, to twitch up his darned hose and patched breeches, bearing witness of many a soil and much hard service.

"I'll tire thee, by the rood!" exclaimed the same female who had spoken before. "Did I not tell thee over-night to be up betimes, because of my desiring to go with my worthy neighbors to see the Queen's Highness enter the city returning from a progress, and, as I'm an honest woman, this is the fifth time thou hast played me the sluggard's trick since my first calling. But an I be tricked any more in this sort, I'll give my head to lay at bowls with."

"Nay, o' my life, mistress, I be putting on my jerkin!" cried the apprentice, with a very monstrous earnestness, as he caught up that part of his apparel from the floor, and proceeded to put his arms through the sleeves with something more of wakefulness than he had shown heretofore. Whilst so employed, he seemed to listen attentively. Apparently all was quiet in the lower chamber, for he slackened considerably in his hurry of apparelling himself, and the earnestness of his features gave place to a roguish impudency and boyish cunning.

"The old hawk sticks to her perch!" muttered he, with a grin of exquisite self-congratulation. "Rateth as she may, she liketh no more leaving her roost thus early, of a pestilent raw morning, than do I."

Saying this, he sauntered leisurely towards the small window that looked out into the street, which he opened carefully; then, suddenly spying of a boy, who looked to be about his own age, on the opposite side, leaning on his arms on the window-sill, over-against him, watching a couple of cats on a neighboring roof, he snatched up one of the sundry rotten apples that lay together on the box, and flung it with all his force at the boy's head; doubtless the aim was a true one, for the varlet, with a half-audible chuckle, hastily crouched down, so as to be out of sight of him he had thrown at, and there for a second or two remained, striving hard to repress a violent burst of mischievous laughter.

Presently he raised himself slowly, as if with a view of reconnoitering the position of the assailed party; but, to all appearance,

the latter was familiar with his mode of warfare, and was right willing to return the attack, for Launce had scarce got his shaggy pole over the base of the open casement, when an old cabbage-stump came whizzing over it, with a force which, had it been less hastily discharged, might, thick as it was, have done it no slight damage.

"O' my life, well thrown, Martin!" cried Launce, with a taunting sort of laugh, the which the other could hear well enough. "Wounds! an I were a Shrovetide cock, I would pray right heartily for such thorough ainstraights."⁵⁵

"I would thou wert!" replied the opposite boy. "But cock, or no cock, here's at thy cocks-comb!" and, ere Launce was well aware, a missile of the like sort as was thrown at him awhile since came against his luckless pole with such force, that he was fain to cry out from the smart. A loud clear laugh, across the street, was all he got for his hurt in the way of sympathy.

"Cock-a-doodle-do!" screamed the merry knave, like a very chanticleer, exulting at the manner he had answered the other's sarcasm. "Body o' me, but thou makest a brave cock, Launce. Prythee wait till I can get me another stump, and I will knock thee off thy legs so prettily thou shalt fancy nought ever after but turning of such delicate summersets."

"Slife, and I do not pay thee for that, call me a pickled hedgehog!" replied Launce in some rage, putting his hand tenderly to the bruised part:—"here be a lump coming, of I know not what size; but let me catch thee; I'll warrant thou shalt have as famous a drubbing—"

"Dost talk of drubbing, thou worthless varlet!" exclaimed a voice close to him, that make him quake from head to foot. A woman, apparently of a goodly size, but so wrapped in a huge cloak thrown over her petticoat, her figure could not fairly be told, and wearing so vinegar an aspect withal, it might have done monstrous good service in the way of pickling, was at his elbow.

"Dost talk of drubbing!" she continued; "I'll drub thee, i' faith!"⁵⁶ and thereupon began raining down upon Launce's devoted head, with all the vigor of her brawny arm, such abundant store of blows, as might have sufficed a flagellating friar for a whole year. He roared most lustily; no town-bull could have done so more to the life; but the offended Tabitha heeded his cries and supplications no more than a cat heeds the squeaking of a mouse she is about to make her repast of.

"Have I not been bawling myself hoarse

for thee these two hours!" said she to him in a manner that could not be gainsayed. "Did I not tell thee over-night to be sure to be stirring betimes, for that I was bent on going to witness the goodly pageants that are to be seen to-day in honor of our admirable sweet queen?—and, instead of getting the shop swept and dusted, and the house opened, and the fire lit in the kitchen, and all things made ready for what company may come, thou art at thy old tricks, and be hanged to thee! Get thee to thy work on the instant! Well deservest thou the name thou art known by. Thou art Lazy Launce, with a vengeance. But I'll have no idle 'prentices. An I catch thee at these pranks again, it shall go worse with thee, I'll warrant. Troop, sirrah, whilst thou hast a whole skin, for my fingers do itch to be at thee."

Launce had vainly essayed, with a marvellous prodigality of writhings and twistings, to get free of his mistress's powerful grasp, whilst she was displaying so much at his expense her eloquence and vigor; and, so soon as he found her hold relax, he bounded out of her reach, and fled down the narrow stairs with the speed of a liberated rat. But he had not got so easily quit of her as he imagined. Ere he had reached the kitchen, which was a long irregular chamber, at the back of the house, and served for the general eating-room, he heard her voice bawling to him to return. This he did with some misgiving, and an infinite lack of speed, for there was that in its tones which seemed to bode him no good.

"Prythee how come these figures here?" asked she, with a look that appeared to the unhappy Launce to threaten killing by inches. His mistress pointed to a ridiculous effigy of herself carried pick-a-back on a personage, who, by his horns and tail, was evidently intended to represent the arch enemy of mankind; whilst another demon of the like sort was preparing to thrust a pitchfork into her flesh, in the part of it that looked to offer the firmest hold. A little further on was the same female figure hanging on a gallows, whilst a whole circle of devils were portrayed fantastically dancing just beneath her. Above was written, in large uneven letters of the strangest shape eye ever met with:—

"With thy dog's nose and pig's eyes,
The devil hath got a notable prize;
Thou'rt a jade that's ever a bawling and banging,
And I warrant thou'lt be none the worse for a good hanging."

In another place, a monstrous cat was

drawn, seemingly at death's door, and underneath these lines were writ :—

“ The shabby,
Scabby.
Flabby-dabby,
old
T A B B Y ;”

the last word in larger characters than the others, and doubtless meant to be the familiar abbreviation of the good Tabitha's name.

“ How came these villanous figures here ?” repeated she, in a louder key, to her trembling apprentice.

“ Nay, o' my life, mistress, I know not !” replied Launce, looking the very picture of virtuous astonishment and indignation.

“ Thou abominable young villain, thou... !” exclaimed the enraged woman, grasping with one hand the long hair of her apprentice, whilst in the other she held a stick she had snatched from a corner, the which she had lost no time in putting across his shoulders with a right good will in every stroke. Her tongue, too, was excellently well exercised the whilst.

“ Dost thou dare write such horrid libels of me, thy too indulgent mistress ! Have I a dog's nose, catiff ? answer me that. Have I pig's eyes, thou perjured reprobate ! Wouldst thou have me hanged, forsooth ! I'll shabby thee ! I'll scabby thee ! I'll flabby-dabby thee with a vengeance ! An I leave an inch of thy pestilent skin innocent of the cudgel, I'll give thee leave to carry on thy scurvy jests till doomsday !”

As every sentence here put down was ended with a blow, the only answer Mistress Tabitha got of her questions came to her in the pitifulest cries cudgelled apprentice ever attempted, and doubtless she might have continued her punishment and her speech for some time longer, had not he, taking advantage of her letting go his hair to obtain a hold on the collar of his jerkin, rushed from her, yelling most piteously, at a pace that left no chance of her coming up to him again very readily.

Leaving this good dame to digest as well as she might the affront she had received from Launce's revenge of her former savageness to him, we shall follow him to the kitchen, where, smarting from the fury of her discipline, he was diligently essaying to strike a light, but, in consequence of his tears, whereof there was a plentiful supply, falling into the tinder, he knocked his knuckles with small profit.

In this strait, cursing heartily all termagant mistresses, and sparks that went

out, as soon as they showed themselves, he drew his sleeve across his eyes, took a candle in his hand, and, opening a door right against him, proceeded into a narrow yard, having a paling on each side so much broke as to admit easily of his passing over it. This he did ; and, entering at a wicket belonging to the next house, he found himself among some half-dozen slovenly men and boys, sitting cross-legged on a huge table, where many lights were a burning, stitching away upon divers garments before them with a most commendable speed.

Scarce had he shown himself, ere Launce was hailed by all present as a familiar and perchance a welcome acquaintance ; none failing to attempt a merry jest at his expense. Launce lit his candle, as though he was so crest-fallen of his late beating he had not a word to throw away on a dog, nay not even on a tailor ; but, as he was on the eve of departing, he slowly pushed the hot iron, with which one had that moment been flattening the seams of a doublet, against the bare toe peeping out of the ragged hose of him who seemed to possess a greater commodity of jokes than the others ; and, as he—screaming with the greatness of the pain—started back with a force which laid his neighbor on his back, and put all his fellows into a sudden terror, the boy, with a loud laugh, whisked out of the chamber, jumped over the paling, and was soon engaged upon his duties in the kitchen, as light of heart, from the remembrance of the trick he had played Toby Snipkin, as if he knew not what a beating meant.

It should here be made known to the courteous reader, that Mistress Tabitha Thatchpole carried on the art of a capper, in a goodly tenement situated in Golden Lane, Barbican ; the which excellent calling her father, honest Barnabas Thatchpole, had pursued in good repute till his death, leaving it, and all the profits thereunto appertaining, to his beloved daughter and sole heirress, the estimable Mistress Tabitha Thatchpole aforesaid. How it came to pass, that, with so tempting an addition as this trade in caps, to a visage and person by no means of the ordinary sort—the former having a striking resemblance to that of a sand-boy's horse, and the latter being built much after the fashion of a coal-barge—the name of Tabitha Thatchpole should have clung to her even after her lease of it had been protracted beyond half a century, remaineth the most incomprehensible of mysteries. Certain is it, she had strove all that a poor woman could to alter this undesirable state of things. She first sought the

young, who would have none of her; then aspired to the middle-aged, who gave her as little comfort; and now very mightily affected the old, with a desperateness, the exceeding desperate nature of the case seemed to give her excellent warrant for.

She was a great furtherer of all manner of merry meetings, both at her own house and those of her neighbors, in which her ostensible object was to bring young people together, in whose happiness she professed a marvellous interest. When she had succeeded in getting her female friends conveniently disposed of, she would, with an amiableness to which no pen can do justice, sit herself by the side of any respectable grey-beard widower or bachelor—it mattered not which, so easily pleased was she—who happened to be amongst the company, and dilate on mutual affection and the union of appropriate ages, in a strain that ought to have subdued the most callous and indifferent old heart that ever throbbed under a comfortable jerkin.

Launce had been sent from Stratford, by Tommy Hart, to his kinswoman, Tabitha Thatchpole, of London, at her earnest solicitation to have some such a boy as he was to assist her in her business. To prevent his quitting her, as some had done with exceeding brief warning, she lost no time in having him bound apprentice; and here, in Golden Lane, Barbican, was Launce fixed, under the tender mercies of the fair Tabitha, ostensibly to learn the art and mystery of a capper, but, in fact, to do all things, from the top of the house to the bottom, and get nought for his pains but blows and abuse.

Had it not been for the fellowship of a few merry knaves in the neighborhood, about his own age, with whom he was as often at loggerheads as in sworn brotherhood, it is hugely to be doubted if his indentures would have held him in Golden Lane for a day.

It must now be supposed that he made an ample fire in the kitchen—a chamber, floored with red brick, which formed, save on grand occasions, the usual sitting-room—and in this duty he had so long lingered that Mistress Tabitha came nigh upon catching him lying his length on one of the settles that stood on each side of the ample chimney corner, forgetful of all else but the comfortableness of his situation. The hearing of her foot on the stair, however, roused him as effectually as might a cannon fired close to his ear; and, in the twinkling of an eye, he was as busy as a bee sweeping out the front chamber.

Here she presently entered, scolding and cuffing him for not finding things there exactly to her mind. This was out of its place, that was carelessly put by, and the other ought to have gone to a customer; then, some fine cap or another had been injured by his utter carelessness; and she had lost the sale of others by his placing them, to keep them free of moth and dust, where they were never to be got at.

“Launce!” cried she, sharply, having completed her arrangements in the kitchen.

“Anon, mistress,” replied the boy.

“What said that worthy Master Doctor Posset to my message of last night?”

“An it please you, mistress, he said nought.”

“How so, fellow?”

“For this most especial reason:—he was attending a candlemaker’s wife in Bread Street, and could have no note of your message, mistress.” A sharp box on the ear followed this speech.

“Wilt never have done with thy fool’s answers, thou miserable dolt, thou! But thou had speech of his admirable daughter, Mistress Millicent?”

“An it please you, mistress, I had,” replied Launce, rubbing his ear with some vigor. “That is to say, when it pleased her to have done a swoounding, for when I got me into Master Doctor’s chamber, there I found Mistress Millicent on the ground, supported by a strange young fellow, looking as solemn as the queen of Sheba, done in worsted, that is up stairs in the blue chamber.”

“Master John Hall, perchance. But were they alone?”

“No, mistress. There was the physician’s man there, too.”

“Physician’s man, fellow!” exclaimed Tabitha, aiming another blow at him, which he avoided by ducking his head; an accomplishment in which practice had made him so proficient, he rarely failed of escaping the intended blow. “Physician’s man! Canst not say Master Leonard?” Then, in a lower tone, continued, “Doubtless, he was greatly concerned at the sad plight of one to whom he hath been so long betrothed. Was no other present?”

“Yes, mistress, there was the stuffed alligator hanging from the top of the chamber, and the kitten, with five legs, that was in a bottle on a shelf.”

“Out, fool!” cried his mistress, aiming her customary salute with no more profit than before. Thou art the most incorrigible ass ever honest woman was troubled with. But what followed?”

"Followed, mistress?" repeated Launce, scratching his head in some perplexity. "O' my life, I saw no following of any one for they all stood where they were."

"Knave, dolt, idiot!" exclaimed Mistress Tabitha, her remarkable yellow complexion getting suddenly enpurpled with rage, as she sought to inflict a proper chastisement on her apprentice. "What said they to you? Tell me on the instant, or I will beat thee to a shaving."

"An it please you, mistress, they said but little, till Mistress Millicent recovered herself from her swoond, when they questioned me as to my errand to the doctor; the which having told, Mistress Millicent presently spoke in a monstrous small voice, and said Master Doctor should come without fail, and there should be in his company herself and a young acquaintance, whom methinks she called Mildred, with Master John Hall and Master Leonard Supple."

"Good; and you went to Martin Pains, the spurrier?"

"I did, an it please you, mistress; and he said he would come the instant after morning prayers."

"Ah, good, excellent man! A most admirable, worthy christian. And what said Simon Peltry, the leather-seller?"

"In troth, mistress," replied the boy, despite of the fear in which he stood before his mistress, a smile of roguish meaning breaking over his grimy cheeks, "he was in no case for the saying of any great matter, seeing that I found him at the Peacock, so overcome with the drinking of new ale, that he was as blind as a bat, as deaf as a beetle, and as mute as an owl; and when I roused him to hear of your message, he replied, unconnected, and confusedly, in praise of sobriety, adding, the fiddlers must needs pray for your death right heartily, for they would then be like to get such exquisite tough catgut as they had never seen all their lives before."

"A merry knave, i' faith!" exclaimed the rather antiquated damsel, who could find toleration for the faults of every man who afforded her the slightest prospect of a husband. "He must needs have his jest. And how sped you with Roger Chinks, the lantern-maker?"

"An it please you, mistress, with no great profit. Chinks was hard at work among his men, and received your message as though it were a huge affront. He might or he might not come. He cared not. An it suited him, he would; and the like."

"As honest a heart as ever broke bread!"

cried Mistress Tabitha. "And what said Master Galliard?"

"The old Frenchman fellow, an it please you?"

"The French gentleman, sirrah," replied the other, sharply.

"Nay, o' my life, mistress, I took him to be a right Tom o' Bedlam, for I found him playing of all sorts of antics in Bessy Marshmallow, the simple woman's upper chamber. He was twisting, and turning, and curvetting, and capering, worse than an unbroke colt; and his toe kept pointing to all quarters of the wind, for all the world like the great vane on the top of our church."

"But what said he to my message?"

"A long speech, and a flowery, but in such outlandish phrases, I had to cudgel my brains pretty soundly ere I could get so much as a glimpse at the sense of it. He laid his hand on the breast of his doublet, and made a leg to me as though I was the Emperor of the Indies. This I let pass, but he presently fell to calling you mad-dam, which I taking to be some reflection on you it did not become me to be a listening to, up and told him I'd punch his head if he called my mistress any such names, for she wasn't a bit of a 'mad-dam,' not she, and he was a scurvy rogue, and lied in his pestilent throat. On this, the villain had the horrible impudence to say something about a *pardonnez moi*, the which was, I doubt not, a more gross offence than t'other, so I would no longer stand to be so put upon, and straight-way gave him so sore a clout on the chaps it sent him spinning to the other side of the chamber; whereupon he out with his toasting-iron, and would have skewered me against the wall, like a pickled herring left to dry, had I not shown him a fair pair of heels, ere he had got it fairly out of its scabbard."

In making this relation, Launce had some hopes of being rewarded for the great zeal he had shewn in his mistress's defence. What then must have been his astonishment when of a sudden a shower of blows came on his defenceless head, which all his skill in taking care of put at nought—she the whilst rating him for his rudeness and bearishness in such terms of vehemency as went night to take her breath away!

The hapless apprentice vanished from her presence as quickly as he might, vowing from his heart the pestilent Frenchman might call the old Tabby whatsoever disreputable name he chose, without his ever attempting to wag a finger in her defence.

He returned to the front chamber, where

he occupied himself very busily in putting his mistress's wares in the most tempting array. It had a broad casement, looking into the street, made up of small diamond panes, through which the passenger, if he chose to peer with any great degree of curiosity, might note a vast display of caps and hats of all fashions, from the statute cap of the humble artisan, to the goodly copthank beaver of the gay gallant. On shelves, on one side, were placed rows of boxes, and upright against the wainscoting, was fixed a long mirror, in a carved frame, on which Mistress Tabitha set great store. A large table, having a motley assortment of hats, caps, feathers, brushes, irons, and blocks, and two stools, that seemed to have seen good service, constituted the remainder of the furniture—save only Launce, without whom Tabitha Thatchpole might have kept the place empty.

He was not, however, as usual, allowed to be long doing of any thing without his mistress coming and rating him for not doing it to her liking. Nought satisfied her of his performance, essayed he ever so. Nevertheless, in the midst of her cuffing and rating, she on a sudden changed the crabbed expression of her countenance for one of the absolute sweetness. At that moment there entered a tall, thin, figure, hat in hand, which was pressed against his breast with a marvellous energy, as he bowed himself almost to the ground. His face looked to be mightily given to wrinkles, but two restless, sharp eyes gave it a youthfulness, the greyness of his beard and hair, both of which were somewhat of the longest, belied; his suit had once been fine, but it was now threadbare and faded, yet there was not a soil in it from top to toe; the ruff looked fresh from the starcher's, and the shoe-roses were without a crumple, though they had graced the feet of the wearer any time these ten years. The stranger was Monsieur Galliard, of whom mention has just been made.

Mistress Tabitha tripped up to him with the most amiable manner ever seen; whereupon Monsieur Galliard seized one of her enormous hands, and pressed it betwixt both his, and bowed upon it, and shrugged his shoulders with an appearance of profound devotion.

In sober truth, they were most like unto a pair of Barbary apes chattering and grimacing, than two human beings. Whilst, however, they were completely taken up with passing mutual civilities, they were suddenly disturbed by a loud, joyous laugh behind them, and, turning round, discovered

a fellow somewhat coarsely apparelled, standing at the door with his hands on his hips, and a jolly face well covered with fiery carbuncles, expanding under the influence of a hearty laugh.

"Heart o' me!" cried he, merrily, "I would rather have lost my best stroke at bowls, than so exquisite moving a scene. Here's choice fooling—brave fooling—delicate fooling as ever was witnessed! If Will Somers had been alive, he could never have compassed it."

"Ah, Simon Peltry, Simon Peltry!" exclaimed Mistress Tabitha, "ever at thy merry conceits! Why, what a man thou art!"

"Man, quotha!" answered the leather-seller, giving the grinning Frenchman, as he offered his salutations, a slap on the back that appeared, for the moment, to have taken his breath away. "In troth, I look upon myself to be as good a man as any that never was a better. What sayest, good Mounseer Spindleshanks?"

"But talking is dry work, dame," added he. "Hast ever a draught o' small ale? for I supped last night of pickled herrings, and, if I had a drop of honest liquor to cleanse my throat of the salt, I am a Dutchman." This assertion what Launce had stated of him completely disproved; therefore, it can be in no way strange that, on hearing it, the apprentice, who was close at hand, opened his eyes with very absolute amazement. Nevertheless, Mistress Tabitha very courteously bade him follow her, to partake of such poor cheer as the house afforded, the which welcome bidding the thirsty leatherseller gladly accepted, and without more words, the three proceeded in that direction.

They had scarce arrived in the inner chamber, and were intent on seating themselves comfortably in the chimney-corner, when voices were heard approaching, which immediately sent away Mistress Tabitha to welcome the new comer. One of these proved to be a truly broad-shouldered man, with an exceeding dark complexion and severe expression of countenance, and apparently of a middle age, who was presently hailed by the parties already arrived as Roger Chinks, the lantern-maker. The other wore a more pleasing look, and was attired in less coarse apparelling; and he, when receiving the attentions of the now superlatively amiable Tabitha Thatchpole, appeared to own the name of Martin Poin, the spurrier.

The former spoke but few words, and they of the gruffest, to his hostess's oft-

repeated assurance of her gladness at the sight of him; and the replies of the latter consisted, for the most part, of allusions to the goodness of Providence in allowing him the gratification of visiting so excellently disposed an acquaintance as neighbor Thatchpole.

With him came a boy, out of all doubt his son, of about the tallness of Launce, though of far greater slimness, and of more intelligent features; and, whilst the rest of company were completely engaged with their gossip, he had got a spur in his hand, which he held nigh to the cheek of Launce, who, unaware or his close neighborhood, was intent upon trimming of a hat for a customer, and, upon hearing of his name whispered in his ear, turned suddenly round, and received the prickles of the spur in his cheek. Smarting with the pain, he gave the young rogue who inflicted it, and with a laugh was endeavoring at his best speed to get out of his reach, a sharp kick on the shins, the which made him cry out, and commence rubbing his hurt leg with a most doleful visage.

Upon Mistress Tabitha inquiring what ailed him, he very readily stated that he had hit his leg against the table; the which was instantly believed to be the truth, for no one could have fancied from Launces' unconcerned visage, that he had aught to do with the matter. But they were both very dogs at such tricks. Martin Poins was he who had flung at Launce with so true an aim across the way when the latter was jibing him for being wide of the mark; and indeed, morning, noon, and night, were they slyly engaged in such warfare—for all which two such fast friends never existed. They not only never complained when one suffered of the other, contenting themselves with retaliating at the first opportunity, but each would fight for the other at a pinch as long as he could stand.

Martin, having been left behind when Tabitha and her two guests proceeded to join the others in the kitchen, commenced a race round the table after Launce, which had not lasted long before one knocked down a goodly heap of boxes, which stood convenient in a corner. Tabitha Thatchpole and her company rushed into the front chamber to see what was the matter; when Launce, with as absolute a solemnness as any judge could have assumed, stated that the mischief had been done by a strange dog, whom Martin and he strove earnestly to send a packing, and, as Martin, with quite as great a seriousness asserted to the same thing, with sundry additions, in

which he described the monstrous ugly pestilent beast they had such difficulty in getting rid of, they all returned to the chimney-corner; Mistress Tabitha bidding her apprentice replace the fallen boxes, and, taking in her hand the spurrier's son, whom she seemed intent upon making much of, perchance with a view of creating in the mind of the portly widower, his father, an idea that she would make the very properest sort of mother for him.

Scarce, however, had she got him into the kitchen, when she again hurried back with the same pleased alacrity, for there a group waited, whose voices she had heard, to whom she seemed bound by no ordinary tie. First she rushed eagerly towards a young female of rather a commanding figure, tall, and somewhat stout of shape, with a face, though it could not be ranked of the handsomest, possessed of a pleasing expression, which peculiar set off as it was with all possible art, as was her person, gave to her an exceeding agreeable appearance. In this tempting guise it was rather difficult at first to recognize the damsel that was in so pitiable a state on Master Doctor Posset's stairs at the entrance into his house of the new scholar.

Millicent had on one side of her a youth of exceeding good carriage and appearance, having a round good-natured sort of face, and a head remarkable for a profusion of very light air. He was soon hailed by his smiling hostess as the Master Leonard to whom it has been stated Millicent was betrothed. On the other side was an acquaintance of the courteous reader's of older standing—no other than our reserved student of medicine, John Hall. He looked somewhat less grave of aspect than had been his wont when in company with his marvellous caretul guide, Simon Stockfish—long since with those estimable specimens of horseflesh, Dapple and Jack, in ease and security in his native hamlet. Both these youths were welcomed with similar demonstrations of their infinite contentation at their coming.

From them she hurried to a little damsel, who hung on the arm of the physician—the same who was in attendance with Mistress Tabitha on the fair Millicent when we first had acquaintance with her. Her features were fair and regular, and might be thought comely, but a constant humor she had of laughing in a child-like manner, though she was within a year as old as her friend the physician's daughter, gave her aspect an air of silliness. Mildred was caressed as eagerly as had been Millicent. There remained

now only Master Doctor Posset himself, for her who was so intent on playing the amiable hostess to welcome, and right welcome was he made. Indeed, the sober-clad, active little man, with his saturnine complexion, and beard of formal cut, was as dear to Mistress Tabitha as the apple of her eye; and all the attentions she lavished on his daughter, and the attachment she professed for every one and everything belonging to the physician, were for him, and for him only. Even the courteous master of dancing fell far short of the esteem with which she regarded the doctor of physic, and all other men whatsoever were as nothing in her eyes compared to him.

All apparently in the choicest spirits, the little Mildred, heard above the rest, giggling at every word, proceeded to the chamber where the others of the party were assembled, and, after mutual salutations had passed, they were placed at their several seats, the doctor having the place of honor; and the cold sirloin and the manchets, the pasty, the turkey poult, and the other goodly things their hospitable caterer had provided for her guests, were quickly, with the help of a huge flagon of ale, passing from the dishes into the trenchers, and from the trenchers down the throats of the company; Mistress Tabitha pressing all with a most bountiful spirit, but kindly taking care the little doctor should have the tit-bits, and he intent upon making the best use of her welcome attentions; Monsieur Galliard administering to the wants and wishes of every female in the circle with an infinity of sugared compliments and expressive pantomime, the which seemed to afford such absolute diversion to Mildred, her childish mirth was breaking forth at every minute; the jolly leather-seller drinking to all with more freedom than good manners; the pious spurrier moralizing at every mouthful, and the surly lantern-maker saying naught unless spoke to, and then being so short in his speech, few but they who knew his humor would have tolerated such bearishness.

Young Martin Pains, found himself carefully placed by the side of his hostess, for she was too experienced a campaigner not to have two strings to her bow—indeed, she might have acknowledged to at least half a dozen—where he was plentifully supplied with whatever the table afforded, with a vast show of “sweet-hearts,” “dear little rogues,” and the like. After awhile, Launce joined the group, having washed his face and hands, and put himself into as decent a trim as he could, and sat opposite young Pains, and these two mischievous varlets kept amusing

themselves during their meal, by endeavoring to stamp on each other's toes under the table, looking the whilst as though nothing was so far from their thoughts. It chanced that Launce, intending inflicting on the other a proper punishment for the missile that had given him so sore a blow that morning, stamped with all his force, after, as he thought, he had made sure of his victim.

In an instant the guests were prodigiously alarmed, by seeing Mistress Tabitha jump from the table in the middle of an animated discourse she was holding, and, screaming like twenty wild-cats, commence hopping about the chamber, frantically holding of one foot in her hand. A soft corn of exquisite tenderness she had long endeavored to conceal had received the full force of the heavy foot of her apprentice; but her gestures and grimaces were so singular that even those who were most eager to proffer their assistance could scarce restrain their mirth. Martin Pains endeavored to smother his laughter by hiding his face in his arms, which were crossed before him on the table, ever and anon peeping up at the bewildered Launce, with eyes that glistened again with the intensity of his enjoyment.

The Frenchman looked the most concerned, and was in an instant at her side with the equally attentive Millicent, expressing all manner of consolation and sympathy after his fashion; the little doctor, like most of the others, had more in his countenance of marvel than of pity; Mildred was giggling openly; and Simon Peltry was having a more hearty laugh in the nearly empty flagon he held for disguise before his face.

Tabitha Thatchpole found that she had a difficult part to play. Had she followed her inclinations, her apprentice—for she was but too well satisfied to whom she was indebted for her intolerable suffering—would not have had a whole bone in his body, ere one could count twenty; but, had she exhibited her wrath, her character for sweetness of disposition she had been at such infinite trouble to make her friends properly aware of, might have been in some danger; therefore she thought it most to her interest to put off for the present the display of her rage, and, evidently struggling hard against the agony she endured, she presently limped towards the table, assuring every one it was a sudden pain in her foot, but that it had left her altogether. She glanced but once at Launce, and the hapless apprentice thought he beheld as many cudgels in her eyes as might have sufficed all the apprentices of his acquaintance, in an attack upon the city watch.

Millicent, like the rest, returned to her

place, which was on one side John Hall, Leonard being on the other, and these two seemed rivals in their attentions to the young student. If he had been a brother, he could not have been more kindly cared for. Doubtless this was all in the best spirit of friendship and regard of the youth's amiable disposition; yet, when the full lustrous eyes of the physician's daughter dwelt upon him with the delicious smile which played around her most seductive mouth, it looked as though she invited him to a more tender attachment. Howsoever this might be, already John Hall reflected less intently upon the opinions of the learned in his profession, than he had been wont for some years past.

During the greater portion of this time, there had been no lack of discourse amongst the hostess and her guests. There had been a deal of friendly gossip relating to neighbor this, and neighbor t'other; the state of the weather, parish matters—Old Pains being one of the city officers—and, most of all, of the Queen's Highness, of whom many loyal speeches were said—even the bearish Roger Chinks professing a zealous devotion—where she had been during the last progress, the goodly entertainments provided for her, and the excellency of her health and government, were canvassed in a spirit that denoted the admiration with which she was regarded by her good and faithful citizens. Something too was said of the day's pageant, but the discussion was brought to a speedy ending by general preparations for departure; Mistress Tabitha, forgetful of her hurt, hurrying them with the fear of losing the sight. Having locked up all the victual, and secured the exclusive attentions of Dr. Posset, she led the way, apparently in the happiest mood possible.

CHAPTER XI.

O happy life, if that their good
The husbandmen but understood!
Who all the day themselves do please,
And younglings with such sports as these;
And, lying down, have nough t' affright
Sweet sleep that makes more short the night.

ROBERT HERRICK.

A NOISE of the roughest, wildest, maddest sort, ever and anon came from one of the humblest tenements in all Stratford. It was borne on the air in gusts, such as made the rafters creak again, when the wintry wind visiteth us in his rudest fashion, but, unlike in this much, it bore little o' the humor of melancholy in its accent. It was a strange medley. In truth it held as little accord-

ance with aught of nature's music, as you may find betwixt the filing of a saw and the strain of a nightingale, and to so extraordinary a degree had it the trick of varying from one character and meaning to another totally opposite, that nothing could exceed the ridiculous effect it had upon such as heard it.

At one time you would have sworn all the cat family in the town of Stratford were pouring forth their amorous declarations; at another it seemed as palpable that a whole pack of curs were snarling and snapping at each other with a most canine ferocity; a moment after, and lo! you heard some lusty-throated cock hurling a shrill defiance to every one of his feathered brethren within a mile of him, which, ere quite ended, would be replied to in as hearty a spirit, by another terribly valiant crower eager to uphold the dignity of his own dunghill; then some contemplative donkey would pour out his honest song in such piercing style you were forced to clap your hands to your ears to shut out the riot. Anon, a peacock would trumpet a most moving flourish; thereupon followed, a chorus of ducks, geese, turkeys, pigs and cows, such as ought to have satisfied any one there was a goodly farm close at hand, as well furnished with all manner of live stock as any in Warwickshire; and after such would come a burst of laughter mixed of screams, and the strangest cries ever heard, that sounded as though a score or two of drunken mad fellows were having their diversion, with the devil to pay the piper.

Whence came this strange uproar? what causeth it? what meaneth it? perchance some may ask. Whereof the proper answer can only be got, by leading the questioner by the ears, which, an he will excuse my being so free with him, I will do, unto the very spot where it exists, under which guidance, doubtless, he would marvel hugely at noting what a lack of attentiveness there appeared amongst those he chanced to find nearest to it. Such of the townsfolk as he might meet abroad lingering about the doors of their gossips, or speeding on some urgent errand, seemed to take as little heed of that terrible coil as though it were of no more account than a child's whistle; save when, on a sudden, as it were, it burst out with a greater vehemency of strangeness, the intelligencer would stop i' the midst of his news, to join in the laugh those about him raised as they took heed of it, and he on his errand would chuckle to himself as though his brain had just been tickled by the apprehension of some singular good jest.

It was evident, beyond all doubting, that the noise proceeded from a chamber, in a small tenement, at the outskirts of the town; the wicket whereof—a low door not more than three feet from the ground—though closed, allowed of a free current of air and sound above it. Over the threshold was the rude sign of a pair of shears, which with the diamond-paned casement, a little on one side of it, were half concealed by the tendrils of a thick-spreading creeper, that nearly covered up the whole front of the little dwelling.

Should the curious spectator be induced to peep over the half-door to behold the cause of the racket, which now raged fiercer than ever within, the first thing he would catch a glimpse of would be no other than his odd acquaintance Jonas Tietape, his hose ungartered, his feet unshod, and his slops open at the knees, seated cross-legged on his shop-board without his jerkin, a stitching a kirtle, that seemed much to need his repairing hand, as fiercely as though his life depended on his speedy getting of it done; all the whilst amusing of himself by making the rude concert already mentioned, the which seemed to afford him the most absolute contentation, for ever and anon he would stop in the midst of it to rid himself of the mirth he could no longer contain.

In the chamber which, in many things, was of a like oddness with its occupant, having an aspect of grotesqueness in all its furniture, a godly fire was blazing on the hearth, and a rude lamp was burning over his head, both affording him—for it was long after sunset—a sufficiency of light to work by. Perched on a chair, made out of divers rough pieces of such branches as had grown in the most fantastic shapes, was a magpie, evidently keeping a fixed and somewhat suspicious eye on the busy tailor; and, on the other side of the hearth was seated, on a low bench, a grave and venerable cat, in color much like unto a fox, who also watched him with a marvellous keen look. Besides these, three or four little dogs, of various breeds, were attempting to snatch a brief repose in the neighborhood of the fire.

One of the sources of Jonas' pastime was the annoyance he managed to cause his companions. After a course of odds and ends of ridiculous songs, varied with the mimicry of all manner of animals, his attention would be directed towards the blazing hearth, and they who were enjoying its warmth; and then he would commence all manner of extravagant grimaces and antics, mingled with the wildest screeching and squealing, till the magpie exhibited its alarm

by flapping its wings, and cawing at him with a very monstrous earnestness. And the cat, no less disturbed, would raise her back, and commence a sort of half-threatening, half-frightened song, in the lowest bass of her compass; and the little dogs would uncurl themselves and yelp in chorus. This state of things achieved, their delighted owner would fall back in a seeming ecstasy, shouting out his exceeding gratification with a strength of throat, the like of which no man ever heard, and then allow his grave associates a few minutes respite.

Ere he again took to his stitching, he again cleared his throat with an affectation of ceremony most laughable to witness; taking up an old cittern which was beside him, and gazing at the occupant of the stool, with a passionate tenderness in the first part of each verse the most devoted gallant could not have excelled, he sang the following words, well known by the title of

A RIGHT MOVING DIALOGUE BETWIXT THE
DESPAIRING LOVER AND HIS
JOLLY GOSSIP.

Despairing Lover.

Alack, there is no remedie,
My moving plaint is heard in vain;
Oh, traitress false, thy treacherie
Doth cleave my very heart in twain!

Jolly Gossip.

Tush, boy, for shame! the heart that breaks
Can feed no more a thirsty throtle:
Who cares a jot for Fortune's freaks?—
Come, Drawer, open t'other bottle!

Despairing Lover.

I'm sick of life—I long for death!
Say what ye will, deem as ye list;
Why should I breathe this worthless breath,
Since I your priceless love have missed?

Jolly Gossip.

Tush, boy, for shame!—Hold up thine head!
If of thy life she's none so chary,
She'll care still less for thee when dead—
No woman's worth this rare canary.

Despairing Lover.

Ah me, my breast is pierced with woe!
Death's dart doth in my vitals lie:
Thou didst not well to use me so,
Naithless I bless thee as I die.

Jolly Gossip.

Tush, boy, for shame!—What, fall'n indeed,
As ripest acorn in October!
Here, Drawer, help him in his need,
And let him sleep until he's sober!

"By Jeronimo, a good song!" exclaimed a voice, evidently proceeding from one who leaned at his ease, resting of his elbows on the wicket. There could be no more mistaking the merry way of the speaker, than the waggish look that peered over the low door of the woman-tailor's humble tenement. The words had scarce been said when the singer jumped up on the board, whereon he was so nimbly a stitching, with a ridiculous screech, and holding of his right leg, stretched out before him, with his two hands, as though it were an arquebus, and he was taking deadly aim at his visitor, uttered a loud sound, threw a summerset, as though from the recoil of the piece, and then made a clear leap out of the open window. No sooner had this been done than he at the wicket leapt lightly over it, sprung on the shop-board, and jumped through the casement after him, which was the commencement of a terrible sharp race betwixt the two; the one screeching and hallooing as though flying for his life, passing over the wicket and through the window like a fox hard pressed, and the other at his heels barking and yelping as though exceeding ravenous to have him for his prey.

The horrible din these two made can scarcely be conceived. Dick, the magpie, flew and hopped about, cawing with a monstrous energy, as though he thought his last hour was come; and Tib, the cat, clambered to a high shelf, where she kept up a constant swearing, spitting, and caterwauling, as the strange chase proceeded, and as each engaged in it passed close by her: the little dogs crowded into one of the corners, barking with all their little might.

Thus these two went on, till on a sudden Jonas, turning quickly round, and making in the opposite direction, they came against each other with so monstrous a shock as to cause both to tumble backwards. For a second or so, they lay silent and motionless, as though dead as any stone. Anon, one raised his head, and peered at his companion, and then again laid himself at his length. The other did the like, with the same affectation of gravity; and this they continued to do alternately, Tib and Dick looking on from their resting-places with a singular curiousness, and the little dogs a little less disturbed, but still uttering an occasional bark.

At last they both rose at the same moment, and sat gazing at each other, face to face, with the rueful visages of whipped schoolboys, each putting his finger to his eye, and each commencing first to whimper,

then to sob, and at last to roar as though in the terriblest tribulation.

Suddenly the woman's tailor stopped short in his grief, clapped his hands to his sides, and uttered so piercing a cry, it must needs have been heard by every chanticleer in the parish; whereupon, his companion jumped on his legs, laughing as heartily as ever man did, and flung himself into a chair.

"O' my life, this is exquisite fooling!" exclaimed he. "I would my dame had seen it. Joan's merry heart would have enjoyed it right heartily. In truth, 'twas rare sport. I would rather have lost my best customer than have missed it." The speaker threw himself back in his chair and indulged in a succession of mirthful chuckles. His companion answered not, save by a whoop at his favorites, which made them look intent on a speedy taking of themselves away from their present places of refuge, as he proceeded to do the host's part to his visitor.

The gossips entered upon a jovial carouse, and, as their spirits became refreshed, they grew into a greater content with themselves, and had recourse to their customary tricks, till they kicked up such a racket, the dogs, the cat, and the magpie, were again driven from their ordinary places, on each side the fire, to which they had returned, to find security wherever they could.

It was whilst they were intent upon the performance of some of the maddest of their freaks, that two men, cloaked, and otherwise habited like persons of worship, were proceeding at a slow pace into the town in the direction of the woman-tailor's humble tenement. These persons were Sir George Carew and his friend Master Shakspeare. It was now so late an hour, that all the sober-minded townfolk had taken them to their beds. It followeth that the place was hushed into a profound stillness, save where the noise of the two gossips spread itself, and the darkness of the night was of that impenetrable sort, nothing could be seen but here and there a stream of light from some casement wherein a fire still blazed, or a candle was kept burning, betokening, perchance, a late carouse, or the good dame's preparations to welcome to his comfortable hearth her absent bedfellow; or a door thrown open to admit of the departure of some merry party to their several homes, would, the whilst they were saying their parting courtesies on the threshold, illumine the deep gloom of the whole neighborhood in a still more cheerful fashion.

The two persons, to whom allusion hath just been made, kept close together, conver-

sing in a low tone to each other, but returning, with much heartiness, the fair "good nights" they had of every one who passed them on their way. At their heels was a stately hound, who seemed to take no heed whatsoever of any thing or any one, but stalked along with as much affectation of solemnness and dignity, as would have sufficed the goodliest justice to the peace that ever sentenced a sturdy beggar to the stocks.

The subject of their conversation was no other than the Earl of Essex, whose treasonable designs, after his abandonment of his government in Ireland, had become much talked of. Sir George Carew detailed to his friend the intrigues in which this vain and headstrong noble had been engaged, after he had been placed under arrest by the Queen's order.

"He got his liberty at last," added he, "but was not allowed to come to court, or near the Queen's person. These restrictions he could not stomach. His great heart would not take quietly the humility that was put upon him. He regarded those who were most in favor at court as his restless and remorseless enemies, and was ever saying some scurvy thing or another against them. His discontent grew greater every day, and he gathered about him a number of mischievous, restless busybodies, bold swordsmen, confident fellows, men of broken fortunes, and such as saucily used their tongues in railing against all men. They did him no good; but his worst adviser was one Cuffe, his secretary, a plotting dangerous knave, who had been with him in Ireland."

"Methinks I have heard of this man, Sir George, at Oxford. Held he not some appointment there?"

"O my life, I know not well. All I know is, that he is the most pestilent, treasonable knave that ever carved out employment for the hangman, the which I make no manner of doubt he is now busily intent on, assisted by divers others whose names are in great repute. Foremost of these is your assured friend and patron, Lord Southampton."

"Nay, nay, Sir George Carew, this cannot be. Your intelligencer must have played you false!" exclaimed Master Shakespeare, greatly excited. "I would pledge my life on his loyalty."

"Do nothing unadvisedly, friend Will," replied his companion. "The Privy Council know of a surety that he is engaged in a treasonable design, and, moreover, that he hath engaged his friend, Sir Charles Danvers, in the same desperate undertaking. In short, they have the names of all the con-

spirators, and are as well informed of their plans as they are themselves."

"I must to London, Sir George. I must away without loss of time. I am bound to save him. He shall not be sacrificed in this foolish business, and I have power to help him."

"Well said, Master Shakespeare," replied Sir George Carew, to his agitated friend. "It was mainly for this I sought occasion for privy speech with you. I knew with what affectionateness you do regard this young lord, nor am I ignorant of his worthy nature; therefore desired I he should have the aid of so trusty a friend in the perilous condition in which he hath placed himself. But, hush! What wild uproar is that?"

The two speakers stopped of a sudden and listened intently; but all around seemed wrapped in as deep a silence as darkness; and, whilst they tarried, Talbot put himself forward in the direction whence the rude sounds that so much startled Sir George Carew had come. It may readily be imagined that this noise proceeded from the woman's tailor and his merry gossip, who still pursued their mad pranks as riotously as ever. They had got to the rehearsing of certain strange feats of posturing, which they intended performing at the next Stratford games—an annual festival, in famous repute all over Warwickshire—that would be held in a day or so, twisting of their bodies in the oddest positions ever seen, to the extreme bewilderment of Dick and Tib, who glanced on the scene with a singular curious look, from a place of safety. Jonas stood on his head and hands, supporting Tommy Hart on his feet, whose head and body formed a sort of ring, the legs being round the neck, when, as they were deeply intent on keeping their unnatural posture, they suddenly heard a dreadful sort of sharp snapping noise. The eyes of both were at the same moment directed to the spot, and, to their extreme horror, they beheld, peering over the wicket, a horrible black visage, with eyes that looked to be of burning coals, glaring on them as though about to do them a terrible mischief. The lateness of the hour, joined to the fiendish aspect of their visitor, as it was seen in the ruddy firelight, looked a thousand times more unearthly from the singular positions in which they observed him, struck the hearts of both with a sudden and overwhelming fear, and, in an instant, Tommy Hart tumbled from his elevation, and he and his equally frightened gossip rolled over and jostled each other till they got to a distant corner of the chamber. There each strove,

with main and might, to get behind the other, uttering all manner of fearful cries in a low voice, and trembling in every limb. Dick and Tib and their associates seemed to share in their terror, for they got themselves as far as possible from the door—one cawed, the other mewed, and the rest yelped, as though they, too, were within an inch of being frightened out of their lives.

The once merry hatter had now sunk on his knees, as terribly out of conceit of mirth of any sort as a whipped turnspit, and commenced a strange, yet monstrous earnest sort of prayer, full of asseverations of the thorough honesty of his dealings to man, woman, and child, whilst the poor woman's tailor was kneeling behind him, engaged in a similar kind of devotion, but making very urgent confession of divers appropriations of small pieces of stuff, which he had neglected returning to his customers.

"An it please you, my lord," muttered the fear-struck hatter, scarcely daring to lift his eyes to the horrible object he addressed, "I am in no case for the society of your honorable worship; I am an exceeding humble, worthless poor varlet, unworthy to tie your honor's shoes. But here is my friend here, an your honorable worship pleases, as worthy a soul as ever broke bread—"

"Nay, I assure your noble worship," cried the other, with a wild kind of fervor, "I am a monstrous malefactor, that hath more sins to repent of than there are threads in a piece of cloth. It is this, my very excellent sweet gossip, you must needs be in quest of, for he hath such rare virtues—"

"Believe him not, I beseech you, good my lord," screamed out Tommy Hart in as loud a voice as he could use, "I have no more virtue in me than you may find in a withered radish. Jonas will do credit to your worship's judgment—Jonas is such an admirable choice company."

"I am but an ass to Tommy here, an it please you, my lord," replied Jonas Tietape with equal energy—"there is not such an intolerable ass in all Warwickshire."

"Try him, an it please your worship. An you do not find him worth a score of such poor wittols as am I, I will give my head as a buttered-toast for the next hungry dog I meet."

How long this altercation might have continued I cannot take upon me to say, had it not been put to a sudden conclusion. The sole cause of it at that moment opened a pair of monstrous formidable jaws that, to the excited and terrified visions of the trembling posturers, looked to be of the size of a

church-door, at least, when fully extended. At this, Tommy Hart, with a cry of terror, made a desperate struggle to get behind the friend in whose praise he had spoken so movingly scarce a moment since, the which the latter seemed as desperately intent on not allowing, and began struggling fiercely, shouting murder at the top of his voice. The object of their terror closed his terrible fangs with a curious sound, that was anything but human; and, at the uproar it created in the two gossips, began a series of other sounds that were less human still—for beyond all manner of doubt they were—such as a dog uses when barking.

In all honesty, the horrible head peering over the wicket, that had so frightened the woman's tailor and his associate into the assured conviction the arch enemy had come to them on his devilish errand for one or both, was no other than that of Talbot, who, attracted by the noise the two were making during their performances, went straight to the house, and put his paws on the low door so that he could see all that was going on in the chamber. The singular attitudes of the posturers made him utter the low growl that attracted their attention; and, not being able to make out the nature of the eloquent addresses that were made to him, and, moreover, being somewhat inclined for sleep, he indulged himself in a yawn of more than ordinary length; and the outcry this occasioned so disturbed him, that he took to barking rather angrily.

The cry of "Murder!" made Master Shakspeare and Sir George Carew quicken their steps; and they arrived at the wicket just in time to witness the recognition of Talbot by the frightened gossips, who now laughed at their fears till the tears ran down their cheeks; and, whilst the merry hatter caressed his old acquaintance, Jonas took to his ordinary antics, and went whirling along the chamber, on his hands and feet, with more wantonness than ever, scaring his favorites from the snug places wherein they had been bewildered spectators of the strange scenes just described, and somewhat disturbing the gravity of Talbot, who could not refrain from an occasional bark. On Sir George and his friend coming up, the story of the fright Talbot had put them into was soon told, to the amusement, as it seemed, both of narrators and hearers; and, in a short time afterwards, Master Shakspeare and Sir George parted, with a few hasty words that seemed to be of deep import. The former, in an exceeding perturbed state of mind, made the best of his way to his cottage at Shottery, whilst Sir George

Carew returned to his own mansion; and the two gossips, for a brief space longer, to their postures, their jests, and their bursts of joyous laughter at the recollection of the awful visit that had so hugely disturbed them.

CHAPTER XII.

As she goes, all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty;
And enamored do wish, so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through woods, through seas, whether
she would ride. BEN JONSON.

TABITHA hurried on with her companion as though with an exceeding desire to witness the goodly pageants of which rumor had spoken pretty loudly throughout Barbican, and perchance also with some particular eagerness to show to all of her acquaintance, in the first place, in what marvellous good company she was, and, in the second, what brave attire she could don for such an occasion.

Ever since she had heard from an intelligencer in whom she could put her trust, that Queen Elizabeth was to return on such a day to her good city of London, and, according to a fashion in excellent favor with her, was to be welcomed back with rejoicings and shows of all descriptions, she determined to play the part of the good woman, on as large a scale as possible, and, by every means in her power, endeavor to secure for herself the long-coveted station of wife to that very admirable, famous physician, Master Doctor Posset.

It was rare that Mistress Tabitha was seen in the streets with other male companion than Launcelot Curthose, whose task it had often been, when his mistress stayed out nights in visiting any of her gossips at a distance, to march before her, as every dutiful apprentice was wont to accompany his mistress, with a lantern in one hand and a cudgel in the other: the one for lighting of her way, the other to be raised in her defence, in case of need. But Launce was now little thought of, save only for the consideration of the notable punishment that was due to him for the horrible monstrous torture he had put her to, which entered her mind when a smart twinge of pain occurred in the wounded foot. At all other periods, her thoughts, like her speech, had but one direction. She laughed and talked, occa-

sionally turning round to say something peculiarly gracious to her followers, and omitting nothing that could make herself appear as devoted to the wishes of her companion as she was pleasant and amiable.

The conduct of the Physician did not very clearly establish an opinion on the state of his feelings towards her, as satisfactory as she could have desired. He looked as lively as a superannuated ape, to which his mowing and chattering gave a marked resemblance. He never failed to laugh when it was expected he should; and though there might be nothing absolutely lover-like in his behavior, there was certainly nothing to discourage the idea that at least a very friendly feeling existed. There was only one thing in his conduct Tabitha disliked. He kept continually turning round, even in the midst of her most powerful attacks upon his affections, to observe their followers. She fancied that the proceedings of his daughter with Leonard and John Hall, who were walking on each side of her, did not meet with his approbation. Although this might be very natural on his part, she liked not the indifference it manifested to her claims upon him.

After them came Millicent and the two young students—as it seemed, the other two still vying how most to gratify John Hall. With the girl every sentence was accompanied with a most seductive smile, and her betrothed seemed to heed a vast deal more the making of himself agreeable unto his male associate than unto the other. The young physician could not but appear pleased. Reserved as he was, and of so marvellous a gravity, he could not but feel the genial influence of two such persons anxious to give him all the contentation in their power.

They were followed by Monsieur Galliard and Mildred, each apparently on the exquisitest terms with the other. After these came Roger Chinks, old Poins, and Simon Peltry, gossips almost from their cradles, who were so intent on dilating on the good qualities of the Earl of Essex, whose affairs then were much talked of by the citizens, as scarce to heed the vast crowd in which they had now got commingled.

Every one, gentle and simple, young and old, appeared to have donned their holiday tire in honor of their sovereign; and a countless multitude of such, as gaily habited as their means would allow, were hastening along the narrow streets of the city; the tankard-bearer's daughter elbowing past the alderman's wife, and the artificer's widow pushing before the poor gentlewo-

man, without regard to respect or precedence. Gay gallants were mixed up with the rascal sort; valiant commanders were thrust aside by unruly apprentices: and honest merchants were hustled by a pack of masterless vagrants, and the like worthless poor knaves.

The major part were intent on making the best of their way to the nearest point where the Queen's Highness was expected; but a very many were too busy to have such intentions. Of these, some were making preparations for a goodly bonfire, wherever the space admitted of it; and here there was a marvellous activity and running to and fro with faggots, and logs, and tar-barrels, to heap up for the expected blaze.

Along the whole line of road the owners of the better sort of houses were engaged displaying from their windows whatever store of tapestry or arras they were possessed of, which, stirred by the wind, did make a pretty show, out of all doubt. In almost every fresh turning were seen artizans using of their utmost diligence in the getting ready of some wondrous pageant: for these things, especially wherein fine Latin speeches were addressed to her—the Queen wonderfully affected. This day being the anniversary of her coronation, more than usual efforts were made to give her contentation in this way, and the utmost cunning of the times was taxed in producing allegorical shows of more scholarly sort than any that had hitherto been seen. The city authorities only allowed their zeal to be exceeded by their diligence; they had made the most magnificent preparations; yet, satisfied as they might be with them, they were too well aware of the variable humor of their royal mistress to await the result without some anxiety.

Whilst these more important matters were in hand, there was no lack of amusement ready for such as chose to partake of it. There was scarce a corner that had not its balled-singer, by whose stentorian lungs the superhuman qualities of their sovereign were insisted on in the most choice doggrel. Mountebanks took advantage of the continual thronging to endeavor to find a market for sundry excellent remedies for divers most potent diseases, which it was delicately hinted by them, good subjects should strive earnestly to rid themselves of. Here, conjurors swallowed fire; there, astrologers announced the telling of fortunes: here was a delicate puppet-show, just arrived from the court of Prester John; and there, a bear, of such capital sort for

the showing of sport, the Sophy had offered a thousand crowns for it from the owner to have it for his own particular pastime.

Noticing of these famous sights, and commenting on most, the party from Barbican kept pressing on. Of these the three gossips, who brought up the rear, took the least notice. Their attention seemed engrossed by political matters, and, after discussing the aspect of affairs at home and abroad, abusing of certain courtiers, and extravagantly lauding their favorite the Earl of Essex, it seemed as though they were about to take up with one of the most fruitful sources at all times of popular eloquence—grumbling.

"Gog's wounds, it would be wondrous such things should be allowed!" exclaimed Roger Chinks, in a gruff voice. "Things are getting in so bad a case, I doubt hugely there will be honest living for any man, soon. The prices of whatsoever matters are most needed of us poor men, are nigh upon double what they were a score of years back."

"Ay, neighbor, that I find to my cost," observed Simon Peitry. "I cannot get me a pint of huffcap for less than a penny, which in my father's time was to be had for a halfpenny at any ale-house within the walls. As for bracket and dagger ale, they have got to such a pestilent price, as have put them clean out of my drinking."

"But it endeth not at the ale-house," replied the lantern-maker, "else might it be in some way bearable. Here have I been obliged to raise the wages of my journeyman twopence a day more than ever was heard of since the craft of a lantern-maker came into exercise; and yet they have the horrible impudency to tell me they cannot keep soul and body together. Do not you, neighbor, remember that, within these thirty years, I might in this goodly city buy the best pig or goose I could lay my hand on for fourpence, which now costeth twelvepence? a good capon for threepence or fourpence? a chicken for a penny; a hen for twopence, which now costeth me double and triple the money? It is likewise, in greater ware, as in beef and mutton. Moreover, I have seen a cap for threepence as good as I can now get for two shillings and sixpence of our good gossip, Mistress Thatchpole. Of cloth, ye have heard how the price is risen. Now a pair of shoes cost twelvepence: yet, in my time, I have bought a better for sixpence. Now I can get never a horse shod under tenpence or twelvepence, when I have also seen the common price was sixpence."

"Ay, marry," responded the leather-seller, "and hast marked, neighbor, the monstrous falling off there is in the goodness of whatever things we most need, notwithstanding of such exceeding charges? Now the lambswool I have tasted of late hath no more the true smack of such as I was wont to drink, no more than a score of years back, than has a draught of this conduit we are passing the flavor of muscadine. Hanging be too good for the cheating varlets who plunder us in this intolerable fashion."

In good sooth, neighbors, methinks you are somewhat too hasty in these your judgments in this matter," observed the spurrier. Doubtless is it that the prices of divers commodities have been raised to some extent since our youth: but it remaineth not merely in matters of victual; divers other things needed by us are not to be bought but at as high a price. Perchance, Neighbor Chinks, the selling of lanterns hath of late become more profitable than it used?"

"An if it had not," replied the lantern-maker, "I must needs have abandoned the trade."

"And in the selling of leather, there might also be larger gains," added the other.

"Body o' me, yes," answered Simon Peltry, laughingly, to whom the preceding question had been addressed. "I had no need to grumble on that score, did not the villainous tapsters rob me of them."

"Then I prythee say, where is the wit or honesty of complaining of the times?" asked Martin Pains quickly, yet with deep seriousness. "I marvel hugely you should lack that proper sense of religiousness, which would have made you perceive that this change in the times was a thing for which you should have been hugely grateful. Instead of being foolishly discontented at the highness of prices, you should have gone down on your knees, and have thanked God you lived when such were general."

The only reply the pious spurrier got was a sort of grunt from the surly maker of lanterns. The jolly dealer in leather made no other sign of having attended to the speech, than by putting his tongue in the corner of his cheek in a manner infinitely more significant than refined, and winking at his fellow-grumbler. At this instant, the attention of all the party was drawn towards Mistress Tabitha, calling to young Martin Pains to point out to him a pageant that seemed exceedingly to have struck her

fancy. Martin was no where to be seen. All had been so engaged upon their separate gratifications, that the boy had been entirely forgotten by them for some time past.

Many were the comments, and various the conjectures his disappearance occasioned. Mistress Thatchpole, in especial, appeared to take his absence much to heart, there being no end to her hopes and fears concerning of the dear child's safety. What looked to be most strange, the father seemed the least interested or alarmed, though known to be of a singular affectionate disposition. He knew Martin better than the rest, and could, had he chose, have made a shrewd guess as to his whereabouts. He contented himself, however, with expressing his conviction that there was no cause of alarm. This at last satisfied his anxious neighbor; and, after some exceeding strong assertions, that she should never know the least atom of comfort all her days should any harm befall her precious favorite, she was induced to resume her hold of the physician's arm, which she had dropped in the intensity of her concern, and the party proceeded on their course.

The crowd grew more dense as they advanced. The doctor began to find considerable difficulty in making a path for himself and his companion. The people were wedged together in countless multitudes, without the slightest distinction of worth or station. The windows and housetops were crowded with eager faces, turned in one direction, which was of course that by which the Queen's Highness was expected. But the party from Barbican had now nearly approached their destination, which was the house of a certain gossip and kinswoman of Mistress Tabitha's, well known to most of her companions as Dame Quiney, then living in the city in excellent repute both there and at court as a clear-starcher. The windows of her dwelling overlooked the road through which the expected procession was to pass, and one on the ground-floor had been set aside for the convenience of those now urgently pushing their way towards it.

In due time, after no small difficulty, they were so fortunate as to obtain access to Dame Quiney's dwelling; and, after a courteous welcome from an exceeding clean and still comely matron, wearing one of the very ruffs she was so famed for preparing for the Queen's Highness and the ladies of her court, they took their position at the large open casement, some sitting on stools and benches, and the rest standing up be-

hind. After seeing them all properly placed, their hostess retired, to look after other guests of hers.

It was now about the hour of noon. The day was none so bright at the first dawn of it, but suddenly the sun burst out with a marvellous cheerful aspect, that made the decorated streets and countless thousands in their holiday suits look wonderfully brave. In all that vast assemblage, there was scarce one face whereof the expression was not cheerfulness and content.

A famous commodity of debating was going on amongst the crowd, during the time Tabitha and her party were kept waiting; but it was suddenly put a stop to by distant shouts, that made every individual in the crowd break off what he was then intent on, and do all that in him lay to get a good view in the direction of those welcome sounds.

Every one was now restless with expectation. They who were in the streets were on tiptoe, striving to look over each others heads—the short deploring their want of height, and the tall wishing themselves to be very May-poles; whilst, from the windows and housetops, and indeed from all elevated places, the same efforts were made for the satisfying of the general curiosity. Anon the sound of trumpets caught the ear, and the shouting became louder. Whereupon, the crowd in the neighborhood of the party from Golden Lane showed greater restlessness in their movements, and more curiosity in their looks. And so it continued, with the addition of divers impatient yet loyal exclamations from all quarters, till the sound of the trumpets coming nigher and nigher, the shouts every instant increasing in loudness and the cries and movements of all around who were well placed for a view in the quarter to which every gaze was directed, gave good assurance that the Queen's Highness was approaching.

A short time, which to many seemed to grow to a marvellous length, and the imposing cavalcade that accompanied the Queen began to make its appearance. First, came trumpets and kettle-drums on horse-back; the performers whereof, in gay dresses almost covered with gold lace, appeared to be making the loudest music in their power. Then came a godly company of the highest nobles and gentlemen of the land, on prancing palfreys gaily comparisoned. In the midst of these, and they were a very many, came a handsome caroché drawn by six horses, in the which were two or three persons, but conspicuous above

all a woman right royally appavelled, the sight of whom seemed to make that vast multitude mad with very joy. Such shouting of good wishes, such throwing up of caps, such waving of handkerchiefs, it was scarce possible any human eye had ever seen before; all the whilst the lady so welcomed regarded everything with exceeding graciousness, inclined her head in grateful acknowledgment of the popular good-will, and more than once spoke her thanks in words of winning courtesy.

Bravely as she was clad, and gracious as she appeared, there could be no disguising that age had marked her features with many unpleasing memorials; besides which, her visage had a careworn and heavy look, that told of a heart ill at ease. In truth, she had just then many causes of disquietude in the aspect of affairs at home and abroad; but the conduct of her favorite, the Earl of Essex in his Irish government, and since his improper return thence, as it was continually represented to her, filled the aged beauty with more uneasiness than all the other things put together. She strove hard to disguise her cares and anxieties from her loyal subjects under a smiling exterior, but she could not conceal from herself that the arrow had entered into her soul, and her increasing moodiness and irritability had long since told to her attendants the increase in her sufferings.

In this manner Queen Elizabeth continued her progress, with such occasional stops as came of certain pageants, consisting of such dainty conceits in the way of the personating of allegorical and heathenish characters, as were considered most apt for the occasion.

Here came Time, to lay aside his scythe and hour-glass, and swear he had nought more now to do than to note, with infinite reverence, the peerless being on whom his poor eyes had been allowed to gaze. There Hercules put by his club, vowing that, although he had performed so many marvellous labors, to stand undazzled within the influence of such radiant beauty was of too much difficulty—therefore he would not essay it, but at an humble distance be ever at hand ready to put forth his puissance to the uttermost against any who should be daring enough to deny her exceeding exquisiteness of feature and supereminence of mind.

In one place, Faith, Hope, and Charity came forward to say that they had had nought to do on earth, since a princess had appeared, who, in her own proper person, made so fair a show of all their virtues, and every other it was possible to have: and, in

another, Neptune exhibited himself, with his trident and sea-horses, swearing most lustily that he had given up all empire of the seas, since its true and invincible ruler, the high and mighty Elizabeth, had put forward her pretensions to such sovereignty; and a vast deal more of the like sort, spoken in most excellent sounding verse, and replied to by the Queen's Majesty in fair and pleasant speech.

To the monstrous delight of the immense multitude, congregated in every street, Queen Elizabeth proceeded, after this fashion, to Somerset House, where she intended to remain.

Mistress Tabitha Thatchpole and her party waited where they had placed themselves, rarely pleased with the sight they had had, till the crowd in the streets had so far diminished as to allow of their retracing their footsteps to Golden Lane, it never having been their intention to stay in Dame Quiney's house but sufficient time to see the pageant; so, taking leave of the clear-starcher, who, to tell the truth, was right glad to be quit of them, she having persons of higher condition than staying with her, they bent their steps homeward. But, in so happy a mood were they—for even the old lantern-maker spoke and looked with some pleasantness—that they cared not for immediate returning, and, at the suggestion of the jovial leather-seller, proceeded to a quiet inn in Paternoster Row, to solace themselves after their fatigues with a tankard of choice ale. All the chambers seemed as full of thirsty customers as they could well be: and the drawers were running hither and thither, calling to this one, and answering that, and serving all as busy as bees in a hive. There was, the while, such a hum of voices as could scarce have been exceeded at the building of Babel.

With a great to-do, and not without much patience, and a word or two spoke by Simon Peltry to one of the drawers, an acquaintance of his—no marvel, for the thirsty leather-seller was as familiar with every drawer in London and Southwark as he might be with his own jerkin; they were accommodated with a small table and the proper quantity of stools, and thereupon they, with a very reasonable heartiness, commenced paying their attention to the tankard.

This was well liked of each, and singularly so of the jolly leather-seller, who, whilst pronouncing his opinion on its merit, and giving its whole history, from the sowing of the grain and the gathering of the hops, to its present acquaintance with his throat, had such frequent recourse to his subject, that

few of the party knew of its worth, save through the medium of his commendations; whereof, the consequence was, another tankard was ordered, of which a fairer division was enforced; and, as they this way were led to understand the justice of their neighbor's commentaries, each began to be as eloquent as Simon Peltry.

Of John Hall, it is sufficient to state, he was not altogether unmoved. Whether the blandishments of the kind Millicent, or the friendly attentions of her betrothed, or the generous influence of the tankard, did most in removing that grave and somewhat studious air, that had so distinguished him, when leaving his mother's home, under the guardianship of that unmatchable prudent guide, Simon Stockfish, we have no positive assurance, but it was easy to see he was exceeding well pleased.

Simon Peltry, in the meanwhile, was relating to such of the company as he could get to listen to him the particular history of every drawer who had been seen by any of his companions since they had entered the inn, for in such learning he had not his match all the world over. He could name not only the parents of each individual, but knew their gossips, and every thing they had said or done worthy of the telling. As for Mistress Thatchpole, she was in her element. It seemed to her that the little doctor was as attentive as though she had been his most profitable patient, and she fancied his looks were of a wonderful tender and devoted nature.

All at once the conversation took a turn towards Golden Lane; and she, perchance, being more at home there than in any other subject that had been mentioned, cared no more for being a listener, and straight talked away as vigorously as the best. She entered at some length into her own history, not failing, with proper expressiveness, to state how well things were going on with her in the selling of caps and hats, and giving a full, perchance an over, valuation of the tenement that had been left her for the carrying on of her business. In short, she left nothing unsaid that could convey to her hearers the conviction that Mistress Tabitha Thatchpole, of Golden Lane, Barbican, was worth anybody's having, be he whom he might.

"Methinks that apprentice of yours doth not lack industry," observed Martin Poins.

"By my troth no," replied Tabitha, anxious, for especial reasons, to appear ready to speak kindly of every one. "He is no idler, I promise you. And, though I cannot but hesitate somewhat in telling you of it, as it may seem in some sort the showing of

a great vanity in me, he entereth into my service with such exceeding affectionateness, that he will allow of none assisting. Nay, so devoted is he, that of his own accord he pressed, with a monstrous earnestness I found it impossible to deny, that he should be left on this glorious day to look after the concerns of the shop, stating that I should enjoy myself all the more, as it was his wish, if I knew that my customers were as well looked after as though I were present."

Whilst Mistress Thatchpole's company were adding their several commendations to hers of this phoenix of an apprentice, it so chanced that a noise was heard of no little laughing and shouting in one of the adjoining rooms, and, amid the maddest uproar of mirth from many voices, they could easily distinguish the following sentences:—

"Out on her for a scurvy jade, say I!—But I cannot restrain mine honest mirth, when thinking what a fury the old tabby would be in, knew she I have set at nought her strict commands and threatenings in case of disobedience to keep within doors. But she is well served. I entreated to be allowed, as other 'prentices are, to make this a holiday, but all I got of my prayers was a rating—plague on her shrewish tongue!—so loud, I was nigh upon stunned by the fury of it; and, as for cuffs—methinks she taketh me for nothing better than a custard, that must needs have a constant beating to make it of any goodness. But prythee join with me in a draught of huff-cap, to drink this Mother Brimstone a speedy meeting with her proper master and helpmate, Old Scratch."

Scarce had this speech ended, when, with a shout of riotous laughter, a party of nearly a dozen youths, seeming to be apprentices, burst into the chamber, and at the head of them, and out of all doubt the speaker of what hath just been stated, was no other than the phoenix, Lazy Launce. At the hearing of such rude phrases at such a moment, Mrs. Tabitha Thatchpole, quite forgetful of the amiable character she had been so earnestly endeavoring to assume, directly Launce made his appearance, flew towards him, shewing by her looks and manner, that neither this offence, nor that whereby her corn had suffered so terribly, would be allowed to pass without a signal punishment.

Doubtless he would have had a famous mauling, had not young Poins, who was one of the most boisterous of the party, as she came rushing with her utmost speed, thrust one of his companions towards her with such force, that they scarcely escaped coming to the ground together. Ere Tabitha could re-

cover herself, Launce, looking to be in as great a fright as ever he was in his life for all his big words, took but two steps to the door, and vanished out of the neighborhood as though the very helpmate he had proposed for his mistress was in full chase, at his heels.

CHAPTER XIII.

Here are none that can bear a painted show,
Strike when you wink, and then lament the
blow;

Who, like mills, set the right way for to grind,
Can make their gains alike with every wind;
Only some fellows with the subtlest pate,
Amongst us, may perchance equivocate
At selling of a horse, and that's the most.

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.

If we do prosper now, not we on Fate,
But she on us shall for direction wait.

THE GREAT FAVORITE.

It is a weary interlude
Which doth short joys, long woes include;
The world's the stage, the prologue tears,
The acts vain hopes, and varied fears;
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death.

DR. HENRY KING.

THE principal chambers in Essex House were thronged with men of divers characters and conditions, but for the most part bearing in their several aspects an air of fierce determination and gloomy discontent. Amongst them were some of high lineage and good reputations, and divers of singular repute for ability in learning and in arms; but there were also present a vast number of gentlemen of poor fortunes and poorer characters; daring adventurers, who had nothing to lose but their lives, which they were ready to risk in any venture that promised to better their fortunes; and impoverished cast captains, who sought a desperate enterprise, somewhat out of revenge against certain persons in the government, by whom they fancied they had been scurvily treated, and somewhat in the hope of obtaining rich advantages, as had been held out to them if they assisted in the stirring game that was afoot.

There were signs of exceeding restlessness and noisy debate in the crowded chambers. Little knots of eager disputants kept together on the staircase, in the ante-rooms, and even in the state apartments, where the leaders of the party were in close and earnest debate. Although many bore upon them the appearance of discontented courti-

ers and poor soldiers, wearing of such bravery as their means would allow, albeit it was in many cases exceedingly worn and soiled, there were others who were dressed with a marked plainness. These latter were men of severe aspect and of formal manners; rude in their bearing, loud of voice, and violent in their counsels; in their outward apparel affecting the new religion, and in their behavior monstrously disaffected to the existing government. Amongst them were two or three who wore the garb of priests; and these were, for the most part, engaged in loud discourse on the marvellous qualities of their noble patron, the Earl of Essex, and of the intolerable grievances that had been thrust upon him by certain ungodly wretches who poisoned the ear of the Queen's Highness against him.

The hubbub of voices, and the constant going to and fro of upwards of three hundred persons, gave to the scene an air of strangeness and confusion, to which the vast number of offensive weapons that lay here and there on the rich furniture of the principal apartments, and in every convenient corner, added greatly. Messengers were rapidly passing in and out, bringing reports to the leaders; one was rudely shouting to his fellow afar off, and numbers were standing upon the carved benches and chairs, making their comments upon the strange scene and the chief actors in it.

At one corner of one of the suit of apartments, wherein the principal part of this assemblage were crowded, there were two persons, a little apart from the crowd; the one, who looked to be a Puritan from the plainness of his suit, stood on an oak table of great strength, supporting himself by leaning against a massive cupboard, richly carved, that stood beside it; the other, whose apparelling had a vast deal more of the gallant and the soldier about it, to which a patch over one eye and a well-bronzed complexion, were expressive additions, stood on a cane-backed chair almost at his elbow.—The first, notwithstanding a huge, rough beard, wore an aspect of honest plainness, and seemed to take a wonderful interest in the proceedings, though he said but little; but the features of the other were expressive of more impudency than honesty, and his tongue wagged like the clapper of a village bell giving an alarm of fire, though it is much to be doubted his heart was in the cause he had embarked in.

"Now, I pray you, good Master Puritan," said the latter, whom the reader will presently recognize, "cast your eyes beneath the great window yonder. There are all my

excellent worthy friends and sworn brothers—persons with whom I am as intimate as I am with my sword, the which, to tell you the truth, is a rare one, the right Toledo.—Fore George, it is not long since it graced the thigh of the King of Spain."

"The speaker, finding the curiosity of his companion was not then to be drawn to so goodly a weapon, proceeded—"Yes, there they are by this light. All of them look up to my judgment and vast experience in military matters, and had counsel of me but yesterday as to the conducting of this enterprise. He with the grey beard is Lord Sandys, as gallant a nobleman as any that lives—he is talking urgently to Lord Monteagle (he with the slashed doublet); and Lord Rutland, another of my especial intimates, together with Sir Ferdinando Gorges—he that is governor of Plymouth—and Sir John Davis, surveyor of the ordnance, are listening and occasionally joining in the discourse. Next to Davis is John Lyttleton of Frankley, a Worcestershire man, not long since knight of the shire for that county, a person of great resolution and ability, my familiar and sworn gossip; the person who is pulling him by the sleeve is Sir Gilly Merrick. It was he who, last night, bespoke the play of 'Richard the Second,' at the seeing of which were nearly all who are now in this action."

The Puritan, in a sort of snuffle, said something expressive of the iniquity of such performances; but regarded the persons at the further end of the chamber with increasing earnestness.

"Fore gad, I forgot your misliking of plays," observed his communicative associate. But there is a group now a little to the right of those I have just been naming—these are of more moment than all the others. You know none of them, I doubt not, except by casual observance; but, if you seek their notice, you will find no one so like to get it you as I, in regard of the great love they bear me for certain important services it hath been my good fortune to be able to render them." This hint not being taken any notice of, the speaker continued—"Now, mark you that stately gentleman, in the falling collar and ruff; he in the plain russet suit, with the full beard, that looketh so restless and uneasily, and speaketh with so great a vehemency; see how disdainfully flash his eyes; note how proudly he beareth himself, like one grievously oppressed, and passionately desirous of having his revenge of his enemies. Well, that is no other than my Lord of Essex."

Verily, he looketh to be a right proper

leader!" exclaimed the other, with that particular nasal twang they of the new religion chose to affect.

"By this sword, yes!" replied his companion; "and of his soldier-like qualities few can speak so confidently as can I, who have been his companion in arms throughout all his campaigns, and, in truth, may be said to have been his sole teacher in what he knoweth of the art of war. But of this it doth not become me to speak. Some say he has moved in this action merely to oust his enemies, Cecil, Raleigh, Cobham, and the rest; others assert he will change the commonwealth, and reform all abuses and disorders in it; and divers are confident it is his intention to bring in King James, of Scotland: but I, who am so deep in his confidence, could tell his meaning and objects more faithfully, chose I to do so; but, of course, I am bound in honor to keep so great a secret."

The Puritan seemed to have nothing to say to a truth so evident; indeed, his whole attention was directed towards the group round the Earl of Essex.

"He who is so busy with the Earl, writing at the table before him," continued the other, "is my lord's secretary, one Henry Cuffe. He affects a clownishness and honest bluntness of manner, but he is shrewdly suspected of having secret ambitious ends, with a marvellous disposition towards deep plotting and far-sighted policy. The Earl once dismissed him his service, assured his sharp and impertune infusions would one day prove his ruin; but he hath been so politic in his behavior as to be again taken into his lord's favor, and hath the credit of being the main-spring of this enterprise. On the other side stands one of a different spirit. He is my Lord Southampton, another of my especial familiars, and he is leaning on his friend Sir Charles Danvers, who hath been drawn by love for him into this action."

