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by Anne E. Keeling**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ANDREW GOLDING: A TALE OF THE GREAT
PLAGUE ***

**ANDREW GOLDING:
A Tale of the Great Plague.**

By

ANNIE E. KEELING

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INTRODUCTION.

HOW I, LUCIA DACRE, CAME TO WRITE THIS HISTORY, AT THE TIME THAT I WITH MY SISTER WAS LODGED IN A DESERTED HOUSE IN LONDON, WHEN THE GREAT PLAGUE WAS AT ITS HEIGHT; WHICH WAS IN THE MONTHS OF JULY AND AUGUST, ANNO SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE.

Now that my sister and myself are in such a strange melancholy case, and I enforced to spend many hours daily in idleness, I find the time hang very heavy; for I cannot, like Althea, entertain any longer the hopes that brought us hither. She continues daily to make great exertions in pursuing them, but does not often admit my help; and, being afraid that I may fall into mere desperation, I have bethought me how to amuse some hours daily by setting down the manner of our present troubles and the beginnings that led to them. May I live to write of their happy end! but my fears are very great, and almost forbid me to pray thus.

Having thus resolved how to beguile the heavy time, I began spying about for paper and pens and ink; and finding in a kind of lumber room a great many sheets of coarse paper, I stitched them together; then with much trembling I peeped into the study of the late poor master of the house, and there found a bundle of quills and some ink; and, leaving money in his desk to the full value of the things I took, I carried my writing-tools into the great front parlour, and set myself to the work.

Now while I sat considering how to begin, Althea comes softly behind me, and, looking over my shoulder, asks me what I would be at; and when I told her, 'What, child,' says she, 'art going to turn historian? Thy spirits are more settled than mine, if thou canst sit quietly down to such work, with sights like these daily before thine eyes,' pointing with her hand to the window. Now I had pulled the table into a corner well out of sight from the street, wishing not to be discerned; for as yet but one knows of our being hidden in this house, and we would fain keep it a secret still. But rising and following with my eyes her pointing hand, I could behold a sight common enough, but too dismal to be looked on without fresh apprehension each time: in the middle of the street, which is quite grown with grass, a horse and cart standing, no driver in sight near it, and the cart as we too well knew being that which goes round daily to take away such as die of the Plague, though as it then stood we could not discern if any dead person lay in it.

'It is waiting for our neighbour next door,' says Althea. 'As I stood by an open casement up-stairs I plainly heard the family bemoaning themselves because the master is dead; I heard also how they are devising to get away unobserved in the early morning, and escape to some place of safety in the country. How sayest thou, Lucy? were it not well for thee to go also in their company?'

'Never I, while you stay here,' I answered.

'It repents me often,' she said, 'that I discovered to you my design of coming up hither. I would you were safe at home again.'

'I have no home, but where you are,' said I.

'Poor faithful little heart!' she says, sighing. 'Well, get on with thy history-writing; I must go forth presently, when all is quiet again; and when I return thou shalt show me what thou hast written. Tell the tale orderly, Lucy; begin at the beginning with "Once upon a time there lived two sisters; the elder was a fool, but the younger one loved her"'—and before I could say a word she had slipt away.

I sat awhile, too much disquieted to write, listening against my will for the heavy sounds that told

how the dead man next door was being carried forth and laid in the cart; but the thing lumbered away at last, its cracked bell tinkling dolefully; and I found courage to take to my work.

But to begin at the beginning is not so easy, especially for one so unskilful with her pen as I. And who shall say what are the beginnings of the things that befall us? Perhaps they lie far off, long before our little life itself began.

CHAPTER I.

HOW WE WERE VISITED BY TWO OF OUR KINSFOLK, OUR FATHER BEING DEAD; AND HOW THEY BEHAVED THEMSELVES TOWARD US.

Think, however, that the troubles that now lie upon us might not have been ours had not our father died when he did, which was the cause of our being taken into the house of our mother's sister, Mrs. Margaret Golding;—a happy thing we then thought it, that she would receive us, for we were in great straits;—so I will begin my history at that sad period.

Our father, William Dacre, was indeed a gentleman, born to a competent estate, and married into an honest stock and to some fortune, but his fair prospects were all blighted and our mother's money well-nigh wasted before he died. To his great loss, he stood steadily for the king against the Parliament all through the late Rebellion, as he would ever call it; and, our mother's people being very stiff on the other side, and she dying while we were little children, we were sundered from them while our father lived. He took such care of us as he could, striving to breed us up like gentlewomen; sometimes we lived with him in London lodgings, sometimes were left at his manor-house of Milthorpe; but the last two years of his life were very uneasy to him and to us.

For when the young king, Charles the Second, was brought in again, five years ago, our father was drawn up to Court by some I will not name, who tempted him with hopes of preferments and rewards to recompense his loyalty. He wasted his means much through the ill counsel of these false friends, but obtained no fruit of their promises, and at last he died suddenly; whether broken-hearted or not I leave to the judgment of God, and to the consciences of the men who for their own ends had betrayed him into those vain expectations. At that time Althea was barely nineteen, and I a little past sixteen; we had no brother nor other sister.

We were then at Milthorpe; and thither our father was brought to be buried. That was a black time for us. Though lately we had been kept apart from our father, we loved him dearly, and we knew of no other friend and protector. And when the funeral was over we could not tell which way to turn; for we found our father's land must needs pass to the next male heir, Mr. John Dacre, our distant cousin. He, I know not how, had contrived to thrive where our father had decayed, and had gotten a good share of favour at the new Court.

My memory offers things past to me as if in separate pictures, this and that accident that befell us showing much more clear and bright than things quite as important which lie between. I remember but dimly all the sad time of our father's death and burial, the grief I myself felt, and all the bustle and stir about us, making those days cloudy to me; but all the more plainly I remember a certain day that followed the funeral, when Althea and I were sitting together in a little parlour where we had been wont to sew,—I weeping on her neck, and she trying to turn my thoughts from my grief with planning how we two should live,—when, the door opening, some one came briskly in who called us by our names.

'What, Althea! what, Lucy! All in the dumps, and not a word to say to your mother's own sister?' and, in great surprise, we looked up on our aunt, whom we had seen but once since our mother died, when we were quite little. She was looking kindly on us; her eyes were quick, black, and sparkling, but had something very tender in them at that moment. I noticed directly how plain she was as to her clothes, wearing a common country-made riding-suit, all of black, and how her shape was a little too plump for her low stature, while her comely face was tanned quite brown with the sun; but methought the kind look she bent on us was even sweeter because of her homely aspect. So I got up and ran to her, holding out both my hands; but she took me into her arms, and kissed me lovingly, saying,—

'Poor lamb! poor fatherless, motherless lamb! thou shalt feel no lack of a mother while I live.'

Then, holding me in one arm, she stretched out the other hand to Althea, who had come up more slowly, and she said,—

'And you too, my fair lady-niece; I have room in my heart for the two of you, if you will come in;' on which the water stood in Althea's eyes, and she took our aunt's hand and kissed it, saying,—

'God reward you, madam, for your goodness to us desolate orphans! I receive it most thankfully.'

'That's well,' quoth our aunt cordially. And she proceeded to tell us how, when she got the news of our father's death, she made haste to come down to Milthorpe. 'Not that I hoped,' said she, 'to be here in time for the burying; but it was borne in on my mind there should be a friend of our side of the house to stand by you. Is Mr. Dacre here?'

'He came down to the funeral,' said Althea, 'and hath spoken to us on some small business matters; but he has been constantly out of the house, riding about the estate, and so we have seen little of him.'

As she said this the door opened again, and our cousin, the new master of Milthorpe, entered. I had scarce noted his looks, being drowned in my grief at the time when, as Althea said, he had talked with us on business, accounting to us for some moneys, the poor wreck of our fortunes, which had been lodged in his hands; but I now thought what a grand gentleman he looked in his rich mourning suit; and indeed he was of a very graceful appearance, and smiled on us most courtly. He held his plumed hat in his hand, and, bowing low to our aunt,—

'I am much honoured,' said he, 'that Mrs. Golding should grace my poor house with her presence before I have had time to sue for it. Will it please you, ladies, to step into the dining-parlour and sit down with me to a homely refecton I have ordered to be spread there? I must return to-day to town; so if Mrs. Golding will bestow half an hour of her time on me to talk over some needful matters, I shall take it as a favour.'

Mrs. Golding bent her head to him, saying, 'At your pleasure, sir;' and we followed to the dining-room, where we found what I should have called a plentiful dinner, but Mr. Dacre kept excusing its meanness at every dish he offered us. This was very grating to Althea, seeming a reflection both on our ways at Milthorpe and on our poor old faithful servants; and Mrs. Golding liked it no better. I saw her turning very red; and at last she said bluntly,—

'The dinner is all very well, and I think Margery cook needs not so many excuses; so will you please leave speaking of meats and drinks, and turn to the needful matters you spoke of instead?'

'I might have chosen,' says Mr. Dacre, 'to talk to you in private first about those things; but perhaps it's as well my fair cousins should hear at once what I have to say. I am a married man, as you know, Mrs. Golding; and my wife loves the town, and cannot endure to hear of a country life. I have no hope she will ever live at the Manor here. But I will not let it; and I shall want it kept in good order against my coming down, which will be frequent. So if my cousin, Mistress Althea, likes to remain here as housekeeper, she will be very welcome.'

'And what do you think of paying her for her services?' said our aunt.

Mr. Dacre lifted his eyebrows, and looked at her as if much surprised. 'She would have meat and lodging free,' said he, 'and servants to do her bidding. Also, if she can make anything by keeping of a dairy, or of fowls, or selling of fruit from the gardens, or such like devices of country dames, I shall ask no account of her gains; and if her management pleases me, I shall find a broad piece for her from time to time, I doubt not; so she may do very well.'

'And is her sister, Mistress Lucia, to dwell in your house and receive your bounty also?' said Mrs. Golding.

'That made no part of my plans,' said he, smiling and bowing. 'I shall hardly need two housekeepers here.'

'Then it may chance you must look elsewhere for your one housekeeper,' said Mrs. Golding. 'What sayest, Althea? Wilt be parted from thy sister that thou mayest have the honour of keeping house for so liberal a kinsman and master? or wilt go with Lucy and me to my farm, at West Fazeby, where you two shall be to me as daughters? for I am a childless widow, and will gladly cherish you young things. The choice lies before you, Althea.'

Althea was now red as any rose; and the tears that had been in her eyes seemed turned to sparks of fire. She rose from the table and made a deep curtsy to Mr. Dacre.

'I am exceeding grateful for your preference of me,' she said; 'but seeing I am only a young maid, and inexpert in the management of a house, I must beg to refuse your princely offer'—she spoke with infinite scorn—and betake myself instead to the home Mrs. Golding will give me, where I may improve myself, and become fitter in time, both in years and skill, for some such post as you would now prefer me to.' She stopped and panted, being quite out of breath.

Mr. Dacre did but lift his eyebrows again and say, 'As you will, madam,' and then begged she would sit down and finish eating; but she remained standing, and looked pitifully at Mrs. Golding; on which our aunt rose also, and I doing the same,—

'You go to town to-day, I think you said?' questioned Mrs. Golding; 'we will therefore take our

leave of you now, not to importune you further. My nieces and I will endeavour to be gone from here to-morrow, so please you to endure their presence in their father's house until then; for you must think it will ask a few hours for them to remove their apparel and other goods.'

'Assuredly, madam; they have full liberty,' said Mr. Dacre, rising and bowing, and, for a wonder, looking a little abashed.

'And I think it were well we lost no time,' continued our aunt.

So we took our leave of him gladly enough, and I think he was full as glad to have us go; and we went back to the little parlour.

'I guessed what sort of kindness John Dacre would show you,' said our aunt, looking at us with a smile. 'Your father, my sweet maidens, of whom you have a heavy loss indeed, was of a much nobler nature than this his kinsman; and it's doubtless for that reason that one of them has thriven in the bad air where the other could not thrive, but perished;' and then came tears into her lively black eyes, and she was fain to sit down and weep awhile, in which we bore her company.

Then Althea wiped her eyes, and said, with a trembling voice,—

'I cannot think, however, why our cousin should make so strange a proffer to me—one so unfitting for a well-taught maiden to accept.'

'He made it that you might refuse it, child,' said our aunt. 'Now he can truly say he was willing to do somewhat for you, and that you would none of it, but thought scorn of his goodwill. It hath ever been his way to get much credit for little goodness. Well, Lucy, child, what art thinking of?'

'I was thinking,' stammered I, surprised with her question,—'I was thinking that the day is not so far spent but we could get away from Milthorpe before night. I wish not to sleep under Mr. Dacre's roof again.'

'That might be managed,' said Mrs. Golding; 'I left my horses and my men at the little inn in your village, where I had some thought of sleeping myself. And yet it's but a little inn; nor should I care to turn Andrew out of his lodging even to please thee, pretty Lucy. No, child; put thy hand to some work and thy pride in thy pocket, and submit even to spend one night in the house of an unkind kinsman. He will not be in it, thou knowest; see where he rides out of the gate.'

So I looked and saw Mr. Dacre riding off, a very grand gentleman on his tall black horse, with his men, also well mounted, following him.

'He will be in town before nightfall,' quoth Mrs. Golding.

It did not seem so insupportable to stay one more night in our old home, now its new master had left it; but I was in haste to be gone for all that, and Althea too; so we fell to work with great eagerness, gathering all our own possessions together and packing them for removal; while Mrs. Golding helped us with her hands and her counsel; and so well we worked that the sun had not gone down before we had all in readiness for our departure in the early morning; for it was the height of summer, and the days therefore long. Then Mrs. Golding would have us take her into the garden and show us what used to be our mother's favourite walks and alcoves; there was a good prospect of the house from one of them, and she stood some time regarding it.

'It's a stately place,' said she,—'a very noble house indeed, and a fair garden too. Your mother had a pride in it once, I know; and there was a time when it would have grieved her sore to think how her children should leave it. But what signifies that to her now?—a happy, glorified spirit, who may scorn the transitory riches and joys of this poor world, which are far outvalued by one ray shining on us from the Father of Lights. At His right hand are pleasures for evermore.'

Althea and I looked on each other surprised, for we had then heard little of that kind of talk; and, our aunt espying it,—

'Ah, children,' she said, 'I have learnt a new language since I saw you, and I see you know it not; but your mother could speak it before I could. I think thou art most like her, Lucy; there is more of your poor father about Althea.'

I looked at Althea and thought Mrs. Golding was not much mistaken; for if I were to write my sister's description, it would need but the change of a word or two to make it pass for a portrait of my father. Like him, she is tall and slender and well-shaped; her complexion pale and clear, her hair almost black, very thick, softer than the finest silk, and curling in loose rings at the ends; her brows and eyelashes black also, but her eyes a blue-grey, appearing black when she is much moved or in deep thought; and she moves with admirable grace, showing a kind of nobleness in all her carriage. Myself am of low stature, and of shape nothing like so slender; indeed one hath told me I am dark and round as a blackheart cherry; so I could well think that at Mrs. Golding's years I should be very like her, though perhaps less comely.

Mrs. Golding was still comparing us with each other and speaking of our parents, when I was aware of a tall man coming up to the garden gate; and my aunt, turning as she heard the latch

clink, cried,—

'Ah, here is Andrew! he will have come to have my orders for the night; I think we may welcome him in, nieces.' So she stepped to him, and taking him by the hand led him to us. 'This,' quoth she, 'is my husband's nephew and mine, but he is something more—he is my steward and my heir. I hold him for my son; I were but a lost woman without him. He would not hear of my coming to Milthorpe with no company but that of my serving-men, but must needs be my conductor himself; so precious a jewel as I was sure to be lost in the hedges otherwise;' and she laughed cordially. 'And, Andrew, these are two poor fatherless girls, Althea and Lucia Dacre by name; fatherless, I say, but not motherless, for I am their mother from this day forth, and so they are your sisters; see you use them kindly.'

Andrew coloured up to his hair, and bowed to us, with some confused words about the honour of being as a brother to such gentle ladies; then he turned to her and they talked of our morrow's journey, and how our mails should be conveyed; and Mrs. Golding, telling him she would sleep at the Manor, bade him be early at the gate with horses for us; 'for we have many a mile to go,' she said to us; 'and make what speed we may, we shall be a day or two on the road.'

And Althea spoke very prettily to Mr. Golding, praying him to sup with us; but he excused himself, still in a confused and disturbed way, and went away.

While he stood and talked I was able to take note of his aspect, and I thought he looked a very homely youth indeed, after Mr. Dacre, though he was taller and of a better shape, and I believe a better face too; though burnt with the sun, and ruddy like a country-man, he had well-cut features and a full mild eye, with a right pleasant smile. But his garb was so ordinary, being of some dark cloth, and cut very plainly, and his hat with no feather in it, that though I had little cause to love Mr. Dacre, yet I wished our new friend was more like him outwardly, and thought I should then have been prouder to ride in his company. And Mrs. Golding praising him to us, and saying how good he was, and wise beyond his years, I thought it was pity such good people as he and she did not go handsomer; so little I knew of what belonged to goodness.

CHAPTER II.

HOW WE JOURNEYED UP TO YORKSHIRE; AND HOW WE WERE WELCOMED THERE.



'A noisy rabblement of people came running up'—Page 26.

Though I remember so plainly what passed on our last day in Milthorpe Manor-house, I am not very clear about our journey up to Yorkshire, which was tedious enough. We kept to the king's highway, and yet were sometimes put in much fear of thieves, but happily we fell in with none; the only notable thing that befell us was in leaving a little market town, I cannot call to mind its name, where we had stopped to dine. We had ridden but a little way forth of the town when we heard a great din of shouting and hooting behind us, which made us women afraid; and presently a noisy rabblement of people came running up. They were chiefly of the baser sort, both men and women, some very ragged, and some red-faced and half tipsy; one or two gentlemen in laced coats rode among them. I thought at first they had some spite at us, but it proved not so. We drew to the wayside to let them pass, and they went by, very disorderly, yelling and swearing, the women not less than the men, pushing and hauling some poor creature dragged along in their midst. I looked earnestly to see who it might be, and presently discerned the person—a tall thin man, in a kind of loose garment girded about him, and I think it was made of some hempen stuff, a kind of sacking. This man was very pale, with longish dark hair hanging about his face, which, as I say, was pale indeed, but not dismayed; I think he even smiled

when one struck him on the head, and another, pushing him, bade him, with a curse, go faster. I saw the blood trickling a little from the blow that had alighted on his head, as they hurried him past.

Andrew, who saw all this as well as I did, looked full of horror. He caught one of the hindmost of the rabble by the sleeve and asked him harshly, 'What has this man done, and whither are you taking him?' At which the man, turning towards us his red, jovial face, replies,—

'It's a mad Quaker, that took upon him this noon to stand up in our market-place, it being market day and every one mighty busy, and he tells us all to our face we were a set of cheating rogues, that he had marked our doings and seen how bad they were, and that he had a commission from God to bid us repent and amend, or a sudden dreadful judgment should fall on us. Didst ever hear of such a fool?'

'And what more did he,' says Andrew, 'to make you handle him so roughly?' at which the man stared and said,—

'Nay, what more needed there? Matters are come to a pretty pass if free Englishmen, who are pleased to cheat and be cheated according to the fashion of this world, mayn't do so neighbourly and kindly without some canting rogue starting up to control them. We bade him hold his peace for a mad ass, but he would not. So we judged his frenzy to be something too hot, and that a cold bath were good to cure it; and Squire, riding up and seeing the bustle we were in, offered us his own duck-pond for the ducking of our preacher. Stay me no longer! I shall lose the best sport;' and Andrew snatching at him again to make him stay, he broke from him and ran as hard as he could after the crowd, that was now got some way from us.

