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STANDARD NOVELS.

Nº LXXIX.

"No kind of literature is so generally attractive as Fiction. Pictures of life and manners, and Stories of adventure, are more eagerly received by the many than graver productions, however important these latter may be. Apuleius is better remembered by his fable of Cupid and Psyche than by his abstruser Platonic writings; and the Decameron of BOCCACCIO has outlived the Latin Treatises, and other learned works of that author."

THE BUCCANEER.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET:

BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
J. CUMMING, DUBLIN.

1840.

London:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE.
New-Street-Square.



THE BUCCANEER.
***The Protector instantly exclaimed "Guards! what ho!
without there!" Five or six rushed into the room and
laid hands upon Robin.***

London. Published by Richard Bentley. 1840.

THE BUCCANEER,

A Tale

BY MRS. S. C. HALL.



Kneeling on a high-backed and curiously carved chair, which he leaned over pulpit-fashion, was seen the lean, lanky figure of Fleetwood.

LONDON,
RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
CLIMMING DUBLIN, BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH,
1840.

Kneeling on a high-backed and curiously carved chair, which he leaned over pulpit-fashion, was seen the lean, lanky figure of [Fleetwood](#).

THE
BUCCANEER.
A TALE.
BY
MRS. S. C. HALL.

Stay! methinks I see
A person in yond cave. Who should that
bee?
I know her ensignes now—'tis Chivalrie
Possess'd with sleepe, dead as a

lethargie;
If any charme will wake her, 'tis the name
Of our Meliadus! I'll use his Fame.

BEN JONSON.

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET:
BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
J. CUMMING, DUBLIN.
1840.

THE BUCCANEER.

[1]

CHAPTER I.

With roomy decks, her guns of mighty
strength,
Whose low-laid mouths each mounting
billow laves,
Deep in her draught, and warlike in her
length,
She seems a sea wasp flying on the waves.

DRYDEN.

It was between the hours of ten and twelve on a fine night of February, in the year sixteen hundred and fifty-six, that three men moored a light skiff in a small bay, overshadowed by the heavy and sombre rocks that distinguish the Isle of Shepey from other parts along the coast of Kent, the white cliffs of which present an aspect at once so cheerful and so peculiar to the shores of Britain. The quiet sea seemed, in the murky light, like a dense and motionless mass, save when the gathering clouds passed from the brow of the waning moon, and permitted its beams to repose in silver lines on its undulating bosom.

It was difficult to account for the motive that could have induced any mariner to land upon so unpropitious a spot, hemmed in as it was on every side, and apparently affording no outlet but that by which they had entered—the trackless and illimitable ocean. Without a moment's deliberation, however, the steersman, who had guided his boat into the creek, sprang lightly to the shore: another followed; while the third, folding himself in the capacious cloak his leader had thrown off, resumed his place, as if resolved to take his rest, at least for a time.

"Little doubt of our having foul weather, master," observed the younger of the two, in a half querulous, half positive tone, as standing on a huge bank of sea-weed, he regarded first the heavens, and then the earth, with the scrutinising gaze of one accustomed to pry into their mysteries. His companion made no answer, but commenced unrolling a rich silk scarf, that had enveloped his throat, and twisting it into loose folds, passed it several times around his waist—having previously withdrawn from a wide leathern belt that intervened between his jacket and trousers a brace of curiously-fashioned pistols, which he now handed to the young sailor, while he elevated the hilt of his dagger, so that, without removing or disturbing the silken sash, he could use it in an instant. Having fully ascertained this point, by drawing the weapon more than once from its sheath, he again deposited the pistols in his belt, and buttoned his vest nearly to the throat; then drew the ends of his sash still more tightly, and placing a hand on either side, turned towards the cliffs, measuring their altitude with an eye, which, though deficient in dignity, was acute, and peculiarly fierce in expression.

[2]

The seaman, for such was his calling, was about five feet eight or nine inches in height. His hair, as it appeared from beneath a cap singularly at variance with the fashion of the time, curled darkly round a face, the marked features of which were sufficiently prominent, even in that uncertain light, to denote a person of no ordinary mind or character. His figure was firm and well-proportioned, and, though he might have numbered fifty years, it had lost neither strength nor elasticity. His whole bearing was that of a man whom nothing could have turned from a cherished purpose, were it for good or evil: though his eye was, as we have described it, fierce and acute, it was also restless and impatient as the waves upon which he had toiled from his earliest years.

Again he surveyed the cliff, and, stepping close to its base, applied the point of a boat-spear to

remove the sea-weed that spring and high tides had heaped against it; he then summoned the youth to his assistance: after a few moments' search, the lad exclaimed,—

"Here it is, master—here is one—here another—but, my eyes! are we to trust our necks to such footing as this? I'd rather mount the top-gallant of the good ship Providence in the fiercest Norwester that ever blow'd, than follow such a lubberly tack."

"Then go back to the boat, sir," replied the elder, as he began, with cautious yet steady daring, to ascend—a course attended with evident danger, "Go back to the boat, sir—and, here, Jeromio! you have not been taught your duty on board the Providence, and, I presume, have no scruples, like our friend Oba Springall. Jeromio! I say, hither and up with me!" [3]

"I am ready, sir," replied the youth, whose momentary dread had been dispelled by this attempt to promote a rival to the post of honour; "I am ready, sir:" muttering, however, soon afterwards to himself, as the difficulties of the way increased, "He thinks no more of his life than if he were a sprat or a spawn." No other word was breathed by either of the adventurers, as they threaded the giddy path, until about midway, when the elder paused and exclaimed, "A-hoy there, boy! there are two steps wanting; you had better indeed go back. To me, the track has been long familiar; not so to you."

The youth thought of his master's taunt, and Jeromio, and resolved to take his chance. "Ay, ay, sir, no danger when I follow you." But the peril was, in truth, appalling, though its duration was brief. Below, the sea that was now rapidly covering the small creek, rudely agitated and opposed by a rising breeze, dashed and foamed against the rocks. To fall from such a height was inevitable destruction. There was scarcely sufficient light to mark the inequality of the ascending cliffs; and a spectator, gazing on the scene, must have imagined that those who clung to such a spot were supported by supernatural agency. The Skipper, nothing daunted, struck the spear, that had served as a climbing-stick, firmly into the surface of mingled clay and stone, and then, by a violent effort, flung himself upwards, catching with his left hand at a slight projection that was hardly visible; thus, hanging between earth and heaven, he coolly disengaged the staff, and placed it under the extended arm, so as to form another prop; and feeling, as it were, his way, he burrowed with his foot a resting in the cliff, from which he sprang on a narrow ledge, and was in safety. He then turned to look for his young companion, to whom he extended the boat-spear that had been of such service. Animated by his master's success and example, Springall's self-possession was confirmed; and both soon stood on the brow of the precipice.