The Puritan's apparent deep interest in the group he was observing was, at this moment, interrupted by the loud shouting of the name of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and great commotion was created amongst the conspirators when it was known that Sir Walter Raleigh was waiting to have speech with him on the river. The Earl of Essex seemed to put himself into a rage at the first mention of Raleigh's name, but allowed Sir Ferdinando to see what was wanted of him, although the Earl had given strict orders that none of the company should leave the house. As Sir Ferdinando took his departure, he was counselled to seize Raleigh,

and bring him in prisoner, which it was thought by some it was his intention to do.

Scarce was the stir which this occasioned at an end, when a still more violent commotion was occasioned by one coming in and declaring that divers persons of state from the Queen's Highness were at the gates demanding admittance. This begat a great confusion of opinions, some shouting to keep them out, and others to have them in; and, at last, orders were given to let them into the courtyard by the wicket, but not to allow any persons of any sort, to have admittance with them. All now hurried down into the courtyard, amongst others the Puritan and his companion; the latter, from some reason, kept close to the other; and, believing him, as it seemed, to have little or no knowledge of the distinguished characters with whom they were associated, he continued his information as to their several names and characters. From him the Puritan learned that the personages the conspirators were now so eagerly thronging around were the Lord Keeper Egerton, the Earl of Worcester, the Lord Chief Justice, and Sir William Knowles, the comptroller of the Queen's Household; all of whom were considered friends of the Earl of Essex, the latter being his uncle.

They walked uncovered, with a dignity worthy of their office, through the crowd, most of whom regarded them with looks of malice and mischief, till they reached to where Essex stood with a proud and haughty bearing, surrounded by his principal associates, also uncovered. The Lord Keeper spoke first, and in an audible voice delivered a message from the queen, stating she had sent them to know the meaning of so great a concourse of people in that place, and promising, if they had any griefs to complain of, they should be heard and remedied. This conciliatory speech on the rash and headstrong Earl had no other effect than to make him the more intent on his desperate purpose, thinking in his own weak mind it proceeded from fear; and he loudly and passionately replied, in confused assertions, that his life was in danger from the plotting of his enemies, that his handwriting had been forged, and that, seeing he could get no redress, and was threatened with the horriest mischiefs, he and his friends had resolved to defend themselves. This speech was received by those around him by loud acclamations.

Thereupon the Lord Chief Justice stated that, if any such matters were attempted or intended against the Earl, it was fit he should declare it; they would report it faithfully to her Highness; and he could not fail

of finding a princely indifference and justice on her part. On this the Lord Southampton spoke, describing his having been lately set upon by Lord Grey of Wilton, sword in hand, when he was quietly riding along one of the public streets, unexpected and unprepared for such an attack; to which the Lord Chief Justice replied that justice had been done in that matter, the offender having been sent to the Fleet Prison. This answer might have sufficed; but there were those in the courtyard who, for especial reasons, disliked any thing approaching a reconciliation in this stage of the business.

The Lord Keeper, noting the mood of the conspirators, asked Essex to explain his griefs privately, since he would not in public, adding he doubted not being able to give or procure him satisfaction. But this was not in accordance with the intentions of many of those around, who interrupted him with great clamor, shouting to the Earl:—"Away, away, my lord! They abuse your patience! They betray you! They abuse you! You lose time!" Whereupon the Lord Keeper put on his hat, and said to the Earl with a louder voice:—"My lord, let us speak to you privately, and understand your griefs;" and then, turning to the noisy crowd, with a grave and severe aspect, added:—"I command you all upon your allegiance to lay down your weapons, and depart."

This command, however, suited not with the humor of any of the conspirators to obey, and the chiefs looking on it as an attempt to draw their followers away from them, took it up with much appearance of disdain. Essex and his friends put on their hats, and turned away into the house; and the queen's officers, thinking he made that movement to confer with them privately, followed as they could. But there was a great outcry made at them, and on passing through the principal suite of rooms, some shouted:—"Kill them! kill them!" Others, of a less sanguinary turn, cried:—"Shut them up!" "Keep them as pledges!" This latter advice Essex thought fit to follow, for, when they arrived at his book-chamber, he gave orders to keep them fast there, and gave them in charge to three resolute fellows, who stood at their door with muskets charged and matches lighted.

It was during the confusion consequent upon this scene, that the Puritan made divers efforts to shake off his gossiping companion, who, nevertheless, continued to press upon him, introducing of himself with many flourishes as Captain Swashbuckler, and proffering to teach him the utmost cunning of fence for an exceeding moderate re-

ward; and, when this was impatiently negatived, kept pressing on him with still more urgency to buy the King of Spain's trusty Toledo at the small sum of ten crowns. At this the Puritan turned round fiercely, and, with a look that made the noble captain feel exceedingly uncomfortable for a good hour after, swore, with a monstrous oath, that if he dared to follow him a step further, or address to him another word, he would slit his nose to the bone. Ere this valiant gentleman could recover from so unexpected a mode of address, the Puritan was urging his way rapidly through the noisy crowd, as though to overtake my Lord Essex; but it was not the Earl he sought, but the Lord Southampton, in whose ear he unperceived whispered something which made the young nobleman turn round with a start of intense astonishment. He looked bewildered for a moment; then, making a sign for the Puritan to follow him, he opened a door, within which both quickly disappeared, and instantly fastened it to prevent intrusion.

"In the name of all that's marvellous, Will, what bringeth thee here in this guise?" exclaimed Lord Southampton, evidently in a monstrous wonder at the appearance of the person before him.

"A good errand, my dear lord, and one that admitteth of no delay," replied the other; but in a voice as different from the snuffling drone with which the same person but a few minutes since, addressed himself to the cast captain, as is a nightingale's from an owl's. "You are on the high road to destruction. The net is spread for you, and all those who have joined this rash and ill-arranged enterprise, and you cannot help falling into it. I pray you, my lord, hearken to one who never advised you but for your good. Move no more in this foolish business, but escape from it whilst there is safety. This I will secure at the hazard of my life."

"I thank you heartily, Master Shakspeare?" exclaimed his young patron, pressing his hand affectionately. "I am well assured of your heartiness to serve me at all times, but I am so bent on this action, I cannot give it up; and, as for the desperate character you give it, be assured you have been misinformed"—then, observing some sign of impatience in the other, added:—"Know you not that Essex counteth upon a hundred and twenty earls, barons, and gentlemen of his party; that the citizens of London are with him heart and soul; and that Sir Thomas Smith, one of the sheriffs, is to support him with a thousand trainbands, of whom he hath the command? By

this hand, sweet Will, we cannot but prosper. We are sure of success."

"Nay, such is out of all possibility," replied Master Shakspeare. "I have certain intelligence that every preparation has been made to defeat the objects for which you are striving so ill-advisedly, and they have been made with such judgment that the issue cannot be doubted. The Lord Mayor hath been warned of your projects, and an infinitely stronger force than any you can get together is on its march to overpower you, and make you all prisoners. Let me beg and pray of you, my dear friend and patron, to abandon this mad scheme at once. I have arranged a plan for your escape that cannot fail. I entreat you to save a life so dear to me!"

"You must be misinformed, Will!" exclaimed the young lord, much moved. "I am greatly beholden to you for your urgency to do me service, but in this matter it cannot be. Mine own grievances have not been few or trifling. I have endured a long imprisonment, for no greater fault than marrying for mine own liking. I was degraded from my command as Master of the Horse, for no reason of any sufficiency; and I have been attacked in the open streets, with no more ceremony than might be used to a common cut-purse."

"I know it all, my lord," answered his companion, urgently. "You have good cause for complaint, there cannot be a doubt. But your appearing in arms against your sovereign, the which you are now doing, is of all things the surest road to prejudice your good cause irretrievably. Once more, my dear lord, I pray and beseech you to take heed whilst it is time. Leave this wretched plot to the wretched fate that must overtake it. Pardon hath been promised you from a sure hand. Quit this place, and allow me the singular sweet pleasure of seeing the truest friend man ever had, out of the most imminent and terrible danger that could touch him."

"Nay, Master Shakspeare, it cannot be," said my Lord Southampton, resolutely, yet much affected by his friend's urgent entreaties. "Methinks I am bound in honor to see my kinsman through this perilous action of his, if perilous it be. Come weal or woe, I must share it."

In vain did Master Shakspeare strive to move his resolution, by showing he could do the Earl no good by involving himself in his guilt. He would hearken to no counsel of the sort, but commenced urging his friend to secure his own safety as quickly as he

could. But Master Shakspeare had too great a love for the youth who had shown to him so much nobleness of soul, and resolved at least to watch over his safety throughout the adventure.

Lord Southampton did again and again urge him to put himself out of danger, but the other roundly stated that, an he would not escape with him he must share his fortune, for he could not reconcile himself to leaving so estimable choice a friend to certain destruction. It was useless wasting time in such a debate, with natures so determined; so at last they made out of the room as privily as they had entered, and mingled unnoticed with the crowd, who were now hurrying out of the house; the Earl having set himself at the head of two hundred of the boldest of his followers, who were sallying forth with the intention of raising the city.

But a force less likely to do any essential service in so stirring a business there could not well be. Few were in any way provided as soldiers, the greater part having no weapons but their rapiers, and no defence but their cloaks wrapped about their arms. Nevertheless, they sallied forth full of confidence; the which was greatly increased by their being joined by one or two small parties, among whom were the Earl of Bedford, the Lord Cromwell, and a few other persons of distinction.

My Lord Southampton made his way to his kinsman, and the pretended Puritan kept as close at his heels as he could get. The party entered the city at Ludgate, preceded by the Earl, shouting lustily, "For the Queen! For the Queen! A plot is laid for my life! England is bought and sold to the Spaniards!"—the which none doubted would send every man and apprentice who heard it, with their weapons ready, eager to swell their ranks; but, to the surprise and consternation of all, not one person joined them. Devoted as the citizens were to Essex, he could not account for this utter desertion of him. In vain he repeated his cry as he proceeded—every house was as quiet as though the plague had swept away all its inmates: and neither man nor boy was to be seen.

The conspirators liked not this appearance of things at all, as was evident from their blank visages; but when, on going through Cheapside, towards Fen Church, and arriving at Sheriff Smith's house, where such mighty succors were expected, they found every dwelling closed and apparently deserted, many began to repent them of joining a plot so badly supported.

"Where is the Sheriff?" cried the Earl. "Let him bring muskets and pistols. It is for the good of the Queen, and for you all, my masters; for I am credibly informed, out of Ireland, that the kingdom of England is sold to the Spaniards."

Alack, no Sheriff was to be seen. He had withdrawn from his house by a back door, and hastened to the Lord Mayor. Essex entered his dwelling faint unto death. His folly and madness seemed now for the first time placed properly before him; but he made a struggle to disguise his feelings by calling boisterously for refreshments, and linen to shift himself, for the intensesness of his anxiety had caused him to sweat at every pore.

The faces of the principal conspirators wore an uneasy expression, which did not lessen when word was brought that Lord Burleigh (Cecil's elder brother), and Gethick Garter, King at Arms, with a few horse, had entered the city, and had proclaimed Essex and his adherents traitors; and that the Earl of Cumberland, and Sir Thomas Garard, Knight Marshal, made a like proclamation in other parts of the city. It was then that Master Shakspeare drew his young patron on one side, and urged him, with increased eloquence, to provide for his safety; but the young nobleman had too gallant a spirit to allow of his abandoning his friend when his fortune looked desperate: nevertheless, he very affectionately entreated of his attached friend to endanger himself no longer by remaining with him, but this the other would not hear of, still hoping to be able to free him from the perilous condition in which he had placed himself.

Presently, my Lord Essex started off with his followers, thoroughly hopeless of doing of himself any benefit, yet not so despairing as to give up the attempt. He called upon the citizens to arm, and assured them that England was sold to the Infanta of Spain; but not one obeyed his summons, or took any heed of his intelligence. His followers were now leaving him rapidly; and, when it became known that the Lord Admiral, with a strong force, was hastening to attack them, desertion became still more frequent.

After a brief consultation, it was decided that the conspirators should return to Essex House as speedily as they could, and obtain their pardon by the release of the queen's officers there imprisoned. Hearing that the gate at which he entered the city was now well guarded, Essex sent forward Sir Ferdinando Gorges alone, to release the Lord

Chief Justice, and make the best terms he could, and took his way with his company by Paul's; but at the West Gate they were stopped by a chain drawn across the street, having pikemen and musqueteers to defend it. The Earl drew his sword, and ordered his followers to fall on. Lord Southampton obeyed the command eagerly, and the pretended Puritan started forward to endeavor to guard him from harm. A skirmish ensued, and one or two were killed and wounded on both sides, but Essex was repulsed, and a shot through his hat showed how near he had been to add to the list of mischances. He was allowed to turn off to Queenhithe unpursued, where he and his company took boats, and in due time landed at Essex House.

When the Earl arrived within his own dwelling, he and the rest were greatly astonished to find that Sir Ferdinando Gorges, out of a care of his own safety, had released the four prisoners, and had gone with them by water to court. Essex had now no hope, save in the remote one of the Londoners coming to his relief. He felt confused and distracted by his danger, burnt whatever papers might compromise him, and gave directions for fortifying his house, intending to defend it to the last extremity. He had little time for consideration. He found it invested with a force likely to overpower all opposition. On the land side were the Earls of Cumberland and Lincoln, the Lords Thomas Howard, Grey, Burleigh, and divers others of note, with a strong force of horse and foot; whilst the garden was filled with the Lord Admiral, his son Lord Effingham, Lord Cobham, Sir John Stanhope, Sir Robert Sidney, Sir Fulke Greville, and a sufficiency of foot-soldiers preparing to attack it on the river side.

Whilst the majority of the conspirators were overwhelmed with consternation at these preparations, increased by the fright of certain ladies who were amongst them, Sir Robert Sidney came, by the Lord Admiral's order, to summon them to surrender. But some of them had spirits worthy of a better cause.

"To whom?" cried Southampton, boldly. "To our enemies? That would be running headlong to destruction. To the Queen? That were to confess ourselves guilty. Yet, if the Lord Admiral will give us hostages for our security, we will appear before the Queen; if not, we are, every one, resolved to die in our defence."

To this spirited speech, the Lord Admiral returned for reply, that conditions were not to be propounded by rebels, nor hostages

given to them; but he informed Essex that he would permit his Countess, and Lady Rich, his sister, and their waiting gentlewoman, to go out. The earl took this as a favor, but asked an hour or two to fortify the place, by which they should go forth. This was readily granted.

"Now, my lord," whispered Master Shakspeare to his young patron, seizing opportunity for doing so unobserved, "prythee, be persuaded to your good. Your cause is lost, as I full well knew it would be, and you cannot do yourself, or any other, the slightest benefit by clinging to it. Escape is still open to you. Trust yourself to me, I pray you, and I doubt not being able to bring you off scathless even now."

"Thanks, sweet Will, a thousand times," replied Lord Southampton, eagerly. "But, as I wanted to partake of Essex's good fortune, methinks it would not be well in me to shrink from sharing his bad."

His friend intreated and prayed, and used every argument of force, but the young lord was not to be moved. Master Shakspeare knew not now what course to adopt. He was loath to leave him to the sure destruction he was courting, and saw no prospect of advantage in remaining to share the fate of those by whom he was surrounded. As for the conspiracy, he hated it with all his soul; and for those engaged in it he had no sympathy, save only in his generous young patron, for whom he felt so deep an interest, he could not be induced by any consideration for his own safety to leave at so perilous a moment.

All this time, Essex and a few other of the leaders strove to keep a good face on the desperateness of their fortunes. Preparations were made for a vigorous defence, and divers talked of dying sword in hand, as became their quality. But most were wild with affright, and even the Earl acted in a confused violent manner, as though he knew not what to be about. Now he abused the citizens as a base people, and boasted he could take the whole city with four hundred men; anon he threatened to force his way through his enemies, and seek to escape with his followers to Ireland; and then he spoke of the goodness of his cause, with a great show of bravery, and seemed to find consolation in its miscarriage. But all this vaporing ended in nothing. The conspirators, before the time had expired, had agreed to surrender upon conditions; and when the Lord Admiral would agree to none, they were fain to do without, and presently they gave up their weapons, and were taken into custody.

It is presumed that the assumed Puritan had some understanding with the Lord High Admiral, or other great person, for he managed to get himself at large, when all, in whose company he had been, were proceeding to their prisons; but, in the first moment of his freedom, he resolved to use it for the advantage of the gallant and excellent young nobleman, to whom he felt himself so largely indebted, and was assured such would not be entirely profitless.

CHAPTER XIV.

Break, Fantasy, from thy cave of cloud,
And spread thy purple wings;
Now all thy figures are allowed,
And various shapes of things;
Create of airy forms a stream,
It must have blood and nought of phlegm;
And though it be a waking dream,
Yet let it like an odor rise
To all the senses here,
And fall like sleep upon their eyes,
Or music in their ear.

BEN JONSON.

TIME, in his steady flight, seeth many changes, but rarely any more marked than such as were created in the period that elapsed betwixt the last chapter and the present.

The strange and powerful sway of those melancholic humors which had visited Master Shakspeare with such uncontrollable vehemency ever since the death of his sweet young son, appeared now to have gathered such head, that, when his thoughts travelled that way, he seemed quickly to lose all consciousness of surrounding circumstances, and to give up every sense to the consideration of the huge grief that prayed upon his spirits. What this grief might be, none knew. None even guessed that a gentleman, so prodigal with his pleasant jests, when surrounded with proper company, was, when left to his own sad thoughts and feelings, the very miserablest wretch that can be conceived.

Frequently was it that he looked to be overpowered with a heaviness that wrapped him all around like a shroud, and, from his aspect, there might be read an anguish that was wont to probe him to the quick. Could it arise solely from a consideration of the great loss his affections had sustained by the death of the youthful Hamnet? Could it be occasioned solely by the exceeding unsatisfactory nature of his domestic affairs? Might it arise from disappointed ambition—

loss of friends—or deficiency of worldly wealth? Or, did it proceed from the recollection of some offence of very monstrous evil, the consideration whereof smote him terribly? Hammet's death, of a surety, was an intolerable blow to his happiness; but, since the doleful day it happened, Time, the sure alleviator of human affliction, had exercised his reconciling influence, and closed, though it could never entirely heal, the wound it had made. Philosophy, perchance, did something towards banishing all useless regrets; but philosophy hath but a small hold upon the heart of a doating parent, from whom the object of its infinite love hath been untimely snatched away.

There was much in the state of his home, which, to one of quick sensibility, like Master Shakspeare, might have afforded most intolerable reflections. That any of his ambitious views had failed in fulfilling their promises, is very much to be doubted, seeing the position he had gained in society by the proper influence of his own greatness. Of loss of friends he might complain. His royal patroness, who had held him in such honorable estimation throughout his career, had died full of years and glory, but of a heart broken by vain regrets for the loss of her unworthy favorite, the Earl of Essex, who had perished by the hand of the headsman for his treasonable practices. His still more generous friend, the young Earl of Southampton, had been kept a close prisoner, for his share in Essex's treason, up to the Queen's death: a worse fate would have attended him, had not the loving friend who strove so earnestly to get him out of the conspiracy, employed all-powerful appeals for the saving of his life. He had received certain intelligence that another of his estimable friends, Sir Walter Raleigh, was like to be in as pitiful a case as my Lord Southampton, from the coming of the Scottish king to the throne of these realms, in whom the very strongest prejudices against Sir Walter had been artfully raised by his rivals, Cecil and Essex.

Therefore, loss of friends might have gone some way towards exciting melancholy humors. Yet was Master Shakspeare so richly off in this respect, the few who were taken away were not like to be missed so greatly as to throw so thick a gloom over his spirits as had oppressed them. But, as to the only other cause we have hinted at—what offence could there be in one of so honorable a way of living that could touch him so nearly as the hidden cause of his huge trouble appeared to do? We doubt there could exist anything of the sort.

Nevertheless, Master Shakspeare had a heart so ill at ease, no man would have envied him, could he have known what an infinite lack of comfort he possessed.

But who could have guessed he had so much as the slightest uneasiness of any sort? In whatever play chanced to be before the audience, he so forgot himself in the performance of his part, that the spectators might reasonably enough have judged him to have nothing in his own nature to complain of, or regret, of sufficient import to call him from his feigning for one minute. In the company of his brother-players, and all the nimble wits and learned spirits with whom he associated, he looked to be of so happy a mind, he displayed ever so prodigal an abundance of pleasant thoughts and admirable witty jests, and was at all times so ready to add to, rather than share in, the general entertainment, that few who observed him could have thought of saying, "This gentleman hath griefs. He is distracted with trouble. He is as sick at heart as a man who hath not a hope in the world."

This unhappy gentleman, then, for so methinks we must needs consider him, sat in his lodging, in the Clink Liberty, in a deep fit of profound abstractedness, his head resting on his hand as he leaned upon the table, and his noble visage wearing an aspect so sad and woe-begone, the feeling that had caused it evidently lay as deep in the heart as it well could. Before him were many papers and books, and implements of writing, but they seemed to be thrust on one side, as though the owner cared not to have aught to do with them. Amongst the papers was one which appeared to have been recently written. It seemed at first to be fragments of verse; but, on a closer look, these would be found to be divers small poems, much affected by the writers of that period, under the name of Sonnets. They were thus entitled:—

A NEW PARADISE OF DAINTY DEVICES.

I. PLANETARY INFLUENCE.

A radiant star within th' empyrian dwelt;
It stood confessed a glorious Cynosure,
Shedding a light around so bright, so pure,
That as I gazed, with throbbing heart I knelt,
"Oh, would," quoth I, "I might thy rays secure!"

(Marvel not I such covetousness felt
With such temptation.) Ah! those starry beams

Had shed their beauty on another's dreams.
Yet deep within my heart I nurtured still
The love that fed upon its rosy streams—

Still hoped, still prayed for it with eager will,
And turned away from all the shining wealth,
That woo'd me off from Heaven's sapphire hill,
That one proud star to idolize by stealth.

II. A COMPARISON.

Behold the jewel-hunter, searching well,
With a most curious eye, the mountain-tops,
Each rock, and ravine, cleft, and hidden cell,
Where from the soil the shining treasure
drops—

He suddenly with admiration stops,
As if entranced by some secret spell ;
For naught of emerald, or amethyst,
Or costly stone, that his experience knew
With such bright sheen, or with so rich a hue,
Dazzled his gaze on fairest ear or wrist,
As doth a gem now flashing on his view :
Enriched thus, thus wondering I exist.
Thus found I thee, and in my loving sight
Art thou my perfect, matchless chrysolite.

III. THE SOUL'S LONGING.

I dreamt a dream of marvellous good intent,
The harbinger (would 'twere !) of coming
bliss ;
And thou, fair seer, shalt tell me what it meant,
For thou alone canst well interpret this.
Methought an angel had from Heaven been
sent,
Whose starry wings the air seemed proud to
kiss ;
Quoth he, " Thy struggles have not been in
vain,
And for thy suff'rings passed, name now thy
gain—
What thy soul yearns for, say, and all is
thine."
Then not a moment's space did I refrain
From uttering longings, precious as the mine,
Countless as notes within the glad sunshine ;
For beauty, honor, in the first degree ;
For all things that are excellent—FOR THEE !

IV. THE TRUE PHENIX.

In the old time, as ancient bards rehearse,
In many a legend of barbaric verse,
Where Araby exhales her spicy breath,
There came a wondrous bird, but rarely seen ;
That drew a new existence from its death,
Whereat, doubtless, the reader marvelleth.
This wonder therein scarce such time had been
A pile of goodly incense to have laid,
When there arose a fierce, consuming fire
That burned it utterly—which did not fade,
Ere a new bird sprung from the funeral pyre !
Love is to me the Phœnix poets mean,
Which in its sweets a flaming bed hath made,
Whence it doth new and perfect life acquire.

V. THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM.

The pilgrim who, with weary feet and slow,
Travels his sacred journey anxiously,

Measuring, with a self-inflicted woe
And earnest pray'rs, that heed not pang or
throe,

Each step he taketh, feels and acts as I,
Who, having set myself a pilgrimage
Unto a shrine of pure excellency,
Do tread on thorny ways, and constant wage
A warfare with myself—a sharp infliction—
A sense of some most grievous direlection
Unworthy of the goodness I have sought.
Say in what moving terms, what passionate
diction,

Shall I, sweet saint ! thine ear and heart engage,
To be absolved in feeling and in thought.

VI. A GREAT OFFENCE GREATLY PUNISHED.

The sun hath drawn his curtain in the West,
Where the tired hours do chaunt his lullaby ;
And Heaven's Argus eyes now watch the rest
In which the weary world doth calmly lie.
The blossoms now their oderous alms deny,
Folded in dreams on Nature's bounteous breast.
The nightingale, nor time nor tune doth keep—
E'en the rude winds, bound in their caverns
deep,
Murmur their vespers with a holy care.
All things in earth and heav'n seemed hushed
in sleep,
All things save I—I no such blessing share.
Punished like him who stole th' immortal fire
A vulture's beak my vitals seems to tear—
Fit recompense for those damned by such proud
desire.

Whether any passage in the writer's life
of some singular deep import is marked out
in the foregoing poems must be left to the
consideration of the sagacious reader. It
may be thought they appear to indicate an
attachment on the part of the inditer of
these sonnets to some fair creature of the
other sex very far above him in rank, which
had been the cause to him of exceeding
trouble both of heart and of mind. Never-
theless, it may be looked upon merely as a
device of the imagination, which hath in it
no reality of any sort, the poet having, in
the exercise of his vocation, fancied a
mistress under the circumstances related,
whereof both circumstances and sentiments
had no other origin in his fruitful brain.

Of these two views, the reader may in-
cline to either. But we will obtain for him
the perusal of another paper from the same
source, which perchance may assist his
judgment. This was entitled after the fol-
lowing fashion :—

THE GROWTH OF LOVE.

In those warm climates nearest to the sun
The flow'rs and fruits a wondrous nurture
show ;

The breezes fan them, and their part is done,
The sunbeams kiss them, and they bud and
blow.

So 'tis with love in this warm heart of mine :
It springs at once to highest perfectness ;
It blooms as sunny looks upon it shine,
And the fruit ripens 'neath the first caress.

A DOUBLE ENCHANTMENT.

Within those orbs a trembling radiance dwells,
Full of strange charms, and soul-enthral-
ling spells ;

Whilst round those tempting lips such magic
lies

As overpower'st th' enchantment of thine eyes.
Yet still the witcheries of thy gaze I seek,
Still own the smiling bondage of thy cheek ;
But if one spell the other should eclipse,
Oh, bind me in the magic of thy lips !

Of a surety, if the sonnets do not speak sufficiently of love, there must needs be enough of it in the sugared poems the reader hath just perused. But it may be advanced that in them there may chance to be no more of reality than in the other. For mine own part, I am inclined to the belief that the writer of each and all these poems was in earnest when they were written by him, and that he hath therein figured out his own particular thoughts and feelings regarding an individual by whom they had been powerfully excited under circumstances obscurely hinted at in one of the sonnets.

Nor is there any thing improbable in entertaining such a view of the matter. At an early stage in his career, eminently qualified as he was both by appearance and unparalleled gifts of mind to please the eye and captivate the heart of any fair creature disposed to be enamored of such qualities, his prominence in the public gaze, under the double advantage of an admired player and admirable writer of plays, could scarce fail of giving ample opportunity for some doting nature of this sort to regard him with a sweet yet dangerous sympathy. It is the natural disposition of passion to level distinctions and smooth obstacles of the difficultest kind ; and it was no unusual thing, in the age sought to be pictured in these pages, for a gentlewoman of high estate and lineage to give the entire devotedness of an uncalculating and, alas ! unthinking affection, to some individual of the other sex, whose natural or acquired gifts were in her estimation infinitely preferable to fortune, birth, and the like estimable qualities.

That the development of such a sympathy took place clandestinely is rather to be deplored than wondered at. The obliga-

tions the young poet had already contracted must have rendered the entertainment of any feelings of the sort an offence not to be justified : but we are fearful that passion hath no considerations for what is strictly creditable and honest, and that, however excellently disposed in other respects, a youth, scarce twenty, full of the irrepressible yearnings that form so prominent a part in the influences which do commonly govern the humanity of all the higher order of intellects in early manhood, is not to be expected to withstand so powerful a temptation as is presented to the senses in the kindling glances of a fair creature of exquisite loveliness, forgetful of differences of degree, and indeed of whatsoever should most rule the conduct of one of her condition, in an uncontrollable admiration of him and his works.

The love of woman is the exquisitest intoxication under all circumstances, to any man of truly manly feelings, but when the most complete self-abandonment is evidenced in her love, with the most earnest idolatry, what man of woman born is there who could resist her affection ?

The young poet, in whom love is the very breath of his being, and whose noblest thoughts and feelings can be nurtured only by intimate communion with the many admirable sweet qualities a loving woman possesses, of a surety is the very last person in the world to withstand such temptation. Tender looks, passionate sighs, and delicious smiles, can scarcely be aimed at him, without exciting a world of fond tumultuous hopes, and entrancing dreams, that make him at once a worshipper and a slave, impelling the current of his thoughts in one direction, with a maddening eagerness that leapeth all boundaries, overcometh all obstructions, dangers, and difficulties, and heedeth nothing of any sort but the one object to which it is directed ; and that give to all the visible world around a voluptuous coloring of the like glowing nature as that with which the said looks, sighs, and smiles have tinged his every sense.

Although it may be too much to expect one thus circumstanced—to say nought of the cruel disappointment by which his domestic peace had been made shipwreck, which could but exert a powerful influence towards the same conclusion—to hold himself aloof from the enticements of passion when coming in so flattering a guise, yet was he exactly of that well-disposedness which, when he recovered the proper exercise of his sense of justice, would see the monstrous mischiefs that could not help

coming of his allowing of such temptation, and would lament, with an intolerable sense of misery, his own unworthiness. For what infinite evils might not result from giving way to such enticements!

It cannot be denied that there are instances in which deception, even in the highest places, sit so easily upon those by whom it is worn, that it would seem altogether superfluous for a man to trouble himself with any regretful feelings for his share in producing it, but Master Shakspeare would on no account have believed in such a deplorable state of things, and the woman that enjoyed his affection was too secure of his respect to have so much as a doubt entertained of her detestation of all falsehood and mystery.

It was whilst engaged in deeply thinking on this subject, that there suddenly came a gentle tapping at the door. In the mood in which the tenant of this goodly chamber then was, it can be by no means strange that he heeded it not, though it was repeated more than once. At last the door opened cautiously, and there peeped in no other than our old acquaintance, Simon Stockfish, who, through the good offices of his old master's son, had been engaged as serving-man to Master Shakspeare. There was on his stolid visage an air of mystery, mingled with that look of caution and prudence he was wont to assume whenever he was under any difficulty.

Noticing his master's position, he walked straightway up to him on tip-toe, and whispered his name very gently.

"Well, Simon," said he, instantly rousing himself. "Anything from the Globe? Any one wanting me about the new play?"

"No, honorable sir," answered he, still in a whisper, and pointing to the door. "There is a lady, an it please you, seeketh to have instant speech with you."

"A lady, Simon?" answered his master, in some surprise. "Prythee, what sort of a lady?"

"A gentlewoman, honorable sir," was the exceeding lucid answer, with an aspect of increased mystery and a show of more confidence in his voice. "That is to say, her apparel is of a creditable sort; nevertheless, it is not to be gainsayed, dress alone doth not make the gentlewoman. She is tall, and of a stately carriage, and speaks like one used to command; yet, as is like enough, she may be a monstrous indifferent sort of woman enough as any within a mile."

"What sort of face had she, Simon?"

"I have especial reasons for not knowing, honorable sir; seeing that she allowed none

of it to be noticed by me. Her mouth and chin were closed wrapped in a muffler, and the rest of her visage was hid behind a mask. Now, for mine own part, I do think that one who taketh such trouble to hide her face must needs be ashamed of it, and in this case she can be no fit company for your honor; therefore, an it please you, honorable sir, I think it would be prudent not to allow such a person to have speech of you, and if it be your good pleasure I will on the instant send her packing."

"Said she not who she was, or what business she had with me?"

"Her name she refused, doubtless for some excellent good reasons; but, as to the matter she came upon, she said you would have full knowledge of it on your having sight of this ring."

As soon as Simon Stockfish displayed the trinket that had been entrusted to his custody, his master looked like one seeing a ghost.

"Gracious Heaven, can this be possible!" he exclaimed, starting up in a marvellous excited manner, as he took the ring into his hand. "Run, Simon, run!" he added, hurriedly, and to the intense astonishment of his new serving-man. "Bring her to this chamber with all possible speed, and on your life see that I am disturbed by no one—even were it the king himself!"

"What marvel hath we here?" cried he, pressing his hands against his brows in a distracted manner, as Simon left the chamber, somewhat bewildered in his thoughts of the person to whom he was sent. "How wondrous! how incomparably strange! Surely there must be some huge mistake in this. But, no, this is the ring, out of all manner of doubt: it must be her—it can be no other."

He had scarce well uttered the words, when the door opened, and there entered the chamber just such a female as Simon Stockfish had described. She was enveloped, and hid, as it were, in a large, coarse cloak. This and her face being completely covered up, took from the spectator all ordinary means of guessing her character and condition. The first care of Master Shakspeare was to fasten the door, as hurriedly and as speedily as possible, which he did with an air of wildness, altogether unusual to him, that bespoke some strange and powerful excitement. Whilst this was a doing, the lady tottered to a seat, like one scarce able to support her limbs, into which she dropped as though without sense or motion. It looked as though she had swooned, but this

was not so, for presently she drew a hand beautifully fair and dazzling with gems from beneath her cloak, and spread it open, and tore from her face the mask and muffler, and gasped as though for air.

The face that was discovered was of extraordinary loveliness; the features were of immature womanhood, yet their settled unhappiness made her seem much older than she was. A proud and lofty brow, eyes that seemed to gleam with a supernatural light, an arched nose, with a mouth, whereof every line spoke unutterable disdain of all mean things, did sufficiently tell of high lineage, without the costly-embroidered robe, fitting tight to the neck and bust, that was seen through the open cloak, which one of poorer quality could never have worn.

Master Shakspeare was hastening towards her, when a sudden and imperative motion of her hand compelled him to stop within a couple of yards of her chair, and for some minutes he there stood, to all appearance, humble as the veriest slave, with looks cast to the earth, a pallid cheek, and a most sorrowful visage—she gazing on him as though her eyes were starting from her head, now pressing her hand to her heart, as if to stop its tumultuous throbbings, and anon raising it to her brow, as if to repress some terrible spasm there. Neither spoke a word, and nothing was to be heard but a sort of gasping, with which the lady took her breath. Once or twice it looked as though she essayed to speak, but the sounds died unuttered on her tongue. Yet language wanted she none. The look she cast upon her companion spoke volumes of meaning, such as the most picked phrases could never express.

Master Shakspeare was the first who spoke. But his words were breathed slowly, falteringly, and in a whisper, as though the confused state of his feelings would scarce allow him utterance.

“My Lady Countess, I—”

“Hush!” hastily exclaimed the lady, with a sort of wild desperation, as it were. “I have taken such pains as I have to seek you, unknown to any, to obtain at your hands a service, to the granting of which I have looked forward with feverish anxiousness, through many sleepless nights, and miserable days.”

“Be assured, good my lady, it is already granted,” said her companion. “Your slightest wish must ever be a law with me, whilst I have aught remaining of sense or life.”

“Swear it!” exclaimed she, suddenly starting from her seat, and grasping Master Shakspeare by the arm; then, dropping on

her knees by his side, enforced him to the same posture. “Swear it!” she cried, with a look and manner of intense excitement—“Swear you will do my bidding, as God is your witness and your refuge!”

“I swear it!” answered Master Shakspeare, solemnly. At this his companion dropped her hold on him, buried her face in her hands, and sobbed convulsively for several seconds. In leaving the chair she had freed herself from the cloak which had concealed her dress, which was now displayed in all its richness—and a most costly robe it was, as ever the cunning of woman’s tailor triumphed in. It was of wrought cloth of gold, daintily set with pearls; the stately wearer whereof, though boasting of such bravery, in the humble posture which she had chosen, and in the deep distress of heart she exhibited, looked a marvellous contradiction. The humility of her spirit would have better sorted with cloth of frieze, or other modest apparelling, but her noble figure and majestic beauty undoubtedly did well become the cloth of gold.

Master Shakspeare sought not to disturb her grief, or to check it by any attempt at consolation. He retained his position in silence, but with a heart deeply wrung by the sorrowful spectacle beside him. Her sobs growing to be less vehement, she made a movement as though she would rise, the which he readily assisted; and, without a word on either side, he respectfully led her to her seat, then fell back to the place he had occupied before she had left it, and kept gazing on her with looks which did plainly bespeak his entire sympathy. She continued to sob for some time, leaning low against her chair, her breast heaving convulsively, and in other signs betraying the exceeding powerful agitation by which she was moved.

After a few minutes she raised herself, and gazed steadily at her companion. Her eyes were humid, and her face deadly pale. She paused awhile, and it was evident she labored under some extraordinary feeling that checked her speech. At last, in a murmur that could scarce be heard, she said—“I have a son.” Master Shakspeare listened with intense interest. She continued, but still with extreme difficulty of speech, and in a marvellous low voice—“This boy love I with all my heart and soul. A mother’s love, huge as it is at most times, giveth no sufficient conception of the particular affection I bear to him, for reasons which cannot readily be expressed. Up to this time his schooling hath been well cared for. He will not be found deficient in

such scholarship as is considered necessary for one of his condition. But he is now grown to be a youth, requiring for his guidance, in after-years, a knowledge of men rather than of books."

The speaker paused, perchance to collect her ideas. Her countenance was still more like unto a marble effigy, than a human being; and her eloquent gaze was fixed upon the flushed cheek and kindling eye of her companion, who listened to her speech, as though he put his whole soul into his looks.

"It hath become a common, and, methinks, a commendable custom," added she, "for youth, of any fortune or degree, to travel to distant countries, under the eye of some wise and worthy person, to see and profit by whatever is most noticeable in other countries ere they commence their career of action in their own. I have so much liking of this custom, I would fain have mine own sweet son to get whatsoever advantages it may bring to him; but there is but one person in this wide world under whose guardianship I would he should obtain it."

Here came another pause, somewhat longer than the other, in which it was exceeding difficult to say which seemed to be most moved. The lady was still the first to display her powers of speech. Her words were uttered slowly, thickly, and scarcely above her breath; and, moreover, there was in them a solemnness which carried them at once to the heart of her singularly attentive companion. She then added—"You have sworn to do me this excellent service."

Master Shakspeare felt his every sense in such a whirl of bewildering sensations, he could not find one single word of speech to state his readiness to fulfil the oath he had taken. He felt not only as if utterance was denied him, but as if he could scarce breathe.

"Dost shrink from it?" asked she, in the same trembling tones.

"I have sworn," said Master Shakspeare, at last, in a manner which showed he had no small difficulty in having such words at his command, "I have sworn, and will regard mine oath most reverently." He longed to ask certain questions—in especial he was desirous of learning when he might be required for this service, but his tongue did so cleave to his throat, not a word more could he utter.

"'Tis well," replied she, taking a long breath, "'tis exceeding well: and I thank you right heartily for your readiness in so

disposing of yourself. But there is one thing more—a thing of most vital moment, a matter of such huge consequence—"

Here the speaker ended abruptly, and pressed her hand against her breast, as though its pulses were of such force she could no longer endure them. Then with a mighty effort of self-command, she proceeded—"Whatever your feelings or your thoughts may be regarding him, none must know them; and more than all, at whatever cost, they must be strictly concealed from *him*."

Here, seeing her companion striving earnestly to interrupt her, she added, with a more tender expression in her face than she had hitherto used—"I have such opinion of your nobleness of soul that I would not have uttered this caution; but it is not any thing evil, I fear, in you; it is rather an excess of goodness. The better qualities of your heart may, unless they are discreetly governed, do a world of mischief. I pray you think of this."

"Be assured it shall be well thought of," replied he, faintly.

"Guard him as the apple of your eye," she continued. "Instruct him both by precept and example, till his nature hath taken upon itself as much as possible of kindred with your own. Keep him secure of danger of every sort, and make him worthy of bearing an honorable name, and filling a creditable station, if his country should have need of his services. I can speak to you no further on this subject now, but I will not fail to apprise you of the time when you will be called upon to fulfil the service you have undertaken."

At the ending of this speech, Master Shakspeare knelt respectfully at her feet. At first, she seemed inclined to withhold her hand, but, as if struck by the air of respect that was in his aspect and demeanor, she gave it him, and he at once pressed it, though with much more of reverence than gallantry, to his lips. He had scarce done so, when she started up with every sign of fear in her lovely countenance. Sounds were heard on the stairs leading to the chamber in which they were; they appeared to arise from a struggle and an altercation, as though some persons were striving to force their way up stairs. "God of heaven, I have been watched!" exclaimed the lady, in tones of agony and affright.

"I tell thee, thou senseless dolt, thou!" cried a husky voice from outside, "thou shotten herring! thou guinea-hen! thou empty peascod! I must and will have speech with him."

"Nay, Will, prythee let us depart," said another. "It is unmannerly to press upon him thus, if he have company."

"It is Kempe and Allen, two of my familiars," said Master Shakspeare. "But they must, on no account, have sight of you. On with your disguise, I beseech you, and whilst my knave holds them in parley, I will see you safe to the street by a way that shall avoid them."

"As I live, they are forcing their way!" replied the lady, in intense anxiety and alarm, as she hastened to put on her mask and her apparel. "They are coming—they are close upon the door! Oh, let me away this instant!"

Master Shakspeare lost no time in opening a door that entered upon a book-closet, at the end of which was a back stair, down which both proceeded hastily, till they came upon a long passage. Here they could hear a noise of knocking at the door above, mingled with a violent altercation of voices. Master Shakspeare hurried his companion to a door that led into one of the thoroughfares in the liberty of the Clink, knowing full well that Will Kempe, in the state his husky voice too well denoted, was not like to mince his phrases. A brief farewell was all that was passed; the door was quietly closed, and Master Shakspeare rapidly ascended the stairs, and, unmindful of the din outside his chamber, flung himself into the chair near the table, hiding his face upon his arms. A short time sufficed for the indulgence of his feelings. He seemed to make a powerful effort at composure, and rose from his seat to put an end to the wild uproar at the door.

"An ancient kinswoman, sayest!" exclaimed one. "Why thou Barbary ape, thou unspeakable foolish knave! dost think Will Kempe is to be caught by so poor a conceit? Is my gossip and namesake one to have an ancient kinswoman with him at this hour? He is better employed, I'll warrant him."

It is here necessary the reader should know that Simon Stockfish had considered it to be both prudent and politic to conceal from his master's visitors the exact sort of person closeted with him, and took upon himself to say that he was engaged with an ancient kinswoman, and could on no account be disturbed. The which, as was usual in all his politic strokes, made matters a great deal the worse.

It so chanced that the discussion was put to a speedy ending by the opening of the door by his master, who, after duly acknowledging the presence of his ill-timed visitors,

affirmed very confidently his ancient kinswoman had left him some time, and he had since fallen asleep. Nevertheless, it was easy to see, by certain signs, more significant than mannerly, that Kempe was vastly incredulous. What he had to express on the matter he was prevented from giving utterance to by his companion, who commenced by informing Master Shakspeare of certain matters of intelligence respecting the patronage of different companies of players, by the king, the queen, and Prince Henry, and ended by requesting his company at supper at his poor dwelling. This Master Shakspeare was in no mood for, but he was anxious to get both Allen and Kempe out of the house as speedily as possible, so he at once very heartily signified his assent, spoke of an errand he had that required his immediate attention, and in a few seconds was proceeding with them, in an exact contrary direction to that just taken by his fair visiter.

CHAPTER XV.

Next unto his view

She represents a banquet, ushered in
By such a shape as she was sure would win
His appetite to taste.

JOHN CHALKHILL.

AND how, all this while, fared our student of medicine? He had surely been a sufficient time an associate of the family of the famous Master Doctor Posset, to feel himself at home, and, although, perchance, he might miss the anxious care and affection of his admirable kind mother, there was great likelihood that he was looked after by one who omitted no opportunity of showing that she regarded him with a care equally tender, and a much more endearing affection. In short, the attentions of the attractive Millacent were of so flattering a sort he must be the dullest stock ever heard of that could resist them.

John Hall, it is true, entered the house a mere student, on whom the passion—commonly called love—had hitherto made no sort of impression; but the conduct pursued towards him by the fair damsel with whom he had become domesticated was of a nature that so powerfully appealed to his feelings, he soon began to throw off the humor of the book-worm, and by degrees take on himself that of the passionate lover. These appeals were not only made by means of a thousand nameless offices of kindness, of services that

had in them the appearance of devotion, which could not but have immense power over a nature so new to the influence of woman, but the critical state of her health, caused by a constant recurrence of convulsive fits of the most alarming character, and the too evident existence of some secret cause of unhappiness, increased greatly the interest with which the young student felt disposed to regard her.

She said nothing positive as to the nature of her unhappiness; all that he could gain on the subject was through the expression of mysterious hints, by which he was made to understand that she led an exceedingly unhappy life with her family.

Whilst the germ of affection was developing itself in the breast of the young student, he heard nothing and beheld nothing that could lead him to imagine that there was any engagement betwixt his friend Leonard and his fair mistress; but, when it had a sure hold of him, Millicent took occasion to acquaint him of its existence. But she did so in a way that looked so like lamenting such should be the case, and did so prettily and so fondly withal promise him at least half the heart, thus unhappily pre-engaged, that he was so bewildered with her flatteries, he could not bring on himself to give up his suit. The more he saw of the behavior of the two to each other, and of the conduct of each towards persons that seemed to be infinitely better thought of, the more he felt satisfied that the engagement was mutually dissatisfactory; and as afterwards she frequently displayed the state of her feelings to him, in a manner that could not be mistaken, he allowed himself to act and feel as if no such engagement existed.

John Hall was of a nature as unsuspecting as any child, and equally credulous. His experience of womankind had been limited almost exclusively to his mother, who was one of its rarest examples—gentle, fond, generous, pure-hearted, and single-minded; and he was willing enough to believe that in the devoted Millicent he beheld all that was most admirable and worthy of honor. The education he had had, and the habits of thinking in which he had been wont to indulge, made much in her speech and conduct to him seem strange and unaccountable, but her manner was so pleasing, and her arguments so specious, that it was impossible he could imagine there was any thing improper in her proceedings. Indeed, he most firmly believed her to be the most disinterested, noble-hearted being upon earth; and, though he marvelled at the earnestness with which she pressed him to be on his guard, that

Leonard her betrothed should remain in ignorance of the good understanding which existed betwixt them, he had not a doubt in the world she had some excellent good motive for it.

We must beg leave to transport the courteous reader into no other place than Mistress Millicent's bed-chamber, at a time too, when, with her young companion, she was preparing to retire to rest. The chamber, though small, was peculiarly orderly and clean. It was situated in the roof of the house, at a considerable distance from any of the others. But, though thus isolated, it had every appearance of security, and many of comfort. The bed lay low almost to the floor, yet it seemed to promise more than ordinary accommodation, and from the number of packages, and huge chests and cupboards about it on every side, it showed that there was good store of other furniture equally useful.

Mildred, chatting as fast as her tongue would let her, with a constant recourse to her childish and unmeaning laugh, was getting ready to take the rest it was evident she needed. Millicent seemed to be listening, as she sat at the foot of the bed, combing out her luxuriant tresses, but there was that settled gravity in her aspect that showed she was thinking of a far different matter. But the other cared little whether her especial friend was listening or not. On she proceeded with her narrative, exceeding content to have no interruption.

Now and then her companion uttered a brief unmeaning phrase, evidently more because she was expected to say something, than from any interest she took in the subject or subjects so fluently spoken of. Thus she slowly pursued her task—indeed so slowly, that the other had placed herself under the bedclothes before she had taken off her outer garment. Then she seemed to be wondrous busy looking over a heap of linen, that stood in a heavy arm-chair, as if fresh from the buck-basket. For some short time after Mildred had laid down, she continued her gossip. At last, as though tired of its constant exercise, her tongue ceased, and her full and regular breathing declared she was sinking to sleep. As soon as she heard these sounds, Millicent left off what she was about and gazed for some moments at the sleeper. Presently she took the lamp, and walked gently to the bedside. The examination she gave seemed to satisfy her, for then she quickly but softly glided out of the chamber.

She passed down the staircase without producing the slightest sound, and entered

a chamber, directly over the basement floor. Here she hid the lamp in the fireplace, and went direct to the window. This projected considerably over the lower part of the dwelling, as was the case in most houses at that time, so that any one could gain from it a clear view up and down the street. She opened the casement, and looked to the right for a considerable space. She then gazed in the opposite direction, but as it seemed with a like result. If she expected any one at that hour, it did not look as though her expectation would get fulfilled. There was no one visible from one end of Golden Lane to the other, as far as could be seen of it. Indeed, all Barbican appeared undisturbed, even by so much as a solitary constable of the watch.

It was a clear starlight night, that made the picturesque features of the quaint old houses in that quarter of the city as goodly a picture of the sort as the eye might look on. Millicent sat herself down by the open casement, with her elbow resting on its ledge, and her cheek supported by her hand. She sometimes looked up to the deep blue sky, which, with its myriad lights, spread far and wide over the tall chimnies and sloping eaves; but her look wondrously lacked that devotion, which the young heart cannot fail to feel when impressed with the beauty of that marvellous work of the Great Architect. She gazed upon the buildings before her with the same absolute indifference. Neither the work of God nor man appeared to excite in her the slightest speculation; yet was her mind infinitely busy. All its energies were bent to the consideration of the best means of accomplishing certain purposes of her own, the policy of which would have done credit to the veriest grey-beard that ever sat at a council board, of directed the powers of mighty states.

A slight sound disturbed her reveries, and she immediately looked forth, but drew in her head again, or seeing it was a neighbor hastening for a midwife. Again they were interrupted, but this time it was by the noisy singing of a group of merry apprentices, who had stolen out from their master's dwellings, doubtless for some especial mischief, which caused her to draw back so far into the chamber she could not be seen by them. She returned to her position, and remained there some time longer. The silence was undisturbed, the blue canopy above seemed to have gained additional brilliancy, and the sharp outlines of the houses around looked to be placed in a more pleasing perspective, but to Millicent all these were still as though they had never been.

Now a light quick footfall attracted her attention. She started up on the instant, as though she recognized the sound. By the indistinct light she observed a man hurriedly approaching towards the house. What was his age or dignity was not sufficiently evident; but from the firm step he took, and the uprightness of his stature, it might reasonably be supposed he was not far advanced in life. He was close upon the house and just under the casement, when Penelope cried out, "Hist!" which caused him to stop instantly and look up. She put her finger to her lips, as she leaned forward. Satisfied that the sign was attended to, she presently closed the casement, took the lamp from its hiding-place, and noiselessly crept down stairs.

In a moment after, the street door was opened very gently, and the person seen outside admitted. The door was then gently closed and fastened. Scarce had it been done, when without a word spoken on either side, he received such usage as showed her visiter was on the footing of a lover. The two were then perfectly in the dark. Then he followed her footsteps up-stairs, at a turning in which stood the light which she had left there when she admitted him. This she took up, and proceeded, followed by the other noiselessly, till she entered a chamber which adjoined that in which lay the unconscious Mildred.

There was an appearance in it of studied comfort. A fire burnt on the hearth, and materials for an excellent repast stood on the table. Millicent put down the light, and once more embraced her gallant—for her gallant out of all question he was. Nothing could exceed the delight she displayed. Her pale features were lighted up with admiration. Her words were most honeyed flatteries, and her actions the most caressing fond woman ever disclosed. She divested her companion of his hat, then of his boots, putting on his feet a pair of comfortable slippers, and made him sit down to his supper and waited on him pressingly and diligently, partaking of none herself, but sparing no pains to make him eat and drink heartily.

And who was the gallant so well cared for? It was no other than John Hall, and the place in which he and the seductive Millicent were was his own chamber, which, by the way, was in some way evident, from the books and other signs of study there to be found. He could not but make earnest acknowledgments for the loving care she took of him. In truth, her entire devotedness to him, which she made every possible

effort to show him clandestinely, had not been without its due effect on his grateful disposition.

Indeed, the manner of her behavior filled him at last with a sort of intoxicating delirium. He was never happy save when he was alone with her, and although there was nothing on his part strictly evil to conceal, he was ever in a constant mood of apprehension that his feelings should betray her.

He began to feel exceeding anxious and uneasy when alone with the always friendly Leonard, although it would have been a difficult matter to have shown any just cause for it. In short, his senses were mystified and confounded, and he scarce could arrive at one definite conclusion, save that he loved Millicent, and, although this was a monstrous injustice to his friend, he would be doing a still greater wrong to the fond creature who strove so earnestly to pleasure him, were he to love her one jot the less.

By this time the supper things had been cleared away save only the flask of wine and a tall glass, and Millicent had seated herself on a chair on the opposite side of the chimney.

At the constant request of his fair mistress, the young student, from time to time, finished his glass; and the wine began to have its effects upon him. His eyes flashed with an unwonted brilliance; his pale cheek had on it a glow that in warmth rivalled that of health, and his tongue contrived to exercise its qualities after a fashion quite foreign to his ordinary habits. His spirits seemed every moment to rise higher and higher. He uttered jests, and delivered compliments, the one with humor, the other with both spirit and grace; and she seemed to have equal satisfaction in both, returning too, the coin he gave with prodigal interest. Then she, when this humor of his was at its height, begged of him, in too pretty a way to be denied, that he would sing to her the same exquisite sweet ballad she had heard him sing to Leonard the day previous.

At another time it is like enough our young student would have done all in his power to get off attempting a love-ditty to the too charming Millicent, but he had drunk so much wine, and imbibed so much flattery—the more intoxicating of the two—that he was ready to do her bidding on the instant. He merely uttered a few brief apologies for his want of skill, and then commenced:

THE HEART'S RECAL.

Come back, fond heart! why wouldst thou stay?

Content thee with thy present dwelling;
Enjoy thine ease, whilst here thou may—

What ills thou seek'st, there is no telling.
Fond heart replied, "Too long I've pined,
Unloved, unloving, dull, and dreary;
In yon fair breast a home I'll find,
For of my own I am full weary."

Ah, me, 'twas but a little space—

The least of Time's fast bursting bubbles—
The truant found his dwelling-place
Beset by countless pains and troubles.
"Oh, would I could but know again,"
Quoth he, "that peace I have so needed,
None then should say, 'Come back,' in vain,
None then should warn, and be unheeded!"

When he came to the end of his ditty, he fully expected to hear the usual gracious commentary, but, to his extreme surprise, there ensued a dead silence; and turning round to see why it was, to his astonishment and alarm he perceived that his companion was in one of those strange convulsive fits that were wont to visit her so roughly.

She sat leaning back in her chair, her face bloodless, her eyes fixed, and her lower jaw constantly snapping against the other. Her arms were in her lap, but they were slightly raised once or twice, and dropped down again. John Hall was hugely concerned at this. He hurried to her, and, supporting her in his arms, strove to open her hands, which were close shut and compressed.

Whilst he was intent in this, she heaved a deep breath. Anon, she began to laugh, first slightly, and then in long peals of frightful vehemence. Then she took to talking, and, to her companion's no small gratification, did say many things that spoke the extent of her passion for him.

Crying followed laughing, and all sorts of strange phrases were mixed up with her passionate declarations. Sometimes there was a pause, and she seemed, but for the beating of her heart, like one from whom life hath departed, and then the wild hysterical laughter would burst out afresh, and she would act over again with increased frenzy the loving confession she had just made.

To John Hall's exceeding credit, he bore himself towards her throughout with an infinite greater show of the physician than the lover; and when she at last began to exhibit signs of returning consciousness, he gently placed her back in the chair, and merely stood by her, holding one of her hands, so that, on her recovery, her sense of womanly delicacy might not be shocked by any thing which might lead her into the belief that she had made the disclosure of her feelings she had. She presently drew her hands over her

face, and stared about her like one waking from a strange dream. Then she cast her eyes upon her companion with a singular curiosity, and slowly began to have some conception of surrounding objects. She heaved a deep sigh, and looked unutterably wretched. The young student, with an evident sympathy, expressed his hopes she felt better. She smiled faintly, and, in few words, acknowledged she was so. Then she rose from her chair as though with some difficulty, and for a while leaned her head on his shoulder. John Hall was too much accustomed to receive such familiarities from her to be surprised at such an act. Yet he felt a thrill of pleasure dart through his frame as her cheek came close to his, and he could not refrain, by means of the arm that encircled her waist, from drawing her into closer neighborhood—a great boldness in him. This was immediately responded to on her part by her raising her lustrous eyes to his, and fixing on him a gaze, that he could not have looked on for an instant. His eyes fell before it, and he felt dizzy and faint, like one about to sink into a swoon.

A silence followed, uninterrupted on either side. Finally, Millicent, making some ordinary remark on the lateness of the hour, lit a small lamp that was in the room, and, with one of her most bewitching "good nights," faintly answered by him, took her own light, and quietly glided out of the room. She had scarcely closed the door when her whole countenance underwent a sudden and most complete change. Her brow was fiercely knit, and her visage expressed utter dissatisfaction. Little did the unsuspecting student imagine that the whole scene, like many others that had preceded it, had been acted by her; and that each and all those fits, which had so distressed him to look on, were simulated for the purpose of exciting his sympathy.

CHAPTER XVI.

They that enter into the state of marriage cast a die of the greatest contingency, and yet of the greatest interest in the world, next to the last throw for eternity—life or death, felicity or a lasting sorrow, are in the power of marriage.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

AFTER due consideration of the duty he had so strongly bound himself to fulfil, Master Shakspeare made arrangements for paying a visit to his family at Shottery. He, as was usual with him on all such occasions, took leave of his friends and fellows

at the playhouse, by means of a jovial supper at his lodgings in the liberty of the Clink; and early next morning started off, accompanied by Simon Stockfish, both well armed, and otherwise well provided for a long journey, on the road to Oxford.

Simon was very differently circumstanced in this journey, to what he was then travelling with his old master's son; in the first place, there was a very opposite style of horseflesh employed on the present occasion; in the next, he had no such important responsibility as weighed so heavily on him when acting as guardian to the young student. Master Shakspeare rode a fine tall horse, worthy to carry an emperor, and Simon had for his own riding a truly serviceable gelding, that was possessed of very good paces; and, so far from wanting a guide, Master Shakspeare knew the road so well, he could have gone the whole distance blindfold.

Simon, however, had, as in his memorable journey to London, ample opportunity for cultivating his genius for taciturnity.—Though he had usually found his master agreeably communicative, and ever with something pleasant in his speech, all the way nearly to Oxford, he was so deeply intent on his own thoughts, as to seem to take no heed of any other matter whatsoever. Doubtless he was considering the important matters that had transpired during the extraordinary visit he had received. He seemed to be going over in his mind the whole remarkable history of his Secret Passion.

As he approached the University, he strove to shake off the load of thought which pressed upon him, and suddenly disturbed his sedate old follower, in the midst of certain deep considerations as to the properest policy for him to pursue for the advancing or securing of his master's interests under divers possible contingencies, by affording him various pleasant remembrances of the fair city he was about to enter. As if for to make up for his want of sociality previously, he now began to entertain his humble fellow-traveller with numberless stories of the freaks and humors of the college youths. They seemed to amuse Simon wonderfully; and when they rode up to "The Crown," it was difficult to say which was in the choicest spirits, the master or the man.

Simon, however, speedily recovered his customary staidness, and in looking after the stable-boys, and giving directions for the proper dieting and attentions to his master's beasts, demeaned himself as became

his reputation for gravity or caution. He did more—fully impressed with the superior advantages of gaining the ear of the higher powers, and feeling bound in conscience to do his utmost for the benefitting of his good master, he took the first opportunity he could of speaking in private with the hostess of "The Crown," in honor of the exceeding worthy person whose serving-man he had the good fortune to be, and with much earnestness begged she would see that he had every thing of the best at a fair and reasonable charge.

Simon Stockfish little knew the amusement the relation of this studied speech of his, by Mistress D'Avement to Master Shakspeare, caused in the little parlor the latter was wont to use when staying at Oxford. But we cannot now tarry to narrate what was said on that occasion, nor any other thing that passed, when it came to be bruited among the Oxford scholars that Will Shakspeare was at "The Crown." We must needs hurry him out of that fair and ancient city, which he left early the next morning, to carry him as fast as we can towards Stratford.

As he travelled along, his thoughts set in a totally different direction to that they had taken in the earlier part of his journey. The heart of Master Shakspeare was one admirably attuned to all the sweet affections of domestic life. God only knoweth with what overmastering love he had regarded his sweet young son. He could not but shudder when he considered the terrible punishment he had endured in his lamentable death, in which all his ambitious hopes for him had been levelled to the dust, and his whole nature crushed, as it were, in the ruins. But, though his beloved Hamnet was no longer to gladden his eyes with his beauty and intelligence, there was still left him the wild and wilful Judith, who, with all her strange unfeminine ways, was an object of love to him; and, better still, there was the tender and loving Susanna, of whose entire affections he felt himself secure.

He had, as was his custom, brought with him presents for every member of his family, selected to meet their several wants or tastes. Even the three aunts, whose hostility to him and talent for mischief he had been made to appreciate so often, had not been forgotten; and he busied himself very pleasantly in anticipating the gratification these gifts would create:—how greatly Mistress Anne would be enamored of the piece of Norwich stuff that was to make her a new gown!—What exceeding joy Judith

would display at the sight of the gay ribbons he would set before her! and how tenderly Susanna would express her thanks for the dainty ear-rings of Venetian gold he had bought to adorn her delicate ears! The new knitting instruments, the excellent hose, and the admirable Cambridge gloves, which he had procured for the three elderly Breedbates, he doubted not would suffice for the creating of their good-will and good-humor—till the next opportunity of backbiting presented itself.

Simon Stockfish all this while did not allow the time to grow irksome; so thoughtful a person, about to make such important connexions as the family of his respected master, could not fail of giving the circumstance all the benefit to be derived from sufficient reflection. He laid down rules for his guidance, prepared answers ready for certain questions he expected to be put to him, made up his mind to be a miracle of discretion touching his master's secrets, the more especial as regarded the questionable visiter he had strove to pass off on Kempe and Allen as an ancient kinswoman, and cudgelled his brains for politic strokes wherewith to screen his honored master, should any thing of this suspicious matter have got bruited abroad. Therefore it was no wonder Simon wore a graver countenance even than usual. Truly had all the cares of empire devolved upon him, he could not have looked more thoughtful than he did.

As Master Shakspeare approached scenes so familiar to him, and so endeared to his recollection as those that were in the neighborhood of his home, every object that met his sight did, by some means or other, connect itself with his lost Hamnet; and, by some singular association of ideas, this intolerable affliction drew his mind to the consideration of other things, which did marvellously increase the sadness of his humor. He was in no mood for light converse. He endured such sharp pangs, that, as he advanced, he became more dejected, and less inclined for playing of the social part that so well became him.

He was disturbed in these unpleasant reflections, when within a short distance of Stratford, by observing two figures approaching from the town, that, at first, from the strangeness of their motions and appearance, did puzzle him exceedingly to make out to what kind of animal they belonged. On they came, seeming to be flying along the surface of the ground, uttering the most singular cries ever heard. Whether they were beasts, birds, or those marvellous creatures that are said to par-

take of the different natures of both, it was not easy to decide. Master Shakspeare was at a nonplus. But Simon Stockfish, who had been preparing himself to meet many strange things, as, in his sagacity, he thought was very natural when going to a strange place, was astonished far beyond any astonishment he had felt all his life long.

On came these nondescripts with a most horrible din, sometimes abreast, anon following each other; having so singular a motion withal, it could not be said, with any certainty, whether they were flying like birds, or leaping like grasshoppers. Simon, though he was in a terrible fright at meeting such outlandish things, considered it was his duty to defend his master from any mischief they were like to do him; for that they came with some murderous intent he had no manner of doubt. He looked to his pistols, and had his hand upon one, in readiness to meet the expected assault.

The wonder with which Master Shakspeare noticed them at first gave way to a smile, as soon as they came near enough for him to view them correctly. He drew up his horse, and, notwithstanding his mind was so ill at ease, he could scarce refrain from mirth. His faithful serving-man, judging, from his master's stopping, that now was the time for action, though his heart was in his mouth, he was in so huge a fear, drew forth a pistol, and rode to his side, having valorously made up his mind not to be eaten up alive till he had done something in his respected master's defence. "I will shoot the first villain, an it please you," he said, hurriedly, and in a terrible trepidation. "Perchance it would be good policy were you, at the same moment, to despatch the other." Simon got no other answer than having his weapon knocked upwards by his master's hand, at which instant it went off, expending its ammunition harmlessly in the air; and well it was for Simon that action was so quickly done, or such mischief would have followed as would have put him in greater peril than that from which he sought to escape.

If this astonished him, how infinitely more did he marvel when, at the same instant, the horrible nondescripts appeared standing before him, in the outward resemblance of men—men, too, from whom it was evident there was nothing to fear, there was in them so much to laugh at.

They were no other than the reader's old acquaintances, Jonas Tietape and Tommy Hart. The latter had heard that the much-respected brother of his merry little wife

was expected at Stratford, and he was sent to meet him with a communication of grave import. He was joined by his nimble friend Jonas; and, quite forgetful of the exceeding serious nature of what he was instructed to state, no sooner had he caught sight of Master Shakspeare than he challenged his companion to a race, in his favorite method of progression, alternately using the hands and feet. The challenge was as soon accepted as spoken, and off they started.

Both were adepts in this strange feat, for which they were famed, far and near; and it was the manner in which they advanced, now with the head close to the ground and now up, and at a distance showing nothing but a confused bundle of arms and legs, going round like the spokes of a wheel in rapid motion, with the savage cries they thought fit to make, that puzzled Master Shakspeare, and put his valiant and faithful serving-man into so absolute a fear.

Simon, albeit he had so carefully made up his mind to see strange things, marvelled so greatly at the wonderful transformation he had just beheld, that it clean took away his speech. He gazed upon Tommy Hart and his odd-looking associate, as though he could not convince himself that they were human. It was his master who first brought all parties to feel a little at their ease. He explained the mistake of his attendant so pleasantly withal, that they who were likely to have suffered by it so dreadfully seemed to take it as the most exquisite jest they had ever heard.

After making friendly inquiries for all of his acquaintance at Stratford, which brought upon him a whole budget of news, and assuring both his townsmen he would not be long before he paid them a visit, he took his leave of them. Tommy Hart was so taken up with the enjoyment of his mirth, and the prodigious quantity of gossip he related, that the message with which he had been sent escaped him as completely as though he had had no knowledge of it; and Master Shakspeare rode away towards Shottery, unwarned of the state in which he was like to find matters there. Simon rode after him, but not before he had seen the two singular beings, whose approach had so much alarmed him, commence again their unnatural method of progress. He said never a word, but he was fully satisfied, extraordinary as it seemed to him, that the men of Warwickshire went upon four legs.

His master dismounted when within a convenient distance of the cottage, and Simon held the horse while he proceeded to the door. It struck him as something mar-

vellous, that no one of the family was visible in or about the house. At all other times they were wont either to meet him in a body, within a mile or so of home; or, if circumstances would not allow of this, they were about the door, waiting anxiously for his appearance; and, directly he rode up, the children would rush towards him with loud demonstrations of pleasure. Now not a soul had he seen, and the place was as silent as though it had been deserted. The doors and windows, too, were all carefully closed. Even of Talbot, a still more rare occurrence, there was no sign.

This unusual state of things struck the loving father and husband as exceeding strange. He knocked at the door. No answer was returned; but on listening, he fancied he could hear some persons whispering inside. He knocked still louder, and could evidently distinguish the voice of his tender and affectionate Susanna, endeavoring to quiet Talbot, who had been disturbed by the knocking. Marvelling greatly that no one came, though there could be no doubt several persons were within, and knowing he had sent word by a trusty hand of his coming at this very time, he took his heavy riding-whip and beat the door with sufficient violence to arouse all the people in the house, were they ever so deaf, and also raised his voice to its highest pitch, bidding them let him in. No sooner did the faithful Talbot hear his master's voice, than all attempts to keep him silent were vain; he barked and whined most vociferously. It then appeared that he was shut up, but his efforts to get out were of the most violent sort. Still Master Shakspeare could hear three or four individuals at least, carrying on an animated debate in a low tone of voice. He could hear nothing distinctly, but the voices appeared to be those of women.

At last, on his loudly asking the reason of this strange reception of him, the window over his head was slowly thrown open, and there appeared at it the strongly marked visage of Aunt Pratepace. She put on at first a monstrous friendly manner, and bade her kinsman "good den," as pleasantly as you please, but, upon his peremptorily insisting upon knowing why he was kept out of his house in this unheard-of fashion, she presently raised her voice to the true shrewish pitch, and, as Master Shakspeare could plainly hear, continually prompted by some persons behind her to whom she ever and anon turned her head, she began to rate him right soundly, and let him know "our Anne," with a spirit worthy of her family,

had come to the proper determination of having no more to do with him; therefore, he might take himself away with all possible haste.

Master Shakspeare listened to this tirade, fully satisfied that the three old harridans had been employing their talents at mischief-making with more than ordinary zeal; but proud, weak, and wilful as he knew his blooming Anne of former years to be, he could not readily believe that the influence of her meddling kinswomen over her was so great as to induce her to take the step which, he was well convinced, they had long been leading her to. That he was greatly moved at a determination so unexpected there is no question; but he kept his feelings under control, and courteously bade Aunt Pratepace acquaint "his dear bed-fellow" from him, that he was exceeding anxious to see her, and that he had no doubt in the world that in a few minutes he would explain all apparent evils to her perfect satisfaction, and would make such arrangements for her future comfort as should convince her how dear to him was her happiness and contentation.

"In sooth, fairly spoken," replied Aunt Pratepace, sharply. "But our Anne hath had enough of such poor bates to catch fools, I promise you." Here she disappeared, and immediately in her place came Aunt Breedbate, looking even more crabbed than the other.

"Take your fine speeches to those who are willing to be cajoled by them," she said in her harshest tones. "Our Anne hath too much sense, ay, and spirit too as becomes her, i' faith, any longer to be made a convenience of." Thereupon, she took in her head, and it was straightway replaced by that of Aunt Gadabout, with one of the most fiercely shrewish of her shrewish looks.

"Wives are not to be made slaves of, whatever their tyrants of husbands may think!" she exclaimed in a scream like unto that of an angry peacock. "Our Anne thinks herself made of better stuff than to be a poor household drudge, that is to be kept at home whilst her unworthy husband is to wander about the world at his pleasure;" and then she added in an emphasis, and with a look that spoke pokers and tongs at the least, "An I had a husband that would use me so, I warrant you I would teach him better ere he was a week older!"

"There must be some great misunderstanding in this matter," replied Master Shakspeare with a marvellous sweet patience. "In all reasonable things Anne

hath ever found me willing to indulge her to the fullest extent of my ability, and this I am always ready to do."

"There hath been nothing of the sort!" cried Aunt Breedbate, rudely.

"Monstrous reasonable, forsooth!" exclaimed Aunt Prateapace, taking her place at the casement directly she left it. "Pry-thee, what dost call indulgence? Dost indulge her by the horrible injustice of keeping her in this poor place by herself, whilst you sometimes for a whole year together care not to come near her once! And now, more monstrous still, you have sent her word you are about going, Heaven only knoweth how many miles away, for the seeing of far off countries, saying never a word of her going with you, farther than to state you would like it of all things; but it could not in any way be brought about—or some such poor stuff. If she put up with such a slight as this, she hath no more womanly spirit than a cracked flea!"

"Let her be assured that no slight is intended," said Master Shakspeare, very certain it could not have been taken so by her unless a vast deal of malicious care had been used to give it that color. "My absence from her was first caused by necessity, and by necessity hath been continued, and all the years it hath lasted, she hath never to my knowledge been otherwise than satisfied it should so remain. As for my intended journey out of England, it is clean out of my power to take her with me, even were there no such absolute cause existing as there is, for her remaining at home with her children, nor do I think so ill of her that she would ever entertain so unworthy an idea, had it not been thrust upon her mind by the perverse exertions of a set of worthless mischief-makers."

"Mischief-makers!" here eagerly exclaimed all three, putting out their several heads at the same moment, with every appearance of guilty consciousness, and the most absolute rage. Forthwith each vigorously disclaimed having any thing to do in the matter, vowing nothing was so far from their thoughts. They stoutly and with an infinite lack of civility insisted that they had a right to see that 'our Anne' had justice done her, and that they could not allow of her being so trampled on as she was without feeling for her unhappy, distressed state—that they thought it particularly commendable of her acting as she did, and that they would give her the benefit of their countenance and advice, in spite of all the monstrous tyrannical husbands that could be found.

Much more they might have said to the same purpose, had not Aunt Prateapace, in her impatience to be heard, interrupted Aunt Gadabout somewhat sharply, which was replied to in a terrible savage humor, whereupon a squabble ensued betwixt them, which Aunt Breedbate did all she could to increase. In the midst of their mutual bickerings and revelations, Master Shakspeare, much excited, declared that he insisted on seeing and hearing from their kinswoman the determination they had stated she had resolved on. This took them from the window in a very brief space.

A long and vigorous discussion followed, which could not be distinctly heard by the outraged husband, though he could distinguish the noisy hum of many voices. It seemed to him as though others than the mischievous three shared in the conference, and he more than once fancied he could detect the tones of the high-spirited Judith and the affectionate Susanna.

The result of the discussion was, that Mistress Anne made her appearance at the window, but not before he had plainly heard such phrases as, "Hold thee a good spirit, Anne!" "Never be made a slave of!" "An you suffer yourself to be cajoled, you deserve all the ill-usage and neglect it cannot help but bring you!" with divers others of a like tendency. Her visage did not bespeak any very terrible grievances, though there was a certain expression of discontent in it. She had still some pretensions to be considered the blooming Anne, though pretty well a score of years had passed since first that title had been bestowed upon her. But she valued her good looks too highly not to have taken particular care of them.

Master Shakspeare, at sight of her, urged all arguments that a fond husband could be expected to have, to bring her to reason and show her the folly of persisting in a course of conduct so unworthy of her: but she had been too well instructed in her lesson to allow the proper influence of any thing of the sort. She answered with a firm show of resolution, that she considered herself to have been exceedingly ill used, and that she would endure it no longer. Her husband tried every possible exertion to induce her to give up so unworthy a determination, and promised many additional enjoyments, would she determine more wisely. But the promptings became now eager and audible, "Not to be cozened," and, "to show a proper spirit." Unfortunately for herself, either through fear or inclination, she took too much heed of them, and answered she had

considered the matter well, and had resolved to change not her course.

This seemed so far to satisfy her husband that he left off pressing the point, though he wore a very disturbed countenance. He asked to see his daughters that he might at least have the pleasure of beholding their improved appearance, and enjoy their love after his journey, as it was not likely he could promise himself that pleasure for some time. Thereupon, one of the aunts answered tartly, that, as was exceeding proper and natural, the children shared in the sentiments of their mother, and that neither of them wished to have further speech with him.

At this cruel speech, all the father was in his heart, and he replied, with an extreme earnestness, he could not believe in any thing so monstrous and undutiful. It was almost too unnatural a thing to be conceived that children should be so set against a loving parent, and he inveighed bitterly against the authors of this atrocious mischief. How much more was his affectionate heart wrung by soon afterwards beholding Judith, who too, doubtless, had been well taught her lesson, appear with an unbecoming boldness at the casement, and express herself very rudely.

Whether he so disliked this last drop in his cup of bitterness, or could not bring himself to strive further to obtain more affectionate treatment, cannot be said,—but the speech had scarce been uttered when he hastily left the place, mounted his horse, and rode full speed from the door, as though he was anxious to be as quick as possible a thousand miles away. Simon Stockfish, who had been an amazed spectator and hearer of all that had passed, lost no time in following; but what he had already seen and heard of the people who were natural to the place, sufficed to satisfy him that they were a sort of savages, who had as monstrous a way of receiving a tender father and husband, after a long journey, as they had of taking an ordinary ramble on the king's highway.

Master Shakspeare did not draw rein till he arrived at the porch of the goodly mansion of his excellent friend, Sir George Carew. That estimable, worthy gentleman, and approved good soldier, chanced, at the time, to be sitting at an open window on the ground-floor, giving orders to some of his people who were employed in clipping some old yew-trees into the strange figures therin in fashion. But on the instant he caught sight of his visitor, riding like a post, with a wild, unnatural look, such as he had ne-

ver seen in him before, he made no more to do but leaped out of the window as nimbly as ever he could have done in his youth, in the fullest conviction that something dreadful was the matter.