'You hear and see this, Mrs. Golding?' says Andrew, turning to her, his mild countenance grown dark with anger. 'There may be murder done yet, let me ride after and see what I can do to hinder it;' and setting spurs to his horse he galloped off after the rabble. We saw him pressing in among them, riding close up to the chief horseman, talking earnestly to him; then we saw no more of them, they going round the turn of the road; and Mrs. Golding, half frowning, half smiling, says,—

'It's ever so with Andrew! he cannot see mischief a-foot but he is all afire to stop it. I like it in the lad, but I wish yon poor fanatic had been content to stay at home and mind his own business, instead of crossing us so unluckily here.' She looked anxiously.

Presently Andrew comes back to us, riding pretty quickly, and Mrs. Golding called to him,—

'Now, my lad, hast not gone on a fool's errand this time also?' but he said smiling,—

'That is as you take it, good mother. Yon Squire has some humanity in him, and some wit; for when I began vehemently to urge how sinful were the murdering of yon poor man, he smiled and let me know his proffer of the duck-pond was but to get the man out of the hands of his ill-wishers, for he meant to draw the Quaker within his gates and then have them shut as if by mistake on the rabble, who were already growing weary with the length of the way, and so were dropping off by twos and threes.'

'So thou hast had thy labour for thy pains?' says Mrs. Golding, smiling as one well pleased.

'Not altogether,' said Andrew, 'for the Squire wills us to turn into the byway here, and keep from the high road awhile, lest we meet the baser rascals coming back, in all their fury and disappointment.'

'Good counsel,' said Mrs. Golding; 'we will take it.' And so we kept to that byway for a mile or so; and it was rough uneasy riding, though a pretty green lane enough.

Althea said to me half aside, 'We had had none of these discomforts, if we had ridden as we were wont with our father, in a good coach like gentlewomen, and not a-horseback in the country fashion;' the first discontented word she had said, and Mrs. Golding hearing it,—

'Child,' said she, 'I cannot away with these coaches, they are proud lazy inventions, and nothing like so wholesome as this our old country fashion of travelling;' at which Althea blushed and said nothing more, and Mrs. Golding began pleasantly to chide Andrew for his hazarding of our safety as he had done, which had put Althea into these discontents; and he hung his head, smiling, and had not a word to say for himself. I should scarce have remembered this accident, or Andrew's behaviour on it, had it not been for things that befell after.

I was heartily weary of journeying by the time we got to West Fazeby; the way was long, the manner of travelling new to me, I had not so much as slept at an inn before, our former home being no great distance from town; and my company was not such as to shorten the way, for Aunt Golding was the only frank and cheerful-spoken person in our party, Althea behaving, as I told her, like an enchanted princess in a fairy tale, so melancholy, proud, and silent, and Andrew being so dashed with her stately ways that the poor youth was not less tongue-tied than she. So I was glad indeed when we rode out of York one fine morning, and Mrs. Golding told us we must reach her house before the day was out; in which she said no more than truth.

She having always talked of it as a poor farmhouse, our surprise was not little when we saw it at last. It stands a little away from the village; it is no great house, but is a right fair one to my thinking, built of red brick, with a great deal of wood, handsomely carved, about the gables and the porch; it is much grown with ivy, at which our aunt would often rail, but I think for all that she loved it, seeing it makes the house green and pleasant even in winter. And at the back, looking into the gardens and orchards, was a pleasant porch, a very large one, grown with roses as well as ivy, wherein Althea and I have spent many a happy hour in summer-time, sitting there with our needlework or our lutes. I can see it in fancy, and would very fain be in it, looking on our

lily beds and green walks and arbours, instead of these hot and dreary streets. But it's too likely I shall never see West Fazeby or any other pleasant place on earth again.

A good comely man and woman, plainly habited like serving folks, came forth to greet Mrs. Golding, and she commended us to them much as she had done to Andrew, saying to us, 'These are Matthew Standfast and his wife Grace; good, kind souls, who look well to my house when I cannot do it. And how doth little Patience?' she went on to ask Dame Standfast; 'and have you seen aught of Mr. Truelocke while I have been gone?' and so chatting she led us into the hall, where we found a table ready covered, and the little Patience Standfast ready to attend us at it, a pretty child, fair-haired and blue-eyed, very civil and modest. We were not long in finding that she and her parents, with a serving-man or two, made all my aunt's household; and that she did very much work with her own hands, and would expect the like of us; a thing which displeased Althea not a little, but she said nothing of it, only to me, when we were got to our own chamber.

'And it is an odd thing,' she continued, when I did not reply, 'that Mrs. Golding should sit and should take her meals in the open hall, when there are one or two fair parlours more fitting for her occupation.'

'But the hall is a pleasant place,' I said; and indeed it was so to me, I hardly know why, being a very plain apartment, with a checkered pavement of blue and white stones, and furnished only with bright oaken tables and settles, and a great chair or two; also the great fireplace was well garnished with green boughs and flowers, it being summer. I looked all about it that evening as we sat in it chatting with our aunt, and was thinking I should always like it, plain as it was, when I was aware of two persons coming into the porch, one walking feebly like an old man, and one stepping firmly and strongly; and Mrs. Golding, springing up, ran forward to greet them, saying,

'Welcome! welcome, good Mr. Truelocke! this is a greater kindness than I had hoped for;' so she drew into the light of our candles a reverend old gentleman, clad in a black gown; he had white hair hanging about his face, and in his hand a stout staff on which he leaned as he walked. There came at his side a young, strongly-framed man, in a seaman's habit, who, I thought, looked something like him, having the same strong features, but a clear, merry blue eye and brown curling hair; he was very watchful over the old gentleman, who seemed to move feebly. Our aunt greeted him kindly by the name of 'Master Harry,' and said, 'It's good of you to bring your father up so soon to welcome me,' whereon the young man smiled and said,—

'Nay, it is he that hath brought me; there was no holding him when he had heard of your return. I would gladly have kept him within doors, fearing the night damps for him;' and our aunt laughed also, and said to us,—

'Come, Althea, come, Lucy, and speak to my best friend, who was a good friend to your mother also; it is the parson of this parish, Mr. Truelocke, and this his son Harry, newly come home from the seas;' so we came up and greeted the old gentleman reverently, and his son as kindly as we might; and Mrs. Golding put Mr. Truelocke into a great armed chair, and sat looking at him with vast contentment. He looked at her and smiled a wonderfully sweet smile.

'Had you brought these young maids home a month or two later, Mrs. Golding,' says he, 'you could not truly tell them I was the parson of this parish or of any other. But we'll let that pass;' and turning to us he began to speak to us kindly and fatherly, pitying our afflictions, and bidding us praise and thank God, who had raised up so good a friend to help us. I was glad to hear his words, though they brought the tears into mine eyes; but our aunt sat impatiently, and presently broke in on his discourse, saying,—

'What mean you, sir, by telling me in a month or two you will be no parson of this parish? is there anything new?'

'Nothing, but the falling of a full-ripe fruit, that began to blossom two years ago,' says the old gentleman cheerfully; 'it hath been long a-ripening, 'twas time it should fall.'

'Give me none of your parables, good friend; I want plain speech,' cries our aunt; and Master Harry said bluntly,—

'Madam, it's all along of the new Act for Uniformity which was printed and set forth this last May. You were too full at that time of your apprehensions for these young ladies to be curious to read that mischievous Act; but, since it touches my father nearly, he mastered its meaning with great pains, and has thought of little else for many days; and the upshot of all this is, that next Bartholomew-tide he will go forth, like Abraham of old, to wander he knows not whither;' at which words Mrs. Golding sighed deeply, and sat as one amazed.

'It is even so, my kind friend,' said Mr. Truelocke, smiling.

'Well, I can't tell what you may think here of the matter,' went on Master Harry; 'but in my conscience, I think my father's conscience something too tender.'

'You speak like a man of this world, Harry,' says Andrew, who had come in, and was looking at the young man with frowning brows and angry eyes.

'How else would you have me speak?' says Harry. 'I am but a plain sailor, and I pretend not to know any world but this work-a-day world that I have to get my bread in. I leave the new worlds in the moon, or beyond it, to poets and madmen; and I'll tell you my mind of the matter, if you will hear me.'

He stopped, and Mrs. Golding said, 'Speak your mind, Master Harry, it's ever an honest mind, and full of goodwill.'

'I will venture then,' said he, 'and do you bear with me, Andrew, and father too. I take it the Church of this country is a good ship that has to sail whither her owners will. A while since they were all for steering her straight to the Presbyterian port; now that voyage likes them not, and they would have her make for Prelacy. It's pity that the good ship has owners of such inconstant minds; but why should not the crew obey orders, and sail the ship as they are bid?'

'Wrong, all wrong, all wrong, Harry, my boy,' said the old man, with a groan; 'thou hast no spiritual sense of these things. How dare Christ's liegemen take their orders from the carnal rulers of this or any other country? Have I not seen the government of England change like the moon, ay, and more strangely? and shall I follow the changing moon as doth the faithless sea, ebbing and flowing in my zeal for truth like the tide? Nay verily! what was God's truth in Oliver's days is the truth of God still; and I will cleave to it.'

As I gazed at the old man's face, pale and wrinkled and awful, I thought that so might have looked the prophet Moses when he brake the tables of the Law. Mr. Truelocke's deepset dark eyes flashed fire under his long white eyebrows, which themselves seemed to stir and to rise and fall, as he spoke with great passion, and he struck his staff against the floor.

Althea was looking from one to another, something puzzled; presently her silver voice broke the silence that had fallen upon us; she said, 'All that you say is so dark to me, it makes me feel like a fool for my lack of comprehension; will you, madam, tell me in a few words what it is that troubles you and Mr. Truelocke?'

'It's our new masters, dear heart, who have been making of new laws,' said Mrs. Golding; and Andrew added instantly,—

'Our pastors, madam, must consent to renounce the Covenant, and must use the Common Prayer-Book as newly set forth by authority of King Charles the Second and his Parliament; or they must leave to preach and to pray in the churches called of England, and must renounce their livings too; and this by the twenty-fourth of August next, which the Papists and such-like cattle call St. Bartholomew's Day. That is the story in little of the doings which afflict our good mother and our reverend friend.'

'It's a dry short setting forth of the matter, friend Andrew,' said the old man.

'But is it a true one?' asked Althea.

'Yea,' said he, 'too true, this is the new law; but I shall, as I think, follow after the footsteps of godly Mr. Baxter; he hath already ceased preaching, that his weaker brethren, such as I, may be in no manner of doubt as to what he thinketh. I shall not change my mind twice, once having seen the great error of my early prelatical opinions,—as your good aunt knoweth I have seen it.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Golding, sighing heavily, 'we will pray you may have illumination from above. I cannot tell how we shall do, bereft of our father in Christ. But I dare not urge any man against his conscience. And now am I ashamed that you have been so long within my doors and I have yet set nothing before you. Lucy, Althea, come help me;' and she bustled about, and presently with our help had set a dish of strawberries and cream, with nuts and cakes and wine, before our guests. Mr. Truelocke ate but little, which grieved my aunt; and he would drink nothing but spring water. But Harry was gay enough for two. We could get him to touch nothing until he had both of us girls served, he saying we were greater strangers than he. And since I chose to eat nuts, he would do the same, and would crack all mine for me. He had a clever way of doing this with his hands only, which were small, but like iron for strength; I made a cup of my hands that he might pour the sweet kernels into it, and so doing we scattered some on the floor, and both dropt on our knees to pick them up, when I, being nimbler than he, had them all snatched up before he could touch one; then we both laughed heartily. I was startled to hear myself laughing, and looked at Althea; and she seemed to be regarding me with scorn as if she despised me perfectly, so I checked my laughing and sat down quite crestfallen.

Then Harry, sitting by me, half whispered, 'Now, sweet madam, if you did but know what music a heart-free laugh is to mine ears, you would not stop yours in the middle. I have no quarrel with my father's nor your aunt's piety, but there's too little laughing in it.'

'It's not piety that checks me now,' I said; 'do not credit me with more than I have; but a new-made orphan like me might well feel it something heartless to be very mirthful.'

'That's it, is it?' said he, looking comically from me to Althea, and then at me again. 'Now tell me, sweet lady, if you know any good reason why mirth should be a thing forbid to those who have had a cruel loss? If in the middle of a winter voyage, when the stormy winds do blow, we mariners should have one fair sunshine day, we don't spend it in bemoaning the black days that

went before and the black days that will come after.'

'And what has that to do with me and my griefs?' asked I.

'Only this,' said he, 'that you should not be less wise than a sailor lad; think no shame to be glad when your heart bids you, whatever sorrows lie before or behind you. And I'll keep you in countenance, whenever I see your fair mournful sister reproving your gaiety with her eyes; but you must do the same by me with my father and your aunt. Is it a bargain? strike hands on it!'

He held out his hand, and I put mine into it—I could not help it; though I stole a look at Althea, but her attention was drawn away by Andrew, who was half timidly urging her to eat some more of Mrs. Golding's dainties; she would not, however; and presently Mr. Truelocke, who had been talking apart with Mrs. Golding, got up and would be going; so when he and Harry were withdrawn, we all went shortly to our beds, being very weary; and for my part I felt that I was in a new world I could not half understand; but there seemed some pleasant things in it.

I liked it better still as the days ran on. Country life at West Fazeby was more to my mind than ever it had been at Milthorpe. There we were waited on dutifully by kind old servants, and might not soil our fingers by any coarse work. Here I was taken into the dairy and the still-room, and instructed in their mysteries, and in many another useful household art; I might feed the pigeons and the other pretty feathered folk in the barnyard, and I got no reproof for my coarse tastes when I was found learning from Grace Standfast how to milk a cow, and making acquaintance with young foals and calves. There were prettier works too; gathering and making conserve of roses, and sharing in the pleasant harvest of the strawberry beds and the cherry orchard, or tossing of hay in the meadows. I will not deny that all these things were more pleasant to me that year than they have ever been since; partly because I was so new to them, and partly because Harry Truelocke often took part in them also. My merry and kind playfellow, I wonder if you have yet any heart for such simple pleasures? or if, in the midst of miseries and perils, you can still jest and laugh?

Althea went with me and shared in these occupations, except in the haymaking and the milking; but she did so with a grave and serious air, seeming to give her whole mind to the work, as if it were a task she had to learn, whereas I thought it but a delightful pastime that I loved in spite of its being profitable.

Mrs. Golding took no note, as it seemed, of Althea's sad and steadfast ways; but Andrew marked them, I could see, though, being daily busy with out-door matters and cares of our aunt's estate, he was but little in our company. When he was with us, he surrounded Althea with a careful, watchful kindness, treating her so reverently as if she were some sacred thing, and indeed never venturing to say much to her unless she spoke first; all which she never appeared to notice.

Now it is a strange thing that in this pretty peaceful time the stormiest day and the fruitfulest of future mischiefs should have been a certain Lord's Day, only a week or two after our coming. It was from Mr. Truelocke that I learnt to say 'the Lord's Day,' Sunday, said he, being a heathenish, idolatrous word, nor would he allow of the fashion of calling the day of rest 'the Sabbath.' 'We keep not holy,' said he, 'the seventh-day Sabbath of the people of Israel, but the first day made holy for us by the resurrection of our Lord;' and I saying idly to him, out of the poet Shakespeare, whom my father loved,—

'What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet,'—

he looked sternly, almost angrily on me, and said, 'Madam, what have ends of stage-plays, and the idle talk of a lovesick girl about her lover's name and the names of flowers,—I say, what have these vanities to do with a glorious divine thing like the Christian's Day of Rest? And believe me, there is much in names, too much in names. What a spell to conjure with is the name of King! and the name of Priest may make wild work in our poor England yet.'

I was dumb when he reproved me thus; and thinking of it after, I began to have some glimmering why this good man should resolve to give up his all, rather than use a Prayer-Book he deemed not according to right doctrine, since he was so earnest about the right name for one holy day. I found it to be a strong point with him, some of his flock murmuring at him about it, and saying how could we appeal to the Fourth Commandment if our holy day might not be called the Sabbath? But he cared not for their words; no, nor for king, nor for Parliament, compared with what he deemed right.

I used to wonder if his heart would have been so stout had he had wife and children to care for; but he had been many years widowed, and Harry, his only child, had carved his own way in the world, being now part owner of the ship he sailed himself.

But by whatever name folks called it, the Lord's Day in West Fazeby was then a sweet, religious, holy day, and I loved it. Alas, to think of the changes wicked men have made!

CHAPTER III.

HOW MR. TRUELOCKE PREACHED HIS LAST SERMON IN WEST FAZEBY.

On that Lord's Day of which I spoke, the weather was fair and bright when we went to worship in the church where Mr. Truelocke still ministered. Week after week more people came to hear him, for the time was growing short, and he was much loved; so this day the church was thronged, and we had some ado to get to our own places. As I said, the day was fair enough when we set forth, a little too hot, indeed; but we had not been long at our prayers before there came a gloom and a darkness, making the church full of shadows; and I saw the sky through the windows of a strange greenish and coppery colour.

We were singing the hymn before the sermon, when I was aware of a tall man in a whitish garment standing directly below the pulpit, still as a stone; it seemed to me I had seen him once before. When the singing was done, and we were all in readiness to hear the sermon, this man suddenly stood up on the bench, so that even in the dusky light every one could see his tall white figure, and, looking up to Mr. Truelocke in the pulpit, he said,—

'May I have liberty to speak a few words to this people?'

'You have liberty,' said Mr. Truelocke; then, folding his arms on the desk, he leaned forward and looked very intently on the man, who had turned himself to face the people. They were all rustling and stirring in their places, very uneasy at the interruption. He stretched out his arms in the form of a cross, and began to speak in a full and rich voice, very musical, with strange changes in it; and always the sky grew darker in the great window behind him while he spoke.

'Friends,' said he, 'I have listened earnestly to your singing; and now I am constrained to speak to you and tell you the words you sang were very unsuitable to your state. For the words were those of holy, humble souls, who are athirst after God; and how many of you be there that could truly answer Yea, if one should ask whether you are come here because you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is it not true that the best of you only take delight in the preaching of the man who stands in yon pulpit, because it is to you as a very lovely song of one that can play on a pleasant instrument? but you hear his words, and do them not. And there be some of you that only come here to display your gay apparel, caring not how foul you are within, if you are but fair without; and some of you appear here weekly, because it is a decent and seemly thing to be here, and you desire the praise of men, though you care not for pleasing God. Your religious worships and ways are vain, for they are made up only of speaking and singing other men's words, which are not yours, nor do ye mean them truly. You were better to sit in humble silence before God, waiting till His Spirit, that enlighteneth every man, should speak in secret to your spirit.

'And I have a word to thee, Emanuel Truelocke,' he continued, suddenly turning, lifting his long right arm and pointing his long finger towards Mr. Truelocke, whose pale countenance, framed in his long white hair, could still be seen looking quietly at him. 'I desire to speak to thee in love, and show thee the secret of thy ill success in thy ministerings to this worldly people, who have not the excellent spirit that I gladly acknowledge in thyself. The canker of gold has been on these ministerings of thine, for thou hast yearly taken hire for them; and therefore it is that so many of these people are cold and sickly in divine things. But the Lord hath had mercy on thee, and will take away from thee the mammon whereby thou hast been deceived; and for thy sake I rejoice in thy coming downfall'—

Here there began a mighty hubbub in the place. Men stood up on benches, shaking their sticks and clenched fists against the speaker; women cried, 'Shame on him! pull him down! have him away!' and many rushed upon him, struck him, dragged him down, and would soon have trampled him under their feet, but Mr. Truelocke spoke with a voice that rang like a trumpet, and said,—

'Do the man no harm; for shame, my brethren! Did not I tell him he had liberty to speak? Make me not a liar by your violence!' and then I saw several men, Andrew and Harry being foremost, raising up the stranger, for he had been felled to his knees pushing off those who were striking him, and leading him forth of the church. Then a mighty flash of lightning glared through the building, and a great peal of thunder roared and echoed after it, and the rain rushing down like a torrent drove and beat against the windows. The stranger, who had been got to the door, now turned round, crying,—

'Hearken, O people, to the voice of the Lord bearing witness against your madness!' with which

words he vanished, friendly hands pulling him out of sight against his will.