"Sharp sailing that, boy," observed the elder, as the youth panted at his side. [4]

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Springall, wiping his face with the sleeve of his jacket. "Take a drop, master," he continued, drawing a tin bottle from his bosom, "'twill warm ye after such a cursed cruise."

The Skipper nodded as he accepted the flask, "I hope you are as well armed on all points as on this; but don't take in too great a reef, or it will make you a heavy sailor before your time: drop anchor now, and keep watch here till further orders."

"Keep watch here, sir!" said Springall, in a mournful tone. "And did ye bring me ashore, and up that devil's rope-ladder, to leave me to watch here?"

The Captain looked upon him angrily for a moment. "I am rightly served for taking man or boy out of the canting hulks that lag on the water. Did ye ever chance to hear such a sound on board the ship Providence as 'Silence, and obey orders?' Let not your walk, youngster, extend beyond that point, from which, at daybreak, you can catch a view of the court tree, where, if ancient habits are not all put off, there will be revelries ere long: the old church at Minster will be also within your sight, while the sea between us and the Essex coast, and for miles along the Northern ocean, can scarcely bear a sail that your young eyes will not distinguish. Watch as if your life—as if a thousand lives hung upon the caution of a moment; and remember, while the blue light revolves, which you now see in the vessel's bow, all things abroad go on well. You also know the pass-word for our friends, and the reception for our enemies. If you should be at all afraid, three loud notes on your whistle will summon Jeromio, and a single flash of your pistol will bring the long-boat off, and into the creek in five minutes. You can then tumble down the devil's rope-ladder, as you call it, and send the less timid Italian to keep watch till my return—you understand me." So saying he strode onwards, leaving the youth, who had not yet passed eighteen summers, to his discontented solitude and ill-temper.

"Understand you! I wonder who does, ever did, or ever will; perched up here like a sea-mew, and not having touched land for five weeks! 'Beyond that point!' I'll be even with him, for I wo'n't walk to that point: I'll just stay in the one spot." With this resolution, he flung himself upon a bank of early wild thyme, that filled the air with its refreshing odour. Long after his master was out of sight, he continued pulling up tufts of the perfumed herb, and flinging them over the cliff. [5]

"Now, by my faith," he mentally exclaimed, "I have a mind to pelt that Jeromio with some of these clay lumps: he is enjoying a sound nap down there, like an overgrown seal, as he is; and I am everlastingly taunted with Jeromio! Jeromio! Jeromio! at every hand's turn. Here goes, to rouse his slumbers." He drew himself gradually forward, and raised his hand to fling a fragment of stone at his fellow-seaman: the arm was seized in its uplifted position, by a figure enveloped in a dark cloak, that, muffled closely round the face, and surmounted by a slouched hat, worn at the time by both Cavalier and Roundhead, effectually concealed the person from recognition. He held the youth in so iron a grasp, that motion was almost impossible; and while the moon came forth

and shone upon them in all her majesty, the two who contended beneath her light might have been aptly compared, in their strength and weakness, to the mighty eagle overcoming the feeble leveret.

The stranger was the first to speak, as motioning with his disengaged hand towards the revolving light that hung in the vessel's bow, he inquired,—

"What colours does that ship carry?"

"Her master's, I suppose."

"And who is her master?"

"The man she belongs to."

"She's a free-trader then?"

"The sea is as free to a free ship, as the land to a free man, I take it."

"Reptile! dare you barter words with me?—Your commander's name?"

The boy made no answer.

"Dost hear me? Your commander's name?" and as the question was repeated, the mailed glove of the interrogator pressed painfully into Springall's flesh, without, however, eliciting a reply.

"He has a name, I suppose?"

"That you, or any cowardly night-walker, would as soon not hear; for it is the name of a brave man," replied the youth at last, struggling violently, but ineffectually, to reach the whistle that was suspended round his neck. [6]

"Fool!" exclaimed the stranger, "dost bandy strength as well as words? Learn that in an instant I could drop thee into the rolling ocean, like the egg of the unwise bird." He raised the youth from the earth, and held him over the precipice, whose base was now buried in the wild waste of waters, that foamed and howled, as if demanding from the unyielding rock a tribute or a sacrifice.

"Tell me thy master's name."

The heroic boy, though with certain death before him, made no reply. The man held him for about the space of a minute and a half in the same position: at first he struggled fiercely and silently, as a young wolf caught in the hunter's toils; yet fear gradually palsied the body of the unconquered mind, and his efforts became so feeble, that the stranger placed him on his feet, saying,—

"I wish not to hurt thee, child!" adding, in a low and broken voice, "Would that the Lord had given unto me sons endowed with the same spirit! Wilt tell me thy own name?"

"No! If you are a friend, you know our pass-word; if a foe, you shall not know it from me. You can go down the cliff, and ask our commander's name from yon sleepy Orson; his tongue goes fast enough at all seasons."

The stranger entirely withdrew his hold from Springall, while he moved towards the summit of the rock. Quick as lightning, the whistle was applied to the youth's mouth, and three rapid, distinct notes cut through the night air, and were echoed by the surrounding caverns.

"I thank thee, boy," said the mysterious being, calmly; "that tells of Hugh Dalton and the Fire-fly."

And he disappeared so instantaneously from the spot, that Springall rubbed first his eyes, and then his arm, to be assured whether the events of the last few minutes were not the effects of a distempered imagination. He had, however, more certain proof of its reality: for, upon peering closely through the darkness into the thick wood that skirted the east, he distinctly noted the glitter of steel in two or three points at the same moment; and apprehensive that their landing must have been witnessed by more than one person—the hostile intentions of whom he could scarcely doubt—he examined the priming of his pistols, called to Jeromio to look out, for that danger was at hand, and resumed his watch, fearful, not for his own safety, but for that of his absent commander. [7]

In the mean time, the Skipper, who was known in the Isle of Shepey, and upon other parts of the coast, by the name of Hugh Dalton, proceeded uninterruptedly on his way, up and down the small luxuriant hills, and along the fair valleys of as fertile and beautiful a district as any of which our England can boast, until a sudden turn brought him close upon a dwelling of large proportions and disjointed architecture, that evidently belonged to two distinct eras. The portion of the house fronting the place on which he stood was built of red brick, and regularly elevated to three stories in height; the windows were long and narrow; and the entire of that division was in strict accordance with the taste of the times, as patronised and adopted by the rulers of the Commonwealth. Behind, rose several square turrets, and straggling buildings, the carved and many-paned windows of which were of very remote date, and evidently formed from the relics of some monastery or religious house. Here and there, the fancy or interest of the owner had induced him to remodel the structure; and an ill-designed and ungraceful mixture of the modern with the ancient gave to the whole somewhat of a grotesque appearance, that was heightened by the noble trees, which had once towered in majesty and beauty, being in many places lopped and

docked, as if even the exuberance of nature was a crime in the eyes of the present lord of the mansion.