Giving orders to one of his varlets to look to the horses, he lost no time in leading his disturbed friend into a retired chamber, where, in a strange, incoherent, passionate manner, the latter made known to him how matters stood. At this the valiant old soldier was greatly moved, and with no small stock of soldier-like oaths did he denounce the conduct of the three old mischief-makers, whose dishonest meddling had disturbed his friend's peace, and he strove, as well as he was able, to console him.

But the unhappy father was then in no mood to profit by his kindly intentions. The iron seemed to have entered into his soul, and he did nought in the world but rave, in an unconnected and vehement manner, on the singular and hateful ingratitude of his daughters. He burst out with a passionate phrenzy of language that was quite awful to hear. His words seemed to flow from his mouth like a stream of living fire. All the agonies of a great heart, hurt in its tenderest part, were shown in him both by language and action—for his movements were no less wild and forcible than his speech.—In brief, it presently showed such undeniable signs of a disturbed mind, that Sir George, in great concern, despatched messengers for the nearest chirurgeon, and his guest was shortly carried to a chamber that was immediately prepared for him, in a fit of raving, of so outrageous a sort, it took several persons to restrain him.

In this state he continued for several days, to the terrible alarm and grief of his approved good friend, Sir George Carew, and to the no less concern of his sedate and trusty serving-man, Simon Stockfish, whose grave countenance took on it an expression infinitely more serious, as he witnessed the course of his worthy master's malady. With so sharp a sickness as he had, it was wonderful to hear with what intensity his mind would run on, on the subject of his children's disobedience. He seemed to have but one subject for his thoughts, that could hold it for any length of time; for, although his mind would wander from time to time to other matters, it quickly returned to the one theme, and thereupon treated it in so moving a manner, it was truly pitiful to hear him.

He would seem to be addressing his daughter, Judith; and would pour out such a tempest of bitter reproach for her contu-

macy, that the obdurate heart ever heard of must have shrunk under it. Perchance she might have been all the better, had she been brought in to hear it—it could scarcely have failed to have touched her nearly. Indifferent as she seemed to the ties that bind the child to the parent, it must have wakened in her a proper sense of her intolerable ingratitude. But the style in which he, in his unhappy conceit, discoursed to his daughter, Susanna, was of a totally different sort. The bruised heart of the loving father was apparent in every word. The speech was gentle, loving, and pregnant with a melancholy tenderness. It spoke of the unutterable delight those tokens of an affectionate nature she had previously displayed had given to her doting father; and how oft he had strove to show to her, by every kind of acceptable remembrance, how exceeding dear she was to him; and then it entered into the monstrous cruelty of suffering one who had made for her so high a place in his heart to be so stricken by her hands as to make the horriest torture of body to be desired in preference.

There was so much sweet earnestness, and a misery so sharp in the manner in which all this was spoken, that there was not a dry eye in the chamber during its utterance. Many of his most esteemed friends at Stratford, and thereabouts, hastened to the mansion of Sir George Carew, as soon as they heard of the lamentable sickness that had overtaken so worthy a man; and when they learned, as they quickly did, that it arose from the ill-behavior to him of his family, there was a general denunciation of one and all.

The three meddling busy-bodies, in especial, were spoken of in good set terms.—They were in considerable ill repute in and about Shottery, as it was; and the account Simon Stockfish gave of their appearance in this unhappy business, whilst it satisfied all who had in any way heard of their pranks, that the whole matter had been one of their handling, spread their bad names far and wide. All those persons who felt a proper respect for Master Shakspeare would have no sort of association with them, and the feeling against them became at last so strong, that even some of their most familiar gossips thought it best to hold them at a convenient distance.

Their kinswoman, too, Mistress Anne, was greatly condemned for being so led against her husband by such bad counselors. As for Susanna and Judith, it appeared as if nothing could be said of them sufficiently condemnatory. To behave in

so contumacious a manner, particularly to a father, who gave them so many proofs of his prodigal love and kindness, was sad evidence of a natural badness of heart: and it was confidently prognosticated that disobedient children of this sort must needs come to an evil end.

To the great joy of all his friends, after some days, the violence of Master Shakspeare's fever showed some abatement, and he began gradually to recover. Sir George Carew had sent several times to the cottage at Shottery, in hopes of getting the family of his guest to act more becomingly; but his messengers met with no one but the three arch instruments of mischief, and they had set their hearts too strongly on the evil they were doing, to allow of its being set aside—therefore, nothing but unsatisfactory answers had been obtained. This, when his guest was sufficiently recovered, Sir George thought proper to inform him of; and the intelligence was so distasteful, that, waiting only to make some arrangements which should secure ample comforts for the unnatural inhabitants of the Cottage, he must needs take himself at once to London.

He vowed he would never again seek a roof whence he had been so shamefully driven, and was in a monstrous hurry to get as far as possible from it. Without waiting to gain a proper strength, he started off, making as little delay on the journey as he could help; whereof the consequence was, that, when his faithful old serving-man had got him safely within his dwelling, in the Liberty of the Clink, his intense anxiety, over-fatigue, and unhappiness of mind, brought on a relapse, which caused him to be worse even than he was before. Simon thought he could not do better than send for his old master's son, and, very shortly afterwards, John Hall was at the bedside of his patient, and, as he ascertained, not before he had been wanted there.

CHAPTER XVII.

A modest maid decked with a blush of honor,
Whose feet do tread green paths of youth and
love;

The wonder of all eyes that look upon her;
Sacred on earth; designed a saint above;
Chastity and Beauty, which are deadly foes,
Live reconciled friends within her brow.

SAMUEL DANIEL.

WHATEVER success the three villainous ministers of mischief met with in their pro-

ceedings in the cottage at Shottery, they had no manner of assistance in it from the gentle and tender-hearted Susanna. But, it is believed, they held her in so little account, they cared for none at her hands. She was in no way consulted in the matter. Nevertheless, she regarded the whole proceedings with the most intense interest. She listened to all the plans and arguments of the arch-conspirators with a feverish impatience, and when she heard her dear father abused, she could scarce refrain from calling the slanderers to task for their insolency. However, she knew of old what little good was like to arise from any interference on her part; therefore, she was fain to hold her peace, and weep in silence.

Her knowledge of such vile behavior, shown to one whom she so greatly loved and venerated, preyed on her spirits so that she could take no pleasure in any thing. Most unhappily the day passed over, and most wretched was the day that followed. She was exceeding anxious to have some certain intelligence of her father, but she heard nothing from the villanous conclave who ruled the little household of which she was so unimportant a member, that was sufficiently to the purpose, and she knew but too well the unprofitableness of asking.

To such a height at last arose her anxiety, that on the evening of the second day she fell into a violent hysterical fit, that did so weaken her, that she was forced to keep her bed for several days. She thus remained in entire ignorance of the critical state of health of that beloved object to whom all her thoughts had lately been so painfully devoted. It was more than a week before she was so far recovered she could return to her usual duties. For some reason or other, there was little then said, either by her mother, sister, or aunts concerning her father. If they conversed on that subject, they took care to do so when she was not by. This conduct perplexed her exceedingly. Desiring more every hour to learn how her dear father took the monstrous unkindness that had been shown him, and longing most heartily to find some means of acquainting him, that in her heart, at least, there was a proper love and obediency towards him, Susanna sought an opportunity of going to Stratford, in the hope of learning from her merry kinswoman, Joan Hart, with whom she had ever been an especial favorite, all that she knew of the matter, her ignorance of which so distressed her.

She found little difficulty in this, and in a state of mind made up of rejoicing, that she was now pretty sure of hearing intelli-

gence of her father, and a dread that it might be of a terrible bad complexion, she proceeded as rapidly as she could towards Stratford. She had not left the cottage far behind her, when her attention was attracted by the sound of horses' feet, and she soon discerned two horsemen coming from the place to which she was going. One of these she perceived was Sir George Carew, and the other young Squire Clopton.

She had never met the former without his showing towards her a most kind and fatherly attention. He would stop her wherever they chanced to meet, and make all manner of friendly inquiries respecting her and her mother and sister, and would usually inform her of some piece of pleasant news respecting her father, he had heard from some trustworthy intelligencer, and he would season his discourse with certain pretty commendations of his own regarding her appearance, that never failed to call a blush to her cheek, and a touch of grateful pleasure to her breast; and thereupon he would take his leave of her with a show of gallantry, as though she were as greatly in his esteem as his own lady.

The young squire, also, had not been wont to pass her by unheeded. Indeed, if the truth must be told, this was very far from the case. He had seen something of a camp life, and moreover something of a court life, the which the great repute his kinsman and guardian enjoyed in both places threw open to him, but he had brought little from either, save an inordinate love of brave apparel, and a desire of distinguishing himself as an irresistible fine gallant.

The beauty of Susanna Shakspeare seemed sufficient to entitle her to as prodigal an extent of gallantry as it was in his power to evince. Therefore, he sought every opportunity to meet her when she was abroad, or see her alone when she was at home, at which times there was sure to be as fair a selection of sugared phrases and dainty conceits on his part, as might have sufficed for the use of some half a dozen of the perfectest gallants of the time.

As Susanna felt fully satisfied that one or both these persons would detain her, she was by no means pleased at meeting them. Notwithstanding she was sure they were both well inclined to make their greetings as gallant to her as possible. Right gladly would she have got out of their way—so desirous was she of using all speed to get to Joan Hart's for the one great purpose with which she had left the cottage—but there was no time to avoid them, they came at such speed.

As she fully expected, they both reined in their horses at sight of her, but how much was she astonished, when, instead of the exceeding courteous and flattering attentions she had ever before received from him, Sir George shouted to her with a stern voice and manner;—"So, Mistress Susanna! a pretty daughter thou hast proved thyself—a murrain on thee! I hope thou wilt be satisfied with thy horrible and unnatural disobedieney, now that, in consequence of it, thy poor unhappy father, as I have just been credibly informed, is lying at death's door, in his lodging at Southwark." Saying this, Sir George put spurs to his horse, and, followed by his companion, was soon out of sight, leaving the miserable Susanna like one stunned by the overwhelming intelligence she had so unexpectedly heard.

As soon as she had recovered so far as to proceed, she bent her steps towards the well-known dwelling of her jovial kinsman, Tommy Hart. Here she found evidence that all was not as it should be, for not a sign of mirth of any sort was visible.—Strange to say, Tommy and his merry bed-fellow were completely chafallen, and Jonas Tietape, who had come to comfort them, was for a marvel standing quietly on his legs—a sure sign he was in no very pleasant humor himself. Their faces, instead of the joyous expression they were wont to have, seemed monstrous sorrowful. Joan was crying, as it was believed, for the first time in her life, and her husband and his gossip looked on the point of following her example.

Susanna soon learned the cause of this wondrous change. They had just learned that her estimable, worthy father was sick of a fever, and reduced to so sore a strait as to be given over by his physicians. She heard the news with an appearance of indifference that made her friends half inclined to think there was an infinite lack of the loving daughter in her; but they did her huge injustice. The blow struck her so forcibly, it seemed to have stilled all her emotions. She could not feel. All sense seemed dead in her for the time.

There was a good deal said by one and the other respecting what had been done in the cottage, and a full measure of indignation was poured out upon the authors of the horrid mischief, but Susanna heard not a word,—and even the forms of those present had ceased to find a place in her vision. She was as one stone deaf and stone blind.

When consciousness returned to her, she sought an excuse for hurrying away, for, in

sooth, she was in no mood for society of any sort, and returned with what haste she could to Shottery. She thought much and deeply, and could not reflect on the imminent danger of her father without a shudder. She frequently endeavored to be alone on that day, and succeeded. Much self-accusation—much bitter remorse—visited her, for not having assured her parent that she had no part in the unnatural proceedings against him; and then there would come questionings as to what was now her proper line of duty.

There can be no doubt that she gave these matters her closest attention; for, early the next morning, before any of the family were astir, after a fervent prayer that God would prosper her in her perilous undertaking, she first crept into the chamber where her mother and sister were asleep, and kissed them both without disturbing them; then, fully equipped for a long journey, and as well furnished for it as it was possible, in her state, she crept softly out of the house. She lingered awhile upon the threshold, and then made her way to the ordinary resting-place of Talbot, who made not the slightest disturbance, for, though he was fully awake, he knew her step, light as it was, and would have known it from a thousand.

She fondled him, and, as she did so, shed many tears, for he had long been regarded by her as the only true friend she had in her own home, and the noble hound whined, and seemed exceeding restless as he returned her caresses, after his fashion. At last, she left him where he was,—doubtless, much against his will—and took her way along the high road. She did not expect in her own neighborhood, if she met any one at that early hour, to be closely questioned as to her being abroad at such a time, as it was no unusual thing for her to be so early afoot; and as she advanced, she did not fear that strangers would be inconveniently curious, for it was a common thing with a country girl, such as she seemed, to be met, going of her errands to the nearest town, as soon as it was day.

Her great care and anxiety was to remember the names of the different towns that lay betwixt her own village and the fair city of Oxford, for her object was to get there with as little delay as possible, and thence to find her way to London. As to her inducement to undertake so long and hazardous a journey for one of her delicate nature, methinks there needs no great trouble to discover it. The deep affection she bore her loved and honored father, her exceeding anxiousness to show she was not so unna-

turally indifferent to him as she feared he had been led to believe, and an earnest hope that she might be enabled, by constant and careful attendance, to administer to his recovery, all helped in it. Such inducement as it was, it seemed to carry her along famously. The very sad expression of her young and beautiful face appeared to be fading away under an aspect of cheerfulness such as she had been a stranger to a long time.

She had so often heard her father mention the manner and way of his journeys to and from London, she was under no fear that, with what she remembered, and what information she might acquire by asking, she should miss her way; nor was she under any apprehension as to the kind of treatment she might meet with. For the first hour or two, she saw none but laborers going to their work in the fields, who gave her a civil greeting and passed on; yet not without being especially impressed in her favor by her neat and pleasing appearance, Anon, a farmer or substantial yeoman would come by on horseback, going to look after his farm-servants, or to be at market betimes, and would venture upon some commendation of her remarkable comeliness, which she would receive with a proper modesty that increased their regard. And then she met wayfarers of all sorts, from the humblest vagrant, trudging wearily afoot, to the the powerfulest noble, surrounded by a train of serving-men, in their coats and badges, on fair horses, perchance speeding on an errand of state.

But it often happened that she continued her journey for a long time without meeting any one. When she began to feel tired, she sat herself down a little from the road, and refreshed herself with what victual she had brought with her. The birds were twittering in the hedges, apparently their little hearts greatly rejoicing at the brightness of the day; and every thing, animate and inanimate, looked to be full of a like pleasant spirit. Had she been in the mood, doubtless she would have regarded, with an admiring eye, the richness of the landscape outspread before her. Wood and water, field and orchard, with here and there a windmill, a farm-house, a stately mansion, an ancient church, and a straggling group of cottages, made a choice picture for the eye; but Susanna could not now give her attention to such graces, however attractive they might be. Her thoughts were with her sick parent; and her anxiety to get to him made her regardless of every other thing whatsoever.

She soon finished her hasty meal; and, after a draught at a neighboring spring, continued on her way with renewed spirit. She came to where two roads met, and which of them she ought to take she knew not.—She had no knowledge of where either led to, and there was none near to whom she could make inquiries; but, after a few minutes of uneasy hesitation, she went forward at a hazard. A man passed her soon afterwards, riding on a stout horse; and, seeing a young girl, of a more than ordinary comeliness, going his road, as he thought, he stopped, and was so civil as to ask her to ride beside him as far as she liked. Susanna did not greatly incline to trust herself to a stranger, but her anxiousness to get forward with all haste overbalanced her fears; and, after a scrutiny of the man's features, which were noticeable for good humor and honesty, she accepted his offer, and a minute after was jogging along with him like a farmer and his wife going to market.

Her confidence was not misplaced, for he behaved with a kindness, though of a rustic sort, which showed the goodness of his nature. He asked very few questions, seeming to take his companion for what she appeared, a yeoman's daughter going to the market-town to make purchases, but he readily answered what questions were put to him, by which she gained much information of infinite value to her in her present undertaking. The horse they rode was a great fat creature, of the cart-horse breed, decorated with gay ribbons; and the man was taking it to a cattle-fair, at a town some twenty miles off, with the hope of getting a good price for it. Dobbin's speed, therefore, was not very great; but, as it was faster than her own travelling pace, and promised to forward her twenty miles on her journey, Susanna was well content she had got on his broad back.

On their way, as her companion stopped to victual Dobbin, he took care his fellow-traveller should be provided for in a like manner; and, having borrowed a pad for her to ride on, they resumed their journey. In due time they came to the town to which Dobbin was bound, and not without some sort of regret from his owner, who had got so content with the pleasant company he had had, he was not willing to be so soon quit of it; nevertheless, with a wondrous show of good-will, he was fain to take his leave, and Susanna proceeded alone on her road. She had managed to get such minute directions from her recent acquaintance, that she was now pretty confident she should be

able to find her way without any very great difficulty. The town was crowded by buyers and sellers, and a liberal sprinkling of idle spectators; but she passed on, heedless of pedlars, mountebanks, dancing-bears, and motions of the rarest quality ever exhibited, though nought was left by them undone to stay her steps.

Having got completely free of the fair, and all its wild uproar and confusion, she found herself passing over a wide common, overgrown with furze, with here and there a pollard, or blackthorn, the deep silence of which contrasted very forcibly with the busy scene she had left behind. Here she had full leisure to consult her thoughts; and this she did with so huge an intentness, having them directed to a subject of no less interest than her sick father, that she was unaware of being closely watched, and her steps dogged by a savage-looking woman, of a complexion like unto an Indian in brownness, dressed in tattered weeds, coarse and patched, that spoke of vagrancy in every fold, and had a child at her back, with a visage peeping over her shoulder of a like darkness with her own.

She appeared a few steps in advance of the young traveller, and, with a manner half-supplicating, half-threatening, asked an alms. Susanna was startled by her unexpected presence, and her surprise partook largely of alarm when she had glanced at her forbidding features. In the lonely place in which she was, it was by no means desirable to meet such a person. Of her small store she knew she had little to spare, but her eagerness to get rid of the applicant was infinitely stronger than was her desire to retain unbroken the funds she had thought proper to take with her to meet the necessities of her journey. Therefore she took her purse from off her girdle, and untied its strings, intending to give the woman a penny, at the least. The avarice of the beggar was awakened at the sight of the few coins it contained, and a powerful longing began to show itself in her, to have it by hook or by crook; so she cast a furtive glance towards the town, then along the road, then on both sides of her, jabbering the whilst a rambling jumble of wants and thanksgivings, when she suddenly made a snatch at the purse, but not before Susanna was aware of her design, and drew it so quickly back, she completely failed in her purpose.

Thereupon, with divers horrible imprecations, the strange woman drew, from a bag that hung suspended before her, a long knife, and rushed forward, calling on her to deliver her money, or she would have her heart's

blood. At any other time, Susanna would have been content enough to have escaped the peril she was in, by parting with a much larger sum; but the sole thought she had at that fearful moment was the impossibility of her ever reaching her sick father's dwelling, were she deprived of it, and therefore she was not content to part with it. She avoided the woman as she made up to her, and the next moment took to running at the very top of her speed.

The young traveller was light of foot, and fear seemed at first to have given her wings, but on turning her head round, and finding she was hotly pursued, her heart seemed to jump to her mouth, and she felt almost incapable of exertion. She screamed as long and loudly as she could, hoping it might bring some one to her assistance, and strained every nerve to increase the distance that was betwixt herself and her pursuer; but the latter, though not so light of step, and, moreover, burthened with the child at her back, was more used to a fleet pace than the other, and soon began with long strides to gain sensibly upon her. Susanna ran wildly on, half-dead with fright, and screaming at the very top of her voice, and the woman followed, shouting such bloodthirsty resolutions as were like to turn the current of her veins into ice.

Thus they proceeded to a distance of full a quarter of a mile. At last Susanna found she had neither breath nor strength to continue the race a minute longer. Her motions and aspect were those of one frantic with excess of terror, and her cries were awful and heart-rending. The threats of her savage enemy, who tracked her heels like a blood-hound, became every instant closer to her ear, and every step looked as though it brought the murderous knife she had menaced her with nearer to her heart. She began to reel and stumble as she ran, her strength was fast failing her, every thing seemed to swim unsteadily before her, and at last, with a piercing scream of agony, she fell to the ground.

At this terrible moment, when a violent and dreadful end was so imminent, one feeling of regret took entire possession of her. Of losing her young life thus early and thus horribly she thought but little; the feeling that was almost insupportable arose from despair of being able to show her beloved parent that she was not so vilely unmindful of him as he had been led to suppose. Her pursuer came up with every bad passion written in legible character on her gloomy brow. There could be no doubt as to her intentions, and the little imp at her back

seemed to chuckle with unnatural delight, as she hastened, with fierce curses and bloody threats, to wreak her vengeance for the opposition she had met, and then satisfy her dishonest purposes at her leisure.

The fair young traveller had no mercy to expect. Her hours, nay, her minutes, seemed numbered, and drawing to a speedy close. The murderess seized her savagely by the arm with one hand, as she knelt upon her panting body. Susanna murmured a short prayer. The upraised steel glittered before her eyes, and was descending with a force that must have buried it to the very haft in her flesh, when the arm that directed the blow was suddenly grasped from behind, and with a swing, that a person of prodigious strength only could have given, the woman was hurled from her destined victim to a considerable distance. With such force was this done, that the knife was sent flying through the air, and the child was cast out of his resting-place and safely transferred to a clump of fern several yards off; nevertheless, as though in some measure used to treatment of the roughest sort, he raised no outcry, but presently employed himself, as well as he was able, in delivering himself out of the mass of leaves in which he had been thrown.

The person who had thus timely interrupted the beggar-woman's murderous design was a man of mean and slovenly apparel, with a visage bearing no slight pretensions to manly beauty, though having on it a wild and desperate expression. His figure denoted unusual strength and activity, but his whole appearance was in no manner likely to predispose any one very greatly in his favor. He must have leaped out from one of the hollows, or sprung from behind a neighboring clump of brambles, where possibly he might have been lying his length, for his intervention was so sudden as to make it doubtful he had been brought to the fair traveller's assistance from any great distance. His interference was at the very nick of time, and appeared to be as effectual as any one could have desired; the vile wretch, who had been so intent on her deadly purpose, now lay her length on the hard road, apparently stunned by the fall.

Of this the man took no further notice, than some words, perchance a fierce malediction; the language in which they were spoke, sounded uncouth and strange, so that their exact meaning could not be come at. It was, out of all doubt, the common tongue of the gipsies, and on close observation it was as evident that the speaker, though greatly changed for the worse in his visage

and outward appearance, was no other than that villainous murderer whom the reader hath already some knowledge of by the name of Black Sampson.

Since he had behaved so roughly to Simon Stockfish, in his memorable journey to London with his young master, he had lived a terrible restless life. Pursued by an avenging hand, that seemed, to his fancy armed with a deadly weapon that was ever within an inch of his heart, he had wandered from one extremity of the kingdom to the other, in the vain hope of security. It was singular that, though of a more fearless spirit than all the wild tribe of which he was the acknowledged chief, either by some superstitious feeling, or the weight of a wicked conscience, he never could hear the name of the man whose dear and only son he had so ruthlessly slain, without being seized with a sudden panic, and to know that he had been seen in his neighborhood was sufficient to cause him to flee from the place as though pursued by the legions of the damned.

This occurred frequently. He would retire to the wild fastnesses of Wales, and for a time fancy he was safe from further pursuit; but at last he got certain intelligence from his scouts that a gaunt, grey-bearded churl was lurking about his retreat, and off he would be as secretly and expeditiously as possible to the weald of Kent, where, in some apparently impenetrable wood, he would hide himself and his dusky band. Ere he grew confident of security, he would learn that the same terrible form had appeared within some few miles of him, which was quite sufficient to make him abandon, with all speed, his late secure position; and perchance he would seek some lonely moor or solitary common in Devon. Here he would remain, but only for a brief season. He got good reason for knowing the untiring bloodhound was upon his track, and away he started, like a hunted deer, to the deep caves on the rough coast of Cornwall.

Mayhap he would abide here in peace—in such peace as the wicked know, whereof he knew about the least of any; but, when he thought from all absence of rumor touching his enemy, he might rest secure in his deep concealment, he was sure to learn that one answering but too truly to his description had arrived at the next village, and at once he would quit the place which heretofore looked as though it might have defied the very searchingest eye, and never rest foot till he had buried himself in one of the most remote and savagest parts in the highlands of Scotland. Here even he met with the same fortune. The old shepherd dog-

ged his heels with a pertinacity that was truly marvellous. Go where he would, hide as closely as he might, use the cunningest disguise, sooner or later Wattie Elliott was certain to get so close to his neighborhood, as to induce him to quit it with all speed, and in the terriblest fear.

Although Black Sampson avoided a personal encounter with his pursuer, this was by no means the case with divers of his trusty followers. They felt no compunctions or dread of any sort; and, seeing the straits in which they were put by their chief through his sudden and desperate changes, as well as being made sufferers by the wildness and unreasonableness of his humor, were well inclined to put an end to it in the only way which presented itself to them. With this object they banded together, and lay in wait for the old man. But for a long time he avoided falling into their hands. He seemed as cunning in escaping their toils as he was in following up the fierce chase he was pursuing. Nevertheless, he did not succeed at all times. Though he made the most determined resistance, which cost some of his assailants their lives, he was at last overpowered, beat with sticks, and left for dead.

This result achieved, all felt sure their leader would speedily recover his wonted greatness of soul. They assured him his enemy had got his quietus, and related how completely it had been done. A month or two might pass over, and hearing no sign of him, Black Sampson would relax somewhat in his precautions, when, lo! to his horror, he would himself, when abroad, catch a distant view of his well remembered figure; and off the outlaw would start on the instant, like a heron who spyeth the hawk afar off. Again the gray-haired shepherd would be set upon, and, after a furious contest—not without much injury to many of the assailants—he would sink at their feet pierced with innumerable deadly wounds. Again the terror-struck gipsy would be persuaded he had nothing to fear, and again, after a due interval, he would find the slaughtered man, as hale and vigorous as ever, close upon his footsteps.

At last, the wildest of the band began to be as fear-struck as their chief. The old shepherd had been shot at by all their best marksmen; he had been stabbed in the vital parts; he had been beaten, as it were, to death with heavy cudgels; nevertheless, he was certain to appear in their sight in some brief space as whole as though nothing had happened to him—it looked as though

he bore a charmed life, or was a creature not of this world. So deep did this impression enter their minds, that they forebore ever after from molesting him in any way, and were as ready to be a hundred miles from him at all times as was Black Sampson himself, who felt a secret assurance that his enemy had so unconquerable a spirit, he could not or would not be allowed to die till his just revenge upon the murderer of his son had been fully satisfied; and this haunted him so by night and by day with such continual apprehension, that he grew to wear the altered appearance he possessed at this date.

After so forcibly separating the woman, who was one of his own tribe, from her threatened victim, he raised the latter gently from the ground, and seemed to marvel at her singular beauty. Susanna, though in a horrible fear, and with scarce strength to breathe, she was so spent with running, still held possession of her senses, albeit it was with but a slight thread. She understood she had been saved from a frightful death, but, on the first glance she got of her deliverer, she seemed to have little cause for satisfaction—so dreadful a visage to look on had she never seen before. It was so unnaturally wild and terrible, she shuddered as she gazed upon it; nevertheless, she made no effort to remove herself from his hold, but lay helpless on his arm, as though she could not take away her eyes from the unnatural, searching gaze that was fixed upon her.

What feelings the contemplation of such comeliness, united to so much helplessness and innocence, might have created in the breast of this caitiff, cannot very clearly be known; but, of whatever sort they may have been, it is out of all manner of doubt they were right summarily put an end to, for, on his quick ear detecting the sound of distant footsteps, he presently turned his gaze in that direction, and, on the instant, with a marvellous lack of ceremony, dropped his gentle burthen to the ground, and, with a cry of alarm, ran off at the very top of his speed. It was soon manifest what had been the cause of this sudden movement. A man was seen passing over the common with marvellous quickness of foot; and as he drew nearer, it was observed he was of a gaunt figure, ill and rudely clad, with a fierce and haggard expression of countenance. On he came—in sooth an awful sight—his grey hair and beard of unnatural length, streaming in the wind; his eyes sunken under shaggy overhanging brows.

yet gleaming with an unnatural fire, and one hand brandishing threateningly an open dagger.

As he passed swiftly by our gentle traveller, she could not believe he was any thing human; and the unearthly manner in which she heard him raise, as he hurried on, his ordinary cry of "Blood! Blood!" seemed enough to turn her to stone. It was the old shepherd in pursuit of the murderer of his dear son. On he sped with an eagerness far beyond what his more youthful days had witnessed; and, holding the murderer in sight, he kept at his heels over bush and hollow, hedge and ditch, till both were lost to sight in the depths of a neighboring wood.

Susanna had just begun to breathe with a little more freedom than she had done for some minutes past, when she was again overwhelmed with deadly fear by the sight of the woman from whose murderous hand she had so lately been rescued again making towards her. Doubtless she could now have wreaked her vengeance uninterrupted, and have plundered her at her leisure, and such it is more than probable was her intent; but at this critical time, a company of carriers from the fair made their appearance at a little distance, and she was fain to content herself with breathing the horriest threats ever heard, as she recovered her weapon, and then replacing her child at her back, who had been all the while playing about as though he required no better nursing than had Romulus and Remus, she took herself quickly off in a contrary direction.

The carriers, who were simple men, marvelled greatly at the tale they heard when they came up; and when the fair traveller appealed to them for protection, so eager were they to render it, they were ready to go to loggerheads before they could settle who should be the fortunate man to guard so much beauty and innocency. At last the matter was settled in some sort satisfactorily, and Susanna was raised on a pack-saddle on a fine mule that belonged to one of the party, all agreeing that she should ride upon it, because it was the goodliest beast of them all, and set off, nothing loath, in their company.

It was curious to see the sudden change that appeared, as soon as Susanna took her place in the midst of them. They had approached in very boisterous style, with an abundance of rude jests, and prodigal display of riotous mirth, consequent doubtless on the long draughts they had taken in fellowship at the last town; but now, as though by common consent, each one put a bridle on

his tongue, so that there should be no offence in it, and essayed to distinguish himself above his fellows by courtesy, seriousness, and all manner of civil speech, whereof the consequence was, our late terror-struck traveller quickly recovered her proper spirits, and journeyed on, with no other wish than for increased speed, that she might the sooner reach the lodging of her dear father in Southwark.

No further adventure happened till they arrived at Oxford, wherein she had scarce entered when a number of Oxford scholars, struck at first by the strangeness of so fair a creature riding in the midst of a parcel of rude carriers, were for a closer acquaintance, and in their admiration becoming too familiar, to the great scandal of divers of her simple company, one must needs break the head of the foremost, which was so resented by his associates, that a fierce attack was made upon the offender and all his fellows. These defended themselves with such spirit, emboldened by the presence of their gentle fellow-traveller, in whose defence they considered they were fighting, that soon a most violent battle raged betwixt them. The scholars every moment were reinforced; nevertheless, the carriers with their cudgels fought so desperately, many of their numerous assailants got sore hurt.

Susanna sat on her mule, wringing her hands, begging and praying each party to leave off their quarrel; but the greater part of the scholars, who had seen nothing of the beginning of the affray, believed that she was held against her will by the knaves in whose company she was, and that her distress was occasioned by her detention, felt a chivalrous desire to rescue her from out of the hands of such Philistines, and they returned to the charge again and again with increased numbers and tenfold fury. The street was a scene of the wildest riot seen there for many a day. All were attracted to the neighborhood, alarmed by the horrible outcries and fierce contention that raged in that spot, and, as is usually the case in disturbances in that fair city, they took different sides. The citizens, satisfied that where the scholars were fighting it must be against them, without question of any sort ranged themselves on the opposite side, and with whatever weapons they could get, gave battle furiously by the side of the carriers.

In this way every instant the fight was increasing with such vast strides, that it looked as though two rival armies were contending for mastery. The more peaceable sort were in a monstrous fright, and the au-

thorities were getting ready as strong a force of constables, as they had at their commandment for the immediate quelling of the riot, and securing the disturbers of the peace. By this time the scholars had grown to so huge a force, that they had been able to beat back her doughty champions and their now numerous adherents, and were in triumph leading away in the midst of them the unoffending cause of the battle they considered they had so gloriously won. Their shouts of victory and martial songs drowned every attempt the poor distressed damsel made to show them how little reason she had to be content with their services. None knew what was to be done with her, and none troubled themselves to think, their minds were so filled with their hard-fought success.

As they crowded along in this state, they were made aware of the approach of the strong force of foot sent by the civil authorities against them, among whom were several of the principal persons in the University on horseback ; but, in their present mood, there is little doubt the victorious scholars would have given them instant battle. It so chanced, however, that the delectable young creature they felt assured they had rescued from unmannerly knaves, spied, amongst the horsemen, two gallants, whose persons she recognized with a vehement cry of pleasure. There could be no doubt as to who they were. They were Sir George Carew and young Master Clifton, then journeying to London, who from curiosity had joined the civil power, to behold the quelling of the violent disturbance that had so unaccountably sprung up in the city. By singular good fortune they immediately recognized her, which was in some sort easy, she being on her mule, above the heads of the riotous assembly which surrounded her.

Seeing her, like one in the very absolute distress, as if calling and making signs to them to come to her, Sir George and his companion marvelling to behold her in so strange a company, put spurs to their horses, and dashed forward ; but they would have been roughly handled, had not the old soldier had the exceeding good policy to cry out that the young female they had got amongst them was his fellow-traveller, and he desired she might be allowed to return to her friends. Many knowing Sir George, made way for him, and others did the same, seeing he was a person of note by his worshipful figure, and the number of his retainers, with their blue coats and silver badges,

so that the two found no difficulty in making their way to the distressed damsel.

Sir George appeared to have forgot his late cause of displeasure, as he rode to her side with the courteous bearing towards women so familiar to him ; but when he listened to her hurried narrative, and discovered that she had gone through such troubles and dangers out of her anxious desire to minister to the wants of her sick father, his very estimable good friend, he seemed to regard her with unusual interest, interrupting her with many soldier-like commendations, and bidding her to be of good heart, for he was her assured friend till death, and she should travel in his company without delay of any sort.

Then, turning to the crowd, in a brief and energetic speech, he showed them the mistake they had been under, and begged them as a proper token of respect for the fair damsel for whom they had so manfully exerted themselves, to disperse each to their homes as speedily as possible. This proper advice was instantly acted upon, and in a brief space all were making what haste they could to their several colleges ; perchance, some using the more expedition from a wholesome fear of punishment. Sir George did not find much more difficulty in satisfying the authorities and the citizens, and he allowed but little time to pass over before he sought out the trusty carriers, to reward them for their exceeding commendable conduct.

In due time he set off, with the fair Susanna, on a goodly palfrey, in his company, for London, and they arrived the next day, without further adventure, at Master Shakespeare's lodgings in the Liberty of the Clink.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A honey shower rains from her lips,
Sweet lights shine in her face ;
She hath the blush of virgin mind,
The mind of viper's race.

These things we write merrily, but we would that the reader should observe God's just judgments, and how that he can deprehend the worldly-wise in their own wisdom, make their table to be a snare to trap their own feet, and their own purposed strength to be their own destruction.

JOHN KNOX.

FROM what hath already been stated, mine especial friend, the reader, hath good warrant for suspecting that our young student

of medicine was not in such good hands in the dwelling of that famous physician, Master Dr. Posset, as his excellent mother trusted he was, and that the abundance of admirable counsel she had so impressively given him, touching his behavior to women, had not been altogether superfluous. But whatever little insight there may have been obtained by the progress of this story, as to the characters of the several inmates of the doctor's house, it is essential for its full understanding that something more should be known. With the object of furnishing such information, the reader is urgently requested to allow himself to be transported to a certain closet, in which the doctor, after the labors of the day were over, was wont to solace himself in private with a few glasses of sherris-sack, and the enjoyment of the new fashion of smoking a pipe of tobacco.

This closet was lighted by one small window, and was wainscoted all round from ceiling to floor, with projecting cupboards at the corners, in which, under lock and key, were kept the napery, and other household stuff, of which he was possessed. There was an oak table in the middle of the room, on which were placed the customary tankard, and two glasses, with a small brass-bound box, wherein was kept the Indian weed with which he furnished his pipe. Doctor Posset sat, leaning against a high-backed chair, his legs resting upon a tall stool; he was dressed with a formal sort of neatness—a compromise between the plainness generally affected by the old and the bravery of the young physician of his day. His hair and beard, though scant and grey, were kept in excellent order by the barber; and though his years were far past the best, there was a piercing quickness in his eye that made him seem more youthful than he was. As he had lost all his teeth, his mouth was drawn in with monstrous little improvement to his wrinkled and leaden visage; and when he took on himself the humor of laughing, he looked like one of those grinning satyrs sometimes to be found carved on the stalls of our ancient cathedrals.

It would be no difficult matter for any skillful peruser of faces to have guessed, after a careful observation of that of this famous physician, in his private hours, the sort of character he was. There was a mixture of craftiness and self-conceit in the continual expression of his visage that occasionally made way for a sort of sneering devilishness that became it no better. Of this craftiness he prided himself extravagantly, although it was merely just sufficient to keep his neck out of a halter, and his person from the

rough handling, as it had been whispered, he had too frequently deserved. Obsequiousness, impudency, and some chances of fortune, had greatly befriended him. To those more ignorant than himself, he ever assumed a marvellous extent of knowledge, whilst, to any likely to be better informed, he cautiously held his peace, and looked as profoundly sage as he could.

On the side opposite to that on which he sat stood an empty chair, and the doctor seemed by his frequent glance at the door to expect some person to fill it. Nor had he long to wait. Presently the door opened, and there entered the seductive Millicent, apparently in the best of humors, or assuming such for some secret purpose. She soon sat herself down, and, as was her wont, proceeded to fulfil her first duty—the making of the sack; the which she did with a constant affectation of light-hearted-gossiping. Had her too-devoted lover, John Hall, been present, he would have marvelled hugely to have heard his melancholy mistress making a most bitter mockery of the grief of Tabitha Thatchpole, her especial friend—as she had led him to believe—because her boy Launce had given his indentures a fair pair of heels, and run away with Martin Poins, as it was supposed, to try their fortunes on board an armed ship that had sailed down the river, bound for the Spanish main; and he had marvelled still more to note the exceeding heartiness of her good will towards her father, of whom she never spoke to him in confidence, without conveying to his mind the idea that he was a monster to be regarded only with execration.

Her merry, biting jests, and the excellence of the sack she had brewed with even more care than usual, had their expected effect. The old man was in the mood she desired. Sitting herself to the enjoyment of her own glass of the exquisite beverage she had been manufacturing, she gradually and skilfully led the conversation of her companion's most favorite subject, the success he had had as a gallant.

The old fellow threw himself back in his seat, his satyr-like visage growing more hideous as the expression of vanity which lighted it with smiles became more intense. He smoked on and chuckled, occasionally interrupting his associate to add more important features to the things she reminded him of with such singular satisfaction. Then she chided him slightly, and seemed to think it was high time he should give over such unbecoming matters, take to himself a wife, and live in matrimonial respectability for the rest of his days.

He fell into this humor very readily, as he had long entertained the desire of having for his wife his daughter's little friend, Mildred; but began to despair of its accomplishment, as she, besides being young enough to be his grand-daughter, did nought but make sport of him. The wily Millicent knew this well, and had determined to turn it to her own profit. It matters little what was said on both sides; suffice it that a bargain was entered into betwixt the two, that the father was to pay to the daughter the sum of two hundred crowns as a marriage-portion with her betrothed, on the day Mildred became his wife.

She stayed not long after this, excusing herself that she had much to do to bring matters to the conclusion desired, and thereupon left him to enjoy his customary afternoon's sleep which followed upon his stuffing his skin so full it could hold no more.

Truly she had much to do. To effect the infamous sale she had set on foot, there was no small difficulty. There was first to be got over a strong feeling of dislike in her friend to the old man, considering him only as an acquaintance, which doubtless would amount to abhorrence, if he were to be proposed to her as a husband. The disparity of age was not greater than the disparity of disposition. Even could that natural feeling be removed which disinclines the youthful tasting the first rich draught of life to partake of the cup of another which hath nothing left of it but the lees, the opposition of thoughts and feelings, pursuits, habits, and tastes is hardly possible to be overcome. Doubtless there are some to be met with, among womankind in general, who are possessed of that singular indifferency which renders them insensible of any preference, and there can be no question divers aged persons may be found more worthy the entire love of the young heart than others of fewer years, but these are extreme cases.

In the instance here given, nothing could be more atrocious; but the utter selfishness of the crafty Millicent took no note of any thing but her own base ends. She sold her youthful acquaintance, and cared for nothing in the wide world save the price she was to obtain for the infamous bargain.

There was one thing in the aspect of affairs, which she could not regard without uneasiness. For objects of her own, she had done all she could to foster the growth of friendly feelings betwixt her betrothed and her new lover; this had led to a more than ordinary affectionate intimacy in the young men for each other; but now, as she found it more to her interest to wed the former, it

was requisite that she should put herself to particular pains to lessen this attachment. It might, in spite of all her care to prevent it, lead to so profound a confidence, that her double-dealing and infamous views regarding both would surely be discovered.

There was still a great obstacle, and this was no other than the much-abused John Hall. His love for the worthless creature by whom he had been so played upon had, by this time, become the better impulse of his life. The frequent recourse she had to mystery he had got so used to, that however strange the matter might seem, he put it down to her humor, and gave himself no further concern in it.

We will, however, with the reader's consent, penetrate into another part of the same tenement. This was the chamber in which were made all the surgical and pharmaceutical preparations wanted for Master Doctor Posset's numerous patients. There were in it the usual objects that make the vulgar marvel when entering such places, to wit—the stuffed crocodile hanging from the ceiling, a multitude of bottles and jars and gallipots of sundry sorts, with strange characters marked upon them, a shelf of monstrosities preserved in spirits, sundry bundles of simples hung up to dry, a nest of drawers with Latin names no each, a strong table with vials, measures, weights, scales, knives, scissors, pestles and mortars, and the like necessary things, for the use of a chirurgion; and a large iron mortar, fixed on a huge block of wood, with a famous ponderous pestle of the same metal, stood in the centre of the same chamber.

At the further end, opposite to a window, was a stout chair for patients to sit in when undergoing any operations. Close to it was another table, containing basons and other vessels for making infusions, decoctions, and syrups; with tape, plaster, bandages and ointment-pots, for the dressing of wounds. On one side was a chimney, where, on the fire, in an open earthen pipkin, some preparation was simmering, intended as a restorative for a sick courtier, which was carefully watched by John Hall, who, ever and anon, stirred it carefully with a ladle. Leonard was engaged at the large table, with an open book before him, weighing and mixing together certain powders, and then dividing them into small papers, for the barren wife of a gouty alderman. They were intent upon a discussion connected with the art they were studying, when they were interrupted by the entrance of a gentleman borne like unto a dead person in the arms of Ned Allen and Will Kempe, whilst a

crowd of players, among whom was Ben Jonson, followed at their heels, with concern and alarm depicted in all their countenances. Even the humorous visage of Will Kempe had a cast of melancholy that might even have become one at a funeral.

The party were shown into an adjoining chamber, used only by the Doctor for private consultations with his patients, and the person they had brought placed convenient on a table. He gave no sign of life, which the players did not fail to notice with an increased length of visage. The physician was hastily sent for, and all things were got ready handy for his using—plasters, bandages, and the like, with certain surgical-looking knives and probing instruments, in case an operation should be required. The poor players scarcely breathed, they seemed so frightened at this array, assured that the danger must be imminent that called for such ominous-looking things, and whispered to one another brief sentences signifying of the badness of the case.

At last Master Doctor came, not in the best humor that his sleep should be disturbed. Either by accident or design, a towel had been thrown over the face of his patient, so that he was not recognized by the Doctor. The latter asking what had happened, he was told that the poor gentleman who was there in so pitiable a case, had given some offence to Ben Jonson, which he could not stomach; so, making him draw, he attacked him furiously, and, it was believed, had killed him outright, for he presently dropped like a stone at his feet, and had since given no sign of life, save one or two most piteous groans, that seemed to denote the utter ending of his soul from his body.

"'Tis a sad case," said one.

"Indeed, 'tis most lamentable," added another.

"Sblood!" exclaimed Ben Jonson, greatly vexed, "am I also to have this poor gentleman's death at my door? I had rather a hundred pound I had never set eyes on him."

"Thou art ever of too hasty a spirit, Ben," observed Master Allen, "and I doubt not it will some day or other put thine own life in jeopardy from the hands of the law."

"I fear it will go hard with Ben at Asize," said another of the players gravely. "The dead man's friends may pursue him with such rigor, he may chance to find himself in nigh upon as bad a case himself."

"I fear hugely he his dead," said the first.

"Assuredly there is no room to doubt it," replied a second.

All this time the doctor, assisted by his apprentices, examined the body of the wound-

ed man very carefully; but he lay stiff and motionless, as though all such care was superfluous.

"Alack, poor gentleman!" exclaimed Master Allen.

"Alack, indeed!" added Will Kempe.

Now the doctor, looking somewhat puzzled, felt the pulse of the dead man—many there present thinking such as unnecessary a thing as could be; and in a moment pulled the towel off his face.

"Captain Swashbuckler, o' my life!" he cried in a monstrous surprise, as he caught sight of his well known visage; then, turning to the company, added, "Had I not seen it with mine own eyes, I would not have believed there were in the world such easy gulls as those I now see before me. Be assured, my masters, that the valiant Captain hath received no wound of any sort, and is at this present in as perfect health as ever he was in his life."

"Why the cozening rascal!"

"Out on the pitiful knave!"

"Get thee gone, thou intolerable base trickster!" exclaimed the players.

"A goodly football, my masters!" cried Will Kempe; "and i' faith, we'll play a fine game." Thereupon the poor captain, as he found his trick discovered, and was for getting out of the place as fast as he could, as soon as he was on his legs, was sent forward with a hearty kick by the last speaker, at which he turned round to mark who did it; but had scarce done so, when he received a like favor from Ben Jonson, given with so fine a zeal he was thrust to the end of the chamber. Nevertheless, his stay there was exceeding brief; one of the players who had recently been most concerned at his supposed death propelled him from it forthwith, after a fashion that was so quickly and closely imitated, that he was soon thrust into the street, amid the jeers and laughter of those who had waited outside to learn whether the wounded man was past cure.

Whilst the players were vigorously following their game, John Hall was surprised by the appearance of Simon Stockfish, with whom, after one or two of their marvellous brief speeches on either side he presently left the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

His mirth was the pure spirit of various wit,
 Yet never did his God or friends forget ;
 And when deep talk and wisdom came in view,
 Retired and gave to them their due.
 For the rich help of books he always took,
 Though his own searching mind before
 Was so with notions written o'er,
 As if wise nature had made that her book.
 COWLEY.

THE tender-hearted Susanna had now the full enjoyment of her own sweet will. She was in constant and most loving attendance upon the father, whom she regarded with so dutiful an affection, to show which she had put herself to a difficult and perilous journey, on foot and unattended save by the courage of her own pure heart ; but though she had escaped the knife of the assassin, and was secure from the insults and rude questioning of unmannerly strangers, she had to meet with treatment of a far more intolerable sort.

The mind of her sick father was a prey to the fantasies of a wild delirium, the constant theme of which was the ingratitude of his daughters. On this he would ever and anon dilate very movingly—in especial dwelling on the undutiful behavior of his favorite Susanna, after so touching a fashion, that the poor damsel, who was close at hand, feared her heart would break, it did touch her so deeply. Nevertheless, she would on no account allow her feelings to betray her ; so, keeping up a high heart, albeit it was often a most aching one, she busied herself in ministering night and day to the wants of him who spoke of her so hardly.

Sleep took she none, at least none of any account, for at all hours she was to be found playing the faithful nurse with such admirable matchless skill, it was the marvel of all who beheld it. The pillow was smoothed for the aching head, the dampness wiped from the burning brow ; the parched mouth was kept moist with refreshing drinks, and the burning skin bathed with cooling lotions ; the various medicines were administered to the patient by none but her hand ; the little matters of diet she herself prepared and placed before him ; every comfort that could be procured for one in his hapless condition she obtained for him ; and it was her musical voice that sought to make him, as readily as might be, follow the directions of his physician, and the dictates of her tender love. The words she spoke soothed the sick man, but the voice he did not recog-

nize ; he appeared to understand the great comfort of her careful nursing, but the once loved form passed before him as that of a stranger.

This was a sore trial to her, but she held up bravely ; and none who saw the untiring patience and sweetness of disposition with which she fulfilled her office, could have guessed how piercingly her poor heart ached the while.

Her loving attentions were well seconded by John Hall, whose assistance had been hastily sought, with the fullest confidence in its superiority over that of all other doctors whatsoever, by his father's faithful follower, Simon Stockfish. Together had they watched at the bedside of their suffering patient, seeking to take immediate advantage of every favorable symptom—together had they administered to his wants and provided for his comforts. Surely had no man in the like strait such great heed taken of him, as had Master Shakspeare in this sharp sickness of his. The young physician employed all the resources of his art to conquer it, partly to serve his humble friend, and in a great measure from the deep interest he felt in him whom he was attending. He soon learned in what nearness of relation his matchless nurse stood to him, and the frantic declarations of the poor gentleman did inform him sufficiently of how matters stood betwixt them. This, as may be supposed, did not in any way lessen his respect, or check his sympathy. Indeed its effect was exactly the reverse. Simon Stockfish also afforded such service to his sick master as it was in his power to perform, and did it with an earnest affection and reverence which could only be exceeded by the more ardent love of his devoted daughter. These three in their constant attendance followed their natural inclinations, for they spoke marvellous little, but it would have been difficult to have found the like number of persons who, under any circumstances felt one-half as much as they did.

The chamber in which Master Shakspeare lay was of a fair size and height—as indeed were all the principal ones throughout the house—one of the best in all Southwark, it having been, at no distant date, the mansion of a person of worship, from whom Master Shakspeare had bought it, with a great part of its chattels and household gear. All round was a goodly suit of tapestry hangings, representing certain notable scenes and adventures in the life of William the Conqueror, with labels issuing from the mouths of divers of the chief characters. A large

window, or casement, which was thrown open, gave a refreshing view of the green trees of the adjoining gardens, whence the small birds were heard twittering lustily their cheerful chorus. Through an open door, a view was got of part of the next chamber, up to the window which overlooked the street, with glimpses of its quaintly-carved cupboard; some one or two tall chairs, having about them a cittern, a rapier, and a hat and feather; a table with a rich coverlet, and its goodly burthen of books, manuscripts, writing utensils, and other furniture of a like sort.

On each side of the bed's head was a stout arm-chair, wherein the watchers of the sick man were wont to keep guard. There was a small table at a convenient distance from the casement, covered with a fair cloth of damask, whereon was a mirror in an ebony frame, with an antique vase of fresh flowers before it, which were prettily imaged in the glass, having on one side a crystal bottle daintily figured over, and a large goblet of a like material and fashion on the other, containing a delectable beverage for the patient's own drinking; whilst in a china plate that stood betwixt them, in front of the vase, were grapes and oranges, whereof the latter one was sliced ready for his eating. In a corner adjoining were the proper utensils for washing, and nigh the fireplace was a table of polished oak, on which were sundry bottles and vessels, and all conveniences for the concocting of such articles of diet and drink as were deemed necessary for him; and it was here that the neat-handed Susanna was wont to prepare them.

Elsewhere were other chairs, and also other necessary furniture, the chief of which was a massive oaken press, for the containing of linen and wardrobe. The bedstead was handsomely provided with all proper matters of bedding, most conspicuous of which was a rich counterpane, such as adorned the beds of the wealthiest sort in those days. With his head supported by pillows, the occupant of this chamber was there and then lying, his noble visage bearing evident marks of the ravages of sickness; but, his beard and hair being new-trimmed, and his face constantly and carefully refreshed with the necessary ablutions, he showed no signs of that neglect in such things which others less lovingly attended never fail to exhibit.

John Hall and Simon Stockfish stood on each side of him, regarding their charge with a vigilant eye, yet even with more

seriousness than ordinary, for he was in one of his raving moods, and it behoved them to interpose when there was a likelihood of his doing himself a mischief. And where was the ever-watchful and loving Susanna? In honest truth, she had but turned her head away to conceal a tear that came unbidden to her eyes, through hearing the sharp reproaches which her fond, distracted father did heap on her, whereof every word seemed armed with a barb that pierced and tore her sensitive heart to an agony insupportable. She considered she had merited it all, hard as it was to bear, for she loved her father with such entireness, she could not believe him capable, even in his distraction, of any unkind behavior to her. Therefore was she now raising a look to Heaven with so strong an appeal in it, it could have been withstood by nothing of mortal nature, her beautiful figure supported by one hand leaning heavily against the table, striving to recover such composure of mind as would allow her again to attend diligently to the duties of her office.

But her brave spirit was soon to have its fitting recompense. Her loving nursing had in time its proper effect. The sick man mended apace; and be sure there were no pains spared to hasten his recovery. But greatly as she rejoiced—and no imagination can do justice to the exceeding exquisiteness of her feelings, as she beheld this much-desired improvement—there was one consequence attending on it which she allowed with infinite reluctance—this was banishment from the sick chamber.

From the many intolerable speeches she had heard, she was painfully impressed with the opinion that, when her dear father should come to know her, it might perchance make him worse, and he would be sure to bid her begone for a disobedient daughter, that deserved not the pleasure of attending upon him. Therefore she kept herself in the next chamber as privily as possible, albeit she took good heed to have constant intelligence of aught relating to the object of her so much love that could be told her, and was as busily engaged in providing for his wants and comforts as though she had remained with him.

Whilst Master Shakspeare remained in this deplorable state, and even from the first notice of it that was bruted abroad, there came to his lodging every day vast numbers of persons, some his very good friends and gossips, and others known unto him only by the fame of his singular great worthiness, and these were of various classes and cor-

ditions, from the humblest drawer at "The Mitre," or call-boy at "The Globe," with whom his pleasant speech and liberal hand made him ever a monstrous favorite, to the highest noble in the kingdom, who had enjoyed many a well-spent hour in taking into his mind the prodigal store of delightful thoughts and images he had furnished in the exercise of his matchless talents. His brother players, all the principal writers, the most notable of the citizens, and the most worthy of the courtiers, either came themselves or sent continually to inquire what hopes were had of him; and Simon Stockfish was, out of sheer necessity, forced to abandon his humor of taciturnity somewhat, he had such a horrible press of questions forced upon him.

Of those who were most anxious in their inquiries and most frequent in their visits were Master Edward Allen and Sir George Carew. Nothing could exceed the former's concern at the pitiful plight to which his assured friend had been reduced; and he straightway sent his excellent partner to afford Susanna such advice and help as the exigency of the case needed; and well and kindly did she fulfil his wishes. Sir George was no less deeply interested in him, and was continually bringing or sending such things for his use as he thought might advance him in his recovery. To the marvellous sweet satisfaction of all, as hath been said, his worst symptoms left him. He grew conscious of all that was being done, and was evidently gaining strength rapidly. One thing was in especial noticeable at this time—that he carefully avoided all manner of allusion to his family. What was so recently the one sole theme of his thoughts and of his tongue, was now, as it were, driven from both—perchance from dread its entertainment might induce the evil consequences he was still smarting under.

This state of things Sir George Carew liked not at all, as it made a difficulty in what he was waiting to venture on, on the first favorable opportunity, which he knew not how to get over. Nevertheless, the matter he had undertaken could not be delayed; therefore, when the sick man grew sufficiently hale to converse on ordinary topics, he began, though not without some misgiving, to come to the point with him. Master Shakspeare was then dressed for the first time since his sickness, and sitting in his chair, leaning against a cushion, and inhaling the invigorating breeze that came through the open casement, for it was a most balmy day, that was like to fill his mind

with all manner of healthy impressions. His noble features still bore on them the marks of sickness, but the old expression of infinite good humor seemed forcing itself through the painful gravity so deeply impressed upon them. He was informing his friend of all that he remembered of his recent sufferings, and entered at length, and not without some show of animation, into certain fantasies, under the influence of which he had spoken and acted.

"But what I can by no means satisfy myself of," said he, "is a marvellous powerful impression my disordered senses have retained, touching a fair vision, by which I was constantly visited during the fiercest stage of my malady."

"A fair vision! I warrant you now some black-eyed wench," observed Sir George, merrily.

"To the best of my memory, her eyes were of no such color," replied Master Shakspeare; "but rather of the deep pure blue, such as the heavens seem made of in the sunniest weather. Indeed, she seemed in her majestic motions, her youthful grace, and most seraphic voice, a creature of the skies, rather than of the earth."

"Prythee say no more of her by way of description, Will, for my mouth waters villainously," said his friend, in his usual cheerful humor. "But, what was her errand? doubtless, she took your heart into her keeping without more ado, and proclaimed you to be her sworn servant."

"Her errand was that of a ministering angel," answered the other, fervently. "She soothed my pains, she created my comforts; her delicate hand smoothed my pillow; her loving eyes watched my rest. All that I knew of ease, or comfort, or satisfaction of any sort, seemed to come at her commandment, and was provided by her care."

"A golden girl, truly!" exclaimed Sir George, right heartily. "Had she ever a sister?"

"I fear not," replied his friend; "I cannot think there can be two of such a sort. But I know not how it was—of a sudden I missed her. I felt no more her dainty hand upon my fevered brow; I heard no more the gentle rustling of her dress, or the scarce audible sound of her light footsteps, as she glided like a creature of air about my chamber; and her soft voice, every tone of which was the delicatest music, I listened for in vain. In brief, the deprivation of this looked so intolerable, notwithstanding I was conscious of greatly amended health, that more than once I felt disposed to have endured

the full fierceness of my malady, to have enjoyed again the wondrous solace I found in this exquisite vision."

"Saw you nothing in the features of this matchless creature, familiar to you?" inquired Sir George, in a more earnest tone than he had hitherto used.

"Nothing," replied Master Shakspeare.

"They in no way reminded you of, in no long time since, the chief object of your love and worship, your own fair daughter Susanna?" asked his companion; whereat the other seemed greatly moved, and could not for some lapse of time answer the question.

"I pray you, Sir George," he at last said, evidently with some difficulty of utterance, "out of the especial regard you have had for me so long, never more to mention to me that unworthy name."

"That can I not promise, Master Shakspeare," said Sir George, gravely. "In sooth, I must needs have your serious attention to much in which that name is nearly concerned."

"Torture not a bruised spirit!" cried his companion, greatly excited; "I cannot heed you. I am in no way capable of enduring any allusion to one by whose horrible disobedience and ingratitude I have been so sorely tried."

"Hear me this once," urged his friend. "For be assured I have that to tell which is worth your hearing." Master Shakspeare said not a word, but, with a distracted sort of gesture, seemed to say he would have none of it. "You have spoken of disobedience and ingratitude," continued Sir George. "These are bitter charges to make against a child. Suppose, now, for a moment, they should be without any manner of warrant. Suppose that the very child thus villanously accused should, at the imminent hazard of her life, and, despite all difficulties in the way of such an undertaking, as soon as she got knowledge that the father she so dearly loved—she cared not to suffer a thousand deaths to prove it—was sick of a fever, and like to die in a city several days journey from her, she set off afoot, and, unattended, travelled through a strange country, every step of which was attended with perils enough to daunt the most courageous of her sex; and, after enduring and triumphing over all with unheard of constancy and patience, made her way to his sick room, where night and day she fulfilled the tender office of nurse, with a sweetness of disposition and entireness of devotion, which made all marvel to see her. Suppose now that the blessed creature, you thought was

the offspring of a disordered brain, was in truth no vision at all, but a real and palpable being, gifted with all the noblest graces of womanhood, who did keep watch and ward, and tended over you like a ministering angel, as you have said, and suppose this matchless creature of such infinite perfection was no other than the much-abused Susanna—what say you then?"

Master Shakspeare had listened to this strange speech with increasing interest, till interest grew to amazement, and amazement became a wild, bewildering phrenzy of excitement, that could keep within no bounds. As soon as he could find speech, he exclaimed, very urgently, "Can this be true?"

"Ay, on mine honor and life, is it, every word!" replied the other.

"Where is she? Bring her to me. I pray you let a fond father have the satisfaction of holding her to his heart." He had scarce said the words, when Susanna, who had previously been placed in the adjoining chamber in readiness, rushed into his arms.

Her joy was not loud, but unfathomably deep. She laid her head upon his breast, and wept. He disturbed her not, but ever and anon seemed to draw her to him with a firmer pressure, as if to assure himself she was still in his embrace. All this while they were alone, for Sir George Carew had suddenly slipped away when he had secured his desired end.

With the happy Susanna, all cares and pains were now in as perfect an oblivion as though they had never existed. She felt herself richly rewarded for whatever had been thrust upon her, which seemed hard to bear, and would readily have undertaken a much more hazardous enterprise than her long terrible journey, to have secured but half the priceless satisfaction that she now possessed. She was assured her dear and honored father did not regard her as one unmindful of his love: nay, there was a most flattering conviction she had that share in his heart she had so long coveted. With such impressions, she thought no evil could touch her—no pain annoy her—neither vexation, nor sorrow, nor doubt, nor fear, trouble her under any circumstances.

But the so late unhappy father, how took he the gaining of this incomparable pleasing knowledge? As a bird escaping an unwholesome cage to the grandiose freedom of the invigorating air. He experienced feelings to which he had long been a stranger, and his breast became lightened of a most weary load. He made his fond and dutiful daughter tell over and over again all her various adventures, from the com-

mencement of her brave journey up to the present hour; and much he marvelled, and greatly he praised, as he listened to her simple narrative.

The discovery that he had met with a heart truly devoted to him, that would, with a prodigality of affection akin to his own, pay him back his love with an interest that smacked largely of usury, was undoubtedly a wonderful blessing to him. Its effect on his health savored of a miracle. He gained strength and spirits so fast, that the happy change was visible to the dullest eye; and of the numbers who hailed it with genuine pleasure, it was evident in none so strongly as in the doating Susanna, the attentive John Hall, and the faithful Simon Stockfish. Of the two latter, the young physician was looked on as one, for his absolute painstaking, deserving especial gratitude, and this be sure was shown him in exceeding liberal measure; and whilst his attached follower, from that time, was regarded by him as certain a fixture in his household as the most stable thing in it.

It chanced, however, ere he was scarce well recovered of his sickness, that he had another subject presented to his thoughts, to which they seemed to cling with a prodigious powerful hold, and this was caused by his receiving, in a close and mysterious manner, the following letter:

"By a trusty intelligencer, I heard of your lamentable sickness, and have since learned, with singular satisfaction, of your assured recovery. This I am desirous of hastening and securing as much as possible, and with such a view I bid you prepare to take the charge on yourself already mentioned to you. W. H. is a youth of quick parts, and is kindly disposed to all whom he believes mean well towards him; yet in his disposition so unstable, he requires constant directing to prevent him going greatly astray whenever he may think he finds proper example for it. All is ordered for your and his sufficient accommodation. Methinks I need not commend him to you. I feel well assured you are prepared to satisfy me in all things relating to him, to yourself, and to me. Make then what despatch you can in your own affairs, so as, with only such slight delay as cannot be helped, you may be able to transport yourself to where the pure bright atmosphere of Italian skies is like to afford you the health and strength most urgently desired by your well-wishers; among whom not the least sincere, let there be ranked,

"Your fast friend, and her own enemy."

Master Shakspeare pondered on the contents of this long and deeply. It stirred a current of feeling, which, though carefully hid from all observance, was the strongest in his nature. Powerful as it was, it was wonderfully sweet and delectable; a sort of delicate intoxication, as it were, that excited the senses into a wild, ecstatic delirium, that thrust aside all common matters of life as unworthy of any account. That he most passionately, and with a wondrous earnestness of devotion, loved the fair writer of this letter, there can be no denying; it was scarce in the ordinary nature of things that he could avoid this, considering how singularly choice a pattern she was of all womanly excellence; admirable in form, and more admirable than all in the exquisite worthiness of her heart; and this matchless combination of rare qualities had regarded the intellectual graces of his exalted character under circumstances that appealed most irresistibly to her sympathies, and had showed her appreciation of him in a manner too flattering not to touch the heart of one so exceedingly sensitive of kindly offices.

This love, be it remembered, must not be classed with the selfish passion which usually goeth by that name. Here, in both parties, it was the better impulses of deep feeling, exalted by the constant operation of high intellect. It was an adoration or soul worship, wherein the moral and intelligent being was wondrous powerfully operated upon by a like intensity of the moral and intellectual quality in another. I will not say that physical beauty had no hand in it, for where it exists it cannot help but make its due impression on the nature prepared to receive it; but as the channel through which its impressions were conveyed was completely under the influence of the mind and heart, each acting upon the other, it standeth to reason that whatever was physical got so idealised and moralised in its course as to be regarded only in its best and most ennobling aspect.

Master Shakspeare loved this noble lady then after the same fashion that singular choice poet, Petrarch, loved his inestimable sweet mistress, the Lady Laura. He loved her, as it is familiarly said, with all his heart—and, an excellent addition, with all his mind also. There is no manner of doubt this was a marvellous sum. But he loved not her alone; he loved whatever belonged to her with a like prodigal extravagance, and this his promised intimacy with W. H. seemed particularly to call forth his loving feelings. Nevertheless, though he might

indulge in private to what extent he pleased in this his fond devotion, he knew, before the public eye, he must be intent on nothing so much as showing his indifference, and therefore he sought to school his affections with a severity such as the absoluteness of the occasion called for.

On the perusal of the foregoing communication, his thoughts took an excursive flight—rising high in that elevated region where whatever is pure and noble is readily found, and floating long among the crowd of great and worthy images that properly belong to it. His present mood was one admirably adapted for the ready creation of those thoughts and feelings which are called and considered poetry; which, with one whose whole being was constituted of this choice quality, cannot seem singular: thereupon he suddenly took pen in hand, and presently wrote down the following succession of verses.

THE LOVER TURNED MERCHANT.

I.

The thriving merchant, moved by former gains,
Doth readily his venturous trade increase,
Taking such wondrous pleasure in his pains,
As though his good fortune was ne'er to cease.

Day after day doth find him grow more bold—
He sends out merchandise of ev'ry sort,
And sees his ships, heavy with silk and gold,
Amber and gems, float proudly into port.
He adds, he doubles, trebles ev'ry chance,
And doubled, trebled, every chance returns;
At last, his huge wealth hugely to enhance,
He ventures all his store: this Fortune spurns,

Scatt'ring it to the winds in divers ways,
And leaving him a bankrupt all his days.

II.

I fear me much my goods I do embark
In traffic no less hazardous and blind,
Albeit though pounds at least for ev'ry mark
I in my ventures rarely fail to find.
And by such profit have I been led on
To make my chances greater than before,
Whilst tears that held me back at first are gone,
And I am thrust on risking more and more.
Within my warehouse, all in swelling piles,
My stores are garnered, making a fair show;
That proveth how man fares when Fortune smiles,
And what vast increase her adventurers know.

Yet am I not content—a sumless gain
Tempts me to risk the heaps which there remain.

III.

At first I sent forth but an humble freight,
Of admiration void of flatt'ring gloss;
And in the venture my ambition's height
Was but to be secured from heavy loss.
When proper time elapsed, my ship came in
With a fair cargo of sincere esteem,
Which so well paid me, I was moved to win
More large returns with what should worthier seem.
Straightway I fell to gathering what I had
Of courteous sentiment and gallant speech,
Then put them forth, and, with a heart right glad,
Gained kindly thoughts in rich return for each,
Next on my gladdened feelings I laid hand,
And found, well pleased, they were in good demand.

IV.

My traffic flourished—and, now bolder grown
I ventured on a precious store of hope;
The which, in sooth, I ne'er had called mine own,
Had not my ends attained so wide a scope.
I scarce was sure my good ship held her course,
When I had notice she was coming back,
So richly laden, merchants on the Bourse
Might deem her of the seas the Queen Car rack.
Thus bountifully gifted, an invoice
I then made out—"Item. A rare supply
Of strong affections, very pure and choice."
Wherewith my ships sailed onward gallantly.
They owned when next they to their anchorage drew,
The treasures of the old world and the new!

V.

Is this similitude too finely drawn?
Smacks it not roundly of the poet's dream?
Nay, 'tis so true, I'd put my heart in pawn,
I've done scant justice to the worthy theme.
For what, in honesty, can poor words do
The profit I have lit on to express?
What bravest speech sufficiently make true
The prodigal source which gave to such excess?
Ah, my heart's queen! but little reck the crowd
The heaped abundance of all goodly things,
Which in thy matchless nature stands avowed,
Which from thy bounteous heart uncounted springs;
E'en the blest few to whom thou dost come forth,
Have not intelligence of half thy worth.

VI.

I speak not of the crisped gold that waves
Its glorious treasure o'er thy noble brow;
Or of the pearls lodged in their coral caves,
Whose smiling glimpses glad me even now;

Nor speak I of those gems of sumless price,
 Worthy the proudest spot in Heav'n's blue
 zone,
 That, without foil or other artifice,
 Can dim the lustre of the rarest stone.
 I look not to the sun that untold lies
 In ev'ry curve of thy fair arm and hand ;
 The African might gaze with wild surprise
 To see such store of ivory in the land—
 For with such costly gifts doth Nature grace
 Those in her court who hold the highest place.

VII.

'Tis not of outward bravery I speak,—
 That doth not enter into this account ;
 For the most rounded bust or rosy cheek,
 Which e'er hath made the eager blood to
 mount
 In the wrapt lover's veins, must in its time
 Be turned to dust. There doth exist
 A beauty boasting a perpetual prime,
 That the Destroyer's sythe hath ever missed.
 Age lays no wrinkle on its fair aspect,
 Its sweet complexion ne'er was known to
 fade,
 It steals no grace from gauds wherewith 'tis
 decked ;
 From cunning art it never looks for aid.
 This quality, of such great eminence,
 Hath for its name, and title " EXCELLENCE."

VIII.

Herein we find a wondrous aggregate
 Of every gift that clothes humanity ;
 Where noblest hopes and kindest wishes wait
 Where charitable thoughts are standing by.
 There VIRTUE prospers—there in worthiest
 guise,
 HONOR with stately mien doth glance around ;
 There PITY seeks to dry her tearful eyes,
 And MODESTY looks blushing to the ground ;
 There sits RELIGION with a brow serene,
 And calm-eyed JUSTICE eloquently grave,
 Whilst meek OBEDIENCE so rarely seen,
 With TEMPERANCE a quiet nook doth crave.
 And breathing round a soul-entrancing thrall,
 LOVE, with a regal power, ennobles all.

IX.

Such is the marvellous goodness of her heart !
 But of her mind—snatch from a seraph's
 wing,
 A quill, and—fashioned by the scholar's art—
 Dip it in truth's most delectable spring :
 Where should we find a tablet large enough
 To hold its worthiness—save Heav'n itself ?
 (Forced though I be to put it in the rough,
 I'll lodge the abstract on my heart's first
 shelf.)
 There WIT on honest fellowship is bent,
 And LEARNING reaps where most are feign-
 to lease ;

There THOUGHT is great with child of Good
 Intent,
 Where WISDOM, the grave mid-wife, takes
 her ease.
 There JUDGMENT, FANCY, TASTE, and GENTUS
 dwell,
 And do become their lodging passing well.

X.

In traffic like the merchant Prince of old,
 A very CRESUS in her treasury,
 Hath she not funds to pay a thousand fold,
 For whatsoever I would have her buy ?
 Ay, with such gen'rous spirit doth she trade,
 It seems you cannot greatly sink your store ;
 And with the wondrous profit I have made
 I well may hope to better me still more.
 Like a successful gambler do I pause,
 Exulting in my winnings. " On ! still on !
 Once more be swayed by Fortune's crooked
 laws,
 Great gains remain—all comes or all is
 gone !"
 Shall I seek ruin, in th' increase I crave,
 Or rest me now, content with what I have ?

XI.

Down, ye insatiate longings ! Hence, avaunt
 All covetous influences ! In vain
 With eager restless impulses ye haunt
 The secret chambers of my heart and brain !
 Have I not gained a gracious competence
 In this adventurous barter of the soul ?
 And shall I do my worth such huge offence,
 When blessed with part, to hunger for the
 whole ?
 Nay, let such selfish ends be thrust aside,
 As very mire that muddles the pure fount.
 We have sufficiently the traffic tried—
 Let us, like honest merchants, close th' ac-
 count ;
 And should there be a balance small or large,
 Let each to the other grant a full discharge.

XII.

But think not, bounteous spirit, I withdraw
 From thy fond dealings, here to make an end :
 Conscience, a sworn accountant, learn'd in law,
 Is in this matter pleased to stand my friend :
 And sheweth me a way where without ill
 I can my grateful feelings cultivate ;
 Whereof to take advantage is my will,
 And shall my study be, early and late.
 Trust me, that neither damp, decay, nor moth,
 Shall ever touch my precious merchandize ;
 Nor shall there be a sign of ease, or sloth
 In my behavior when this change shall rise.
 I shall have constant use for all my store,
 And in its care be busier than before.

XIII.

Then farewell, honorablest of all thy kind,
 Epitome of Heav'n, for earth to grace !

Farewell, thou trusty heart—thou noble mind,
Thou exquisite in nature as in face!

Farewell the bounteous hand, whose princely
aims,

Were not more fair than is its dazzling hue;
Farewell the seraph tongue, whose music claims
More soul-subduing power than Orpheus
knew.

Oh, what a sum of sweetest womanhood
Makes the grand total of thy worthiness!
How vast a heap of all things great and good
Doth in thine excellence upon me press!
Blessings, and happiness too great to tell,
Be ever in thy path—Farewell! Farewell!

CHAPTER XX.

Such is her beauty as no arts
Have enriched with borrowed grace;
Her high birth no pride imparts,
For she blushes in her place.
Folly boasts a glorious blood—
She is noblest, being good.

HABINGTON.

MASTER SHAKSPEARE had by this got so far towards recovery as to be able to resume his ordinary duties and employments; and, being busy in the bringing out of the new play at "The Globe," his mind had no time to dwell upon any troublesome matter like to disturb his peace. He had many very liberal arrangements for the comfort of those of his family remaining at Shottery, the knowledge whereof doubtless gave him great contentation; but the gentle and faithful Susanna still abode with him, one cause of which was, that he had grown so attached to her, he delayed parting with her till the last moment; and another was, he knew not for the best how to dispose of her during his travels, for he doubted she would live in any sort of comfort if she returned to the cottage, and he was undecided where else she could be placed with satisfaction to herself and him.

The subject of the new play he had taken from the Scottish story, in compliment to the Scottish king, his own sovereign; and he was earnest to have it brought out with as little delay as might be, as the time was fast approaching when he was to leave England, in charge of one of whom he could never think without emotions of the tenderest sort. It was now complete, and ready for the players; but, before he gave it for performance, he must needs try if it wanted not any finishing touches, and he did so after this fashion:—He sat in his chair in a

thoughtful attitude, with Susanna over-against him, reading aloud from his MS. She, pleased to be so employed, went through her task very lovingly, and, with a sweet, womanly voice, did give such melody to the vigorous lines, that the author felt himself much better content with his work than he had before been, and greatly did he marvel at the excellent rare judgment and taste displayed by the reader, as she entered into the spirit of that especial masterpiece of the writer's genius.

Of a surety, it made a most admirable, loving picture the father and daughter so employed, set off, as their figures were, by their brave apparelling, and surrounded by the picturesque furniture of the chamber in which they sat; and the understanding spectator, had he seen, could not have failed to have noticed how much the pleased excitement in the reader, and the gratified pride in the listener, did add to the expression of their noble countenances. Susanna had scarce finished her task, which, in secret she thought much too soon—an opinion shared by her delighted parent—when Sir George Carew entered, and, after saluting the blushing Susanna, with an air a much younger gallant might have envied, and cordially congratulating his friend on his greatly improved looks, he at once opened on his errand. This was no other than to inform his old acquaintance that he had been appointed ambassador to the court of France—whereupon he received congratulations no less hearty than awhile since he had bestowed. He went on to say he had a project in his mind, which not only himself but Lady Carew had set her heart on, that Master Shakspeare could alone effectually help him to. On hearing this, the other lost no time in assuring him his poor services were ever at his disposal, and that he should be infinitely glad to be a means for securing him and his sweet lady their several desires.