A great silence seemed at once to fall upon the people, while the storm blazed and thundered on; and in the midst of it Mr. Truelocke began his discourse.

'My brethren,' said he, 'I did not think to have been so cruelly put to shame as I have been by you this day. Long have I toiled to make you follow His righteousness, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; long have I trusted that you were indeed partakers of that Spirit whose fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. Alas! what longsuffering, what peace, what gentleness have you shown to-day? Ye have well-nigh done a man to death in the very house of God, and before the eyes of me your pastor. I stand rebuked here, a teacher whose teaching is proved useless and fruitless. From this day forth I will preach to you no more, but will lay down, a little before the law takes it from me, the office I have so ill discharged. Now hearken to me once more, and once only; and let not my last sermon prove so idle as those I have preached to you before.'

With this preamble, which struck every one into awe, he began to preach with an uncommon fervour, as one who was all on fire to have men turn from their sins, and to close with the offers of God's mercy while yet it was time; and this earnestness of his, and a certain passionate tenderness in his looks and tones, something more than ordinary, would not let us forget the resolve he had expressed. His text was, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' and having enlarged on it with such piercing eloquence as I have spoken of, and come to an end of his discourse, he made a little pause, and then said,—

'Little as I like to mingle any private matters of mine own with the message I stand here to deliver, I had determined, when I should come before you for the last time, to say something of the reasons why I cannot comply with what our rulers require of us. I will not depart from that determination because a strange cause has moved me to lay down mine office some few days sooner than law requires.' He stopped a moment, looking troubled; then he resumed: 'Not my own humour, nor the pride of a vain consistency, holds me back from compliance. I have sought in prayer, and in study, and in discourse with my brethren, for light on this matter; but in my mind is something still unsatisfied that bids me persevere in my fixed opinion, so long adopted; I can do no other. Therefore, submitting patiently to leave my church and my flock, I pray your pardon for any fault I make in this resolution; of God's pardon I am assured.'

Having said thus, he bowed his fatherly head, praying inwardly, and all the congregation wept and prayed with him, though many of them afterwards showed themselves highly displeased with the way he had taken of rebuking their violence; also great efforts were used to make him break his resolve of preaching there no more, it wanting more than a week or two of the appointed day in August when he must needs desist; but he would not yield to do more than pray publicly; and the pulpit was for a season supplied by other men.

I am wandering away, however, from that day and its doings, of which I have not finished the account. While Mr. Truelocke was preaching, the storm drew off and died away in distant mutterings, so that it was in a very great stillness that he spoke his last words. However, the rain was still falling, though without violence, when we came out of the church; so we waited awhile in the porch till the clouds had rolled away, many others who did not love a wetting doing the same as we, and there was much talking.

None of our party said aught, till Mrs. Bonithorne, one of the wealthiest farmers' wives in the parish, turned herself to Aunt Golding, saying,—

'Heard you ever anything so strange, neighbour, as yon awful thunder-clap coming close on the malicious words of the brawling Quaker? He ought to have quaked and trembled indeed at the voice of Heaven rebuking his madness.'

'But that he did not, mistress,' said I, something too pertly, I fear; 'for he bade the people hearken to the voice of God bearing witness against *them*.'

'Did he so?' cried she; 'the more was his impudence to wrest the heavenly sign in his favour. But what make you then of the passing away of the storm when Mr. Truelocke began to preach, and of the sweet calm that had fallen on all things when he ended? was that a witness in favour of Quaker madness?'

'Nay, I make nothing of it,' said I; and Aunt Golding added,—

'You would not interpret it as a sign of approval granted to Mr. Truelocke for his hasty resolve never to preach to us again? For my part, I hope he will be persuaded otherwise.'

'Truly I hope so,' said Dame Bonithorne, her ruddy colour deepening; 'for it's too cruel an affront he puts on us poor people;' and I know not how much more she might have said, but for Harry Truelocke, who now came up to the porch, and, beckoning Aunt Golding forth, whispered to her how Andrew had carried the Quaker to the Grange, and now desired her presence; at which we all set forth together, the rain having ceased; and on the road Harry tells us, what sore disquieted Aunt Golding, that the man had only come to West Fazeby on Andrew's account.

'It seems,' said he, 'you met him on your road hither, when he was in the hands of some base

fellows that had a mind to maul him—do you remember such a matter?' and Aunt Golding saying how she remembered it very well, Harry went on to say that the man, having noted Andrew's willingness to serve him, had ever since 'had a concern on his mind for the good youth,'—that was his phrase,—and had been led to our village, and to the very church, being assured he would see Andrew there. 'It's a strange, mad story,' quoth Harry.

Althea had given earnest heed to this tale, and now she asked, 'And what says Master Andrew to such wild talk? I suppose he will use the poor deluded wretch gently and kindly, that's his nature; but sure he will scorn his ravings?'

'I cannot tell what Andrew may think in his heart,' says Harry moodily; 'but he uses the man as if he thought him a saint or a martyr, or both. I wish harm may not come of this day's doings;' and he fell into a gloomy silence.

I had never seen him look so nearly angry before. We were now got to the Parsonage, and Harry arousing himself to take leave of us, our aunt says to him,—

'I shall ask you to do me a great good turn, by bringing your father to sup with us at the Grange. I would have him reason peaceably with yon poor distraught man, and convince him of his folly; so he may do a service to my Andrew also, if he has indeed a leaning to such delusions.'

'Well, madam, I will do it for you,' said Harry; 'but there is only one other person in the world to please whom I would bring my father into such odd company as yon man's;' and he went in, looking but half pleased; and as we took our way to the Grange I was musing who that other person might be Harry was so fain to please.

When we got into the hall we saw Andrew sitting there and talking with the stranger, who was now clothed like any other man. His face had been bruised and his hair torn by the violence of the people; but, for all these disfigurements, I, looking earnestly at him, could see he was the very one the sight of whose ill-usage had so moved Andrew on our journey; there was the same composed look, and the same strange inward light in his eye.

He rose when he saw Aunt Golding come in, saluting her with the words, 'Peace be to thee!' on which she, gravely smiling, said,—

'You did not bring peace with you to our place of worship, sir; but I trust no one will break your peace in my house, where you are welcome to rest and refresh you this day.'

'No man can break my peace,' said he, 'my soul being ever at rest in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.'

'That's a good resting-place indeed,' said our aunt. 'Will you tell me by what name I am to call you while you stay here? I think no one in our village knows who you are.'

'Not every one can know my name, but they that have the Light,' said the man; 'and the world can never know it.'

'But sure, man, you have a name of your own by which the world does know you,' said our aunt a little impatiently.

'I wish not to deny it,' he replied; 'therefore fret not thyself, good friend,—my worldly name is James Westrop. And I will tell thee what thou askest not, that my errand hither is to this young man, Andrew Golding. I have now told him my message, so I am free to depart; and if thou likest not of my talk or my ways, I refuse not to leave thy house and protection this hour.'

'But I will not have you go,' said she, 'till you are refreshed and rested. And, in good time, here comes the Vicar, whom I have desired to sup with us and to reason with you. You will not refuse his company? He scorns not yours.'

'I will not refuse it,' said Westrop gravely; and Mr. Truelocke coming in at that moment with Harry, we all went presently to table.

I marvelled greatly during the meal at Mr. Truelocke's courtesy, so kindly did he speak to the Quaker; and he strove to excuse to him the mad behaviour of the people, ascribing it to their regard for their ancient pastor, now about to leave them. 'I pray you,' he said, 'to pardon them for my sake.'

'Friend,' said James Westrop, 'I had pardoned them before they offended. But thou art deceived if thou thinkest it was love to thee which moved them. They could not endure my word, because their own spirits were foul. My word was to them as the shining of a candle into a dark, dirty place, and the sight of their foulness made them mad against me. But in thee I perceive purity of intention; and I will gladly reason with thee of the things of the Spirit, according to this good woman's desire.'

So after supper Aunt Golding showed the Quaker and Mr. Truelocke into a parlour, and herself with Andrew went in to hear their reasonings; but Althea whispered me, and said, 'Let us go and walk in the garden; I cannot stay and hear the man's insolent talk.' So we stepped out, and began

to pace up and down one of the walks, the moon being just risen, and the evening very sweet and calm—a pleasant change it was after the heats and storms of that afternoon's work. Presently Harry joined us, and said at once, 'Well, sweet ladies, so you have no mind to turn Quakers?'

'As soon shall this rose turn nettle,' said Althea, plucking a white rose off a bush and giving it to him. 'Keep it, I pray you; and when you find it will sting you to touch it, then conclude Althea Dacre has turned Quaker.'

'Give me your rose too, Mistress Lucia,' said Harry.

So I gathered one, and put it in his hand; but I felt obliged to say,—

'I cannot speak so confidently as my sister; I know nothing of these people and their doctrines.'

'You see their doings,' said Althea indignantly; 'that should be enough. Mr. Truelocke, Lucia and I were bred up true Churchwomen, and so I will continue to my dying day. I love not all these sects that spring up like weeds in the ruined places of the Church; I am for those who are building up her walls again, and making them stronger.'

'And is this your mind too, Mistress Lucia?' says Harry. 'I fear me, if it is, you will not approve my good father either;' at which Althea went red and went pale, for she had not thought how her words might hit Mr. Truelocke; but since she did not speak, I said,—

'Being so ignorant about these things, I don't like to say much, except that I hate these new harsh laws,—axes, I think them, lopping off from our Church her true, faithful members as if they were diseased limbs. I fear me the poor trunk that is left will be like a headless, handless corpse without them.'

'Well, God mend all!' said Harry, drawing a long breath. 'For my part, all I know is, that I would these great folks who rule us now had let my father end his days in peace, without pestering him about surplices and Prayer-Books and the sign of the cross, all which he holds for rank Papistry, I suppose; and I cannot wish him to lie, even about such foolish trifles as these things appear to me. But what profits wishing?'

'Very little,' said Althea, sighing softly. 'I might wish too, all in vain, that I had not spoken with such needless warmth even now;' and she began entreating him to believe she had meant no disrespect to his father; but he cut her short, assuring her he knew it already.

'My father is not in all your thoughts,' said he; 'but he is seldom out of mine. I am ever longing to see him settled in some peaceful shelter before I go to sea;' and he looked more downcast than I had ever seen him.

We were got into the orchard now, winding in and out among the trees, and Althea went musing by herself; but I could not help lingering beside Harry, to say some comfortable words about how all folks loved Mr. Truelocke, my aunt especially, and I knew it was in her mind to have the old gentleman make his home at the Grange with her, if he only would.

'Ay,' says Harry; 'that's a larger "if" than you wot of, sweet Lucy. But would it please you, as well as Mrs. Golding, to have the old man living under this roof?' and I answered hastily,—

'Nothing could like me better than to have so kind and fatherly a man dwelling with us, not to say that his holiness and piety would bring down Heaven's blessing on any house that sheltered him; and I promise you,' I went on, 'that I, for my part, would show him all a daughter's love and duty,'—'and so will Althea,'—I would fain have added, had not Harry cut my speech short, saying,—

'That's a charming word on your lips when you speak of my father—the word of daughter. I hope you consider what it may mean to me.'

'Sure,' I said, 'I am very willing to take you for my brother, if that is what you aim at.'

'No, no, Lucy,' said he; 'I wish not to be your brother. I refuse altogether to let you think of me as such; but I have nothing to say against Mistress Althea as a sister. Think well of my words, will you?' and, taking my hand, he put it to his lips. And it was not the first time, in truth, that such a courtesy had been shown me; but with a fine gentleman it seems such a matter of course. It was not so with the frank and blunt sailor, who had had a kind of Puritan bringing-up too; so I suppose that was the reason it made me tremble so strangely, or perhaps the look on his face was the cause. I was therefore not sorry to see Althea coming up to us again.

'We had better keep nearer the house; their conference may be over, and Mrs. Golding will not know where to find us,' she said; so we turned back, and all three paced up and down the terrace under the windows for a while, then we went into the hall, and sat there awaiting the end of the disputation.

At last we saw Mr. Truelocke, Mrs. Golding, James Westrop, and Andrew, all issuing forth together, and all but one seeming mightily disturbed. Mr. Truelocke looked stern and sad, and Mrs. Golding had been weeping; Andrew gazed on the Quaker with much anxiety, but with such

reverence as if he saw in him an angel of God. As for James Westrop, there was no change in him, only his usual composure seemed a little exalted, if I may so phrase it. He walked straight to the hall door, Andrew keeping by him. There he made a stand, and, raising his hands as if in blessing,

'Peace be to this house!' he said; 'I have been well entreated in it, though it approves me not. Friend Andrew, thou and I will meet again; but now follow me not. I may not sleep under this roof, having many miles to go before the sun rises;' and with that he turned and walked out of the door, which he shut after him; and Andrew, who had stopped at his word, came slowly back to us. Althea now rose from her place and went towards him; her eyes were very bright, and there was unusual colour in her cheeks; indeed she seemed carried quite out of herself, yet she kept her queenly look and gait withal.

'Mr. Golding, said she, putting her hands on his arm, 'what means that man by his farewell to you? Sure you are not befooled and led away by his deceiving words to believe such madness as he speaks?'

Andrew started at her touch, like a man waking from a dream. He then looked seriously at her, and said,—

'Madam, I cannot say yet how much I believe of yon good man's doctrine; but I will not rest till I know more of it. If I find it to be as heavenly true as it hath seemed to me this day, not all the joys and glories of the world should hold me back from embracing it; at which Althea, letting her hands fall from his arm, stood as if she were turned into stone, her eyes remaining fixed on him sorrowfully. I suppose he could not endure that look; for he turned away sharply and went out of the hall.

'I feared this,' said Mr. Truelocke. He looked quite weary and spent. 'These men have a strange eloquence; and I cannot wonder that such youths as our Andrew should think their words are indeed set off by some superior Power,—the more, since none can deny that they preach what they practise. I would I could have imbued all my hearers with a like burning sincerity.'

This was nearly all I heard about that long conference of theirs; for after some more lamentations over its ill result, which, Harry whispered me, they might have expected, Mr. Truelocke departed with his son, and Aunt Golding remained so troubled that I did not like to question her about what had passed. But all the more was I curious to know what the man's doctrine was; and on the first fair occasion I found, I began to ask Andrew to describe it to me. Poor youth! he was mightily pleased with my inquiry, thinking, doubtless, that it sprang from a real thirst for truth like his own; and to the best of his power he complied with my wish. I found he had not been altogether ignorant of this new teaching for some months back.

'We English Christians,' said he, 'have fallen into many hurtful snares by our lack of faith in God's great gift of the Holy Spirit, the mighty boon which the risen Saviour promised to His followers, and which truly came according to His word. I have often wondered,' said he, 'that we all profess and say, as often as we repeat the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," yet we act and think as if we believed not in Him.' And from this point he went on to tell me how George Fox, first of all, and many others after him, had been going about the country endeavouring to make people alive to the high privilege they had so long slighted, to their own exceeding hurt; 'also,' said he, 'these men, in obedience to the inward Voice that instructs them, strive to bring people off from their formal man-made religions to the primitive purity of Christ's religion, which consists not in rites and ceremonies, repeating of forms of prayer, singing of hymns, and ringing of bells, but in a holy and harmless life;' and he quoted many things out of the Sermon on the Mount, 'which,' said he, 'the common run of Christians never dream of obeying; but the poor Friends practise them most strictly.'

All this was most alluring to Andrew, for, as I have often noticed, he detested nothing so much as false professions, and a show of goodness where none was. I asked him curiously why the Friends behaved themselves in such strange fashion in public places and churches; when he answered me by referring to the bold speeches of ancient prophets in rebuke of sin, and asked me if I could think that a man might now-a-days refuse to carry God's message to sinners because it might bring him into bodily peril? 'It were far worse,' said he, 'to disobey the Divine Voice, that still small Voice that is heard by the restful soul, than to endure a little pain at men's hands, or even the death of the body.' Well, I could not wonder that he was charmed with such teachings, for while I listened to him my own heart was moved strangely; but it evermore ended with my resolving to keep to the opinions of my aunt and Mr. Truelocke; I thought they were both too good to be far mistaken. But Andrew now began to be often away from home, and he made no secret that he went to meet with Westrop and other Friends, from whom he often had letters also. He was never at West Fazeby on the Lord's Day; and Aunt Golding and Althea also showed themselves mightily afflicted thereat.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW HARRY TRUELOCKE LEFT US FOR THE SEA.

And now came fast upon us that black day, the twenty-fourth of August, 1662, when such numbers of faithful ministers were stript of their offices and livings because they would not go against their consciences; and our own Mr. Truelocke among them. I think he was more stiffly set than ever in his opinion of the unlawfulness of conformity, since he had that talk with James Westrop; at least Aunt Golding thought so. But on other points he showed himself mild and persuadable, so that there was nothing like the difficulty Harry and all of us had looked for in winning him to come and dwell at the Grange, for a season at least; and he agreed to make the change before the fatal day should come.

So we had all a busy time of it that last week, in getting his many books and his simple household stuff removed from the Parsonage house, and in bestowing them suitably at the Grange, where Aunt Golding had prepared two fair rooms for his particular use. And however bad the occasion for our doing this work, some of us found pleasure in it.

I must own I myself always loved a busy, bustling time, when there seemed a little more to be done in each day than we could crowd into it; which was our case now, wheat harvest having begun. And I was gladder than common of the stir and the bustle, for it helped to stupefy and dull a pain there was at my heart whenever the thought crossed me how soon Harry would be gone. He was to depart on a long voyage to the East Indies, and would indeed have sailed already but for his loving care about his father, which made him resolute to tarry until he saw the old gentleman in a manner provided for.

Some perverse whimsy of mine had made me careful never to be left alone in Harry's company since that talk with him by moonlight in the orchard. It's no wonder that I so perfectly recollect all the sayings and doings of that day, for it was a fateful day indeed to some of our little company. But the things that dwelt most constantly in my memory, to the shutting out of weightier matters, were Harry's looks and words on my saying I would be as a daughter to Mr. Truelocke. There was small need to bid me think well of them; I thought of them whether I would or no, all the while telling myself that I was a poor fool for brooding over such airy trifles; that I had not known aught of Harry, nor he of me, six months before; and that I deserved whipping for fancying he could mean anything serious. And so, between a kind of fear and a good deal of pride, I tried, as I have said, to avoid any private talk with him; and I succeeded pretty well. But Harry's blunt, plain-spoken ways overmatched me after all.

The first evening after Mr. Truelocke had come to the Grange—I cannot say, after we had him settled there, for he was mightily unsettled—he was not able to rest in the room we had fitted for his study, and so came to sit among us in the hall, seeming to please himself with watching our occupations, as he sat in his great chair. Andrew was writing somewhat at his desk; Althea had some sewing; and I was having a lesson from Aunt Golding in the right use of the little flax-wheel; for I had taken an extraordinary fancy for spinning, and our aunt encouraged me in it, and took pains to teach me, saying I was an apt scholar. Thus we were busied when Harry came in and sat down among us.

'You all look peaceful and content, methinks,' quoth he. 'I wish I were a skilful painter, then might I make a picture of this pretty scene to carry with me and cheer my heart in distant seas. But since I cannot do that, I must try for some other comfort to take away with me.'