"Sir Robert," muttered Dalton, "may well change the name of his dwelling from Cecil Abbey to Cecil Place. Why, the very trees are manufactured into Roundheads. But there is something more than ordinary a-foot, for the lights are floating through the house as if it were haunted. The sooner I make harbour, the better."

He paced rapidly forward, and stood before a small building that was then called a porter's lodge, but which had formerly been designated the Abbey Gate, and which, perhaps in consideration of its simple, but singular, beauty, had been spared all modern alteration. The ivy that clustered and climbed to its loftiest pinnacles added a wild and peculiar interest to this remnant of ancient architecture. It contained a high carriage archway, and a lateral passage beneath it, both decorated with numerous ornamental mouldings and columns, flanked at the angles by octagonal turrets of surpassing elegance. An apartment over the arch, which, during the reign of monastic power, had been used as a small oratory, for the celebration of early mass to the servants and labourers of the convent, was now appropriated to the accommodation of the porter and his family. [8]

The Skipper applied his hand to the bell, and rang long and loudly. For some time no answer was returned. Again he rang, and after much delay, an old man was seen approaching from the house, bearing a torch, which he carefully shaded from the night wind.

"My good friend," inquired the sailor in no gentle tone, "is it Sir Robert's wish that those who come on business should be thus kept waiting?"

"You know little of the affliction with which it has pleased the Lord to visit Sir Robert, or you would not have rung so loudly: our good lady is dying!" and the old man's voice faltered as he spoke the tidings.

"Indeed!" was the only reply of Dalton, as he passed under the archway; but the word was spoken in a tone that evinced strong feeling. The porter requested him to walk into the lodge.

"The place is in confusion; and as to seeing my master, it is a clear impossibility; he has not left our lady's bedside these three days, and the doctor says she will be gathered to her kindred before morning."

"He will leave even her to attend to me; and therefore, my friend, on your own head be the responsibility if you fail to deliver to him this token. I tell you," added Dalton, "death could hardly keep him from me!"

The porter took the offered signet in silence, and only shook his head in reply, as they passed together towards the house.

"You can tell me, I suppose, if Master Roland is still with his Highness's army?"

"Alack and well-a-day! God is just and merciful; but, I take it, the death of that noble boy has gone nigher to break my lady's heart than any other sorrow: the flesh will war against the spirit. Had he died in honourable combat at Marston or at Naseby, when first it was given him to raise his arm in the Lord's cause!—but to fall in a drunken frolic, not befitting a holy Christian to engage in—it was far more than my poor lady could bear." [9]

"Oliver promised to be a fine fellow."

"Do not talk of him, do not talk of him, I entreat you," replied the domestic, placing his hand on his face to conceal his emotion; "he was, indeed, my heart's darling. Long before Sir Robert succeeded to his brother's property, and when we lived with my lady's father, I was the old gentleman's huntsman, and that dear child was ever at my heels. The Lord be praised! the Lord be praised! but I little thought the blue waves would be his bier before he had seen his twentieth year. They are all gone, sir: five such boys!—the girl, the lamb of the flock, only left. You do not know her, do ye?" inquired the old man, peering with much curiosity into the Skipper's face, as if recognising it as one he had seen in former days.

The sailor made no answer.

They had now entered a small postern-door, which led to the hall by a narrow passage; and the porter proceeded until they stood in one of those vaulted entrances that usually convey an idea of the wealth and power of the possessor.

"You can sit here till I return," observed the guide, again casting an inquiring look upon the form and features of the guest.

"I sit in no man's hall," was the stern reply.

The porter withdrew, and the seaman, folding his arms, paced up and down the paved vestibule, which showed evident tokens of the confusion that sickness and death never fail to create. He paused occasionally before the huge and gaping chimney, and extended his sinewy hands over the flickering embers of the expiring fire: the lurid glare of the departing flames only rendered the darkness of the farthest portion of the hall more deep and fearful. The clock chimed eleven: it was, as ever, the voice of Time giving warning of eternity!

A light gleamed at the most distant end of the apartment, and a slight but graceful girl

approached the stranger. She was habited in a close vest of grey cloth: her head covered with a linen cap, devoid of any ornament; from under the plain border of which, a stream of hair appeared, tightly drawn across a forehead of beautiful colour and proportions.

[10]

"Will you please to follow, sir, to my master's study?"

Dalton turned suddenly round; the entire expression of his countenance softened, and his firm-set lips opened, as if a word laboured to come forth, and was retained only by an effort.

"Will you not follow, good sir?" repeated the girl, anxiously but mildly. "My master is ill at ease, and wishes to return to my lady's room: it may be——"

The sentence remained unfinished, and tears streamed afresh down cheeks already swollen with weeping.

"Your name, girl?" inquired the stranger, eagerly.

"Barbara Iverk," she replied, evidently astonished at the question. He seized her arm, and, while gazing earnestly in her face, murmured in a tone of positive tenderness,—

"Are you happy?"

"I praise the Lord for his goodness! ever since I have been here, I have been most happy; but my dear lady, who was so kind to me——" Again her tears returned.

"You do not know me?—But you could not." Hugh Dalton gradually relaxed his hold, and pulled from his bosom a purse heavy with Spanish pieces—he presented it to the girl, but she drew back her hand and shook her head.

"Take it, child, and buy thee a riding-hood, or a farthingale, or some such trumpery, which thy vain sex delight in."

"I lack nothing, good sir, I thank ye; and, as to the coined silver, it is only a tempter to the destruction of body and soul."

"As it may be used—as it may be used," repeated the sailor quickly; "one so young would not abuse it."

"Wisdom might be needed in the expenditure; and I have heard that want of knowledge is the forerunner of sin. Besides, I ask your pardon, good sir, but strangers do not give to strangers, unless for charity; and I lack nothing."

She dropped so modest a courtesy, and looked so perfectly and purely innocent, that moisture, as unusual as it might be unwelcome, dimmed the eyes of the stern man of ocean; and as he replaced the dollars, he muttered something that sounded like, "I thank God she is uncontaminated!" He then followed the gentle girl through many passages, and up and down more than one flight of stairs: they both at length stopped before a door that was thickly plated with iron.