On this assurance, Sir George proceeded to state that he had thought very much of late of "his dear mistress"—as he styled his friend's daughter—and that the sorrow of parting with one he affected so deeply was so great he could by no means be brought to endure it, and that it did seem an especial hard case that so true and well-disposed a servant as was he should be debarred the exquisite sweet content he had been used to find in his dear mistress's delectable company—indeed it was altogether intolerable, and not to be borne—so that, after much debate on the matter with Lady Carew, it had been decided that the latter should in-

vite his dear mistress to accompany her to Paris, where it was earnestly desired she might be allowed to stay under her honorable guardianship, whilst the worthy gentleman, her father, proceeded on his travels till he reached Paris on his return home.

During this sportive speech, which wanted no grace the courtier could bestow upon it, was in course of utterance, Susanna turned a rosy red, and her eyes did flash very prettily, as much at the conceit of it, as at the exceeding pleasant prospect it opened; and her father could not conceal the extent of his satisfaction—for the proposal was what he had never dared to hope for—it was such an unlooked-for honor; yet nothing could have come so seasonably, seeing that he had been at a loss, for some time past, to dispose of her during his absence from England. Therefore, with a heart-felt thankfulness for so agreeable a proof of his consideration, he gladly agreed to such a disposition of his faithful Susanna, and soon got her to express her contentation at it, though she did so with that diffidence the nature and extent of the obligation could not fail of creating.

After this, in an excellent, pleasant humor, the two friends fell to discussing the state of the French king, Henry the Fourth's court, and Sir George promised both his companions he would take care they should both have a proper knowledge of it, of the gallant Henri Quatre, of the stately Marie de Medicis, of the grave and politic De Rosni, and of all the other notable characters there to be found.

"But," said he, in his own cheerful humor, "'tis of another Henry you must now think of making the acquaintance, who bids fair to rival the French king in all his more sterling qualities." Then, seeing the other looked puzzled, he added, "I speak of our promising young Prince of Wales, than whom a more honorable, noble nature never breathed in this world; and for the proper qualities of a gentleman, as to learning, carriage, and the use of arms, I know not where to find his peer. In some discourse with him I had yesterday at Hampton Court, where he is staying, he chanced to make an allusion to yourself, and, being of a marvellous inquiring mind, put to me a vast number of questions concerning you and your writings, of which he appeareth to have a fair knowledge. I answered him in such sort, acquainting him with your intended journey, that he commanded me to bring you to him without fail this morning; therefore you must e'en surrender yourself at once, and away with you to Hampton Court,

for which journey I have taken care to provide horses ready for our riding."

Master Shakspeare expressed his willingness to be gone on the instant; and, after making certain arrangements regarding his new play the necessity of its speedy performance required, he left the house, accompanied by his assured friend, but not till the latter had made many gallant speeches to the fair Susanna, with a devotedness worthy of the perfectest example of knighthood in the most chivalrous times; and in a little while they were both riding together in the direction of Hampton Court, followed at a respectful distance by several mounted serving-men of Sir George Carew's, in their coats and badges.

"I hugely mislike the complexion of this trial of my right noble friend, Sir Walter Raleigh," observed Master Shakspeare in a confidential tone. "I am assured he is much too wise a man to have been guilty of the practices attributed to him, and his unworthy associate the Lord Cobham. I have heard from a trusty intelligencer that Cecil poisoned the king's ear against him before his coming to the throne, out of jealousy of his greater virtues and talents; and, having completely abused the king's mind, so that he could not endure the sight of him, notwithstanding his surpassing excellency, both as a soldier and a scholar, more securely to get rid of him, he devised this incredible charge of treason, and had him sent to the Tower, where he now is a close prisoner."

"I know not how this may be, Will," said Sir George, somewhat reservedly; "but this I *do* know, that if any of Cecil's spies be abroad, who are said to hear every thing, you stand an exceeding fair chance of sharing his imprisonment for what you have just said; and, indeed, if you escape being cast for a traitor, you will be in better fortune than many others in a like condition."

"Doubtless," replied his friend. "Yet there is warrant for my safety that I am not a rival, or am like to be one. In sooth, to tell you my exact sentiments, I like not much that has been done at court of late."

"Neither do I, Will," said the other, in a like confidential manner. "And in all honesty I have sought this appointment, that I might not continually see what I cannot but disapprove."

"I would have sworn as much," observed Master Shakspeare; then, after a pause, asked:—"Holds the king still to his minion Carr?"

"Ay, with fonder conceit than ever," an-

swered he. "This shallow popinjay not only hath no one merit to entitle him to be preferred over the heads of the bravest and best that seek the king's service, but he hath a marvellous ill reputation, that is like to dishonor all with whom he may chance to get connected."

"And our sweet young prince, how takes he such undue preference?"

"He is too deeply intent upon his various studies to heed greatly what is going on around him; nevertheless, his carelessness in this matter is not like to do him any sort of service where it should be most effective."

"How so, Sir George?"

"Truly, after this fashion, Will. He is already gaining to him the general voices, for which his many admirable sweet qualities are sufficient warrant, and not without some comparisons in no way pleasing to the principal subject of them. Now a displeasure so created will greedily be taken advantage of by those who feel assured they can make their advantage of it, and I fear me much he will hardly escape some terrible mischief, however discreet may be his carriage."

"Like enough. But Heaven preserve our fair young prince from all such evils!"

"Amen, with all my heart, Will!"

By this time they had rode so far, all the beauties of the country were fairly displayed before them, and greatly it delighted both travellers to see the farms which lay on every side, with here and there a windmill, a group of hay stacks, and a goodly mansion, till they came to the villages on their way. They beheld much which excited their observation in the groups they passed, which were of singular variety, from persons of the highest authority and worship, going or returning from the court, with such speed and state as bespoke the greatness of their business, to those of the humblest calling, who trudged quietly along, with a perfect indifferency of all their prouder wayfarers evidently held in such huge estimation; and much was said by them of very excellent purport; but, when they had reached the neighborhood of Hampton, and saw spread before them, as in a picture, the lively beauties of all that part of the pleasant county of Surrey, though each had beheld them scores of times before, they frequently stopped their horses the better to admire them, and warm were the commendations both expressed.

Nor did the magnificence of the building they were approaching escape without a due share of admiration, and before they

entered its walls many a pleasant anecdote and many an interesting history had been told of the gay doings they had witnessed from the stately days of Cardinal Wolsey, to a date much nearer their own experience. And thus it was Master Shakspeare made himself so singularly well liked wherever he went, either affording entertainment from the bounteous stores of his own mind, or eliciting it by judicious questioning from such as could dispense it, yet lacked inclination, that his company was ever eagerly sought after by any who had once enjoyed the opportunity of knowing how profitable it was.

In the courtyard were men waiting with horses, dogs, hawks, statues, pictures, books, armor, and weapons, and divers other things, hoping to find a purchaser in their liberal young prince.

After giving their horses to the grooms, they advanced into the house together, unchecked by the porters and guards standing with their halberts about the entrance, whose duty it was to see none had admission who came not by proper authority, for this especial reason—Sir George Carew, being so well known there, any gentleman in his company would be sure to pass unquestioned. But, on their reaching the reception-room, Sir George was speedily accosted by one of the grooms of the chamber, who, on hearing the other's errand, courteously bade him wait with his friend amongst the company, with which the place seemed well crowded, whilst he went to acquaint the Prince of Wales of his coming.

"Surely, that is my Lady Countess of Essex!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, as they stood together, where they could have a good view of the company.

"My Lady Countess that was, Will," whispered his friend. "She hath succeeded, Heaven only knoweth by what arts, in getting a divorce from her husband, on whom, as I am credibly informed, by devilish practices, she hath infamously imposed ever since they married."

"I have heard the like," answered Master Shakspeare; "in especial of her dealings for charms and drugs, by the help of which she might effect her horrible purpose. Yet to look at her, as she stands there so bravely apparelled, dealing out to the gallants around her such delectable smiles, one cannot but doubt that she could be guilty of such thorough infamously. She hath an angel's shape."

"And a devil's heart—if one half of what is bruited abroad be true," added Sir George.

"It hath been confidently said," observed his companion, "yet I know not on what grounds, that the prince is enamored of her, and that she favors him."

"That the prince liketh her passing well I have seen enough to think probable, and that she is disposed to return the liking with unlawful interest I cannot doubt, but I question there is such attachment between them as is like to be lasting; for, in the first place, his Highness hath no more knowledge of her, than her woman's grace and woman's wit hath bestowed upon him; and I have that good opinion of his regard for honesty, I am in hopes, when he discovers what a terrible cockatrice she is, he will speedily be quit of her, and in the second place, I have good reason for believing that she hath cast her eye on the king's favorite—nay, I have been assured that he hath got himself made Earl of Rochester at her instigation, and that it is his intention to marry her forthwith."

"It is at least a marvellous fit and proper match," said Master Shakspeare, jestingly; "never were two people so well assorted. Their tastes are so equally abominable and abhorrent, there can surely be no falling out betwixt them; and their reputations are so wondrous alike in baseness, it is clean impossible they should ever take to calling each other names."

Sir George Carew laughed heartily at this conceit, which brought to them a courtier of his acquaintance, who would needs know the cause of his mirth; which the other, not being willing to tell, very gravely laid it to some cause so trivial and ridiculous, a child would scarce have taken it for a jest; nevertheless, the courtier laughed famously, and, satisfied he had been told an exceeding good thing, went, to the infinite satisfaction of his present company, to repeat it to divers of his friends there present. Master Shakspeare and his companion, after this, continued their remarks on certain of the persons who thronged the chamber, occasionally interrupted by such as they had knowledge of, who were not disposed to pass them without a courteous recognition.

The company was of a mixed sort: gallant ladies, each ambitious to monopolise the young prince's smiles—with the most powerful of the great nobles of the state, anxious to testify their respect to the heir to the throne; divines and lawyers, elbowing each other in the hope of gaining the attention of their prince to certain ponderous tomes of their inditing; whilst poets and playwrights trod on their heels, ready to tear each other to pieces to be first in get-

ting his Highness to accept their high-flown dedications to their labored trifles. Then came scores of commanders and captains, no less eager of the prince's countenance of their merit; whilst ingenious mechanics same with their inventions and contrivances, that, in their opinions at the least, were marvels, such as the world had never seen before. With these came jockeys to brag of their horses; virtuosos, to put off their pictures and statues; musicians, matchless in the practice of their art; possessors of choice dogs and hawks; armorers, painters, players, famous swordsmen, and gunners unrivalled any where in the world.

They were employed in this way, when a stately gentleman, with a serious aspect, yet gracious manner, came up and accosted Sir George Carew with a friendliness that showed they were of old acquaintance, after which the latter introduced him to his friend as Sir Thomas Chaloner, the prince's chamberlain; and he having stated that he had been sent by his Highness to bring Master Shakspeare and Sir George Carew to him, they immediately proceeded with him to the chamber, where the prince awaited them. This they found to partake much of the character of a museum of arms and other warlike matters, with a few things of a more peaceful sort. There were ranged round the room sundry sorts of armor, of curious fabric, confusedly dispersed with all manner of weapons—models of ships, boats, and pieces of ordnance stood upon the tables, with a crowd of books and pamphlets—whilst in other places were many ingenious instruments, with globes, maps, and the like objects of philosophical study.

When Sir Thomas Chaloner entered, announcing his companions, they beheld a youth of grave and studious aspect, earnestly attending to the explanation of a plain seafaring sort of man, who was describing the various parts of the model of a fine ship before them. He was not dressed with such grandeur as would denote his dignity, yet there was that princely air with him, a stranger would have been at no loss to give him his right title. At a distance was one in the habit of a priest, with a mild expression of countenance that greatly became his calling, who appeared to be regarding the young Prince with an unusual deep interest. This was his secretary and tutor, Master Adam Newton.

Prince Henry received the homage of his visitors with a very Prince-like courtesy, noticing of Master Shakspeare, as it seemed, with singular curiousness, the which

was returned by its object, coupled with a feeling of the purest gratification; and, after the first few proper speeches had passed, his Highness addressed him, as though he was his assured friend and counsellor.

"I hear you are about venturing on a long journey" said he, "for that you are going to travel as governor to my Lord of Pembroke's heir, to show him what^sever things are worthy of note in ~~other~~ countries."

Master Shakspeare briefly answered that he was about taking upon himself such an office.

"Surely, my Lord of Pembroke hath singular good fortune!" he exclaimed. "Methinks, it is rare for any one, let him be as rich as he please, to secure for his son in such a case a person so like to do honor to his judgment, and justice to his son's good qualities." The compliment was gracefully and gratefully acknowledged.

"I have read several of your works Master Shakspeare," added the Prince, "and have seen others represented by mine own players; and believe me I am exceedingly taken with them." Here the well pleased author could do no less than bow very reverently at being so commended by his Prince. "There are passages which methinks can never be read or repeated too often, that will bear no addition to their very exquisite sweet beauty, and from which nothing can be taken without irreparable loss." Master Shakspeare again testified his sense of the honor of such praise. "I have long wished to have speech with you, having received such excellent profit from all that you have writ; and, hearing of your speedy departure, I begged of my greatly esteemed friend, Sir George Carew, that he would manage so that I should see you before you sailed. I feel infinitely thankful to him he hath so readily accomplished my wishes."

At this Sir George said how heartily glad he was, at all times, to serve so gracious a prince, but more especially in this instance, when his office was to bring before His Highness's attention an honorable gentleman, whose qualities of mind and heart were of such a sort, he felt it a distinction to be of his acquaintance. Thereupon Master Shakspeare thought himself bound to acknowledge, more at length than he had before done, the honor he had received; and he spoke to such good purpose, and with such force of language, the prince seemed to listen with a visage that plainly expressed his satisfaction. He then inquired concerning his route; and on learn-

ing the cities in Italy he intended visiting, he turned to his secretary, and bade him write such and such letters to the king his father's ambassadors in those places, to be sent to Master Shakspeare's lodging with all proper speed. Then, learning he was to pass through France, he promised he would write a letter in his own hand, to his excellent good friend the French king, as well to recommend unto His Majesty a person of such note as Master Shakspeare, as to thank him for certain presents of armor and arms Henri Quatre had lately presented him with.

These he presently showed his visiters, and got Sir George Carew, whose intimate knowledge of such things he seemed to take into great account, to give his opinion of them, after which he spoke of certain horses he had got fit for the great saddle, and exhibited, in various ways, the interest he took in every thing of a warlike character, particularly dwelling on the model he had been so intent on of a certain ship that was to be built for him under the direction of that approved shipwright, Phineas Pett, who, on their entering, had been explaining to him many interesting particulars relating to it, and speaking of a number of other subjects with such vivacity of tongue and extent of knowledge, that his hearers were as much gratified by his speech as they were charmed by his courtesy.

On their moving to depart, the prince again spoke very earnestly of the marvellous sweet pleasure he had had from the productions of Master Shakespeare; so handsomely alluded to the entertainment he looked forward to on his return from travel, from new efforts of his fantasy, and in his department so kindly carried himself towards him and his friend, that it seemed as though neither could find language sufficiently strong to express their contentation. Sir Thomas Chaloner accompanied them, and to him they mentioned the pride they felt in their good fortune, in having a prince so worthy to reign over them; upon which the worthy chamberlain, who was so well pleased to hear as they were to speak his praises, gave them many choice anecdotes of the like behavior of his, at which they found excellent entertainment.

They were pushing their way through the crowd, waiting the prince's appearance, when they were struck with the stir that was made at the other end of the chamber, and soon they heard the cry spread of "The King! the king!"

"King James is returning from hunting," said the chamberlain; "and if he

cometh back in no better humor than he went, I would as lief hang as ask him a favor."

"Hath any thing in particular put him out?" asked Master Shakspeare.

"Ay, something exceeding particular," answered he.

"Carr hath got the tooth-ache, perchance?" inquired Sir George, with an affectation of gravity he was far from feeling.

"No, by this light it is scarce so bad as that," said Sir Thomas, laughingly. "But touching this new-made Earl of Rochester, for I hear the patent of his nobility is already made out, high as he holds himself, and secure as he thinks himself, methinks his fall shall not be very far distant."

"How so, pray you?" asked both, earnestly.

"See you that handsome youth, in the satin doublet, curiously embroidered?" demanded the Prince's chamberlain.

"A well-limbed youth, by this hand! and of a very excellent aspect," said Master Shakspeare. "Of what name and rank is he?"

"His name is Villiers," answered Sir Thomas; "and the graces of his manners are not more conspicuous than those of his person. Now King James hath more than once been seen to cast an admiring eye on his delicate figure; and those who know him best say it waiteth only some slight difference to spring up betwixt Carr and his patron for Villiers to step in and be preferred at once."

"But what was it, I pray you, Master Chamberlain, that hath so discomposed His Majesty, as you said but now?" said Master Shakspeare.

"Marry, matter enough, of all conscience," answered he. "Some one, more blessed with tongue than brains, hath, in his place in parliament, so roundly abused Scotland and the whole Scottish nation, that every one of that honest people, from the king to the lowest beggar among his liege subjects, look upon it as an intolerable affront. His Majesty, in especial, is in horrible disdain; and, if the orator succeed in keeping his ears, he will have better fortune than some predict for him."

Here the approach of King James, and the bustle it created, put an end to the dialogue. He approached in a hunting-habit, with as little of the trappings of royalty as of its demeanor, wearing a dull, stolid countenance, marked by no pleasing lineaments, and exhibiting a form possessing as little pretensions of kingly state as to manly grace. Near him were several of the courtiers, who

had been his companions in the chase, looking tired and heated, and not a whit better pleased than their master, for they had all had ill success. All at once, as the king was advancing through the crowd, who respectfully made way for him, a well-apparelled female, of noble appearance, rushed forward, and, with every sign of the deepest distress, threw herself at his feet. The king looked no less displeased than surprised; but he evidently knew not who she was, or what was her object.

"By this light, 'tis Dame Raleigh!" exclaimed Sir George Carew.

"Ay," added Sir Thomas Chaloner, "she hath come to sue his Majesty for the restoration of her husband's lands, which the king hath seized, considering them forfeited by Sir Walter's late abominable treason." It was no less than he had said. They could hear her imploring the king, in the most passionate, moving arguments woman's eloquent tongue ever uttered, not to strip her innocent children of their inheritance; but the monarch turned from the beautiful matron impatiently; and, with a severe aspect, and almost savage voice, cried out, "I maun ha' the land! I maun ha' it for Carr!" then hastily continued his progress.

Master Shakspeare smothered the execration that readily rose to his lips; and his companions, whatever their thoughts may have been, had too much experience of court-life to betray them; nevertheless, they also remained silent till it came to leave-taking. Such effect had the scene on him, that, for some time, he rode on in silence; and, though he entered into conversation with his friend during their return with his accustomed spirit, he did not shake off the feelings in had created till he found himself at the Globe, and was busily employed in making the requisite preparations for the immediate performance of his new play.

It is here only necessary to state, that this his very admirable and right-moving tragedy of *Macbeth*, so took with the public, that more complete success was never known; and when he beheld it thoroughly established with the audience, he took leave of his friends, and prepared himself for the immediate commencing of his travels.

CHAPTER XXI.

But wot you what? The young was going
 To make an end of all his wooing;
 The parson for him staid;
 Yet by his leave, for all his haste,
 He did not so much wish all past,
 Perchance as did the maid.

SUCKLING.

MARVELLOUS was the stir in the cottage at Shottery, when it was discovered that Susanna had taken herself away from home, on the hazardous and difficult errand her affectionate, grateful heart had set her. The tongue of Aunt Prateapace wagged as though it was never to stop, to the infinite disparagement of her gentle niece. Aunt Gadabout lost no time in going hither and thither to pick up what information she could of the runaway, and returned with a budget of scandal, for which she found eager listeners; but, ere she had well got rid of it, these two came to words, which Aunt Breedbate did so encourage, that nothing was like unto the fierceness of their quarrel. Nevertheless, they agreed at least in this—that they had always been satisfied in their own minds she would come to no good: and then they glanced from her to her estimable worthy father, who, for the crime of encouraging her to quit her home in so horrible scandalous a fashion, was every thing most intolerably villanous and to be abhorred; and, for the shamefulness of his behavior to his wife, was all the brutes that ever went into Noah's Ark, with a commodity of monsters sufficient to supply a similar establishment.

Then they set to lamenting most pitifully how poor wives were horribly tyrannized over, and laid it down, as a well-ascertained fact, that husbands and wives were natural enemies, and that the latter being so abominably put upon, ought to look the sharper after their proper rights and privileges; the which, as it seemed, principally consisted in doing as they pleased, whether right or wrong, and deceiving and defrauding their tyrannical helpmates to the very best of their abilities. On this fruitful subject, it may be said to their credit, they spoke like unto those who practiced what they preached, and with an eloquence equally moving and edifying, until, as usual, something was said offensive to the other, which the third handled to such good purpose, that a bitter wrangle ensued more sharp and lasting than the one so lately concluded.

She, for whose pretended benefit they labored so assiduously, said little; in truth, she began to entertain misgivings she had

been led to act a good part; but such ideas were quickly driven from her by her mischievous kinswomen, and she was fain to rest under the exceeding consolation, that of all ill-used wives she was the most infamously abused. Her favorite daughter, Judith, however, was not to be so easily contented. Under the careful tutorings of her aunts, she had made such progress in what they took to be a woman's proper sense of her own worth, that she outrivalled each in her peculiar merit. She was as indifferent to the proper pleasures of home as Aunt Gadabout—as greedy of gossip as Aunt Prateapace—and, not only was as prone to strife as Aunt Breedbate, but showed her discontent of things by a shrewishness that had come to be the general talk of the whole county. Though it was a matter of doubt a young woman of a more enticing appearance could have been met with anywhere—for her form had now been moulded in that ripe and tempting perfectness for which her mother had been so famed at a like age, and the rich blooming beauty of her countenance was admirable to look on, at those rare times, when it was free from the marks of passion—yet the young men who knew her took such heed to avoid her, as though she were ugly as Hecate.

The simple truth was, several had already taken some pains to prove themselves her true lovers; but one having, as a choice proof of affection, got a broken pate, with a besom-handle from her own fair hand, for venturing to express an opinion of colors differing from her own, another, equally fortunate, escaping by a miracle, a martyrdom she intended him by casting a pasty, two wheaten loaves, a neat's tongue, and a dish of pippins at his head, because, at dinner, she took offence at his arguing for brown meats whilst she was expressing her preference for white; and divers having been pretty nearly annihilated by the flashings of her dark eyes, and the torrent of searching words she poured upon them, for some small fault they had unwittingly committed that had provoked her violent temper, that all had resolved she was of so cursed a tongue, and so evilly disposed withal, they would have none of her. Therefore had she come to be carefully avoided of them all, as though she had the pestilence.

At home she was often as difficult to please as abroad, and had more than once, in scolding, proved herself a match for either of her aunts, proficient though they were in the art. But, though they had been taught to understand the force of her temper, never did it come upon them with so

sharp and pitiful a shower as after the discovery had been made of her sister's flight. On a sudden, she turned upon them, and so mauled them with her tongue, they were for a time clean dumbfounded with astonishment; nevertheless, they were too experienced in such warfare to be easily beaten, and were inwardly ashamed so young a hand should get the better of them, even for a moment; therefore they took to their weapons very briskly, in the hope of quickly silencing their rash antagonist. Thereupon ensued a terrible din, to which that confusion of tongues which existed at the building of the Tower of Babel was harmony in comparison. Judith, so far from being abashed at so overpowering an attack, did presently meet it with a countercharge so furious, it swept down all before her. In sooth, she raised such a hurricane of words, the three scolds were one and all fairly driven out of the field; and, after this, ever held their young kinswoman in especial respect, looking up to her with much the same sort of admiration men of war regard a famous commander.

The more grave among the burgesses of Stratford became at this time exceedingly disturbed by the wild pranks of a young kinsman, from London, of Malmsey, the vintner, who was called Dick Quiney. He not only spent his money prodigally in roystering with divers his loose companions, to the scandal of the greybeards, but kept the whole town in continual ferment by some mad prank or another, which exceeded all things in audacity and recklessness the longest liver amongst them had ever heard of.

At one time he would cause an ass, dressed in the robes of the High Bailiff, to be found taking the bailiff's place in the Town Hall; at another, he would so change the signs that usually hung at the burgesses' doors, that every one had something as different as possible to what he had before, which oft had some satirical meaning in't, of which the witty rogues made rare sport. There was a bunch of grapes seen hanging over the parson's porch, and a fleece swung before the lawyer's; the apothecary's door boasted the sign used by the furnishers of funerals; and the baker's had that which belonged to the dealer in bones, chalk and the like stores. One who was known to have a scolding wife found his house decorated with the sign of the good woman—that is, a woman without a head; and another, who had shown himself deficient in courage, was similarly pointed at by a board before his dwelling, representing a white hart. In brief, there was never a day

passed that did not bring forth some freak of his wanton wit at the expense of the more sober-minded of the community.

But though by some he was regarded as a scandal to the place, his free spirit and manly bearing made him a favorite with others. He affected neither fineness of dress nor of phrase, though his well knit limbs and comely visage would have right well become the one, and his ready wit might not have turned the other to bad account. And his readiness to join in any sport, as well as to create such sport as all those of his station were sure to flock to, made him well liked of many, among whom be sure were Tommy Hart and his merry partner, and their constant associate and good gossip, Jonas Tietape, who, by the way, was shrewdly suspected of assisting in most of the jests which young Quiney played upon the grave burgesses of Stratford. In the kitchen of the jovial hatter he was a frequent visitor; and there, often after the gay song and merry tale, many a famous scheme had been devised for the furnishing of good occasion for honest mirth.

One night they were altogether, as merry as so many crickets in a clover-field. The hatter and the vintner's nephew were playing at tables, with the good-humored Joan looking on, yet occasionally casting aside her eyes to watch the strange movements of Jonas, who was balancing himself on two chairs, and employing other strange antics, much to the diversion of herself and the players, both of whom, ever and anon, forgot their game to be spectators of his grotesque antics. There was no lack of converse amongst them, but it looked not to be of the very gravest import, if any judgment of it could be drawn from the mirth it excited. The chief source of this was the laughing dame, strongly recommending to the young bachelor beside her, certain honest maids of her acquaintance as wives, the whole of whom she knew to be as little to his taste as ugliness, shrewishness, age, or folly, could make them. At last, she seemed to fix upon her niece Judith, of whose exceeding gentleness, quietness, and pleasantness of temper, she expatiated so largely, out of the mischievousness of her spirit, that he looked to be greatly taken with the description, and swore lustily he would have her, come what would, for she was exactly what he wished to find in a wife. At this Tommy Hart turned his head on one side, and laughed in his sleeve.

Then the merry Joan went on to state what a blessed family he would unite himself to, particularly referring, with famous

imposing words, on the marvellous sweet disposition of her three ancient kinswomen:—how singularly homely a body was Aunt Gadabout—how reserved and prudent with her tongue was Aunt Prateapace—and how precious and notable a peacemaker was Aunt Breedbate. Thereupon young Quiney answered these were the very sort of persons he would most desire as relations. At hearing this, his merry host could contain himself no longer; and, after the hugeness of his mirth had somewhat abated, he undeceived his companion as to the characters and dispositions of the damsel and her intolerable meddling, marring, mischief-making kinswomen. And all laughed at the jest that had so cleverly been played upon him. They very cordially congratulated him on his meeting a person so well fitted to secure his happiness, and assured him that, if his heart was really so set on having a shrew, he might be certain in Mistress Judith to have the most perfect example of shrewishness of which all Warwickshire could boast.

“Odds, cat o’ mountains!” said he, very merrily. “Be she ever so savage, I will tame the shrew, I warrant you,” and, out of bravado, would still continue in his humor of taking her to wife; and the tales he was told of the villanous manner she had behaved to her suitors only seemed to inflame him the more. He seemed to like the conceit of wooing such a tigress, and in this humor started the next morning for Shottory.

It so happened that Judith had that morning chose to remain at home whilst her mother went on some errand of revelry with Aunt Gadabout, and was sitting in the kitchen, earnestly engaged in spinning, when she was startled by a loud knocking at the outer door. Thinking it was some one of her acquaintance, she bade them enter, though in no gentle voice, for she was not in a mood to be disturbed; but this mood was in no way lessened, when she beheld enter a young fellow with a countenance and manner betaking of a careless impudency, negligently apparelled, whom she knew slightly by sight, but more by report, as the wildest roysterer in Stratford. The cloud on her brow darkened ominously as he hailed her on his entrance in intolerable familiar language, and made to salute her with a huge profession of gallantry. She started up from her seat with no less indignation than amazement, for it was a marvellous thing for any man to offer to come near her, much less to address her after such a fashion.

“Away with thee, fellow!” exclaimed she, in a right angry pitch. “On what fool’s errand hast thou come here? Get thee hence, on the instant, or by my halidome I’ll crack thy crown for thee, thick as it is!”

“What exquisite music!” exclaimed young Quiney, in a seeming ecstasy. “Had the trees and rocks, that were so moved by the power of Orpheus, but have heard thy harmonious voice, they must needs have reeled again in the infinite sweet intoxication of its too absolute charm upon the senses. Permit me to claim a faithful servant’s privilege——”

“Hands off, knave!” cried Judith, as she started back. “Nay, by the rood! this impudency exceedeth my poor patience. Prythee, have done with it straight, or I will give thee cause to repent it the rest of thy days.”

“Deny me not, fair arbitress of my destiny!” continued he, putting himself into all manner of extravagant attitudes, in what looked to be the likeness of a courtly lover, only the homeliness of his garb made it seem infinitely ridiculous. “My heart is overburthened with the weight of my exceeding love for thee, which I can no longer contain in pining secrecy, as I have, O light of my life, for so long a time past.”

“Thy heart and thee may go hang together,” replied the damsel, sharply. “I need no such garbage. Thou wilt find, I tell thee, thou hast taken the wrong sow by the ear, an thou comest any thy fool’s tricks upon me.”

“The greatness of my passion must needs find vent, dear heart,” persisted he. “Love hath such wondrous potency, nought can stay him in his fond career; and, having such food to feed on as thy exquisite beauty, and admirable sweet gentleness of nature, what marvel is it he should be uncontrollable, as in mine own case. Matchless example of woman’s perfectness, I must needs do thee a pardonable violence——”

“Wouldst!” cried she in a fury, as she snatched up a rollingpin that was nigh at hand. “I’ll pardon thee, i’faith!” And she aimed a blow at him which, had it taken effect, would have quenched the fire of his love had it burned ever so fiercely; but he caught her wrist ere she had time to use it, and, despite her struggles, not only deprived her of her weapon but inflicted the violence he had spoke of; uttering, all the whilst, such affectionate declarations as it seemed only could have been drawn from the most thoroughly enamored heart. She broke away from his caress, and, in a very monstrous passion, took to flinging at his head

with a prodigal store of abusive and contemptuous epithets, every sort of thing within her reach, that might do him a mischief; but he, by his quickness, succeeded in escaping all harm, and continuing in the same loving mood, again caught her in his arms, and took his revenge, malgre all her kickings, plungings, and cuffings, till he was content. It was terrible for her to be so foiled; so directly she could get away, her first effort was either by taking up some heavy weapon to fell him to the ground, or to drive him out of the place by means of a furious shower of missiles; but she had small profit of her pains, for he allowed nothing to touch him, and, watching his opportunity, soon succeeded in again taking the freedom which did so enrage her.

At last, thoroughly exhausted, and panting with her long and violent struggles, with a heated face, and disordered hair and dress, she threw herself into a chair. Seeing which, young Quiney sat himself familiarly on the table over-against her, and pursued the gallantry of his humor in his speech, as though nothing could ruffle him. Judith was so spent by her exertions, she could only get a few words out now and then, but their virulence showed the greatness of her spirit was in no way diminished.

"Thou art an insolent knave! I doubt thy true errand is to rob the place."

"My true errand, sweet heart, is to woo thee."

"Woo me! Ere I will suffer myself to be wooed by such a scurvy rogue, I'll eat my fingers by way of breakfast."

"I will not only woo thee, sweetest, but wed thee; and that shortly."

"Nay, if thou dost, I will let thee call me a snipe. I marry such a lackfarthing—such a ruffian roystering pickthank? Why thou hast no more credit than wit, and as little honesty as either! I would as lief marry the whipping-post, for it could not put me more in mind of all manner of knavishness and ill-dealing."

"Nevertheless, sweet Judith, be assured I will marry thee and none other; and I doubt not at all, out of the absolute affection thou dost kindly entertain for me—"

"I entertain affection for such a worthless, ill-behaved knave as thou art. I would right willingly give all I am worth in this world to see thee have thy deserts from the hands of the hangman."

"Thou wilt shorten the time of my wooing, so that I may take thee to church in as brief a space as may be possible."

Judith bitterly disclaimed any such intention; nevertheless, her lover continued

to sit with his heels dangling under the table, perseveringly insisting on the wondrous greatness of her love for him, and the necessity of their speedy marriage, and took no manner of heed of her interruptions. But whether it was it so chanced she could not help being influenced by such singular behavior, or, as she sat, had time to scan the handsome features and well-knit figure of her determined gallant, which was evident enough in spite of his rough, unhandsome garments, her abuse began perceptibly to be less violent.

At this time, her aunts Breedbate and Prateapace—who had hitherto been no farther off than the garden, yet were engaged in so violent a dispute they had heard nothing of what had been going on in the kitchen—entered, and no sooner did they spy young Quiney, sitting at his ease so famously, than they took to calling him to task in the severest language they had at their commandment; during which he looked them quietly in the face, and whistled and drummed on the table with an excess of impudency that inflamed their rage the more. His mistress, who seldom missed an opportunity of defying her meddling kinswomen, was drawn more towards him by this opposition of theirs to him; yet she did not think proper to interfere in the matter.

Aunt Breedbate and aunt Prateapace now became quite furious, and in a torrent of villanous language bade the intruder begone, or they would tear his eyes out; at which he suddenly jumped down, and putting on a horrible fierce look, snatched up a spit that was hanging above the chimney, levelling it at them, shouted out in a most murderous voice:

"Ha! dost dare attempt such sacrilege as to disturb two happy lovers? Nay, then, I'll pin thee to the wall like a couple of cockchafers." But the sight of the point of the blade, presented in so formidable a manner, was enough for them, and ere you could count one, they turned tail and fled, shrieking like scalded pigs, into the garden, in their haste stumbling over each other as they got to the threshold.

Judith could not forbear laughing at the ridiculous fright the two old women were put into—but there were other laughers besides herself—for young Quiney's gossips, Jonas Tietape and Tommy Hart, had come to see how their friend fared in his wooing of the terrible shrew, and from the open door had been spectators of it from first to last. Jonas was so well pleased with the conceit of the cockchafers, that, whilst his companion

was enjoying his mirth, he commenced before the house a series of tumbles, with all his might, quite forgetful of a young terrier he had got in each pocket, who put out their heads, and yelped most lustily at being so strangely turned about.

Judith's lover now took his departure, yet with many famous speeches denoting the excess of his love, and the intolerable hardship of tearing himself away; but, the next day, after watching the absence of her mother and aunts, he again presented himself before her, and a like scene passed between them, with this difference, that she did not put herself in so tearing a passion, nor abuse him quite so scurvily as she had done the day before. The truth was, her mother and her aunts, hearing of his strange visit and its object, did declaim against him so fiercely, that, out of sheer opposition, as was her wont, she took up the cudgels in his defence, and swore very roundly he should marry her, as she liked it, come what would. Nevertheless, when he repeated his visit every day, assuming to himself the appearance of one who is greatly beloved, she was frequently exceeding sharp upon him; but his perseverance won so upon her, that at last, looking to be in a great rage, she promised she would marry him, that she might be the better able to punish him for his matchless impudency.

In this humor the wedding-day was soon fixed, but, when the neighbors came to hear of it, there seemed no end to their marveling. To think that Judith should find a husband! They could scarce believe it possible; and that so reckless a fellow as Dick Quiney should have sought out a helpmate of Judith's villanous temper, so monstrous looked the union, they could hardly be brought to believe it. The matter though was settled: and every day the disinclination of the damsel to it became less and less evident; in truth, she could not but admire the spirit with which her lover pursued his object, and be amused with the extravagance of his professions in averring the prodigious extent of her affection for him. Ever and anon she broke out into sudden rages, but these latterly had come at longer intervals.

The wedding day approached, and she determined on carrying it with a high hand, bid all her friends to the ceremony, and got together as much finery as she could to grace the occasion. Some of her acquaintance affected to lament her so casting of herself away; but others—and these were such as had had most knowledge of her disposition—by this time had assured them-

selves this marriage promised to be a good riddance of her.

The wedding-day arrived, and the bride and all the company were assembled in their holiday suits, ready to go to church. Of the latter, whatever might have been their thoughts, their visages were as pleasant as though the match was one of their own contriving. They had been waiting some time, to the damsel's infinite impatience, and yet no bridegroom had arrived. Judith began to chafe at this neglect, and her brow darkened, and her foot beat the ground. Still no bridegroom came. His absence began to be marked, and whispers went round, which the bride observed not without a marvellous increase to her former discontent. For a time she managed to comfort herself to some small extent, by imagining that in honor of her he had been making extraordinary preparations which delayed him, and in a brief while he would doubtless appear at the head of a gallant cavalcade, all in new suits, got ready expressly for the occasion. But, as time passed, and still there was no sign of him, she began to suspect he had no intention of marrying at all, and only cared to put her to this public shame.

The idea of it so galled her, that she was about bursting forth in a horrible tearing rage, to send every one sans ceremony about his business, when she heard the welcome intelligence of his coming. She took a hasty peep at the casement, to observe the brave fashion in which he had chosen to lead her to church, but words of mine cannot picture her dismay, indignation and shame, when she beheld him approaching on foot with hasty strides, not only in the old buff jerkin and slops, the soiled boots, and the worn beaver, she had ever seen on him, but so covered with dust from head to foot, he could scarce be recognized. Instead of the gallant company she expected with him, there followed close at his heels the well-known figure of Jonas Tietape, in a similar rude suit, making the most extravagant strides to keep pace with him, with the heads of two young water-dogs peeping out of his pockets, a long rusty sword at his side, and a pair of pistols in his belt.

Without a word said, young Quiney strode through the astonished crowd assembled to do honor to his nuptials, and the woman's tailor quite as indifferently strode after him. The bridegroom stopped before the enraged and humiliated bride, and, malgre her black looks, accosted her with a familiarity in no way corresponding with the time, and in a voice all could hear, vowed he had been

playing at bowls, and had nigh forgotten his appointment; then, hastily turning to his trusty squire, who had assumed a very owl-like visage, he inquired whether he thought not bowls an exceeding pleasant pastime to while away a dull hour or so, to which the other answered, in a monstrous aggravating voice:—"By goles, there was none such in his estimation, when he was of the winning side, and the tipples was good!"

The whole assembly looked thunderstruck, and the bride could not conceal her intense mortification, but time pressed so closely, it admitted of no remonstrance on her part; so, comforting her loving nature with the prospect of an ample revenge, she allowed herself to be led to church, her lover all the way behaving towards her as though he had done all that was best and fittest, and that she must needs be satisfied with him in every respect, and occasionally turning away from her to ask some question about the game he had been playing, of the woman's tailor, who chose to walk in the procession a little way behind him. Judith felt disposed to have brained them both, so horribly indignant was she with the slights that had been put upon her, but she satisfied herself with nursing her wrath, and vowing all sorts of intolerable retaliations. As they came to the church-door, Quiney turned round, and reminded his companion the steeds would be wanted at such a time, to which the other answered:—"The noble animals should be in attendance at his worship's order."

The ceremony proceeded, every one marvelling more and more at the strange behavior of the young bridegroom. Judith had fancied she had endured enough affronts; but, when the priest demanded "who gave the maid away?" and Jonas Tietape, puppy-dogs and all, gravely stepped forward to claim that office, she felt ready to sink into the earth with vexation; and at the termination of the ceremony she relished not a whit the more the rough, rude manner in which her husband, before all the people, gave her a salute which made the church ring again, and hailed her as Dame Quiney, after such boisterous fashion as might be seen only at the wedding of a tinker. She seemed overpowered with this villanous usage. No one congratulated her; for in truth, all were so wonderstruck they knew not what to do; and she proceeded back to the church-door in so discontented a state of mind, she had resolved, when she mounted on one of the "noble steeds" she had heard would be pro-

vided to take her to her husband's home, to ride away somewhere, she cared not whither, so that she escaped the base usage to which she had been subjected.

But, whatever had been her discontent hitherto, it increased to a pitch beyond all toleration when she beheld at the church door, a raw-boned, wind-galled, goose-rumped, wall-eyed animal, that seemed in age a very Methusalem among horses, which evidently by the pillion fastened upon him, was intended for her riding; and, by his side, was a half starved donkey—looking as miserable as though he had not a belly-full since the day he was foaled—which she supposed must be for her husband. At the very sight of these "noble steeds" she held back, and, fearing she could have no better conveyance, she flatly refused to budge a foot to mount such wretched horseflesh.

In vain the bridegroom, with most persuasive gentleness, assured her that she could not reach his dwelling in any other way, and dilated on the matchless qualities of the horse, relating a pedigree boasting of the first blood of the kingdom. She vowed she would not be a laughing-stock to her friends, and stoutly determined no power on earth should make her mount so sorry a beast. At this, Quiney himself mounted the horse, all the whilst giving him as many flattering expressions as though he were an Arabian of the purest descent, and then made a sign to his gossip, the woman's tailor. In a moment Judith found herself enclosed in two powerful arms, raised from the ground, and, in the next, despite her struggles and cries, placed on the pillion by the side of her husband. Having done this with singular dexterity, Jonas mounted the donkey, and, amid the laughs and shouts of the spectators, the three started off.

Finding in physical force, she was no match for him into whose hands she had fallen, she let loose her tongue, and did so be-maul him with it, such a torrent of invective was surely never heard before; but he minded it not a jot, every now and then stopping in the tune he was whistling, to ask her, with a marvellous show of affection, if she felt herself perfectly comfortable; or turning unconcernedly around to his trusty companion, to make some pleasant remark, which was sure to elicit a smart rejoinder, in the roughest tone voice ever had. Her surprise at this indifferency became much lessened, when she discovered that her husband's ears were so stuffed with cotton, doubtless for the occasion, that, had she rated him in ever so high a key, he could

have heard no more than one who was a thousand miles off. Finding scolding of no avail, she grew to be sulky, and would answer no questions; but, as her husband seemed careless whether she replied or not to what he said, she got but small satisfaction from her silence. All this time she was exceeding curious as to where she was going; but it did not appear she was like to have any information very speedily.

In a few hours they arrived at a desolate-looking cottage on the heath, far from any public road. She entered, and the unpromising outside was not a foretoken of the want of comfort within. Indeed it did so lack all proper accommodation, that, forgetting her late humor of sulkiness, and the small likelihood there was of her talking to any profit, she once more burst out into the most overwhelming reproaches and abuse, till she remembered how idle was all matter of speech; then, breaking forth in a rage to be so foiled and unhandsomely used, she began to scatter and destroy everything that was within her reach. Much did she marvel to find her husband, instead of checking her as she expected, not only encouraging her by his voice, but assisting her in the work of destruction, and with such extraordinary fury, that, in a brief while, there was not a thing of any sort left whole in the chamber. Then she took to be sulky again, and sat herself down on a bench fixed against the wall, beating her foot against the ground, and biting the string of beads she wore round her neck with a pull which looked as if it was about to be torn assunder.

Presently the woman's tailor made his appearance, and he and the bridegroom began jesting with each other, seemingly to be as indifferent of her presence as though she was a stone. From this Jonas Tietape got to his tricks—he tumbled, he juggled, he did so many wonders and in so ludicrous a way, that Judith found herself more than once unable to refrain from joining in the hearty mirth they caused. By this time, vexed to the heart as she had been, she could not help feeling unusually hungry, which cannot be thought singular when it is known she had scarce ate anything the whole day, and had had a long ride in the keen air. It was now getting late, yet no sign of a meal had appeared. She could not bring herself to say anything, were it ever so, yet she would have been right glad to have had an opportunity of breaking her fast.

Notwithstanding her hunger, hour after hour passed by, and yet she saw no means

of satisfying it. Her companions continued to divert themselves as though they were so used to long fasts they cared not for eating. She expected no abundance, nor any show of delicacies where she was; but, as the time passed without bringing forth the slightest sign of diet of any sort, she began to fear she was in a fair way of suffering all the horrors of starvation. To her great relief, an old woman, with a visage like a dried applejohn, came and announced supper; and, all at once, her husband seemed to grow marvellous attentive, and offered his arm, with a wonderful affectionate speech, to lead her to the chamber where the supper was laid. She did not think proper to accept his civilities, but she rose and walked out of the chamber with him, as otherwise she would have been left alone and in the dark. She passed into another chamber—where there were a few stools and a table—as a ragged boy was serving up the supper.

The place was mean and bare, but the meal gave her even less satisfaction, for there looked not to be enough for one, and it was such as none but a beggar might have been content with. Judith, however, was by this time in so ravenous a mood that she was willing to let her pride wait upon her hunger. The meat looked stale and the bread hard and dry, but she felt she could have devoured even such poor eating with a fine relish. Such relish, however, she was not fated to enjoy; for, on a sudden, as the bridegroom was paying her some exceeding gallant compliments, his eye seemed to flash at something he took note of at the table, and he broke out into the most ungovernable fury of passion eye ever beheld. He expressed the terriblest indignation and rage, and actually seemed to foam at the mouth as he denounced the omission he perceived. There were no custards!

Though custards seemed as out of place amongst such miserable odds and ends as the table afforded, as a court dame in a lazar-house, their absence was regarded as an offence not to be pardoned. In vain the bride urgently affirmed she cared not for custards; in vain she acknowledged she was content with what she saw before her, and was willing to make her supper of it—her husband, increasing in his fury, threw the viands out of the open casement, kicked over the table, and, taking up a three-legged stool, run after the ragged urchin, swearing lustily he would make an example of him, for showing such neglect towards his new-made wife.

The woman's tailor had disappeared, so

that, on the departure of her husband, Judith found herself alone. Great as was her spirit, she felt somewhat alarmed at the outrageous violence she had just witnessed. Her appetite was gone; she cared not now for partaking of the goodliest banquet the world could produce; and when the old woman entered, scarcely able to speak for very fear, the few exclamations she uttered pointed to matter so horrible, she begged she might be led to her chamber. This was readily done, and the old crone did not leave her till she had filled the mind of the young bride with the most fearful accounts of the terrible furious temper of her husband whenever he met with any sort of opposition. In other respects, he was described as a man so marvellously well disposed, any woman might be happy with him to the end of her days; but, whenever it chanced he was crossed, or contradicted, or opposed in any manner whatsoever, no whirlwind was so fierce as his wrath.

Judith locked herself in her chamber, not without a secret dread the door might presently be burst open, and herself be made a sufferer from such frantic violence as she had witnessed. Her meditations, which were none of the pleasantest, were frequently disturbed by strange, unnatural noises, which made her tremble from head to foot. She did not dare to stir—she could not attempt to go to sleep; but, from hour to hour, continued to expect to be involved in a scene of uproar which appeared to be going on below.

Little did she fancy that her husband all this while was never in so good a humor in his life, and that, saving a few minutes passed in making for her sole entertainment the unnatural screeches that so frightened her, he was feasting right merrily from a bountiful store of excellent meats, with his fast friend and counsellors, Jonas Tietape and Tommy Hart, and kept pledging with them bumper after bumper of most choice Gascon, to "The speedy and thorough taming of the Shrew."

CHAPTER XXII.

These are the works of our God, whereby he would admonish the tyrants of this earth, that in the end he will be revenged of their cruelty, what strength soever they make in the contrary.

JOHN KNOX.

It was on a morning of matchless beauty

—the sky being all around of a clear, intense blue, the soft, warm, voluptuous air, refreshed by its closeness to the sea, which looked of a delicious coolness and transparency—that a small ship, of that sort called a pink, was seen entering the Bay of Naples. It was evident she had no warlike intention, from the absence in her of any thing which showed a disposition for hostilities; nevertheless, a few guns, well placed, gave sure sign that she was not altogether unprepared to make a defence, should she be attacked. At this time, however, she neither expected nor sought to use such weapons; her sails were spread to catch the breeze that was gaily wafting her to her destined port; and on her deck might be seen several curious spectators enjoying the lovely prospect that opened before them.

Prominent amongst them there stood the figure of one in his full manhood, well favored in countenance, noble in figure, handsomely but not too bravely apparelled, and bearing about him many other marks that point out a man of more than ordinary note in the eye of the world. He was addressing a youth that was leaning over the side of the vessel, and by his manner it might be supposed they were father and son, had not the deep affectionateness which beamed in the intellectual countenance of the elder one been mingled with a respect that spoke more of homage due to superior rank. The younger of the two, though the natural graces of his face and person, set off as they were with such admirable bravery as he displayed, might have seemed to furnish ample proof of relationship, the indifference, beyond the interests he could not help feeling for the objects to which his attention was directed, with which he listened to the speech of his most eloquent companion as he pointed out the beauties of the magnificent scene that every moment seemed to become more enticing, was sufficient assurance he was no son of his.

Such, in truth, was the case—the former being no other than our marvellous sweet Shakspeare, and the other Master William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke's heir, to whom, at the desire of one whose slightest wish had long been the most absolute of laws, he was now travelling to the principal countries of Europe, as his governor, and diligently did he endeavor to fulfil satisfactorily the task he had undertaken. He strove, by all means in his power, to make the mind entrusted to him acquire whatever of knowledge, or the love of it, he himself possessed; and his discourse was so pregnant with high and noble truths, that often

the rude mariners that chanced to be within earshot of him, stopped what labour they were about, and forgot their business, however pressing it might be, as they listened to his wondrous speech.

Nor was it done less lovingly than diligently. Indeed, he had cheated himself into no common pleasure in the conceit, that the sunless heaps of love he might not feel for the mother, he could allow himself to feel for the son as her representative, image, and second self. All the voyage, he had secretly been feeding his heart with the most passionate transports for his young namesake and pupil; and as he was forced to conceal as much as lay in his power the idolatry with which the youth was regarded by him, and yet could not restrain the busy world within, he, at every convenient opportunity, privily committed his thoughts and feelings to paper, in the form of the most exquisite verse poet ever writ. This practice he continued for a long time after. Often, when he had been struggling to endure outwardly unmoved the coldness in the unconscious inheritor of the features of the noble lady, against the powerful influence of whose excellences he had so long and vainly struggled, has some passionate sonnet expressed and eased the fulness of his o'ercharged heart.

But this excess of affection rested not entirely, though, in sooth, it did in a marvellous great measure, on the grounds here stated, for he would fancy at times that, had his loved Hamnet lived, he would have been just such another goodly youth to look on as Master Herbert, and thereupon he would mingle the gallantry of his devotion to the representative of the best and loveliest lady of her age, with the touching earnestness of that fathomless love with which he had been wont to look on the sweetest, worthiest son fond father ever had.

Whilst he was talking, one who looked to be the captain, a sturdy Englishman, who knew well the country he was sailing to, joined the group, and, in answer to Master Shakspeare's praise of the smiling Eden from which he had been drawing such infinite contentation, he launched out into very sharp abuse of it, vowing that it harbored so many who lived by spoiling and murdering all such as came in their way, that the place was clean unfit for a Christian to live in. In proof of what he advanced, he spoke of a noted brigand called Zingano—who had lately infested those parts—a captain of wandering Bohemians, who had made himself a terror to the whole neighborhood, by plundering travellers and

attacking and carrying off to their secret caves any one in their reach who could pay a tempting price for his ransom, making short work of such as they could not make a market of. This intelligence did, in some measure, damp the pleasure Master Shakspeare felt in observing so fair a scene; but much time was not allowed him for the entertainment of his disappointment, for, by this time, the pink had entered so far into the bay, that the anchor was let go, and preparations were made for an immediate landing.

Master Shakspeare's party consisted of himself and young Herbert, and the former's faithful serving-man, Simon Stockfish; with them came an aged mariner, of a wild, unnatural aspect, whose exceeding taciturnity was so much to the humor of Simon, that he engaged him to attend his master on shore, and help take charge of the luggage. They reached the landing-place without any hindrance or difficulty, and soon were in the streets of Naples, to the vast content of Master Herbert, who seemed to admire hugely every thing out of the ordinary that met his observation. His governor failed not to direct his attention to what was most worthy of note, but he looked too pleased with the aspect of all that met his gaze to heed much what was said.

In the house in which they presently took up their lodging they were so fortunate as to meet with a person ready, for a fitting reward, to do them all good services in showing them whatever in the city was considered worthy of observation. But all the talk of Naples then was of Vesuvius, for it was generally believed, from certain signs, that an eruption in that fiery mountain would soon display itself. Great alarm seemed to exist amongst the Neapolitans on this subject; and they who had property lying in the direction it was expected the burning lava would take, were busily devising all sorts of idle schemes for the saving of it.

Master Shakspeare determined to ascend the mountain, that his youthful charge might see one of the most marvellous of the deep mysteries of nature, yet no sooner was this known than many friendly attempts were made to dissuade him from it. The most horrible accounts were given of the danger there must be in making the ascent at such a period; added to which there were awful stories told him of the atrocities of the terrible Zingano and his band, whose haunts were in the very part of the mountain along which they must proceed. These, however, took little effect on him. He caused preparations to be immediately made for attempting the

ascent; and, in case he might be molested by the brigands, all his party went well armed, and, for further security, he took with him, in addition to the usual guides, a strong escort of the town-guard.

Simon Stockfish appointed his new acquaintance to help him in carrying whatever might be required during the expedition; for, though old, he did not look as if he lacked strength, and there was something in the sternness of his glance that satisfied Simon, in case of danger he would stand on his defence right sturdily. He therefore was properly armed, and took his place in the party.

They left Naples, and proceeded in the direction of the burning mountain, Master Herbert's governor very much lightening the way for him by pleasant and profitable discourse touching the nature and history of volcanos; thence proceeding to notice the wondrous mischiefs they had done, more especially the destruction of the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum by showers of red hot cinders—this brought him to speak of Pliny and his miraculous escape from the terrible fate that overtook the inhabitants of those cities, and then he followed on with later eruptions, eliciting by apt questions from the guides, full particulars of what had happened in their experience; and thence arose sundry narratives of the phenomena Vesuvius exhibited, descriptions of the destruction caused by the progress of the burning fluid, and certain marvellous escapes of the country people from the scorching and consuming element.

There was no great difficulty in passing from this subject to the brigands, and there followed an abundance of stories of their daring and savageness, in which different captains of them were made the heroes; but, in especial, there was great mention of Zingano, who, according to all accounts, infinitely exceeded in audacity, courage, and fierceness, the most celebrated of his villainous brethren. Some spoke of him as a devil incarnate, not satisfied with plundering all who fell in his way, he was merciless as an enraged tiger to such as he took offence at; others magnified his prowess to what was far beyond the ordinary, and touched upon instances he had afforded of succor to the distressed. Then came such accounts of his life as would have sufficed all the heroes of the table round. No romance was ever so marvellous, no ballad so full of strange adventure. Nevertheless, the guides, one and all, seemed deeply impressed with the truth of the most incredible

of such accounts, and if need were, would have borne testimony of their faithfulness.

My Lord of Pembroke's heir appeared to take but little heed of these narratives, as though he looked on them as old wives' fables, unworthy of the attention of a youth of noble blood.

His worthy governor had marked this indifference to matters of more moment, and not without some slight disquietude. He would put himself right earnestly to exalt his scholar's mind to nobler perceptions. With the deep interest in him he could not help feeling, no wonder his councils sometimes, spite of his efforts to conceal how much his heart was in his task, looked to be of a warmer character than the situations of the parties seemed to warrant; but the coldness with which such manifestations were invariably regarded, never failed quickly to bring him back to a proper state of self-control. It was a hard task for him to look on the living image of the noble-hearted woman to whom so large a portion of his best thoughts had been dedicated, with the unconcern of one who hath but a dependant's interest; but it was harder still when the tender impulses which were struggling in his breast made themselves visible, to find them met by the proud wondering of a haughty spirit that considers kindness so shown as savoring of nothing so much as of a presumption that he is bound to check by every way in his power.

This time the behavior of his youthful charge had struck him more powerfully than on any preceding occasion, but he dissembled as well as he might, and pursued his way up the mountain, conversing in his ordinary cheerful manner with the guides. The path now began to be a troublesome one, the soil being composed, for the most part, of cinders and lava, which made an exceeding loose footing, so that each one of the party was forced to look carefully to his own progress.

Young Herbert, with an active guide, lightly and rapidly led the way; he was followed closely by Master Shakspeare, who anxiously kept up with him. At a little distance followed Simon Stockfish, silently entertaining numberless doubts as to the advantage of all this arduous climbing, and considering whether some fine stroke of policy could not be hit upon whereby such dangers as seemed most imminent might be diverted from his good master. Simon had, close at his hand, the old seaman from the Pink, carrying a basket, and though he seemed to have a friendly feeling towards

him, he did not think it necessary to communicate his good wishes; and as for the other, there could be little question he was in a like humor, for he scarcely so much as opened his mouth all the way. After them came other guides, and the escort followed at a convenient distance. It appeared as though nothing was so plain as the unnecessary of the latter, for there existed not in the neighborhood the slightest sign of living creature of any sort; the wild and desolate scene would not have accorded ill with groups of savage banditti, but there was no evidence of any such thereabouts.

They had climbed so far that their nearness to the volcano might easily be judged by the sulphureous fumes that pervaded the air, and by certain rumblings and shakings in the belly of the mountain. At last the atmosphere appeared to be gradually getting darker, and the rumblings did so increase as to shake the ground beneath their feet. Whereupon the guides wore a monstrous serious aspect, and did affirm with singular earnestness, these signs portended a speedy eruption, and that all were in singular jeopardy, from which there was no likelihood of escaping, unless they met with very marvellous good fortune.

The gloomy color of this intelligence Master Shakspeare liked not at all. But not on his own account was it so little pleasing to him, for he was not of a spirit to heed his own convenience or safety in a case of common danger, but he could not help certain uneasy thoughts of the infinite responsibility he had taken on himself in leading his young charge into a situation so fraught with peril. The life of one in whom the nature he so devotedly worshipped seemed part and parcel, was very far dearer than his own, and he trembled to think of the consequences, should aught of evil befall him. But Master Herbert would not hear of any retreating. He treated the prognostications of the guides as statements worthy of no credit, and being exceeding curious to see the crater, he bade all push on without an instant's loss; and, attended by his guide, briskly led the way. His worthy governor followed with all the speed possible, and his faithful serving-man, with his desperate looking associate, did their best to keep near at hand. The rest came straggling on at their leisure.

With all the activity displayed by the foremost, their progress was slow, and not unattended with danger. Frequently did their legs sink so deep into the hot cinders, their only footing, that it looked as if they

were to be swallowed up in that treacherous soil. A guide was engaged in pointing out to the travellers the course of the last stream of burning lava which had poured down the sides of the volcano, when, on a sudden, there came a terrible explosion, that seemed to deafen all who heard it, which was followed by the shooting up from the crater of an immense pillar of burning stone and ashes, that fell on the other side of the mountain, in a mass that would soon have annihilated a city. Presently this black pillar turned into one of fire, spouting up to an immeasurable height, in the midst of which were seen huge masses of rock thrown up as though shot out of a great cannon, which fell thundering down the sides of the volcano, splitting into fragments as they fell.

Scarcely had this terrible eruption commenced, when the leaders of the party had reached a sort of shelf or platform overlooking the crater, whence the fearfulest sight broke on them eye ever saw. The mountain, like an enormous monster, continued to belch out immense volumes of fire and flame, that reached a height at which the eye ached to follow it, and it broke in a resistless flood that went boiling, hissing, and scorching down the side of the mountain, and into the valley beneath, threatening the destruction of all the orchards, gardens, and villages that lay in the direction it was taking.

Master Shakspeare could not forbear shuddering as he remembered that a change in the wind might bring upon the heads of his party the whole power of this consuming inundation. He could not sufficiently marvel at the sublimity of the spectacle before him; but, attractive as it was, he would have given all he was worth in the world to have got his charge at that moment some fifty miles off.

A new danger threatened him much more imminent than the one he had such dread of, from which there appeared to be no escape. Whilst all eyes were directed to the huge mouth of the burning mountain vomiting such prodigious volumes of fire, one of the guides, in accents of terror, cried out, "Zingano! Zingano!" and all turning at that instant, discovered a tall, stout bandit, with a dark and savage aspect, well armed with sword and dagger, pistol and arquebus, within a few yards of them, on the same ledge of the mountain, whilst, from various eminences that overlooked them, appeared several of a like threatening appearance, whose pieces were pointed at them with matches ready, as much as to

say if they stirred they were no better than so many dead men. Resistance was hopeless; they had advanced so expeditiously as to leave their lagging escort behind them, at a distance too far off to know the strait they were in, or to be able to render them any assistance.

Zingano suffered not his victims to have much time for reflection, or to mistake his intentions. With a monstrous loud and insolent voice, he bade the party deliver their purses and all they had about them of value, threatening speedy death delayed they a moment in doing his bidding. Had assistance not been so near, they would have been stripped at once and carried off captive, but the object was to get what booty they could easiest obtain and quickest depart with.

Seeing, whichever way they looked, a horrible cut-throat visage peering at them from the further end of a tube, that in a moment or so could put a ball through their heads, without a chance of escape, they took to getting ready what was wanted of them as speedily as was possible. Even Simon Stockfish was so taken by surprise, he prepared to deliver all he possessed, without aiming at a single stroke of policy, either for his worthy master or for himself.

All at once there came a cry from one of their own party—or rather a shriek of exultation such as a savage Indian might be supposed to make at the sight of an enemy in his power, and, turning to whence it came, how greatly did they marvel at seeing the aged seaman whom they had taken from the Pink to help them in the ascent, leap before them with all the quickness of a deer, and armed only with a long knife, confront the captain of the bandits. The recognition was evidently natural—a cry of terror, involuntarily as it were, burst from the lips of Zingano, better known to the reader as Black Sampson, as he heard the cry of "Blood! blood!" hissed into his ears. He saw at a glance that the eyes which were piercing through him were those of the old shepherd, whose gallant son he had so ruthlessly slain.

With a mighty effort he suddenly sought to nerve himself for a deadly encounter with his remorseless pursuer, and swaying with his vigorous arm by the end of the barrel, the weapon he held in his hand, he sought to crush him at a blow. Ere it descended, however, the shepherd had leapt upon him, and his knuckles were at his throat: then commenced a most fearful struggle—not only from the deadly rage which animated the breasts of each with equal degree, but

from the perilous place in which the conflict was carried on.

They stood only within a few feet of the spouting gulf of fire, the intense heat of which became hardly possible to breathe in, and for their footing they had a loose soil of cinders and lava that crumbled at the slightest tread. Nevertheless, each looked only to his enemy, thought only of his enemy, and in such looking and thinking had but one object—his quick and utter destruction. No weapons were used, there was no time to employ them; it appeared as though the first thing sought was by mere strength to overpower the other, and then dispatch him.

The old shepherd had got a good grip, and he held on like grim death. The bandit put forth every muscle to free himself, but with little avail, and his companions would readily have put a bullet through his antagonist, did not the constant twisting and turning of the combatants make a sure aim impossible. Some would have come to their captain's assistance, but the ledge where they stood was so narrow, from a part of it having just given way, that another could not get there without incurring a very horrible risk, and they also thought that the old man was not strong enough to be a fit match for their famous leader.

Apparently without knowing it, they were gradually nearing the brink of the crater, the ashes sunk beneath their pressure, and fragments of the ledge continued to break off, and fall into the fiery mass now boiling and raging so awfully near them. Still neither relaxed in his endeavors—neither thought of the horrors of his position. Each had contrived to get one arm fixed as in a vice round the other's waist, and the gipsy was intent on drawing the other away from the grasp it had, to seize a weapon; but to keep such advantage as he had, he was fain to hold on and continue his fierce struggling and wrestling. At last, with the quickness of lightning, he snatched the dagger from his girdle; but in the very act of uplifting it, he was carried off his feet by a tremendous exertion of the old man, who, with a fierce shriek of horrible laughter, leapt with him in his arms into the boiling flood.

The horror-struck spectators saw them disappear, and the next instant they rose a whitened shapeless mass in the midst of an enormous spout of boiling lava, that rose like a fiery torrent into the sky—then they fell back, and in a thought became indistinguishably commingled with the flaming ingredients in that terrific caldron.

By this time the escort had approached so near, that the companions of Zingano, terrified by the spectacle they had witnessed, disappeared as speedily as they could, but not without one or two shots being fired at them, which, however, it is believed did no great damage. The travellers had seen enough of the burning mountain, and no one seemed disinclined to resist the wishes of the leader of the party to get back to Naples, before a change in the wind made their fate scarcely less terrible than that of the murderer and the avenger of his crime.

CHAPTER XXIII.

His countenance was a civil war itself,
And all his host had standing in their looks
The paleness of the death that was to come.
BEN JONSON.

IT was about the midwatch, in a serene night, a gallant pinnace might have been seen cleaving her way through the waves of that highroad to great adventures, commonly called the Spanish Main. To a sailor's eye, she was as fair a craft to look on as might be seen anywhere on the wide ocean, bravely appointed with warlike stores, and manned with a valiant company of daring adventurers, most of whom were as careless of life as though, in their estimation, it was not worth a pin's fee. A famous sight was it to see the good ship, "The Little Wolf," careering over the foaming billows that oftentimes raised their huge crests as though to topple her down headlong—in sooth, it was an admirable goodly sight: yet there were some persons to be met with who disliked it hugely; they could not bear the gallant pinnace so much as named without being terribly moved, and to get sight of her, no matter how strongly furnished they might be for war, they instantly fell into a deadly fear.

These were no other than the Spaniards inhabiting those coasts, or had occasion to voyage in those seas; and the reason of their monstrous fear was, that this same ship was known far and near amongst them as the terrible scourge to all of their country the liveliest imagination could conceive. The crew were looked upon as a sort of roaring devils, and their captain it was thought could be no other than the arch-fiend himself. Since she had first appeared on that coast, it was wonderful the damage she had brought upon them; the strongest places and the powerfulest ships were of

no avail against the unnatural fierce valor of those on board of her: they were stormed and sacked in an incredible short space of time, and those who attempted opposition grievously hurt, or slain outright.

This captain was known on the coast as "the devil-Englishman," England having been his birthplace, as it was reported, but it was more generally believed he was a native of a much warmer place rumored after divers horrible fashions; some giving out that he was infinitely beyond the ordinary stature of man, with a wild inhuman countenance, the nostrils whereof had been seen to breathe fire, as several creditable witnesses could testify, and that he was of a most savage appetite, loving to pamper his delicate stomach on nothing so much as a new-born babe, carefully barbecued over a gentle fire, or tit-bits from a young virgin, daintily done in their own gravy.

That he had cloven feet there seemed not to be any dispute—nay, there was a certain priest who, in the midst of a most moving sermon touching the identity of the arch-enemy with this terror of the Spaniards, did avouch most solemnly that, when a prisoner on board the dreaded ship, he once came upon the devil-Englishman suddenly, and found him paring his hoofs, and, as undeniable proof of what he stated, he immediately produced to his fear-struck auditors a portion of the infernal paring he had then and there secreted.

Much more of these awful accounts found ready credence in those parts; but, although in some points they were exceeding contradictory, as regards the courage of the individual to whom they related, there seemed but one voice. Nothing could withstand his fierceness: he swept all before him, no matter how great the force, or how strong the defences, the whilst no hostile weapon or destructive missile had power to do him the least injury. Many a serious Spaniard had beheld a bullet drop to the ground, having been flattened upon his person; and more than one goodly rapier was shewn, the edge whereof quite turned from having been forcibly thrust against him.

Of his first appearance in those seas there were various legends; but the best informed seemed to take on themselves to say that he began to war against them as a person of little or no authority, yet that his terrible furious courage soon raised him above his associates. From a small command he quickly rose to a greater, and had been wont latterly to come upon them with

from one to five or six large ships, well equipped with all munitions of war, and with valiant and skilful crews, that took all vessels coming in their way, attacked the towns and villages upon the coast, and plundered them of whatever of value they possessed that could be carried away, spoiling them, and doing them such intolerable mischiefs, the like had not been heard of in the memory of man.

The men who joined in this warfare were known in that part of the world by the name of buccaneers, from the manner of curing their meat; and the chief of these, or at least the most famous amongst their leaders, was now this terrible fierce captain. It was said that they were no better than pirates, making war without any authority, save their own desperate inclinations; but, let them be what they would, it is certain they were a monstrous evil to the Spaniards in those seas, against whom, in especial, they were exceedingly implacable.

They were people of many countries; but principally English, Dutch, Portuguese and Moors, of the most adventurous and fearless sort the world contained, who took to the high seas as a road to fortune; and, though they were ever in a constant peril of their lives, they, for the most part, managed to amass great riches, with which they that escaped after many years' fighting with their enemies, returned to their several countries, and were ever after looked upon as persons of worship.

These buccaneers would appear in the Spanish Main with sometimes one, sometimes more ships; and, making a landing at some place on the coast, where they knew beforehand they were like to get, with a few hard knocks, good store of plunder, they would steal upon the inhabitants when they least expected them, and, slaying all who made opposition, take all the gold and silver, and other precious stuff they could lay hand on, and, when they had obtained all they could, would get on board and sail away.—Perchance they would meet ships of the Spaniards of equal or greater force; but these they would attack, and, in an incredible short space, get the better of.

Such was the marvellous courage on which they entered upon their most desperate enterprises, it seemed as though there was no resisting them. On land or at sea, attacking the strongest towns or the biggest ships, they so rarely failed of destroying and spoiling their adversary, that many of the terrified Spaniards looked upon them as leagued with the powers of darkness, and did utter or give credence to the strange

tales concerning them and their captain, such as hath awhile since been mentioned.

It was on an expedition of this sort that the good ship, "the Little Wolf," was now pursuing her course. She had sailed in company with two smaller vessels from the general place of assembling of these adventurers in the Western Indies, but had been separated from them in a tremendous storm, which drove her at the mercy of the winds, day and night, till the crew were nigh spent with watching and labor. Moreover, the water and provision were found to run short, which greatly increased the discontent. Of buccaneers, the common sort were, by reason of their riotous, disorderly habits, not easily kept in any sort of discipline, and any mischance or reverse of fortune they took so ill, that it was only by great heedfulness on the part of their appointed officers, they could be held in proper subjection.

In the case of the Little Wolf they were horribly dissatisfied every one of them: they had been so tossed about, they had lost their reckoning; none knew for certain where they were, yet many presumed to find fault with the course they were steering, and murmurs, and even threats, were heard amongst the most turbulent. Their captain they knew to be a thorough seaman, and as brave a leader as brave men ever fought under; nevertheless, they were not wanting, some amongst them who looked upon his rule as intolerable, and were for any change by which they fancied they could in any way better themselves. Their captain was strict, keeping every man to his duty, and punishing sharply the slightest disobedience. This fretted their proud stomachs monstrously, especially those who were not of his nation. They could not endure such sharp handling, and seemed only to wait for an opportunity to put an end to it.

It was under such circumstances that the ship was proceeding on her way, as hath been described at the commencement of this chapter. The watch had been set, and in general all seemed fair and orderly, save ever and anon a burst of riotous merriment would break forth from the fore-castle, where it was evident enough, of all conscience, a numerous party of the crew were entertaining themselves, after their own rough fashion. On the main deck, as far as possible from the hearing of the revellers, two boys were sitting together away from close scrutiny on one of the guns. They spoke in a low voice, and, as it seemed, in a manner especially savoring of confidence.

"Nay, I like not this seafaring life, Martin," said one, who, out of all doubt, was no

other than our especial acquaintance, lazy Launce, the runaway apprentice of Tabitha Thatchpole, and his companion was his sworn fellow and loving friend, Martin Pains, his opposite neighbor. Neither looked the better for their rash embracing of that wild, adventurous life they had adopted—the one from impatience of the hard rule of his severe mistress, the other that he might share the fortunes of his sworn lover. Hearing there was a ship of war lying in the Thames, which it was rumored was about to sail for the Spanish Main, where her captain had already greatly signalized himself by his valor and seamanship, they got on board, volunteered to serve the captain, and, being approved of by him, they had been ever since sharply employed learning to fulfil the duties of a sailor.

“I like not this seafaring life, Martin. It jumpeth not with my humor at all,” said Launce, with marvellous seriousness. “I wish very heartily I were well back again in Golden Lane. The cuffs and ratings I got of that old cat afforded fair entertainment, in comparison with the intolerable climbings aloft for the bending of sails or some other villanous hard work, and the constant fear of my life I am in through the terrible furious storms we have had since we left the Thames. Though I had in Barbican such monstrous abundance of hardships and ill-usage as ever poor ’prentice endured, I had on an occasion no lack of good sport, but in the horrible case in which I am now tossed like a cat in a blanket, on the Spanish Main, there are no tailors at hand to play tricks upon, or constables of the watch, or old women, or stray pigs, to have any proper diversion with, or dogs or cocks to set a fighting. There are no late passengers to pelt privily from the window as they pass unsuspecting along the street, nor a chance of a stolen game of bowls as I go of an errand; and, as for a delectable draught of tickle-brain to comfort one’s-self withal, I have as clean lost sight of such a thing, as though such good liquor had vanished out of the world.”

“A hard case, o’ my life!” exclaimed Martin Pains, very gravely. “Were I you, I would no longer put up with such grievous losses, but straightway be quit of the good ship and her company, and walk myself off.”

“Ah, there’s the horrible mischief of it,” said the other, in an exceeding lamentable tone. “I am like a pig in a pound;—I must e’en stay where I am, whether I will or no.”

“Doubtless!” answered his associate, drily.

“If it should be my good hap to get back to Golden Lane,” added Launce, with a prodigious show of sincerity, “I promise you you shall not catch me on board a ship of any sort, come what will on’t.”

“Dost remember the famous words you gave utterance to when you sought me to join with you in this adventure?” inquired Martin. “How hugely you comforted yourself with the great store of gold you were to gain by your assisting in taking of some Spanish galleon, and how gallantly you would conduct yourself in every desperate enterprise, till you had raised yourself to be a great captain, and how you would marry some king’s daughter at the least, when it suited you, and in good time succeed to his wealth and kingdom? Dost remember——”

“Body o’ me, I am in no humor of remembering of anything,” cried his friend, impatiently. “But, as for Spanish galleons, I wish not for their acquaintance, for I am told they are armed with guns, that do terrible execution when they are let off; and that the Spaniards we are so intent on spoiling have a villanous way with them of putting to death all of our nation that fall into their hands. Methinks they and their goods are best let alone. For mine own part, I regard them with no malice, and care to do them no injury. But, hush, what choice singing is this?”

The two young men listened attentively, and they distinctly heard, in a fine, manly voice, tolerably familiar to them already, the verses which are here set down:

THE BUCCANEER’S SONG.

Come, seek with me the blushing girls
That India’s spicy islands hold;
Where ev’ry stream doth brim with pearls,
And ev’ry rock doth burst with gold:
And where some overladen tree,
Holds low its store of purple berry—
Their charms shall prove our argosie,
And there we’ll feast and live right merry

You paler beauties of the south
May serve to grace a gallant’s feast,
Who’s tasted not the luscious mouth
We find within the burning East.
Love there a draught more sweet secures,
Than gascon, muscadine, or sherry:
Then make the bounteous vintage yours,
There take your fill, and be right merry!

“Doth not *that* move you?” asked Martin Pains, as soon as the singer had come to a halt.

“’Tis an exquisite song, o’ my life,” replied Launce, “and I have heard many such

from the same singer; yet I like him not, Martin."

"Nor do I," said the other, with more seriousness than he had yet affected. "I know not what he may have been before he sought his fortune in this ship; but there seemeth to be that in him which smacks of a better condition. Nevertheless, I like him none the better for it, for I much doubt his honesty. I have seen him laying himself out very craftily to catch the voices of the worst-disposed of the crew, particularly affecting the foreigners. I cannot help fancying he harbors some ill design; for I like not the manner I ever find him in corners holding converse with all who are known to be dissatisfied with the voyage."

"I have heard it said, and very roundly too, the captain is much to blame," observed Launce.