Here he stopt, and Aunt Golding said kindly, 'What is in my power to do for you, Master Harry, I will do as freely as your father could.'

'Thanks, madam,' said Harry; 'there's much you and my father can do for me; I know only one other person who can do more. Father, I looked for you in your study even now; but I am not sorry to find you here instead, hardly any one here but has some interest in my business with you. I want your consent and Mrs. Golding's to my seeking Mistress Lucy here for my wife.'

I heard the words plainly, and I suppose their sense reached me; but if they had been so many blows of an axe upon my head they could not have left me more stupid. So I sat helpless, hearing Aunt Golding cry out,—

'Here is hasty work, indeed! do you speak seriously, Master Harry?'

'Never more seriously,' said he; 'if they were the last words I should speak I could not mean them more truly and heartily. And I hope you have a good answer for me.'

'I don't say no,' she replied; 'but there are others to be consulted beside me.'

So Harry, looking at Mr. Truelocke, said, 'Father, call your thoughts off from your unkind Mother Church, and bestow some of them on your dutiful son. Will you give me your sanction and your

blessing, if I can win this lady to say she will be mine?'

'I can never refuse thee my blessing, Harry, and that thou knowest,' said the old man. 'But it's fitting that I should think of the lady too, and bid her consider what she does.'

He turned to me, which troubled me greatly, and, looking sadly and kindly at me, said,—

'If you take this boy of mine, madam,' said he, 'you take the son of a poor, despised, aged man, who can give you and him nothing but a father's blessing, coupled with his burdensome infirmity to care for and tend, till death remove it;' words which loosed my tongue straightway to say I should deem such an office a pride and honour.

'That is not all,' said Mr. Truelocke. 'Harry hath chosen to embrace a dangerous wandering way of life, neither very glorious nor very profitable. And his bride will have to spend many a sad lonely hour, while her husband is tossing on the seas, and she sitting trembling at home, deprived of his protection and doubtful of his fate.'

'That's a very odd way of recommending my suit, father,' said Harry, a little uneasily.

'Nay, I have not done my recommendation,' replied Mr. Truelocke; 'let me say all. You should further consider, Mistress Lucy, that this son of mine is so light of spirit and careless of speech, that some will say he has no constancy of disposition. I will not so far slander him, for I know him better; but this I must say, for it is truth, that he has not yet that confirmed and settled piety I should desire in the husband of mine own daughter, if I had one. Now I have laid before you all the disadvantages of the match, it is for you to say if you will have it.'

I wonder if ever a love-suit was so urged before? It made me heartily angry to hear poor Harry so disparaged to his face, and to see him sit so downcast, a cloud of angry colour mounting to his very forehead. I suppose pity for him killed all my bashfulness, for I stood up, and said passionately, I thought no worse of a man for having the bold adventurous nature which loved seafaring; that was a noble trade, I said, and our mariners the very flower of England; and as for light spirit and merry speech, they were but flowers covering a rock, for steadfast as a rock was the heart under that gay show.

'And if you speak of piety,' I wound up, 'I am sure Harry hath as much of it as I have, at least; he has some faith, some love, and so I hope have I; but we will help each other up to better things; and here is my hand on it if he will take it.' With that I held out my hand to him, and he sprang up and grasped it in both his, looking exultingly at his father; it was a pleasure to see how his face had changed all in a moment. Mr. Truelocke smiled, but he shook his head too, saying,—

'Well, children, I blame you not. The Lord will surely teach you and lead you, it may be in ways you will not like; for it is on my mind that you both have much to learn and much to suffer before your marriage day shall dawn.'

And now Aunt Golding, who loved Harry, and never could endure to have him crossed, began to laugh outright.

'I will own,' she said, 'I thought you very unmerciful to your good son, Mr. Truelocke, while you continued to run him down so shamefully; but now I see you took the right way to advance his cause. It's wonderful what a spice of contradiction will do with a woman! Lucy, you would never have made this bold, open confession without some such provocation'—words which abashed me much, for they were true.

And now, no one present having a word more to say against it, Harry and I exchanged rings; and Mr. Truelocke in a few pathetic words besought Heaven's blessing on our contract. I do believe Harry would not have been sorry could he have called me wife before he went away; but, every one frowning on this fancy of his when he distantly hinted it, he did not urge it; and truly the time was too short.

I was a little afraid of Althea, lest she should think I had every way demeaned myself; but she never has owned that she thought so.

'These things go by destiny, little Lucy,' she said once. 'I am not strong enough to control fate, and certainly you are not; so why should I blame you? Were not all our follies written in the stars when we were born?' I could not tell then what to make of her mocking words, knowing how she despised what people call astrology.

As for Andrew, he could talk cheerfully of nothing at this time; and the hopefulest word he could find for Harry and me was that though in these evil days there could be no love-thoughts or marriage-thoughts for such as him, he would not say they were forbidden to others; and he wished us all the happiness we could get; poor cold words; but Harry said 'twas wonderful Andrew could say as much on any worldly matter.

This was the manner of our betrothing; and, were it not for Harry's ring still shining on my finger, and also for the odd unusual fashion of the whole thing, which is what I never could have dreamt, I should be sadly apt to think of it as a dream too pleasant to be true.

For within a day or two Harry had left us and gone to Hull, from which port he sailed. I have never seen him since; also it is now a full twelve-month since any letter from him reached us. Yet I cannot believe he is dead; and if he is living, I know he is true; and living or dead, I have a strong persuasion that my little ruby ring, which was my mother's once, is on his finger still.

But many a time have I thought on Mr. Truelocke's words, how we both should have much to learn and much to suffer before our marriage day. I think the words be true.

CHAPTER V.

HOW ANDREW MADE ONE ENEMY, AND WAS LIKE TO HAVE ANOTHER.

And now my happy time was over; its story is all told so far; and I must write of darker days that came after.

The living of West Fazeby, left vacant because of Mr. Truelocke's sturdiness in his opinion, did not wait long for an incumbent, but was quickly bestowed on a Mr. Lambert; a man not troubled with awkward scruples, for he had been a strong Presbyterian under the Commonwealth, and now was become as strong a Churchman; but an honest man as the world goes now, and not hard-hearted. He had another better living where he resided; so our parish was served by his curate, a Mr. Poole, a young man of shallow capacity and but little learning. Mr. Truelocke, however, went to hear him preach;—a strange sight it was to see so reverend, saintly, and able a minister sitting humbly as a listener, while that weak-headed lad spoke from the pulpit;—and he said the youth preached true doctrine; so he continued going to hear him, and encouraged our household to do the like, which they all did, except Andrew. That Mr. Truelocke himself did not join in the new formal prayers was not noticed, his presence at sermon-time seeming to give mighty satisfaction to Mr. Poole, who would often walk up to the Grange of a Lord's Day evening, to ask Mr. Truelocke's opinion of his handling of a text, and would even beg to hear his exposition of the same; when several of our neighbours would also come in and listen thankfully to their old pastor's words; neither we nor they dreaming that such practices could be deemed unlawful, as they soon were, being stigmatized as conventicles, and heavily punished. But this did not happen in Mr. Poole's time.

There were other things much less agreeable to us under the new order of things. A monstrous new Maypole was set up on the village green, by command of a gentleman very powerful in the parish, whom I shall soon have to name, and we were told the old heathen May-games would be observed at the right season,—as indeed they were when the time came; meantime the one or two taverns in West Fazeby began to stand open on a Sunday, and were much more frequented than they used to be, men who had formerly been very careful to shun them now going to them boldly in open day; which plainly discovered their former decent carriage to have been a hollow show. Althea and I chanced one day to be passing the Royal Oak, as the chief inn of the village had been new christened, just as there reeled out of it a young gentleman whom every one had deemed a most hopeful pious youth, Mr. Truelocke in particular having a great opinion of him, though I never liked his demure looks for my part, nor his stiff way of dressing himself. He was called Ralph Lacy, and was son and heir to old Mr. Lacy of Lacy Manor, a worthy old gentleman, though somewhat austere, who was lately dead; which I suppose partly accounted for the mighty change in his son, who was now clad in silk and velvet, scarlet and gold; and, as I have said, could not walk too straight at that moment.

He stood still, leering foolishly on us, just in our way; I could not bear to look at him, and would have slipt on one side; but Althea looked sternly at him, and said bitterly,—

'Shame on you, Ralph Lacy! You mourn for your father in a very vile manner; a swine could do no worse.'

'Ah, sweet Mistress Dacre,' said he, 'do you think then the grim, sour-visaged saints are reigning still? Nay, their day is over! we have a right good fellow for a king now, and this shall be Merry England again, I can tell thee.' (He was growing more familiar at every word.) 'I will soon show thee what the ways are at Whitehall now;' and he was coming much nearer to her than was pleasant, when Andrew, who came up with us at that moment, flung him out of our path with such goodwill that Master Lacy measured his length on the ground; and there we left him lying. Althea thanked Andrew warmly and cordially; but Andrew, who had been all glowing with just wrath at first, seemed to shrink into himself at her praise.

'It was a temptation,' he said, 'and I have fallen. I could have taken you out of yon fool's way

without laying a finger on him.'

'It's something of a disgrace indeed to have touched the beast—an oaken staff had been fitter than your hand,' she replied. 'Merry England, quotha! drunken England, I suppose he meant.'

'There is too much indeed of the unclean spirit of riot abroad now,' answered Andrew; 'but it is not with violent hands that we can cast it out. I sinfully forgot our Lord's word, "Resist not evil;" and nothing could brighten him, though Althea did her best all the way home.

There came the day when I rued Andrew's angry action as much as he did, though not for the same reason. Ralph Lacy was not too drunk to be unaware who had flung him aside into the dust; he never forgave it; and his hand was plainly seen afterwards in the troubles that came upon us. Another man also contributed something to them, though more innocently.

Mr. Poole now came very much about us, and would often talk about the good family he belonged to and his hopes of speedy preferment; and another favourite topic of his was the gay suits he had worn in his secular days; he would dwell very fondly on the cut and trimmings of these clothes. I think nothing disliked him in his profession but the gravity of dress required from a clerical person; and I was often tempted to ask, had his father been a tailor? He made the most of his sober apparel, and loved to show a white, smooth, fat hand, with a fine diamond on one finger; but he was unhappy in an insignificant person and a foolish face, both of them something fatter than is graceful.

I do not know what first made me guess that all his boastings and parading were intended to advance him in Althea's good graces; but she refused to believe me when I said so.

'Poor harmless wretch!' said she; 'he is but practising with me; he would fain perfect himself in the airs and graces of a thriving wooer, before laying siege in earnest to some fair lady, with the heavy purse, that I lack, at her girdle.'

'That's a far-fetched fancy indeed,' said I. 'Why should he single you out alone for such practisings?'

'Well,' quoth Althea idly, 'he may deem me the fittest person to rehearse with, seeing I have at least the breeding of a gentlewoman, and am contracted to no one else. He will think that if his ways and words please me, they may answer with richer women of my sort as well.'

'But sure they do not please you!' I cried; 'nor should you let him think they do; 'tis not fair usage.'

'Nay, he diverts me hugely,' said she; 'and I need diversion, for my heart is heavy as lead, Lucy;—all at once there were tears in her eyes;—'if I can forget my griefs while I watch a mannikin bowing and grimacing before me, don't grudge me the poor pastime. I assure thee, child, there's nothing more in it;' and with that she left me hastily.

I was used to think Althea much wiser than myself, but the evening of the very day when we had this talk proved that in this matter her judgment was more at fault than mine. For about sunset Mr. Poole came up to the Grange, which was a rare thing for him to do, seeing he did not love to be abroad when it was dark. He seemed mightily puffed up about something; and, not being one of those who can keep their own counsel long, he soon imparted to Althea and me, whom he found sitting by the parlour fire, how his promotion now seemed very near. There was a living of which he had long had hopes to get the reversion; and the actual incumbent was fallen sick of a strange fever, with little prospect of recovery.

'And you are troubled because of the poor man's grievous case,' says Althea demurely. 'I guessed something was disturbing you. It's melancholy news indeed, Mr. Poole, for one would guess by it that the place must be unhealthy, so it may be your luck to sicken in like manner when it is your turn to live there.'

I thought Althea cruel thus to tease the poor man, imputing to him a tender concern for the sufferer of which he had never dreamed; besides, he was chicken-hearted about contagious disorders, and that she knew. I pitied him then, but found it hard to forbear laughing, his aspect was so comical; therefore I feigned an errand out of the room, and, having stayed away long enough to compose my countenance, I returned to the parlour, where I found poor Mr. Poole on his knees to Althea, urging his suit for her hand with a great deal more passion than one could have expected in him. 'Twas in vain she spoke of her orphanhood and poverty, and told him he should look higher; and at last she had to speak sharply, and say, however she might esteem the honour he would do her, wife of his she would never be; 'so quit that unbecoming posture at my feet,' she added; on which he rose indeed, but said half-frantically,—

'Give me at least, madam; the comfort of hearing you say you are heart-free, that you love none other better than you do me;' on which first her eyes flashed angry fire, and then changed and softened, her whole face and even her neck going rosy-red, and she said almost kindly,—

'I will give you no such assurance, sir, to hold you in vain hopes; but I wish you a happier fate than marriage with me might prove.' With that she was gone from the room, like a shadow; and Mr. Poole and I were left foolishly staring at each other. Presently he said hoarsely,—

'Who is it that your sister loves, madam? for whom does she disdain me? Sure,' he went on, with growing heat, 'it cannot be your cousin—he that is infected with the Quaker heresy! say it is not he, madam.'

Well, I was tempted to lie, and say it was not our cousin; for Andrew was nothing akin to us; but I resisted the tempter, and said I could say nothing, but that I was heartily sorry,—'and I am sure, so is my sister,' I said, 'that you should have fixed your affections so unluckily.' Then I told him Andrew had no thoughts of marriage with Althea or any one; and I reminded him of the many rich and fair women who would be sure to look kindly on him; at which he smiled again, and presently went away in no unfriendly mood. So I acquit him of meaning the harm which he afterwards did us, poor youth, with his prattling tongue. He did not wait long for his promotion, the poor man whom he hoped to succeed dying indeed of the fever that had seized him; so we lost our curate. But it seems he prated to his patron about the fair young lady he had hoped should share his preferment, lamenting her silliness in preferring a moonstruck Quaker youth; also he complained of Mrs. Golding for not discouraging such follies, and he even deplored Mr. Truelocke's obstinate heresies as to church discipline.

I think even he had held his peace, if he had known into how greedy an ear he poured these tales. This patron of his, one Sir Edward Fane, had much land and not a little power in our parish, though he resided in another neighbourhood; he was a bitter hater of all Nonconformists, and in especial of the Quakers; men said this was because of some encounter he had had with Fox himself, by whose sharp tongue and ready wit our gentleman was put to open shame, where he had hoped to make himself sport out of Quaker enthusiasm. However that might be, it was commonly said this Sir Edward loved Quaker-baiting, as it was called, beyond all other of the cruel, inhuman sports, the bull-baitings and bear-baitings, in which too many men of condition now take pleasure; and it was not long before we found a powerful enemy was raised up against our harmless friends.

'Twas a wonder to me that any would lift a hand against them; Mr. Truelocke being so venerable and so peaceable a man, and Andrew of life so irreproachable. Also, since the youth had cast in his lot with the Friends, he had shown a singular zeal in good works. He sought out those who were in distress or necessity, and laboured to make their hard lot easy, not merely giving them alms, but comforting them as a loving brother might do; and such as had fallen into want through folly or sin he toiled hard to lift up again, and to put them into an honest way of living. By this means some few were led to embrace his way of religion, it is true; and what wonder? My wonder was that so many were vilely ungrateful to him, at which *he* never showed any vexation. 'We are bidden,' he said, 'to do good to the unthankful and the evil,' which seemed enough for him.

But it being contrary to his conscience to attend the church, I suppose all his other graces did but lay him more open to injury, and we were soon warned of mischief hatching against us and him, and that by one from whom we never expected it.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MR. TRUELOCKE AND MRS. GOLDING LEFT US.

Mr. Poole being gone, there came in his place as curate an oldish man, grey-haired and meagre; a great adorer of Archbishop Laud and of King Charles the First, 'the Royal Martyr,' as he would say; but for all his half Popish notions, he was blameless, nay, austere in his life; and he had thriven so ill in the gay new world of London, that he deemed it great good luck to have the curate's place at West Fazeby.

We had half feared that this poor Mr. Stokes would feel bound in conscience to torment and harass Mr. Truelocke into conformity; so when he came to the Grange one day, very earnest to see Aunt Golding and the former Vicar, and that in private, we were on thorns while he stayed; and when we heard the door shut after him, we hurried to our aunt, asking what his errand had been.

She answered us not directly, but, gazing after Mr. Stokes, whom Mr. Truelocke was conducting out through the garden, 'Well, my girls,' said she, 'if the tree may be known by its fruits, yon is a right honest man and a true Christian;' and she went on to say how he had only come to warn her and hers of evil that was designed against them. 'I fear,' she said, smiling, 'the good man's conscience pulled him two ways; yet his heart has proved wiser than his head. I am right glad now that Andrew is away, though I was vexed before; yet I knew his was a charitable journey.'

Then she told us of new crueller devices intended against the Friends, and, indeed, against all Nonconforming folks. 'And there be some,' she said, 'who have spoken very evil things of us here at the Grange. I warrant you it will not be long that we shall be suffered to have family worship if our labouring men share in it as they are used to do; nor can Mr. Truelocke so much as expound a Psalm to us and them, but it shall straight be said we hold a conventicle here.'

'Surely,' says Althea, very pale, 'the gentlemen who now rule the country are too proud-spirited, too noble, to intermeddle with such matters; what is it to them how we say our prayers in our own houses? Abroad, there may be need of a decent face of uniformity, and some open outrageous follies may require to be put down strongly'—She stopped, and Aunt Golding said,—

'Ah, child, thou little knowest. I have not yet heard of any outrageous follies that our poor Andrew has run into; yet I am told, and I fear it's true, that if he were to show his face openly in West Fazeby to-morrow, his next lodging might be in York Castle, where he should lie in the foulest den they could find for him, and have the worst company to boot. Nor will it be very safe here for our good Mr. Truelocke, who now talks of taking his journey to certain worthy kinsfolk of his that are farmers in the Dale country, there he may live in a peaceful obscurity; but his chief aim is to avoid bringing troubles on our house.'

It struck me cruelly to think of Harry's father leaving us, but I had no time to dwell on the thought, for now Althea sank down at my feet, helpless and senseless like one who was dead indeed; and much ado we had to bring her out of her swoon, which was very long, and she very feeble when she was recovered from it. We got her to her room, and persuaded her to lie down and sleep; and when we came away, Aunt Golding turns to me with a puzzled look, saying,—

'What means this, Lucy? I never thought your sister one of those fine ladies who swoon for every trifle;—what is it, think you?'

'Andrew,' says I, 'and the image of his danger; you made a frightful picture of it, dear madam, do you know?'

'Ah, set a thief to catch a thief!' says Aunt Golding, and I felt glad to hear her laugh once more; 'my love-passages are of too ancient a date to serve me, it seems, but yours are fresh and new, my Lucy. But what of Andrew? is Althea dear to him?'

'More dear than he knows, or she guesses,' quoth I; at which our good aunt laughed again, but then said,—

'It's a thing that would have pleased me well, had I been told that it would happen a year ago, but now I see nothing but trouble in it. There would be no equal yoke there, my Lucy. Whatever extravagances Andrew hath fallen into, the love of Christ runs through all he does and thinks. And canst thou say the like of thy sister?'

'Not yet,' I murmured, but Aunt Golding heard me, and said,—

'Ay, well spoken, Lucy; we will remember that when we pray.'