"You need not wait," said Dalton, laying his hand on the latch. Barbara paused a moment, to look on the wild being, so different from the staid persons she was in the daily habit of seeing at the hall; and then her light, even step, faded on the sailor's ear.

[11]

Sir Robert Cecil was standing, or rather leaning, with folded arms, against a column of the dark marble chimney-piece, which, enriched by various carvings and mouldings, rose nearly to the ceiling. The Baronet's hair, of mingled grey and black, had been cropped according to the approved fashion of the time; so that his features had not the advantage of either shadow or relief from the most beautiful of nature's ornaments. He might have been a few years older or younger than the sailor who had just entered; but his figure seemed weak and bending as a willow-wand, as he moved slowly round to receive his visiter. The usually polite expression of his countenance deepened into the insidious, and a faint smile rested for a moment on his lip. This outward show of welcome contrasted strangely with the visible tremor that agitated his frame: he did not speak; either from inability to coin an appropriate sentence, or the more subtle motive of waiting until the communication of the stranger was first made.

After a lengthened pause, during which Dalton slowly advanced, so as to stand opposite Sir Robert Cecil, he commenced the conversation, without any of that show of courtesy, which the consciousness of their relative situations might have called for: even his cap was unremoved.

"I am sorry, Sir Robert, to have come at such a time; nor would I now remain, were it not that my business——"

"I am not aware," interrupted the Baronet, "of any matters of '*business*' pending between us. I imagine, on reflection, you will find that all such have been long since concluded. If there is any way, indeed, in which I can oblige you, for the sake of an old servant——"

"*Servant!*" in his turn interrupted Dalton, with emphasis, "we have been companions, Sir Robert—*companions* in more than one act; and, by the dark heavens above us, will be so in another—if necessary."

The haughty Baronet writhed under this familiarity; yet was there an expression of triumphant quietude in his eye, as if he despised the insinuation of the seaman. "I think, considering all

things, you have been pretty well paid for such acts, Master Dalton; I have never taken any man's labour for nothing." [12]

"Labour!" again echoed the sailor, "labour may be paid for; but what can stand in lieu of innocence, purity of heart, and rectitude of conduct?"

"Gold—which you have had, in all its gorgeous and glowing abundance."

"Two'n't do," retorted the other, in a painfully subdued tone; "there is much it cannot purchase. Am I not at this moment a banned and a blighted man—scouted alike from the board of the profligate Cavalier, and the psalm-singing Puritan of this most change-loving country? And one day or another I may be hung up at the yard-arm of a Commonwealth—Heaven bless the mark!—a Commonwealth cruiser!—or scare crows from a gibbet off Sheerness or Queenborough, or be made an example of for some act of piracy committed on the high seas!"

"But why commit such acts? You have wherewithal to live respectably—quietly."

"Quietly!" repeated the Skipper; "look ye, Master—I crave your pardon—*Sir Robert Cecil*; as soon could one of Mother Carey's chickens mount a hen-roost, or bring up a brood of lubberly turkeys, as I, Hugh Dalton, master and owner of the good brigantine, that sits the waters like a swan, and cuts them like an arrow—live quietly, quietly, on shore! Santa Maria! have I not panted under the hot sun off the Caribbees? Have I not closed my ears to the cry of mercy? Have I not sacked, and sunk, and burnt without acknowledging claim or country? Has not the mother clasped her child more closely to her bosom at the mention of my name? In one word, for years have I not been a BUCCANEER? And yet you talk to me of quietness!—Sir, sir, the soul so steeped in sin has but two resources—madness, or the grave; the last even I shrink from; so give me war, war, and its insanity."

"Cannot you learn to fear the Lord, and trade as an honest man?"

Dalton cast a look of such mingled scorn and contempt on his companion, that a deep red colour mounted to his cheek as he repeated, "Yes! I ask, cannot you trade as an honest man?"

"No! a curse on trade: and I'm *not* honest," he replied fiercely. [13]

"May I beg you briefly to explain the object of your visit?" said the Baronet at last, after a perplexing pause, during which the arms of the Buccaneer were folded on his breast, and his restless and vigilant eyes wandered round the apartment, flashing with an indefinable expression, when they encountered the blue retreating orbs of Sir Robert.

"This, then: I require a free pardon from Old Noll, not not only for myself, but for my crew. The brave men, who would have died, shall live, with me. As a return for his Highness's civility, I will give up all free trade, and take the command of a frigate, if it so please him."

"Or a revenue cutter, I presume," observed the Baronet, sarcastically.

"Curse me if I do!" replied Dalton, contemptuously—"the sharks! No, no, I'm not come to that yet; nor would I ever think of hoisting any flag but mine own, were it not for the sake of a small craft, as belonging to—no matter what."

"You have seen but little of the girl."

"Too little: and why? Because I was *ashamed* to see her—but now—not ten minutes ago—I was glad she did not know me. Sir Robert, when your own daughter hangs upon your arm, or looks with her innocent eyes into your face, how do you feel?"

Sir Robert Cecil had been too well schooled in Puritanism to suffer the emotions of his mind to affect his features. He did not reply to the question, but skilfully turning the conversation, brought the intruder back to his old subject.

"How do you purpose procuring this free pardon?"

"I! I know not how to procure it; I only wish it procured: the means are in your power, not mine."

"In mine!" ejaculated the Baronet with well-feigned astonishment; "[you](#) mistake, good Dalton, I have no interest at Whitehall; I would not ask a favour for myself."

"That is likely; but you must ask one for me."

"*Must!*" repeated Sir Robert, "is a strange word to use to me, Dalton."

"I'm not scholar enough to find a better," replied the other insolently.

"I cannot if I would," persisted the Baronet.

"One word more, then. The Protector's plans render it impracticable for me to continue, as I have done, on the seas: I know that I am a marked man, and unless something be determined on, and speedily, I shall be exposed to that ignominy which, for my child's sake, I would avoid. Don't talk to me of impossibilities; you *can* obtain the pardon I desire, and, in one word, Sir Robert Cecil, you *must!*" [14]

Sir Robert shook his head.

"At your pleasure, then, at your pleasure; but at your peril also. Mark me! I am not one to be

thrown overboard, and make no struggle—I am not a baby to be strangled without crying! If I perish, facts shall arise from my grave—ay, if I were sunk a thousand fathoms in my own blue sea—facts that would—You may well tremble and turn pale! The secret is still in our keeping; only remember, I fall not singly!"

"Insulting villain!" said Sir Robert, regaining his self-command; "you have now no facts, no proofs; the evidence is destroyed."

"It is *not* destroyed, Robert Cecil," observed Dalton, calmly pulling a bundle of papers from his vest: "look here—and here—and here—do you not know your own hand-writing? you practised me first in deception: I had not forgotten your kind lessons, when in your presence I committed forged letters to the flames!"