"And so have I, many times," answered Martin. "But, as far as I can learn, from the best informed in such matters, nothing better could have been done in such stormy weather as we have had, and I hugely suspect these grumbings are produced only by envy and jealousy, and the like evil passions in they who are discontented."

"Hush, surely this is him coming this way!" exclaimed the other; "and he being to-night captain o' the watch, may chance not be well pleased to find us loitering here. Let us hide till he has passed."

There happened to be thrown over the gun a large piece of sail-cloth, to which some repairs had been made during the day, and not having been finished, it had there been left until it could be thoroughly mended. Under this, Launce and his friend, as quickly as they could, disappeared.

They had scarcely done so when two men were seen approaching slowly towards the place, engaged in deep and earnest discourse. One was an Englishman, a tall fellow of his his hands, with somewhat of a slouching gait and with an exceeding dissolute look. Doubtless, this was the person to whom allusion had just been made. The one with whom he was in company was evidently a Moor, by his complexion and apparel. His yellow eye-balls seemed to gain additional ghastliness in the moonlight, and there was treachery in every line of his swarthy features. He was, like his companion, a proper fellow of his inches, and of an exceeding powerful frame. To look at the countenances of these two, and notice the earnest manner of their discoursing, the understanding observer might readily have suspected something unusually damnable and treacherous; and such suspicions would soon have received

strength through a little attention to their discourse.

"I tell thee, Abdallah, the plot cannot fail," observed the Englishman, in a low voice, as he approached the hiding-place of the runaway apprentice and his friend; and these were the first words they heard, but they caught much of what followed, the conspirators continuing to pace up and down close to them on the moon disappearing behind a cloud—"I have got over all but my countrymen, and I can easily secure them also, when they discover there is at least three to one against them. But there is one thing, without which our chance of success will be little, even with all the advantages we possess."

"Let thy slave know thy pleasure in this matter," answered the Moor, "and doubt not it shall be as thy heart desireth."

"The captain must be made away with before any thing else is attempted," said the other. "I know thy great courage, Abdallah, and have that confidence in thy discretion, I can entrust this important business only to thy sure hand."

"I have already settled the proper execution of it, O Compton," replied Abdallah. "I have so planned, that I can readily enter his cabin when he sleeps—my trusty blade will do the rest."

"Good; but when can this be accomplished?" inquired Compton. "The plot is ripe; I would not have a moment lost.—Let us burst forth before any smell it out. I would have it done this night—ay, this minute,—if within the warrant of possibility."

"Such is thy slave's design," replied Abdallah. "Our great captain shall meet his death, in his first sleep, this night."

"That is well thought of, Abdallah. I like the plan on 't marvellously," said his companion. "The other officers we can dispose of more at our leisure; but prythee, noble friend, take good heed he escape not. Remember, thou art to be my lieutenant, and that a life of sweetest enjoyment, with exhaustless hoards of Spanish gold, await us when we have got possession of this ship."

"By the beard of the prophet, I swear to thee, he shall die!" answered the Moor.

Launce listened with very different feelings to those of Martin, though both youths were horribly astonished at the treachery thus laid open to them. The one felt as though he dared scarcely breathe, and trembled from head to foot; but the other, though greatly alarmed with the imminence of the danger, was anxious to make some effort

to prevent it. To issue from his concealment, he knew would insure certain death, if discovered. The arch-conspirators would not hesitate to slay one who had got possession of their villainous secrets; and to remain where he was would be to prevent all possibility of an alarm being given in time to prevent the approaching massacre.

Not an instant was to be lost. Whispering to Launce to remain quiet till his return, Martin softly took off his shoes; then, when he knew, by the retreating footsteps, that the backs of the conspirators were towards him, he raised the sail-cloth, and crept away from it very cautiously across the path they would make in returning. When he thought they had got their usual distance, he lay quiet, and endeavored to still the violent beating of his heart. This was the critical moment. It was too dark to distinguish objects at a little distance; but, should the moon appear whilst the conspirators were approaching, he could not fail of being detected.

He waited in an agony of suspense.— Suddenly they both stopped, and he felt assured all was over with him. To his great relief, they did not cease talking, and he heard, with a terrible distinctness, some of the details of the murders that were about to be acted. At last they continued their paces, evidently too intent on their treason to notice his closeness to them. As soon as their backs were fairly turned, he again commenced creeping on all-fours, and so continued, stopping when they approached, and cautiously proceeding when they retreated, till he had got himself out of danger.

In the meantime, Launce lay quaking for very fear. He would have given all he was worth in the world, and all he was like to be, from that time forward—his hopes of the galleon, of being a great captain, and of marrying a king's daughter into the bargain—only to have been safe on his accustomed pallet, in the well-remembered chamber in Tabitha Thatchpole's homely dwelling.

How bitterly he lamented his folly in quitting such a delectable spot as he now looked on it, and so sweet a mistress as he now considered the very shrewish Tabitha, to be in daily risk of drowning, escaping which he stood in hourly fear of having his throat cut! He could have cried with vexation, had he not been well aware that the slightest noise might betray him; and then—he trembled from head to foot, and dared not think of the peril he was in.

He marvelled greatly that Martin Poin had left him, and entertained intolerable

fears that it might lead to the discovery of his concealment—and there he lay crouched up, like a frozen snake, expecting the very horriblemest deaths in every creak of the cordage or whistle of the wind, that sounded louder than ordinary.

The two conspirators appeared to have much to say, ere they could settle their plans to their liking—they agreed that the time for action had arrived, and that the mutiny should break out forthwith.

The massacre of the captain and his officers was to be followed by an attack on those of the English amongst the crew who were not disposed to join them, and then the ship's course was to be altered, and a certain town on the American coast, which was believed to be richly furnished and but weakly guarded, was to be surprised, the place sacked, and they who could not ransom themselves to be put to death; after which, they were to cruise on that coast till every man was as rich as he wished to be. Then they were to sell the ship and her prizes to the Portuguese, and every one return to his own country, or wherever else he liked, to enjoy his gains. At last, they parted—the Moor going to the captain's cabin for the purpose of murdering him with his own hand, and Compton proceeding to the rest of the conspirators to prepare them for immediately commencing the attack on the other officers and men they had determined on getting rid of.

Launce heard their retreating footsteps, but he was in so deadly a fear he could not dare to lift up the sail to see if the coast was clear.

Compton proceeded on his errand. Just then the moon escaped from the clouds which had veiled her glories, and poured a flood of soft light upon the ship and along the waves over which she was so gallantly floating. He glanced a sharp and eager eye around him, and noted the extreme negligence of those who kept watch. This augured well for his plot, and he smiled exultingly, as he saw how unprepared those from whom he feared any resistance were, for the fierce encounter which was to wrest the ship out of their hands, to give it into his.

This man had been born in a respectable station, and was not without parts, but had led so dissolute a life that all his friends had disowned him, and, after committing all manner of villainies, he had been fain to go to sea, to escape the hue and cry set for him.

In the present expedition, he had been allowed a small command, but this served only the greater to excite his huge ambition.—

He must needs be first in the enterprise he and his companions were upon, and, to obtain this station, he cared not what monstrous crimes he committed.

He passed on to the fore-castle, where several of the conspirators were waiting in expectation of the summons that was to set them at the work of slaughter. They appeared to be carousing, as if they had no such thoughts in their heads. The Englishmen had gone to their hammocks. This was what they had counted on, and what was wanted for the full success of their infamous designs. They now only waited the appearance of their new captain to break out into open mutiny. Compton was seen approaching—whereupon all started from the places where they had been sitting or lying, as the case might be, and hailed him as their captain.

They were a wild crew—the scum of all nations—each in the manner of dressing that best pleased his fancy, and all variously armed,—fierce, unruly ruffians, that had lived by cutting purses, had abandoned that vocation for the more perilous one of cutting throats, and had taken service with their captain from the fame of his bravery and success in all his enterprises.

“Now, my masters, to our rendezvous on the quarter-deck!” exclaimed Compton, exultingly—“and then a sharp struggle, and the ship is our own.”

“Hurrah for Compton!” answered the mutineers right lustily. “He alone shall be our captain!—Death to all who oppose him!—Away with the tyrant, Daring!—Ho, for Spanish gold, and a free life!”—And, with divers other sentences of a like character, in as many different languages, the mutineers rushed in a body towards the quarter-deck, to cut down all who should withstand them, as they sought to take possession of the ship; whilst another body of them, under the command of the Moor, was to murder the officers and seize on the magazines.

On they came, sure of gaining an easy victory over their unsuspecting messmates; nor did they discover their error till they had made good their footing on the deck, when they were brought to a speedy halt, crowded altogether as they were, by perceiving the Englishmen they believed to be secured under hatches, with the officers they had supposed to be murdered, drawn up, well armed, with an evident intention of disputing their further progress.

In front of them was a figure, beneath the fire of whose eagle eye the stoutest of them quailed. He had not had time to put on his

doublet, and most of his people were in a like predicament, but all had got arquebuses, or pistols, or swords, or pikes, or other serviceable weapons; and, though greatly inferior to the mutineers in numbers, they were like to make the contest more doubtful than seemed agreeable to any of them.

The captain stood in front of his faithful followers, his brawny arm bared to his elbow, with his trusty sword in his hand, and the other clutching a pistolet that was in his belt. His countenance bore, in every line of it, the desperate valor which had carried him in triumph through so many fierce encounters. At his side was Martin Poins, by whose timely warning he had been enabled to make such arrangements for his safety as we have noticed; and, at a convenient distance, Launce might be seen, looking to be in no pleasant plight, very desirous of getting out of harm's way, yet not being able to satisfy himself as to where he should be as safe as he desired.

“Why, how now?” exclaimed the captain, tauntingly, as he noticed the surprise the mutineers exhibited. “By Gog and Magog, but these are fine doings truly, ye mutineering dogs! Back, every one of ye, or ye shall have no better hammock this night than a shark's paunch is like to afford.—To your duty, knaves!”

“Down with him!” cried Compton, who hoped, with his superior force, to bear down all opposition. “Behold, my masters, we are three to one, as it is, and the Moor will anon come to our assistance.”

“Methinks you are reckoning woefully without your host, ye thrice treacherous villain!” replied his captain. “Behold him from whom you expect succor!” Compton turned his eyes in the direction the other pointed, and, to his extreme horror, discovered the body of his fellow-conspirator, Abdallah, hanging at the fore-yard-arm. The moon shone full on his features, which were convulsed with agony, so that he presented an awful spectacle.

Villain as he was, Compton was brave—and, seeing the desperateness of the case, he determined on not being subdued without a struggle. Turning to his followers, amongst whom some were already wavering, he cried out again—“Revenge, my masters! revenge the noble Moor! If you wish to 'scape his fate, follow me, and the ship is our own. Down with the tyrant! Ho, for Spanish gold and a free life!”

He was answered by a loud cheer, and the mutineers rushed, in a body, on the rest of the crew, who came forward manfully

with their favorite cry of "A Daring! a Daring!" and a fierce and terrible fight ensued. The captain was attacked at once by Compton and two of his foreign associates, powerful knaves, who singly seemed more than a match for him; but one he pistoled on the spot, and the other was knocked on the head by Martin Poin with a heavy axe, with which he had armed himself. Left only with the arch-plotter to deal with, he set himself to bring the matter to a speedy ending.

Compton was both strong and valiant, and he fought with the fierceness of a desperate man, who has set his all upon a cast; but he had but small chance against so determined a combatant. Whatever might be the degree of credibility attached to the Spaniards' estimation of him, certain is it the terrible Englishman was invulnerable to his present assailant, and in a few short minutes his sword was passed, with fatal effect, through Compton's body. As they had already lost many of their number by the fire which the English part of the crew assailed them, both from aloft and other advantageous places, directly they commenced their attack, the fall of their leader further dispirited the mutineers that they began to give way.

It was at this critical moment that a voice was heard shouting out from the mast head, "A sail! a sail!" which appeared to have quite a magical effect on the crew. They desisted from all show of fighting on the instant. Due inquiries were presently made; and, on its being stated that she was a Spaniard, and like enough to be the very treasure-ship they had been so exceedingly desirous of meeting, one shout of universal obedience to their leader broke forth from them to a man, the mutineers joining in it more lustily than any; they acknowledged entire submission to his pleasure, endeavoring to excuse themselves for their late crime, on the plea that they had been worked upon by designing villains, who sought to make of them the stepping-stones to their own ambition, and promised, with many signs of repentance, that if they were forgiven their fault they would so conduct themselves against the enemy as should prove they were not unworthy of being commanded by so great a captain.

Captain Harry Daring saw the politeness of agreeing to their request at such a time; so, after a brief admonition, and a few sharp speeches showing the enormity of their offences, he bade the wounded to be looked to, and the dead to be thrown overboard, but solemnly vowed the Moor

should hang where he was, as a token of the disgrace of the crew, till they had made prize of the Spanish ship; then he sent them to their several duties. This mingling of severity and conciliation had its due effect. Every one strove to do his utmost for the pleasuring of his captain; and few persons, at this moment, called to observe the unanimity and extraordinary diligence exhibited in every part of the ship, could have supposed that a few minutes before it had been the scene of the most desperate mutiny.

Under the able directions of the captain, assisted by his officers, the good ship, the Little Wolf, was rapidly approaching the Spaniard. At first, those in the latter appeared to give themselves no concern, perchance noticing how greatly superior was their size, or not taking the other to be an enemy; but when they got closer view of her, and beheld her to be no other than the terrible ship that had already done their nation such huge damage, they set up all their sails, and strove earnestly to escape as speedily as they could.

The gallant leader of the buccaners was not of a temper to allow so golden a chance to slip out of his hands, now, after so much watching and travail, he had, as it were, a hold of it; for out of all doubt, it was the galleon, to intercept which had been the principal object of his expedition. He knew her capture would enrich himself and all his followers for life—she was reputed to carry such immense wealth; therefore he made every preparation, not only to overtake her in her flight, but to attack her, with all his means of offence, as soon as ever he could get within shot of her.

The Spaniard was too heavily laden to be a good sailer, and therefore it was no marvel the smaller and lighter vessel gained upon her rapidly. The decks were cleared for action; every man was armed with whatever weapons best suited the occasion; ammunition was served out, the guns were loaded, and the gunners standing by, with matches lighted, to discharge the murderous missiles they contained, and all were on the tiptoe of expectation.

At this time it was Captain Harry Daring called to him Master Poin, and, after much commendation of him before all his officers for the good service he had rendered them all, presented him with a purse of gold to provide for him in case he should fall in the approaching engagement, and named him to be a junior officer under him, expressing a hope that amongst those whom he had so well served, he would find a

friend to realize his good wishes, in case he should be deprived of the power of doing so himself. Whereupon all his chief officers readily promised that, should any mischance occur to their captain, which he hoped might never be, they would see that Martin Poinc was well cared for.

Thus was Martin already, through his courage and prudence, placed on the high-road to fortune, whilst Launce looked only to be in a worse case than ever. In the first bruit of an engagement with the galleon, wishing himself cuffed and rated by the ungentle Tabitha within an inch of his life rather than were he was, he, unnoticed by any one, stole away, and hid himself in an empty tub in the ship's hold.

The report of the Little Wolf's great guns spoke in a pretty loud voice that the two ships were getting to be within reach of each other's shot. This was answered by the great guns of the Galleon, who, seeing they could not get away, determined on making what resistance they could, and with their immense superiority in every way it seemed probable to her commander they might succeed in beating off the buccaneers, or sinking the dreaded vessel with their heavy ordnance. These discharges soon began to be very brisk and fierce on both sides, but the Galleon floating so much higher in the water than the pinnace, her shot usually pitched clean over her, whilst on the contrary, almost every time the buccaneers fired, the shot wounded her enemy either in the spars or rigging or hull, besides doing infinite mischief upon her crowded decks.

The little pinnace all this time came gallantly up to her huge enemy, and, after pouring in a destructive broadside, lost no time in grappling with her for the purpose of taking her by boarding. This, however, was an exceeding difficult matter to accomplish, the sides of the larger ship rising up before the other like a wall, the decks being guarded by nettings, behind which stood a close array of hostile Spaniards, pouring down all sorts of heavy missiles, and shooting of their pieces at their assailants as fast as they could load them.

The sight of the Moor hanging at the fore-yard-arm struck an extraordinary terror in them, and doubtless, with the terrible reputation of the Devil-Englishman, made their defence more weak than it might have been; for when they found that so deadly a fire was kept upon them from the tops of the Little Wolf, that it brought them down by scores, and that their enemies climbed up to their decks with the agility and fierceness

of wild cats, whilst others dropped upon them from the over-hanging rigging of their own ship, they began to be monstrously dispirited, and gave way.

The confusion of Babel was nothing to the uproar which existed in both ships, the one crowded with grandees of Spaniards returning with all their treasure from the new world to the old, inciting by their example and oratory the soldiers that were on board to guard the galleon, to beat back the furious enemy, whilst the other, no less intent on making their way, came on shouting of all sorts of wild tumultuous cries and execrations, in divers languages, enough by themselves to daunt the stoutest hearts. Then interspersedly were heard the screams of the women on board the Spanish ship, the groans of the wounded, and the constant discharge of arquebuses and pistols making the most infernal concert that can be conceived.

At last Harry Daring, supported by a considerable number of his crew, made good his footing on the deck of the galleon. He had in his hand a monstrous battle-axe, which with tremendous force he swung around him, crushing to the earth every Spaniard on whom it fell. Many a desperate intent was made to bring him down, but the few who were so fortunate as to survive them fled from before his terrible strokes, crying out to their fellows to save themselves from the Devil-Englishman. A gallant band of Dons, who were evidently made of the best stuff their country afforded, still kept up a stiff defence, supported by the more courageous of the soldiers.

"Down with the villain Spaniards!" cried the captain of the buccaneers, with all the energy of his earlier days, as he rushed forward to attack his enemies.

"A Daring! A Daring!" shouted his men, now every instant increasing in numbers, as they threw themselves upon the Spaniards. The battle was fierce, but short. The bravest of the Dons were cut to pieces, and the rest fled or surrendered; and in a few minutes the huge ship with all her treasures became the property of Harry Daring and his crew.

A curious incident occurred during the hottest part of the engagement—the body of the Moor suddenly disappeared, and no one knew where or how; but divers had shrewd suspicions, a person reputed to be of a like color with him had come and claimed his own; nevertheless, I incline to the opinion that he was shot away by some of the great ordnance and fell into the sea.

The wealth found in the galleon exceed-

ed the conquerors' expectations. Ingots of gold and bars of silver, with heaps of coin and plate beyond all counting, and bags of pearls and other precious stones, together with an incalculable abundance of the most costly merchandize, appeared before them till the eye marvelled there should be such wondrous store of riches in the world. This was all taken from the galleon and placed in the pinnace, after which the former was allowed to proceed on her voyage. A division of the booty soon afterwards took place, to the monstrous satisfaction of every one of the crew of the Little Wolf. As Launce had disappeared, it was supposed he had fallen in the contest; when, whilst his fast friend Martin, who had behaved himself very stoutly throughout the fight, was lamenting his supposed loss, he crept from his concealment so privily no one knew he had been there, and now all danger was over, took care to make it believed he had distinguished himself amongst the Spaniards in a terrible heroic manner.

Of the gallant Harry Daring let it suffice here to say, that he continued to be the greatest scourge to the Spaniards they had ever known, spoiling them of their substance, and overthrowing all their armaments, whether on land or on sea. Indeed, after the taking of the treasure-ship, his reputation as "The Devil-Englishman" was more fierce than before. Amongst his own men, he grew to be in such extraordinary estimation, he had soon several ships and some thousands of followers of all nations desirous of being led by him, and there never after was any thing in the shape of a mutiny attempted by any one of them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A sweeter swan than ever sung in Po—
A shriller nightingale than ever blest
The prouder groves of self-admiring Rome.
THE RETURN FROM PARNASSUS.

She who tamed the world tamed herself at last, and, falling under her own weight, fell a prey to time.
JAMES HOWELL.

WHO that hath either heart or brain can walk unmoved among the vestiges of fallen greatness that attract attention on every side of that city of cities, that birthplace of noble soldiership, that cradle of honorable freedom, that home of classic learning, that seat of omnipotent majesty, that altar of true religion; the feared, the honored, the condemned, the classical, the venerable

Rome? Who can see her crumbling baths, her ruined temples, her tottering aqueducts, her prostrate monuments, her shattered amphitheatres, and her desolate, silent, and choked-up forums, without calling to mind the greatness that hath passed away? What a marvellous story is here writ! ay, and what pregnant characters compose the writing!—they are your true hieroglyphics, whereof one hath the meaning of a volume.

Here you shall have a whole host of recollections of the infant colony struggling with its neighbors for a mere existence. There you shall gather as goodly a crop of memories from the Imperial City that gave conquerors and laws to all the world. In one place the mind is crowded with augurs, vestal virgins, sacrifices, incense, and hymns, and all the impressive worship which of old was offered up to that more powerful than creditable assemblage yclept the gods and goddesses; in another it finds room for no less numerous a company of lictors, centurions, præters, conscript fathers, orators, philosophers, and poets, and all, whether of the patrician or plebeian class, that belonged to the intelligence of the Seven Hilled City in its palmy days.

Here comes a gigantic memento of its gladiatorial barbarousness, there an enduring sign of its Apician refinement. One instant brings before us the peaceful luxury of an Augustus, another the brutal despotism of a Nero. We behold in every thing presented to us a series of the noblest spectacles the world ever saw. The joyful city witnessing an ovation; the infant republic forcibly carrying off from a neighbor state such women as suited them for wives; the slaughter of Cæsar in the capitol; Coriolanus prevented by his domestic affections from leading the Volscians against his ungrateful city; Cincinnatus called from the plough to lead the armies of his country against the enemy; and Belisarius, blind and old, begging his bread amongst those whose safety his talents and his courage had secured.

These are but a few of the rallying places that, upon some remembrancer starting up—as could not be avoided, wander where you might—gave occasion for a busy throng of associations to take exclusive possession of the mind. But these are such as most prominently and frequently came before the imagination of Master Shakspeare in his rambles with his beloved charge in this antique city. In particular, he dwelt with exceeding interest on the story of the exiled Coriolanus, lingered over the tragic fate of the noble Cæsar, referred to the

magnificent follies of the enamored Marc Antony with the seductive Cleopatra, and recalled the moving history of the haughty Tarquin and the abused Lucrece, as though he were never weary of having them brought under his consideration.

And on these subjects would he dilate to his young companion with an eloquence so winning, that the usually indifferent youth gave him all his attention, and appeared to feel almost as much interest for what he heard as he was sure to exhibit did a prettier face than ordinary come within sight of him, or there looked to be a horse-race, a religious procession, a mountebank, or any public sport or show that promised something new or marvellous.

Though my Lord of Pembroke's heir did not lack ability, he was strangely deficient in steadiness; and, notwithstanding the infinite painstaking of his worthy governor that, in the strange cities they visited, he should see all that was commendable, and know all concerning them that was worth the hearing, he would frequently give him the slip; and there was but too good reason for believing he would at that time be devoting his attention to objects the least likely to afford him any wholesome knowledge.

As his person and countenance were singularly well favored, and he dressed as became his birth, wherever he went, there was sure to be divers persons anxious to have him in their company, whose society could confer upon him little credit. There had been already more than sufficient evidence that the handsome English youth had attracted the attention of many beautiful signoras, who had the reputation of being as kind as fair; and at Naples the watchful governor had observed sufficient of the willingness of his charge to meet their advances, to make him hurry away with him to Rome.

Though the earnest affection with which Master Shakspeare regarded him, from certain deep and powerful causes, might have led him to look on his faults with extreme leniency, the promise he had given to the noble lady, whose vowed servant he was, made him exceeding urgent in the proper discharge of his duty; and, fearing he might, if not properly cared for, fall into the hands of some base adventurers, whose fair visage and goodly person were always ready to be put out to pawn at most usurious interest, whereof the penalty was the monstrous infamy of the lender, he was wondrously anxious to save him from such snares.

But in this there was a difficulty of a

kind not easy to be got over. He cared not showing too open an interference with the youth's inclinations, as he knew it was like to be resented in such a manner—from his great pride and high-spiritedness—as would throw an insurmountable obstacle in the way of all further leading of him; or, governed by the excellent policy which says that "prevention is better than cure," he watched carefully and anxiously to keep out of his way the sort of dangers he had most fear of.

Rome he thought less dangerous than Naples, where the hearts of its fair inhabitants seemed akin with the combustible stuff on which that gay city is built; for the monuments of antiquity, and the associations connected with them, gave such abundant food for the mind, that there was scarce opportunity for it to turn for nourishment to those mischievous sources whose complexion he so hugely disliked. In this he judged by the influence of the place on himself.

He had been furnished with letters that insured him all manner of courtesies from the noblest families, and even obtained personal notice from the sovereign pontiff; but these flattering favors had far less attraction for him than a companionship with the mighty spirits whose tombs or favorite haunts he loved to explore. The charms of music and painting were placed before him in such perfectness as he had never known at any other time; but, deeply as his soul was moved at hearing the wondrous harmonies the Catholic Church so well knows how to use, and, as he stood entranced before the marvellous works of art which join their mighty forces in the same gorgeous service, to him there was a music far more touching in the pastoral sounds that enriched some of the many lovely landscapes the neighborhood affords, and his eye was fed continually wherever he went, with pictures painted with a truth, a force, and a beauty no mortal painter ever yet could boast of. The song of the herdsman or the muleteer, a chorus of vine-dressers, or the jingle of a rude gitarra, to which a score or two of merry feet were tripping it in artless measure, had more charms for him than the sweetest airs of Palestrina; and a young girl offering her heartfelt devotions before a rude statue of the Virgin in one of the public streets, a sunset scene from the terrace of any of the suburban villas, or a moonlight on the Tiber, gave him scenes which neither Raphael, nor Titian, nor all the schools of Italy together, could ever come up to.

It was in that gigantic ruin, known as

the Coliseum, that Master Shakspeare, with his young charge, were standing, lost, as it were, in utter astonishment, with the faithful Simon in attendance, who, if one might judge from his looks, was in as huge a wonder as either. The sunlight streamed upon the desolate amphitheatre, investing its picturesque details with a beauty almost magical to look on. The eye of the poet regarded those broken arches with a double consciousness, the actual and the ideal: first it embraced the wondrous picture of desolation they presented—the stains of time, the rank verdure, and the influence of many centuries of neglect, laying on tints and perfecting forms that, combined, gave the image of antiquity in her most majestic garment; gradually this faded away, and the glorious fragments made one more glorious whole; and the wondrous wreck displayed a more marvellous perfectness.

Tier above tier became thronged with earnest, anxious countenances, in countless variety and with well-defined grade; the humble plebeian, the haughty patrician, and every class and dignity, from the most abject of the citizens up to the highest officer of the state—consul or emperor, as the case might be; whilst below, to whom the universal gaze was directed, there raged a fierce combat, perchance some of the very savagest denizens of the forest against each other—the fell rhinoceros, the cruel tiger, the raging lion, the terrible hippopotamus, and the majestic elephant; or maybe, with one or other of these horrible monsters, a man should be matched, and so he dares the unequal combat, armed only with a short sword, whilst among the multitudinous host above there exists an awful silence, as deep as that of one in a trance. Or, it may be, public gladiators are set to try their strength and skill, among themselves, after divers fashions of fighting, and blood flows like water, and there is no lack of gaping wounds, crushed bones, and bruised limbs; and the shout of the spectators rises like a burst of mountain thunder, as he who hath the skill or good fortune to survive this monstrous butchery, steps forward the acknowledged victor of the day.

On this fantasy the mind of the poet lingered till all sense of existing things seemed absorbed, and all attention was concentrated upon this fearful leaf in the mighty volume of the past. How deeply his noble heart was touched by the outrage on humanity it so forcibly exhibited, abler pens than mine must seek to show. But to one taught in that most ancient of free schools, nature, the humiliating reflections which

could not but arise from it must have clothed his spirit with a bitterness the natural sweetness of his disposition could scarce render endurable.

For after the exulting mind has been tracing the imposing signs and tokens of Roman greatness, from what small beginnings a brave and enlightened people became great and free, triumphed over the barbarian, and, for his loss of freedom he knew not how to keep, conferred the blessings of civilization he would soon learn how to appreciate, how terrible is the shock that follows a closer inspection, when it is discovered that the cement which held together these immortal monuments is composed of the blood and tears of tortured and degraded manhood! Roman freedom, Roman greatness, Roman glory, raise them on their towering pedestals, and then, behold! the whole fabric is built up of the basest slavery, the vilest meanness, and the saddest degradation, that ever weighed down the aspiring soul of man since the gates of Eden were first closed against it.

On this theme the intelligent mind of Shakspeare was wondrous busy; and, after he had found sufficient entertainment in the impressions it received, he bethought him of his duty to his young companion, and addressed him in a marvellous moving speech, full of fine scholarship, and finer wisdom, touching the difference of false greatness and true; and, like another Cicero, he spoke high and learnedly, distinguishing the genuine claims the Romans have on the respect of posterity for the many signs that have been preserved of a surpassing intellect, from the fictitious demands that have been so prominently brought forward to obtain an immortal admiration, for causes purely physical.

Young Herbert listened as though he had forgot he was my Lord of Pembroke's heir, and, which was of no less consequence, as if he had not seen at Naples an exquisite fair face, that had haunted his young fancy with the glow of a perpetual sunrise. He was not entirely indifferent to the force of classic examples, and the scene and the sentiments that so naturally and forcibly arose out of it touched him somewhat.

He began to ask questions which, in the result, was like unto one beginning to dig in a soil abounding with treasures, every effort was so singularly productive of sterling truths: and, pleased with his acquisitions, he grew more inquisitive and more eager to obtain a greater sum of that profit which was repaying his exertions a hundred-fold. By his inquiries his governor

was led to draw a comparison between heathen and Christian Rome; between the Cæsars of the one, and the Popes of the other; between the invincible arms of the Roman warrior, and the absolute ascendancy of the Romish priest; and, in the parallel, divers new and striking illustrations were produced. A family likeness seemed to run in the heathen Cæsar Caligula and the Holy Catholic Cæsar Borgia: a great similitude was showed betwixt the superstitions of the classic soothsayer, and those of the Christian dispenser of Indulgences; and the same love of dominion, which arrayed the Roman phalanx against every appearance of independence in other countries, was proved to be observable in the policy which, from time to time, influenced the occupant of the papal chair in its relations with foreign states.

But here the parallel ended, and the most positive contrast commenced. The former boasted to obtain their ascendancy over the rest of the world by physical means, and conquered by force of arms; whilst the latter relied on a moral force only, as a means of subjection, and maintained a despotic sway over every part of the civilized globe by force of opinion.

Then the speaker went on to show that this opinion, in modern Rome, bore the name of religion, and it was produced in a manner best suited to answer its desired end. All things whatsoever that could most attract and subdue the senses, either as a source of gratification or one of fear, were pressed into the service of the successors of the ancient sovereigns of Rome. With this object, art was appealed to as an auxiliary of the most powerful character; and the painter, the sculptor, the architect, and the musician, were taught to put forth all their excellences to assist in subduing the Catholic world. How ably they fulfilled the purport for which they were devoted, it did not require a journey to Rome to ascertain, though undoubtedly there it might be learned in more perfectness than elsewhere; and the Julius Cæsars of the pontifical chair had been satisfied with an authority based on such means, they need not have been very harshly condemned; but they sought to establish a despotism with more extortionable weapons—the terrible thunders of the Vatican, the dreaded whispers of thequisition, torture, injustice, tyranny, and superstition, were employed upon human conscience, as with an intention of binding forever in the humiliating bonds of credulity and ignorance; and then it became a

question whether the state of heathenism or Catholicism were the most desirable.

But, as Master Shakspeare eloquently proved, the parallel became again destroyed. The world grew more enlightened, and consequently less tolerant of mental bondage, and each succeeding century found modern Rome lessening its pretensions to a power equal to that which existed in the ancient city; and now it possesses neither mental nor physical energy sufficient to keep a creditable place among the states of the civilized world. An emasculated race, who are slaves to the most lamentable ignorance, pride and self-conceit, bear the dreaded name of the Conquerors of Carthage, and if any one individual, to whom it now belongs, obtaineth any sort of celebrity in foreign countries, you shall find him no greater character than a bigoted monk, who hath not a thought beyond his breviary; a skilful limner, whose whole soul is in his paint-pots; or a fair composer of madrigals, whose highest philosophy is drawn from an exact application of his *mi sol re*.

They have lost all that was Roman but the name—valor, glory, and all the nobler qualities of honorable manhood are departed; and in their place there is nought but the subtlety of the fox and the venom of the serpent—a fierce hatred of liberal thoughts and institutions—and the most degrading observance of solemn fooleries, unmeaning self-abasements, and contemptible deceptions.

But the utterer of these strictures was of too great a soul to omit the mention of what was in any way of a worthier nature than what hath just been set down, and he did ample justice to the piety, charity, humility, and wisdom that characterized many of these unwarlike descendents of the heroes of Roman history; nor did he pass over the merits of those illustrious men who had made Rome the metropolis of art. It cannot be supposed that he who was the first and noblest of artists should fail in appreciating those ideas of the grand and the beautiful which the Roman painters had expressed in such immortal characters, as in their frequent visits to the most famous galleries and churches of Rome, Master Herbert and his governor had witnessed; far from it—the latter showed how much more Catholic was the religion of Raffaele than that of Leo; and how much nearer heaven were the labors of Michael Angelo and Sebastian del Piombo, than were those of the College of Cardinals, or the Society of Jesus.

If the palette, then, might be allowed to stand in place of the sword, the painters, at least, were worthy of their origin; and if the influence they maintained was peaceful, it was more valuable, pleasing, ennobling, and enduring, than that obtained by their ancestors with so vast a cost of injustice and bloodshed. They admirably upheld the honor of Rome—they had triumphs worthy of rivalry with any which were gloried in throughout the rejoicing streets of the ancient city—and they, be it remembered to their everlasting credit, had no Coliseum.

This was not uttered without some searching questions from the speaker's companion, who seemed to listen with more than ordinary attentiveness and satisfaction; but the humor was only a little less transient than usual, and as soon as his curiosity was sufficiently gratified, he moved off to where Simon Stockfish was reclining at his ease, diligently employed in providing for imaginary evils that *might* visit him, by subtle strokes of policy such as would do credit to the exceeding gravity of his turn of mind, and was soon deeply engaged, with the faithful old servitor, in carrying on some business of his own, as little creditable as profitable.

Whilst the youth was thus employed, his tutor returned to the luxury of his own thoughts, which, in the first moment of leisure, took the following complexion.

THE ADDRESS

OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT IN A FAR-OFF LAND
TO A MOST GRACIOUS MISTRESS.

The ever-rolling seas in vain divide

Two separate natures, such as do exist
In that pure shrine where thy fond wishes hide,
And this poor heart, who hath such 'vantage
miss'd;

For I thus differ from the egotist,
Who his dear self in ev'ry thing doth see—
Whatever I behold is full of thee.

Therefore, nor time, nor space, availeth much,
Thine image is so constant in mine eyes;
For here thou liv'st in ev'ry thing I touch:
I meet thy gaze in these Italian skies,
I hear thee in these glorious harmonies,
That fill with marvellous praise each holy place,
And find thy smile on each Madonna's face.

If from the presence of the Past I turn,
And live mid relics of an antique time,
Where temple, bust, or monumental urn,
Bring back the classic ages in all its prime,
In glory infinite, in grace sublime;
Go where I will, consider what I may,
Signs of thy nobleness start forth straightway.

Perchance, some crumbling column rears on
high

The remnant of a glorious architrave;
Or matchless Torso 'witching every eye,
With shape such as God's noblest creatures
have,

Doth my especial wonder seem to crave—
Where 'tis most admirable there doth dwell
That quality in which thou dost excel.

But e'en the statue most divinely bright,
The proudest structure of our proudest days,
The fairest picture offered to man's sight;
In brief, whatever marvels art could raise,
Can never take one atom from thy praise.
There is no chance 'gainst such o'erwhelming
odds—
They are man's masterpieces—thou art God's!

Yet in such perfectness as they possess,
For thee they bear triumphant evidence,
Which in my pleadings, dwelt on more or less,
So well establishes thine excellence,
A verdict for thee must be drawn from
thence:
Making a precedent of such import,
Who deems it ill should be put out of court.

How then can I from thee be separate,
Did nought express a closer likelihood;
But when mine eyes take in thy goodly state,
Clothed with the tempting worth of flesh
and blood,
Of thee I am so thoroughly imbued,
So filled with thy sweet self, in heart and soul,
We stand confessed a just harmonious whole.

But were this but a shadowy fantasy,
Bred of th' imagination's rank conceits,
I should allow it here less readily.
The understanding no such mockery meets,
I see thee not in visionary cheats;
Thy honest, tangible, and ocular grace,
Presents itself before me face to face.

Seeing thy living image, I enjoy
The profit of thy pleasant neighborhood,
And ev'ry step of time I do employ
In storing up the admirable good
Thou dost dispense in such a gracious mood:
I see thee, hear thee, touch thee, and from
thence
Sight, hearing, touch, assume a threefold sense.

But who shall set aside fate's stern decree?
Zeuxis his painted grapes poor birds did not
More hugely disappoint than thou poor me
In the *fac-simile* which thou hast got;
Thou findest me a most unhappy lot;
Like him who sought a goddess, pressed a cloud,
I find the robe of Love become his shroud.

Cold slighting looks, and high and haughty
tones,
Indiff'rence rude, and careless disrespect,

Sharp questions, and some few unconvincing ones,
And wild extravagances passed uncheck'd—
Tenants at will, that Time will soon eject;
These are but sorry solace for the lack
Of that which Memory only can bring back.

Yet hath that solace some sweet gift withal,
Some pleasant power, some profitable end;
The contentation it affords is small,
Still doth it oft a wondrous comfort lend!
It speaks of that incomparable friend,
Whose image charges, wheresoe'er it lies,
'Th' unkindest thoughts with kindest properties.

Therefore can never obstacle divide,
Nor contrary thing oppose, nor time delay,
The sweet communion that must now abide
All tests, all chance, without change or decay,
That betwixt thee and I shall from this day
Live wheresoever I take up my rest,
Making the cursedest thing appear most blest.

One of those gorgeous assemblages of the countless religious orders that throng the Seven Hilled City had passed through its chief thoroughfare, with banners and crucifixes, and images, and proudly decorated prelates, and monks in humbler garb, but not less lofty spirit, and incense-bearers making the air rich with frankincense, and choristers filling it with stately harmony, which occasioned the assembling of vast numbers of idle Romans and curious strangers, who dropped on their knees as the procession passed, many of whom affected a marvellous degree of devotion and reverence, and others no small extent of surprise and wonder.

The chanting of the priests was beginning to be inaudible in the distance, when, in a certain open space, over which those holy men had passed, there was formed a circle of the good people who had but a moment since been so greatly edified by the impressive spectacle that had been presented to them, who were as busily engaged in regarding the graceful attitudes and marvellous tricks of a party of Bohemian dancers and jugglers, as though the sight had clean put out of their mind the sacred one which had immediately preceded it. Of the exhibitors there were two men of monstrous sinister-looking aspect, who flung brazen balls into the air, and sharp-pointed daggers, one after another, and did catch them with a dextrousness that was a wonder to behold.

Their audience looked on as much amazed as delighted. Presently one took to swallowing a sword, and the other to eating fire, as though he were a salamander, and the faces of all present seemed bewildered with the beholding of sights so strange. Anon

one seized a rude chair, strong and heavy, and seated on it a young boy of their company, exceedingly well favored, though he had a roguish look withal, then placed it on his head, balanced on one leg, where he kept it as he walked about, picking up a certain number of eggs from the ground, the boy the whilst looking about him unconcernedly cracking of nuts, as though he had the securest seat in the world. After this he took his comrade by a linen fastening round his loins, and fixed it between his teeth, and so carried him round the circle. These tricks were also regarded with the hugest astonishment.

But the most pleasing sight of all, was a woman of the same company, of a beauty the most ravishing eye ever dwelt upon, and attired very temptingly after the Moorish fashion, who, to the accompaniment of a small drum decorated with silver bells, which she struck and shook, and cast about her in every graceful motion, danced the Romalis or gipsy dance in so moving a fashion, that the gazer seemed to look on in a manner entranced. Truly the swimming eyes and pouting mouth, and the eloquent motions of the Bohemian, were enough to warm the current of a man's blood had it flowed less sluggishly than it doth in Italian veins.

There was in her appearance such a mingling of the ripe Hebe with the joyous Bacchante, that a Roman, even of the classic age, would have felt her influence. Her dance was a sort of hymn in motion—an invocation in pantomime to the winged urchin, who, with his marvellous keen arrows, is wont to cause such sharp wounds in every one that hath part and parcel with humanity—in the which every twirl, and every bend of that voluptuous body, every wave of those delicate arms, every spring of those elastic feet, each glance of those subduing eyes, and each smile from that provoking mouth, were examples of poetical meaning, such as even the rarest masters of the poet's craft seldom reach. There seemed an intense ecstasy of animal enjoyment breathing all around and about her, evident not only in the flashing of her soft dark eyes, but in the saucy wantonness of her raven hair, and in the expressive buoyancy of her most seductive limbs.

Perchance the reader would fain have some acquaintance with this very delectable, sweet creature, but he must needs here be reminded that she is not so complete a stranger to him as it would appear; he having already enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of her company, when our grave young stu-

dent of medicine, John Hall, and his polite serving-man, Simon Stockfish, were, hugely against their wills, made inmates of a gipsy encampment, when on their way to London.

In sober honesty, this wondrous dancer in the public streets of Rome was no other than the very youthful companion of Black Sampson, as he was then called, the king of such of the wandering outlaws as were to be found in England; and the strong, sturdy-looking urchin, who so bravely looked from his perilous seat, was the same admirable fair child for whose existence she felt herself so deeply indebted to the skill of our young physician.

The life of this matchless dancer had been at every step the sport of fortune—she had gone through numberless adventures of the most extraordinary character. It was believed, when very young, she had been found in a Moorish barque, that had been captured on the coast of Barbary, by the crew of a Spanish ship, the captain of which had sold her to an ancient grandee, who had her taught all feminine accomplishments, and brought her up in the closest, strictest retirement, in a strong castle in Andalusia. All went on fairly enough with the Don, till about thirteen or fourteen years of age, the ripening beauty of his interesting purchase induced him to double his attentions, and treble his vigilance. The old gallant strove earnestly to win his way to her heart; and just as he was beginning to congratulate himself on the favorable result of his exertions, the astounding intelligence was conveyed to him that the incomparable Dona Xariqua was nowhere to be found.

Whether he hanged the Duenna who had charge of her is not known, but certain is it, that, whilst he was employing his vast resources to recover what he considered a treasure far more valuable, she was being conveyed from the nearest port, in the good ship, "Endeavor," of Bristol, by a famous, tall, well-favored young fellow, that looked a prince at the least, and this he was most assuredly, for he was a prince at the least sort of estimation.

He belonged to the royal tribe existing amongst that wandering people, so generally spread over Europe, under the several names of Bohemians, Rommanee, Egyptians, gypsies, and Zincali; and, though born and brought up in England, he had joined some daring smugglers on the coast, who traded with Spain. Whilst pursuing his adventures in the country, he had got sight of the Don's destined mistress, and, struck with her exceeding loveliness, had, in a manner

no less daring than ingenious, carried her off from the garden of the castle. It must be acknowledged, that the youthful, nay, almost childish Xariqua, got wonderfully soon reconciled to the change, from a particularly crabbed, ill-favored old lover, to one as remarkably young and comely; and on their landing in England, she made no objection to be married to him, according to the ceremonies of his tribe, to which about the same time he was elected to be king, in consequence of the decease of his predecessor in the royal dignity, in a somewhat unregal way at Tyburn.

She soon made herself mistress of the arts and mysteries practised by the females of the strange people with whom her life was now to be passed; and, though her partner, from the violence of his passions, did not make her the best of husbands, she made him a model of a perfect good wife down to the very day of his so terrible death, sharing in all the hazards of his dangerous way of living with a fearlessness and devotion worthy of a better object. After she was left a widow, still young, still of ravishing loveliness, she was prevailed on to turn her attractions and the accomplishments she had been taught, to some account. Therefore, she made part of an exhibition which certain of the Bohemians got up about this time, and acted from town to town, whilst their equally active confederates contrived to ease the wondering spectators of whatever valuables they had about them that were accessible to their light fingers.

As her charms were set off to the greatest advantage by her picturesque dress, and her dancing was exceedingly animated and graceful, after the Bohemian fashion, wherever she appeared she gained no lack of admirers, on whom she never failed to levy contributions, often gaining from them something additional by practising for their edification the science of palmistry.

La Xariqua became celebrated, throughout more than one of the Italian states; and her witcheries turned the heads of all the gallants, and also of men of graver sort, who might be expected to have been insensible of such follies. Rumors on this point had got abroad, to the prejudice of divers holy fathers of the church, which had, moreover, come to the ears of their superiors, who, though they looked to be horribly shocked at such scandals, were secretly as much enamored of the beautiful Bohemian as their humbler brethren. Her appearance in the Holy City caused quite a stir, both amongst clergy and laity; and although, generally, she was spoken of as a creature

worthy to be worshipped of all men living; it chanced that she was made the subject of comment in another and totally different quarter, which boded her no good.

Among the most enraptured of those whom she had gathered round her in Rome at this time was a youth, who looked on with all his soul in his eyes, to appearance fairly bewitched by a scene so exquisitely seductive. The emotion he exhibited did not escape the brilliant eyes of the dancer—neither did his noble visage and admirably formed figure; for, from beneath her long, dark lashes she ever and anon shot at him such glances as set his heart in a flame in a presently.

It so chanced, during the performance of the Romalis, that she was exerting herself to the very utmost to out rival all she had previously done, and the admiration of the surrounding crowd approached to a frenzy; the enticing scene was put a stop to by the sudden apparition of two mysterious figures in sombre robes that entirely enveloped their persons, who pushed through the circle, in which, with looks of mingled awe and terror, all fell back. They made their way to the fascinating Bohemian, whom each seized by an arm, and placing the fore-finger mysteriously on the lip, began to drag her away. At seeing this, all her enraptured admirers slunk away in every direction, without daring so much as to look behind them, and none seemed inclined to stay, save a few ill-looking knaves, who, out of all doubt, were her companions, and the youth whose intoxicating dream had been so rudely disturbed. He seemed at first to marvel hugely at the appearance of the two mysterious figures, taking it to be a part of the performance; but when the cries and struggles of the dancer convinced him her seizure was an act of violence, his rapier flew out of his scabbard on the instant.

The crowd had by this time entirely disappeared. The youth rushed after the struggling Xariqua, sharply calling on those who were hurrying her along to loose their hold of her if they desired to live. They paid no manner of heed to him, but continued to hurry away their terrified prisoner. He was upon them sword in hand, when from a neighboring portal, there came upon him unawares two or three armed men, by whom he would infallibly have been slain or taken captive, had it not happened, that almost as quickly after rushed hastily, from an opposite direction, a gallant, who ranged himself on his side. The contest lasted not long, for the Bohemians, with weapons of various sorts, so bestirred themselves, that

the beginners of the fray were speedily either stretched on the ground with grievous wounds, or running for their lives with what speed of foot they had. La Xariqua was rescued out of their hands, and soon, by the contrivance of her associates, beyond all fear of recapture.

It was but a short hour after this occurrence that the youth, and the friend who had come to his assistance, were with a single attendant, pursuing their way out of Rome as fast as fleet horses could carry them. The younger of the two was no other than the Earl of Pembroke's heir, who had given his companion the slip whilst examining some of the many marvels of the City of the Cæsars; and the other was, of course, his worthy governor, who, as he came upon the spot, and beheld the danger with which his charge was menaced, could do no less than hasten to his assistance. But when he came to learn, as he shortly did, that Master Herbert had provoked an attack from the Pope's guards, by endeavoring to rescue a sorceress, then in charge of the messengers of the Holy Office, he knew there was no longer any safety for either of them within the Papal States.

CHAPTER XXV.

And with that word she smiled, and ne'ertheless
Her love-toys still she used, and pleasures bold.

FAIRFAX.

THE treacherous Millicent, by the exercise of that craft with which she was so eminently gifted, was now in a fair way of seeing all things settled as she would have them. She persuaded her young friend and confidant that the desirablest thing on earth would be a marriage with her father; and, by dint of working on her vanity and pride, of which she had no slight share, got her to see, in a union with one thrice her age, only famous braveries, money at command, and the covetable situation of mistress of a fine mansion. Her consent was obtained, and a day fixed for this May and December union; when it was also settled should take place the marriage of Millicent and Leonard.

At first, when his mistress urged him to complete his contract with her, for which she failed not to give him good and sufficient reasons, he seemed somewhat taken by surprise, as not only had he long given up all idea of such a thing, but he had seen what

had assured him of his fellow-student's attachment, whose true friend he held himself at this time, and would have been right glad to have furthered his happiness in any honest way. This friendly inclination of her destined husband towards her lover it was her policy now to destroy, as she saw it would be a serious obstacle in the way of the success of her fine scheming; whereupon she set about to poison his mind with dark hints and discreditable insinuations of and concerning his friend's integrity, and, to give sufficient color to these, she read letters from John Hall to herself, which proved incontestably that he was not such as he took him to be.

Concerning of these letters it is sufficient here to state, that, though Leonard was allowed to recognize the handwriting, he had no means of comparing the passages read with what was written, and entertaining no suspicion of deceit, it is not surprising that she should easily have passed off on him what was entirely her own invention, for the handwriting of John Hall.

Leonard had nothing for it but to fall into the humor of one whom he had allowed to govern him as she listed. Yet it was long before he could reconcile himself to what he looked on as the violent extinguishing of his fellow-student's happiness. In due time, by the constant artifices of the crafty Millicent, the estrangement was complete. Leonard's habitual indolence and indecision were taken advantage of, and John Hall every day became less and less cared for. Indeed, as it usually happens with those who wrong their fellows, Leonard felt disposed ere long to look on John Hall as one possessed of the absolutest unworthiness ever heard of.

But how fared the young physician all this while? How took he the intelligence his mistress artfully conveyed to him of her being forced against her wish to complete the betrothal of so long standing? Of a truth it came on him like a thunder-clap. He had allowed himself so completely, in consequence of her conduct to him, to lose sight of any such engagement, that he could not now be brought to tolerate it in any manner. It was a most moving sight to see the tears which chased down her cheeks, and the passionate fondness of her bearing and language, when this accomplished dissembler informed her lover of her father's tyranny in insisting upon her immediate marriage with one she liked not.

No man who has ever devotedly loved could reconcile himself to another's possessing his mistress; and the heart of John Hall

was too completely given up to the seductive Millicent to be easily drawn into an abandonment of his claim upon her. Her representations were marvellous powerful, and his nature was exceeding yielding. Nevertheless, though he did not in any way dispute the marriage, in heart and soul he loathed and detested it.

From the first hour he heard of the arrangement he became a different being. A slow, consuming fever preyed upon him—his flesh fell away—he could endure no employment—he could enjoy no gratification. He confined himself to his own chamber, where, hour after hour, he sat at the table with an open book before him; but the page was never turned, and, though the eyes dwelt on it, they took in nothing of its meaning. His thoughts were directed elsewhere, but kept themselves to a most contracted circle; for, oppressed by a sense of his own misery, they seemed to have no energy to get beyond it.

Thus, day after day passed by, he getting weaker and weaker, his cheek more transparent, his look more haggard, and a settled despair seemed stamped upon his visage, with a sharpness that expressed death in every line. No one came near him but Millicent, who used some arguments to console him, but they were not understood; and, if they had been, they would not have afforded the sufferer any consolation; and, the caresses she continued to heap upon him he received as one in a delirium takes a drug that is to give him present composure.

The night before the wedding-day arrived, and whether her bad heart was touched by the youth's uncomplaining but most eloquent misery, or she had a bad purpose in view, in which her heart was not concerned, is not known; but, most assuredly, she sat up the whole of that night with him: all which time, by every word and deed most convincing, she let him know that he was beloved by her as no other ever could be. He seemed moved by her affectionateness, and clung to it with all the wild fervor of one who knows he hath before him his only stay. The excitement which this produced bel came at last two powerful for his enfeebled frame, and, towards morning, he sunk into a stupor.

It was full noon, on that eventful day, before the unhappy youth recovered to a perfect consciousness. He felt more than ordinarily weak and feeble, but he mechanically rose and made his morning toilet as usual. He noticed that his customary breakfast was prepared for him, but he touched it not. He went to the casement,

and marvelled greatly to see, by the shadow of the sun on the opposite house how late it was in the day.

His thoughts were strange and disconnected. Now he was with his mother in the home of his childhood, hearkening to her sweet counsel; anon, he was engaged with such profitable company as Celsus and Hippocrates, in the familiar seat under the old walnut tree; in a moment he was in the tent of the gipsy girl, restoring her child to life, and directly after he was no less delightfully listening to Master Shakspeare's admirable converse in his well-remembered lodging in the Clink Liberty.

In short, his thoughts went from one thing to another with no settled purpose, travelling hither and thither, yet carefully avoiding home. He dared not think of her. He strove all in his power to avoid recalling to his mind anything which would bring the business of this intolerable day before him. Nevertheless, do what he would, he frequently found himself approaching the dreaded subject. He walked about his chamber, counting his strides as he proceeded; and when he tired of that, he leaned out of the casement and watched the sparrow flitting about the eaves, and the smoke of the chimneys curling up till it disappeared in the blue sky.

The day seemed to be of a monstrous length. He ardently longed for it to end, but every minute had to him the duration of the most tedious hours. He was struck with the extraordinary quietness of the house. In directing his attention to this, the knowledge of why it was so rushed upon him with a force that overthrew all his precautions. Millicent was gone to church!—by this time she was another's! and doubtless they were all making merry every one with another; and while he was in the extremity of his misery, hovering over the brink of very madness, the more fortunate Leonard was —

As his mind caught a glimpse of the exquisite sweet happiness of his rival, there seemed to him to come a sudden whirlwind, which crushed the walls of the chamber in upon him on every side, and making a feeble clutch at the chair on which he had been leaning, he fell in a deadly swoon on the floor.

How long he remained in this state he never knew, for several weeks elapsed before he recovered the facultiss of a reasoning being, and then he was lying on his pallet as feeble as a child, with an entire oblivion of all that had been done to him during that interval, and all the wild rav-

ings and monstrous extravagances he had then exhibited. But he had not been discovered till, on the return of the wedding-party from their day's pleasuring, Millicent stole up to his chamber hurriedly.

If ever contrition touched her cold, selfish heart, one would have fancied it would have been now; but her sole object was her own security, and for this only she looked to his wants, and nursed him throughout his disorder. She feared that, despite her fine scheming, her treachery might be made visible, and albeit her influence over her new made husband was none of the weakest, it was possible a knowledge of her infamous behavior he might receive in a fashion little to her liking. She obtained assistance in which she could trust, and the malady of John Hall began at last to assume a more favorable character.

In especial, the young stepmother of his treacherous, false mistress, was untiring in her attentions, and showed a more than ordinary kindness in every thing she did. He felt gratefully disposed towards her, for her exceeding friendliness at such a time, and, noting his thankfulness, set her to make herself still more agreeable. She had, by this time, learned the true value of the position into which she had been cajoled—she saw the sacrifice that had been made of her—and was at no loss to discover for whose sole advantage she had been thus infamously bartered. Her mind was of a most limited capacity, but it was large enough for vengeance, and it became the business of her life to study some sure way of obtaining it.

She sympathised with him, and denounced the unprincipled conduct of her quondam friend, whose whole proceedings she gradually placed before him in their proper light. He shrank from believing her statements, but she returned again and again to the charge, supporting her accusations by proofs there was no questioning.

Loath as the lover always is to believe ill of the woman he loves, he cannot resist, for any long time, insurmountable evidence, unless he be wilfully blind. Our young physician was wondrously moved at the information he had received, and felt much inclined to upbraid the crafty Millicent for the infamouslyness of her proceedings; but, on her next making her appearance, the consummate hypocrisy of her bearing, and the influence of old impressions, drove him from his purpose, and he let her take her departure as though she were still the matchless, spotless, admirable fond creature he had so long been used to consider her. But when she was gone, and her confidante

returned to him with fresh instances of her falsehood, he again resolved to charge her with it, and break off all intimacy for the future.

He was now sufficiently recovered to leave his chamber; and, as he had of late been schooling himself to meet the woman of whom he had been so enamored, in company, with a sufficient indifferency, he resolved to have his meals on a certain day with the family, as had been his wont before his illness. He presented himself at his customary place, and, though feeling horribly restless and uneasy, he received the general congratulations upon his recovery without much embarrassment. He took his seat. Towards her he dared not look; but he felt she was sitting over-against him. Her husband, to his great relief, was absent, and not expected to return till late.

The meal passed off without anything worthy of notice, save that old Posset strove to show himself in the character of a jester; but his was the facetiousness of a grinning skeleton. Nevertheless, his daughter encouraged his humor, and seemed, to the unhappy student, to have an extraordinary flow of spirits. He could not fail of drawing some comparisons between her now ever ready mirth and her constant affectation of wretchedness a few short months before.

The dinner had all been removed, and the master of the house had brewed a pot of sack, which was poured out in glasses for the company. Millicent had hardly got hers in her hand, when, in a manner half of carelessness and half of spite, she addressed every one in turn, and wished them something which had much the appearance of being what was least desired. John Hall was left by her to the last, when she commenced a speech to him in the same strain, in ambiguous phrase, but sufficiently apparent to all present. She alluded to his ill-placed passion, and wished him, as the best thing that could be had for him, *forgetfulness*. This was too much for the miserable lover; his pride revolted at thus being openly pointed out as the sufferer he was, but the blow was one he could not ward off or withstand. He felt the corners of the room whirling round, and, for some seconds, he lost all consciousness of what or where he was.

It chanced that, just at this time, word was brought that one badly wounded in a scuffle was waiting to have his hurts dressed, which instantly caused the room to be emptied of all but Millicent and John Hall. The former, for some motive or other, left

her place, and came round to him, when she presently put her arm round his neck, as of old. "Take not this accursed marriage of mine so much to heart, my sweet life!" whispered she in his ear very lovingly. "Heed thy behavior, and thou shalt profit by it to thy exceeding contentation. For now such can be done safely which—"

John Hall looked in her face with a sort of bewildered stare, every vein and artery throbbing as though they would burst. He could scarce believe his ears, which had conveyed to him a meaning which seemed to have turned him to a mass of fire; but the gaze that met his own there could be no doubting; his eyes had fallen before its too obvious expression once before; albeit, now the villany of it came to him so glaringly, that his whole soul revolted at its baseness, and he forcibly pushed her from him.

Whilst he buried his face in his hands, he saw nothing of the horrible, fiendish scowl with which the spurned tempter gazed upon him. The comely face was distorted out of all likeness with humanity; it was spectral, Medusa-like, and devilish, beyond all expression. In a short time it returned to its ordinary expression—nay, was more smiling than it had ever been, and Millicent spoke in the light manner she had a moment since, as if nothing had occurred to change her humor. When he found himself strong enough, the young student staggered out of the room, and was soon in the privacy of his own chamber. Here he had full leisure to think over the unquestionable evidence he had just obtained of the worthless nature of the woman he had so distractedly loved. Had the testimony come from any other source, he might have entertained a doubt, but, proceeding as it did from her own polluted lips, it carried with it a terrible conviction. A sensitive nature and a pure mind, that have remained for a long period in the most blessed conviction that the fair creature for whom all their best energies were devoted, was the one rare example of perfect excellence the world possessed, discovering, of a sudden, that she is among the very vilest of her sex, can scarce fail of receiving a shock likely to unsettle his whole being. He who truly loves, loves only in the impression of his mistress's superiority in all worthiness—this conviction is to his passion air, and food, and raiment; this it is that leadeth him to adoration, this it is that speaketh for him in song: but it hath more than once fortuneed, that this fair seeming hath been only the fruit of a much-studied hypocrisy, and that under the outer semblance of such great

goodness there existed unparalleled baseness; and such was it, beyond all manner of doubt, in the case of this unnatural false Jezabel.

Our young student was sorely troubled in mind; but he saw there was for him but one measure, which was a proper schooling of himself to regard the tempter in the light she ought only to be looked upon by him; and, strengthening his heart with divers wholesome resolutions, he succeeded at last in quieting his disturbed nature somewhat. He called to mind his mother's tender warnings, and these and other goodly recollections of the admirable principles she had taken such infinite pains to implant into him, did strengthen and encourage him wonderfully.

It was a little after midnight on the same evening that Millicent left her sleeping husband, and, wrapping herself in a loose gown, stealthily and silently crept down stairs. Having provided herself with a lighted lamp from the kitchen, she proceeded to the little back chamber described in a preceding chapter, as one where Master Docter Posset was wont to enjoy his privacy unmolested by any save his daughter, the door of which she unlocked with a key she took from her girdle; then entering she locked herself in. Placing the lamp on the table, she went immediately to the old cabinet, which she opened with another key. The doors thrown back discovered nests of drawers, save at the top which looked to be blank; but Millicent, touching a secret spring, the panel slid on one side, and there appeared several curiously-shaped little bottles, some with powders, and some with liquids.

She opened one of the drawers, and took from thence a pair of ivory scales with divers small weights; from another she took a graduated glass measure; from a third a pestle and mortar of the same material. These she carefully placed on the table without noise; then took several of the bottles, and weighed and measured their contents in certain quantities, and mixed them in the mortar.

Whilst this was being done, it was curious to notice the dull, unearthly expression which pervaded her visage. Her sallow cheek was more bloodless than ever; her eyes seemed covered with a dead glaze; and her lips were of a blueish tinge, and firmly compressed. Once or twice she looked as though she smiled, but it was a smile of such a sort as might have become a corpse, raised to life by some awful deed of sorcery. Anon, at a sudden noise being heard, she suspended her operations, shaded

the lamp by interposing her handkerchief between it and the door, held her breath, and glared, listening with a terrible attentiveness, with an aspect that seemed to have the fearful power of blasting the sight of any too curious looker-on. All was still again, and she resumed her work with the cold, inhuman visage with which she had commenced it.

The mixture was at last completed, and secured in a vial, and the vessels which had been used were each separately washed and dried, and put with the rest of the things in their proper places. The panel was then returned to its place, and the cabinet locked; and the lamp was held close before the table, and then to the floor, to see that nothing had fallen which could show any one had been in that chamber. Having sufficiently satisfied herself in this respect, she took the vial and the lamp, and, carefully locking the door of the room after her, blew out the light, replaced it in the kitchen, and then cautiously returned to her own chamber.

John Hall awoke much weaker in body than he had been the day before at the same time. As he dressed himself, he again reflected on the incident of the previous day, and he came to a determination of renewing those studies that had been so completely interrupted by the violence of his passion. In accordance with this very admirable resolution, he looked to his favorite books with which he seemed to return with a new relish. But he was not in a condition for any serious study—the task soon became irksome to him, and despite of his inclination to continue at it, he more than once found himself indulging in his old habit of dreamy reveries, instead of directing his attention to the page before him.

To his infinite wonderment and no small confusion, the person of all others he wished least to see entered the room. He would gladly have told her he desired not her company; but there was such a winning cheerfulness in her manner, and such an impressive kindness in her language, that any repulse on his part would appear a rudeness there seemed no warrant for his shewing. She had brought with her a basin of strengthening broth, which she had made, as she said, expressly for the perfect healing of his sickness—for she had determined to take his cure into her own hand—and she continued to converse with so graceful a modesty, and so admirable a good humor, that he could not help coming to some doubts he had understood her rightly in her behavior to him the previous day.

The end was, that he allowed himself to

be persuaded by her of the restorative qualities of the broth, and was content to make trial of its effects. She insisted she would see him take it, as was the duty of a good nurse, and so he fell into her humor, and straightway began to do as she would have him.

The broth seemed of especial excellence, and cunningly compounded, as she said, of certain rare herbs. He commended its savor, and was content she should concoct the same mess for him every day till he recovered. Several days passed, and she came regularly at the same hour, and behaved in the like commendable fashion, always overflowing, as it were, with good-humor, gentleness, and the tenderest sympathy. Nevertheless, for all her friendly care, he felt himself getting much worse, and in a manner for which, with all his skill in medicine, he could not account. His pulse was sinking, his mouth was parched with an ill taste, his head ached strangely, he had racking internal pains, and his limbs could scarce support his body. His new nurse, hearing these symptoms, made light of them, and still maintained her restorative broth should work his speedy cure. This while he saw no one else but Millicent, for she had taken especial pains to keep every one out of the way.

His pains were getting to be so great, and his feebleness so to increase, that he began to think his case needed the most skillful physician he could find; and on this point he spoke seriously to his attendant, but she treated his fears as proceeding only from lowness of spirits, which would leave him in a day or two, and pressed on him her restorative broth as an unquestionable remedy.

It had been her practice every day to stay in the room whilst her patient swallowed the broth, and she would never be satisfied till he had drank it all. It so happened on one occasion she was suddenly called away very urgently when he had about half finished it, and, not feeling disposed to take any more, John Hall put the basin on the ground before a favorite little spaniel that usually accompanied Millicent in her visits. The dog, nothing loath, licked it up every drop; but, scarcely had he done so, when he began to appear exceeding restless and uneasy. Presently he whined very piteously, and ran round the chamber with his tongue out of his mouth, looking terribly disturbed. Anon he stopped, and straightway twisted himself about, and writhed and rolled, howling wildly, and foaming at the mouth as though in a monstrous agony.

John Hall gazed on the poor animal in a strange amazement and alarm. At first he was fain to believe he might be taken with a sudden fit; but when he, beheld the evident torture he endured, and saw too plainly he was dying a terrible death, he was bewildered and astounded with his own thoughts. The symptoms were undoubtedly those which arise from the taking of poison; this poison could only have been in the broth he had just swallowed; and, if the broth had been mixed with any poisonous stuff, it was such as he had been taking for several days.

A horrible conviction came upon him, and he gasped for breath as he entertained it. He had been daily taking the broth, and had been daily getting into a state like one who may be said to be dying by inches.

At this moment the dog uttered a piercing howl, and gave up the ghost, and John Hall sank, sick unto death, into the nighest chair.

He was, however, roused from the stupor that was coming over him by the return of Millicent, and, making a desperate effort as he clung to the back of the chair for support, he hurriedly related the awful sight he had just witnessed, and, in a few and incoherent words, accused her of attempting his life by daily administering some noxious ingredient. As, with looks of horror and alarm, he gazed upon her visage, he was struck by the ghastly paleness which instantly overspread it, and the shrinking eye, quivering lip, and trembling form, were alone sufficient evidence of her atrocious guilt.

Where was the matchless hypocrisy, the subtle craft, the wondrous readiness of deception that had so often served her in times of peril? Where were her tricks, and glazings, and cheats she had in such infinite abundance at her command? Had the ample magazine of her artifices been so exhausted, there was no lie left, no deceit practicable, no treachery at command, by which she could move the foul suspicion which every moment grew more black against her?

A few seconds of horrible silence followed, which the young student at last broke, as with a superhuman energy. Catching his breath with a sharp guttural spasm, in a voice scarcely audible for its hoarseness, he bade her "Begone!" The wretch obeyed, cowed as it were by the suddenness of the discovery of her damnable villainousness, and retired as quickly as she could—perchance to devise means of practising upon her victim more effectually.

But, scarce had the door closed upon her, when John Hall started up with frantic eagerness, hurried down stairs, and rushed out of the house, with the fullest determination never to enter those accursed doors again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Then the Soldier

* * * * *

Seeking the bubble reputation,
Even in the cannon's mouth.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE state of Venice had been famed for the vigor wherewith it had in times passed carried on war against the Ottoman; and, although years had gone by since any distinguishing victory had brought honor to the arms of this renowned republic, there were not wanting, either amongst her hardy gondoliers, her skilful artificers, or prodigal young nobles, spirits as ready to rally round the glorious banner of St. Mark, as when defended by the most heroic of her doges, it was planted on the walls of the capital of the western world.

The winged lion, though far less prominent in the war of Christian chivalry against the turbaned infidel, than in the time-honored days of the worthies of her golden book, had not yet learned to live in inglorious peace with the ancient enemy of its protectors, and both by land and sea, had, with scarce any intermissions, looked over battles and skirmishings, as varying in their natures as in their fortunes. Sometimes both Venetians and Turks carried on their enduring contest in places as remote from the natural home of the one as of the other, and upon an occasion armaments would be fitted out by either power to invade the dominions of the other; but, wherever they might chance to meet, this was certain, that very pretty fighting would soon follow, which was thought so attractive a matter to divers of the restless bold hearts of the more peaceful kingdoms of Europe, that they liked nothing so much as to serve a campaign or so under the Venetian commanders.

It chanced that the whole senate of Venice became thrown into a sudden commotion by the intelligence that a powerful body of Turks had contrived to land, and take by surprise a small place in the Venetian territory, which it was said they had entrenched, as though with a view to retain. Measures, however, were promptly taken to dispossess them of their conquest,

and the warlike citizens of the republic, inflamed by the rumors of their unfortunate countrymen taken prisoners only to be sold as slaves, thronged to the ships that were to transport them to the spot they intended to signalize by the punishment of their audacious enemy, and the deliverance of their pining friends. I would I might, with a proper convenience of this, my story, here tell the goodly show of weapons, the famous display of armor, and the no less admirable array of all other proper munitions of war, that gave such a brave appearance to the lagunes; but I must for certain good and proper reasons at once transport the reader to the camp of the Venetians, a brief space only before they assaulted the position the Turks had taken, and seemed ready enough to defend.

The two armies lay in sight of each other, the Ottomans on a hill over-against the little town, above which their standards still proudly waved. Afar off was the sea, with the Turkish fleet hotly engaged with the ships of Venice, which, having put ashore the force intended to operate against their enemies on the land, had sailed to destroy their vessels, and so prevent their escaping by sea.

The town seemed to be defended with no lack of military skill, but the principal reliance of the infidels looked to be a battery of six petards, which already began to pour forth its murderous fire as the front columns of the Venetians approached with trumpets blowing and banners flying to begin the combat. The whole army of the republic was in motion; and it was at this period, just as their general, surrounded by his ablest captains, had given his last orders for the disposition of his forces, an ancient approached, and with a vast show of respect and reverence, delivered certain papers into his hands. The general was a veteran, tall, stately, and severe of aspect, who, it was easy to see, had fought under the banner of St. Mark, for some two score years at least. He was splendidly apparelled in the picturesque Venetian habit, which lost nothing of its state by being seen on his commanding figure. In brief, he was just that manner of man wherof the skilful limning of Titian hath given such admirable examples.

Taking the papers into his hands, he broke the seals, and read them attentively, and with visable appearance of interest. This done, he addressed himself to the bearer, and said, in an audible sonorous voice:—"Let them enter." Straightway the officer made his obedience, and departed

thence; presently, however, returning, accompanied by two persons, whom he announced as "the Signor Shakspea, and the Signor Guglielmo Erberto, Cavalieri Inglese." The different captains looked on the strangers with a pleased curiousness, for there was that in both that did as well become as bespeak the soldier. The captain-general gazed from one to the other as they saluted him, and, if satisfied with the fiery valor that shone in the glances of the younger of the two, his eyes rested with no less approval on the steady resoluteness that was as plainly to be seen in the graver aspect of the senior. Him he addressed.

"I have read with very singular satisfaction, Signor," said he with exceeding graciousness of manner, "these letters from certain honorable Councillors of State, in Venice, my assured friends, stating your desire to serve with your young companion, under my command, and urgently recommending you both, as persons of consideration and worship, to my countenance and favor. Signor, I am right glad to please the state—and am well content to have any of your honorable nation to be my good comrades in this campaign. By the favor of God and St. Mark, I will anon give you such opportunity of displaying your noble valor against the infidel as I doubt not will be greatly to your contentation.

"Da Ponte!" he exclaimed, to a young soldier of the group around him, "take these worthy cavaliers to be of your company, and with all dispatch join the division now marching against the enemy's centre; and, gentlemen," he added, to the others, "we will all, an it please you to our several posts."

Thereupon there was a stir among that warlike assembly—each hurried away to his company, or to perform such duty as had been previously assigned him—sounds of command were heard in all directions—trumpets were blown and drums beat: the general mounted a charger richly caparisoned, and with several of his captains about him, galloped off; and my Lord of Pembroke's heir and his estimable governor found themselves, in a few minutes' space, marching in the midst of a well-appointed body of Venetian soldiers, directly in front of the enemy's position.

At this time, the loud report of the great guns, and a scattered firing of matchlocks, told that some of the advanced parties were already engaged with the Turks: but it was not till the armies approached each other more nearly that the contest became general, and then it began to wax fiercer and

fiercer every instant—for both were inflamed with religious zeal, and a national animosity that had endured for many generations.

The bravery of silken scarfs, embroidered vestments, rich banners, gorgeous turbans, costly arms and armor, that figured in that battle-field exceedeth belief, and when the smoke cleared away from any part, it was like unto a curtain rising above some matchless picture, glowing with all the deepest colors of the painter's art.

The infidels had something besides fanaticism and hatred to urge them to make a stiff fight of it, for they were well aware that, unless they beat off their assailants, their case was desperate indeed. What success their fleet met with, they could have no knowledge of, but they saw it was in vain to look there for assistance at that time. Therefore, they encouraged each other with their warlike cries, and rushed forward with shouts in praise of their prophet, and execrations against "the Christian dogs," with whom they were so eager to engage in deadly battle.

Master Shakspeare, in availing himself of that favorable opportunity to obtain for his beloved scholar the prized accomplishments of a soldier, had not done so without some inward strife with himself. All the earnest deep passion he had so long yet secretly felt for the noble mother, he had gradually transferred to her high-spirited son, as her representative and perfect image; to the lawfulness of which he had succeeded in reconciling himself, though he was as zealously intent as ever in concealing from its object the influence by which his feelings were ever directed towards him.

Moreover, he had more than one reason for directing his steps towards the Venetian camp, not the least pressing of which was the necessity there existed of removing his charge, where pressing duties and constant action would destroy a degrading entanglement he had watched with solicitude, and had in vain by other means endeavored to destroy. The youthful lover would needs be his own judge in the correctness of such matters, and like a fiery horse would rush into the horriest mischief were any rude means employed to move him out of the way of it.

To his governor's huge content, he found that he readily embraced the attractive project of seeing somewhat of the art of war; but now that Master Shakspeare had him where he so desired, he was by no means free from disquietude; for one moment, seeing the stoutness with which the battle was

contested, he feared he might come to harm, and so cause the greatest unhappiness that could befall his noble mother; and anon, noting his wilful heedlessness of proper discipline, he despaired of his distinguishing himself as would be most to her contentation.

Weapons of numberless sorts were now glancing threateningly in all directions around him—the well-tempered Damascus blade crossing the trusty Toledo, and the bright Moorish lance ringing against the Milan breastplate. The spirited war cry of "God and St. Mark," from the stout soldiers of the republic, was replied to by deafening shouts in which "Allah" and "Mahomet" could not fail of being heard. The Turks opposed the Venetians at every inch, endeavoring with frantic furiousness to break their ranks, but the latter forced them back with great slaughter after a long and severe contest, and advanced to a bridge entering upon the town, which was defended by petards supported by a strong force of desperate infidels. If Master Shakspeare found enough employment in locking to the safety of his young companion in arms, awhile since, in the attack on the bridge that soon followed, the service was one that required tenfold watchfulness.

The winged Lion waved proudly above the heads of its defenders, as they came steadily on to the assault in the very face of the terrible iron engines, that vomited their deadly iron shower amongst them. Here the Venetians suffered severely, for when the Turkish engineers had fired their formidable artillery, numerous matchlock men from the neighboring houses and walls kept up a murderous fire, whilst they prepared for another discharge. Cries, mingled with groans, and defiance, were answered with insults and execrations. More than once the brave soldiers of Venice were beaten back on this point, but they eagerly responded to the voice of their commanders, and pressed forward to revenge their slaughtered comrades.

My Lord of Pembroke's heir was often in the most imminent peril—his companions kept falling fast around him, and it could scarce be expected he could long escape the same end, for he had got himself in the foremost ranks, and, to the admiration of both friends and foes, was ever with his anxious governor close at his side, the first to push forward after a repulse. The behavior of the English cavaliers so inspired their allies, that on a sudden they all rushed, in spite of the storm of missiles that saluted them, up to the very mouths of the

cannon. The engineers fled from their guns, and the bridge was in the possession of the Venetians.