After this, Aunt Golding had a long conference with Matthew Standfast, whom she despatched in pursuit of Andrew, that he might furnish him with money and warn him to keep away from the Grange for a season. And after much trouble, Matthew found him, somewhere on the road to York; when it cost him still more pains to lead his young master into compliance with the prudent courses enjoined on him.

'He talked much,' said Matthew, 'of the honour of suffering for the truth, and how he must not be the vile coward to refuse it. And I had never been able to beat him away from that, but for the excellent counsel of one that was riding with him; I think he was a Quaker also, for he could talk with Master Andrew in his own dialect.'

'What manner of man was he?' said our aunt.

'I can hardly tell,' said Matthew; 'he had a piercing eye, I wot, and a voice as clear as a bell; very neat and seemly he was in his attire, and yet he might have been a ruffling cavalier if one judged by his hair, which he wore long and curled.'

'That is much how George Fox himself has been described to me,' said Aunt Golding.

'Nay, I cannot think it was any such man,' said Matthew, 'for he talked very reasonably, plain sense and plain words, such as a simple man like me could not choose but understand; and one told me how George Fox should be in Lancashire about this time.'

'Well, what said he to persuade my poor lad?' asked aunt.

'Why, he bade him remember certain works of mercy he had already in hand, which should not be neglected to gratify a mad fancy of thrusting his head in the lion's mouth whenever it was opened against him. So Master Andrew was ashamed of his rashness, and was persuaded to take himself away for a time; and we parted very lovingly. He says it shall not be long ere you hear from him, mistress.'

I believe, in spite of Matthew's contrary opinion, that Andrew's counsellor was no other than the famous man whom our aunt had named. But I have no proof of this, only mine own strong persuasion.

Not many days hereafter, we had proof that Mr. Stokes had been very honest in his warning to us. There came constables to the Grange, who showed a warrant to seize the body of Andrew Golding, charged with many strange misdemeanours, but especially with refusing the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance. I do not believe the poor youth ever had refused them; but this was the common trap set for the Friends, who were known to decline all oath-taking, because of that saying of our Lord's, 'Swear not at all,'—a harmless scruple at the worst, which never ought to be used, as I think, against honest and peaceable subjects.

We were now heartily glad that Andrew was absent, and that we could truly say, we knew not where he was; nor were the constables much grieved at it. One of them found an occasion of whispering to Aunt Golding, 'If you can get word to the young man, let him know this air is unwholesome for him just now;' after which they went hastily away.

And now we began to be haunted with spies, our steps seeming to be dogged even in our own garden, where we were aware of people moving about behind trees and bushes, as if hearkening after our talk; or we caught sight of faces peering in at the windows when we were at evening prayer. Also our friends and neighbours began to shun us as if we had the plague, and no one more than Mrs. Bonithorne, who had been a great worshipper of Mr. Truelocke, but now, as we heard, blamed him openly for his lack of true obedience to the powers that be, 'which are ordained of God,' she would often add. It was her husband who told us this as a good jest; but it hurt Mr. Truelocke, and he became more set on his design of leaving the Grange, and betaking himself to his kinsfolk in Cumberland, where among the waste and lonely mountains he might linger out his days without offence to any. I could not hear him talk of this plan without tears, which he perceiving tried to stop.

'Seest thou, dear child,' he would say, 'all these discomforts come upon this house because of my abode in it; for as for poor Andrew, he is known to be elsewhere, and however peaceably I may behave myself, you will be allowed no peace till I am either gone out of sight like him, or lodged in gaol for some fancied offence. Which were best, thinkest thou, Lucy?' and when I had no answer but weeping, he would leave that point and begin to talk of Harry's ship, the *Good Hope*, of which we had got some news, and would speak hopefully of the joyful meeting we should have when that ship came home.

Alas, I fear he was no prophet! But he was not to be turned from his intention; and presently he was gone indeed, in the company of Mr. Bonithorne, who had business in the north country, and who undertook with a great deal of satisfaction to let no one, and especially not his wife, into the mystery of his having this reverend travelling companion.

And now the Grange seemed a sad lonely house indeed; for every day and all day long we missed that noble white head, that kindly presence, that voice still musical and tender in spite of seventy years of service. Those spyings and watchings of us, which had helped to drive away our fatherly friend, were a little intermitted when he was gone; but the poor benefit was counterpoised with a heavy trouble, for now our Aunt Golding began to decline, falling into a strange lingering kind of fever, which the doctors could not understand. I think it was nothing but trouble of heart which caused it, for she was mightily disquieted about Andrew. There was reason to think it would be as unsafe as ever for him to return home, and letters from him were very rare; he could not often find a messenger whom he would trust, and this difficulty was increased by his wandering about the country as he did, which yet was deemed the best way for him to live.

So being often a prey to anxious thoughts, the poor lady pined and faded away, and presently catching a cold, she began to be troubled with difficulty in breathing, and her sleep went from her. It was now that we learned the worth of Grace Standfast, who fairly took us poor silly girls in hand as her pupils, setting us tasks to do both in the house and the sick chamber, and keeping us in heart with cheerful words and looks. But for all her skill and her cheerfulness, our patient visibly grew worse and worse, and as the year wore into winter, we saw that we should lose her.

And now there befell a strange thing, which I will tell just as it happened, and I think there can be no superstition in dwelling on it so far.

Aunt Golding's sickness had now become so sore, that it was needful for one of us always to watch with her; and on the night I speak of it was my turn to do so. She was very uneasy the first part of my watch, but about midnight she fell into a deep sleep, and continued so for an hour, when, hearing no sound, I went to look on her, and saw such heavenly peace on her sleeping countenance, that I could have thought a light shone from it like the glory about a saint's head in a picture. I do not know how long I had stood gazing on her, when all at once she woke, and, smiling at me,—

'Is it thou, Lucy?' said she; 'that is well. I have good news for thee;' at which I began to fear she was light-headed, for how should she have news that I knew not? But presently she went on, with many pauses because of her difficult breathing.

'Thou hast grieved much, Lucy, thinking thy sailor would never come home to thee again; be at

peace, he shall come home, a better man,—and find thee a holier woman for all the troubles thou shalt have seen.'

'How do you know? how can you tell?' I cried.

'I cannot tell thee now,' she said, 'but I do know. And thou hast seen, dear heart, how I have grieved over my Andrew—my heart's child, the comfort of my old age; I have thought he was clean gone out of the right way, for all his sincerity. It has been shown me in my sleep, that I had no need thus to grieve. His rashness may bring him sharp trials, but even through those shall he enter in. The light that leads him is the true Light. And though he and his fellows are but erring men,—like all others,—yet even their trivial errors shall have their use; in days to come men shall say that these despised and persecuted believers have done nobly—for their country and for the world.'

'Then, do you think,' I said, in some trouble, 'that we are all wrong, and only Andrew and those like-minded in the right?'

'Nay, dear heart,' said she, 'I think not so. The paths are many—but the Guide is one. Let us only follow His voice,—and He will bring us to His Father's house in safety. I have comfort about thy sister too,' she added presently, 'though I fear it is not such as she can value yet. Do not forget, dear child, to have Mr. Stokes sent for to-morrow; I wish to receive the most comfortable Sacrament of the Lord's Supper once more—with you all, before I go hence.' As she said the last words, her voice sank away, and I saw that she was sleeping once more.

The next day we did as she had bidden, in sending for Mr. Stokes, who accordingly came, and gave the Communion to all our household, as well as to our poor aunt. I never liked him better than on that day.

But a sad day it proved to us, for we all saw plainly how our second mother was now a dying woman. I think she hardly said twenty words to one of us thereafter, but quietly slept and dreamed her life away, and on the third day she was gone. This was last winter, the winter of 1664; and I remember how all that melancholy time the people were greatly disturbed about the comet that was to be seen, wondering what mischiefs it should betoken; I saw it myself, but so full was my mind of my private griefs, I cared not much about ill omens to the State. Indeed, one thing that soon happened was very distressing to us, and I shall shortly relate what it was.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW ANDREW CAME TO THE GRANGE BY NIGHT.

It was about a ten days after Mrs. Golding's death, and we were beginning to feel as if our desolation was a thing that had always been and always would be, for so I think it often seems when a grief is new. However desolate we were, we were not destitute; she who was gone had cared for that, and we found a modest dower secured to each of us, without injury to Andrew's rightful inheritance of the Grange and the lands belonging thereto; also we were to continue dwelling in the Grange till its new master should come home and make such dispositions as pleased him. But for all this we were greatly perplexed; we had been long without news of Andrew, and could not tell how to get word to him of Mrs. Golding's death.

On the day I speak of, we had been teased by a visit from Mrs. Bonithorne, who, professing great sorrow for our loss, and her own loss of one whom she called her oldest friend, soon fell to talking of Andrew, and how his unlucky doings were all owing to our good aunt's foolishness in entertaining so pestilent a heretic as James Westrop under her roof.

'I warned her of it,' quoth she; 'I said to her, "You will rue it yet, Margaret; with such an one you should have no dealings, no, not so much as to eat," and now see what has come of her perverseness!' and such-like stuff she said, which moved Grace Standfast to say disdainfully, when our visitor was gone, 'Yon woman surely owes us a little grudge, that 'twas our house and not hers which entertained so rare a monster as a wandering Quaker; she asked me twenty questions about him the day after, I remember it well; but we hardly had heart to laugh, though we were sure enough she had given no such warnings as she spake of. Althea only sighed and said, "'twas an evil day for her when she first saw that man;' and as she told me, his two appearances to us haunted her as she went to rest, and mingled themselves with her dreams. She woke at last sharply and suddenly, thinking she heard the hail rattling against the windows as it did when Mr. Truelocke preached his last sermon in our church; but it was not hail that rattled, it

was some one throwing sand and pebbles up at her window to wake her, and then a voice calling on her name. She sprang up, and, hurrying on some clothes, she ran down-stairs; for, as she told me, she had no more doubt of its being Andrew who called, than if it had been broad daylight, and she could see him standing below the window; and, being too impatient to unlock any door, she undid the hasp of the nearest casement and climbed out; and at the same moment hearing a voice again calling softly, 'Althea,' she ran in the direction of the sound, and came upon a man whom in the starlight she saw to be Andrew indeed; she spoke his name, holding out both her hands, and he turning at once grasped them in both his, and so they stood gazing at each other awhile. Then she said, half sobbing,—

'You come strangely, Andrew—but you come to your own house, and I am glad that it falls to me to welcome you to it; it lacks a master sadly;' and she tried to draw him towards the door, telling him she would set it open if he would tarry a few minutes while she herself climbed in to do it.

'Alas!' he said, resisting her efforts; 'what do you mean by calling this my house? is our aunt indeed gone? I had hoped that part of the message might be a delusion.'

'What message? I sent none, for I knew not where to send, nor did any of us,' she replied; 'but it is too true that Mrs. Golding is dead these ten days; and all things are at a stand for lack of your presence. Come in; do not keep me here in the darkness and the cold.'

'I will not keep thee long,' he said sadly; 'fear it not, Althea. But I may not come under this roof which thou sayest is mine. I saw the dim light in your window,' he went on, like one talking in a dream, 'and I could not bear to pass by and make no sign, as I ought to have done. For I love thee too well, Althea Dacre, as thou knowest.'

'How can it be too well,' she answered boldly, 'if you do not love me better than I do you? and therefore come in to your own home, or I will not believe there is any love in you at all.'

'That's a foolish jest,' said he half angrily. 'I may not cross the doorstone of this house to-day, Althea; I am forbidden; so hear me say what I came to say. There is a heavy burden laid on me. For seven nights together I saw in vision a dark terrible angel, having his wings outspread and holding in his hand a half-drawn glittering sword; he was hovering over this land of England; and it was shown me that he was a messenger of wrath bidden to smite the land with a pestilence. Now there be those far holier than I who have seen the like vision; but to me came the word that I must go up to London, where this year the plague shall be very sore, and as I go I must warn all men, that they may repent and amend, before this judgment fall on them.'

There was that in his voice and words that made Althea tremble like a leaf; she did not disbelieve in his visions while she heard him; but she strove against the impression, and cried out, when she could find her voice, that this was indeed madness.

'You have no right,' she said, 'to desert your natural and lawful duties, and your poor kinswomen too, who are desolate; you will break our hearts, you will ruin yourself, and all for a delusion.'

'It is no delusion,' said he; 'your own words, Althea, have confirmed to me the truth of my mission. For it was said to me, "This shall be a sign to thee, that Margaret, the widow of thy father's brother, lies sick even to death; and thou shalt see her face no more, nor come under her roof." And is it not so? for her face is buried out of our sight,'—his voice shook,—'so dost not see, Althea, I may not come in as thou wouldst have me? Furthermore, I believe my earthly pilgrimage shall come to its end in London; I cannot be sure; but, I think, I return no more alive. That is why I hungered so for one last look at thee, Althea; also I wished as a dying man to entreat thee not to despise the Lord's poor people any more. Now I must go; farewell, dear heart, for ever;' and with these words he assayed to go; but, as she told me afterwards, she clutched at his coat, passionately protesting he should never go; and when he unlocked her hands, and besought her not to hinder him, she dropt on the ground at his feet, clasped him round the knees, and called on me with all her might.

'Help, Lucia! help, sister!' were the words that woke me, and sent me flying with breathless speed to the place whence the call came. I climbed through the window which I found open, and ran to the spot where I could discern that a struggle was going on; but as I came up Andrew had got himself loosed; and, saying low and thickly to me,—

'Look to your sister, take her in instantly,' he turned and fled as a man might flee for his life, while Althea threw herself on the cold ground, moaning and sobbing like a creature mortally hurt. I took her in my arms and raised her up, asking her, all amazed, was that indeed Andrew? but she did nothing but wring her hands and implore me to follow him and fetch him back; and I had much trouble to persuade her that was useless and hopeless for us at that hour of the night. At last she was won to rise and return to the house; and we both found it a difficult matter to get in where we had got out easily enough; which Mr. Truelocke, I doubt not, would have moralized in his pleasant way into a sort of holy parable. But I have not that gift, and I suppose 'twas the hope in Althea's breast and the fear in mine which had raised our powers for a moment and made a hard thing easy.

When we had recovered a little, and had got safely to my room, Althea recollected herself and told me every word that had passed; and we both agreed that Andrew was running himself into



'Look to your sister, take her in instantly.' — Page 110.

new and strange dangers in pursuance of what he held as a Divine call. I noted it as a new thing in Althea, that she could no longer scoff at this belief of his in the inward heavenly voice that must be obeyed; but this matter was very terrible to us; and we talked of it till daylight, without coming to any conclusion as to what we were best to do about it.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW A STRANGE MESSENGER BROUGHT US NEWS OF ANDREW.

And now we had a time of unceasing disquiet. It was soon noised abroad that the heir to the Grange was missing, and his house and lands left masterless; and there presently appeared first one and then another of the Goldings, far-off kinsmen of Andrew; these persons came to the house to examine it, and talked much with the Standfasts; also they tried to find out what my sister and I knew of Andrew's doings; some of them went to York to talk with Aunt Golding's lawyer; and it was not hard to see that they would have been glad to get certain news of Andrew's death. This made their coming hateful to us; but the house not being our own, we could not shut them out. We did what we could to get news of Andrew; but there was small comfort in the scanty intelligence we could glean, since it all pointed to his having indeed gone up to London, and having preached woe and judgment on his way thither.

And had it not been that we sometimes got comfortable letters from Mr. Truelocke, telling of his quiet untroubled life in the Dale country, I had now been unhappy enough; for we were ever hearing tales of the evil handling of all kinds of Dissenters; even young maidens and little children being pelted, whipped, and chained for the crime of being of Quaker parentage and belief, while hundreds of Nonconformists of that sort and other sorts were thrown into prison and left there. I suppose it was the mad doings of the Fifth Monarchy men, as folks called them, which stirred up such a persecuting spirit; so at least said the people of our village, who now began to come about us again, with some show of former kindness; but they proved very Job's comforters to us, by reason of the frightful stories they loved to retail.

There was one good soul whom I loved well to see, who yet gave me many a heart-quake; it was a Mrs. Ashford, wife to a small farmer near us; a lad of hers had sailed with my Harry, and thus she would often come to talk over the hopes and fears we had in common, and to exchange with me whatever scraps of sea-news we could pick up. So one day, as we sat talking,—

'It may be,' says she, 'we shall see things as terrible here in England, as any that can befall our darlings at sea;' and I asking what she meant, she told me she had learnt from certain poor seamen that the Plague was assuredly on its way to us, having been creeping nearer and nearer for a year and a half.

'A Dutch ship from Argier in Africa,' says she, 'brought it first to Amsterdam, where it grows more and more; and 'tis certain, in another Dutch ship, a great one, all hands died of the Plague, the ship driving ashore and being found full of dead corpses, to the great horror and destruction of the people there; which makes our people tremble, because of our nearness to Holland and our traffic with it.'

'I heard something of this,' I said, 'last summer, but it seemed an idle tale only, that died away of itself.'

'It is no idle tale,' answered she; 'see you not, sweet lady, the infection itself died away somewhat in the cold winter; but now that spring comes on so fast, the sickness and people's fears of it revive together. You will see.'

Well, this news was frightful to me for Harry's sake. I began to tremble lest perchance the *Good Hope* should be visited like that Dutch ship; but I did not breathe such a fear to Mrs. Ashford. And as the spring drew on, and war with the Dutch was in every mouth, we had a new terror; for now if our sailors came safe home, they could scarce escape being impressed for the king's service; so we knew not what to wish for.

The spring being more than ordinarily hot, doubled the apprehensions of the Plague; and some time in April, as I think, news came down that it had broken out indeed in London. 'Twas said it came in a bale of silk, brought from some infected city, and the fear of it increased mightily; and we, remembering Andrew's strange vision, were not less in terror than our neighbours.

About that time I was busy one morning in the front garden, when a gentleman in black came in at the gate, and was making up to the hall door, when, espying me, he stopped, beckoning with his hand, and seeming to want speech with me. He was muffled in a cloak, and his hat pulled over his brows, so I could not tell who he was; yet I went to meet him, and when I was near enough,—

'I think, madam,' says he, in an odd husky voice, 'you have a kinsman who took his way up to town some weeks ago? I bring news of him;' on which I begged he would come in and tell it to my sister also; but he said,—

'There is much sickness in town; I am newly come from it; it were more prudent for me to speak with you here;' on which I ran and fetched Althea out; and the man said, 'I do not pretend, madam, that my news is good news. Your kinsman demeaned himself strangely on his coming up, denouncing wrath and woe against the poor citizens, speaking much evil of both Court and City; I am told his civillest name for one was Sodom, and for the other Gomorrah.'

Here Althea said scornfully, if all tales were true, those names were fit enough; and the stranger replied, that might be, but civil speech was best.

'People took your kinsman's preachings very unkindly,' he continued; 'the more so when the Plague he prophesied of began to show itself; then he was called a sorcerer; and to make a long story short, he was taken up for a pestilent mad Quaker, and clapt into gaol. I looked on him there; and in gaol he lies still, and may lie for me.'

With that he plucked his cloak away from his face, and, lifting his hat, made us a deep, mocking bow, and we saw it was Ralph Lacy; but such a ghastly change I never saw on any man. His face was livid, his eyes, deep sunk in his head, glared like coals of fire; and when he began to laugh, his look was altogether devilish.

'You did not know me, pretty one,' he said to Althea, 'did you? When I had seen Golding laid in gaol, I swore none but I should bring you the joyful news; and I can tell you he is worse lodged than even his great prophet, Fox himself, at whose lodging in Lancaster Castle I looked this year with great pleasure—very smoky, and wet, and foul it is.'