The man laughed the laugh of contempt and bitter scorn as he held forward the documents. For a few moments Sir Robert seemed petrified; his eyes glared on the papers, as if their frozen lids had not the power of shutting out the horrid proofs of his iniquity. Suddenly he made a desperate effort to secure them; but the steady eye and muscular arm of the smuggler prevented it.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed, whirling the Baronet from him, as if he had been a thing of straw; "you know my power, and you know my terms: there needs no more palaver about it."

"Will not gold serve your purpose?"

"No, I have enough of that: I want distinction and fame, a free pardon, and the command of one of your registered and acknowledged plunderers; or, mayhap, baptism for my own bright little Fire-fly, as the 'Babe of Grace;' or—But, hang it, no—I'd sink the vessel first, and let her die, as she has lived, free, free, free! *I* belong to a civilised set of beings, and must therefore be a slave, a slave to something or some one. Noll knows my talents well, knows that I am as good a commander, ay, and for the matter of that, would be as honest a one as the best."

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He paused: the Baronet groaned audibly.

"We have one or two little jobs upon the coasts here of Kent and Essex, trifles that must, nevertheless, be attended to; but this day month, Sir Robert Cecil, we meet again. I will not longer keep you from your wife. Gracious Heaven! where was I when mine expired! But farewell! I would not detain you for her sweet and gentle sake: she will be rewarded for her goodness to my child! Remember," he added, closing the door, "[remember](#)—one month, and Hugh Dalton!"

CHAPTER II.

Death! be not proud, though some have
called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost
overthrow,
Die not, poor Death—
* * * *
—Why swell'st thou, then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally;
And Death shall be no more:—Death! thou
shalt die.

DR. DONNE.

When Sir Robert Cecil returned to his wife's chamber, all within was silent as the grave. He approached the bed; his daughter rose from the seat she had occupied by its side, and motioned him to be still, pointing at the same time to her mother, and intimating that she slept. "Thank God for that!" he murmured, and drew his hand across his brow, while his chest heaved as if a heavy weight had been removed from it. The attendants had left the room to obtain some necessary refreshment and repose, and father and daughter were alone with the sleeper in the chamber of death. The brow of Lady Cecil was calm, smooth, and unclouded, white as alabaster, and rendered still more beautiful by the few tresses of pale auburn hair that escaped from under the head-tire. The features were of a noble yet softened character, although painfully emaciated; and not a shadow of colour tinged her upturned lip. Her sleep, though occasionally sound, was restless, and the long shadowy fingers, that lay on the embroidered coverlet, were now and then stirred, as if by bodily or mental suffering. There was an atmosphere of silence, not of repose, within the apartment, at once awful and oppressive; and Sir Robert breathed as if his breathings were but a continuation of suppressed sobs.

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Constance Cecil, never in earlier life, never in after years, gracious and beautiful as she ever was, appeared half so interesting to her unhappy father as at that moment. There was at all times about her a majesty of mind and feeling that lent to her simplest word and action a dignity and power, which, though universally felt, it would have been impossible to define. If one could have procured for her a kingdom to reign over, or have chosen from the galaxy of heaven a region worthy her command, it must have been that pale and holy star, which, splendid and alone in the

firmament, heralds the approach of day; so unfitted might she have been deemed to mingle with a world less pure, so completely placed by nature above all the littleness of ordinary life. Her noble and majestic form was the casket of a rich and holy treasure, and her father's conscience had often quailed, when contemplating the severity of her youthful virtue. Dearly as he loved his wife, he respected his daughter more, and the bare idea that certain occurrences of former years might be known to her was as a poisoned dagger in his heart. He had been a daring, and was still an ambitious man—successful in all that men aim to succeed in; wealthy, honoured, and powerful, and—what is frequently more ardently sought for than all—feared; yet would he rather have sacrificed every advantage he had gained—every desire for which he had unhesitatingly bartered his own self-esteem—every distinction he had considered cheaply purchased at the price of conscience, than have lost the good opinion, the confiding love of his only child. Even now he looked upon her with mingled feelings of dread and affection, though her bearing was subdued and her lofty spirit bowed by sorrow, as she stood before him, the thick folds of her dressing-gown falling with classic elegance to her feet, her fine hair pushed back from her forehead and carelessly twisted round her head, and her countenance deepened into an expression of the most intense anxiety: while, assured that the invalid slept on, she whispered into his ear words of consolation, if not of hope.

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Lady Cecil had existed for some days in a state of frightful delirium, and, during that time, her ravings had been so loud and continued, that her present repose was elysium to those who loved her. Constance bent her knees, and prayed in silence, long and fervently, for support. Sir Robert, leaning back in the richly-cushioned chair, covered his face with his hands, withdrawing them only when the sleeper groaned or breathed more heavily. At length both felt as if death had indeed entered the chamber, so motionless lay the object of their love: they continued gazing from each other to the couch, until the misty light of morning streamed coldly through the open shutters. Another hour of sad watching passed, and, with a long and deeply drawn sigh, the sufferer opened her eyes: they were no longer wild and wandering, but rested with calm intelligence on her husband and her child.

"It is long since I have seen you, except in strange dreams," she said, or rather murmured; "and now I shall be with you but for a very little time!"

Constance put to her lips a silver cup containing some refreshment, while Sir Robert supported her head on his arm.

"Call no one in. Constance—Cecil—my moments now are numbered:—draw back the curtains, that I may once more look upon the light of morning!" Constance obeyed; and the full beams of day entered the room. "How beautiful! how glorious!" repeated the dying woman, as her sight drank in the reviving light; "it heralds me to immortality—where there is no darkness—no disappointment—no evil! How pale are the rays of that lamp, Cecil! How feeble man's inventions, contrasted with the works of the Almighty!" Constance rose to extinguish it. "Let it be," she continued, feebly; "let it be, dearest; it has illumined my last night, and we will expire together." The affectionate daughter turned away to hide her tears; but when did the emotion of a beloved child escape a mother's notice?—"Alas! my noble Constance weeping! I thought she, at all events, could have spared me this trial:—leave us for a few moments; let me not see you weep, Constance—let me not see it—tears enough have fallen in these halls;—do not mourn, my child, that your mother will find rest at last."

How often did Constantia remember these words! How often, when the heart that dictated such gentle chiding, had ceased to beat, did Constantia Cecil, gazing into the depths of the blue and mysterious sky, think upon her mother in heaven!

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Lady Cecil had much to say to her husband during the remaining moments of her existence; but her breathing became so feeble, that he was obliged to lean over the couch to catch her words.