It was here, during the short but slaughtering conflict that took place before the Turks finally gave way, that a gigantic infidel threw himself suddenly before young Herbert, as he impetuously pressed onward with the most daring of the assailants, after their retreating foes, and easily beating aside his slight rapier, the glittering blade he wielded with no less strength than skill was descending on the youth's head, when it fell from a nerveless grasp, as the sword of the trusty governor was buried to the hilt in his heart. Thrice had a similar service been conferred, in that perilous fight, by the same vigorous arm; then the watchful guardian, assuming a calm he felt not, had been forced to hurry on in a feverish anxiousness, to avert the mischiefs that seemed to threaten him in countless numbers; but in this instance, the greatness of the escape of his charge affected him so, that he lost sight of his ordinary self-control, and with a frantic transport embraced him with all manner of joyful and endearing ejaculations. He was not long, however, before he became aware of his forgetfulness, and as suddenly left his passionate fond humor to put on the more sober fashion of the worthy governor. Fortunately, as he thought, the youth marked not the strangeness of his behavior, taking it to be excessive pleasure in having effected his rescue, in so timely a manner, and did no more than express his thankfulness for such excellent service.

Just at this time, the Captain-General of the Venetian army coming up, stopped at sight of the two English cavaliers, and, before all the captains and soldiers around him, did commend them exceedingly for their notable gallantry. Fired with this praise, both presently hastened with the main body into the town, which was stormed at all points. Numbers of the Turks were driven into the sea—many perished in the houses in which they vainly attempted to defend themselves—and the few who remained together in the streets, keeping up a desperate and hopeless resistance, disdainful quarter and shouting defiance to their enemies, were cut down to a man.

Scarcely was this glorious victory completed, when the fleet of the republic, after an equally successful conflict with the Turkish ships, returned with several prizes, the rest having been either sunk, or scattered to the winds, so that no two of them could be found together. Such an humbling of the Ottoman power the state of Venice had

not achieved for many a year, and great was the exultation among all classes, both of the land and sea forces in consequence.

My Lord of Pembroke's heir and his worthy governor were held in especial honor by their principal men of war, for the exceeding valor they had displayed when the fight was at the hottest; and, at the return of the expedition, the nobles vied with each other which should show them most favor and distinction.

Nor were the ladies in any way behind their lords in this, and showered their most bewitching smiles, as though of all things they cared for nothing so much as to have such gallant spirits for their declared servants and devoted favored lovers. As there were many amongst them of a very exquisite and ravishing beauty, Master Shakspeare did look with no slight degree of alarm on the greatness of the temptation with which his young charge was now surrounded; and he had need of all his watchfulness to take heed he thrust himself in no fatal mischiefs. The secret assignations—the nightly serenades—the stolen interviews—he knew to be full of deadly peril; and he never saw him enter his gondola but he feared the poniard of some envious rival, or the poison of some jealous mistress, would put a terrible close to the adventure, in which, he was but too well aware, he was then embarking.

It was on the very balmiest of moonlight nights, when the silver radiance of that planet, which is so well liked of lovers, was lighting up the rich architecture of one of the stateliest palaces in all Venice, that a lady of that ripe and luscious loveliness that doth, as it were, take the senses of the gazer by storm, was seen in such glorious robes and ornaments, as could the most temptingly set off her admirable form and countenance, leaning on a balcony over-against a marble terrace that led by a flight of steps into the canal that washed the basement walls of the building, looking with eyes lustrous as fire, yet possessed of a tenderness withal, that did marvellously soften their flaming glances, across the water, as though for something she expected there to behold. Ever and anon a melancholy gondola would be seen gliding along, and the voices of the gondoliers might be heard answering to each other in words of liquid sweetness and tones of passionate music. Perchance the slight breeze, that so gently stirred the waters, would waft to the ear of the watcher a burst of harmony which was readily recognized as a serenade of some fond lover for the peculiar delectation

of his, perchance, equally fond mistress, but these were all afar off, and evidently were not, in any way, attending upon the pleasures of the lady of the balcony.

She seemed to span the blue waves that spread out before her glance with an increasing interest—the glowing cheek sometimes paling, and anon, flushing to a warmer hue than before, as she watched the course of the distant gondolas. Presently she noted one dextrously turned into the channel that flowed beneath her, and then her rosy mouth dimpled into an expression of such delicious sweetness, that doth defy the poet or the painter's craft to do justice to; and, after waiting awhile with an eloquent heaving breast, a softer glance, and a more crimsoned cheek, as she recognized the well-known boat being propelled towards the palace, she retired a little distance, whence she could conveniently see and yet not be seen.

The gondola was urged onward till it stopped at the foot of the stairs—thereupon a strain of soft music commenced, which presently received additional harmony, of no ordinary sort, from a rich, manly voice, whose every note was as full of passion as of music. The words, which lacked no art in the singer to make them sufficiently expressive, were to the following purpose:

SERENADE.

The day hath lost its gladness,
Bella Donna!
The night is wrapt in sadness,
Bella Donna!
The wave, the shore, the skies,
Now don their sober dyes,
Pining for thy sweet eyes,
Bella Donna!
But, ah! more deep emotion,
Bella Donna!
Than earth, or air, or ocean,
Bella Donna!
Must be his hapless case,
To whom all's dull and base,
That lacks thy matchless grace,
Bella Donna!
Then bring thy fondest glances,
Bella Donna!
To chase such solemn fancies,
Bella Donna!
And hear, till blushing morn,
All nature put to scorn,
And love's soft worship sworn,
Bella Donna!

As the song of the unseen singer came to its close, the lady, with looks that did most completely bespeak her approval of its

sentiments, came to the balcony and waved her handkerchief. A moment, and there leapt on shore a young and handsome cavalier—a moment more he had ascended the stairs, crossed the terrace, reached the balcony, and was locked in the arms of the kind Venetian. Scarce, however, had the lovers begun to give utterance to their mutual adoration, when a shadow fell upon them, and the figure of an old man, whose wrinkled visage was distorted with hatred and jealousy, was seen creeping stealthily behind them, with a long, sharp dagger clutched in his nerveless grasp.

"Fly, Signor Erberto! Maledetto! here is my husband!" screamed the terrified dame, as she glided from his embrace and disappeared. The youth was so hugely surprised that he knew not where to look for the unwelcome intruder; and the threatening weapon was already gleaming in his eyes, when a figure, closely wrapped in a black domino, and as closely masked, rushed from his place of concealment, and, in the same instant, the meditated assassin was hurled down the marble stairs, and lay stunned and motionless at the bottom.

"Well met again, Excellency," said an unknown voice, cheerfully.

"And again I thank thee, Signor," replied the gallant, though with more reserve than might have been expected under the circumstances. "But methinks it seemeth marvellous strange thou shouldst ever be at hand when my life is in jeopardy. I would fain know to whom I am so hugely indebted."

"Pardon me, Signor Erberto," said the other, "my name is not of such importance to deserve the attention of a noble English cavalier, like yourself. But let me warn you, Excellency, that if you leave not this city ere another sun sets, the vengeance of offended husbands and jealous rivals, to whom you have given such potent provocation, cannot fail of overtaking you."

"A notable warning, i' faith!" cried the youth, laughingly. "But I fear me much I am in no case for profiting by it, while the dames of this beautiful city are at once so fair and so kind."

"Cospetto! they are indeed a temptation," said the stranger, but added, more gravely, "The love which is so lightly won, methinks, ought to be valued by any man, who is not a fool or madman, as of little account in comparison with his own life."

"Am I fool or madman, Signor, if I choose to risk my life in such pursuits?" angrily demanded the fiery youth.

"In honest truth, so it would seem," quietly replied the other.

"And, perchance, I may be thought something worse?" asked Master Herbert, with every symptom of a rising passion.

"I doubt not you would be open to such an opinion," gravely responded his companion.

"Nay, by this hand, this is sheer insult!" exclaimed the impetuous young Englishman. "You have put an intolerable affront on me. I will owe no obligations to one who doth good services only to hold the person on whom he conferreth them in contempt. I charge you, draw and defend yourself."

The stranger seemed unwilling at first to comply with this challenge; but soon finding he could not avoid it, he opened his domino, and drew his rapier. He had but barely time to put himself on his defence, when the rash and fiery youth came upon him so vigorously, yet so incautiously withal, that, after a few rapid passes, he ran upon the point of his opponent's weapon, and it entered his side to some depth. At the sight of his blood, the stranger uttered a cry of horror and despair, impossible to be expressed; and his mask dropping off as he stooped to catch the wounded youth, who was falling in a swoon to the ground, there appeared the noble features of Master Shakspeare. He hurriedly caught his young charge in his arms, and carried him down to the gondola, where he presently bound up the wound, and soon had him safe at his own lodgings, under the care of the skilfullest chirurgeons in Venice.

Master Herbert never knew by whom he had been wounded, and believed that he had been discovered after he had received his hurt. The worthy governor now played the part of the anxious nurse, not only attending strictly to the surgeon's directions, but making the hours of the invalid—restless at all times, but now still more impatient of confinement—so pleasant with the legends and ballads he had picked up from the gondoliers and others, that he seemed to forget he was under any restraint. Foremost in these narratives in his favor was the romantic story of a Moor, who was a general of the Venetian army, and, taking to wife an exquisite Venetian lady, was driven to such a madness of jealousy by the perjuries of an artful villain, that he stifled his fair wife as she slept; and when he found how deeply he had been deceived, presently laid violent hands on himself, and died, in the old Roman fashion, with his own sword.

In this way he was healed in an incredible short time; and, leaving Venice, they travelled in the direction of Verona, visiting all the places worthy of note in their way. It is true, young Herbert seemed to listen to what came from his worthy tutor with more attentiveness than formerly; but the magic of a pair of black eyes soon deprived the forciblest lessons of wisdom of their attraction; and he was wont to neglect them altogether when he found more pleasing studies elsewhere. Master Shakspeare lived in a state of exceeding anxiousness about his young charge, who would be absent from him for two or three days together, dreading he was engaged in some questionable adventure, endangering as much his credit as his safety; but he so loved him, as much now for some nobler qualities he had seen in him, as for the noble mother he did so forcibly remind him of, that he found greater difficulties every day to put on the governor towards him, as harshly as he made it necessary.

It is essential that here the author should change the scene of the many-colored life he has essayed to draw, to one as strangely differing from what the understanding reader hath had knowledge of, as doth a phoenix from a barn-door fowl. So, with his permission, I will at once transport him to one of the wildest landscapes that ever figured in a painter's canvas or a poet's dream. It was a sort of ravine or gorge in the mountains, enclosed by huge masses of granite, covered with lichens of various colors; but rank and luxuriant vegetation of shrubs and grasses was perceptible where the soil was deeper, with here and there a tall tree, stretching its giant arms far above.

Picketed where the best fodder seemed to grow were two or three young horses, which, to all appearance, were worth a fair sum, save only to such as were well experienced in the buying of horse-flesh, who would detect in them such faults, cunningly disguised though they were, that made them comparatively worthless. Further off were asses and mules grazing at full liberty, save that a half-naked urchin, who seemed to find excellent sport, as he lay at his length on the ground, by gambling with himself for a single doit, was watching that they strayed not too far. In one place tents were pitched; in another, a fire burnt, and a huge black pot was reeking over it; but, save a few boys lying about in idle, listless groups here and there, whose devil-may-care features appeared to have lost half their audacity, there was nothing of human life visible.

But, on getting behind the tents, this

could be no longer the case, for, lo! there was an assemblage grouped together, of man and woman, of age and youth, swarthy as Moors; all looking as wild and lawless a set as ever cheated or robbed, and not a few having just that sort of visage commonly thought to belong exclusively to such as deal in witchcraft, and have dealings with the arch enemy of mankind.

Truly this was as diabolical a set of beings as could ever have been found together in one place. They squatted on their hams, excepting some who leaned against the rock, or lay at full length, resting on their elbows; but the faces of all had the same settled stern malignity, whether it was that of the toothless crone, or the budding girl, the decrepid grandfather, or the sportive child—all, save one, and she was as different from all around her as is a costly gem among basest pebbles. She stood in the centre of the circle, her hands tied behind her; and, though the stream of silken hair, that hung dishevelled over her graceful shoulders, almost concealed her exquisite countenance, there was enough of her visible to show it could be no other thus strangely placed than the wondrous dancer of the Romaica, the seductive Bohemian, the idolized Xariqua, whom the reader last beheld winning all hearts in the streets of Rome.

But what a change was here! She then was free as a bird, and as though her heart was only lighter than her fairy feet. Now the downcast eye, the cheek of deathlike paleness, the compressed lip, and the quick heaving of her breast, betokened a state fearfully different. What meant this? In honest truth no other than this—she had sinned against the laws of her tribe, and was now on her trial. Her offence was one that, in their savage code, was visited the most heavily of all for which they sought to legislate. The very spirit of their distinct existence was an irreconcilable hatred against all who were not of their blood, and she had been detected in indulging a passion for a stranger. As her judges and accusers were influenced by one feeling, and as their law expressly stated the crime and the punishment, they were not long in coming to a verdict. In short, she had been tried and condemned. The oldest man of the tribe, a hoary patriarch, with beetling eyebrows and tanned and shrivelled skin, arose in all the dignity of rags and dirt, and, leaning heavily on a long staff, in a cold and malignant tone thus addressed the criminal.

“Woman, thou hast brought shame and dishonor on the Rommanee! thou hast bestowed thyself on one of the hated Bosnee.

Woman! it was lawful for thee to have so conducted thyself with a lover of that accursed race, that he might be deluded, cheated, and tricked for thy especial sport and satisfaction; and when thou hadst had sufficient gain of him, there was plenty of our people ready to cut his throat—too good a death for so base a hound!—had it been thy command. Woman, thou hast not sought to show the craft of the Rommancee in thy dealings with this son of a hated race; it is known and proved that thou hast loved him—may his blood be drink for dogs!—only as thou shouldst love the man of thine own people.

“It is provided by our law that the woman who shall commit this villany shall assuredly die; that the manner of her death shall be by the knife; that it shall be done in a convenient secret place; and that the punishment of her crime after this manner shall, under all cases and circumstances, be by the hand of her next of kin.”

“Oh! no, no!” shrieked the criminal, looking wildly at her judges, “you cannot be so inhuman—an act so monstrous can never be intended. I am ready to die. I will not shrink—I will not utter a groan. But to find my executioner in mine own child—oh, it is too terrible! Spare me!—have mercy! You that are mothers, you that are fathers, you that have seen how a mother’s heart clingeth to her own offspring—I pray you change this horrible sentence, and I will willingly endure a thousand deaths of another sort, be they all the cruellest that ever were devised!”

She implored in vain. They who chose to take any heed of her appeal coldly said, “It is our law;” others answered her with curses, and the rest moved carelessly away. Then she frantically called on one, and reminded him of such a service she had done him; another she bade remember her promises of returning, on a fit occasion, some portion of the benefits she had bestowed upon her; a third she begged, in return for the securing his happiness with his mistress, he would strive for her to get so intolerable a sentence altered. They one and all muttered, “It is our law,” and departed their several ways.

At this time two horses, with rude bridles were brought; and one of the savages of the tribe leaping on one, the criminal was placed before him. The boy noticed in another chapter now made his appearance, dogged and sullen in visage, yet with a resoluteness worthy of one of the devil’s imps. He leaped on the other horse, and

they both rode through the gorge, till they came to a clump of cork-trees quite out of sight of the encampment. At the foot of one a grave had been dug.

The poor dancer had not failed to use the most moving entreaties which, in her agony, she could think of; but she might have as well addressed them to a stone as to her companion. He interrupted them with the horriest imprecations; and, alighting at the end of his journey, roughly took her off her seat, and bound her with cords to a tree. He then addressed the boy, and, putting a long, sharp knife into his hand, bade him act as became one of the true blood, and he should be their king, as his father was. Having said this, he mounted his horse, and returned to his people, without attempting to look back, or show any further concern in the matter.

The criminal had uttered never a word since she had been bound to the tree. But her eyes were fixed on her son with an intensity of horrible curiousness which language can give but an exceeding faint idea of. Her face was of a bluish paleness, and in the expression of it, at that time, was something which seemed awfully unearthly. There was no motion at her heart, there was no color in her lips; in her eyes only there looked to be life, and it was such life as the living had never before been known to have possession.

The boy remained for a few seconds gazing on the weapon given him for the atrocious act he was expected to perform. Whether his memory fell back upon the numberless proofs of the deepest and sincerest love woman ever felt for her first-born he had experienced, or whether, as was more common to the children of these singular and abominable race, he was insensible to any grateful feeling, and indifferent to the most sacred ties, cannot be ascertained; but the sounds from the hoofs of the retreating horse had died away before he ventured to look up.

At that instant he met the full force of the spectral gaze that had been fixed upon him, and it made him start as though he had felt the shock of an earthquake. He seemed to strive to avoid it, but on him it had the power of fascination. He could not glance aside; he could not turn. He felt his feet rooted to the ground, and his eyes drawn as though by cords in the direction of those whose light he was there to quench for ever. His arms fell powerless at his side; the weapon dropped from his feeble grasp. He felt sick faint, burn-

ing, scorching, suffocating; and presently, with a loud cry, fell down in a fit into the open grave before him.

This result had scarcely been effected, when a youthful cavalier, who had, for some moments prior, been engaged in making a cautious descent from a neighboring tree, flew as though on wings to the intended victim; and, rapidly cutting the cords which bound her, easily placed her, insensible as she was, on the horse quietly grazing near, which he then mounted and rode off over the broken and tortuous paths that led from this savage scene, at its fullest speed.

It was not till all chance of immediate pursuit seemed removed, that the cavalier ventured to slacken the pace for the purpose of beholding the state of his helpless burthen. He unclasped his arms, and looked on her face. The current of air to which she had been exposed during her rapid journey appeared to have revived her somewhat; a more natural color had returned to her skin; she breathed gently but regularly; anon she opened her eyes; and then, with a very ecstasy of gladness, murmured "Erberto mio!" as she gave back her lover's affectionate embrace. She then fell into another swoon; but a few drops from the contents of a hunting-flask recovered her presently, and he pushed on as fast as he could to where his own horses were waiting, where he arrived just as the one on which he rode showed undeniable symptoms of being utterly exhausted of its strength.

CHAPTER XXVII.

We came to Paris on the Seine,
 'Tis wondrous fair, 'tis nothing clean,
 'Tis Europe's greatest town:
 How strong it is I need not tell it,
 For all the world may easily smell it,
 That walk it up and down.

RICHARD CORBET.

In the time sought to be illustrated in this veritable story there was a worshipful city, the fame whereof was bruited far and wide as the abode and seat, as it were, of pleasure; for, from the very getting up of the sun to its lying down, nought seemed to be known or understood in that gay place, but the art of passing time—or wasting it, according to some—in the pursuit of the most agreeable pastime in which man and woman could be engaged. This pastime, be it known, which was so generally engaged in, that old and young, rich and poor,

learned and ignorant, the greatest statesmen and the most absolute blockheads, joined in it with a like eagerness, and each, after his own fashion, made it the very business of his life, was, by general consent, regarded by a name to which it had no manner of pretension. As in a great cage of monkeys you shall see every one of them filching his neighbor's apple rather than guard his own, these worthy persons took on themselves to leave their wives, or daughters, or sisters, or mistresses, as the case might be, for any man's unlawful having, while they were dishonestly intent on the wives, daughters, sisters, or mistresses of their especial friends; and this was to them a source of infinite contentation, nay, the *summum bonum* of their lives—and the name they gave to this pleasure was none other than "Love."

Now it chanced that the king of this people as much exceeded any of his subjects in the energy with which he embarked in those pleasant adventures, as doth a triton exceed a minnow. It would be in vain to number the wives, daughters, sisters, and mistresses of other men who were honored as objects of his particular and right royal regard. In these pleasant affairs he was a merchant adventurer, who had taken out letters of marque against all and sundry the fairest dames and damsels that were to be met with on the high seas of gallantry; and, though he chose to appear as a holiday barge rather than as a corsair, he rifled such as fell in his way as completely as though he carried a black flag at his mast; and the citizens of his good city looked up to him with admiration, assisting him with all their powers to secure success in his several adventures, feeling most loyally indignant when he met with any obstinate, rebellious virtuousness, and triumphing in his successes over chastity, modesty, and the like sort of traitorous criminality, as though they felt a more than ordinary interest in the prosperity of his undertaking.

The consequence whereof was that the whole city was continually astir with every sort of entertainment that could so please the fair dames and damsels within its walls, as to incline their hearts to share in that pastime which both sexes had been pleased to distinguish with the name just mentioned. Dancing, singing, feasting, drinking, gambling, and all other pleasures whatsoever, were in such constant requisition, that an indifferent person might have said, after observing this constant humor of revelry, that there could be no other business in the world. Such was the city, and such its

sovereign—such was Paris at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and such its popular monarch—the gay, the gallant, fond, and fickle Henri Quatre.

It was about a month after the circumstance related at the close of the last chapter that the gayest palace of this gay city seemed to have assumed more than its customary excess of revelry. Wherever the eye turned within this magnificent building, it fell upon evidences of luxury, profusion, and grandeur. Such carving, such gilding, such painting, such tapestry, such gold and silver plate, bright burning lights, such variety of costly raiment, such abundance of rich jewels, such dancing, such music, such a multitude of light hearts, and, to say the truth, lighter heads, could be found in no other place in the world. And, in especial, the principal state rooms seemed the very court of pleasure, where every one gave himself up to the most absolute enjoyment. Albeit, instead of the dwelling of a Christian king, it seemed the palace of a heathen Aspasia, where beauty was the passport of both sexes, and all qualities, gifts, and enjoyments made to minister to the gratification of personal vanity.

There were great lords and great ladies, great statesmen and great prelates, great soldiers and great wits, one and all intent upon considering themselves under the shafts of the rosy urchin whose arrows are of such intolerable keenness. The very atmosphere was pregnant with vows of everlasting devotedness, and praises of incomparable attractions—whereof the vows might stand firm for a week at the least, and the attractions be deemed matchless for a duration almost as long; provided always no other form and features appeared with any pretensions to rivalry.

The great lords and ladies made their language to be less of the proper court phrase than the proper courting phrase. The great statesmen pondered less on nations and their policy than on hearts and their affections. The great prelates preached but from one text, which was "Love one another;" and, to their praise be it said—after a certain fashion—they practised as they preached. The great soldiers chose one particular campaign only, wherein, in besieging hearts, taking captive such as resisted them, and in bringing their fair enemy to an engagement, they covered themselves with laurels more than sufficient to have satisfied all the Cæsars; and the great wits were ever industrious in the invention of sugared poems, pretty jests, choice epigrams, quaint sonnets, and the like dainty

goods, upon one theme only, whereof the reader may presently get acquainted by the prominence with which such brave words as "love" and "dove," "heart" and "dart," "grace" and "face," are thrust before him.

Filled with a throng of such worshipful good company, the palace of the King of France presented a scene alike joyous and picturesque. The bravery of dress displayed by both sexes outrivalled the peacock and the dolphin in delicate colors, and in gold and gems looked as though the jewelers of the city had scattered their whole shops upon their several persons. They were engaged in all sorts of ways. In one chamber they sat round tables gambling with cards and dice, ladies as well as lords, and, perchance, the winnings of the latter from the others were rarely paid or demanded in the current coin; in another, they danced to amorous tunes measures of a like tender character; in a third was much passionate singing, and discoursing a monstrous deal of flattery, and a prodigal allowance of scandal—the natural sauces which do most delight a court palate. There were groups of spectators, and groups of gossips; groups of busybodies, and groups of idlers; groups of young courtiers, discussing the perfections of the thousand-and-first last new favorite; and groups of old ones, equally fluent in their recollections of the thousand who had preceded her.

Then in one place you heard a sort of popinjay, with the earnestness of life and death, laying down the law respecting the color of the beard, the material of a doublet, and the fashion of a sleeve; while in another should be a throng of vain-glorious libertines, making free with the reputation of every lady who had the misfortune to be of their acquaintance. It is our business with none of these, but with a small party of young gallants, who stood in a recess some little way apart from the rest, and seemed exceeding well satisfied with themselves, and inclined to hold every one else at an infinitely less valuation.

They spoke of their own little exploits, both in the duello, and in the favor of fair dames, with a self-exultation that made them appear as monstrous fine fellows as you shall see any where. There was no lack of names of great ladies, with whom they wished it to be known they had become, as it were, hand and glove, and they abounded in anecdotes sufficiently explanatory of the excellent understanding that existed between them. From this they took to scandalous gossip, and put forth insinuations respecting certain ladies of their ac-

quaintance, that were exceeding defamatory. They dilated on the orgies of the Hotel de Sens, and disputed as to the exact number within a score or two of the lovers of its voluptuous mistress, Margaret de Valois. They made comparisons between the last batch of the king's mistresses, and the most celebrated of their predecessors, in which divers delectable tales were told of the fair Gabrielle, Charlotte des Essarts, la belle Corisande, the beautiful daughter of the gardener of Aret, and many others.

One thing leading to another, they at last began to discourse of the appearance in Paris of a mysterious stranger, whose arrival had for some days past caused the circulation of the most marvellous stories ever told of a pretty woman, and had set the youths of the court and city in a fever of curiosity to know who and what she was, and whence she came. All that was really known was that she entered Paris in company with a young gallant, supposed to be an English nobleman, who affected the strictest secrecy and privacy; that they lived in handsome lodgings, without friends or visitors; that she was young and of a ravishing beauty, and was supposed to be a Jewess. This was but scant materials, but it was sufficient to originate the most strange and eventful histories ever heard, even in a city so famed for the marvellous, as the capital of the King of France.

It chanced, that, as these idlers were intent upon their discourse, a party of five or six individuals in passing through the rooms took up a position close to them, for the better observation of the crowd of gay company that went from one apartment into another. Sundry of these were of the courteous reader's especial friends: to wit, the noble and gallant Sir George Carew, not as had been his wont many a festive day in the glittering chambers of this gay palace, with the fair and gentle Susanna Shakspeare on his arm, to whom, to the huge envy of all the gallants of the court, who much desired to be in the good graces of a creature so fresh and beautiful, he bore himself with the tenderness of a parent, and the gallantry of a lover, out of respect for his especial friend, her worthy father; but, in close and serious converse with that friend, whose thoughtful brow was impressed with an expression of deep sadness, as if the import of what he discoursed of was a matter of life and death.

They were a little in advance of their party, the principal persons of whom, out of all doubt, were the stately Lady Carew herself, having, on one side of

her, in all the imposing pomp and vanity of his church, a right reverend cardinal; but the bravery of his dress fell short of that of his speech, which did out-compliment the very finest words courtier ever spoke. Yet though it seemed directed to this excellent fair lady and no other, she was wise enough to know it was intended for her exquisitely fair companion, our admirable acquaintance Susanna, who, dressed in the full court tire, looked a princess at the least, as she bowed her graceful head in courteous acknowledgment of the numberless fine things said to her and of her, by a distinguished grand duke, who had the honor of walking by her side. After these came certain princes, marshals, and prelates, having the new made knight, young Sir Hugh Clopton, in the midst of them, in whose hearing they rivalled each other in the extravagant things they said of the charms of "la belle Susanne," who had caused the composition of ballads, ditties, sonnets, and madrigals, since her arrival in France, out of all number.

As Master Shakspeare and his attentive friend passed the knot of talkers in the recess, he heard part of a sentence, which caused him to interrupt some observation the other had commenced.

"A young Englishman, say you?" said one of them, in a tone of exaltation.

"Perdie, that is well! These English are always thrusting their insolent pretensions before some charming creature or other, for whom a Frenchman is her only proper lover: but we have but to show ourselves, and the intruder is content to make the best of his way to his own foggy island, leaving the prize in our possession."

"*Pardonnez moi, mon ami,*" replied the one who had spoken immediately before; "but this Englishman is not to be so easily disposed of. I am told he carried her off from an army of Turks, who were taking her to the prince, their sultan, after slaying with his own sword I know not how many of her turbaned escort."

"By this light, these English are mad!" observed another.

"They have not brains enough to be mad. They are only foolhardy," said one less charitable.

"I know not, gentlemen, whether they be one or the other," resumed the former speaker; "but of this I am sure, that Monsieur le Comte du Barre, my cousin, having contrived, by the most politic stratagem, to gain admittance by the door, to the lodging of this charming Jewess, or Moorish princess, or whatever she may be, in a few se-

conds was seen to make her exit by the window, in a fashion that must needs have been intolerably disagreeable to so fine a gentleman."

"How was that?" exclaimed half a dozen voices, in some astonishment.

"It was the pestilent Englishman!" replied the other, with a shrug of his shoulders, that said a great deal more than his speech.

"Bah!" cried the first speaker, in great contempt; "Monsieur le Comte should have chastised this rude fellow with his rapier, and then carried off his mistress."

"My cousin, Monsieur le Comte du Barre, intended so to do," answered the other; "but the Englishman, almost as soon as he drew, sent my cousin's rapier flying some twenty yards off in one direction, and then, taking him by the back part of his embroidered murray velvet trunks, and, seizing him with the other hand by the neck of his satin doublet, sent Monsieur le Comte du Barre flying through an open window, some twenty yards off, in another."

At this the party uttered various exclamations of indignation and horror, with a handsome sprinkling of the newest oaths, during which a few words passed between Master Shakspeare and Sir George Carew, which ended in the latter making his way towards the group; and, as he knew them all exceeding well, he addressed them as his familiars, begging to be made acquainted with the subject of a discourse, which could not be but of surpassing interest, as it rendered them indifferent to the attractive scene around them. Courteous pleasantries followed on both sides, after which he heard all that they had to tell concerning the Moorish princess, or Jewess, or the grand Turk's favorite Sultana—as she was described to be by his various informants—and her English lover.

"You are right, Will," exclaimed Sir George, as he returned to his friend, with his ever pleasant countenance beaming with infinite satisfaction in every feature. "These fine chattering popinjays were talking of your lost sheep, and the seductive wolf who had carried him off."

"Let us away, Sir George!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, eagerly, all trace of his late seriousness disappearing:—"He hath led me a fine dance, and hath filled me with the most absolute anxiousness poor governor ever endured, since, with my trusty squire, Simon Stockfish, I have been tracing his footsteps. I prythee let us away, and secure him at once!"

"Not so fast, friend Will!" replied Sir George. "At present he is safe enough, I warrant you; and it will be as well not to disturb his fancied security till we have the means of holding him fast for the future. I will lose no time in consulting a certain excellent powerful friend of mine, who will be here anon, and will put us in a way of securing your scapegrace, and of placing his dark dulcinea in worse than Egyptian bondage, where she must needs find other pastime than stealing young noblemen from their proper guardians and teachers. But we must hasten to pay our respects to the crowned majesty of France; for, having obtained permission to present you both to Henri and the royal Marie de Medicis, his ill-beloved consort, I should get myself into huge disgrace were I to allow you to leave the palace without the necessary presentation, so you must e'en with me, my master, as my poor jest hath it, 'Willi nilli.'"

Seeing there was no help for it, Master Shakspeare proceeded through two or three of the state apartments, and, notwithstanding his excessive eagerness once again to get his youthful charge under his governance, he could not help being famously entertained by the little histories his companion gave him of the different notables with whom he exchanged courtesies, or whom he pointed out in the crowd, as well as some account he furnished of divers intrigues in which the present favorite, the Marchioness de Verneuil, was engaged for the purpose of securing her power over the king, and humbling and annoying the queen. Ever and anon Sir George would turn round and address some pleasantry to the daughter of his friend, who replied in a like spirit, which caused the tongues of his eminence the Cardinal and of his highness the Grand Duke to proceed with their sweet phrases with a new impulse. The graceful ease and admirable self-possession of the village-girl, amongst the most polished portion of the most polite court in Christendom, was not lost upon the delighted father. But he knew that Nature hath her nobility as well as kings and queens—and there was no finer example than he exhibited in his own person—and findeth, when it so pleaseth her, from the humblest homesteads her maids of honor, who could confer grace and dignity to a palace or to a throne.

The courtly throng increasing, the party, slowly making their way, were at last allowed to approach a group composed principally of ladies who were stationed on a *dais*, under canopy of state, in the midst of which was a throne, richly carved and gilt, whereon

sat the proud, majestic, but unhappy-looking Marie de Medicis. The display of costly silks and velvets, embroidered with gold and jewels, were here exceeding conspicuous; indeed, every thing in that grand apartment bespoke a scene of luxury and magnificence worthy the taste of a daughter of a de Medicis. The proper officers having facilitated their approach, Master Shakspeare was presented in due form by his friend; but, although the queen condescended so far as to grant the request of the English ambassador, having subsequently learned that Monsieur Shakspeare was neither a lord nor an abbé she did not at first think it necessary to notice him beyond that very slight attention the ceremony permitted; but his noble bearing and graceful courtesy of manner did impress her so favorably towards him, that she ultimately unbent herself of much of her stiffness, and even honored him so far as to mention in terms of commendation his fair daughter.

"There is a Queen of France for you, now!" said Sir George Carew to his companion, as they left the presence. "She certainly lacketh none of the external signs of a queen, but she hath no more. All the real power and consequence that should be with the king's consort rests with the king's mistress, who, besides usurping her state and inveigling her husband, puts monstrous affronts upon her, ridicules her, and seeks all she can to excite the king's mind against her. The knowledge of this maketh her to wear so grave a visage: but it is said, on pretty good authority, that she is not entirely without consolation; for that supple ecclesiastic on her right hand, the very reverend Master Richelieu, Bishop of Luçon, hath the reputation of being able to preach to her, to her heart's content, on matters of which his breviary affordeth him no text. Yet, whatever may be the state she here supports, that with which the Marchioness de Verneuil had surrounded herself in her splendid apartments in the Louvre, and in her own magnificent chateau, smacketh infinitely more of the queen."

As the two friends were pressing on with their company, a general murmur of "Le Roi! Le Roi!" whilst passing through one of the handsomest of the saloons, announced the approach of the king; and, in a minute or two, they beheld a middle-aged man, royally attired, with a peculiarly dignified bearing and pleasing aspect, though, to a close observer, it bore traces of sensuality and satiety, walking along, leaning familiarly on the arm of a man, much his senior, of a most profound gravity, to whose dis-

course he seemed to listen with very little attention, his eyes being directed to the persons within his observation, yet never resting on any for a moment, unless the individual chanced to be a woman with a new face, and a famous handsome one. But he was courteous and affable to all who recognized him, returning their courtesies in right princely fashion, and, to those who knelt, giving his hand to kiss with the air of one who strove earnestly to be considered the father of his people.

"Behold the invincible Henri Quatre, king of France and Navarre!" exclaimed Sir George Carew to his companion. "A great conqueror, truly; though his conquests have been amongst women rather than men—a great hero, according to the ideas of the former; for he hath often, to obtain an interview with one or other of them, put the fortune of a whole campaign into jeopardy, and hath purchased their smiles at little less than the cost of a kingdom. His open-handed generosity, his indulgent humor, and his graceful courtesy, seem to blind his good subjects to the extent of the evil he has created in France by the general laxity of morals throughout the country, caused by his inattention to the ordinary decencies of society. There is scarce a barber in Paris who would care to live in honorable wedlock—there is not an idler in all France who hath not as deep an interest in her destinies as his king. Fortunately for him and for France, he hath for his counsellor a man capable of managing the state for him; and equally fortunate is it, he chooses to leave it to such management."

"That must be Monsieur the Baron de Rosni, of whom I have heard so much," said Master Shakspeare.

"It is no other," answered Sir George. "And there he stands—the Grand Master of the Ordnance and Chancellor of the Kingdom—by the side of his thoughtless master; in all honesty, much too good a mentor for so indifferent a scholar. But the King's eyes are upon us, Will.—We must advance."

The two approached the King of France, who presently accosted the ambassador in a sufficiently cordial spirit; and, when the latter presented his friend, received his homage with a marvellous degree of courtesy, and, after inquiring with much apparent earnestness news of Prince Henry, he spoke to some extent of the English stage, not failing to express several well-earned compliments respecting the important share Master Shakspeare had in making it what it was. Presently he returned again to Prince

Henry, whom he mentioned in exceeding excellent terms, yet seemed to be in doubt his life would be either very happy or very long.

Master Shakspeare proved himself an admirable intelligencer, and his pertinent answers so pleased the king, he continued his questions—now asking him of his travels—now of his plays—now of the fair dames of England—now of those of Italy and France—now of his brother, the King of England—and now of him. The conference broke up at last, leaving each very favorably disposed towards the other. Whilst they were thus engaged, Sir George Carew took the opportunity of entering into conversation with the Grand Master of the Ordnance, to whom, when the king was in deep discourse with the Spanish ambassador, Master Shakspeare was presented. They conversed together for several minutes, on divers subjects, in which the great counsellor of the French king showed how well he merited the reputation he had acquired, and the friend of the English ambassador proved how worthy he was to hold discourse with him. After sundry courteous expressions on either side, Monsieur de Rosni returned to his sovereign, who had just received some news which had thrown him into an extraordinary state of disquietude. He kept exclaiming, "All is lost! All is lost!" in the most moving tones; and, in his looks and movements, shewed as a man suddenly overtaken by some overwhelming calamity.

"What think you, Will, is the monstrous evil that hath so moved this magnificent king?" asked Sir George.

"Of a truth I know not!" replied the other, "but methinks it must be something very terrible."

"Perchance you would take it to be the destruction of an army abroad, or a terrible insurrection at home, the death of a favorite child, or the discovery of a deep spread conspiracy, the intelligence of the plague breaking out in the city, or the news of its fairest quarter being burned to the ground?"

"Surely it must be one or other of these huge calamities."

"By this hand it is nothing more or less than the knowledge that the Princess di Conti, a young beauty, recently married, hath ventured to save herself and husband from dishonor, by flying with him out of the country!"

"This is marvellous, indeed!" cried Master Shakspeare.

By this time it had become generally known how the King's sudden disorder had been created, and universal was the sympathy for the royal sufferer, whilst the lady

and her husband, who had dared to evade the King's august intentions, were stigmatised as traitors of the blackest die. Several of the nobles threw themselves at the feet of their unhappy monarch, and offered their services to trace the fugitives, and happy was he above all his fellows who obtained the envied commission of proceeding on their footsteps.

"We have seen enough of this," said Sir George. "Let us away, Will, after your lost sheep. The Grand Master of the Ordnance hath promised me all necessary help, so that now it may be 'the hunt is up,' as soon as you please."

On this much, Master Shakspeare was all eagerness to be going, and the party were soon afterwards seen leaving the palace, but not before his Eminence, the Cardinal, had taken advantage of a convenient opportunity to whisper to the fair object of his attentions, a communication which had all the fervor of the most devout supplication he had ever offered; and his Highness, the Grand Duke, had availed himself in a similar manner of an occasion to express his sentiments, which were uttered with no less impressiveness than he could have employed had he been addressing an assembly of notables. And the small crowd of princes, marshals, and prelates, that were in her train, either by look or speech, ventured to make known to her that in losing sight of her inestimable sweet society, they should lose everything that gave attraction to the place, or pleasure to the hour. The gentle Susanna acknowledged all these precious courtesies, with an air of graceful indifferency and happy pleasantry, and left the glittering magnificoes with as much of her regard as they had on the first moment of their acquaintance; which was of that smallness all the resources of fractions could not give it quantity.

Whilst these things were proceeding, doings of equal import to this our story were in progress in a quiet but respectable lodging in a retired part of Paris. Thither had arrived, some days before, a noble cavalier, and a beautiful lady he treated with all the tenderness and consideration due to an adored wife. The young cavalier was no less handsome than liberal—qualities that served him better in this good city than if he had brought with him the recommendations of the greatest princes in the world.

It is true the lady was of a dark complexion, and there seemed no small amount of mystery in her behavior; but the people of the house, like good Parisians of that time, finding there was a sufficiency of mo-

ney, did not think it necessary to trouble themselves about what seemed inexplicable; in which they were confirmed by their lodgers conversing in a language of which, with all their powers of listening, they found they could not make out a word.

The understanding reader will find no difficulty in discovering that the strangers were the seductive Bohemian and my lord of Pembroke's heir. This thoughtless pair had sought such concealment the more effectively to enjoy the happiness they, in their short-sightedness, fancied was in store for them. For anything in the shape of real happiness, neither their dispositions nor their circumstances allowed; and, in a few days after their mutual flight, they awoke from a feverish dream, with anything save the entire concentration of feeling for each other, writers have been pleased to distinguish with the name of love. Nevertheless, they would have been exceeding loath to admit there was the very slightest diminution of their mutual devotion.

If the truth must be stated, they were both of much too restless a spirit to be content with each other's society for any length of time; and a short period after their entrance into Paris, the retirement in which they lived throwing them entirely upon their own resources, they found themselves living after a monstrous dull fashion.

La Xariqua yearned for the exulting freedom of the green woods—the guiltless intercourse of the wild family of which she was an honored member: and the young noble began to regret the seclusion that kept him from sharing in the festivities and revelries that were going on in every quarter of the gay city in which he had taken up his residence. He had been both annoyed and enraged by the impertinent curiosity of some hair-brained Frenchmen, whom the extraordinary charms of the Bohemian had influenced to an extent that made them desperately eager for any adventure that promised her notice and favor: but latterly he had taken less notice of this curiosity.

He also had been the object of similar notice, as he had received several tender communications, one of which, signed "La Dame des Roses," had not failed to create a slight impression in favor of the writer.

He had all along behaved to the companion of his flight with the very utmost devotedness; but, to one so ignorant of anything in the shape of restraint, the comforts and luxuries with which he had surrounded her seemed a poor recompense for the inspiring dance in the free air, and the tumultuous

plaudits of crowds of spectators. He began to imagine that the care with which he had kept her concealed was unworthy of him and her. He had heard much of the attractions of the gardens of the *Hôtel de Sens*, wherein the gayest company in Paris were wont, not always creditably, to amuse themselves, and proposed to her, by way of a frolic, to go there disguised, and be entertained with whatever was worth seeing. A joyful assent was readily given; and as there was no difficulty in the way of admission, he having a few days since received an invitation, the pair were soon promenading the pleasant walks and umbrageous groves, masked and disguised so completely that they scarcely knew each other.

They mingled with the crowd of idlers that had there assembled to kill time as agreeably as possible, listening to concealed music of the most ravishing description and admiring the dancers, the jugglers, the singers, the fountains, the flowers, and the trees, that gave a fairy-like beauty to the scene. They at last found themselves in a path into which all the company seemed to be crowding, as if it led to some peculiar place of attraction. By imperceptible degrees it narrowed till it was impossible for two to walk abreast; and on each side there rose a wall, as it were, of holly, that seemed about to contract, till further progress, even for one person, looked to be impossible.

The cavalier allowed his fair companion to precede him. The path ended in a sort of fairy temple divided into several compartments. He saw her enter one, when the whole structure turned on a pivot, and placed her out of sight. He followed into the building, and found as soon as he entered it, that it revolved with him. On its stopping, he beheld a flight of very narrow stone steps, down which he perceived his companion proceeding with considerable speed. He followed very quickly, and saw her disappear under an archway, where an ascent of steps brought him again into the open air, but in a grove thickly planted with trees.

Observing female drapery fluttering in the distance, he was quickly in pursuit, almost inclined to marvel at the sportiveness which made his mistress so nimble of motion, now she was once more under the friendly covert of such old familiar friends as the tall trees of the forest. He mended his pace, but so quick of foot was she, that only with much ado could he keep her in sight. At last he saw her enter a building by a postern door. He followed as quick

as he might, and found himself entering upon a long dark passage. Thinking he might lose her in so strange a place, he called to her to stop, but to his huge astonishment received no answer. He repeated his call with a like success. He then hurried on, not knowing what to think.

The banging of the door led him towards it. He passed through as he beheld another at some distance thrown back. In this way he went on, meeting no one, the chambers increasing in the richness of their furniture, in as great astonishment at the whole adventure, as a youth of his spirit could well be. He began to doubt that it could be his enamored mistress running from him in this strange fashion. Alas, poor youth! She to whom you direct your thoughts is far enough away in a different direction, well cared for, by one who has both the will and means ample enough to secure her from all others whatsoever.

He at last entered a magnificent saloon, with hangings of the very richest looms of arras, delicately painted with the stories from Ovid his *Metamorphoses*. He made for a door he saw before him, and nothing could equal his surprise, when, on pushing it open, he found himself in a place fashioned like a bower of roses, and giving out the most ravishing perfume of that daintiest of flowers. On what seemed to be literally a bed of their odorous leaves, reposed a female figure in a garb no less classic than seductive.

He gazed as it were spell-bound—scarcely willing to believe his eyes. The lady rose gracefully from her position, and bade him welcome to her palace, where she added his presence had been long hoped for. Then, clapping her jewelled hands thrice, there entered several nymphs of ravishing loveliness, also in the ancient classic garb, bearing refreshments of the most tempting sorts, which they set before him. Half inclined to believe the whole a delusion, he tasted of the cates and the wine so temptingly brought for his delectation, and any thing for the palate so truly delicious he had never known before. He soon ascertained that he beheld his fair correspondent; and, recovering from the bewilderment into which he had at first been thrown, he presently poured out a bumper of wine, and with a gallant air drank to the health of "La Dame des Roses."

As the attendant nymphs disappeared, he could almost fancy himself that he had gone a vast way back in the history of the world, and was at the moment in classic Athens,

in the luxurious villa of the voluptuous Aspasia. Although this was not the case, he could not be considered in better hands; for, as he soon discovered, he was in the presence of Margaret de Valois, the divorced Queen of France.

The ladies of Paris were not more active in seeking new objects of attachment than the cavaliers, and the arrival of a young and handsome Englishman created as great a sensation amongst them, as his companion had done amongst the other sex. Margaret de Valois had early intelligence of the stranger's appearance, and determined to captivate him, if possible. She took her measures without delay, and the reader has seen how far they succeeded. The Lord of Pembroke's heir had heard too many stories of Margaret de Valois, not to be well satisfied as to who was his entertainer; and neither his taste nor his principles were sufficiently vitiated to make him see any gratification in an intimacy with such a personage. Nevertheless, he thought it necessary not only to conceal his sentiments, but to behave with a certain degree of gallantry.

This had its due effect. After a sufficient commodity of impassioned looks, tender speeches, amorous ditties, and the like artillery, the regal beauty fancying she had made a sufficient impression for one interview, gave another summons, which was answered on the instant by a black slave dressed in the Indian fashion, who was directed to lead her honored guest to his chamber. The Lady of the Roses accepted his murmured adieus with a glance sufficiently encouraging, and he left her bower to all appearance her vowed servant.

With the assistance of his sable conductor, he very shortly made his way to a chamber furnished in the most magnificent manner. Vessels of gold and silver, costly hangings, richly carved furniture were presented to his observation in every direction, and an almost overpowering air of luxury seemed to pervade the chamber. Our young adventurer, in a cursory glance he gave to its ornaments, saw that if the senses could be operated upon by external objects, nothing had been left undone in the furnishing of this chamber to make the influence as perfect as possible. He found a suit of the most splendid description ready for him, and every arrangement for a change of apparel worthy of a crowned head. A silver bell lay on a table of porphyry for his use, when he required an attendant. He was, however in no mood for availing himself of such munificence. There were some un-

pleasant stories afloat respecting the fate of certain gentlemen and lords, who were known to have been the lovers of Margaret de Valois, and, with every disposition to play the gallant, he had no ambition of following them too closely. Besides which he was anxious to learn something concerning his so suddenly lost mistress, who had disappeared after so very marvellous a fashion in the gardens of the Hotel de Sens; but this he knew full well he was not likely to do as long as he remained in his present sumptuous quarters.

By drawing aside the arras, he discovered a window, and, although the day had closed, he could easily see that the chamber was elevated not more than ten or twelve feet from the ground. His resolution was soon taken. Opening the casement, he cautiously glanced at the ground beneath, and finding there nothing likely to impede his descent, he carefully let himself out feet foremost, with his face to the window, till he was supported only by his hands clinging to the sill—he then let go his hold and dropped. The shock was considerable, but in divers of his adventures he had had worse.

He now found himself in a deepening twilight, standing in the shadow of a spacious mansion, in an enclosed space that seemed to be a courtyard. If this were the case, he knew that high walls and impassable gates still stood between him and his liberty. He had not yet concluded what he should next attempt, when he heard the hum of voices approaching, and presently discerned several figures by the light of flambeaux crossing the courtyard. He kept in the shadow as close as possible.

As the party approached nearer, he fancied he recognised a voice. He redoubled his attention. He could discern a figure and countenance in which it was impossible for him to be mistaken. It was that of an English gentleman to whom he was well known, and whose powerful protection he might rely upon. With him were several persons; but the majority, from being in the livery of Margaret de Valois, it was evident were attending his departure as an honored guest of their mistress. As they passed, he heard his friend say, "Tis marvellous strange. I can prove he entered the gardens at three of the clock, and hath not been heard of since. O my life, 'tis exceeding strange!" What reply was made he could not distinguish, but what he had already heard was quite sufficient to cause him to decide what he should do. Stealthily creeping from his hiding, he made for the great

gates, which a gigantic porter was unfastening for the Englishman's exit; when one gate opened, he watched his time, and, as the man was pulling back the other, he quickly glided out.

He waited close by. In a few minutes, to his great relief, he heard the sound of the horses' hoofs. His friend and his retinue of grooms and running footmen were sweeping by; when he called out his name, the latter pulled up instantly, and the whole party stopped. It was the English Ambassador, who, not finding his friend's scholar, had traced him to the gardens, and, as he had never returned, had been to make inquiries at the palace, where he was assured by the chamberlain, the groom of the chambers, and other domestic officers, that such a cavalier as he described had not been seen there. As their mistress was not visible, he was returning to seek the assistance of the Grand Master of the Ordnance, when the object of his disquietude, to his great relief and astonishment, unexpectedly presented himself before him.

Sir George Carew had been a frequent visitor at the mansion of the Earl and Countess of Pembroke, and was on such intimate terms with the family, as to allow of his taking upon himself to play the counsellor to the son; and this he did so earnestly and pleasantly withal, that the thoughtless youth promised to be guided by him, and told him all his story from his flight with the Bohemian. Sir George knew too well the character of the divorced Queen, not to be fully aware of the hazard his young friend would run by remaining in Paris. He found him well enough inclined to take his departure, but felt bound to remain for the purpose of finding out where his mistress had been kidnapped. This duty Sir George promised he would himself perform, assuring his young friend, from his knowledge and influence, he was far more likely of the two to succeed.

The joy of his worthy governor at seeing him again was of the deepest sort the heart could have experienced. Master Shakspeare had ever since the discovery of his flight endured the most painful anxiety. His love for the youth, notwithstanding his wilful unsteadiness, was, as it were, twined with his life; and his anxiousness became the more painful, as he saw how impossible it was for him to present himself before the youth's noble mother, to inform her what little heed he had paid to the trust she had reposed in him, as to allow of his giving him the slip with so ill-chosen a companion.

Having experienced such deep distress, there is the less cause for marvelling that, on the youth's making his appearance, instead of being severely lectured for his monstrous ill conduct, he found himself clasped in the arms of his faithful fond governor, as though he were a prodigal son returned to a doting father. Nevertheless, having learned all Sir George Carew could inform him of, he was in such a fever to be gone, that he would give no one any peace till he had left Paris far behind.

He now came to the determination that these travels should end, and in a few days he was on the sea, shouting "Ho, for England!" with a more cheerful heart than he had known since his undertaking so great a charge.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ay, but the milder passions show the man;
For as the leaf doth beautify the tree,
The pleasant flowers bedeck the painted spring,
Even so in men of greatest reach and power,
A mild and piteous thought augments renown.
LODGE.

OUR young physician had now so long sojourned amongst the scenes he so well loved, as to have recovered, in a great measure, from the violent shock, both his moral and physical nature had sustained, through the abominable villany of the infamous Millicent. His very excellent fond parent had tended him with all a mother's affection, and all a woman's delicacy. She asked no questions, and made no comments likely to give her son pain; but she had contrived to obtain a tolerable correct knowledge of his trials and sufferings, and took heed to minister to the diseased mind with that marvellous gentle hand for which her exquisite sweet sex are famous. She talked indifferently as it were, yet was there in every thing she said a healing balm, that soon began to show its wholesome effect.

With such soothing converse, joined to the healthy inspirations which nature ever giveth to such as seek her medicinal aid John Hall began once more to take a proper interest in the small concerns of daily life. He again had recourse to his books, and, in studying the art of healing others, rapidly obtained a cure for himself; albeit, though the wound was in time healed, it left a painful cicatrice. He could not think of the peril he had passed without a shudder—as one who, by wonderful good fortune, is saved from the jaws of a venomous serpent,

long after remembers with fear and trembling the vehemency of his danger.

It so chanced, that an incident occurred about this time, which, though it was fruitful of misfortune to him beyond any thing that could have happened, by engrossing his attention, perfected his cure more readily than other things could. This was the death of his admirable mother. Her only son had been to her the very well-spring of her pure life. Her late anxiety had been infinitely greater than it seemed, but it did not show itself upon her delicate system, till it appeared no longer to be excited by the subject. Then she fell ill, and though she was cared for by the most skilful and tender of nurses, she daily grew worse. The fiat had gone forth, and it found her well prepared, though it was a sore struggle to part from all she so dearly loved and prized. Her beloved son had her last wishes, her last blessings, and her last prayers; and then the fragile form that rested in his arms became but as a clod of the earth, oblivious of the active world of fine perceptions and excellent influences that had so long and well supported the claim of its spirit to immortality.

John Hall buried her in the well remembered nook in the green churchyard, where his other parent had found his last resting-place, and he went forth from its melancholy memorials with a saddened heart, it is true, but with a vigorous desire, that became a joy to him in after-life, to prove himself worthy of that immeasurable love he had just seen shut out from communion with mortality, by the only gates that never re-open for those they enclose.

On proceeding to examine the papers the fond mother had with a careful foresight prepared in case of her decease, our young physician found fresh evidence of her rare affection. By the most rigid economy and comprehensive self-denial, she had contrived to save what he saw at once was a sufficient sum, not only to finish his education, but to give him a good start in his profession, and in the directions with which this sum was made over to him, he read what was henceforth to become the twelve tables of his law.

As soon as possible, he prepared to follow the first and most important of her wishes, and entered himself a student in one of the most esteemed colleges at Oxford. Here he remained, steadily pursuing his studies, and winning the esteem of the learned in that famous school, till he obtained his degree. It was about this time, that he was found by his father's faithful

servicing-man, Simon Stockfish, when at Oxford on business of Master Shakspeare. The result was their travelling to London together, which journey, thanks to omission of all attempts at policy from the over-politic serving-man, partly perchance from his conviction that his old master's son was of an age to take care of himself, was attended with no accident.

On his arrival at the lodging of Master Shakspeare, he was enforced to make his home under his roof, for no denial was allowed, and Master Doctor Hall, as he must now be styled, found himself in greater contentation of mind than a few months since he could have hoped for, which he owed to the pleasant intercourse of his excellent friend, and of his excellent friend's very excellent fair daughter.

This careful friend provided against any further designs from his vindictive enemy, the false Millicent, by getting him appointed physician to the embassy in Paris, where he shortly afterwards proceeded to fulfil the duties of his office.

In the meantime, there had been other doings connected with the principal personage in this my story that deserveth not to be lost for lack of a chronicler, for as soon as his return was known, so well was he loved of all who had any acquaintance with him, he was, as it were, besieged with visitors. Among the first comers were that truly honest heart, Master Edward Allen and his buxom honest partner; and whilst the latter closeted herself with Susanna, to hear the marvels she had seen in foreign countries, the other two friends gossiped about their own matters with as ready an eloquence. The master of the Fortune spoke of the various admirable new players and matchless fresh bears he had got, so confusedly withal, that many times was his friend led into asking questions concerning the famous brute he spoke of, when the other had all the while been praising a man; and when he desired to know what place had the honor of giving birth to the estimable famous gentleman he mentioned in such high terms, learned, in some astonishment, that he believed it must have been a den in some of the trackless forests of Muscovy.

One interview he had long looked forward to with the most excited feelings. Perchance, the courteous reader hath not forgotten the memorable secret visit of a noble lady to Master Shakspeare's lodgings, in the Clink Liberty. The hour had arrived when he should present himself before her, and declare how he had fulfilled the honorable office she had induced him to take.

Many a time and oft, when in far off lands, he thought of the time when he should again stand before her, and hear what estimate she made of his services; but, with the anticipation of the happiness of again beholding her, there mingled no small share of disquietude, when he called to mind how little benefit he had been able to effect in the exercise of his office, where benefit was so greatly needed.

He had now little cause of congratulation on that score, and he could not but take a heavy share of blame to himself for not having been more strict in the execution of his duty; but, circumstanced as he was, how was he to put on the pedagogue? He had made many resolutions to use a proper severity; but when he beheld the face of the offender, all thoughts of harshness disappeared from his mind, as the dews of the morning before the flashing sun. And now he was to render an account of his stewardship! He had neglected his trust. The want of discipline that had previously been so marked had blazed forth in ungovernable wantonness, and what excuse could he have for having caused so discreditable a blot to be produced so close to her unsullied nature?

He had but one consolation. This wildness arose in a great measure from the excess of animal spirits. These must exhaust themselves before long, and then there was every hope that the many noble qualities he inherited from his noble mother would have fair play, when he must needs become an honor instead of a reproach; a source of unbounded content, instead of one of monstrous disquietude.

The worthy governor had, as carefully as he could, concealed his feelings towards his young charge from him; and though his affection would often burst through the restraints he put upon it, the other saw only in these displays a more than ordinary attachment to him, which it was impossible to resent. Had he not found vent for the powerful emotions that often so moved him, by writing down his thoughts from day to day, in many a powerful sonnet and lofty rhyme, he could not have worn the mask so well. It was now more than ever imperative on him to keep his nature under the strictest subjection. The old Earl had been called to his ancestors, and the youth, clothed with the proud distinctions of nobility, was in a situation where an evil surmise might work incalculable mischiefs.

After many delays, the interview took place. There was now no longer a necessity for its being clandestine; and, instead of creeping in disguise to obtain the conversa-

tion she wanted, the noble lady gave him audience in her own mansion. As Master Shakspeare was ushered into the lofty chamber, surrounded on all sides with the imposing evidences of rank and fortune, and beheld the stately form of that most queen-like woman, in her mourning habit, he felt much inclined to doubt her identity with the self-denying, heart-devoted being who had so long carried on an untiring war with her own feelings. But it needed not this change to induce him to treat her with the most profound respect. He bowed his head as to a shrine of unsurpassable holiness, and his heart partook of the same reverence. A deep and eloquent silence was maintained for a few minutes. The lady had schooled herself with the severe discipline of pride and self-respect to pass through this ordeal with a spirit worthy of her race. But blood respecteth no discipline—it taketh marvellous little heed of any lessons of inward or outward application.

Finally, as though determined to express one of the many sentences that presented itself to her, to break the embarrassing silence, she said in a low tone:—"My son Herbert hath borne testimony, Master Shakspeare, of your great zeal and affectionateness for his interests, whilst he had the benefit of your trusty guardianship."

"Truly, it glads my heart, my lady, to hear he hath been so good to me."

"In truth, he is ever sounding your praises. He loveth you well indeed. Methinks he hath profited much of your proper teaching."

Her companion could not in conscience affirm this.

"He seemeth to be well disposed; which is a huge comfort to me. I am wondrously anxious he should prove himself deserving your attentions, and worthy of his family."

Master Shakspeare was anxious also, but had had reason to doubt the youth was in the right way to worthiness. As it was utterly impossible he could breathe a word of such doubt to the devoted mother, he felt forced, somewhat against his conviction, to affirm that my lord would prove himself every thing that was desired of him.

The lady had got so far with some effort; but here she came to a stop. This lasted not long, however; for, as though she thought silence more dangerous than speech, anon she strove to enter into conversation with her companion on indifferent matters, the which he encouraged by many pertinent remarks and just conclusions. But an uninterested spectator might easily have perceived that she was talking at random,

and, though she strove most earnestly to conceal her real sentiments, her emotion was getting so evident, it was impossible it could escape observation. At last she seemed to have come to a sudden resolution, for, leaving all her idle-questions and unmeaning remarks, she, though evidently hugely excited, addressed him in a hurried and somewhat wild manner:—

"I sent for you, Master Shakspeare," said she, "to make one request of you." Seeing he was about to speak, she added:—"I know what you would say. Your assent is already on your tongue. Your willingness to give me further assurance of the noble spirit I have so long admired in you, I see and know how to appreciate. I am now about making a great demand upon it. It is a sacrifice which very few of your sex would make, and it is to be hoped, still fewer of mine require."

"Be assured," answered her companion, emphatically, "you cannot ask anything I should find any difficulty in granting."

A pause of a few seconds succeeded, which seemed employed by the lady in arranging her thoughts for expressing the request of which she had given notice. Presently she added, in a low voice, evidently laboring under increased excitement, and with downcast look, which seemed not able to raise itself from its enforced humbleness, "It is proper and necessary that this should be our last meeting."

Master Shakspeare seemed to hear this in some surprise, and with more regret. Without noticing him, the lady continued:—"There seemeth to me to be but one way in which our coming together, either by accident or design, can be prevented. Whilst you are in London, I can scarce help myself from meeting you at some time or another, and hearing of you at all times. I pray you, sir, of your infinite goodness, of which I have had ample evidence, this long time passed, to satisfy me in this. I must not see you again. I am asking a great matter, I am exacting a serious condition; but, sir, if you could only know how vital a thing it is to me, so noble a gentleman as I have found you, would not deny me. I prythee leave this place, and avoid where I am with all possible care; and deem me not moved to this on light grounds. Avoid me, sir, avoid me. It is necessary for my peace of mind. As God is my help, it is a thing so absolute, it cannot, must not, be avoided!"

"Your wishes shall have a speedy accomplishment," replied he, striving to conceal his great emotion. "But this much let me say before I depart. If blessings and

prayers, good wishes and honorable thoughts can minister to your contentation, be sure, my lady, that there never can exist a more earnest laborer in your happiness."

At this her heart seemed too full for speech. After a while she held out her hand, which he advanced to take. As he knelt with more of the spirit of a devotee than of a lover to raise it to his lips, she pressed his hand eagerly in her own, and, snatching it towards her, covered it with caresses; then, muttering a fervent blessing as she rose, she rushed wildly out of the room.

A few days after this, Master Shakspeare surprised all his good friends and gossips, by announcing his intention of leaving London entirely, and retiring to live in his native town. By his fellows at the Globe such intelligence seemed most unwelcome. Since his return to England he had taken his place amongst them as of old, occasionally enrapturing the town by some new production from his golden pen, the sterlingness whereof all readily acknowledged. But it was not alone as the most successful writer of the day that his character was admirable. He was the friend of all writers, no matter how obscure, who possessed talent of any sort. He gave them honest counsel; he improved their ideas by contact with his own; he increased their knowledge out of his own boundless stores; and, after each several play had been by him and by his well advised hints improved into an effective drama, he took care to have it played in such a manner as to secure it a fair chance of success.

With the players, not only of his own company, but of all others, he was looked up to as their head and chief, and all Master Shakspeare did in the bringing out of a play was accounted as a law, which was well worthy their observance. If the tiring-room of the players was resorted to by the gallants in Queen Elizabeth's days, it became quite a fashion in those of her successor. All the gayest courtiers, the bravest gallants, and many even of the graver sort of our nobles, were wont to be found thronging round Shakspeare, either at the theatre in the Blackfriars, the one at Southwark, or at the Mermaid Tavern; and his lively wit and his general handsomeness of behavior did so recommend him, that to several of the noblest and best amongst them, he was on such near terms of intimacy, no brother could be more kindly and honorably treated.

His circumstances had so continued to thrive, that he had become quite a man of worship as to property, having been able to

make sundry purchases of houses, both in London and in Stratford. He had also become possessed of a principal share in the property of the company to which he belonged. Though his purse was ever open to a distressed brother, and he did not fail to send ample remembrances to Stratford, he might be called a rich man. His affairs were in an excellent flourishing state, out of all doubt, but he was far from being happy. The continued wildness of the young Lord Pembroke often caused him much uneasiness; and in his own domestic state, saving only the treasury of love with which the gentle Susanna had enriched him, there was but little room for congratulation. Nevertheless, save only a few admirable rare verses, wherein he expressed his feelings towards his late pupil, and took his leave-taking of the idolized object of his Secret Passion, he never gave any evidence of complaint. In society he was ever the courteous, gracious, witty gentleman, that made his company so sought after, and his discourse so listened to. It was only in the retirement of his study, when left to the expression of his own thoughts, that they took a melancholy and unsatisfactory tone.

Among those of his old acquaintances most surprised by his determination to quit the field of his triumphs, and the scenes where his greatness had been realized and acknowledged, was honest Ned Allen. He would not at first believe he could have entertained any such serious intention, and in the feelings with which he regarded the matter, he forgot every thing relating to the two different objects of his regard, that played such fantastic tricks with his memory. But much against his will, he was convinced that he was going to lose his good gossip and fast friend. He, however, proved a friend to the last, by purchasing whatever property Master Shakspeare had in London, he could not or cared not to take with him.

There were friends of a higher though not, perchance, of a warmer sort, who as little approved this retirement of their favorite. His intention became talked of by the nobles and courtiers; and, among others, it came to the ears of that gracious young prince, now so completely the idol of the whole nation for his great virtues and gallant spirit. Prince Henry had oftentimes sought his pleasant society, and at each grew more and more to like it. Since Master Shakspeare's return, they had had much discourse together, the prince asking numberless questions concerning of what remarkable things fell under his observation

during his travels, and at every interview the other coming away more deeply impressed with the excellences of his heart and mind. A mutual liking of these noble spirits had sprung up betwixt them; and now the prince was threatened with the loss of his pleasant associate, he had resolved not to let him go till he had been able to express his high estimate of his character.

Master Shakspeare had fixed that the last day of his stay in London should be the last day of his appearance as a writer of plays. But he wished to close his London career with some crowning work, that should excel all previous efforts. With this object in view, he had selected a subject that he had studied during his travels; and he bestowed upon it more than ordinary pains. Of a surety, the result was of the most sterling sort—one on which the world hath stamped its hall mark of immortality. What he was intent on was well known to the young prince, who had had, at his desire, many passages read to him; and he took counsel with certain of his friends that the representation should be as great a triumph to its author as it deserved to be.

On the morning of the day fixed for the first performance of the new play, the door of the Globe was besieged, as it were, with a crowd impatient to get admittance. Almost as soon as it was opened, the interior was as full as it could cram, the best places being filled with the prince and his friends, and even among the understanding gentlemen of the pit were divers persons of worship, who were fain to be content with what accommodation they could there find. There was no room on the stage now for any fine gallant to set up his stool, and enjoy his pipe of tobacco, as he criticised the play. He was forced to be well content to take up with standing room where it could be had.

The play commenced with an audience exceedingly content to be well pleased; but, as the exquisite poetry of this new creation fell upon their minds, their satisfaction grew upon them until it burst forth in loud and frequently-repeated plaudits. When the object of their esteem first appeared, as the magician Prospero, it seemed as though he really had the gifts he assumed, for he raised a famous storm throughout the whole house; and as the delighted spectators learned all the excellence of the work his genius had set before them, had sufficiently admired the tender Miranda, had marvelled at the monster Caliban, and had begun to love the graceful Ariel, the enthusiasm that then manifested itself in all quarters was of the most extravagant character. At the

closing of the play, there was such a scene before the curtain as that curtain had never fallen upon. Every one seemed under the same influence. Acclamations, praises, and good wishes, burst from all the throats within the walls; and a sea of handkerchiefs, and a forest of hats and caps, were waved to and fro, as though their owners were complimenting a hero who had gained a province, or saved a kingdom.

A few hours after he had broken away, with monstrous difficulty, from the hearty congratulatory and dolorous farewells of his fellow players and play-writers, he might have been seen seated at the festive board, whence the remains of a sumptuous banquet were being removed, and surrounded by some of the noblest of his friends, making the enjoyment of his society more prized than the precious wine and sweet cakes that were placed upon the table. The chamber was one worthy of a palace, and this most assuredly it ought to have been, for to a palace it belonged. The furniture was of the richest, the attendants numerous, and of the royal livery, and every object within sight bespoke an enlightened mind, and ample means for affording it every desirable enjoyment. Pictures, bronzes, carvings, armor, books, and musical instruments, met the eye in every direction, intermingled with a profusion of gold and silver plate, costly hangings and rich drapery.

At the head of the table was a noble youth, in a suit of embroidered velvet, in whose pleasing features and thoughtful brow the observant reader cannot fail to recognise that darling of the nation, and delight of all who had the honor of being of his acquaintance, his highness Henry Prince of Wales. On his right, sat Master Shakspeare, whose right witty speech had evidently done its office, for the prince was attending to him with such a face of enjoyment as bespoke his full appreciation of some inimitable jest. On his left was the prince's governor and chamberlain, Sir Thomas Newton, his grave aspect relaxing into pleasantry under the influence of the mirthful spirit then ruling the hour.

At the bottom of the table sat the most courteous of old courtiers, Sir George Carew, but lately returned from France; he appeared to be bantering the young Lord Pembroke, who was seated near him, which the latter took in a humor as if he was far from being displeased. Of him it is necessary to add that he was as bravely apparelled as the last new tire, and no lack of means for paying the mercer and tailor could make him. He was known as a very

model of a gallant; a reputation he took what measures he could to increase. His handsome person and gay appearance caused him to be no less a favorite with the fair dames and gentle damsels of his acquaintance, than he was the dread of their husbands and fathers. If the truth must be told, in the respect of his wildness, little improvement was to be seen in him; and though his mind had profited much from the admirable lessons he had had during his travels, and, in some respects, he had been awakened to a clearer sense of what was due from himself to his own honorable station, it still, much too frequently happened, that in the gratification of his passions he was equally wilful and wanton.

Near him was the young Sir Hugh Clopton, in appearance as fine a gallant as my Lord of Pembroke; my Lord Southampton, returned from his exile, and much honored at court; Sir Charles Cornwallis, the prince's treasurer, and one or two more of the highest officers of the prince's household. The discourse was full and exceedingly animated, the prince eagerly putting questions to Master Shakspeare of his travels, and also of books that had been sent him from other countries, and mentioning what intelligence he had had from divers noblemen and gentlemen his correspondents; thereupon Master Shakspeare would reply in speech full of pleasant recollections, not only of books and men, but of all the countries he had visited. His descriptions of scenes were very pictures; and, when he spoke of ancient Rome, or classic Naples, he so filled his hearers with remembrances of their wisdom and glory, that his words seemed to bring back—with the memories of the Cæsars and of the more powerful Cæsars, the great poets and historians whose monuments survive in all their freshness and beauty, whilst those of emperors, conquerors, and gods are crumbling into dust—the classic days of the world's youth, when the song of the mellifluous Ovid was not less honored than the law of the imperial Augustus. The discourse was greatly enriched by the appeals of the prince to Southampton, Carew, and Cornwallis, who had recently been travelers, and could furnish excellent garnish to the sumptuous feast their friend and favorite was setting before them.

Their prince did not fail to fulfil the duties of a host in other matters besides finding sufficient subjects for the conversation of his guests, and the wine having done its genial office, a little less ceremoniousness might have been perceived in the younger

portion of them. The Prince of Wales himself set the example in a pause which ensued, whilst the principal speaker was doing due respect to the rare Malmsey that had been placed before him, by calling for a song from my Lord Pembroke, who was diligently carving an orange, with his thoughts where he had last seen such choice fruit growing.

Now, of all the accomplishments of this young lord, none stood him in such good stead, amongst his numerous fair mistresses—whose sworn servant he would sometimes be, for a matter of four and twenty hours—as his very exquisite sweet voice. Whether he chose to handle the lute or not—which, by the way, had many a time and oft been a famous letter of introduction to him to the tempting dames of Italy—his song was sure to be infinitely relished. The knowledge of his musical qualities, to the which that choice musician, Dr. Bull, had given its best graces, made him ever amongst the first to procure the freshest ballads and love ditties, and nothing of the choicer sort ever came from Lawes or Wilbye but he was ready to pour out its sweetness in a moment of gentle dalliance or of social festivity.

The Prince's desire excited loud applause; and without any delayings or excusings he commenced.

THE GALLANT'S SONG.

I lead the gallant's pleasant life, who liveth at his ease,

Having no aim, but buxom dame and dainty maid to please;

My doublet is of velvet piled, my trunks are gay and new,

But if my purse be all the worse, "Why *what is that to you?*"

To see me as I walk along, it is a goodly sight—

No maid or wife can, for her life, but gaze with all her might;

The jewel glitters in my hat, the feather's cock is true,

But if she cares for other wares, "Why—*what is that to you?*"

Or seated at the social board, where good wine doth abound,

Now this I try, now that put by, until the room goes round.

A catch I'll roar with any man, and have my jest heard too,

And if my gains be loss of brains, "Why—*what is that to you?*"

Perchance, I meet some brawling knave, who giveth me the lie,

Then at a word I draw my sword, and at him
I let fly;
I all my skill of fence employ and make a
great to do,
If then give in, to save my skin, "Why—
what is that to you?"

But see me when "A hall! a hall! my mas-
ters!" hath been cried,
Forth I advance, to lead the dance, the host-
ess at my side—
We foot it well, the dame is pleased, and pass-
ing fair to view,
And if I find I'm to her mind, "Why—*what
is that to you?*"

Should I away from town delights, to rustic
folk resort
From blushing maid (but half afraid), to learn
her country sport;
To couch amid the golden sheaves, and hear
the ringdove coo,
But if you spy her coif awry, "Why—*what
is that to you?*"

Thus do we glide from youth to age, like
water through a trench,
A game of bowls to glad our souls, and now,
a pretty wench:
New braveries, new toys, new jests—and thus
our course pursue;
But if that Death should stop our breath,
"Why—*what is that to you?*"

The applause being subsided, and also the many pertinent allusions which the Prince, my Lord of Southampton, and Sir George Carew gave to it, Master Shakspeare took the opportunity of privately communicating some intelligence to his highness, that seemed to interest him marvellously. The subject was, that noble gentleman, Sir Walter Raleigh, still a close prisoner in the Tower, whom Master Shakspeare, at the direction of the Prince, had lately visited. He was the better able to state what he was intent on without attracting observation, as a conversation had sprung up at the lower end of the table, seeming of such interest as to engross the attention of all but themselves. As what passed was so strictly confidential, no part of it has been handed down to these times, the courteous reader must be content with knowing that it was no doubt expressive of the greatest possible sympathy for the illustrious hero, scholar, and gentleman, whom fear and envy, in the most contemptible of kings, had consigned to a dungeon. Leaving the Prince and his friend to their privacy, the author will give him an insight into the interesting subject discussing by the rest of the Prince's guests.

"Never was there so beauteous a lady

in all Paris," said my Lord Southampton. "Courtiers and citizens, for once in their lives, were of one opinion, and united in declaring the pre-eminence of her attractions."

"I' faith that was a miracle at the least!" exclaimed Sir George Carew.

"But the stories said of her beauty," continued the young nobleman, "were not half so marvellous as those said of herself. The popular version of her history varied every day, but that which was most in repute, spoke of her as a princess brought to their city from some far kingdom in the East, by a youthful Sultan of a neighboring state, who had suddenly disappeared, without leaving so much as the slightest clew by which he might be traced."

"I will wager my George he had grown tired of his princess, and had gone to get him another," said Sir George, merrily.

"Some were of such an opinion," replied the Lord Southampton, "but the majority were of an opposite way of thinking. They found it was clean impossible for any man to have done so ungallant a thing. Her beauty was of that excessive rareness, he who had once felt its power could no more tear himself from it, than he could have created it. It was the common rumor that he must either have been hurried away privately to some secure hiding-place, by one or other of the great nobles envious of his exceeding good fortune, or slain outright and made away with, by a vindictive rival, intent on the most villanous courses to possess such ravishing perfections."

"What, kill a Sultan!" cried my Lord of Pembroke, as he put a tall glass, of rare workmanship, from his lips. "By this hand, he deserveth the strappado!"

"I warrant you he is no man of Paris," observed Sir George, in a like tone. "They prize such rare birds too well to make away with one, unless it might be by killing him with kindness."

"Of a truth, 'tis hardly credible," said Sir Charles Cornwallis.

"Any great personage from a far-off land, were he from the savagest state of Africa, is sure of being sufficiently caressed by those good people, out of their love for what is new and strange."