'Wretch!' said Althea; 'do you exult over the sufferings of harmless, peaceable men?'

'Harmless and peaceable, quotha?' said he; 'it was one of these peaceable creatures flung me into the dust like a worm; but the worm turns, you know. I took much pains to requite that kindness, and now I cry quits with Master Andrew.'

'Your wickedness shall return on your own head! I pray God it may!' cries Althea, trembling with indignation.

'Past praying for, madam,' said the reckless wretch, 'for I have the Plague upon me. I stayed too long up in town, out of love to your friend and mine. I shall be a dead corpse to-morrow; and why should not you have the sickness as well as I?'

With that he came towards her, as if to embrace her, when we both shrieked aloud, and turned to fly; and Matthew Standfast, coming suddenly between us with a spade uplifted in his hand, bade the miserable man keep his distance, and asked what he wanted. On which Lacy said wildly,—

'A grave, man—I want nothing but a grave, and any ditch will furnish me that,' with which he went away.

Matthew, good man, was troubled when we told him Lacy's words.

'If the wretched fellow have the sickness indeed,' he said, 'he might die in a ditch for all his own people care;' and that same night he went to Lacy Manor, inquiring after its master.

It proved that, on leaving the Grange, the man went straight home, and up-stairs to bed, saying he was weary, and must not be disturbed for an hour or two; and there he now lay dead. None of

the servants had guessed what ailed him, and they were taken with such a fear they would not stay to see him buried, but fled, and laid that charge on poor, good Mr. Stokes, who discharged it with true Christian courage; after which the Manor was shut up for many a day, till the next heir's covetousness got the better of his fears. This matter caused great terror; but the Plague spread no further in our parish, and so the people forgot it somewhat after a time.

But Althea could not forget Lacy's words about Andrew, nor could I persuade her they were false tales spoken in pure despite; she brooded over them, remembering all the tales we had heard of good men's sufferings in poisonous infected dungeons; and at last she said to me,—

'I wish Lacy had but said in what prison he saw our Andrew; however, it was in London, Lucy? sure he said London?'

'Ay,' said I, 'that's what he said, if you can pin any faith on the raving talk of a plague-stricken man.'

'He spoke truth,' said she; 'I am too sure of it. Now there will not be so many gaols in London town, Lucy, but I can find out where Andrew lies; and if I cannot have him out, I can supply his wants at least.'

'Althea, Althea, you do not dream of going up?' I cried; 'it were sinful madness! By all accounts the sickness increases there from day to day; the poor people die like flies.'

'I care not,' says she; and I found her immoveably set on taking this journey speedily. She was getting together all the money she could, and her jewels too, intending to turn them into money if needful; and she was packing some clothes in very small compass, so as to carry them herself as she journeyed.

'It is not likely,' she said, 'that I shall find companions on such a journey. I must learn to be my own servant.'

But I had soon resolved that one companion she should have, and that should be myself; so, after a few more vain efforts to shake her resolution, I acquainted her with mine; and with incredible trouble I got her to agree to it, for I said at last that the roads were as free to me as to her; if she so disliked my company as she said, she might take the right side of the way and I would take the left. 'But where thou goest,' said I, 'there will I go, Althea.'

'Take heed,' she replied instantly, 'that it be not "Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried."'

'So let it be,' I said, 'if it is Heaven's will; but you go not up alone;' upon which she yielded, saying she had not thought I had so much sturdiness.

I cannot deny I thought it a mad expedition, though I dreamed not of the straits into which we have since been driven. But I had prayed again and again for guidance, and always it grew clearer to me that I must cleave to my sister. So I made haste to get ready for our wild journey; and after Althea's example, I sewed certain moneys and jewels into the clothes I wore, and put a competent sum in my purse. Then came the telling the Standfasts of our intent. They opposed it at first with all their might, and no wonder; then, their anxiety about Andrew making them yield a little, Matthew took his stand on this, that we must have some protector.

'A man-servant you have at least, or you do not stir,' quoth he.

'But you cannot be spared from this place,' we urged; 'and who else is there faithful and bold enough for such a service?'

'Leave me alone for that,' said he.

And the evening before our departure he brought to us a strange attendant indeed, but one who proved most trusty. It was a poor fellow of the village, who had once been in service at Lacy Manor; but the young Squire hated him, and got him turned away in disgrace, after which no man would employ him, and he fell into great wretchedness. But Andrew came across him, and not only relieved his distress, for he was almost dead for hunger, but put him in a way of living on his own land. So, partly for love of Andrew, and partly from true conviction, poor Will Simpson, so he was called, turned to the Quaker way of thinking. I do not know if he was acknowledged as a proved Friend, he had some odd notions of his own. But he showed himself a peaceable, industrious fellow, and he loved Andrew as a dog might love a kind master that had saved it from drowning. Indeed there was something very dog-like about honest Will. Without having any piercing wit, he had a strange sagacity at the service of those he loved; and his dull heavy face sometimes showed a great warmth of affection, making it seem almost noble. When Matthew told him wherefore he was wanted, he was all on fire to go. He left his hut, and work, and woodman's garb, Matthew having got him a plain serving-man's suit, in which he looked still a little uncouth; and thus he came eagerly to us and begged to be taken with us. Then with no escort but this poor fellow, who, however, knew the road well, and was strong and sturdy, we set forth on our way up to London, bidding adieu to none in West Fazeby, as the Standfasts had advised. I believe it was supposed in the village that we were gone to Mr. Truelocke.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW WE WENT UP TO LONDON, AND FOUND NO FRIENDS THERE.

I hoped little from the first plan on which Althea relied for obtaining Andrew's release. Her trust was in Mr. Dacre, since he was a great courtier, and she thought his influence might avail to get one poor Quaker set free.

'I shall not get his help for nothing,' said she; 'that were an idle hope. But I know his expenses to be very great, out of proportion to his means; so if I bring a heavy purse in my hand to interpret between him and me, I am sure of a kind and favourable hearing.' She was almost gay while she dwelt on this plan, and it furnished the most of our talk on the first day or two of our journey.

It was very hot summer weather, a little sultry; yet travelling would have been pleasant enough had our minds been easy, which they could not be. It was hard to go fast enough for Althea, Will having to make her understand it was small wisdom to hurry our horses beyond their strength; then she went sighing out,—

'Oh for a horse with wings! or could one only ride on the speed of fire! It will be a week, I dare swear, before we see St. Paul's,' and she grudged herself time to eat and sleep.

There was nothing very noticeable on the way, but the vast amazement expressed by all who found that we were going up to London. And as we got nearer our journey's end, we began to find that the inn-keepers distrusted us not a little, suspecting us of escaping out of the town, and making only a false pretence of journeying up to it. Will, however, was so plainly a blunt, simple fellow, that his word was taken where ours was doubted.

Now and then we heard news of the war: first there was talk of a great victory at sea over the Dutch, won the third day of June, at which the Court and City were rejoicing mightily, half forgetting their home perils; then came contrary news, how this victory was no victory, but rather a disgrace to us, and that our ships were shamefully commanded, which I believe was the truer tale; so my thoughts flew at once to my Harry and his father. I had writ to Mr. Truelocke about our journey, but there had been no time for an answer; and I fell to musing what those two would think of our wild adventure, and wondering if Harry had been seized for the king's service, like many others; but all was vain conjecture, and I had to resign them and myself up to God's guidance; the safest and most blessed way, as I was fast learning; for since Aunt Golding's death I think a change had come over me; I had learned a true hate of mine own sins, and had found One in whose sufficiency I could trust to save me from them, and to guide me in all things. I will not enlarge on this now, however.

So with hopes and fears, despairing and trusting, the days of travel wore away; and late in a sultry summer evening we came into London. We put up for the night at a decent inn, kept by some people named Bell, which our father had sometimes used when we were with him; the people remembered him, and were civil to us. My poor sister could scarce sleep all that night; and the landlady coming herself to wait on us at breakfast, Althea took occasion to ask her, did she know Mr. John Dacre? and finding she did, she got from her particular information about his house, and the way to it, and the hours when he was to be found there; all which the good woman imparted cheerfully, but could not help pitying our rashness in coming up to town.

'I live a dying life,' she said, 'for terror of the contagion; I would never have run into it;' which words we passed over at that time, but had to call them to mind after.

According to her information, Mr. Dacre rarely stirred from home before noon; so we set off betimes to find him. Will, walking behind us, looked about in amaze at the half empty streets, the many closed shops, and houses uninhabited, and at last, fetching a great sigh, he said,—

'Methinks, mistresses, this whole town looks like a gaol, and the folk go about like condemned prisoners.'

'Ay,' says Althea; 'but there are worse gaols within this gaol, Will. Here, the sun shines and the wind blows on us; not so where your master lies;' and she hastened her steps, which were swift before.

Mr. Dacre's house proved to be a very stately and fair one, towards the west end of the town; it stood in a broad, very quiet street; too quiet, I thought. Althea bade Will knock boldly at the door; 'We will not be too humble,' says she; and he knocked loudly enough, once, twice, thrice; but no

one came to open to us, and our knocking seemed to echo and re-echo strangely through the house.

'Sure,' says Althea, 'all the folks cannot be asleep; 'tis past ten o'clock,' and she knocked once more.

There was a gentleman come out of a neighbouring house, who had looked curiously at us; he now drew near, and, standing a little way off, called out, 'It is little use to knock at that door, ladies—the master is dead a week since, and the house stands empty;' at which Althea turned a deadly pale face to him, saying,—

'Do not mock us—sure, it cannot be so.'

The man, looking compassionately at her, now came up to us and said, 'Nay, my words are too true, madam. Have you any interest in this Mr. Dacre?'

'I am his cousin,' said Althea, 'and I am come up from the North on great occasion, to see my kinsman and claim his help.'

'Alas!' said the gentleman; 'he is past rendering help to any. It was mightily suspected,' said he whisperingly, 'that he died of the Plague; but your great rich folks can smother these matters up. This is certain, that he had secret and hasty burial, and all his family are fled and gone, without so much as locking the door behind them, as it is said; but I think none have been so bold as to try that; men love their lives too well to venture within; nor would I advise you to do it.'

'No, no,' said Althea a little wildly; 'I will not take the Plague and die—not yet; I have work to do;' at which the man smiled pityingly, and added,—

'You would not find Mr. Dacre here now, were he in life—he designed to follow the Court, which is removed to Salisbury for safety; but he lingered about some money matters, which have cost him very dear, as I think;' and bowing to us he walked hastily away.

Well, we knew not what to do now, and so returned to our inn, where we sat the rest of the day in the room we had hired, talking over our few acquaintance in town, but unable to hit on one who would have will and power to help us much. Our good hostess served us again at supper, and asked how we sped in our search for Mr. Dacre; so unthinkingly we told her the whole tale; at which her colour changed and she left the room without saying a word in answer. That night we slept heavily for very trouble; so we were not aware of a great stir there was in the night; for Mrs. Bell, the poor landlady, was taken very ill about midnight, the maids were called up, and a physician sent for; they had some trouble to find one; but when he came he told them plainly that her disorder, which they and she too had feared was the Plague, was nothing but pure terror; our careless words about Mr. Dacre's death having struck such a fear in her as to throw her into a kind of fever.

Will told us this news in the morning, and we were grieved at our foolishness, and wondered at hers; but we had little time for lamenting, as we were setting forth to visit a distant kinswoman of our father's, who, being rich and well reputed, we thought might be able to help us. But here we fared no better,—not that the lady was dead; but she had gone out of town on the first alarm of the sickness, leaving her house locked up and empty, as the neighbours told us. So we went back to our inn yet more cast down; but there we stayed not long, for we were scarce got to our room when the landlord came to us, very angry, and said, had he known we had been visiting an infected house, we had never come into his; and he bade us to pack up and be gone within the hour, that he might have every place purified where we had come. Our horses, he said, might stand in his stable; but we saying we would remove them, he spoke more plainly, and said he should keep them as security for what we owed. 'I will take no money from you,' he said; 'you may have the Plague in your purses for all I know;' and he left us, saying if we went not quickly we should be put out by force.

This brutal usage dismayed me; but Althea said, 'Poor wretch! he is half crazed with fear; that makes mean men cruel; care not for him;' and when we were ready, giving our packages to Will, she led the way out with a determined aspect, having, as I soon found, embraced a strange—nay, a desperate resolution. For Will asking her, 'Which way will ye turn now, mistress? In *this* street no inn will open to us, for sure;' she replied,—

'We will not seek any inn; we will betake ourselves to our cousin's empty house.'

'You mean not Mr. Dacre's?' I cried.

'But I do,' said she. 'We have a right to shelter there; and the door is open.'

I exclaimed against this as a tempting of Providence, persuading her first to try some other house of entertainment; and at last she agreed. Now, whether our great distraction of mind gave us a haggard and sickly aspect, or whether 'twas merely the suspicion and hardness of heart bred in all people by terror, I cannot tell; but no one would take us in, some saying flatly they would receive no lodgers they did not know, and know to be sound. The day wearing fast away in these vain applications, Althea says to me,—

'You see we must try my plan at last. I bid you think scorn, my Lucy, of yielding to such base fears as make folk turn us from their doors.'

'It is not that I fear infection as they do,' said I; 'but I shrink from dwelling in a house not our own, and lying open to any thief.'

'Baby fears, Lucy,' she said, smiling. 'We will do our cousins a better turn than they merit; we will keep their doors fast against thieves, and their household stuff from moth and mould and rust. For the infection, we run as little risk in that house as out of it.' So she bore me down with her will, the more easily since we had no choice but either to lodge in that house or in the open street.

But Will said sturdily, 'Mistresses, you may do as you will; I will neither eat nor sleep in that evil house. There is a scent of death and sin breathing from it; I perceived it as we stood at the door.'

'And will you desert us then, Will?' said Althea. 'Have you come so far, to forsake us now?'

'Who spoke of forsaking?' growled Will. 'I can find some balk, some cobbler's stall, without the house, to sleep on, if you will lodge within. The watch-dog lies not in the house, I trow? But if you must lodge there, enter not openly, nor let it be known you are within; you may be suspected for thieves or worse.'

'Yours is no fool's advice,' said Althea shortly.

So we lingered out the time till nightfall in buying some needful things,—bread and meat and candles,—having to walk far before we found shops open; then, as night thickened, we stole into the desolate house, and groped our way to a room at the back, where we lit our candles and looked about us. 'Twas a richly furnished withdrawing-room, with windows open on a garden.

'There will I sleep,' said Will. 'I had rather have the free sky over me than this roof; so give me but a hunch of bread to sup on, and let me go.'

There was little use in crossing him, so we gave him some meat and bread; but we prayed his help first to make all the doors fast, which he willingly did; then he showed us how to secure the window after him, and so slept out into the night.

Now we looked at one another, and felt desolate and dismayed for a moment. Then I said, 'Let us commend our cause to God, sister; He will hear us;' and we knelt down together and implored the Divine protection; after which we felt at peace, and so took courage to sup on the food we had brought. Then we made fast our door on the inside, and lay down to sleep on the floor, with our mantles for coverlets and our bundles for pillows. I never slept in such rude fashion, nor ever more sweetly and soundly.

Early in the morning there came a tapping at the window that wakened me; so I rose and drew back the curtain, and saw that Will was moving about in the garden. We let him in shortly, and gave him some food, which he carried with him out of doors; then, coming back, he excused his incivility of the night before. 'But I cannot eat nor sleep here,' said he. 'In all other matters I am your servant.'

He had lodged for the night in an empty dog-kennel, which he showed us, close against a side-door that led out to the street.

'There,' said he, 'I can do you better watchman's service than if I lay within; and by that door you may come and go unespied of any gossips.'

Althea smiled, and commended his thoughtfulness. Then she said,—

'You will come with us now, Will? We must examine this house;' so he stepped in, shuddering, and looking round almost with horror.

However rich the room, it was in great disorder; and when we went up-stairs we found matters no better—beds half stript, chests and cabinets left open, floors strewn with things pulled forth in haste and left there. We pitched on one sleeping-room to the back, to use ourselves; and, having satisfied ourselves that no evil-disposed person lay hid in any room, we shut them all up (the keys being left in the locks) except that sleeping-room, the parlour we had first entered, the kitchen, and one great room looking to the front, agreeing to use no other apartments; and to this rule we kept, except when, as I have told, I went a-hunting for means to write this history.

That work of examining the house was terrible to me, especially when we looked into Mr. Dacre's own chamber. There we found a mighty rich bed, with hangings of silk and silver, and all the toilet furniture in silver also; with couches and cushions richly wrought, and certain splendid garments, with a jewelled sword, left flung upon them, as if the owner had just put them off; but all was disordered wildly, as if by the dying struggles of a madman, and the gorgeousness seemed to add to the horror of it. I trembled as I looked at the glimmering mirror and thought of what it might have reflected; our cousin's image seemed to rise up in all his pride and bravery as I last saw him, but with the ghastly face of death; so I hurried out and flung the door to behind us, and Althea turned the key in the lock. After which we avoided passing that way; for the place

was not less dreadful to her than to me; she acknowledged it made her remember what we had heard of the great burying-pit in Aldgate, and the dishonoured corpses that were flung into it, heaps upon heaps.

'He may have gone to that grave from this splendid chamber—it's a hideous mockery,' she said.

CHAPTER X.

HOW WE DWELT IN A HOUSE THAT WAS NOT OUR OWN.

And now Althea began her search after Andrew, with none to help her but poor me and honest Will. Our chief care being not to be seen going out or coming in, she chose to steal forth of the back door early in the mornings; sometimes I with her, sometimes Will, but one of us always staying in the house to watch it, and to open at nightfall to the others. Althea went to such shops as she could find open and bought things, sometimes mere trifles, sometimes food and other necessaries, but always spending much time over it, and both listening to the talk of other folk, and drawing the shop-people into talk herself; when she contrived to work round to the prisons, and the poor souls in them, and how they fared in these bad times. Once or twice she took a boat and went up the river, and then was wondrous affable to the watermen, setting them talking also on the same matters; and thus she did with every one whom she could draw to speak with her, not disdainning even beggars, nor fearing the watchmen who guarded houses supposed to be infected, and therefore shut up. I confess that these last were people I would gladly have shunned, there being something so awful to me in the locked doors (marked with a great red cross, and 'Lord, have mercy on us' writ large upon them) by which the poor fellows sat. But Althea seemed to have said a long good-bye to fear. And with questioning and listening, and piecing things together by little and little, she assured herself that Andrew must be in Newgate, if he lay in any London prison. She had tried to find out by artful inquiries if any man had shown himself in London, announcing a coming judgment, and warning people to avoid it, as Andrew had proposed to do; on which people informed her of several such persons, but their descriptions answered not to our poor friend.

One man had cried up and down the streets, 'Yet forty days, and London shall be destroyed,' after the fashion of the prophet Jonah; and another had run about by day and by night, naked to the waist, and crying, 'Oh! the great and dreadful God!' and no other words; which struck a great terror into all who saw and heard him; and yet a third, who was said to be a Quaker, acted more strangely; but he was known by name to those who told about him. Also in all these tales there was something frantic and unreasonable, not like Andrew, nor like the way he had designed to act.

I think I myself saw one of these strange creatures. It was my turn to be housekeeper, Althea wanting Will's help to carry her purchases home that day. Such a solitary day was very dismal and heart-sinking to me; and had it not been for my plan of writing this history, I know not how I could have borne it. When it grew dusk I ventured to look out at a front window to see if my friends were coming; but what I saw was the light of torches coming up the street, which was the sign of a funeral, it being ordered that people should only bury at night; and presently came by a coffin borne of four, and a great many people following; for it was wonderful how people crowded to funerals at this time, as if desperate of their lives. They stopt suddenly, to my terror, right in front of my window; but it was because of another crowd meeting them, and in its midst a tall man, moving very swiftly, and going straight before him. He was stript to the waist; and I thought at first that the hair of his head was all in a flame of fire, but it was a chafing-dish of burning brimstone that he had set upon his head, and which glared through the darkness. As he met the coffin he made a stand, and looked upon it.