"We part, my own, and only beloved husband, for ever in this world;—fain would I linger yet a little, to recount how much I have loved you—in our more humble state—in this—oh! how falsely termed our prosperity. My heart has shared your feelings. In our late bitter trials, more than half my grief was, that you should suffer. Oh, Robert! Robert! now, when I am about to leave you and all, for ever—how my heart clings—I fear, sinfully clings—to the remembrance of our earlier and purer happiness! My father's house! The noble oak, where the ring-doves built, and under whose shadow we first met! The stream—where you and Herbert—wild, but affectionate brother!—Oh! Robert, do not blame me, nor start so at his name;—his only fault was his devotion to a most kind master!—but who, that lived under the gentle influence of Charles Stuart's virtues, could have been aught but devoted?—And yet what deadly feuds came forth from this affection! Alas! his rich heritage has brought no blessing with it. I never could look upon these broad lands as ours—Would that his child had lived—and then—But they are all gone now—all gone!—Alas! what had we to do with courts, or courts with us?—Our domestic comforts have been blighted—our hearth left desolate—the children for whom you toiled, and hoped, and planned, have been removed from us—nipped in the bud, or the first blossoming!—And oh, Cecil! take the words of a dying woman to heart, when she tells you, that you will go down childless to your grave, if you do not absolve our beloved Constance from her promise to him whom she can neither respect nor love. She will complete the contract, though it should be her death-warrant, rather than let it be said a daughter of the house of Cecil acted dishonourably—she will complete it, Robert—she will complete it—and then die!"

Lady Cecil, overcome by emotion and exertion, fell back fainting and exhausted on her pillow. Recovering herself, however, after a brief pause she added, in a broken whispering voice,

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"Forgive me, my dear, dear husband;—my mind is wandering—my thoughts are unconnected—but my affection for you—for Constance—is strong in death. I mean not to pain you, but to warn—for the sake of our only child—of the only thing that remains to tell you of your wife. My breath trembles on my lips—there is a mist before mine eyes—call her in, that my spirit may depart—may ascend heavenward on the wings of prayer!—"

Sir Robert was moving towards the door, when her hand motioned him back.

"Promise—promise that you will never force her to wed that man!—more—that you yourself will break the contract!"

"Truly, and solemnly do I swear, that I will never force her to fulfil—nay, that I will never even urge her to its fulfilment."

The dying lady looked unsatisfied, and some unpronounced words agitated her lips, as Constance entered unbidden, but most welcome. She knelt by her mother's side, and took the hand so feebly but affectionately extended towards her. The fearful change that had occurred during her short absence was but too visible. The breath that touched her cheek was cold as the morning mist. The sufferer would have folded her hands in prayer, but the strength had departed before the spirit was gone. Constance, seeing that the fine expression of life with which her upturned eyes had glittered was gradually passing away, clasped her mother's hands within her own: suddenly they struggled for freedom, and as her eye followed the pointing of her parent's finger, she saw the lamp's last beam flicker for a moment, and then expire!—Her mother, too, was dead!

It is ill to break upon the solitude of the dying, though it is good to enter into the solemn temple of death; it is a sad but a useful lesson to lift the pall; to raise the coffin-lid; to gaze upon all we loved, upon all that was bright, and pure, and beautiful, changing with a slow but certain change to decay and corruption. The most careless cannot move along the chamber of death without being affected by the awful presence of the King of Terrors. The holy quiet that ought to characterise a funeral procession is too frequently destroyed by the empty pomp and heartlessness which attend it; but in the death-chamber there is nothing of this; the very atmosphere seems impregnated with the stillness of the time when there was no life in the broad earth, and when only "God moved on the face of the waters." Our breath comes slowly and heavily to our lips, and we murmur forth our words as if the spirit watched to record them in the unchanging book of immortality. [20]

In due time, the funeral train of Lady Cecil prepared to escort the corpse to its final home. Sir Robert was too ill, and too deeply afflicted to be present at the ceremony; and as he had no near relative, Sir Willmott Burrell of Burrell, the knight to whom his daughter's hand was plighted, was expected to take his station as chief mourner. The people waited for some hours with untiring patience; the old steward paced backwards and forwards from the great gate, and at last took his stand there, looking out from between its bars, hoping that, wild and reckless as Burrell really was, he would not put so great an affront upon the Cecil family, as to suffer its late mistress to go thus unhonoured to the grave.

The day advanced, and as neither the gentleman, nor any one to show cause for his absence, appeared, strange whisperings and surmises arose amongst the crowd, which had assembled from all the villages on the island, as to the probable motive of this most ill-advised delay. More than one messenger was despatched to the top of Minster Church to look out and see if any person like Sir Willmott was crossing the King's Ferry, the only outlet in general use from the island to the main land: but though the passage-boat, conducted (as it was termed) by Jabez Tippet, was evidently employed as much as usual, there was no token to justify farther waiting. The Rev. Jonas Fleetword, one of the soundest of Puritan divines, stood like a statue of cast iron in the doorway, his arms folded on his breast, and his brow contracting into a narrow and fretted arch, as the minute-hand moved round and round the dial of the old clock. At length assuming to himself the command, which in those times was as willingly ceded to the Reformed minister as it had formerly been to the not more arbitrary Catholic priest, he ordered the procession "to tarry no longer the coming of him whose feet were shod with heaviness, but to depart forthwith in the name of the Lord." [21]

The place of interment was at East Church, a distance of about four miles from Cecil Place; and as they paced it but slowly, the increasing chill of the gathering clouds gave intimation that the prime of day was sinking into the eventide before the spire was in sight. As they at length ascended the hill, upon the summit of which was the vault of the Cecils, a young gentleman, mounted on a grey and noble charger, met the funeral train so suddenly, that those who preceded halted, and for a moment it was rumoured, that Sir Willmott Burrell, though late and last, had taken the lower road from King's Ferry, and so arrived in time to behold the remains of her who was to have been his mother, deposited in the tomb.

When the people observed, however, that the salutation of respect made by the youth to the Rev. Jonas Fleetword was followed by no sign of recognition, they moved silently onward, marvelling amongst themselves at the young gentleman's keeping a little in advance of the clergyman, so as to take the exact station which belonged to the chief mourner. He was habited in a suit of the deepest black; and though the cloak which fell in ample folds from his throat concealed his figure, yet his movements indicated that it was slight and graceful. His broad hat completely

shaded his face, but the luxuriant curls of light air, which, moistened by the misty atmosphere, fell negligently beneath its brim, intimated that he was more akin to the Cavalier than the Roundhead.