"This may be, my masters; nevertheless the young sultan was never more heard of," replied the Lord Southampton. "But the strangest part of the story is yet to come. After she had disappeared for some time, and a score of new wonders had in their turn outlived the marvelling of the people of that famous city, she suddenly reappear-

ed at court. Some say she had superseded the Marchioness de Verneuil in the exceedingly comprehensive affections of the magnificent Henri Quatre; others gave her to the Prince de Joinville, and not a few to the Duke de Guise; but there were many who insisted on affirming much scandal relating to her in connexion with the name of the queen's confessor, the wily Richelieu, to whom they attributed the merit of her conversion to their holy religion from the errors of paganism and the knowledge of the French tongue."

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Sir George, laughing. "What, not content with a Christian queen!—did the holy man covet a heathenish princess? What very villany!"

"Be assured it is a calumny," said Master Newton, who liked not to hear the character of a priest, of even an opposite faith, rudely assailed.

"Like enough," replied my Lord Southampton. "They are not quite so careful of what they say in that good city, that is out of all doubt. But certain it is that, for I know not quite how long, from the highest to the humblest, little was said except about her peerless beauty, her unparalleled extravagance, her magnificent banquets, her splendid palace, and her innumerable domestics. Not a song was written that was not to her praise; and, of all the newest oaths, you could only be in the highest fashion when swearing by the matchless splendor of the infinitely lustrous eyes of the incomparable Xariqua!"

"Xariqua!" exclaimed the young Lord Pembroke, with an air of utter astonishment, as soon as that familiar name met his ear.

The speaker continued, without noticing the interruption—

"The crowning marvel is yet to come."

"By this light, my lord, you are like a conjuror at a fair," cried Sir George Carew, very merrily; "you keep your greatest wonder for the last."

"Of a surety, this is an extraordinary lady," remarked Sir Thomas Newton, in a more serious tone; "yet she doth not appear to have been a very creditable one."

"Ah! Sir Thomas, credit is no commodity in this good city we are speaking of," replied Sir Charles Cornwallis. "One who hath the least character is sure there of getting on the best; and he that doth the most unwarrantable things, is more talked of than he hath the least chance of being were he one of the seven sages."

"But touching this crowning marvel," said my Lord of Southampton, "which it is

but proper you should have the benefit of. Know then that, after keeping the whole city in a ferment with her brave way of living, she suddenly disappeared; and, after incredible labor spent in tracing her retreat, it was discovered that she had fled to an encampment of Bohemians, or, as some call them, Rommanees, or gypsies, who had scarcely a day before made their appearance in the neighborhood. A deputation was despatched on the instant to the peerless Xariqua, to offer her two palaces, two innumerable trains of domestics, with permission to be twice as unparalldedly extravagant as she had hitherto been; but when, with their horses in a foam, they reached the spot that had been pointed out to them, not a vestige of a Bohemian or any other creature of any sort was to be seen; nor, though messengers were despatched in every direction throughout the kingdom, and most tempting rewards offered for any information that would lead to her recovery, was any one able ever to get sight of her in France again."

"A strange tale, o' my life!" exclaimed Sir George. Perceiving, for the first time, how closely connected with it was the young Earl of Pembroke, and wishing, with his natural good feeling, to spare him any embarrassment, he sought to change the discourse. "But strange tales are the natural property of every traveller. I remember one now——"

"But was nothing further heard of this singular woman, my lord?" inquired the prince's secretary.

"I' faith, yes, and in a manner which is not the least marvellous part of the business," replied the young noble. "A certain French nobleman, travelling on an embassy into the Low Countries about a month after, in one of the towns through which he was journeying, was stopped by a crowd who were fixed in admiration on the movements of a woman dancing in a style no less animated than graceful to some rude music. He stopped and looked on with the rest. The dancer, having finished her performance, comes to him for money; and prythee, if you can, imagine the noble count's consternation in discovering that the woman who in Paris had enjoyed all the state of a queen, had been displaying the graces which captivated the powerfulest princes of France, for a few coins drawn from the chance passengers in the dirty street of an obscure Flemish town."

"An extraordinary change," observed Master Newton. "But was it never explained?"

Sir George Carew saw it was useless attempting to stem the current of inquiry, and wisely desisted. The object of his regard, however, had in a great measure recovered the shock he had received, and was listening without any greater appearance of interest than the character of the narrative demanded.

"He questioned her," replied my Lord Southampton; "and she, after some hesitation, acknowledged that she was a Bohemian, and was so enamored of that wandering way of life, that she returned to it the first opportunity she had, and for no temptation would be induced to abandon it again. It then came out that she had carefully treasured up the dress she had been used to wear, throughout the whole of the time she had been queening it so bravely at Paris. The sight of this served to call her back to the free air of the forest, and the green nook, and the murmuring stream, that had been so long her familiar friends; and, when she heard that some of her people had arrived in the neighborhood, she put on her humble yet treasured garments, leaving all her jewels, velvets, satins, every coin of the large sum she had at her disposal, and all the luxuries she had so long enjoyed, and, like a bird escaped from a gilded cage, made off for the tents of the Bohemians, to fare coarsely and become a vagabond."

"Was it never known why and in what manner she had at first forsaken this so prized way of living?" inquired Sir Charles Cornwallis.

"On this point she would not give any direct information," said the other. "Yet it was generally rumored there had been a lover in the case, from whom, by some trick, she had been separated."

My Lord of Pembroke was inexpressibly relieved at this moment by hearing the voice of the Prince of Wales, challenging his guests to a bumper. The subject of their discourse was presently lost sight of; and, as if to make amends for the time that had been devoted to conversation, the Prince took care that sociality should rule paramount, and healths were drank, and songs sung with unabated spirit, many compliments being paid to Master Shakspeare by all the company, especially by their princely host, to which he responded in language worthy of himself, till, the hour getting late, the party broke up.

CHAPTER XXIX.

See'st thou not, in clearest days,
Of thick fogs cloud heaven's rays:
And the vapors that do breathe
From the earth's gross womb beneath,
Seem they not with their black steams
To pollute the sun's bright beams,
And yet vanish into air,
Leaving it unblemished, fair?
So, my Willy, shall it be,
With Detraction's breath and thee.

GEORGE WITHER.

He is great and he is just,
He is ever good, and must
Thus be honored

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

THERE were merry doings at Stratford. The whole town was astir, as with a new impulse. Such gossippings at street-corners—such visitings—such a commodity of endless questions, and seemingly equally endless answers—had never been known before. Mine host of the Twiggan Bottle, in attending to the demands for intelligence from his numerous customers, made his throat so dry that he was fain to moisten it from the highest tankard every quarter of the hour at the least, to keep it from splitting; and Ralph, the barber, got so bewildered by the interminable catechism he had to endure from those of his townsmen whose beards he trimmed, that even his tongue, inured to as much clatter as the parish bells, became at last dumb from exhaustion. The baker allowed his batch to spoil while swallowing, with more zest than his hungriest patrons ever felt for anything of his handiwork, the surprising account brought to him by his journeyman and apprentice, who had heard the strange news from the chandler's son. The butcher allowed a long reprieve for the bound and panting sheep, while he made inquiries of the one-eyed water-carrier for the latest news of the all-engrossing subject. The blacksmith stopped his hammering, and almost let the forge-fire burn out, whilst listening to the last particulars of a travelling tinker. The aldermen and burgesses, in their town-hall, equally with the humblest of the beggars in the streets, seemed wonderfully interested in this strange matter.

And what think you was it that so completely turned one of the quietest towns in all England into one of the most active and talkative? Of a truth, it was no more than this: The fair mansion, known as New Place, which had remained so long tenantless, that all hope of its again becoming a dwelling seemed to have departed from the

minds of every inhabitant of the town, at last was enlivened with an owner, and this owner was no other than their excellent acquaintance and fellow-townsmen, William Shakspeare.

But, of all the houses in Stratford town, there was not one to equal the amount of gossiping on this marvellous proper topic, that took place in that of the merry hatter and his buxom little helpmate. The topic was dear to both of them—Master Shakspeare possessing their love and reverence, to an extent it was impossible to exceed; therefore, all who had got any thing to say respecting him, were sure of a right honest welcome under their roof—always provided their speech was sufficiently respectful—for, if not, they stood a monstrous chance of being sent out of the house faster than they came in—a chance that had happened to more than one, as the three inveterate mischiefmakers, Aunt Breedbate, Aunt Prateapace, and Aunt Gadabout, had discovered to their exceeding sorrow.

Under this impression, the kitchen of Tommy Hart was filled with visitors, either desirous of telling or of hearing something concerning the object of the general talk. There was Jonas Tietape in his motliest wear, the little dogs, as usual, ever and anon peering and yelping out of his great pockets, when any vagary, more violent than the rest, disturbed them in their hiding-place; and, as usual, he was keeping the company in an incessant roar, by the strange freaks of his wild fancies—grimacing, posturing, tumbling, juggling, and singing old snatches of ridiculous songs, as though he must needs be doing some out-of-the-way thing or other, or cease to live.

There, too, came Dick Quiney, in his roughest suit, full of strange oaths and monstrous unpolished speech, like a mariner after a three years' voyage. With him was Cuthbert Dredger, the old miller; his hair and beard and suit of friar's gray covered with meal; and there was his son, in all things his very fac-simile, even to his style of speech; and there also was Jasper Broadfoot, the sturdy ploughman, with his huge honest face, bearing unanswerable testimony of his extreme satisfaction. These, with the merry hatter himself, in a merrier trim than ever, constituted the male part of the company.

The women consisted of the laughing Joan, who had not lost so much as an atom of her overwhelming good nature; her buxom kinswoman, Judith, no longer the desperate shrew she was, for i' faith, the shrew had been tamed so absolutely, that there never

was a more excellent obedient wife, quiet and modest withal, as a good wife should ever be. With them was Goody Poppet with a face like a harvest moon—always excepting the matter of the triple chin. The two maypoles, starched and stiffened, and looking like a couple of ninepins left standing after a successful cast of the bowl amongst their fellows; and Peg o' the Twigen Bottle, with such a dextrous use of her somewhat sinister looks, as made it marvellous she had not become a Peg for some of her admirers to hang himself on withal, the which would most certainly have been, had it not been thought by all the better sort that she was a Peg too low.

As none of these worthies had much acquaintance with the rare gift of holding their tongues, as pretty a confusion of voices was going as might have been produced in a rookery by a sudden shot. The sole subject and object of this Babel was the new tenant of New Place. Some of them had been enabled to obtain intelligence of matters respecting him and his establishment, of which the others were clean ignorant, and their interest in him would have made them good listeners, had not their eagerness in asking questions far outspent their patience to hear the answers. Some had been so fortunate as to see him; and wondrous appeared the result of their interview. At last the notion seemed to be gaining ground that the best way of becoming acquainted with the strange matters their more fortunate associates were communicating, was to allow the latter to speak their minds uninterruptedly. They, therefore, grouped round the principal speakers, and, saving a due allowance of eager interjections and judicious comments, appeared disposed to become respectable listeners.

"To think that Ragged Launce should have been taken into favor!" observed the ploughman, in a sort of amazement, "a thoughtless, idle varlet, that knoweth not so much as the coulter from the furrow it turns over."

"Not so fast, good Jasper, I prythee," said Tommy Hart. "Ragged Launce will not now answer to his title. He hath since been styled 'Lazy Launce;' but methinks he shall now rejoice under the style of 'Bragging Launce;' for he be ever telling you the wonderfulest brags concerning his adventures beyond the sea, that can be conceived."

"He it is, then, that is to look to the beasts?" inquired the old miller.

"By the bungle of the cask of Bacchus!" exclaimed young Quiney, "he can-

not look to one requiring more looking to than himself."

"But commend me to the varlet whom Master Shakspeare hath brought with him as his steward," observed Tommy Hart, with a chuckle. "When I said to him, 'Simon Stockfish,' quoth I, 'wilt take a draught?' he fixed on me a wonderful penetrating look, as though he thought my civility intolerably suspicious, and, with a grave face, informed me he would think of it."

"An ass of a notable breed, o' my life!" added Jonas Tietape, "for I have good reason for knowing he thinketh himself three parts fox. Nevertheless, with all his humor of subtlety, the plainest trap that ever was set shall hold him fast, though he be so on the guard, he fancieth snares in every body's speech."

"We will take the fox out of him before he is many days older, I promise you," said Joan, laughingly. "I am no woman, if I fail to make him stand confessed the goodly breed he is, ere our acquaintance be thoroughly ripened."

Affairs of such importance soon began to be discussed, and of such interest too, that even Jonas Tietape left off his vagaries to take part in the conversation. Tommy Hart had spoken to the aldermen and burgesses about holding a festival, and having all sorts of country games in the town, in honor of their worthy Master Shakspeare: and as they determined Stratford should produce all that was most attractive in the way of revels, every one of the company felt bound to do his or her best to afford amusement. The question was, what shape should this amusement assume. Various sports were then thought of, and each in turn discussed; every one giving an opinion for some favorite. There were advocates for Coventry Plays; for mock tournaments; for mummings; for a morrice; for a chase after a soaped pig; for a bear baiting; for a badger hunt; for chuck farthing; and for divers other approved sports of a similar sort.

At last it seemed settled, that nothing could be chosen so likely to do honor to their distinguished townsman as a play; and although to other sports they might also have recourse, a play they determined should be the great feature of the day. On this decision being come to, Jonas Tietape put himself forward to arrange not only the particular play, but the particular way in which it should be played, and the particular persons who were to share in its performance. Considering they had got

neither scenery nor wardrobe, the company appeared less doubtful of their resources than might have been expected: but this was the result of the superlative confidence of their leader, who acted the part of each in turn, showing how marvellous well it might be done, after a fashion that was a marvel indeed.

Jonas took immeasurable pains to instruct his associates, who were not all of them so apt at their lessons as they might have been. This, let it be observed, was the first of several meetings of the same kind, when the same lessons were repeated, and the assistance of other worthies procured to help out the personation of the various characters that were to speak on this momentous occasion. But, leaving them to arrange such business in their own way, we must at once to higher game.

As the reader hath already learned, Master Shakspeare had returned to his native town, a prosperous if not a happy man. That he left London with some reluctance is exceeding probable. There he had achieved his first triumphs; had secured his best friends; there he had obtained the flattering notice of one of the noblest of created beings, whose attentions were regarded by him as honors, to which those of Czars and Cæsars were empty and puerile. He had been driven forth out into the wide ocean of the world without chart or compass, stores, or necessities of any sort by which the fearless mariner might contend out the fiercest storms, and had found there a port in which he had rode at anchor for many years in safety and honor, whilst others, seemingly better provided, had been cast away.

London and her multitudes, therefore, might well be dear to him. He was grateful, he was proud, he was happy in the greatness they had brought him; and it was with a sighing breast and dimmed eyes, he left the crowds of warm friends and honest admirers its numberless streets contained. But with one individual, the parting was more difficult than with all the others put together, or even a thousand times their sum; and, such are the marvellous freaks of human nature, this one was no other than his quondam scholar, my Lord of Pembroke, from whom he had more trouble than every other besides. It is not in the art of poor words to express the depth of his feelings in being obliged to tear himself from an object that had lately become the very principle of his life. He, however, knew the huge necessity there was for this forced separation, and with a swelling heart school-

ed himself into a proper affectation of indifference.

If there was regret in leaving a place in which he had been made so rich in friends, there was much of the same feeling awaited him on his return to a place where all he had known of sorrow and humiliation had visited him. The wound may have healed, which the death of his sweet young son had created; and that equally painful blow which had annihilated his domestic happiness may have ceased to give any very acute pain; but there were times when they would not bear touching, and these times the scenes that every day met his gaze seemed to bring before him. But if he had his discomforts in this return to a spot which, whatever of pain or disappointment there was with it, he had his pleasures also; the satisfaction which his coming to dwell among his townsmen gave to one and all, filled him with a peculiar satisfaction. For the rude but honest affection of the company that assembled in the kitchen of Tommy Hart, he had a deeper sympathy than for his popularity with the gay butterflies of the court of King James.

But the great source of his gratification was his most admirable fair daughter. Susanna had become his companion and friend. With her he was wont to visit the old familiar faces that had haunted him so often in his dreams—the favorite walks, and views, and resting-places in and about Stratford, where, during the vernal spring of his fruitful life, he had learned so many lessons of beauty, purity, and love, that he had since reproduced in materials as indestructible as the pyramids, and as intelligent as the stars.

She gave earnest attentiveness to all such reminiscences—they were to her as the revelations of an oracle. But at times he felt somewhat disappointed in her hearing. It was kind, considerate, soothing, full of exquisite comfort and consolation: but a sensible change seemed lately to have passed over her. She was no longer the creature of life and light he had seen her at the French Court. Perhaps, thought he, she cannot reconcile herself to the sudden alteration of her position—from being one of the brightest ornaments of the brilliant court of Henri Quatre, where all eyes were upon her and all hearts at her devotion, to be the repository of melancholy thoughts, and receive no other courtesies than might fall from a solitary in a small provincial town in England. He entertained some hopes that this gloom might be removed in due course of time. He would

take care to secure her amusement and society more worthy of her time of life.

Poor Susanna! There was indeed a change in her. Her buoyant nature, that, like the brighter glories of the sky, came upon your vision floating in an atmosphere of its own light, had received so rude a shock, that nothing but the possession of that steadfastness of spirit, which, in persons so excellently disposed, bears up against the rudest shock of evil, could have enabled her to keep her proper place, and retain her proper part. A settled melancholy had possessed her—the light and graceful gaiety, which had thrown around her natural gentleness and modesty so winning a charm, had given way to a gravity almost solemn. But it was not any yearning after the lost splendors of Paris life, that had created in her so painful a gravity. Of a truth, so far from it, she was right glad she was well quit of the place, and all its hollow pleasures. Nor would the sunshine, which her courteous admirer, Sir George Carew, was preparing to fling across her path, penetrate, to the slightest extent, the deep shadow by which, in her idea, she was surrounded.

What had caused this shadow to fall there was no telling—the discreet Susanna kept a strict silence. Her father asked her no questions. His quick eye perceived the change, but mistook the cause. Yet, had this been otherwise, he respected her too much to have attempted to pry into a secret she seemed inclined to preserve.

On her part, whatever gloom may have overspread her mind, she felt bound to conceal it as much as possible from her indulgent parent, and oftentimes took upon herself the humor of pleasantry, as if she had not a care she need trouble herself about. She appeared to take a sensible interest in the approaching revels, and put some touch of liveliness upon her speech, whilst she desecanted on the infinite pleasure it would afford to the worthy people of all the neighboring villages. Nevertheless, she would have liked nothing so well as hearing it abandoned—or that she could in any way escape appearing there. Yet, of all strange matters, this seemed the most unaccountable—for, next to her father, whom she revered above all human creatures, and loved with an affectionateness akin to worship, she regarded the gallant Sir George Carew, and his equally kind and considerate lady, who had been active in planning and settling all the necessary arrangements.

Far and near, for many miles, these approaching revels had become the favorite

theme of every idle tongue. As the day they were to be held drew near, there was no subject so generally discussed, and every one seemed to be making extraordinary preparations for a visit to Stratford.

At Shottery this was especially the case; and, at the cottage, the three aunts seemed to be talking themselves into a fever. Aunt Gadabout had been to Welford Wake, to Bidford Whitsun Ale, to a hurling at Fulbrooke, to a wedding at Charlote, and to a christening at Bidford; yet she looked forward to her jaunt to Stratford as to a pleasure that cometh but once in a way. Aunt Prateapace had heard a world and all of gossip concerning Giles of Binton and the parson's maid; had managed to get even on the right scent respecting the secret visits of Tom the Piper, to the widow at Bardon Hill; and had ferretted out the reason why the young squire went so frequently to Wellesbourn Wood; nevertheless, her talk was all of Stratford, of what was doing, and what was to be done. Aunt Breedbate ceased to inveigh against the horrible tyranny of Batch, the baker, to his prentices, though she had succeeded in persuading the latter that they were monstrously ill-used, because they had puddings, no more than thrice a week; and made no boast of having caused her neighbor, Hunks, the carrier, to turn his only son out of doors; she, too, could find no other matter for speech than all that she knew or guessed of Stratford Revels, in which she quarrelled with her sisters no more than some half score times during the hour.

The old and favorite source of their united mischief-making and bickerings, hugely to their discontent, they had for some time past been denied. Their kinswoman would hear no more of their meddling in anything that related either to her "villanous husband," or her "horrible infamous children." Indeed a marvellous change had taken place in her. She remained at home from morn till eve—took no concern in the affairs of those around her, and cared not for the visits of any of her gossips; the more especially for those of her loving aunts. No one knew but herself how the weary hours were employed; but it might have been guessed that they were none so pleasant, as her looks were not those of one whose privacy was happiness. She would not be induced to go to Stratford, but let her kinswomen depart without her; and then shut herself in her chamber, in the same gloomy humor in which, of late, she was commonly to be found.

Bright gleamed the golden sunshine on the day of the Stratford Revels, and from

every village and town for miles round—not only from Bidford, Wixford, Exhall, Alcester, Great Alne, Aston-Cantlow, Snitterfield, Barford, and Wasperton—a distance of some five or six miles or so—but even from Evesham, Warwick, Coventry, and Worcester, from ten to thirty miles, came horsemen, ay, and divers stout footmen, to enjoy the sports that had so long been talked of over the whole country. They came pouring into the town in every accessible direction, but over Clopton Bridge they pressed like an invading army. They passed under the famous triumphal arches made of flowers and evergreens, which had been erected at the bidding of the corporation across the principal streets, where as famous companies of musicians as all Warwickshire could produce were stationed, making such a glorious piping, trumpeting, and drumming, as none ever heard before. Much they talked as they passed along, concerning that marvellous man, for whom fortune and fame had done such wondrous things, and of whom every group possessed some one or more who could, of his own knowledge, testify to the strangest matters that ever befel one of mortal nature. Be sure they had scores of eager listeners. He who could tell some unheard-of tale of his estimation among great lords and princes, of which he had himself seen ample warrant, ensured for himself the consequence of their chief and director during the rest of the journey; but he whom chance and a good memory had furnished recollections of certain glorious plays, seen in London or elsewhere, was regarded by his associates, from that time forward, as a friend to be proud of.

The high bailiff, with the powerful backing of Sir George Carew, had taken especial care that due provision should be made for the sustenance and refreshment of all comers during the day. Nearly every house had a bush over the door, where a good draught of ale or cider might be had almost for the asking; and there had been more boiling, roasting, and baking in the town, during the last three days, than had been for a full twelve months passed: so that he that was tired, athirst, or ahungered, had only to turn into the first open door, and might be sure of getting all he desired.

For the gentry, other arrangements had been made. New Place had been so rarely garnished with green boughs and gay flowers, that not a foot of the front could be seen; and within was the same dainty display in every possible direction: for the which gay work the humblest poor person, as well as the wealthiest burgesses, had joyfully contributed. But there was store

of other things—tables were laid out in the hall, and over them was such bountiful store of good eating and drinking, as, so it seemed, might suffice for a garrison to sustain a seven years' siege. The high bailiff also kept open house—so did the vicar—and so did the chiefest aldermen. The inns were as admirably well provided: and there were also capacious covered booths erected in various directions, with flags and goodly branches at top, whereof some showed such a commodity of good victual as the whole town could not have supplied at another time—others were for dancing; wherein could be had wine, or ale, or cider, in such plenty as it was a marvel to see.

The fame of these revels had brought all sorts of mountebanks, pedlars, ballad-singers, conjurors, masters, of puppets, exhibitors of monsters, quack-doctors, and the like sort of folk, who, in every street, were to be seen pursuing their vocations, infinitely to the amusement of the rustics. This kept the immense multitude from crowding too much in one place, which the corporation had likewise endeavored to avoid by causing different attractive sports to be going on at the same time—some within the town and some without.

On the road to Shottery there was to be a hurling-match—on that to Bidford, a bull-baiting—close to the chapel of the Guild was to be a game at barley-break—near the church, a cudgel-play—provision for shooting at the butts in one field, and for running at the quintain in another—a badger-hunt on the Avon—a jumping-match in the meadows—by the elm, at the Dovehouse Close end, in the Henley Road, a maypole for a dance—and at the opposite boundary, the two elms in the Mesham highway a bonfire. There was also to be every thing as at a May-day—Robin Hood and Maid Marian—Hobby-horse and St. George and the Dragon—and, greatest of all attractions, in the most open place in all the town, was set up a stage, in which was to be represented the exceeding admirable, most moving, and very delectable choice pageant of "The Nine Worthies."

But now there is a cheerful sound of trumpets, and it is made known that the corporation are going in procession from the Town Hall to New Place, and presently there is a vast show of running and scrambling. The high bailiff, in the garb of his office, descends from his horse, and enters Master Shakspeare's dwelling, amid a flourish of trumpets and a great shout of applause, to invite him and his exquisite fair daughter, in the name of the people of Stratford, to see all the goodly sports that

have been provided for their especial honor and delectation; and, presently, he is seen bringing forth Master Shakspeare; whereupon there is set up so main a cry, and so piercing a flourish, that thousands are seen hurrying to the spot in every direction. Master Shakspeare acknowledgeth the applause with such gracefulness and nobleness of bearing as speedily brought it forth with double strength. The whilst he was so engaged, there was brought up to his door a most stately steed, caparisoned as for a king, which had been provided by his loving friends for his accommodation. He leaped into the saddle, and held his seat with so commanding an air, doffing his beaver courteously to all around, as the proud beast curveted and pranced his best paces, as though knowing what inestimable honor he bore, that the hurraing was renewed and continued as if never to end.

Anon there appeared at the door the figure of the gentle Susanna, looking, from the flush of affection and pride, in seeing her father so honored, that spread over her delicate features, more lovely than ever she had been. She seemed for a moment overpowered by the tumultuous greeting that awaited her; but this speedily passed, and, with one graceful recognition, assisted by the ever-gallant Sir George, she leaped upon the noble steed that had been provided for her, and, by her noble horsemanship, was winning the hearts of the vast masses that thronged to every point, window or housetop, that could command a view of what was going on.

A number of the gentlefolks of the neighborhood, of both sexes, next appeared; who, having mounted their horses, the procession started from New Place in the following order—

Constables of the watch.

Twenty-four poor men of Stratford, belonging to the alms-houses, in blue coats.

Scholars of the Free-School—where Master Shakspeare had received his learning—two abreast.

Vicar and Schoolmaster.

The different trades, with their banners.

Trumpeters—followed by the great banner of St. George and the Dragon, like unto that famous representation on the chapel of the Guild.

The high bailiff, on horseback.

The two churchwardens, a-foot. Also the aldermen and other officers of the corporation, two and two.

Another great banner, bearing the arms of England united with Scotland.

A company of musicians, playing joyful tunes.

MASTER SHAKSPEARE, on a tall horse, richly caparisoned. By his side, MISTRESS SUSANNA SHAKSPEARE, riding in a like manner.

Ladies and gentlewomen, on prancing palfreys.

Knights and gentlemen of the neighborhood, all riding.

Yeomen of Stratford and the Hamlets of Shottery, Drayton, Little Wilmeccote, and Bishopton—every man on his own horse.

Serving-men of the gentry, in their coats and badges, a-foot.

A great banner of the cross.

Two trumpeters.

Constables of the watch.

As the procession passed through the principal streets, there was such a general craning of necks from opened casements and crowded house-tops, doorways, and every other convenient place, and such shouting and hurraing, and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, as was truly wonderful to see and hear. There was no lack of comment on the personal appearance of both the principal personages, nor was there any lack of admiration. Of their feelings, nothing can be said to make them sufficiently understood. Master Shakspeare felt elated—of a surety, the sight that presented itself to him was sufficient to have exalted the most earthborn of mortals: but the satisfaction arose less from gratified vanity than from a love of that kindness that seemed the moving spirit of the whole scene.

It was not till he passed by the well-remembered house in Henley Street, that his feelings seemed to be getting the mastery. He thought of the estimable hearts at rest, under the churchyard turf, that would have rejoiced beyond all mortal joy to have seen that day: and, for one, what a day of honor it would have been held, had not the destroyer, so prematurely, cut him off from the world he was so well fitted to adorn!

He was aroused from an unhappy reverie by a fresh burst of plaudits, which brought his thoughts into a more agreeable channel.

Susanna rode by his side with a swelling heart. She seemed entirely oblivious of her own peculiar ideas and sensations—and she had much to forget. She thought and felt only for her father. She had always been proud of him, but now her pride had in it something so reverential, it looked like an angelic appreciation of immortal excellence. They passed on, viewing with infinite contentation the arrangements that had been made for the enjoyment of the people of the different revels. They beheld several in full operation. Most, however,

had suspended their operations to obtain a view of the approaching procession, but they saw enough to know how well everything had been managed.

They now drew near to the spot where the stage had been erected, and were soon marshalled within view of it; the footmen being placed in front, and the horsemen behind. Here they had been but a brief space, when the grand and wonderful pageant commenced with the appearance on the stage of three marvellous ill-visaged, ill-shaped, ill-clad personages, in turbans and sandals, with monstrous long beards, who, in rare ranting speech, proceeded to proclaim to their audience that they were the three Hebrew worthies, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabæus—they spoke some exceeding fine-fustian sentences, and made no small exertions to appear to perfection the heroes of Israel, albeit they were but indifferent Christians, that answered to the names of Jasper Broadfoot, Cuthbert Dredger, and his son.

When they had ranted sufficiently about their distinguished names and deeds, they made off—and presently they were succeeded by three as odd-looking varlets as ever were met within the world, in helmets, having naked feet with sandals, and an odd kind of drapery thrown over their naked shoulders. Their very appearance was the signal for a burst of mirth that seemed to shake the whole town. First came the mighty Hector, and a rare hectoring blade he proved himself. He swore pretty roundly there was not so fine a fellow of his inches any where, and that he had just come from the walls of Troy at the rate of a sheriff's post, to show the whole world what matchless choice spirits there were in the old times. In sooth, he talked big enough; yet, for all his fine feathers, he was no other than the reader's politic friend, Simon Stockfish, who, after due deliberation, had, at a pressing request, lent his excellent powers to secure a proper performance of the pageant.

Next came a fellow who seemed full as broad as he was long; yet his length was little better than that of a dwarf, and in his bullet head appeared a brace of open jaws that looked to be ready to devour any one of the company inclined to test his powers of swallow. When he declared, in the highest sounding phrase, that he was Julius Cæsar, there was a laugh among all such as had any acquaintance with that worthy. Nevertheless, he strutted, and grimaced, and vaped for an intolerable long time, concerning his valorous doings; few there

would have taken him for Julius Cæsar, but if there had been any doubt on the matter amongst the townspeople, it must have ceased when, in the midst of one of his most tearing speeches, from two cavities or pockets below his girdle, sprung forth the heads of two little dogs, who set up such a yelping, that Julius Cæsar stopped sudden short in his heroics, and with two smart pats on their heads, the voice of Jonas Tietape bade them "get in, and be hanged!"

At his heels came a like sort of knave, about the same height, but not so stout; albeit, however small he was in his inches, he, too, was a famous tall fellow with his tongue. He made it out that he had conquered the world; and by his bearing it was plain to be seen, in his own conceit, he could do it again as easy as he could drink off a pint of small ale. But, let him have bragged till doomsday, it was plain enough, Alexander the Great was but Tommy Hart the Little.

These three having departed, there appeared another lot of a like number, to make up the nine; and, however the Jews and Infidels had bestirred themselves in this business, these three, who came as Christians, in full suits of armor, outcrowded them all to nothing. It came out that they were no other than King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Boulogne. King Arthur had got a squint, and was lame of a leg, that marked him for the constable of the watch; and Godfrey of Boulogne was high-shouldered, and spoke with a cracked voice, nobody would have owned but the school-master. As for the illustrious and very absolute valiant potentate the great Charlemagne, by some chance or other, ere he had spoke many lines, he wanted prompting. Charlemagne the great, it was soon observed was gifted with a wonderful little memory. He hardly knew who he was—clean forgot what he had done, and could not for the life of him say why he was there. The spectators made many sharp remarks on this strange failing in Charlemagne—and at last, things growing worse, the great man was so badgered that he scarce knew which way to turn.

When the public disapproval of him began at last to show they would bear with him no longer, he presently opened his helmet and threw it aside, swearing pretty roundly to the crowd beneath him, "He was none of Charley Main, but only simple Launcelot Curthose, Master Shakspeare's boy, and he didn't care a fico for the nine worthies, or any of their generation."

In simple truth, Launce had been too

busy with the tankard, and had become pot-valiant. This burst of indignation set the whole audience laughing, and in this merry mood concluded the "exceeding, admirable, most moving, and very delectable choice pageant of the Nine Worthies."

Certes, Master Shakspeare found no slight degree of amusement in this performance; he often discovered himself wishing that honest Ned Allen, Dick Burbage, or any other of the great London players could see how choicely the players of Stratford employed the resources of their art; and he could have laughed right earnestly, had he not remembered that, however burlesque was the playing, the players were honest hearts, whose sole aim was to do him honor. Thus influenced, it was no marvel he expressed himself exceeding gratified with every part of it.

After this the procession moved on, and in turn visited the scene of the rest of the Stratford Revels, with the which he was equally well pleased.

An important feature in the day's festivities, was a grand banquet at the Guildhall, mostly at the expense of the Corporation; where they feasted their illustrious townsman and his friends right sumptuously; many handsome things being said of him, to which he replied in a tone of earnest thankfulness that did famously express his sense of the honor they did him. When this was over, Sir George Carew, with more tender gallantry than any of his juniors could have used, must needs lead off the first dance with his fair favorite, Mistress Susanna. They kept it up till a late hour, having all the most approved dances, and every admired tune; and when the time for parting could no longer be delayed, it was said of all—both such as came from a distance, and by those living in the neighborhood—that, in their memory, there had been nothing in the county that afforded such excellent desport as these Stratford Revels; and it was the general desire that on the twenty-third of every succeeding April, the town should be rendered attractive by a similar entertainment.

CHAPTER XXX.

Hark hither, reader! wilt thou see
 Nature her own physician be?
 Wilt see a man all his own wealth,
 His own music, his own health;
 A man whose sober soul can tell
 How to wear her garments well?

CRASHAW.

MASTER SHAKSPEARE had, by this time, become settled in his new position. His mansion was large and commodious, and he had taken good care that in it he should be surrounded with such comforts and accommodations as he most liked. There was his library full of choice authors, with here and there a rare specimen of old armor, that recalled the glories of the Black Prince, and the triumphs of Henry of Monmouth. There, too, was a goodly hall, with no lack of helmets, swords, and bucklers around the walls; a dining parlor, with well-carved furniture and handsome panels, with a few choice old portraits; a "blue chamber," so called from being hung with arras of that color; a "paradise," bearing this designation in consequence of its having the story of our first parents, to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, done in German water-colors on the walls; a "yellow chamber," styled so from its yellow hangings, and divers others, distinguished in a like manner by some peculiarity in the character of the furniture. There was also ample accommodation in the way of buttry, kitchen, and the like sort of places, with stable, and a choice garden.

The chamber he most affected was the one used as a common refectory. It was distinguished by a bay window, and a most capacious chimney-corner. Here in his high chair he loved to sit, surrounded by admiring friends, who affected nothing so well in the long winter nights as to get him in the humor of telling stories; and numberless narratives, of wonderful interest, did he narrate to that enviable circle. There were tales of all hues and complexions, to suit all manner of tastes and inclinations; tales of all countries and of all times; yet each marked with the same marvellous invention, that kept the rapt hearers in a very ecstasy of mingled pleasure and wonder, till they had deeply encroached into their ordinary hours of rest.

When he chose to seek relief from his in-door amusements, he looked after his lands and herds as attentively as any yeoman in Warwickshire. If it pleased him better, he would mount his horse; and, with

the fair Susanna riding by his side, each with a favorite bird, would enjoy the delectable sport of hawking. Or, mayhap, he might be ready for any other pastime that looked to be most ready for him. His garden and his farm seemed to possess for him inexhaustible resources; and, next to them in interest, he regarded a cheerful ride or walk into any of the most pleasant places in the neighborhood.

He daily grew into more esteem with his honest townsmen and neighbors, and was much talked of for many miles round, not so much in relation to the great gifts which had secured him his great name, but rather as one Squire Shakspeare of Stratford. In truth the character of squire suited him as well as it would any who had been born in it; and so it is palpable would any other, let it have been of whatsoever rank or station it could have possessed.

He had been appointed to the honorable office of justice of peace; and, having had his hall in New Place turned into a justice-room, it was his wont, with certain assistants of his, to examine such offenders as were brought before him. Frequently would he so admonish the evil-doers that they straightway abandoned their vile courses, and became of a notable honesty ever after. He saved many from the commission of base offences; and those notorious malefactors he was obliged to condemn, he did so in so impressive a fashion, they presently clean repented of their infamy, and took to better behaving from that time forth. In brief, the fame of his justice, and his skill in finding out the intricate matters, spread so every day, that he became looked upon as the chief judge of such offences in those parts; so that it was seldom he had not his hands full of it.

He sat in his chair of worship, which he filled with no lack of dignity, his person being now full and portly—mayhap the combined results of good living and of good nature—Sir George Carew sitting near, who shared in such business whenever he could ride over from his own house; and Simon Stockfish over-against them acting as clerk, who occasionally ventured on giving a hint in the way of deep policy, which, though profiting no one, was sure of being taken in good part. Launce had been promoted to the office and dignity of crier of the court, the which he filled to marvellous admiration, allowing of no noise or disturbance of any sort, save what he made himself, which was sure to be enough, in all conscience, for all the rest of the company. There were also certain constables,

to wit, young Quiney, of whose discretion and diligence in his office Master Shakspeare entertained an excellent proper opinion; Tommy Hart, who, as he could be serious, would have arrested any offender that came in his way; but he was so ready to crack a jest with him, instead of proceeding with such serious matter, that it was scarce safe to put him on such office alone. To these were added Jasper Broadfoot, and old Cuthbert Dredger and his son, who were then grouped together, a short way from where Master Shakspeare and his friend were discussing some favorite subject with marvellous earnestness.

At this period the reader's familiar acquaintance Launce, the crier of the court, who looked on himself as little less in dignity than his worship, shouted out in his most worshipful tone, "One to speak with his worship!" and immediately afterwards there appeared at the door a female, humbly clad and closely veiled, attended by Susanna and her sister on each side of her.

"A plain case this," said Master Shakspeare, in an under-tone. "These two jades of mine take under their protection all the amiable offenders and interesting criminals they can hear of; and, forsooth, I am to stand godfather for their misdemeanors."

"None so well, Will—none so well," replied Sir George, merrily. "There are so many of thine own to answer for, that a few, more or less, need not trouble thee."

"Let her not come any nearer, I pray you," earnestly whispered Simon Stockfish, across the table, interposed between them. "She, perchance, may have some dangerous weapon hid about her: if she be made to stop where she is, there need be no fear of her using it to any fatal purpose."

Thereupon he made a particular movement with his head to Launce, who appeared to understand its import on the instant, for he repeated it to certain of the constables, who, quite as quickly on the alert, presently drew nigher to the prisoner, or petitioner, or whatever she was; so that, had she offered any violence, they could have pounced upon her before she could have done mischief. But the person who had thus engrossed their regards seemed in no case for any deed of desperation. If it was not for her fair supporters, she must have fallen to the ground, her steps seemed so monstrous weak and irresolute. She trembled violently, and her sobs were deep and frequent. She paused a few moments, and seemed as though she desired to go back, but a few words from her kind conductors appeared to give her additional

strength. She continued advancing, but it was evident that her emotion increased wonderfully.

"Merit reduced to beg; or, misfortune forcing an unwilling petitioner," observed Master Shakspeare to his friend, as he began to regard her with considerable interest.

"Well, well, Master Justice," said the other, who also looked favorably in the same direction, "in such cases, it is easy enough to see to which side the scale leans; and, she being a woman, she is entitled to the most liberal dealing of that most worshipful member of her sex, the blind lady, whose office you have been called upon to fulfil."

All this time, Simon Stockfish was fidgeting on his seat, his eyes now dwelling with no small degree of alarm upon the advancing female—anon, winking and pointing at the constables, who were all close at hand, in a remarkable state of vigilance.

"Well, dame!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, gently. "Whatever may be your cause, you have taken care to provide yourself with such counæ as the judge is pretty sure to listen to with some favorableness."

No reply was given to this assurance—unless it was offered in the increasing sobs, which came from the person to whom it was directed. The gentlemen seemed affected, and even the constables looked somewhat bewildered.

"Prythee, come nearer, dame!" said Master Shakspeare, in a still kinder voice. "Perchance you may have something to tell me in confidence. Be assured you will find me anxious to afford you any reasonable assistance, and all proper sympathy."

At this the sobbing increased wonderfully; but never a word was spoke. Master Shakspeare was almost inclined to think that it was a case of crime, followed by deep remorse. He looked steadily at her; but, from the thickness of her veil, could make out nothing but a drooping head, a heaving breast, and a trembling form. Both Susanna and Judith had occasionally addressed words of encouragement to her in an under-tone, but they ceased to produce any beneficial results. At last the elder spoke.

"I have ventured, sweet sir," said she, "to bring hither, at her most urgent prayer and solicitation, one who is deeply sensible of certain unworthinesses by her committed, when her heart and mind was clean innocent of any knowledge whatsoever of the nature and extent of her ill-doing."

"If sincere repentance of what ill she hath done," added the younger sister, impressively, "for which others are more accountable than herself, may be considered a

claim, of a surety, dear father, she hath admirable grounds for being indulgently dealt with in this state."

"I am ever right glad," said her worthy parent, "to hear of a turning back to the right path, when any deviation hath been made from it. If it be in my power to set your mind at ease, be content, I pray you; I will insure you every consolation your case admits of. But, an it so please you, I would fain see your features. In a business of this sort, such mystery is by no means desirable."

At this the trembling and the sobbing became more violent than ever. The party had approached close to Master Shakspeare, to a vast increase to the fears and doubts of Simon Stockfish, who, with his mind in a whirl at the imminency of the danger, was racking his brain, to discover some politic plan of removing his honored master out of the way. Sir George Carew looked on the ground with singular interest—so gallant a heart as was his was alive in a moment to the distresses of a woman; and he felt the more sympathy from seeing the amiable part played in it by his fair friends, Susanna and Judith.

Master Shakspeare gently attempted to lift up the veil—to which no resistance was made; and as he did so, the wearer of it fell on her knees before him, in an agony of tears and sobs. He started back, overcome as it were, with extreme astonishment. There knelt before him, as a suppliant and a penitent, the creator of his earliest and sweetest pleasures—the originator of his early griefs and miseries. She knelt not alone; her two daughters knelt on each side of her, and all, in the mute eloquence of tears, prayed for forgiveness.

Sir George Carew could look on no longer; on pretence of brushing back the hair from his forehead, he removed from his eyes the abundant moisture that there suddenly started forth. Simon Stockfish, in despair of devising any stroke of policy to meet the occasion, was on the point of rushing forward to seize upon the suspected assassin, when he became transfixed with wonderment—staring with open mouth like one beholding a ghost. Not less of marvelling was seen in the countenances of the constables; and one or two turned aside their heads, and drew their sleeves across their eyes.

What a flood of subduing recollections rushed upon the mind of Master Shakspeare, at the sight of that still lovely face! The exquisite sweet pleasure of early love, and all the bewildering trances of passion and

romance it brings in its train—the admirable influence of a faith strong as life, in the existence of the most complete perfectness in womankind—the deep and ennobling sympathy which, whilst it exalts the object of preference to the dignity of a saint, places the admirer in the privileged position of a devotee—all pressed upon him at one and the same moment. He thought not of things evil, as arising out of this overgrowth of grateful feeling, like fungi spreading at the base of the noblest plants of the verdant forest—he saw before him the Anne Hathaway of his happiest hours, the wife of his bosom, the mother of his children, and the partner of his cares and sorrows, ere both had become intolerably familiar to him, and caught the trembling penitent in his arms to hush her tears and terrors, on the breast from which she had too long, by her own sentence, been banished.

This blessed event had been brought about by the judicious and affectionate management of Susanna and Judith—though the former had much the largest share in it. Scarcely had she returned to Stratford, when, unknown to any one, she made for the cottage at Shottery, where, if a rough reception awaited her, she contrived, by good management, to get it passed over without any ill consequences; and, taking advantage of the absence of the three harpies, who were as usual jangling it together some few miles off, she commenced her advances towards the object nearest her heart. They were less ill received than she had expected; and, at her next visit, which she so timed as to avoid her aunts, she pushed forward more boldly, with such satisfactory results, that, on the next occasion of her coming, she took Judith with her, and their united representations and entreaties effected every thing that was desired.

Aunt Prateapace managed to gain intelligence of the reconciliation, and hastened with her two allies to their kinswoman to use all their influence to prevent it; but, when they arrived at the cottage, there were persons there they little expected meeting. Master Shakspeare had gladly proceeded to the dwelling, which had so often rose up in his reveries to bring him pleasant remembrances of the pleasant hours he had once known in it, and a large party of humble friends had been collected to welcome him back to his old threshold. When the three mischief-makers made their appearance, they were horribly astonished at seeing the room filled with company, over whom the object of their bitter calumnies were presiding like a host, with both power and wish

to make his guests happy around him. Prominent amongst these were Tommy Hart and his merry helpmate; Cuthbert Dredger and his son; Jasper Broadfoot; Peg o' the Twiggen Bottle, and her old acquaintance with the triple chin; Quiney and his affectionate partner; Susanna and Jonas Tietape.

After a stare of intolerable astonishment at the company, the three worthies stared as fixedly at each other. The company looked as though they enjoyed their confusion; one or two wore a grave aspect, a few seemed inclined for sport; and, when the old Jezabels looked at young Quiney, or Tommy Hart, or Jonas Tietape, they found faces so disguised by the extravagant grimaces with which each strove to rival the other, that they knew not what strange animals they had got amongst.

"O' the dickens!" exclaimed Aunt Pratepace, who was not easily abashed. "Who would have thought of meeting here so pleasant a company? There is Tom Quiney, as I live!" At this recognition, the aforesaid Tom put his visage into a horrible squint. "How fare you, Tommy Hart?" continued she, whereupon little Tommy set up a squint more horrible still. "And my merry gossip, Jonas Tietape! how goes all with you?" Jonas answered only with so unnatural a contortion of eyes, nose, and mouth, that such as had with great difficulty kept a serious aspect could restrain themselves no longer, and there was a general laugh.

"Let us off to the church-ale at Wilme-cote," said Aunt Gadabout; "I warrant you, we shall be more welcome there than here."

"Go hang thyself for an old fool!" exclaimed Aunt Breedbate, evidently bursting with rage and spite. "What care I for their welcome! Anne hath not the spirit of a woman, that's plain." Here young Quiney set up a caterwauling. "But if she fancyeth being trampled on, I doubt not she'll have enough of it, poor wretch!" At this Tommy Hart addeth an exquisite attempt at caterwauling in a higher key.—"She's an unthankful, false, worthless, vile, treacherous jade as ever was born; her fine husband will find that out, I can tell him. God give her grace to mend her ways, say I! for the villany I have known of her —" She was interrupted by such a terrible burst of cat music from Jonas Tietape, as though a fight of tabbies had broken out more general than had ever been known.— Thereupon young Quiney and Tommy Hart joined in full chorus, which made so intolerable a din, Talbot, who had hitherto re-

garded the whole scene in silent wonder, rose up and commenced howling with all his might, and some of the company were glad to put their hands to their ears, the rest having enough to do holding their sides.

The three worthies waited not for any thing else. They bounced out of the house like very furies; but, ere they had well got into the road, commenced so fierce a quarrel amongst themselves, as to who was to blame for this misbehaving of their kinswoman, that for the first time since they had been together, they would have none of each other's company. It may be here added, that soon after this they found themselves so ill received wherever they went, that they thought it best to leave Shottery. Each proceeded in a different direction, and for the rest of their lives never again entered into that neighborhood.

Perchance the reader will not object in this instance to diverge a little from the current of the narrative, to follow the fortunes of one of his especial acquaintances, the young physician. It has been shown how he went to the French king's city of Paris, to be physician to the ambassador.— When Sir George Carew returned home, Dr. John Hall was recommended to a great nobleman of France, with whom he travelled into the Low countries. He ultimately left Flanders for England. On his landing he made directly for London, where, as he approached, he was sensible of some unpleasant feelings. What further annoyances might be in store for him he had yet to learn, but the subject was one he could not think of without many discordant associations. It chanced, as he entered London by the Oxford road early in the morning, he descried a great assemblage of persons pushing towards him with a horrid yelling and screaming:—"Prythee, good friend," said he, to one of a group who were passing close to him, "what meaneth this commotion?"

"Know you not, valiant sir," replied the other, seemingly in some astonishment, "that this is the morning of the execution?"

"A morning which all London have been thinking of this last fortnight or more," added a middle-aged, flauntingly-dressed female beside him. Dr. Hall recognised the voice. It was one he had often heard. It was that of Tabitha Thatchpole, of Golden Lane. He, however, stood in no fear of being recognised, as in the last few years he had greatly altered. He briefly mentioned that he had been but scarcely a day

in England. This made the other communicative.

He stated that, in the midst of the approaching crowd, two of the horriblest criminals ever heard of were being conducted to Tyburn.

"I would not have believed it," said Mistress Thatchpole, "had it not been so clearly proved against them. They were among my most familiar gossips. Alack, who would have thought, after such pleasant hours passed with them, that I should go so far to see them hanged! In sooth, 'tis a strange world, excellent sir. This noble soldier, Captain Swashbuckler, is my husband."

"A master of fence to the Czar of Muscovy, and to the Emperor of China, at your service, valiant sir," whispered the cast captain.

"And we have known these villainous wretches as familiarly as we have known each other," added the female. "But it was clean impossible any one could have dreamt of the villany they practised. As for Mistress Millicent——"

"Millicent who?" demanded the young physician earnestly.

"Why the intolerable base wretch, who, with her horribly infamous father, Doctor Posset, as he was styled, are now about to suffer the punishment due to such abominable wickedness as they have been guilty of during a long course of secret poisonings, by which it has been proved they got great gains."

On hearing this, Doctor Hall strove to put his horse in another direction, but he was encompassed by the crowd, and he was obliged to wait till it had passed. The intelligence he had heard was but too true.—An enquiry into the mysterious death of a nobleman excited suspicion, a connexion having been proved between the widow and the physician's daughter. Sufficient came out in the examination to warrant the committal to prison of both father and daughter. Evidences of their guilt were discovered in the little back chamber in the house in Golden Lane, which contained, in a secret press, a collection of the most subtle poisons, with every apparatus for weighing, measuring, and mixing; and it was proved in the trial that, under cover of being a physician, the self-styled doctor had for many years securely carried on the trade of a secret poisoner, in which his daughter had actively assisted, among others having been employed for that purpose by the infamous Countess of Rochester.

It was in vain Dr. Hall strove to keep

his horse out of the press; the yelling and shouting so increased, the animal became almost unmanageable; and, in a state of horror not to be conceived, he found himself so close to the sledge on which the criminals were being dragged to the gallows, that he could distinguish their haggard, ghastly features. He closed his eyes—a sense of suffocation seemed to overwhelm him, and he knew not how he got out of the crowd, or completed his journey to his inn in Smithfield, for afterwards all seemed a blank.

It may here be added, that these villainous wretches were hanged at Tyburn, according to their sentence, after having confessed to a series of murders, by secret poisoning, that made the very blood run cold to hear. Such was the detestation felt by the citizens for their hellish practices, that the house in which they dwelt was presently razed to the ground; and, for many years afterwards, many an awful tale was told of the dark practices of the secret poisoners of Barbican. The rest of the family disappeared, and were never more heard of.

It was not until he found himself in the genial society of his fast friend, Master Shakspeare, a welcome visiter at New Place, that Doctor Hall could get out of his mind the terrible end of the base wretch whose villainous arts had cast such a blight upon his youth. There, however, he speedily regained his wonted composure. Cheerful society, continued intercourse with minds of a pure and lofty character, could not fail to elevate his own. He soon found himself taking a deep interest in matters that entirely led him away from the past; and, as this grew more engrossing, the influence of the latter entirely disappeared. But the restoration of his mind to its native tranquillity he owed rather to the daughter than to the father. Ever since their mutual attendance at the sick bed of the honored inmate of the dwelling in the Clink Liberty, they had entertained a most favorable opinion of each other from the amiable qualities they exhibited.

Many a miserable hour had been brightened by the recollection of the gentle, self-denying creature, with whom the young physician had shared so many anxious vigils at the bedside of Master Shakspeare: and it may also be said that, in the brilliant scenes in which she afterwards moved, Susanna did not forget the grave, pure-minded youth, whose devotion to her parent had so entirely won her esteem. On their meeting under happier auspices, these favorable estimates of each were much strengthened.

They now possessed ample opportunities of studying each other's disposition, and every day they gave to the task increased their admiration.

They were necessarily thrown much into each other's society under circumstances which allowed the cultivation of the most agreeable impressions. Master Shakspeare was ever intent on setting afoot some pleasant pastime in which all those around him might join. One day, a party went a-birding to Tiddington,—another a-hunting in Drayton Bushes, a third a-fishing by the meadows near Welford, a fourth they would proceed to fly their hawks along the river by Ludington; then they would take rambles, perchance, to Hampton Lucy, or Lower Clopton, or Bardon Hill, a summer-day's stroll in the woods, or a moonlit walk on the banks of the Avon. In all such cases, Master Doctor Hall and Mistress Susanna Shakspeare frequently found themselves together, taking exceeding delight in each other's observations. Although since his appearance she was observed to be a shade less grave than she had been for some months, she was far from being the same careless-hearted being she had seemed during her appearance at the court of France.

The young physician seemed to possess unusual buoyancy. The vast stores of learning he had accumulated he gave out with liberal hand, and took his share in the conversation with the many noble spirits continually appearing at Master Shakspeare's hospitable board, in a way that shewed he was not unworthy of such fellowship.

Their mutual liking had been of long standing, but it appeared as though warmer feelings were now exercising their influence. This was not so plainly visible in their conversation as in their general bearing towards each other. There was a constant attention paid by the one to the other's feelings and sentiments. Neither expressed the emotions the other had inspired, but a thousand graceful attentions gave evidence of their existence. They were, however, becoming much too strong to remain longer undeclared.

It chanced that, in one of their customary moonlit rambles, which had been prolonged somewhat beyond the usual time, they conversed in that low, earnest tone used only where the speaker speaketh to the heart rather than to the ear. The subject, either by accident or design, was the possibility of the existence of a second attachment, after the first had ended in horrible disappointment. The young physician, with

deep earnestness, and a tremor in his voice that bespoke the powerful interest he felt in his subject, was expressing his arguments in favor of the mind and heart recovering themselves even after the terriblest shock.

Susanna listened with unusual attention. Her eyes were directed to the ground, and her complexion seemed a shade paler than ordinary. There was a balmy freshness in the air, peculiarly welcome after a sultry day; and the stars shone in the clear heavens with a brightness that seemed truly magical. The mill and the mill-stream looked bathed in an atmosphere of liquid silver, that gleamed over the river, and on the neighboring barn, the trees, and the town and church spreading out in the near distance. In brief, it was a landscape which lacked nothing but a pair of lovers to appear a very paradise upon earth. It can hardly be said that there was any thing of such a sort wanted here. If the two who walked so quietly through this unfrequented path were not lovers, they were in a state as near to loving as it was possible for them to be in.

"Methinks," continued he, "nature would be losing sight of justice, were the heart, that hath already been once strongly acted upon to no end but its own deep unhappiness, never to know the genuine taste of that extreme bliss of the which it hath been wilfully cheated. That it doth so happen cannot be denied,—for, in some, the shock which misused affection endureth is of that terrible sort that it bringeth all to one confused ruin; but as, in the physical world, we see after the fiercest tempests the landscape look more lovely than ever, so in the moral world, these rude tornadoes may spend their fury, yet in time there shall arise sensations, hopes, and wishes, of that goodlier sort no appreciation can fully appraise. The clouds have passed off; the atmosphere hath become clear; the mind rebounds from the severe pressure that hath fallen on it to an elevation far above its ordinary level; and the sense of enjoyment becomes the more active, it being, as it were, a rebound from the sense of misery which preceded it."

Susanna still listened with downcast eyes.

"If any one look carefully to the laws which govern the great sphere we inhabit, there will be found to be a carefully adjusted system of compensation. No injury is done for which a recompense is not offered. No loss is sustained which is not followed by a gain. The leaves that the autumnal blast tears from the boughs, form, during

winter, a source of nourishment and warmth to the roots. The fire that destroyed an impassable tangled thicket, where there grows nothing wholesome, creates a soil that will speedily produce the richest verdure. Wherever there is evil, be sure there is some good at hand to neutralise it. It is not enough to know, that the bee that stingeth you can sting you no more; the true satisfaction lieth in learning he possesses a honey-bag, that is at once the best remedy for the wound, and the exquisitest gratification to the taste. When you are tossed in a storm that mingleth sea and sky together, you may draw comfort from the conviction that the same mighty force which plungeth your ship into the trough of the sea, sends her careering over the next mountainous billow, a good step towards a secure port."

The speaker paused, but he heard neither reply nor comment.

"And touching our inward natures," said he. "It standeth to reason that the same beneficence should equally preside there. Surely there is a fund to draw upon in case of reverses: and that he who is a bankrupt in heart shall find means to begin the world again with fairer hopes than ever. Perchance I shall be better understood, if I put the case in this sort." At this part his voice began to falter somewhat. "I will say that I have loved—loved wholly and most passionately; but have been made the victim of the most consummate craft and treachery. My affections have suffered shipwreck, but Time, the consoler, hath at last enabled me to put to sea again, far away from any such breakers as have done me such ill service. Suppose it should chance to be my good fortune to meet with a person so admirably disposed as yourself, and, under the influence of your numberless sweet virtues, I should surrender up my faith, my hope, my pleasures, unto your honorable custody. Let it not be conceived that, having been robbed of my happiness, I am so thorough a pauper in that commodity, I am in the state of him who seeketh a provision out of the abundance of another, on the claim of destitution. So far from the sweet well of human comfort being exhausted in me, it is only in that state which requires a touch of genuine sympathy to bring it out in more freshness and abundance, than followed the smiting of the rock by the great law-giver of ancient time. Well then, excellent Susanna; in this case I present myself before you—I look to you for the happiness I should have found elsewhere. I require of you to answer whether, knowing

my misadventure, you can assure yourself of the same perfectness of contentation, you might have looked for from one who hath had no experience in such matters."

These words were not expressed without some hesitation on the part of the speaker, and on the part of the listener, with very evident embarrassment. At the conclusion of his speech, there remained a pause for some few minutes: the silence was at last broken, but, as it seemed, with no small difficulty.

"The case you have put," answered she, "of a surety, is well worthy of attention, and demandeth some consideration in the answering. Before I attempt this, I have much to say, that must be said. I do not feel equal to enter into such a matter at this moment. Permit me some sufficient time to think of it. To-morrow, if it please you, we will resume our walk in this direction, when I will unburthen my heart of a misery which I thought to have left there undisturbed for the rest of my days. Till then, bear with me, I pray you."

The walk was concluded in silence, but this silence was more eloquent to the hearts of both, than could have been an age of ordinary talking. Soon afterwards they separated. Dr. Hall pressed an uneasy pillow that night. There was something in the parting words of Mistress Susanna, that seemed pregnant with unpleasant mystery, and he thought it boded him and his hopes of happiness no good. She had impressed on him so firm a conviction of her being essential to his felicity, if ever that was to be attained by him, that any thing that tended to disturb it filled him with intolerable uneasiness.

He waited all the next day with a sort of creeping dread upon him, and thought time never hung so heavy as in the hour that interposed between their meeting. He saw her not all that day. As the time drew near, his uneasiness increased. He imagined all sorts of unaccountable strange things that were to affect his hopes. Doubts and misgivings followed each other in apparently endless succession. The hour at last arrived for the customary evening walk, but to his exceeding astonishment, instead of mistress Susanna, came a letter from her. He opened it with infinite inquietude, and read as follows:

"I thought I could have schooled myself into the doing of a task, which your late advertisement to me hath rendered too absolute to be avoided; and finding I am quite unable to the due performance of it, I must throw myself on your indulgence, whilst,

with whatever humble craft of pen I possess, I proceed to it by an easier method. Know then, sweet sir, that like yourself I have loved with all mine heart, one whom I believed the devotion of a thousand hearts, had I possessed them, were no more than his due. In station he was so far above me, that I felt it to be an honor to have his notice—a happiness unspeakable to obtain his affection. For some time he lived under the same threshold with myself, and, besides swearing himself my true servant, seemed never to be easy unless testifying to me how much above all other women in the world he held me in his esteem. In sooth these fine speeches gave me such exquisite contentation, that nothing on earth could come nigh it. If ever woman loved in all honesty of heart, and believed she was loved with a like entireness, I was that happy creature. Of course I thought him of such nobleness of mind as only angels are kindred of; I could not for an instant imagine that one who looked so well and spoke so well, had any sort of ill-disposedness whatever.

“One night we had sat up late together, and were alone, as we had been many times before; but of this terrible night, spare me, I implore you, any further history, than that only by a chance so fortunate as to declare itself a Providence protecting a helpless and almost fallen creature, I escaped from a villany as deeply laid as it was basely put in practice. I held my peace, for I saw full well my speaking might do much mischief, but could do no good. Of him it is only necessary to say that he had the grace to seem repentant; yet the outrage was too gross to be so readily overlooked as he expected. I bade him avoid me—I would have none of him from that time forth. My heart ached for it for many a weary day and sleepless night, but I felt it was due to myself to show such a person I possessed that sense of self-respect which is the true armor of proof to innocence and purity.

“I will not deny that you, sweet sir, have medicined most welcome to the devouring misery, which, for no inconsiderable time, looked to have marked me for its prey. The influence of your worthiness has fallen on my path like a sunshine, and the shadow that seemed impenetrable is now dispersing rapidly away. I deeply regret that the heart you have done me the honor to desire is too battered and bruised to be worthy of your possessing; but, if you be in the same mood after the perusal of what is here writ down, be assured that, as far as your happiness can be secured by so poor a source

of enjoyment, there shall be nothing wanting to hold it as securely as ever happiness was held in this world. And so fare you well, sweet sir, till we meet on the morrow!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ease and wine

Have bred these bold tales: Poets when they
rage,

Turn gods to men, and make an hour an age;
But I will give a greater state and glory,
And raise to time a noble memory.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

IN the long winter evenings, it became the custom at New Place to cheer away the hours with all manner of pleasant sports, Master Shakspeare being ever ready to set an example of such pleasantry, and a jovial time it was sure to be when he set the game afoot. Barley-break, hunt-the-slipper, blind-man's-buff, hot-cockles, and I know not what exquisite pastimes, were going on in the hall; and of the merry company who enjoyed themselves equally with the host, be sure there was Sir George Carew, our young physician, Susanna and Judith, Tommy Hart, Jonas Tietape, and Dick Quiney; and the prodigal heaps of mirth with which they garnished this pleasantry, no pen can sufficiently express. When they had tired themselves of these several honest sports, they would each to his stool or a corner of the settle, and sit round the hearth, bantering, and jesting, and relating such things worth the telling as had come within their several observations. But the chief enjoyment to the greater number was the telling of stories, as hath been said, which, when they got in the humor, all were obliged to do in turn, and the listening to such was found to be as exquisite pleasure as ever was known. Now, there was some marvellous thrilling narrative from the host which sent them to their beds brimming with wonder, pleasure, and admiration; anon came a strange eventful adventure among the wild Irish, or some glance into court life by Sir George Carew. Next followed some touching tale of love by Judith or Susanna; Jonas Tietape, Dick Quiney, and Tommy Hart, would be content only with tales of mirth; and such mirth was put forth in them as would have stirred a bed-ridden weaver out of his melancholy. Joan, too, could not but choose to be in as merry a key as her husband; and our young physician threw variety into the series by nar-

rating scenes of sorrow and suffering he had had notice of whilst practising the art of healing in England and France.

Of the stories that formed the entertainment of this merry circle, it so chanced that the reader cannot, at this present, have a choicer sample of them than can be found in the one here given, which was one night related by the fireside by no less a person than Sir George Carew, and called by him

THE COURT FOOL.

In a goodly chamber, well hung with costly arras that was in the palace of Hatfield, there sat a lady of a very commendable aspect, though it wore an expression somewhat serious withal. She was young—that is to say, nigh unto five-and-twenty years of age, and looked to be of a fair stature. Her hair, of a light red tint, whereof the greater portion was concealed under a small caul of gold thread, was combed up from the forehead, showing a right delicate complexion, and a brow of a famous thoughtfulness. Her dress was a close-vested robe of a sober color, and without ornament, that had nothing noticeable about it, save its extreme simplicity; indeed, in her whole attiring, seemingly though it was, there was evidence of a wonderful modesty in the wearer, and a marvellous freedom from that common vanity of the sex that delighteth in the wearing of gaudy apparel. She sat in a cushioned arm-chair of carved oak, close upon the hearth, seemingly as if gazing upon the log that was burning on the fire-dogs—for it was the 17th November—holding in her lap what looked to be a missal, or other work of the like kind, used by Catholics in their devotions; and she wore a rosary round her neck, to the which there was affixed an ivory cross. This was no other than the Lady Elizabeth, at that time residing in a sort of honorable durance at the royal palace of Hatfield, by command of her sister, Queen Mary, who, out of fear that the Protestants of the kingdom would, in consequence of her highness's persecution of them, rise in rebellion, and drive her from the throne, to place the Lady Elizabeth thereon, did treat her with a monstrous lack of sisterly affection, kept her a prisoner, and sought always to make her disavow any participation in the principles of the Reformed faith; of which the end was, that the poor lady did lead a most unhappy life.

Doubtless was she reflecting upon her distressed condition at that time, and imagining of some means whereby she might escape the snares with which her enemies did encompass her all around. Presently

she pulled from her bodice a letter, which, first taking of a hasty glance around the room to see that she was watched of none, she opened, and quickly began to read. It was to this effect:—

“Count me not a laggard, or one unmindful of your interests, I pray you; for, though I have not writ to you so long a time, it hath been entirely because of my poor wit not being able to discover such conveyance as would warrant me risking a letter. Methinks now I have hit upon such a plan as must be the very safest of all under the circumstances of the case. The bearer hereof is trustworthy, and is not like to be suspected. You may say to him what your necessities require of you, the which he will, with a proper cunning, and with all convenient speed, transmit to me; and at the next favorable opportunity count upon having my answer at his hands.”

At the perusal of this passage, the Lady Elizabeth broke off, and looked to be considering of the matter for a minute or so; anon she read on:—

“To my certain knowledge, you will be placed in great jeopardy, mind you not how you carry yourself. My lord cardinal appeareth to be sick of the slaughter that hath been going on among the suffering Protestants of this now unhappy country; but Bonner only getteth to be more sanguinary, the more Christian blood he is allowed to shed. Her highness, as I think, affects the counsels of this recreant bishop, more than she does those of Pole; and I ofttimes tremble for your safety, for the loss of Calais hath made her temper most inhuman and bearish. Doubtless they will strive for the making a convert of you. Regard not their efforts with too great an indifference; rather seek to make them believe that you are ready to be convinced should they afford you proper argument for it. In this way shall you gain time, which is of vital moment, and keep them from all excuse of violent measures. Remember how many look to you for the rescuing of unhappy England from the Philistines, by whom she is oppressed, and be not regardless of a life so dear to so vast a multitude.

“From your humble, poor servant

“At commandment,

“ W. C.”

The lady Elizabeth, after carefully reading of this epistle some two or three times, with a countenance which showed she was pondering on its contents, stood up and dropped it into the fire; then, after watching it till it burned out, and, re-seating of herself, she appeared to be intent upon perusing the

little book she had a while since held in her lap.

"I prythee hold thy prate!" exclaimed a gentleman of a pleasant cheerful countenance, and somewhat worshipful presence, as he entered at the door. He was closely followed by as merry looking an object as eye could desire to gaze on. He wore a parti-colored coat, fastened round the body with a girdle, having a hood to it, partly covering the head, and surmounted with ass's ears; below his coat he had on close breeches, with hose of different colors on each leg; and in his hand he carried a short stick, with an inflated bladder at one end, and a carving like unto a fool's head at the other. He came into the room, whirling of his stick, making strange grimaces and ridiculous antics behind the person he followed.

"I prythee hold thy prate," repeated the gentleman, but not as if in any way out of humor.

"That will I, master," replied the other, with a famous grave countenance; "be you so civil as to show me at which end I be to hold it;" and then he suddenly brake out into singing:—

"My leman and I fell out, perdie!
With my hey nonnie, nonnie, O!
For love will not last every day,
And the summer grass soon turns to hay,
With my hey nonnie—"

"Hast no better singing than that in a lady's hearing?" exclaimed his master, turning round upon him rather sharply.

"Ay, marry have I—brave singing, I warrant you, if it please her ladyship to be in a brave humor," answered he; "I have songs of every color in the rainbow, for all the several sorts of fancies; and some that be parti-colored, for such as God hath blessed with an infinite proper disposition after motley."

"How canst talk of the colors of songs, fool?" asked the gentleman. "That must needs be out of all reasonable conceit, seeing that songs are made up of sounds that cannot be judged by the eye. "Please you, my lady," added he, as he advanced courteously to the Lady Elizabeth, who, undisturbed by the entrance of her visitors, seemed still to be perusing of the book she held in her hand, "seeing that your ladyship hath grown exceedingly melancholy of late, I have taken into my service this varlet, at a friend's recommendation, hoping he may afford you such entertainment as may render your way of life somewhat the more agreeable to you, than I am fearful it hath been for this several weeks past."

"Truly, Sir Thomas Pope, I am much beholden to you," answered the lady, graciously. "It is long since my poor condition hath seemed to be regarded of any in this land; yet happy am I that, with an untroubled conscience, I can resign myself to what may come of it. Certes, methinks there must be no offence so great as that of being innocent of all; nevertheless, it is not in my nature to be altogether indifferent to the many great kindnesses I have received at your hands, the which, weary of my life as I am, I do hope, with God's good help, I may live to requite."

"Well, Heaven hath been wonderfully bountiful to me, that be a sure thing!" cried the fool, with a monstrous urgency, as he looked to be examining of some books upon a table in the middle of the chamber.

"How now, fool!" exclaimed Sir Thomas.

"A grace of God, lady!" added the other, in the same tone and manner, as he brought a volume in his hand for her to look at. "I pray you say of what this book may be about, and in what tongue it be writ?"

"It containeth divers select orations of Isocrates," replied she, "written in very choice Greek."

"And this?" asked he, taking up another book.

"That is Sophocles his tragedies, writ in the same tongue."

"And this, and this?" continued he, showing a new volume, when the last one had been named.

"The one is no other than the Holy Evangelists; the other those masterpieces of eloquence, the orations of Demosthenes; both also writ in Greek, and very delectable reading for all scholar-like and Christian people."

"And, I pray you, tell me what may be these others?" inquired the fool, pointing to many more that were upon the table.

"The one highest unto you is a volume of Titus Livius his histories, in excellent good Latin," answered the Lady Elizabeth, as courteously as if she was holding converse with some ripe scholar or person of worship, instead of being so close questioned of an ignorant poor fool, who possessed not so much learning as would master a horn-book. "That beside it is the very moving and truly admirable story of Amadis de Gaul, writ in French; and the two that lie further off are the pleasant tales of Boccaccio and Bandello, writ in the Italian tongue; beside which there are sundry right estimable volumes treating of religion, philosophy, and such other grave

matters it be necessary for the wise and good to know of; and these be writ in the same several languages, as well as some that be in English."

Doubtless, to know all these strange tongues requireth a wonderful deal of painstaking and patience?" asked the other.

"They cannot be well learned without, nor can any be accounted truly wise that knoweth them not," replied the lady.

"Then they that be fools have much to be thankful for!" exclaimed he, very heartily.

"How so, knave?" exclaimed his master. "What have fools to be thankful for, more than wiser folk? that be clean contrary to common sense."

"Nay, by your leave, master, I will prove it beyond all denying," replied the other, with an exquisite, solemn, foolish face."

"Do so, then, and quickly, or I will have thee whipped over thy fool's pate with thine own bauble!" added Sir Thomas.

"Now, it be on the face of it, no man can be wise without he endure a monstrous deal of trouble to make himself so."

"Well, varlet!" exclaimed his master.

"Now, this trouble, I take it, is a thing that they be best off who know least of; in honest truth, it seemeth to be a very pestilent sort of thing, and to be eschewed of all men."

"What then, knave?"

"This much, master. Methinks it be no way difficult to prove that a man may become a fool, and know not a jot of trouble in the becoming."

"I doubt it not," said the other, smiling at the varlet's exceeding gravity.

"It cometh naturally, as peascods come upon their stalks, or as a calf seeketh its dam—by a sort of instinct as it were, or disposition which a man hath to be a fool. Therefore, not being put to the infinite trouble which waiteth upon they that seek to be wise, they that be fools have much to be thankful for!"

"Truly, a fool's argument!" cried Sir Thomas, laughingly. "Dost not think, my lady, that the knave hath some shrewdness?" asked he, turning to the lady Elizabeth.

"Methinks, for a fool, he is well enough," answered the lady, carelessly, as if she took not much interest in the matter. At this the fool began to sing, with great earnestness—

"Hush thee poor babe!—cold blows the wind,

Thick falls the rain upon the tree;

But more regardless—more unkind,

Hath been thy father's heart to me!"

"If thou canst not sing better matter than that, and be hanged to thee, thou hadst best come to a quick halt in thy singing," exclaimed his master. "Be such miserable cot-quean ballads as that the properest sort of minstrelsy for a lady's bower—to say nought of its unfitness for one of a melancholy humor?"

"In good fay, master, I knew not the lady was so disposed," replied the other. Then, turning to the Lady Elizabeth, added, "Art melancholy for lack of a husband, an it please you, my lady?"

"By my troth, no, indeed!" answered she, smiling.

"Such things have been, and much mischief come of it," continued the fool, with extreme solemnness. "Now, there be two kinds of husbands—to wit, your fool husband, and your wise-man husband; of the which your fool husband is ever in wonderful estimation of all women."

"He must needs be a fool who would be seeking me on such an errand as marriage," observed the Lady Elizabeth, with a smile.

"But how shall we distinguish your fool from your wise man?" asked his master, evidently in a most cheerful humor.

"Hearken to their wives!" answered the other, knowingly. "If you hear a wife call her husband 'a brute,' be sure she hath some particular reason for't, there be no gainsaying. He is one of your wise men, out of all doubt, who are ever at their wives' kirtles; whilst 'the dear good man,' who is so cuddled and praised of his loving partner, is, beyond all contradiction, some estimable famous fool or another, who heedeth no more his helpmate's goings-on than he does which side of a Shrovetide pancake getteth first into his mouth."

"O' my life! Sir Thomas, methinks your fool speaketh but uncivilly of us poor women," exclaimed the lady, yet not in any way ungraciously.

"Nay, he meaneth no harm, be assured," replied his master. Here the fool, looking pathetically on the head carved on his bauble, burst out a-singing—

"Oh, turn away those orbs of light,

Else, as the sun, where fires are blazing,

Their brighter splendor dim my sight,

And I grow blind by rashly gazing."

"I' faith, that would be a pitiful mishap, indeed!" cried the knight, with a merry chuckle; "but I like not the humor of thy singing—it soundeth as melancholy as a hoarse cuckoo: peradventure, thou wilt now explain thy conceit of having songs of all colors, affirmed by thee as we entered my lady's chamber. Thou hast some exquisite

ridiculous reason for it, I'll be bound."—
 "Dear heart! I have reason enough, and to spare, for any honest man," replied the fool; "and yet, master, I make no boast of it. Forsooth, there be some who think 'tis a marvellous distinction now-a-days to be a fool; but he who ventures to say I am prouder of it than I ought to be, is a thorough slanderer, and a shallow poor knave, who deserveth no better hap than to have his brains beat out with a fool's bladder!"

"Well, knave; but to the matter!" exclaimed Sir Thomas.

"And was my mother of a very excellent, fine virtue?" continued the other, with increasing earnestness. "Ay, that was she—and every one had a wonderful appreciation of her exceeding virtuousness. Indeed, it be well known she was sought after by so many husbands, she never had time to marry one of 'em.

"That showeth the respect her virtue was held in, of a surety," observed the knight merrily. "But to thy conceit of the colors!"

"Ay, master, and hugely to her credit; she brought up a large family—and one of 'em is a fool," added he, assuming of some dignity. "Nay, it hath been said by divers persons of worship, that you shall find him to be as pretty a fool as any that live; but he hath not the presumption to think himself a greater fool than his betters."