'Yet one more,' he said, in a deep hoarse voice,—'one more has fallen in his sins! but ye do not repent. Woe, woe, woe to this unfaithful city!' and he went on again directly, but continued to cry 'Woe, woe!' as long as I could hear him; the people running after and around him could scarce keep up with his swift pace. Those who were bearing and following the coffin had seemed struck with horror; but now they got into order again; and I heard one near the window bidding them sneeringly never to heed a mad Quaker, while another said aloud, 'I marvel such an evil-boding fool is left at large, when far quieter folks of his sort lie rotting in prison;' words which made me fain to hear more; but the men all moved off, and I had scarce seen their torches go twinkling away into darkness, when I heard the signal at the back door, and hurried joyfully to let in my friends, who had been delayed by meeting the funeral; but they had missed the other strange spectacle.



'I think I myself saw one of these strange creatures.'—Page 140.

As I remember, this was the second Saturday we spent in town; and here I may say that almost every Lord's Day which found us in our dismal abode, we two made our way to some church at a good distance, and there joined in worship.

I never saw churches more crowded, worshippers more devout, ministers more fervent. We understood by what we heard that not a few clergymen were dead of the Plague, and others fled for terror; because of which certain of the silenced ministers were called on to fill those vacant pulpits; and they did so while the Plague lasted, with great zeal and boldness, no man saying them nay. But neither the courage of these men, nor the fervency with which they preached and visited among the sick and dying, could so far recommend them to Will that he would set foot in what he called the steeple-houses; so on the Lord's Day we had to dispense with his attendance, and this troubled me; but on the other hand there was comfort in seeing how my poor sister rejoiced in the ministrings of these faithful men. A great change showed itself in her; she was full of a new tenderness to me, and was most mild and patient with poor Will and his odd ways; and as for him, I believe he would have died for her, or done anything that she desired, except lodging in Mr. Dacre's house, or

worshipping in a church.

Now when Althea had assured herself she must look for Andrew in Newgate and in no other prison, she set herself to get admission there. 'No lock so hard,' she said to me, 'but will go with a golden key.'

So she put money enough in her purse. She took Will with her, clad in a suit fit for a plain country gentleman, for she wished it to be thought he was one who had power to protect her; and, having found out the keeper of Newgate, she bought from him at a great price leave to visit his gloomy wicked kingdom, and to relieve poor creatures lying in it for conscience sake.

Now, had she relieved all who professed that they were such as she sought, she might have spent the wealth of both Indies; for it was shocking how many utter reprobates pressed up to her and to Will, claiming that they were imprisoned for matters of religion; but their brazen countenances, that bore the deep impress of their wickedness, witnessed against them. With great trouble she found out at last a few of the sort she wanted, and then began to ask for Andrew by name; but no one seemed to know aught of him; the keeper too professed ignorance of any such person. But her belief was strong that he lay within those walls, and she went again and again on the same errand.

Now I could never get her leave to go with her to Newgate. She said at first that Will, being a man, was more useful to her than I could be; but afterwards she owned that the prison was so vile and hideous a place she could not endure I should see it.

'There is no need,' she said, 'for more than one of us to behold such monstrous evil. 'Tis a society of fiends, Lucy, a training-school for all vice, and the keeper is worthy of it. I think it is not less than acted blasphemy to throw good men into it; as well send them alive into hell. The Lord look upon it, and require it.'

'Are there any of the Friends shut up there?' I asked.

'There have been hundreds, I am told,' she said; 'even now there are too many, but they die daily of fever and misery;' and she stopped short, presently saying, 'If I find him not, I will not repent of my search. I have fed some starving saints already.' So she continued her visits and her inquiries.

But I began to find it an almost unbearable penance to stay within doors alone in her absence; I prayed and struggled for composure, but could not attain it, and at last I said I must go out sometimes to breathe the air. She warned me of perils awaiting me if I walked abroad by myself, but I got some poor coarse black clothes that I put on, and a hood to hide my face; and I sometimes added to these a cloth tied about my neck, such as I had seen on poor creatures who had sores. It was an artifice, but I hope not a sinful one; for in this disguise, and contriving to behave like a sick languishing person, I was more terrible to disorderly people than they to me, and they kept at a good distance from me. Thus I took many a walk about the streets; but my chief comfort was only to see a variety of dismal objects. The street where we dwelt was quite grass-grown and empty; I do not think there were above two inhabited houses in it, nor would you see above half a dozen people go through it, in all the length of the summer's day. Of the passengers that I met elsewhere, I think two out of every three were poor sickly objects with sores and plasters upon them; and sometimes it was my luck to meet coffins of those dead of the sickness; for now there could be no strict observing of the rule to bury them by night, the number of such funerals increasing at a frightful rate.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THERE CAME NEW GUESTS INTO THE HOUSE.

The last day that I ventured out in this foolhardy manner I had a terrible fright which even now it is distasteful to remember. I was hurrying to get home, being warned by the darkening light that it was drawing near Althea's time to return, and, chancing to look behind me as I turned a corner, I was aware that not many paces from me was a man, tall and sturdy, who seemed to be following me, his eyes being fixed on me; and when I turned it seemed to give him a kind of start, for he looked away, and made as if he would cross to the other side. This alarmed me, and I quickened my pace from a walk almost into a run, resolving meanwhile not to look round again; yet I could not resist the fancy that I heard steps coming after me; and glancing over my shoulder I was aware of some one at no great distance off; on which I dared look no more; and, being now very near home, I darted round to the back entrance; and having got in and made the door fast, I sat down trembling, to get my breath.

I was still much disquieted, when I heard the joyful sound of Althea's signal at the back door; I flew to open to her, my hands trembling so I could hardly withdraw the bolts. But when I got the door open, it was not Althea who stood without, but that very man whom I had tried to escape; he stood with his back to the sky, which was red and glowing, for it was just past sunset; and I saw him to be tall and powerful and roughly clad, so sunburnt that he might have been a Moor; and a long scar that ran from his eyebrow half across his cheek gave a strange fierceness to his look. This was all I could see, his back being to the light, such as it was. I gave a smothered shriek, and would have shut the door on him; but he said,—

'Not so hasty, mistress—look at me again, and you will not turn me away, I think.'

But I still held the door in my hand, and said hastily, 'I can admit no stranger—you should know this house is infected—what do you seek?' at which the man's eyes, which I saw to be blue and bright, began to twinkle, and he said,—

'You will think it odd, madam, but I am come seeking my true love—Lucia Dacre is her name; do you know aught of her?' with which words he smiled, and all his face changed in that smile into the face of my own Harry.

My heart sprang up in sudden rapture; I think, as the play says, it 'leaped to be gone into his bosom,' for there I found myself the next moment, clasped tight in his arms, and holding him tight enough too, while I laughed and sobbed, crying out, 'Are you indeed my Harry? am I so blest beyond all other women? have you come back to me, alive from the dead?'

'You may say indeed, sweetheart, that I am alive from the dead,' he said seriously; 'in a double sense I was dead and am alive again. But my tale must wait for a better time. I am sent before, dear love, to tell you your sister is coming, and not coming alone.'

'Who is coming with her? any one beside Will? have you come to say she hath found Andrew? has she indeed?' I cried.

'Ay,' said Harry, 'he is found; but I fear we may lose him again. Have you here a place, Lucy, here a dying man may lie softly and easily, the little time he has left? If not, make one ready quickly—but no stairs for him, remember. I would help you, dear heart,' he said tenderly, 'were it not that I must keep watch here for their coming.'

I turned my lips to his hand, as I unclasped my arms from him; then I flew to do as he had bidden. I dragged the coverings off our own bed and hastily spread a couch in that room where we commonly sat; I set lights, food, cordials in readiness on the table; then I ran back to the door, half afraid my Harry would have vanished like a dream; but there he was, watching yet; so I took my place beside him, and loaded him with questions about the finding of Andrew. I learned he had a large share in it.

'A poor seaman who loved me,' he said, 'met me this morning when I landed at Woolwich; and he testified such extravagant joy on seeing me that I own I half thought him mad.'

'Then what can you think of me?' I put in; at which Harry said,—

'Nay, Lucy, you were ice compared to this poor fellow. He is one that hath tasted Andrew's bounty, and that not long since; for his wife sickened of the Plague, and our Andrew at his own cost provided a physician for her, and many other comforts; and 'tis owing to that, the man thinks, that she is now sound and well.'

'Where was this?' I said, wondering.

'Here, in London,' said Harry. 'Now close on this woman's recovery came the seizing of Andrew, and 'tis but lately that the poor grateful sailor discovered how his benefactor had been lying long in Newgate, where he was thrown by one Ralph Lacy's procurement.'

'Ah!' I said, 'that wretch! but he has paid for it, Harry. But why could Althea never find Andrew before?'

'I cannot tell by what devilish prompting it was,' he said, 'that Lacy bore Andrew and every one else down, that his true name was not Golding, but Dewsbury—William Dewsbury, as I think; and that he had shifted his name to avoid prosecution, having been once imprisoned already; and what our poor friend said to the contrary being slighted as a lie, his true name has never been given him. So inquiry after him has been crippled; and not by this means only.'

'But if this sailor be so grateful, why did he not come to our poor friend's help?' I said indignantly; but Harry said, sighing,—

'A destitute seaman! why, there be throngs of them and their wives starving in the streets, and cursing the navy officers because they cannot get their own hard wages. And this was why my poor fellow showed such frantic joy on seeing me—'twas for love of Andrew; he hurried his tidings on me, and bade me hasten to the gaol and relieve my friend; himself going there with me, else I had not sped so well.'

Now how Harry sped at the prison I learnt afterwards; for at this point his tale was cut short; but I will put the story here, where it seems fittest.

By great good fortune Althea encountered with Harry and the seaman Ned Giles at the very gate of the prison, and she soon bought leave to visit the prisoner called William Dewsbury, who lay under lock and key in a very filthy cell, and had latterly been denied even bread and water, because his money being spent he could not satisfy his gaoler's demands. They found him lying on a heap of mouldy straw; he was miserably wasted, and to all seeming lifeless; yet they knew him at once for Andrew; and Harry perceived there was life yet in him. Althea, however, seeing him lie as if dead, rose into fiery indignation; she turned to the gaoler, saying, in a terrible voice, —

'See there, murderer! that is your work—the blood of this man shall lie on your soul for ever—it shall drown you in perdition!' at which he cowered and shrank ('and well he might,' said Harry), stammering out 'twas an oversight, a pure accident; and she going on to threaten him with law and vengeance, he asked hurriedly, would not the lady like to remove the poor man, and give him honourable burial? at which Harry whispered her, 'Take his offer quickly; say not a word more of revenge;' and Althea, guessing his meaning, softened her tone a little, and consented to the man's proposal. 'Get me only a coach,' said she, 'and I will have this poor lifeless body to mine own home; and I will not charge you with the murder.'

So they fetched a coach; but the driver, seeing as he thought a dead man brought out and laid in it, flung down the reins and refused to drive them.

'I am well used to drive sick folks,' he said (indeed that was now the chief use of hackney coaches), 'but a corpse I never drove and never will.'

Althea, however, stepped in herself, and bade Will get on the box and take the reins; then whispering to Harry, she told him where to find me, and begged he would prepare me for her coming. 'I shall soon master this knave's scruples,' she said; 'he is but bringing them to market, and I am ready to buy them;' and as I suppose, she paid a heavy price for the use of that coach for an hour, saying her man should drive it to her house and then return it empty to the coachman.

For while Harry and I stood talking at the door, his tale was broken by the rumbling of wheels; and the coach coming lumbering up, we perceived Will to be the driver.

'That is well,' said Harry; 'it will not be known where you dwell.' As he spoke the coach stopped, and Althea put aside the close-drawn curtains. She called Harry to her, and said softly,—

'Now help me to lift him, good friend—but be very gentle; he lives, he speaks, but he is deadly weak;' and with infinite care she and Harry lifted out a poor shrunken figure that seemed light as an infant in their arms; and I leading the way they brought it in and laid it on the couch I had got ready; there Althea, sitting down, drew Andrew's head on to her bosom, supporting him with her arms, and murmuring tender words in his ear. Harry stayed to speak a word to Will before he drove off, and then returning he stood by me a moment and gazed with me at those two; 'twas a sight to chain one's eyes fast, to see Althea's face, still heavenly fair in spite of her anguish, bending over Andrew's, which was livid in colour, all but fleshless, and the eyes deep sunk in their sockets; yet he smiled, a smile full of a strange radiance; and he moved his colourless lips, saying something which Althea bent her head very low to hear; then looking up wildly and seeing Harry,—

'Have you brought a physician?' she cried; 'there is no time to lose—he is dying for lack of help.'

'That he shall not,' said Harry, who was now knelt beside Andrew, and offering a cordial to his lips; 'here is no disease but hunger, dear lady—I have learnt by sharp experience how to minister to that;' and in two hasty words he bade me go and warm some broth, of which luckily I had told him; so I went quickly.

Now when I came back I saw there was more company in the room; for Will had come in, and with him a man and woman; but I did not note them much, for it seemed to me that Andrew was swooning, his eyes being closed. But Harry took the broth from me and began to feed Andrew with it; and at the warm scent of the food he revived a little. It charmed me to see the tender skill which my Harry showed in his ministrings. As I stood looking on, the woman came up to me, and with a sort of simple grace let me know who she was; 'twas Mary, the wife of Ned Giles, the seaman, and the man with her was Giles himself.

'You will forgive us, madam,' she said, 'for thrusting our company on you unbidden; it's for love of this your kinsman we come, Mr. Truelocke having sent us word we could be useful about him.'

'Kay,' I said, 'never ask forgiveness for such goodness; do you know this house is reputed to be infected?' but she said, smiling,—

'Madam, I who was all but dead of the Plague not long since have little fear of it left.'

While she spoke I saw that Harry was urging something on Althea, who was still sitting at Andrew's head; she answered at last, 'As you will. I may not gainsay you;' and yielded up her place to that good woman, who came eagerly to take it when Harry called her.

'Now go and rest awhile till we call you—you have need,' Harry said to us; but Althea, as if she heard him not, stood looking down on Andrew and his nurse.

'Does God forget His own?' she muttered; 'is this the reward of His servants? chains, cruelty, starvation?'

Andrew must have caught her words, for he half raised his head, and his languid eye brightened.

'Dear heart,' he said feebly, 'thou knowest little yet. Thou hast seen my prison, thou didst not see the Heavenly Guest who made it a heaven to me; thou hast seen me lacking bread, thou knowest nought of the angels' food with which He fed me.'

As he said this he sank down again, but Mary Giles caught him in her arms; and Harry said imperiously to Althea and me,—

'Leave him to us; it is best he should not speak; get you to your own rest, you need to renew your strength; so we went meekly enough, Althea saying when we were in our sleeping-room,—

'Harry hath got the trick of command very perfect, that's certain; and I may say, Lucy, I am weary at last of ruling over you and Will; it's not amiss there is one here who has a mind to rule me instead.'

Then we knelt down together and gave thanks for the great mercy of the day; and we implored passionately that the life of Andrew should be given back to us. Althea at the end of our prayer still remained kneeling; then beginning to weep she sobbed out, 'I think, I hope, I can say, "His will be done," but oh, 'tis hard, Lucy!' And she was so torn and shaken with her passion that I thought she would take no rest that night. But in five minutes after our heads touched the pillow we were both sleeping soundly: and we woke not till there came a knocking at our door, very early in the morning, and Will's voice praying us to descend and take some food.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW WE SAILED FOR FRANCE IN THE 'MARIE-ROYALE.'

We found our friends where we had left them; the grey dawn glimmering in at the window showed us Andrew lying in a quiet slumber; and he looked nothing so death-like as the night before. But the others appeared haggard and weary, as well they might; for none of them had slept a wink the night through. Yet joy spoke from the poor wan faces of Mary Giles and her husband. They had helped in the tending of Andrew with wonderful skill and care, and now they were rejoicing in a good hope that he would yet recover.

There was a meal spread, of which they had already partaken; and we were now bidden to sit and eat also, as quickly as we might. It was Harry who gave us these orders, with a stern anxious look, which daunted me a little. When we had eaten,—

'Now leave us with our friend, ladies,' he said, 'and gather all together in readiness to depart; this house shall not hold us another hour;' and Althea hesitating, and saying Andrew was hardly in case to depart, 'That knave gaoler,' he said, 'who had hid Andrew from you so long, had strong reasons for doing it; is there no fear, think you, that he may suspect there was life in the dead man whom we removed? Would you have our practice detected and the prisoner seized again?'

It did not need more to set wings to Althea's feet; so we made haste and gathered up all our belongings, and came down again with our bundles packed and our travelling suits donned, long ere the hour was passed.

Yet for all our haste, we found they had made better speed than we. There stood a coach waiting, into which they had already lifted Andrew; he was muffled in a long cloak that I had flung off the night before. The two Gileses had him in their care, and Will was again acting as driver (I believe 'twas the very coach of the previous night); he was taking Harry's orders as to driving at a very soft pace to the nearest stairs, 'where,' said Harry, 'we will meet you; these ladies will walk with me.'

We saw them drive off; then I made fast the outer door, and Harry took the key from me, and flung it over the wall into the garden.

'Let any find it who list,' said he. 'I thank God we are quit of the hideous place. How you have endured to dwell there day and night passes my comprehension.'

'Why,' said I, 'is it not a glorious rich house?'

'A house of sin and pride and death,' said he, 'I grant you.'

'You are of Will's mind,' says Althea; 'he never would eat or sleep in it.'

'If that be Will's mind,' said he, 'I approve his wisdom. And now, hey for Father Thames and his silver streams, and the sweet salt air of the sea! Here, take my arm, fair lady,' he said to Althea as we went along; 'I have my doubts of your obedience—Lucy I can trust to come with me of free will.' So she took his arm, and said, smiling faintly,—

'At least indulge me so far as to tell us whither we are bound?'

'You heard me say,' he answered, stepping on briskly, 'to the nearest stairs; I have a boat ready there, and we will slip down the river to a ship I wot of that lies near Woolwich. I own,' he went on, 'it's a mighty risk to run, with Andrew in such a feeble case; yet I see no better way.' And in hasty words he told us how poor was our chance of getting clear away from the plague-stricken city by land.

'London is something of a mouse-trap now,' said he, 'or a lion's den, if you like a statelier image; the way in is easy enough, but the way out is more difficult than the steep and thorny path to heaven. Every town and village we should come to would rise against us with hue and cry, and drive us back to the city, to perish there; so cruel are men become through fear of the contagion.'

Althea's pale cheek grew paler as she listened; and she said, 'Alas, my Lucy! into what a snare have I brought you! and all through pride and self-will.'

'Nay, sweet sister,' said I, 'do not miscall your compassion, and the daring of your spirit, which led you here.'

'There was pride and wilfulness in it too,' said she; 'and look what a rebuke Heaven gives me! it is not I that rescue Andrew; it is Harry and poor Giles.'

'Tut, tut!' said Harry; 'do not abuse yourself overmuch. You had found Andrew long since, but for the evil mind of Ralph Lacy, who had bought yon keeper with a mighty bribe, and commanded that Andrew should be kept out of sight, if ever you made inquiry after him.'

This piece of intelligence struck us silent till we got to the stairs, going down which we found a roomy boat awaiting us, in which were already the rest of our little company, except Will; and he appearing before we were well settled in our places, sprang in after us, and said joyfully, as he took an oar,—

'That coachman had fain learnt from me who it was I had carried down to the river; but I can be deaf upon occasion;' from which I gathered that he had been commissioned to restore the coach to its owner.