By the time the ceremony was concluded, and the divine had finished one of those energetic and powerful appeals to the feelings which so effectually roused or subdued, as it pleased him to desire, darkness had nearly shrouded the surrounding landscape; and the multitude, whom respect or curiosity had assembled, retired from the churchyard, and wended to their homes. The year was in its third month, and the weather, which, when Hugh Dalton landed, had been clear and fine, was now foggy and cold:—

"The dewy night had with her frosty
shade
Immantled all the world, and the stiff
ground
Sparkled in ice——"

Yet the steed of the youth, who had so unceremoniously joined Lady Cecil's funeral, was cropping the withered grass from the churchyard graves, while his master, apparently unconscious of the deepening night, leaned against one of the richly ornamented stone slabs that marked the entrance to the vault. [22]

Suddenly the clatter of horses' hoofs sounded on the crisp road, the cavalier involuntarily placed his hand on his sword, and his horse lifted his head from the earth, bent back his ears, and whinnied in the low and peculiar tone that serves to intimate the approach of strangers. The travellers (for there were two) halted at the churchyard gate.

"What ho there!" exclaimed the foremost—"you, sir, who are pondering in graveyards at this hour, canst tell me if Lady Cecil's funeral took place this morning?"

"Her ladyship was buried this evening," replied the other, at the same time fairly drawing his sword out of its scabbard, though the movement was concealed by his cloak.

"They waited then?"

"They did, for one whose presence was not needed."

"And pray, how know you that? or knowing, think you it wisdom, Sir Dolorous, to give forth such knowledge, when it might be him they tarried for who questioneth?"

"It is because I know you, Sir Willmott Burrell, that I am so free of speech," replied the youth, vaulting into his saddle; "and I repeat it, your presence was not needed. The lady, as you truly know, loved you not while living; it was well, therefore, that you profaned not her burial by a show of false grief."

"Here's a ruffler!" exclaimed the other, turning to his follower. "And pray who are you?"

"You shall know that, good sir, when you least desire it," answered he of the black cloak, reining up his horse, that pawed and pranced impatiently: he then loosened the bridle, and would have crossed Burrell to pass into the highway; but the other shouted to his associate, "Hold, stop him, Robin! stop him in the name of the Lord! 'tis doubtless one of the fellows who have assailed his Highness's life—a leveller—a leveller! a friend of Miles Syndercomb, or some such ruffian, who is tarrying in this remote part of the island for some opportunity of escape. If you are an innocent man, you will remain; if guilty, this shall be my warrant."

He attempted to pull forth a pistol from his belt, but, before his purpose could be accomplished, the point of his adversary's rapier rested on his throat, which, at the same instant, was grasped with more strength than so slight a person could be supposed to possess. Burrell cried to his comrade for help, but he was already out of hearing, having set spurs to his horse the moment he had seen the assault; he then entreated for quarter in an altered and humbled tone. [23]

"I am neither a robber nor a murderer," replied the youth; "but, not having pistols, I hold my own safety of too much value to relax my grasp, till you pledge your honour not to attack me but with the same weapon I can use in my defence."

Burrell pledged his word "as a Christian and a soldier:" the stranger withdrew his sword.

"And now," said he, fixing himself firmly in his seat, and rolling his cloak around his left arm, "if you wish for honourable combat, I am at your service; if not, sir, I take my way, and you can proceed on yours." He drew up to his full height, and awaited Burrell's answer, who sat as if undetermined what course to pursue. He did not long hesitate; the villain's ready friend—treachery—was at his elbow; in an instant the pistol was presented to the head of his confiding antagonist, who, though unprepared for such an act, bent forward previous to the effort of raising himself in the saddle to give more strength to his good steel. At the very instant that he bowed himself the ruffian fired! The ball passed over him—he swayed in his saddle; the next moment, reining up his horse, he prepared to punish such dastardly conduct as it deserved; but, as worthless purposes are sometimes accomplished by worthy instruments, the fleet steed that Burrell rode was far on its way towards Minster, its track marked by fire-sparks, which glittered in the thickening darkness.

CHAPTER III.

"Now is the time when rakes their revels
keep;
Kindlers of riot, enemies of sleep."

GAY.

"A brewer may be like a fox or a cub,
And teach a lecture out of a tub,
And give the wicked world a rub,
Which nobody can deny.

A brewer may be as bold as Hector,
When he had drunk his cup of nectar;
And a brewer may be a Lord Protector,
Which nobody can deny.

But here remains the strangest thing,
How this brewer about his liquor did bring
To be an Emperor or King,
Which nobody can deny.

Then push the brewer's liquor about,
And loudly let each true man shout—
Shout—"

"Shout not, I pray you, but rather keep silence," exclaimed an old woman, cautiously opening the door of a room in which the revellers were assembled, and thus interrupting their rude, but animated harmony; "shout not: you may hear a horse's tramp without; and Crisp grumbles so hard, that sure I am 'tis no friend's footstep."

"Why, mother," cried one of the company, winking on the rest, "you say it was a horse you heard?"

"Well! and I say so still, good Master Roupall."

"Sure you do not make friends of horses?"

"Better make them of horses than of asses," replied the crone, bitterly; and the laugh was raised against Roupall, who, as with all jesters, could ill brook the jest that was at his own expense.

"I hear no tramp, and see no reason why you should interrupt us thus with your hooting, you ill-favoured owl," he exclaimed fiercely.

"Hush!" she replied, placing her finger on her lip, while the little terrier that stood at her feet, as if comprehending the signal, crept stealthily to the door, and laying his nose on the floor, drew in his breath; and then erecting his ears, and stiffening his short tail, uttered a low determined growl.

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"There are strangers, and near us too," observed an older man, who had hitherto remained silent; "there is little doubt of their being unfriendly: we had therefore better, seeing it would be imprudent to fight, retreat."

"Retreat! and why, I wonder?" inquired Roupall, the most reckless and daring of the set; and whose efforts were invariably directed towards meriting the soubriquet of "Jack the Rover," by which he was usually designated among his associates; "what care we, whether they be friends or foes! let them enter. Old Noll has too much to do abroad, to heed a few noisy troopers in an obscure hostelry in the Isle of Shepey."

"You are always heedless," observed the other; "and would sell your soul for an hour's mirth."

"My soul thanks you for the compliment, truly, Master Grimstone, and my body would repay you for it, if there was time, which, I take it, there lacks just now, for it is past eleven. Observe, gentlemen, Jack Roupall retreats not—he only retires." As he spoke, he pushed from a corner of the apartment, a huge settle of black oak, that apparently required the strength of six men to displace, but which the trooper handled as easily as if it had been a child's cradle. He then slid aside a panel, that fitted most accurately into the wall, of which it appeared a part; and in a few moments the party, consisting of some five or six, had entered the aperture, carrying with them the remnants of their feast, at the particular request of the old woman, who exhibited great alarm lest any symptom of revelling should remain. The last had hardly made good his retreat, when a loud knock at the door confirmed the dame in her apprehensions.