"To thy reason of the songs, and be hanged to thee!" cried Sir Thomas, catching up the bauble, and hitting the fool two or three sharp thumps over the pate with the bladder, and yet as if he was in a humor of laughing all the time; whilst the Lady Elizabeth, as was evident, could not forbear smiling.

"Nay, master," exclaimed the fool, ducking his head here and there to avoid the blows, "if you kill me, I doubt you will have it a bit the quicker. I will about it o' the instant, please you to stay your thumping!"

"O' my word, I will send thee to the grooms to be well cudgelled of them, hear I any more of such prating," said his master, desisting from his exertions.

"I pray you do not," cried the other, with much seriousness. "Believe me, cudgelling hath not agreed with me at any time. I never took it kindly. But concerning of the songs I will speak."

"Thou hadst best," observed the knight.

"There be songs of divers colors, out of all doubt," continued the fool. "In the first place, there is your sad-colored song, which be no other than a ballad that wear-

eth a perpetual suit of mourning. It always cometh close upon the heels of a tragedy, or other doleful occasion, and is as apt at a funeral as an undertaker. Now those that do most affect your sad-colored song are, perchance, a maid who hath lost her lover, or any other small matter there be no likelihood of her recovering—a thief that hath his neck being fitted with a rope's-end—and a debtor that findeth himself within four stone walls, and no chance of getting out. And thus sing they." Thereupon, in an infinite melancholy voice, and with a very pathetic countenance, he sung these lines:

"Oh, woe is me! oh, doleful strait!
 Now mine is sorrow's piercing thorn;
 Oh, luckless hour!—oh, cruel fate!
 Alack that ever I was born!"

"In honest truth, there can be no doubting of what color such a song should be," observed Sir Thomas.

"But my troth, it be a very sad color, indeed," added the Lady Elizabeth, in a like humor.

"An it please you, my lady, so 't is," said the fool. "Now your flame-colored song is of a clean contrary sort. It be full of heat. It burns, as it were. In fact, its complexion be much the same as though it were taken out of the fire, red-hot; and I doubt not, were it well hammered on a blacksmith's anvil, there would be sparks fly from it presently. The matter of this song be ever of love; therefore, it s no marvel that it is in wonderful great request of all your young, your middle-aged; ay, and your old oft affect it in no small measure—after such a fashion as this." Then, putting his hand to his heart, he, with a look of famous affectionateness, commenced the singing of these words:

"As burning coal,
 I find my soul
 Doth glow with Love's divine desires;
 But in the blaze
 Thine image plays,
 A phoenix rising from its fires!"

"Methinks the singing of such a song should save coal and candle all the winter," remarked the knight.

"I' faith, the flame of it seemeth so apparent, I marvel it burn not the house over our heads!" cried the lady, with a manner as though quite forgetting of her melancholy.

"Certes, if the timbers be dry enough, lady, such should be the case," observed the fool, very seriously. "Of other songs,

that shall easily be known by their colors, there is your watchet-colored song, which cometh also of a lover's fantasy. In it you may expect to find all the flowers of speech culled to form a posy of compliments. Then cometh your yellow song, which hath ever a very jaundiced look with it, and is in huge request with your outrageous, combustious jealous pates, and thorough-going cuckoldy knaves. After this, there is your green song, which shall be known by its conceit of vegetation, as—

“O, the green willow!
I'll have for my pillow;”

or, with a like wofulness—

“The green, green grass shall form my bed,
Alack and well-a-day, O!
And the cold, cold stone shall hold my head,
Whilst worms on me shall prey, O!”

These be such pitiful ballads as are chosen of those who oftentimes take to an ugly fashion of tying their garters higher than need be; or, like new-hatched ducklings, rush to the nighest pond as their properest place. Then, look to encounter your orange-tawny song, an exceeding brave-hearted ditty—free as air—with an amorous countenance, well embrowned with tropical sunshine. Close upon which cometh your nut-brown song, which is sure to smack of a tankard, and is like to be in more estimation of a taster, than the whole Book of Psalms. They do say it giveth more provocation to drink than a pickled herring; therefore, will I not essay the singing of it, an it please you, master, else shall it chance to make me dry, and a dry fool cannot help being as sorry a commodity as heart could desire.”

“Gad a mercy, fellow, thou sayest true!” exclaimed Sir Thomas, evidently amused, as seemed the Lady Elizabeth also, with the famous droll seriousness with which the fool spoke the last sentence, as he appeared intent upon the examination of his fingers. “But here is a groat for thee, and, if that will not stay thy drought, get thee to the buttery, and say I sent thee for a drink of good ale.”

As the fool was making his acknowledgments for his largess, which he did in very prodigal fashion, there entered a groom of the chambers, announcing the arrival of some person who would have instant speech with Sir Thomas Pope on a matter of extreme urgency, whereupon Sir Thomas bade the fool stay where he was awhile, and, with a courteous speech to the lady, hoping the varlet might afford her some entertainment, he presently took his leave.

No sooner was he out of the chamber, and the fool left alone with the lady, than the former, on a sudden dropping of his appearance of foolishness, seemed listening to the retreating footsteps with a countenance of intense interest; then went he and opened the door and looked out, and after that kept spying about the arras hangings very curiously, the lady all the while regarding him with a wonderful earnestness. In a few minutes he approached his companion, in a manner marvellous respectful, and, going close up, said, in a low voice, “I pray you, my lady, tell me, have you read Sir William Cecil's letter?—the which, though it hath been in my hands ten days, could I find no opportunity for its safe deliverance till noonday yesterday, when, as Sir Thomas was in close converse with the priest in the park, I slipped it in the posy of dandelions and daisies, and such poor weeds I was then gathering, and gave unto you.”

“In truth, yes,” said the lady, still regarding him closely, and speaking in an under-tone; “I have read it, but I marvel greatly Sir William Cecil should show such an infinite lack of discretion as to make choice of such a messenger. That business must needs come to a foolish ending that hath a fool to meddle with it.”

“I beseech you, my lady, take me not for what I have appeared,” replied the other, earnestly. “This is nothing but a device put on for the better carrying on of our purposes, and watching over your safety. Think not that my worthy and approved friend, Sir William, would have set me on such service, had he not first looked narrowly into my fitness. I hope to prove myself your assured good servant and poor bondsman; hinder you not my service. It is an excellent fine plot, my lady; and I doubt not to carry it on with such singular cunning, that you shall reap by it much benefit, and with God's good help be rescued from your present troubles.”

“I would your hope could be accomplished,” replied the Lady Elizabeth; “but, I pray you, tell me to whom I am indebted for such ready zeal in my behalf.”

“My name is Thomas Challoner,” answered he; “a poor gentleman of some small credit with his fellows, and not altogether deficient of that experience—at least so it hath been thought—necessary to one who is ambitious of devoting his life in the cause of the very fairest and most excellent princess in Christendom.”

“I heartily thank you, Master Challoner,” said his companion, very graciously; “I would it were in my power to recompense

you as your great pains-taking, and ready-thrusting yourself into danger for my sake, merit; but, assure yourself, I will ever hold in my heart a grateful remembrance of your infinite goodness towards me, and that I live in the extreme hope of one day or other making you such poor amends as my ability may allow."

"Talk not of it, I pray you, my lady," exclaimed Master Challoner, respectfully. "Believe me, the honor I find in what I have undertook exceedeth all that the proudest monarch could bestow; but rather, if it so please you, for the time is precious, give me some answer to the letter of Sir William Cecil."

"Tell him, then, from me, worthy sir, I have done all that he would have me do, ere his letter came into my hands," replied the Lady Elizabeth. "This same meddlesome and violent priest, Master Dr. Crosier, whom I suspect Bonner hath sent here to worry me into my grave, hath essayed all the hottest zeal and furious bigotry could do for my conversion; he hath persecuted me night and morn with the horriest threatenings and terriest denunciations, giving me reason to believe that her Highness is thirsting for my blood, and that nought could ensure my safety but the complete renunciation of my Protestant errors, and the declaring of myself a member of his infallible church: whereupon, weary of his persecutions, and, in truth, almost weary of my life, and, scarce knowing which way to turn in my extremity, I heard mass, and confessed to him, and in all things outwardly appeared as he would have me, though in heart, as God is my judge, I am as true a Protestant as ever lived."

Master Challoner listened to this avowal with a countenance of much anxiousness, but at its ending brightening up somewhat, he added—

"Methinks 'tis well it is no worse. I grieve from my heart that your sufferings should have been so great; but, knowing the nature of those who have greatest influence in your fate, I know they are in a manner natural, and to be expected. I beseech you, my lady, think me not over-bold if I offer to advise you in this strait, for I know better than yourself the many dangers that encompass you. From what I have lately learned from a creditable source, I believe this to be the criticallest time of all your life; and therefore I pray you, in company with all your assured friends, take good heed of what you do; appear what you like, but pledge yourself to nothing; stir not your tyrants against you, if you

can help it; but sign no papers that shall bind you to be their servitor in aftertimes; delay, and keep delaying, should they press you upon any such matters, for you shall find such policy of the very utmost consequence to your present safety and future welfare."

Whilst this conversation was proceeding, three persons had been in a secret debate in another chamber of the palace. One seemed to have rode hard and fast upon a journey, for he sat wiping of his face with a napkin, though he talked earnestly all the while; beside which, the rowels of his spurs were of a sanguine tinge, showing he had spared not his horse as he came; and his apparel was so covered with dirt and dust, that it was hard to tell of what color or material it might be. He was stoutly built, and his features had somewhat of a stern and unpleasant cast with them. Close upon him stood one of a spare body, tall, with a sharp, thin face, of a dark complexion, beetling eyebrows, hooked nose, and thick bushy black beard, dressed in the habit of an ecclesiastic, who seemed to be listening to the other with so severe an earnestness, it was evident that the matter they talked of was of huge importance; and occasionally he would interrupt the speaker with questions, to which the other gave answers that appeared only the more to increase the number of such inquiries. Opposite to him, leaning against a table, on which was a hat, whip, and gloves, as if carelessly thrown there, stood the more courtly figure of Sir Thomas Pope, with a countenance full of anxiety and interest, as he listened or took part in the discourse.

"Then there must be no time lost," observed the ecclesiastic, as the other came to a pause in his speech. "Hast got the papers that honorable and truly Christian prelate, my lord bishop, gave you, worthy sir?"

"Here are they, safe enough, I warrant you, master doctor," replied the other, producing some papers from his vest.

"Then come you with me, Sir Thomas; we will to her on the instant!" added he, who had been styled doctor, as he took the papers into his own hands.

"I trust you will use no violence, Dr. Crosier," said Sir Thomas Pope, as the other two seemed about to leave him. "This is an affair of great peril, nor am I sure Bishop Bonner hath proper warrant for setting you upon it."

"It is for her soul's comfort, and the good of the true church!" exclaimed the ecclesiastic, regarding Sir Thomas with some severity. "Methinks that be proper

warrant enough; and I marvel that any of our holy faith should say aught against it. I charge you, as you value your soul's welfare, see that none enter at these gates till we return to this chamber. This is God's own work we are about, and I doubt not to make it the greatest victory ever achieved over the accursed heresy that plagues this unhappy land."

At hearing this, Sir Thomas reverently bowed his head, though in his countenance it was evident he was exceeding anxious for the issue; and then Dr. Crosier and his companion, all dusty as he was, took themselves out of the chamber. As they walked along, they conversed with each other in Latin; and so intent were they on what they were saying, that they noticed not one close upon their footsteps.

"How now, fool?" cried Dr. Crosier sharply, as he all at once discovered he was followed.

"Forsooth, and may it please your reverence," said Master Challoner, in as foolish a manner as was ever seen, "I have heard it said that the ways of holy men were in the paths of righteousness, and wishing to get as nigh heaven as a fool can, I thought it good to bring my toes and your reverence's heels in as close acquaintance as possible, that I might be all the more sure of the right path."

"Begone, fellow, or your bones shall ache for it!" exclaimed master doctor.

"Nay, O' my life, I will tread on your heels as little as may be!" added the assumed fool, very movingly.

"Get you not gone this instant, I will see you have such a cudgelling, as you shall bear in remembrance to your life's end."

At this the other began to whimper, and, rubbing his eyes with his sleeve, turned himself round, and proceeded slowly the way he came.

"Thinkest thou, he heard aught of our speech?" inquired he who was styled Sir Topas, as they continued their walk and their discourse.

"It matters not," replied Dr. Crosier; "he is a very fool, without learning of any kind."

Soon afterwards they arrived at that part of the palace where the lady Elizabeth had her lodging, and, gaining admittance to her chamber, found her seated in a recess, where the window looked out upon the park and grounds, as if seriously intent upon the perusal of the same little volume of prayers she had in hand a while since.

"Glad am I to find you so well disposed," said Dr. Crosier, after some civil greeting

betwixt him and the lady. "Doubtless your ladyship findeth excellent comfort from the contemplation of such true piety and marvellous fine wisdom as may be found in those homilies."

"Indeed, I do find in them exceeding comfort!" answered the lady Elizabeth.

"Surely, you had no such satisfaction from aught appertaining to that pestilent heresy in which you had the ill-hap to get instructed?" inquired the divine.

"Methinks, no," responded his apparent convert.

"Believe me, there can be no comparison," added Dr. Crosier; "and I doubt not, ere long, you shall receive such delight—seek you with all your heart and soul to be a good Catholic—as, before, you have had no knowledge."

"I humbly trust I may become so deserving," answered the lady.

Thus went they on for some time, he with great persuasiveness assuring her of the wonderful content she must find in the doctrines of what he styled the only church in which rested the saving of souls; and she, with a wonderful resignation, seeming to assent to everything, yet pledging herself to nought.

"Methinks, now, I cannot doubt of your conversion," said this ecclesiastic at last; "with the which I am the more pleased, as her Highness, at my report of your complete casting away the wretched schism with which you had been affected, hath sent one of her chaplains, my estimable and very learned friend here, Sir Topas Fletcher, to see that you have truly done what I have reported."

"Truly, honorable lady," exclaimed his companion, now addressing the lady Elizabeth for the first time, "what Dr. Crosier hath stated is not a whit from the truth."

"And moreover, he hath brought from her Highness," continued master doctor, producing and opening a paper, "a written recantation of your errors, which, it is expected, you will sign without any demur or delay."

The lady Elizabeth, without expressing any objection, took the paper into her hand, and read it carefully, the two priests regarding her all the whilst with a severe scrutiny. She discovered that it contained not only a solemn declaration of her true and steadfast participation of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, but promised, on the event of her attaining the English crown, to do her utmost to extirpate heresy out of the land; and in case of any remissness on her part in such godly and laudable endeavors, re-

nounced all natural right and claim to the throne, now and for ever after."

"There is matter in this that requireth deep consideration," observed she, assuming an indifference she felt not at all.

"And moreover," continued master doctor, producing another paper, "her Highness hath sent here a warrant for your committal to the Tower, in case you hesitate in the immediate signing of what is required of you."

The lady Elizabeth then examined the second paper, and finding it to be a warrant, as had been stated, for her imprisonment, and that it bore Queen Mary's signature, her heart was smote with a sudden fear, for she knew full well, went she to the Tower, her enemies would grant her no peace till they had taken her life. It was well remembered of her, at that moment, that she had been advised to seek, by every means she could, to gain time if pressed on any such matter; but the hapless lady felt a presentiment that, in such an extremity, all such endeavor would be fruitless.

"I pray you lose no time, if it please you, my lady," here observed master chaplain, with some eagerness; "for I promised her Highness I would not stay an hour at Hatfield, without your signature, or yourself in my custody."

"Here is pen and ink ready at hand," said the other, as he brought them from the table where the books were.

"Surely there be no need of such extreme haste," remarked the lady Elizabeth. "There yet remain many matters of doctrine of the which I have no certain knowledge; and my conscience will not allow me to attest my conviction of the truth of that I am ignorant."

"I doubt not you are a sufficient Catholic for the purpose required of you," answered Dr. Crosier; "and, as there can be no delaying now, her Highness's orders are so strict, I promise you, on your dismissing master chaplain with the necessary document, without more words said, I will make it my business to give you daily instruction in every minutest point of faith professed by all true Catholics, till you shall be as learned in them as is my Lord of London himself."

"But grant me some preparation," exclaimed she, as one held out the pen for her, while the other unfolded the paper. "Surely, on a matter so vital, I may have time afforded for proper reflection?"

"Nay, it cannot be," said Sir Topas. "I myself heard her Highness say, the signing of such a declaration would be a test of

your sincerity and affectionateness towards her."

"The which, if you made any to do about," added master doctor, "her Highness would judge your late behavior as hypocritical, and put on the better to hide some treasonable practices you are privately engaged in, of which she hath constant intelligence; and, moreover, I heard her Highness affirm," continued the chaplain with increasing earnestness, "should you attempt to evade the signing of that paper, no punishment should be severe enough for you; for it was plain, whatever appearance you put on, you were in heart a plotter of treason, a black heretic and a false woman."

In vain the poor lady tried all sorts of excuses, and brought forward all manner of pretexts for delay. She wished first to write to her Highness; she would rather defer the signing for a week, till to-morrow at noon: in vain she prayed to be left alone for a single hour—the two priests were inflexible; it was more than their lives were worth to allow of any such thing. Her Highness was imperative, and the signing must be without the delay of a single moment. Bewildered, and in great perplexity of mind, seeing no help for it, and fearful of the consequences if she refused what was required, the Lady Elizabeth was about to take the pen in her hand, when she spied a company of horsemen riding post-haste towards the palace, which, the other two seeing, they regarded each other with some uneasiness, and their brows grew black of a sudden.

"I can tarry here no longer!" cried the chaplain, with more severity than he had yet used. "Hither come the escort to convey you to the Tower."

"Surely never was woman so much her own enemy before!" exclaimed master doctor, with an exceeding stern aspect. "You are hurrying your head to the block."

"I pray you pardon me, but I like not being in such monstrous speed," observed the Lady Elizabeth, at last taking the pen into her hand. At this the two ecclesiastics looked with a sort of smile. "At least I will again peruse what is here writ, that I may not be in ignorance of what I am signing," added she.

"Nay, by the mass, but once reading must serve your turn this time!" exclaimed Sir Topas, somewhat rudely.

"O' my word, lady, this is but trifling with us!" cried Dr. Crosier, in a like uncivil manner.

"By your leave, worthy master doctor, I must needs re-peruse this paper ere I sign,"

answered the lady; and despite all they could say or do, she not only commenced reading of it slowly, sentence by sentence, but made remarks on such passages as seemed to demand observation; wherein she was constantly interrupted by the impatience of her companions, who, at last, got to be so desperate to have her do their bidding without further hindrance or loss of time, that they lost all respect in their behavior, and they looked to have more of the restless eagerness of lunatics than the sobriety of doctors of the church. Nevertheless, she dipped not her pen in the ink till she had come to the end of the paper. At this moment there was a loud outcry heard, mingled with a great knocking.

"What noise is that?" asked she, eagerly, doubtless glad to avail herself of anything that gave her a delay, was it of a single moment. Her two companions appeared more alarmed than she at these sounds; for their hands trembled as the one held the paper and the other the ink.

"The noise matters not!" cried master doctor, vehemently. "Sign the paper on the instant, or be adjudged a confirmed and obstinate heretic, accursed in the sight of God and man!"

"Nay, but so huge an uproar putteth me in some fear of my life," added the lady, with more urgency as the noise increased. "Mayhap there is mischief in it for one or all of us—the house is on fire, or there be thieves broke in? Indeed, I know not what great evil it may not be the herald of."

"Pish!" exclaimed master chaplain. "Tis nought but the escort, impatient of being kept so long awaiting. Sign—or, without more ado, I must off with you to the Tower."

"Indeed, it be but uncivil of them to be so soon impatient," cried she again; "for, methinks, they have scarce had time to get to the palace gates." At this moment the noise was heard more distinctly as if it was approaching nearer, and seemed to be the hurraing of many voices.

"All's lost!" exclaimed master doctor, furiously dashing down the ink-horn, and hurrying himself out of the chamber; and, at the same moment, master chaplain snatched away the papers, and disappeared with the like celerity: but, just as the lady Elizabeth had got well quit of them, a company of stately gentlemen entered her chamber by another door, followed by a multitude of meaner sort, and, with every demonstration of respect, the foremost of them all did kneel before her on one knee.

"What meaneth this, Sir William Ce-

cil?" exclaimed a lady, in exceeding astonishment, to him.

"It meaneth, an it please you, my gracious mistress," replied he, with much reverence, "that your troubles are at an end. Your sister hath been overtaken by the hand of death, and by all the proper authorities your Highness, without opposition or let of any kind, hath been proclaimed Queen of these realms."

"God save Queen Elizabeth!" eagerly exclaimed the assumed fool, throwing his cap and bells, with a monstrous zeal, far above his head; and every one of that assembly thereupon, with the same heartiness, joined in the cry.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The sixth age shifts

Into THE LEAN AND SLIPPERED PANTALOON,

* * * * *

His youthful hose well saved; and his big manly voice,

Turning again towards childish treble, pipes

And whistles in the sound.

SHAKESPEARE.

Despiteful Flora! Is't not enough of grief,
That Cynthia's robbed, but thou must grace
the thief?

Or didst thou hear Night's sovereign queen
complain,

Hymen had stolen a nymph out of her train,
And matched her here, plighted henceforth
to be

Love's friend, and stranger to virginity.
And mak'st thou sport for this?

BEN JONSON.

THERE was a cloud resting upon the honored roof-tree of New Place—a cloud that cast its shadows over all Stratford, and even over many a fair dwelling far beyond; for the master-spirit, who was the pride and glory of all that admirable neighborhood, had for a long period been so nigh unto death's door, that it had more than once been feared he had crossed the gloomy threshold.

Master Doctor Hall, with no less craft of love than of medicine, had held a desperate conflict with his malady, day after day, and week after week, assailing it in so many divers ways, as though his resources were out of all number; and whenever it seemed to be getting the mastery, bringing forth some new sort of artillery, and some secret stratagem of physic, that made his enemy fain to give up what ground of vantage he

had gained. The skill of other physicians had been required—so ill looked the case; but they so approved what he had done, and were so favorably impressed with his marvellous knowledge of all that related to their art, that one and all decided the patient could not be in better hands, and thereupon left him to his entire care.

Of a surety, he could not have been better provided for. The young physician acted as though he had in his power not only the existence of an individual, but the fame of a nation; nay, the very glory and boast of humankind. Another could not have had that stake in his preservation he had; he must have experienced the common effects of prolonged watchfulness, over-anxiety, absence of necessary rest and food, and continual strain upon the mind when taxing all its powers upon an issue that looked to tremble upon a hair; but he who presided over that sick chamber appeared to claim immunity from the pains and penalties following a deviation from natural habits—he lost all sense of self—moved, breathed, lived, only in the contest he was carrying on. He watched every symptom, considered every remedy, traced every effect to its cause, brought the experience of the sages of his craft to act in alliance with the result of his own observations, and maintained what seemed a hopeless struggle, inch by inch—in sooth, not giving up so much as a hair's breadth till the conviction forced itself upon him that it might be recovered at a future time.

Though amiable and gentle as a woman, it was marvellous to note how entirely he put on the despot, when his patient's safety seemed to demand it of him. He would have no intrusion into the sick-room—not even from the best and dearest of his friends—shutting his heart as closely against the pleadings of the fond Susanna, save when the occasion better warranted her appearance there, as against the arguments of the faithful Simon, who tried many a master-stroke of policy in vain to plant himself within its hallowed walls. He would have help from none at such times, save only from an ancient dame he had hired as a nurse, whose watchfulness, devotion, and freedom from weariness, thirst, or hunger, rivalled his own. She was truly a most venerable object. Her form looked much too feeble for the proper fulfilment of the labor she had undertaken; but the strange brilliancy of her eyes gave evidence of a vigorous spirit, such as the most youthful frame rarely possesses. By such attendants was the sick man, during the critical time his disor-

der maintained the ascendant, nursed and tended; and in this period, his loving friends were fain to content themselves with such intelligence of his condition as they could by chance obtain from them, or from some in the house, who were enabled, at rare intervals, to hold with them a brief communication.

Every where throughout the neighborhood the inquiry was, "How fareth Master Shakspeare?" and one and all were as interested in him as though he was of their flesh and blood. In some, the knowledge of his danger wrought strange effects. Tommy Hart and his merry bedfellow not only lost that ready pleasantry which had made them a proverb throughout Stratford, but wore these features in so sad a fashion, their most familiar gossips hardly knew them. Young Quiney and his wife had taken up their abode at New Place, and it was no small difficulty to say which was the most disconsolate of the two. Both Judith and Susanna were however fain to repress their own sorrows whilst endeavoring to comfort their mother, whose grief touched all hearts.

Sir George Carew came frequently to Stratford, as though with a view to console the family to whom he was so greatly attached, but it was easy to see he needed consolation as much as any. The strangest effects were observable in Jonas Tietape, who grew as serious as a Puritan, when he first heard that Master Shakspeare kept his chamber; but when it was bruited he was hourly expected to give up the ghost, he shut himself up in his cottage, allowing none to have sight or speech of him, and, as it was verily believed, took no heed of himself whatever.

But in all conditions, age or sex, the same spirit prevailed—for the patient had won all hearts; the poor by his charities—the rich by his excellences—children by his graciousness—women by his courtesies, and men of every sort by his interest in their pursuits and apparent knowledge of every thing that related to them; and there was scarcely a minute of the day in which some fervent prayer was not put up to the threshold of the Most High, for his restoration to health, and to the society of his so numerous lovers.

These prayers were heard, and answered. As soon as it became known, as it shortly did, that a change for the better had taken place in the object of their constant good wishes, then was there a change for the better in the aspect of the whole town. Tommy Hart took his helpmate by the hand, and

repaired to the now melancholy-looking habitation of their good gossip, the woman's tailor, where they made such an outcry, shouting the good news, that presently the door was thrown open, and out bounded the rejoicing Jonas with a summons that pitched his friend on his back in the middle of the road, which he not attending to, flew down the street, to the huge astonishment of his honest neighbors, whirling round and round, now on his hands and now on his feet, after the old fashion, followed by a pack of little dogs in full chase, evidently, by their frisking and barking, as well pleased as their master.

Dr. Hall had won a famous victory over Death: and it was soon seen how deadly had been the struggle between them. Master Shakspeare was reduced to a very skeleton. The commanding figure that had so well filled the justice-chair could not be recognised in the wasted form that leant on the arm of his physician as he shuffled across the chamber. His voice also had undergone a like alteration, it having become feeble and shrill as that of a man at a great age. The change struck the sick man as powerfully as it had others, but a gleam of his customary facetious grace broke from him at the time.

"O' my life, doctor," said he, pointing to his hose, that were now much too large, they being in bags, as it were, from his knees to his slippers, "if I might have my will, I would fain leave the world better supported than I am in this sorry plight."

"Thou shalt have thy will, dear heart!" exclaimed a familiar voice near him. The sick man turned round, but saw only his old nurse making a posset for him. He seemed to marvel a little, but in a moment continued to jest on his condition, as he proceeded in his walk.

"Methinks Death has spared me," continued he; "because he began to be ashamed of taking such poor prey, so, out of pity, and, doubtless, not without some contempt, he allows me to find rest for my bones on the earth, instead of under it. I faith, he hath left me much to thank his worship for: item, a voice as pleasant to hear as the tuning of a viol-de-gamba; item, a pair of sticks by way of legs; two of a like pattern for arms; item, a quantity of ribs—might make pegs to hang caps on at small cost; and item, a skull that needs no polishing to grace an anchorite's cell for the nonce."

This pitiful state of things, however, gradually disappeared, to the huge contentation of his friends, under careful nursing. Among the most powerful agents that min-

istered to his recovery, was the general desire to assist in some way or other in making it as speedy as possible. With this feeling, all sorts of things were daily sent that might tempt his palate, or strengthen his frame, and Simon and Launce had a sufficiency of work in taking in the delicate chickens and dainty capons, and exquisite sweetbreads, and scores of other tempting things that daily came to the door with the kindest inquiries and heartiest best wishes of their several donors.

Now, Launce, of all things, loved to hear himself talk, and, of all subjects, loved most to talk of himself, and rarely did he fail, when he thought he could secure a listener, of endeavoring to impress upon him a due sense of all the terrible dangers he had been in, and of the wonderful courage with which he had borne himself when sailing with that valiant commander Captain Harry Daring in the Spanish Main. Had he spoken so bravely in Golden Lane, he would have been soon silenced; but Tabitha Thatchpole's apprentice and Master Shakspeare's man were exceeding different personages, and, therefore, he fancied he might readily become a hero at Stratford.

This, however, he found more difficult than he had calculated on, and Braggart Launce became as familiar in that good town, as Ragged Launce had been there in times past, or as Lazy Launce had been in his well-remembered attic in Golden Lane. It was only when he could get hold of some credulous good soul, too simple to doubt, that he was ever listened to with any sort of patience or respect, and among the bearers of the different gifts that came to his master's dwelling he found many such.

It was rare to see with what skill he led the inquirer after the health of Master Shakspeare, with a little loss of time as might be, right to the deck of the good ship, "The Little Wolf," and this having attained, how rapidly he led her into the terriblest battles, mutinies, storms, and shipwrecks, in all of which he made himself out, if not exactly the captain of the ship, at least, a person to whom the command might have been given with great advantage to all concerned. But, enough of this braggart. Nevertheless, a little more will finish his history. His big words imposed upon Peg of the Twiggen Bottle, who overlooked his mean estate, in favor of his being a hero—a character she much affected—but on the wedding-night he showed himself such a craven to one of her former lovers who was present, and made a butt of him, that she drubbed him in the bridal cham-

ber so that he did not feel himself comfortable for a week after.

All this time the sick man was mending rapidly, so that he received visitors as usual, and the chimney-nook in the hall was again the comfortable resting-place of the favored few, who were wont to assemble there; and the jest and the tale went round as briskly as of old. Sometimes an acquaintance or two would join the circle with news of what strange things were doing in London or elsewhere, and often was there much to marvel at, often much to lament, and almost as frequently much to doubt.

The news least liked and most talked of was the mysterious death of that darling of the nation, Prince Henry. Various were the rumors afloat concerning the cause of this sudden and fatal sickness; some talked confidently of poison; and the bolder sort plainly alluded to the king as having been jealous of the general favor in which his admirable young son was held by the people; and, if not instigating, certainly having a guilty knowledge of the deed. But these horrible surmises were not canvassed at New Place. Master Shakspeare was deeply moved at learning of so truly national a loss. He knew it to be a loss never to be repaired.

He had news also of more than one friend, for whom he cherished the liveliest remembrances. There were divers his good gossips and fellows at the globe, of whom and from whom he had occasional intelligence. Of worthy Master Allen, too, still the most thriving of players, and the most honest of men, where among his bears, or his nobler animals, he had especial advices. And a like sort of familiar knowledge he had of the city came to him from the court, where he was well pleased to hear his much-loved scholar, the Earl of Pembroke, was rapidly advancing into favor. But there was one to whom his best feelings clung with the like fixedness the devotee regards the emblem of his faith, and never did a thought rise in that direction that was not made yokefellow with a blessing. Need it be said that this was the noble lady, from whom he had separated himself so completely—as it seemed—yet with whom, while he lived, he would be joined in no common bonds.

It was while gradually recovering his health that he became aware of the attachment existing betwixt his admirable young physician and his most estimable gentle daughter. At this he was especially pleased. There was no man living he should

so soon have wished for a son. He felt he owed him no trifling amount of obligation, in the first place for the excessive devotion he had shown for him during more than one critical period of his life; and in the next his high talents in art and his thorough amiableness of disposition pointed him out as likely to make happy his excellent Susanna. He was rarely pleased that they should have come to so good an understanding—albeit he more than once found himself comparing in some astonishment the stately creature that had no long time before received so complacently the adulation of the gayest and noblest of the gayest court in Europe, with the quiet blushing maid fixing her heart and mind upon the thoughtful aspect and unassuming bearing of the young physician.

All this time these two were enjoying a species of happiness peculiarly their own. It looked as though the deep trouble they had endured had given them a keener relish for the exquisite rare pleasure that seemed in store for them. Quiet, grave and unimpassioned, as both had appeared, they entered into the condition of lovers with a depth and intensity of feeling less experienced hearts could have no knowledge of. Each seemed to have dispersed from around the other the cloud which had thrown into blackest shadow all the fairest hopes and dreams of life. And, with a delicate sympathy in the other's past sufferings, each strove to show a brimming measure of that felicity they had previously looked for in vain.

Whilst his patient demanded his utmost vigilance, Dr. Hall would be nothing but the attentive physician; but, when it became evident he might be left to the care of others, he put on the devoted lover with no less singleness of purpose. Many were the pleasant walks he and his fair mistress had through the shady lanes, or the fields of waving corn, and long and earnest the discourse which then and there passed betwixt them. Now came the reign of arms interlinked, clasped hands, and waists encircled, low-breathed aspirations, blushing replies, an over-brimming joyousness in the present, and daintily concealed plans for the future.

For our young physician this period brought a harvest of sweet thoughts, of such abundance withal, he who reaped it could scarce conceal his astonishment at its excess. It looked as though the goodly qualities of the soil, during the time their development had been checked, had been accumulating, and now thrust themselves forth in produce of the rarest excellence

and the most marvellous abundance. His mind, purified in the furnace in which it had been cast, seemed peculiarly sensitive to all the subduing impressions of the affections. It was no longer the feverish dreams of youth, prematurely created by the villanous artifices of a scheming adventurer; it was the natural operation of the most admirable grace, and the most perfect excellence, on a nature peculiarly disposed to cultivate their exquisite influence. It was an intelligent mind strongly reflected upon by mind of a like sagacity, and one heart operating upon another, the feelings whereof were of the same ennobling nature.

When he considered his good fortune in attaching to himself a creature so excellently gifted, the miseries of former years faded as a snow-flake in the sunbeam. Under her fair sovereignty, he felt raised to the proudest estimation; his reserve did not entirely leave him; he was still grave, reflective, and retiring—but this was constitutional. There were times however when, led along by the stirring spirit of her covetable society, he seemed to break down all the restraints of habit, and his voice became animated by the eloquence of his own thoughts; he spoke, looked, and moved, as a being gifted with all the finer properties of manhood—manhood in its worth, its grace, its nobleness, and its purity.

And our gentle Susanna, was she not moved by a similar agency? Did not the bread of her kindly heart she had cast upon the waters, return to her after many days? Did not her mind, so long thrust into shadow, beam out as a cynosure in the deep night, making her fair neighborhood an atmosphere of light and beauty? To this no more need be said than that she was absolutely and perfectly happy; happy in her own thoughts, and in the thoughts of those nearest and dearest to her; happy in her choice, happy in her hopes, happy in her dreams, happy in the present, and exquisitely happy in the future. Day after day passed by, and, the more intimately she became acquainted with the virtues of the man whose finer qualities she had perceived and done justice to in her earliest acquaintance with him, the more did she congratulate herself on finding, whatever storm might come, she had so famous an anchor to trust to.

Thus this estimable pair, in the days of their honeyed courtship, seemed to live in and for each other; their rambles became longer, their attachment to each other's society more intense. Their senses seemed to become more exquisitely alive to the at-

tractions of external nature. The flowers, the sunshine, the shady lane, the green retreat, the intelligent aspect of the mute stars, and the murmuring music of the gentle river, were to them features of a landscape of such ravishing beauty, that its only type could have been found in that unrivalled landscape in which the first lovers experienced a happiness direct from Heaven.

It shortly became publicly known that they were betrothed—in sooth, some who pretended to be better informed than their neighbors, went so far as to say they knew the very day they were to be married; but it was every where understood that, in a short time, there would be a famous wedding, and they were so well liked that no allusion was ever made to the match without its being followed by a blessing. In honest truth, the approaching event was so universally known, and the persons so intimately connected with it so greatly respected, that did any of their well-wishers get sight of the happy pair in one of their rambles, he would make a circuit so as to avoid disturbing their privacy.

The ceremony so much talked of awaited only the complete recovery of Master Shakspeare; but he seemed in no hurry to bring it about. For this there were divers reasons—first, he saw that they were happy, and much of his happiness depending on seeing theirs, he was desirous this golden state of things should continue as long as possible. Next, he liked not parting with them; they had become, through the influence of their own virtues, the chief objects of his regard, and he could not readily bring himself to loose either. The matter was ultimately settled to the satisfaction of all parties, they agreeing to remain under his roof as long as might be agreeable to him.

He frequently held long and interesting consultations with his fast friend, Sir George Carew, who took a warm interest in their expected nuptials; and there could be no manner of doubt he intended performing some liberal act of kindness; doing something for his fair favorite on this particular occasion.

There was one person, however, who regarded the approaching union with ill-concealed ill feeling—this was no other than Sir Hugh Clopton, by this time transformed into a court-gallant of the first pretensions. Possibly the praise of the gentle Susanna, so frequently heard from his guardian, Sir George Carew, influenced him but little—possibly the interest shown by all the com-

munity in her happiness he regarded with a like indifferency; but he liked not that some one should come and bear away from him what he seemed to think could easily have been his own. He held long and serious debates with himself as to the line of conduct he should pursue, and ultimately he came to the wise determination of honoring the subject of his thoughts with a visit.

Taking marvellous pains that every article of his toilet should be impressed into his service in some such a manner as to assist in producing the desired impression, and, after carefully examining the result, and, satisfying himself that there could be no doubt of his perfect success in the experiment he was about to make, he ordered his horse, and took the road from Clopton to Stratford. When he arrived at New Place, Susanna was in attendance upon her father in his chamber. She did not hear the name of Sir Hugh Clopton without some emotion; but it passed away as rapidly as it went, and the expression by which it was followed was of a much less pleasant character.

"Speed thee, wench!" cried her father merrily, "Sir Hugh asketh for thee. Doubtless he is come to offer his congratulations, like a courteous gentleman. Hie thee to the blue-room, then, at once, and prythee use him in thy most gracious fashion."

Susanna made a most gracious reply in the same spirit as she tripped out of the chamber, but she was far from being indifferent as she seemed. She would have avoided the interview, had it been possible, without creating comment, but she nerved herself with a woman's proudest spirit to appear in it as became her father's daughter. On her entrance, she found the young knight, examining, with much intentness, as it seemed, the pattern of the siege of Troy on the arras—albeit, he was giving entire thoughts to the consideration of what he should say, and how he should say the business he had come upon.

"God save you, Sir Hugh!" exclaimed the damsel courteously. "My father bids me express his acknowledgments for the honor you have done him in visiting his poor dwelling. He trusts all are well at Clopton."

There was a dignity as well as an indifferency in this speech that was far from setting the young knight at his ease. He replied in the best courtier fashion, touching his profound respect for Master Shakespeare, and gave his assurance that at

Clopton every one had the good fortune to be in excellent health. Hereupon he endeavored to get a point towards his errand, but he was stopped by an earnest inquiry of his kinsfolk. Having informed his companion that Sir George Carew and his estimable lady were gone to Kenilworth, he once more strove to bring the discourse towards himself and his intentions; but, at his first step, he was interrupted by a string of questions as to divers persons and scenes in and about the neighborhood of the family mansion; and, as soon as these were replied to, there came a long catechism respecting his ancestors, their character and monuments. Thus it continued for a period much beyond what was given to a visit of compliment.

Sir Hugh Clopton was getting more and more discomposed. He was wondrously anxious to address himself at once to the object he had in hand, but he knew not how to commence such a business. He felt a strange awkwardness in the first step, which seemed to throw a terrible stumbling-block in his way; and, when he called to mind how studiously of late she had avoided him, and that, when thrown in his company, with what ceremonious respect she had behaved herself towards him, his chance of a favorable hearing appeared to become more desperate every minute. The fair Susanna all this while looked as though she had met this monstrous fine gentleman for the first time, to whom she accorded the graceful courtesy of a gentlewoman, out of respect for his excellent worthy kinsman, her sworn servant, Sir George Carew.

"Perchance, you are off to some hunting party or another?" said she, at last, "and I am, out of all doubt, much to blame for keeping you from such delectable sport; so I will at once take my leave of you, thanking you, in the name of my most dear father, for your courteous visit."

"Nay, I pray you, Mistress Susanna, leave me not in this way!" exclaimed the young knight, the fine gentleman evidently breaking down under a pressure of natural feelings. "I have much to say to you!—I have much to implore of you! In an evil hour——"

"Ah! I had nearly forgotten," said she, suddenly stopping in the slight advance she had made towards the door. Her aspect became a slight degree more serious, yet there was no sign in it of anger or triumph. "I have also something that ought to be said. It cannot but be known to you, Sir Hugh, that it is my estimable father's pleasure I should be married next St. George's

day to a worthy gentleman, his friend, one Master Doctor Hall; a physician of much skill in his art, and of as honorable a nature as man ever possessed. I trust, Sir Hugh, you will do us the honor to grace that occasion with your company. Among your well-wishers, Sir Hugh, ever count on myself as belonging to the sincerest. Be assured that I entertain a firm hope that you will speedily cast aside as weeds that ill-become a soil of much natural goodness, the follies of a thoughtless youth; and if I could see you divested of every such unworthiness, securing yourself the respect which hath ever been so intimately attached to your honorable name, and united with some noble lady who would do credit to your judgment, believe me, Sir Hugh, it would be such infinite satisfaction to me as my poor words cannot express. Fare you well, Sir Hugh, and much happiness attend you!"

Methinks it need hardly be said that, by such a speech so delivered, "the monstrous fine gentleman" was completely silenced: and before he could recover from the stunning blow, that gentle and graceful rebuke gave to his vanity, he found his fair companion had left the chamber. He was not long in doing the same, but as he rode back to Clopton he thought over every word of those golden sentences he had just heard, and in so proper a mood, that from that time forth he became so swayed by their spirit as to cast from him all discreditable tendencies and foolish humors, and take upon himself the nobler characteristics of an honorable gentleman.

Now that it had become well known throughout Stratford and its neighborhood, Mistress Susanna Shakspeare was to be married at such a date to that famous physician, Master Doctor Hall, there was a wonderful deal of rejoicing in all quarters. Of all places in the world, be sure the matter was properly discussed in Tommy Hart's kitchen—in sooth, there had been divers consultations on this particular subject, in which, besides Tommy and his helpmate, Jonas Tietape and young Quiney labored with exceeding earnestness.

They sometimes obtained the assistance of Simon Stockfish, who seemed as though capable of speaking on no other points than the nobleness of the master he now possessed, and the worthiness of the one he had once served. It used, however, to take him a monstrous time to make up his mind to place himself where so many questions were sure to be put to him; but having satisfied himself that it would be politic not to answer correctly more than one in ten, he occasion-

ally made his appearance in the latter's chimney-corner.

Concerning the marriage, they were all agreed that it was what was most to be desired; for both the young physician and his fair mistress were such especial favorites, that nothing could seem so appropriate as their union; but this auspicious event they seemed called upon to distinguish in some remarkable manner, and they considered long and earnestly amongst themselves how this was to be done.

When Jonas Tietape could be drawn from his vagaries, he was forced to give in his opinion to the common stock, which he did after his fashion, whereupon much debating followed, of which the object was to mark the day appointed for the wedding with appropriate revels. Every pleasant pastime was learnedly discussed, and the best ways of having them with due effect set forth in the goodliest manner possible.

As the appointed day approached the ever-honored first of May so closely, it was at last decided that May Games should be performed with all due solemnity—unusual care being taken that every character therein should find the very fittest representative—besides which, provision should be made for minstrelsy; the resources of the town consisting only of one bagpipe, a blind harper, and a lame fiddler, it was resolved that the neighboring villages and towns should be called upon to assist with whatever of a musical sort they had at their commandment. As the decisions of this council, though not expressed with so much dignity as those of the High Bailiff and his co-adjutors, were scarcely less influential, there could be no fear that the eventful day would pass by unnoticed.

Scarce had the sun rose on the memorable morning of the twenty-third of April, when the bells began a merry peal, which called up all who were not getting themselves ready to play their part in the day's revels. In every part of merry Stratford—and well did it deserve that name—there was rare bustling about, and running hither and thither, and such a prodigality of jests expended as might have sufficed the small wits of the court from then till doomsday; and yet have had abundance to spare.

The first commencement of the day's sports was seen in the bringing in of the tall tree that had been cut down for a Maypole, and the setting it up in a fair, open space, where its fine colors and finer garlands and streamers could be seen to some advantage. Rare was the display of ribbons and other finery in the youths and

maidens who assisted in the dance round the lofty maypole, that followed its first planting, but their universal mirth and well-disposedness made them still more attractive.

It was while this pleasant sport was going on in full force, that those whom it most concerned were preparing for the grand proceedings of the day. With no slight satisfaction they hailed the arrival of the hour that was to realise their most cherished wishes. In especial, the feelings of Master Shakspeare were of the most intense gratification. He had long studied the character of his young friend, and had perceived in him, under his manifold coverings of shyness and reserve, a nature replete with honorable feelings, virtuous resolves, and manly sentiments. He saw it was scarce possible for him to find any man to whom he could confide his excellent Susanna, with so perfect a confidence in her future happiness. Nothing delighted him so much as the evidences he had met with of their attachment to each other, and so great was his content in their marriage, that it is not going too far to affirm that on this particular morning he was infinitely the most pleasant-humored of the three. Though it could scarcely be said he had recovered his wonted strength and appearance, he was sufficiently full of health and spirits to enjoy himself as absolutely as man could on so choice an occasion.

As for the happy lovers, sedate though they looked, and, as some thought, more grave than such a time warranted, they had as full hearts as they could well have, and minds brimming with the same overflowing measure. In brief, they were as absolutely happy as poor humanity hath any chance to be. Perhaps they had the more enjoyment from having known feelings of so very opposite a sort. They took their places in the procession, and performed their parts in the ceremony, that joined their destinies together indissolubly, with a total abandonment of all things whatsoever but their own infinite contentation.

They became spectators of the pleasant labors of their numerous friends, to do honor to the day graced by an event so welcome to them, with senses too much engrossed by their own happiness to be as mindful of them as they deserved. But this was unobserved by the principal actors therein, who were in such famous good humor with their efforts, they seemed as though celebrating their own particular happiness, rather than the happiness of the two young persons who could hardly be regarded as belonging to their circle.

On this memorable day it was well said of many that never had Jonas Tietape made so worshipful a dragon; nor Tommy Hart rode so capering a hobby horse; never had young Quiney played so right reverend a Friar Tuck; nor the young miller appeared to such rare advantage as Robin Hood; nor was there ever so choice a morrice; in brief, it was well said of the wiser sort, that there had not been in the remembrance of any Stratford man a day of such entire pleasantness as that which had been appointed for the marriage of Master Doctor Hall and Mistress Susanna Shakspeare.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

That blast that nipped thy youth will ruin thee;

That hand that shook the branch will quickly strike the tree.

QUARLES.

Egyptians, dare ye think your highest pyramids,

Built to out-dare the sun, as you suppose,
Where your unworthy kings lie raked in ashes,
Are monuments fit for him? No, brood of

Mylus,
Nothing can cover his high fame but Heaven,
No pyramids set off his memories,
But the eternal substance of his greatness,
To which I leave him.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"NAY, as I live! By all that's rare, 'tis Ben himself!" exclaimed Master Shakspeare, with as huge astonishment as pleasure, as about a year after the events mentioned in the last chapter, Simon Stockfish ushered into his book-room one on whom he had exerted much exquisite policy, in vain, to discover who the stout, bluff, free-spoken stranger was, or what his business.

"I' faith, if it be not the great Ben himself," replied the other joyously, "'tis so fine a copy, it may pass for the original among the best judges."

The stranger was no other than Benjamin Jonson, of whom the understanding reader hath already some acquaintance. He was looking more like a hearty yeoman than a London playwright, having under his belt a waist of no ordinary breadth; but the excess of revenue necessary for its subsistence seemed to have kept the outer coverings of his person of less richness than he might have aimed at.

He had had a long journey, out of all doubt, and possibly he had clad himself more roughly than was usual with him; but in

whatever fashion he was clad, he received a most warm and absolute welcome. He was soon made to feel himself at home; a state of feeling by the way, in which he could enter with even much less encouragement than he now received. His friend played the host towards him with equal kindness and courtesy, partly because, putting some faults out of sight, he liked his society and admired his talents, and in a great measure because his arrival seemed to promise news of many of his friends of whom he had been a considerable time without intelligence.

A substantial meal, the principal feature of which was a goodly sirloin, was placed before him on the very whitest napery, flanked with a richly chased silver tankard containing excellent Canary. Ben carefully tucked a napkin within his falling bands, and began an attack on the viands with all the vigor of an old campaigner. Master Shakspeare sat at a little distance from him, in no small measure pleased at the evident enjoyment his friend took in his labor; occasionally rising to place at his commandment something he thought would add to his satisfaction, or laughing at the jests in which his guest indulged, with a heartiness that shewed how completely he understood and appreciated their humor, and when an occasion served, relating one from his own prodigal resources that so diverted the hungry traveller, that he was nigh being choked in the excess of his mirth.

The satisfaction of these two old friends in meeting after so long a separation was of the very heartiest sort. Anecdotes followed on the heels of each other; and just succeeded jest with a prodigality that was truly marvellous. Some remark on a play would bring forth an account of some player, that both had known—and then came a goodly history of all the ups and downs, the whims and vagaries, the strange sayings, the odd ways, the singular ideas, the wild adventures of divers of their acquaintance, connected in some way or other with the stage. In a little while, the mention of something done at court would produce a whole chapter of amusing gossip, respecting the different personages therein to be found. It was as good as a gallery, they were so hit off to the very life; for if one was at a loss for any part of the picture, it was sure to be happily finished from the experience of the other.

"And so Raleigh is still a prisoner," observed Master Shakspeare.

"More shame to those who made him

one!" was the indignant reply. "'Sdeath! my blood boils, when I think of this noble gentleman, cooped up in stone walls to gratify the mean revenge of that poor Scotch animal, who hates this noble gentleman for towering so high above him. Nevertheless as I can fully testify, he keepeth up his great spirit. I managed to get admission to him in the Tower, and there I paid him a visit, which I shall not very readily forget. Never saw I a man so truly a philosopher, or one while possessed of such a high Roman soul, with such store of learning at his commandment, as was only owned by the most famous worthies of Greece."

"You saw him then; how fareth he in this imprisonment?"

"Only so far the worse, as the blade left to rust in the scabbard. There was with him a marvellous deep and learned man, my Lord of Northumberland, with whom he pursueth all manner of strange studies in chemistry; my assured friend, Master Sergeant Hoskins, an excellent poet, Thomas Hariot, an estimable philosopher, and a certain parson, Master Doctor Burrell, a most ripe scholar; and amongst these, I had such discouse, as I could have found, methinks, in no other place in the whole world. Such famous speeches, worthy to be called orations; such profound knowledge; such deep and comprehensive learning; such marvellous wisdom, it hath never been my lot to listen to. We had, as well as the Greek and Roman, fragments of Hebrew sages, and snatches of the lore of Arabian poets and philosophers, that made the wisdom of the western world appear as very foolishness."

"Of a truth, I envy you that visit—methinks 'twas as rare a treat as man could wish for."

"Ay, was it, Will. But there was one bitter reflection that robbed it of the better part of its sweetness. Who could think unmoved, of such choice spirits made to be partakers of a dungeon, who should have had the first place of honor nearest the throne, whilst such honorable places were filled by the vilest scum and dregs of humanity, who would have but disgraced the prison they deserved?"

"A lamentable truth! But, think you not Sir Walter will be given his freedom?"

"Never! His fame as a hero galls one who is a noted coward; his reputation as a scholar hurts his vanity who hath scarcely the knowledge of a pedagogue; and his worth, as a man, confounds him who, even in his vices, is ever grovelling and contemptible. What sympathy can a feeble, vain-

glorious, mud-witted, besotted wretch have for one who is at once gallant, high-spirited, learned, and virtuous?—The sympathy of the wolf for the deer—of the mouse for the lion—of the owl for the linnet. I tell thee, Will, he hates the noble Raleigh, and will not rest till he has his blood—which he will at last take, on some frivolous pretence that will damn him to all posterity.”

“Raleigh hath lost a powerful friend in Prince Henry—had he lived much longer, I think he would have got Sir Walter his liberty.”

“At least, he would have tried—but, now that sweet youth is dead, Raleigh hath lost his only safeguard against the murder which hath been so long meditated. But it is useless lamenting,” added Ben Jonson, as he raised a full cup of wine to his lips. “We are powerless to serve him; but we can have at least the comfort of drinking confusion to his enemies, which I now do with all my heart—more especially referring to one who is a hypocrite in religion, a pretender to learning, a bad husband, a vile father, a false friend, a dishonor to his lineage, and a disgrace to his country.”

Thereupon Ben quaffed off his glass with the satisfaction of one convinced he hath done virtuously. If thus indignant of the undeserved treatment of so great and good a man as Sir Walter Raleigh, how would he have expressed himself, a few years later, when that noble gentleman, after venturing with great risk to his newly-discovered country of Guiana, in hope of satisfying the cupidity of his royal jailor, who hankered after a gold mine there existing, on his return was infamously brought to the block and made the victim to his cowardice!

“But I will tell you a stranger matter,” said Ben, replenishing his empty platter. “Ned Allen hath grown as serious as an undertaker’s dog. His talk is of nothing but building hospitals, or colleges for decayed folk. He is determined to set up for a Samaritan, and will take care there shall be plenty of oil and wine provided for such wayfarers as may chance to fall among thieves and get spoiled. None can doubt his heart to be of the best, but his speech hath become the strangest medley spoken by human tongue. If he talk of the Fathers, you would be rarely puzzled with the bear-garden eulogium directed towards them—instead of St. Chrysostom, you will hear him speak of St. Bruno. Polycarp will have to give way to Ponto—and Taurus will take the place of Thomas Aquinas.”

“This is a new humor,” said Master Shakspeare, laughing heartily. “I have

marked myself a singular confusion in his speech: but then it has been between the heroes of his bear-garden and those of his playhouse.”

“Faith, Will, such confusion is none so extraordinary on an occasion,” added the other, with a sly humor working in his eyes. “I have known as many well-played brutes as brutal players, ere now.”

“Prythee tell me what fortune you have had of late with your excellent writings.”

“Fortune, the jade!” exclaimed he, in a more serious tone—“She go hang! She hath been a damnable stepdame to me as ever worthy heart was plagued withal. Could it ever be believed that one who hath writ the best comedies, all as well flavored with the true attic salt as Aristophanes had writ them in his best days, is forced aside to make room for some unlearned ass, who hath no more art than wit? There is my ‘Volpone,’ now: with no ill-judged pride did I dedicate such a masterpiece to the two learned universities. I will swear it is a very phoenix among plays—that its like hath not been seen in England, nor never will. Yet I know of a sort of fellows, with scarce brains enough to hatch a ballad, who have thrust their crude inventions before it, and, by means of some tickling sauce for the palate of the vulgar, have got them to be preferred. Let them lick their chaps over this savory garbage, say I. If they can stomach such trash, I would have them feed till they burst. They are not fit to have the choice fare I set before them. It is the nature of such hogs to wallow in the refuse and filth a better taste would scorn.”

Ben was intent on displaying his weak point; but his friend, who knew how much of worth there was in him, despite his over-appreciation of himself and his contemptuous regard of the pretensions of others, tried to change the conversation. This, however, was no such easy matter, and he found himself obliged to listen to much disparaging remarks on many writers he knew and honored. At last, the meal having been finished and the flask emptied, the last draught drew him into a passing commendation of the wine: thereupon his host availed himself of this, and they were presently in earnest discourse of the wines of the ancients, on which subject Ben poured forth a flood of learning as inspiring as his theme.

Whilst Simon Stockfish cleared away the things and brought a fresh supply of the wine Ben had so commended, Master Shakspeare informed his visitor he had come at a rare time, for to-morrow was the customary day of the Stratford revels.

Ben Jonson seemed much taken with this, and vowed he had never been in such good fortune as to have hit upon so excellent a time for his visit. He promised he would play no ignoble part amongst the revellers. At this his friend made known to him what strange characters were some he was likely to meet; and he found such entertainment in the description he heard of Jonas Tietape, Young Quiney, and Tommy Hart, that, at his earnest request, they were sent for to afford him present amusement. They came—and, of a surety, they made a night of it.

Ben shook his fat sides most lustily at the humors of the woman's tailor, and the sport afforded that night made the walls of New Place resound again. Their host took an occasion to leave them when their mirth was getting furious, but he found it a difficult matter to get to sleep for the shouting of ridiculous catches and roaring songs they chose to indulge in. This sort of uproar wonderfully disturbed the sense of propriety of Simon Stockfish; and, learning his master had gone to bed, he cudgelled his brains, with small profit, to hit upon some rare stroke of policy by means of which he might be rid of it presently. This he knew could only be done by the dispersion of those who were the busiest peace-breakers, and he found he had a difficult task to effect this with perfect security to himself and credit to his master—two points of equal importance with him.

Little did these choice spirits imagine, whilst so absolutely giving themselves up to jollity, what throes they were causing the grave serving-man, whose lack of speech afforded a copious source of speech in them. Ben Jonson had got them to rehearse before him certain speeches they were to deliver in a magnificent play, styled the Siege of Troy, made by the schoolmaster, destined to be the chief attraction in the Stratford revels of the morrow. He was leaning back in his chair, hardly able to see out of his eyes, his mirth did so puff up his cheeks, with his arm resting on the table, on which stood lights, cups, tankards, and curious shaped bottles, and the other lying across the arm of his chair with an empty glass in his hand. His three associates stood in choice attitudes in the open space before him and the wall; and, as Jonas Tietape was representing Hector, armed with a pot-lid by way of shield, and a spit for spear; Tommy Hart Agamemnon, with a besom handle; and Young Quiney Achilles, with a rolling-pin—each with bare arms, spouting the most terrible fustian ever

heard, there was sufficient cause for his appearing so famously amused. It so chanced as Jonas was delivering himself of some most hectoring lines, in rushed Simon Stockfish, his leaden visage a most moving picture of horror and alarm.

"How now, knave?" cried Master Jonson; "how darrest thou intrude thyself, unannounced, upon such heroes as these?"

"Speak—answer, slave! or Trojan ghosts shall keep thee company," shouted the assumed Hector, stalking up to him with stately steps.

"Death dogs thy steps, presumptuous varlet!" cried Tommy Hart, strutting forward with Agamemnon strides.

"Nay, good sirs! I pray you, worthy Jonas! excellent gossip Tommy!" exclaimed the alarmed serving-man, turning imploringly from one to the other, "I did not venture without strong warrant, be assured."

"Speak, caitiff! or thy recreant life shall be the forfeit," cried Ben Jonson.

"Excellent valiant sirs," hurriedly exclaimed Simon, not without some apprehension, "some one hath just brought me word that worthy Jonas Tietape's house hath taken fire."

Scarce had the words been spoke, when the three players dropped their several weapons, and rushed out of the chamber. Independently of their consideration for the dogs and other animals, they knew full well that most of the properties necessary for the performance of their famous play were there housed; and they at once made off, in a horrible fright, to endeavor to save them from the devouring flames, leaving Simon Stockfish, for once in his life, highly gratified at the success of his profound policy.

The earliest risers the next morning looked at the gloomy sky with huge misgiving; but, much to their content, as the day grew older, the heavy clouds dispersed, and the visitors were ushered into Stratford with a burst of sunshine, that made the gay scene that presented itself before them a thousand times more cheerful. Again commenced the Stratford revels in all their several varieties, and again a glorious cavalcade filed through the streets, wherein Master Shakspeare was the particular grace and ornament to thousands upon thousands of admiring spectators. This time he rode alone; for the gentle Susanna, now Master Doctor Hall's excellent fair helpmate, was with her friends, riding amongst the gentlewomen who had joined the procession.

With the gentlemen rode Master Benjamin Jonson, wonderfully taken with all he saw and heard, especially with the various

sports which he did commend right liberally. His perfect restoration to health made Master Shakspeare appear in such good case as greatly delighted his innumerable admirers; and, possibly, the great danger he had been in appeared greatly to increase the claim on their admiration his own talents had secured.

The great business of the day proceeded admirably; but the grand, unrivalled spectacle of a classical play appeared to take the spectators by storm. The Siege of Troy was looked upon by many as a superhuman effort of human intellect; and the wooden horse, supposed to have done such rare service, the invention of Jonas Tietape and young Quiney, for the safety of which the three friends had made such famous use of their legs the previous night, was the source of the most absolute wonder and admiration. Certainly, Master Shakspeare did marvel in no small measure, but he found it horribly difficult to maintain his gravity whilst glancing at his friend, whose ludicrous aspect during the performance it looked impossible to stand against.

But all things have an end; and, though the Siege of Troy was unconscionably long, it did at last reach its conclusion—with no slight regret, by the way, to much the greater part of the spectators, who seemed hardly to know of which they should most approve, the Greeks or the Trojans. Nevertheless, the reader must submit to be hurried from this and many other delectable sights that were attracting delighted crowds on that notable holiday, and be set at once before the choicest sight, which was a grand banquet, given by the high bailiff and corporation in honor of the guest, to whose fair name the proceedings of the day intended to do some sufficient honor.

Certes, this banquet was marvellously imposing, and in consequence of Master Shakspeare's recent recovery from his dangerous sickness, a greater number of guests assembled than the Guildhall had ever contained before. There was a most imposing array of flowers, and laurels, and no lack of plate or napery. The high bailiff sat at the head of the room, with Master Shakspeare on his right, and Sir George Carew on his left; and down a long table, having a cross one at the bottom, sat not only all the notables of those parts, with the more respectable sort of burgesses of Stratford, but many persons of some distinction, fast friends of Master Shakspeare, who had hurried to Stratford once more to renew their acquaintance with one with whom acquaintance was a distinction.

Nothing can be said here particularizing the viands, or describing their number and qualities. It is sufficient here to state that the tables might have groaned with their weight and number. Everything connected with the feast was of the choicest sort, and amongst the company there existed one ennobling spirit of homage to the object of their sympathy and goodfellowship. They were wonderfully enlivened by the company of Ben Jonson, who was in a rare mood for the display of his choice, facetious talent. In this he was well seconded by Sir George Carew, whose exceeding courteousness, and affable pleasant grace won the hearts of all. It was when the wine-flasks had commenced doing their inspiring office, that the attention of the whole of that gallant company was attracted towards Sir George, by his rising from his seat with an evident desire in him to address them. A respectable silence quickly ensued.

"It hath been said," he observed, after a brief preamble touching his pleasure at meeting so numerous and brave an assembly, "that a famous monarch, of times passed, offered a most tempting reward to any one who would invent for him a new pleasure. Certes, had he lived in these days, he would not have had long to wait for what he so required, and methinks it behoveth us, with whom so much of a very exquisite sort have been made familiar, to be no less liberal. We, too, should offer a higher appreciation for the delights that have been so bountifully afforded us, for they are altogether of a nobler kind than such as might have been created for the entertainment of a jaded voluptuary. Our new enjoyments are drawn from that better part of us that constitutes our intelligence, acting in unison with those fine sympathies that do serve to bind us indissolubly to all human things. But, as cannot be unknown to you, we have a source of pride as well as of pleasure in the creator of these exquisite sweet enjoyments. He is one of ourselves. He is our neighbor—our companion—our friend. He is that incomparably sweet gentleman so well known amongst us all—he is our townsman and friend—William Shakspeare!"

Every one had listened with a most pleased attentiveness to the flowing syllables of the old courtier. As his meaning began to break upon them, every eye flashed with eloquent delight; and when the object of his eulogium was betrayed by the mention of his name, there came forth such a hearty burst of applause as stopped his speech for some few moments.

"Of his excellence in the art he professes," continued the speaker, "there hath already been ample testimony. He hath obtained such repute, and such gain in its exercise, as hath never been possessed by any in the same art. But it is with no small gratification I find myself enabled, from personal knowledge, to advance, that his worth as a man keepeth such fair pace with his merit as though they were twin-born. I feel assured those who know him will agree with me in the opinion that in him the gifts of the heart are not less powerful than those of the mind. Such is sweet Willie Shakspeare—our Shakspeare, of Stratford upon Avon."

Again a burst of loud applause broke forth from the company, testifying their acknowledgments of the propriety of this praise.

"Filled with these impressions," he added, "I must needs say I look for your complete contentation to a proposition I have risen to submit to you. In this most honorable of days—for such surely it should be styled, having given birth to two such distinguished characters as Shakspeare and St. George—we have been employed in various devices for showing how gratefully we look upon it for having bestowed upon us our rare townsman and friend—let us crown our proper task with drinking, in full glasses, of the choicest wine before us, in this sort—Here's to thee, sweet Willie Shakspeare, and numberless happy returns to thee of this golden day!"

At the conclusion of this goodly speech such exclamations arose, as made a very tempest, at it were, throughout that chamber. Scarcely had it subsided, when Master Benjamin Jonson sprang to his feet, and began a comment on what had so moved the company. He was unknown to nearly all, but his powerful manner of speaking, and an air of free and jovial humor with him, got him abundance of listeners. His preface of his disadvantages in being a stranger to the friends of one whom he had ever regarded as the best and noblest of men, it is unnecessary to repeat, nor is there need he should be followed in the prodigality of quotations from Greek and Roman authors with which he chose to lard his discourse. Methinks it will be best to give no more than this, the marrow of what he said:

"We are told, my masters, in a certain classic author of my acquaintance, that there were great men before Agamemnon, but, before the Agamemnon of our Iliad, there were no great men; in brief, so far from it, all who were his predecessors in

the marvellous talent which hath raised him to so proud an eminence, were but as dwarfs compared with him. His greatness smacked of those days of which it was said—there were giants. To what hath been already advanced by one so admirably qualified by his scholarship, by his far distant travels, and by his long intimacy with the object of his well deserved praise, to speak on such a subject and fully and entirely to the purpose, I can make no addition worthy of note. It hath not been my good fortune, like him, to have lived amongst you, nevertheless, I have had many opportunities of studying the fair page he hath so admirably got by heart. I have known him to whom I allude and loved him long, honored his genius beyond that of any living or dead, and regarded his worth with a kind of reverence. I cannot, therefore, be expected to be backward when a way of honoring, what I honor so exceedingly, is under discussion. I must needs, at such a call as we have just heard, be the first to answer: therefore do I now repeat, with all earnestness of soul, 'Here's to thee, sweet Willie Shakspeare, and numberless happy returns to thee of this golden day!'"

Amid a storm of plaudits, no less loud than followed the former speech, Master Shakspeare was seen to rise from his seat. He looked admirably, with health in his cheek, and pleasure in his eye, and vigor in every manly limb, and, as he directed his gaze down the line of friendly faces turned towards him with looks of mingled reverence and affection, his gaze seemed to brighten with the purest happiness, and his form to dilate, as it were, with the most exalted pride. He began to speak, at first deliberately, with words of ordinary acceptance, as he mentioned the honor that had been done him, and his unworthiness to express the grateful sense of it he entertained; but, when he advanced more into the subject, he got free of the spirit of form and ceremony that he had been struggling with. He spoke of his early years, and showed how much he was indebted to Stratford for whatever had given him the means of taking the place amongst them he sought; and, knowing and feeling his obligations, it could not be surprising that he had chosen it as the spot in which he desired to live out the remainder of his days.

"A few years only have passed," said he, "since I traversed foreign lands, where my eyes were witnesses to many strange and wonderful things. I stood were fire and ashes have burned and buried two large and noble cities, yet, with many such marvellous

matters about me, I thought of Stratford. I beheld the yellow Tiber flowing in the honored neighborhood of ancient Rome; I floated on the dark lagunes of once triumphant Venice; and I gazed in transport on the blue waters of the Adriatic Sea; but they were to me as though they never were, when I thought of the less imposing beauties of our exquisite Avon.

"And since I have returned to them, what a balm hath visited me in their looks!—river, wood, and sky; the green lane, the flowery heath, the corn-field, the orchard, and the grove, have come upon me like the faces of ministering angels seen in dreams, giving assurance of health's comfort, and the soul's repose, never to be gainsaid. With these have been associated many a gallant spirit, overflowing with generous sympathy—many a tender heart prodigal of its sweetest solace—much admiration, some reverence, and more good-will. It cannot, therefore, be thought surprising I should gather matter of infinite contentation in finding my ark at rest in so admirable a spot.

"I have to thank you for your good wishes. When a boy, I remember me well, in the prospective my young ambition stirred my fancy with, I saw in the remotest distance some such proud scene as the present. Its happy accomplishment looks as if Destiny hath done for me all that had been promised, and that I must prepare me for a change where alteration is unknown.—Should it so chance that I live not to see another anniversary of the day you have so greatly glorified, accept, I beseech you, my grateful thanks for this bountiful proof of your desire for my honor and well-being, and be assured I feel both proud and happy in your favorable opinion, which it hath been as much my wish to possess, as it shall be my duty to retain."

The applause which here followed, and the various enthusiastic commendations from other quarters, must be left to the understanding reader. The scene was a proud one, and none regarded it with feelings of such exquisite gratification as the affectionate Susanna and her loving husband, who looked on the pleased triumphant features of their honored parent with feelings of mingled reverence and affection. The reader, however, must be content he should leave the place where his hero received those well-merited honors, and accompany him back to his own dwelling. Before retiring to his chamber, he took a light, and appeared to feel a singular pleasure in going over the few pictures, examining some of the rare books, and one or two of the best examples

of antique furniture. He seemed to dwell upon them with a more than ordinary earnestness.

Anon he drew himself away from them, and, having entered his own chamber, sat himself down by the open casement, and, resting his head upon his hand, leaned out, gazing upon the blossoming orchard, the pastures, and hedge-rows, and all the features of a lovely landscape then spread out before him, over which the moon, riding high and clear, occasionally obscured by quick-passing clouds, appeared to bathe every object in an atmosphere of supernatural beauty. His thoughts seemed spiritualized by the touching aspect of the scene he looked on.

Not very far removed from the moon's orbit, he observed a star with an exceeding bright and strange brilliancy. While he gazed, there suddenly entered into his mind the conviction that the soul of his long-lamented Hamnet inhabited its precincts. Master Shakspeare lived again in the past—a holy and a tranquillizing spirit seemed to take possession of him, that brought him, as it were, into immediate communion with the immortal nature of that glorious boy of whom he had been so proud, and whose premature divorce from his embraces he had lamented, with more than a lover's constancy in a first and only passion. His soul was subdued by the force of early memories—affections, aspirations, anticipations, once so devoutly cherished, he clung to as doth a drowning wretch to the tangled weed upon the perilous shore whereon he hath suffered shipwreck. Yet in all this abandonment to so ancient a sorrow, there came a sense of present relief beaming like a Pharos through the gloom of a troubled night upon the ocean, that did calm his perturbed spirit most admirably.

He turned from the casement, and in a few minutes was resting his honored head upon his pillow. He shortly fell into a light slumber, half-waking and half-dreaming, in which indistinct images of things presented themselves, mixing the past, the present, and the future in strange confusion. At one time his thoughts wore the rosy hues of his early life, and the visions that had filled his solitude with fairy shapes and heavenly scenes came to him, as doth the sudden restoration of sight to one who hath been blind many years. Anon rose forms of a more endearing loveliness, every limb and feature teeming with feminine truth and passionate devotedness; the last bearing the likeness of the noble lady whose rare qualities of heart and mind had held his senses in

such strict yet honorable subserviency. Then came memorials of triumphs accomplished, of honor won, of supremacy acknowledged—a most imposing retinue: and at last all seemed to mingle into one—a golden mist penetrating and obscuring all, so that he could get but obscure snatches of what had awhile since appeared so distinctly.

One of the very last objects that presented itself was a face that rapidly changed from a feminine aspect of immortal beauty to an old crone, which was presently succeeded by a lovely smiling youth, in a beckoning attitude; but hardly had he recognized its familiar shape, when a black cloud surrounded its outline, and it began perceptibly to fade away.

At this period he became aware of a strange sensation, like a small flame creeping up his extremities. The cloud grew blacker round the indistinct image of the intelligent aspect he had loved with such entireness. The flame crept up above his knees. The cloud encompassed the figure of the child, passing over it like a thick film, and gathered round the dreamer's head in a heavy volume. The flame crept up his legs to his body. The inky cloud passed over the exquisitely-smiling aspect, and became as a pall before the dreamer's eyes. The flame crept up to his heart, at the same moment that a darkness enveloped him too black for a ray of light ever again to penetrate.

All the revellers were fast locked in their first sleep, and the whole town seemed to slumber no less profoundly, so tranquil was its aspect in the calm moonlight; but if any where there existed a perfect repose, surely it was in a certain part of the meadows bordering on the river. The Avon, of a surety, still pursued its course, but it was as with a lethargy that threatened to check its career. The mill had stopped, and the mill-stream was therefore dumb. For a marvel, neither beast nor fowl gave evidence of existence. The moon shone clear and cold, in a sky traversed with quick, gloomy clouds, now giving the river an aspect of molten silver, and making visible the farms, the mill, the straggling town, and the towering church; anon, leaving all in impenetrable darkness.

Suddenly there arose a low wail; it was not easy to pronounce its cause, for it partook of the moan of the wind among the trees, and the just audible diapason of the church-organ heard afar off. It gathered force and character every moment and

grew into a solemn chant, or lament, so touching, so subduing, it might have passed for a Miserere, sung by a company of spectral monks in some ruined abbey.

At this time, there might be seen innumerable specks high in the atmosphere. These presently grew upon the eye till they took the shape of figures of extraordinary smallness, each clad in a cloak of inky blackness; and as they all came in a body towards the meadows, it might readily be known that they sang in solemn chorus the following words:

THE FAIRY REQUIEM.

I.

Fair courtiers of the fields and woods,
Rare minstrels of the skies,
Put off gay vests and flaunting hoods,
Attempt grave harmonies.
The funeral cloak, the church-yard chant,
Comprise whatever ye most want.

II.

Ye lillies pure, and sweet jonquils,
Lone violet, queenly rose,
Ye pansies, kingcups, daffodils,
Forswear your gallant shows;
Ye marigolds, so proudly dress'd,
A darker suit becomes ye best.

III.

And all things that are fair and good,
Your bravest shapes give o'er;
The darling of your brotherhood
Belongs to you no more.
Mourn! mourn! for such another one
Shall ne'er be found beneath the sun.

IV.

The earth hath lost its fairest grace,
Gift ne'er to be supplied,
And fails to be a fitting place
For fairy forms to hide.
Here, losing all we might befriend,
Our pleasant rule is at an end.

V.

Farewell, then, each loved bud and flow'r;
Farewell the verdant mead,
The fragrant air, the secret bow'r,
Soft fern and towering reed.
Bearing, in solemn rite we come,
Our honored SHAKSPEARE to his HOME.

As the innumerable multitude approached, the attentive spectator could not fail of observing that, in the midst, was a sort of circle, at the head of which two figures might have been noticed, so far like the rest in wearing black cloaks, but differing from them in this important matter—each wore

on its head what looked to be a golden crown. In the centre, thus surrounded, it was difficult to make out what had a place—it bore the appearance of a thin, gray film, having much the resemblance—though too indistinct to pronounce decidedly—of a human figure and countenance, floating upon the air. Afterwards came a countless crowd of the small figures, in their inky

garments, and the doleful wail of their numerous voices sounded like a funeral dirge.

Presently a huge mass of clouds came upon the moon, and when she emerged from behind this black shield, the same deep stillness reigned that had a moment since wrapped the whole neighborhood as closely as if the place formed a sepulchre in the midst of a mighty desert.

HERE ENDETH THE STORY OF

THE SECRET PASSION.

NOTE.—This pleasant task is ended. This labor of love hath been brought to a conclusion. There now only remaineth one thing to be done ere the courteous reader, and the doubtless too-ambitious author, who hath so long and largely demanded his attention, part—of a surety never to meet again in such honorable company. He cannot close an acquaintance carried over so many pages, without expressing a hope that, notwithstanding manifold defects, for which he prayeth a gracious indulgence, his excellent worthy friend has received some pleasure at this picture of an age that in its many golden features has not been equalled in latter times, and this portrait of greatness never excelled in any. To those of his readers, slowly and heedfully descending the hill of life, he desireth such absolute perfect ease at the end of the journey, as tired traveller never had glimpse of, with many inestimable memories with which to rejoice such as they leave behind; and to those who are but climbers in the same path—to the exquisite fair creature who hath carried her generous sympathies through all the varying scenes here set down, he wishes the fullest measure of content in her affections her prodigal young heart can sigh for: whilst to the young gay gallant, glowing with all life's richest impulses, he wishes numberless opportunities for noble adventure, and much comfort with his lady.













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