The sun came up as we began to glide down the stream, and a million little sparkling waves flashed back his reflection as we rowed on; which was the only cheerful part of the scene, I thought; for all our company were grave and silent, and Andrew, though the calmest of us, looked so like death that I could find no pleasure in his peaceful aspect.

And the river itself, which I had formerly seen so gay with all kinds of craft, watermen plying up and down constantly, and great sea-going ships coming and going, and lesser vessels crowding the noble stream, now seemed as desolate as the town that lay on its banks; only as we went on we came to many ships lying at anchor, by two and two; sometimes two or three lines of these ships lay in the breadth of the river, and as we threaded our way between them, men, women, and children came and looked over the sides at us.

I was glad to break the silence that had settled on us, and I asked what was the reason of these long rows of ships being thus moored idly near the shores? on which the good Mary Giles, who had again the office of supporting Andrew, speaking softly, told me how they were the refuge of many hundreds of families, fled out of London, who hoped in this way to escape the contagion.

'I do not know,' she said however, 'that they do always escape as they hope. Many a device did I practise myself to keep myself whole and sound, and some mighty foolish ones; but it pleased the Lord to drive me from all those refuges of lies, and to show me that He only can kill and make alive. To my thinking, a fearless, believing heart is the best charm against the Plague.'

'Ay,' says Harry; 'that is the best charm doubtless. But we shall find it not amiss to keep our dwellings cleaner and sweeter here in England; with faith and courage and cleanliness, we might defy the foul fiend Pestilence. You shall not find that it makes so great ravages, even among the Dutch.' With that he bit his lip, as though a secret had escaped him; however no one but myself noted him; and the others now began to talk more freely; and Mrs. Giles from time to time bestirred herself about nourishment for Andrew, which Harry had been careful to provide; he said a man so nigh dead of hunger must have food often, but in small quantities. So our party grew cheerfuller, ever as the stream grew broader, and we began to breathe the salt breeze that blew inland.

We ventured to question Harry about the ship that would receive us; and he said she was a French merchant-ship, and the captain a great friend of his, a good Protestant, who was willing to take on board any company he should bring.

'I hoped,' said I, 'it might have been the *Good Hope*.'

'Alas for my poor *Good Hope*!' said he; 'she went to pieces in a mighty storm, on the hard-hearted coasts of Africa; and such of my brave fellows as were not drowned were seized for slaves by the barbarous people of Algiers.'

'And you, Harry, what was your lot?' I cried.

'The lot of a slave for many a day,' said he briefly. 'It is thanks to my good friend Captain Maret, who will soon receive us, that I have ever seen my country again.'

I would gladly have asked more, but I saw he was little inclined to talk; and after he had said, 'The ship we are going to board is called the *Marie-Royale*,' he fell again into a silence; but the rest of us continued to keep up some sort of talk, till we got down by Woolwich; and this seemed to help our courage a little,—I mean Althea's and mine, especially when Andrew would say a few words, as he began to do, in a way that showed reviving strength.

Now I had never gone by sea anywhere, and all my sailing had been in wherries on the Thames; so I was not free from some childish fear when we came beside the *Marie-Royale*, and saw her black sides rising high and steep above us; but joy sat on every other face in our little company; and Harry's voice was gay once more as he shouted an answer to Captain Maret, who came and hailed us from above. 'Twas a matter of some difficulty to get Andrew safely hoisted on deck; yet they did it without giving too rude a shock to his enfeebled frame. I confess, when it came to my turn to mount, I shut my eyes for fear, and never opened them till I found Harry's arm about me, and a firm footing under me; and I heard his voice merrily mocking me for a poor little fool, who was ready to swoon at fancied perils, and was reckless of real ones. So then I looked abroad again, and seeing myself encircled with all our company, who were smiling at my terrors, while the dark, kindly face of the captain beamed a welcome on me,—I laughed first, and then wept; and then clasping my hands began to thank and praise God for our good deliverance, as if I were in an ecstasy; but now no one laughed at me, but heads were uncovered, and eyes cast down in thankful prayer also, all around me; the French sailors who had helped us to come aboard showing themselves not less reverent than our handful of English, and indeed appearing to be much moved. Then Andrew, who stood supported by the arms of Ned and Mary Giles, looked smiling at me, and said, in his feeble voice,—

'Thou shamest me much, my sister Lucy; I who was deepest in peril ought to have been foremost in praise;' and Harry replied bluntly,—

'Till you know something of the dangers these ladies have run, you need not be more grateful than they; but your further thanks must be rendered in your cabin, where I long to have you lodged before we get under weigh.'

'That shall be soon,' said the captain. 'We have but stayed for your coming; and see! the wind has shifted since we sighted you, and blows fair for our departing.'

He moved away as he spoke and began giving his orders; while Harry marshalled us down to our

cabins, saying gaily, 'Ay, the merry wind blows from the land now; 'twas against us as we rowed, and I had my fears; but all's well that ends well—the Lord be praised therefor!'

'Tell us whither this kind wind is to blow us?' I asked, and he saying, 'So it is not enough for you to be with me where I go?' I answered boldly, 'By no means;' on which, laughing, he said, 'I will talk with you soon, sweetheart, on that point and many others; but now let us look to Andrew.' So I and my curiosity had to wait awhile; for when Andrew and his faithful nurses were settled below, Harry went on deck; and I sat by Althea, something sick at heart for all my joy, while, with many strange noises of rattling and creaking and trampling overhead, our ship shook out her great wings and spread them for flight. But at last the water slipping past our cabin windows showed we were standing out to sea; and then came Harry and sat down beside us. Andrew had fallen asleep, and Giles and his wife sat watching him a little way off; so there was nothing to break in on Harry's story.

'Now first of all, my Lucy,' said he, 'you must know whither we are bound; 'tis to Calais, for there is Captain Maret due, and over-due, having come to Woolwich only for my sake, and yours, as it hath proved. Then at Calais I have intelligence that we shall find a ship bound for Hull, by which we may go thither, and so home to our father in the Dales.'

'Do you know,' I said, 'I suspected your design to be for Holland?'

'Well,' said he, 'I had such a thought for Andrew. There be friends in that country, with whom he might be sheltered till England should be safe for him once more. But it dislikes me to have dealings with any country at war with mine own—mad and wicked though the war be on our part.'

'All England is gone mad and wicked, I think,' said Althea; 'for my share I care not much if I never see it more.'

'You will change that thought, I hope,' said he. 'But now, my Lucy, I have a request and a petition to you. Captain Maret will bring us at Calais to a clergyman of the English Church whom he knows there; will you consent for the good man to join our hands? 'tis long since our hearts were knit, I trow.'

'What are you asking of her?' said Althea; 'should not such a marriage be celebrated on English ground?'

'So it shall,' said he; 'for we will be wedded on board the ship that shall take us to Hull; and her planks, being those of an English vessel, are reckoned English ground. Now, what says my dear heart?' and as I blushed and stammered, 'I warrant you,' said he, 'Lucy is struck dumb at my presumption in talking of wedlock, my good ship being gone to wreck, and I myself newly loosed from slavery.'

'Harry!' I cried, 'how dare you think so meanly of me? I who have been delighting in the thought of pouring all my little wealth at your feet, and bidding you freight a new ship with it; but perhaps you are too proud—you will refuse it?'

'Nay, I refuse neither it nor thee, my Lucy,' he said, 'the less because I can counterpoise my darling's little purse with something weightier.' And he told us briefly how in his captivity he had risen very high in his Moorish master's favour, having had the good fortune to save the man's life at the risk of his own.

'There were two rascals set on my master to murder him, for certain precious jewels that he wore,' said he; 'and I had the luck to lay them both low, though I got this little remembrance first from the fiercest of them,' touching as he spoke the scar upon his cheek. 'And with that stroke,' he went on, 'I purchased my freedom, and something more; for the Moor conferred on me freely those gems that the thieves had coveted; they are worth a little fortune. After this my only care was to find a ship to bring me home; of which I was almost in despair, when the good Maret came to my rescue, which he effected with great skill and boldness. Nor do I know how I could have got you clear of London, but for his readiness to help me once again.'

This was Harry's history, which he made very dry and short; for he hates to dwell on his own doings or sufferings. I have got from him since many particulars of the story, and I think it were more worthy of pen and ink than this poor tale of our homely joys and sorrows, but he thinks not so; and it is at his bidding I have written all this last part, telling how he brought us safely out of London.

CONCLUSION.

HOW LUCIA DWELLS IN ENGLAND, AND ALTHEA OTHERWISE.

There is little more to write now. I did not care to cross Harry's wish in the matter of our wedding, to which both the good Mary Giles and Althea herself urged me to consent; only I had always hoped that my father Truelocke himself should join our hands; and when I whispered this to Harry, he said, 'If you cannot be content without it, sweetheart, my father shall marry us over again when we get to Dent-dale. But I will not go back to England till I can call you wife.'

So my last defence fell; and wedded we were on board the *Diamond*, a good English ship that we found lying at Calais, according to Harry's intelligence. I did not forget that promise of his, and in due time I held him to it; but before I wind up mine own story I will relate that of my sister; for our lives, that have run so long in one channel, are divided now, since Althea sailed not with us to England; and I will show the reason presently.

That imagination which Harry had once entertained of Andrew's passing into Holland and being safe there as an exile proved to be no impossible device, in spite of the war between the English and the Dutch. For while we still lay at Calais in the *Marie-Royale* (I must ever admire her captain's courage in taking us poor fugitives on board, even though Harry was warrant for our soundness), there came letters from certain Friends called Derricks, of the Dutch nation. They had heard of Andrew's strange escape from prison, I wot not by what means; for the Friends have their own ways of learning news of one another. These good people willed him to go make his home under their roof in Amsterdam; and he was very fain to seek that shelter, being exceedingly weary in spirit, as one half spent with toil and grief; only two things held him back. The one was his love for our dear and cruel country England, which made him shrink from dwelling in a land at enmity with her; and the other was my sister. Now the first scruple Harry overcame thus.

'You needs must dwell in some foreign land,' he said, 'for England is altogether unsafe for you. Should you choose France, as Captain Maret would have you, you choose a land chiefly Papist, and now full of oppression; and my life on it, there will be war between France and England this very winter,' a saying which proved too true. 'So the balance must dip in favour of Holland, a Protestant country, where you shall live under just laws and among faithful friends who believe as you do. Is not this worth weighing, brother?' and Andrew said, 'It is,' but yet he hesitated; and I needed not the sight of his questioning look at Althea, nor of her dropt eyelids and whitening cheek, to guess the reason of his hesitation.

The next morning after we had this talk, Harry, Althea, and I were sat idly on deck, basking in the sunshine, and drinking the sweet air, while we watched the sailors at work; when we saw Andrew come feebly towards us, at which we sprang up surprised, for he had not heretofore risen so early, because of his great weakness. Althea would have had him rest on the cushions from which we had risen, but saying, 'I would rather stand awhile,' he leaned on Harry's shoulder for support; and indeed he looked deathly when his white and wasted face was seen beside Harry's countenance, all bronzed with sun and wind, and glowing with health and life.

'Althea Dacre,' he said, looking steadily at her, 'I have sought all night long for a light on the path I must now take; and a word is ever in my ears, "Speak to the maiden thou lovest, her word shall lead thee!" Thou knowest I were loth to part from thee, who hast sought me and spent thyself for me—and more loth to think that we are parted in spirit. Yet if thy heart be not as my heart towards God, we must be parted now and ever. I implore thee, speak the perfect truth to me, and do not colour or change it.'

'And I will speak truth,' she said proudly, 'as if I stood before an angel of God; and it shall not grieve you. Andrew Golding, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The Church that I dreamed of, the Church I would have died for, was not a Church stained with innocent blood. I will cast in my lot, now and for ever, with the only Christian people that have never persecuted another—the only one, I verily believe, that follow whithersoever the Master leads.'

At this Andrew's pallid face glowed as if a clear flame shone through it; he stretched out his hands to Althea, and she gave him both hers, continuing to say,—

'And what is my native land to me? it is filled with violence and madness; I fear 'tis accursed of God; I am willing to find my fatherland wherever you find a home.'

She turned with a defying look towards us; at which Harry began to laugh, and said, 'How about the rose I had one night from Mistress Althea Dacre? it is a rose yet—dry and faded truly; but it has not turned into a nettle.'

'Be generous,' she said, blushing; 'do not remind me of that; I spoke of it in the days of my folly. I have been taught the plague of my own heart since, by many a sharp lesson.'

'Well,' said Harry, 'I may truly say the same of myself. It hath pleased God,' he said reverently, 'to bring me to Himself through suffering. I trusted overmuch to my own heart; and not till I was stript of all, a beggar and a slave, did I learn mine own vileness and weakness, and Christ's all-sufficiency. I thank Him for the teaching. And I think my Lucy hath gone through the same school; is it not so, sweetheart?' and I murmured an assent.

'Not one of you,' said Andrew, 'has been so poor a pupil at that learning as I; but I think my many stripes have surely beaten it into my hard heart at last, and that I have mastered my task once and for ever.'

'Then,' quoth Harry, 'we are all on one footing so far, and we may thank Heaven for it. But I cannot fall in with you in your condemning of other Churches, and the Church of England chiefly. She is not disowned of God, not quite gone astray from Him; there is in her, I must think, a seed of life and holiness.'

'Your father went out from her notwithstanding,' says Althea; 'and in my mind he did well, though I was fool enough to condemn him at the time.'

'With your leave,' says Harry, 'I think he was driven out, because of those nice and subtle points of doctrine, that our rulers cruelly enforced, and he could not honestly assent to. But I have heard him say, 'tis his firm persuasion that out of this misgoverned English Church there shall yet rise great good, and marvellous blessings, to the land and the world. And in that hope I shall cleave to it with all its faults; and so I trust will my wife;' to which I had nothing to say but blushing. Andrew, however, was troubled.

'I fear thou art in perilous error, kind and good Harry,' said he. 'But let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.'

'That am I,' said Althea promptly, on which he smiled again; and the two falling into talk about their own concerns, we charitably left them to it; for now it was well understood among us that they would wed at the earliest opportunity.

It was a pretty sight to see the new humility they practised towards each other. Andrew, being now fully acquainted with my sister's efforts on his behalf, seemed to look on her as a protecting angel; but she, regarding him as a saint and a martyr, knew not how to show enough reverence to him. Also her high courage failed her sometimes, and she would cling to the good Mary Giles like a timid child to its mother; Mary on her part showing the same tenderness for her that her husband displayed to Andrew. These good people, with Will, kept them company when they departed for Amsterdam, which thing was a marvellous comfort to Harry and me; and shortly we had news how the lovers were married, after the Quaker fashion, and were in a happy way to be settled in that city. They dwell there still. The good honest Standfasts have power from Andrew to manage his lands for him, which they do faithfully; and the moneys due to him therefrom being privily conveyed to him, maintain him and his wife in comfort, nor them alone, but many poor and pious souls who are their pensioners.

And now, our companions being gone, it might have been thought that I should feel a great lack of them, especially when the *Diamond* loosed from port and bore us away with her. But I could feel nothing save joy and gratitude, more especially when I thought of the heavy and dreadful summer that lay behind me; and I was possessed with a great longing to see my father Truelocke once more. Harry had got word conveyed to him of his safety, and of our approaching journey; and sure I am his thoughts flew to meet our thoughts on the way, as we drew nearer and nearer. But I want words to express the tenderness of our meeting together, when at last my Harry and I beheld that venerable face again. There are some joys that cannot be told.

We have made our home with him in Dent-dale; for there Harry hath bought a little farm, with a pretty odd farmhouse belonging thereto; and our father lives with us, well content, and in great peace. For no squabbings about ecclesiastical matters ever trouble the quiet of our sweet mountain solitude. There is a little lonely church in the Dale, where a good simple-hearted pastor ministers; and there can we worship in a homely and hearty fashion; nor does the pastor take it ill that Mr. Truelocke keeps aloof from the prayers, but respects his scruples, and reveres his character. For proof thereof, I did not cease urging on Harry his careless promise, that our union should have our father's blessing on it; and the good pastor falling in with my whim, prevailed on Mr. Truelocke to remarry us very privately in the little church I spoke of, he himself assisting. 'Twas a foolish fancy, I wot, but I was not easy till I had it gratified. And it is now my constant hope that Harry will never put to sea again, but will be content to plough the kindly earth and gather in her fruits, instead of furlowing the barren cruel waves; sure he has had enough of strange adventures. Yet I fear him sometimes, when little work is stirring; then he is so restless that even in his dreams he will talk of seafaring; I think, however, he will wander no more, so long as our father lives.

We get letters from Althea and her husband, at rare intervals indeed; but then they are long and ample. And it is a marvel how stiffly Althea now stands for all the points of the Quaker doctrine, which formerly she so abhorred and contemned.

Not many days since there reached me a long letter from her, in which she told me indeed a great deal of news, and also expressed a wonderful sisterly affection; but the burden of it was her disquietude because of my religious errors. She was very earnest with me upon the sin and danger of conforming to the world, in dress, and speech, and deportment.

There were things in this letter which really troubled me, so I carried it to Mr. Truelocke; and when he had read it, I asked his opinion, whether Christian folk were bound to observe such strictness as Althea now advocates and practises? at which, softly smiling, he said,—

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." I think thou art not far from exemplifying that pure religion in thine own life, daughter; so I trust does thy sister; but I think her not more free from world-spots than thee, because she perchance goes clad in grey, and thou in scarlet;' for I had a new red cloak and hood upon me. 'This,' he said, touching the cloak lightly, 'is no stain of scarlet sin, 'tis honest dye-stuff, Lucy.'

'It might make me vain and proud to go gaily, might it not?' I said.

'When it has that effect, child, renounce it as a snare,' he replied. 'I think thou art not over gay as yet, for a young wife, with a true-love husband to please.'

'But besides these things,' I said, 'there are others more serious. See how my sister cries out against all set forms of worship, even to the singing of hymns; and how she accounts even the outward visible forms of the two great sacraments as having something of the nature of an idol that we sinfully adore. All should be spiritual and inward, according to her, and to other Friends; and I do not myself understand how that can be.'

"'Tis a great truth that they uphold,' said he musingly, 'yet I cannot see that it includes all truth. For my own share, I still hold fast to my opinions; they commend themselves to my reason as strongly as ever. I should lie, did I deny them. And yet from my very heart I agree with the Friends in prizing the spirit above the letter. And I hope, my daughter,' he went on, while a smile trembled on his lips, 'that a day will yet dawn when all Christian men shall agree so heartily as touching the deep and vital truths of their faith, that they may be content to differ as to the visible ceremonial garment that their faith may wear. But that will not be in my day, Lucy, nor, I fear much, in thine. Let us hope and pray for its coming; and let us rejoice meanwhile and give thanks for our safety here from the strife of tongues, for the peace and rest we are allowed to share in this corner of the earth; so far are we happy above many.'

And I am only too glad to obey his word, and to fare like a bird of the air that is fed by God's daily bounty, without care for the morrow. Nor will I trouble myself any more about this nice point of doctrine and that, laying on myself a burden that God never gave me. Has He not given me His own peace; and with it more of earthly bliss than ever my heart dared hope for? And were I even less happy in my lot, I ought all my life to praise Him for His hand over us for good, while we dwelt in that City of the Plague. I have heard with infinite satisfaction, how, since this cold winter weather came on, the sickness is mightily abated, and men hope it is passing away. But it hath swept off, say they, not less than a hundred thousand souls in one fatal year; and what were we, that we should escape? It is all of the Lord's goodness, and His pity to our rashness.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ANDREW GOLDING: A TALE OF THE GREAT
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