"In the devil's name!" she growled, "how am I to shove this mountain into its place? One of you must remain here; I might as well attempt to throw Blackburn cliff into the sea."

"I'll stay then, if you'll wait a minute," replied Roupall; "I defy the devil and all his works; and old Noll himself, the worst of them:—so here goes."

Another and a louder noise testified the traveller's impatience; but the summons was repeated a third time before the settle was replaced, and the room restored to its usually desolate and inhospitable appearance. Roupall ascended a narrow ladder, that led to the loft of the cottage-like dwelling, carrying with him a pack resembling those used by itinerant venders of goods; and Mother Hays (for such was her cognomen) holding the flickering candle in one hand, unfastened the door with the other, while Crisp crouched and snarled at her feet.

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"You could not have been all asleep, dame," said the stranger, as he threw off his horseman's cloak, and hung his rapier on the back of the nearest seat, "for I distinctly saw lights. Is your son within?"

"No, marry, good sir; he is far away, in London, with his master, Sir Willmott Burrell, who was looked for home to-day, but came not, as I hear from some neighbours, belonging to East Church and Warden, who were at Lady Cecil's funeral."

"Do you expect me to believe there is no one in the house but yourself?"

"One other kind gentleman, a pedlar-man, a simple body, who lies above; he's weary travelling, and sleeps soundly."

The stranger took off his hat; and as he shook his head, throwing completely back the hair that had in some degree overshadowed his face, the old woman started, and an undefined expression of astonishment and doubt burst from her lips. The gentleman either did not, or appeared not to notice the effect he produced; but carefully drew from his bosom a small book or tablet, and read in it for some minutes with much attention, turning over and over the one or two leaves upon which his eyes were fixed.

"And are you sure, good woman, that no other persons are in your house save this same pedlar?" he inquired, now fixing his gaze steadily on the withered countenance of Mother Hays.

"Alack! yes, sir, few travellers come to the lone widow's door, and it's an out o' the way place: wouldn't your honour like some supper, or a stoop of wine, or, mayhap, a glass of brandy?—it is useful these raw nights; or a rasher and eggs?"

"Are you quite certain there is no other in the house, and that your son is really not returned?" he again inquired, heedless of her invitation.

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"Why should I deceive your honour?—am I not old, and would you that I should so sin against the Lord?"

"You were not always thus piously given," replied the youth, smiling. "Know you aught of this token?" and he united his hands after a particular fashion: "heard you never the words——" and he whispered a short sentence into her ear: upon which she dropped a reverential courtesy, and, without reply, ascended, as quickly as her age and infirmities permitted, the ladder that led to Roupall's place of retreat. Ere she returned, however, accompanied by the trooper, another person had entered the dwelling. It was no other than her son Robin, for whom the gentleman had first inquired, and they were both engaged in such deep and earnest conversation, that neither noticed the addition to the party, until the old woman had thrown her arms around her son's neck, so as almost to stifle him with her caresses, seeming to lose all sense of the stranger's presence in the fulness of joy at the youth's return.

"There, mother, that will do; why, you forget I have been in London lately, and 'tis not the court fashion to rejoice and be glad. Besides, I have seen his Highness, and his Highness's daughters, and his Highness's sons, and drank, in moderation, with his Highness's servants: so, stand off, good mother, stand off!—'honour to whom honour.'" And Robin laid his finger on his nose, while a remarkable expression of cunning and shrewdness passed along his sharp and peculiar features.

As he busied himself with preparations for the guest's supper, it was impossible to avoid observing his quick and energetic movements, spare body, dwarfish stature, and long apish arms, that appeared in greater disproportion when viewed beside the now sedate and elevated carriage, the muscular and finely-developed form of the bulky trooper. And, in good sooth, it seemed that Roupall little relished the extraordinary civility shown to the new comer, both by mother and son. Had the stranger been disposed to hold any converse with him, matters might have been different; but he neither asked nor required information—sitting, after his return from the shed in which he had seen his horse sheltered, with his legs stretched out in front of the warm fire, his arms folded on his bosom, and his eyes fixed on the blazing wood that lent a brilliant light to the surrounding objects—giving a simple, though not uncourteous reply of "Yea," or "Nay," to the leading questions occasionally put to him by his rough, yet inquisitive companion. At length, when the rashers were dressed and deposited on the table, flanked on either side with a flagon of Canary and of Gascoigne, and the traveller had done ample justice to his cheer, he, with a conciliating smile and bow, wished the widow and Roupall "Good night," and followed Robin up the ladder, observing that his rest must be very brief, as he had occasion to start early next morning, and begging the good widow and her friend to finish the draught of her own excellent wine, to which he feared to render farther justice. Some time elapsed ere Robin

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returned; and when he did, he perceived that Roupall was in no gentle humour.

"Have you warmed the chicken's nest, and taken good and tender care of the gentle bird, according to orders, Robin? Gadzooks! I see so many cocks with hens' feathers now-a-days—sweet-scented Cavaliers, who could no more draw a trigger than they could mount the moon, that I think Hugh Dalton must line the Fire-fly with miniver to bring them safely over. A murrain take such fellows! say I—close-mouthed, long-eared scoundrels. D—n it! I love a frank heart——"

"And a bloody hand, Master Roupall."

"Stuff! stuff! Robin; few of either party can show clean hands these times; but does yon gallant come from over sea?"

"It might be that he dropped from the sky, for that is over the sea, you know."

"Faugh! you are as snappish as a cur whelp. I mean, what is he about?"

"Sleeping. Zooks! I'm sure he sleeps."

"Is he of good credit?"

"Faith, Roupall, I know not his banker."

"Good again, Master Robin; upon what grinding-stone were your wits sharpened?"

"Right loyally, good trooper; even upon King Log," replied Robin, grinning maliciously; and then, as if fearful that the gathering storm would forthwith burst, he continued: "Come, let's have a carouse, and wake the sleepers in that snug nest between walls; let's welcome in the morning, like gay gallants, while I tell you the court news, and exhibit the last court fashion, as it graces my own beautiful form!"

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The man looked at him and smiled, soothed into something resembling good-nature by the odd humour and appearance of his old companion, who was tricked out, with much precision, in a blue doublet and yellow hose, while a large bow of sad-coloured riband, with fringed ends, dangled from either knee. He then glanced a look of complacency on his own proper person, and replied,—

"No, let them sleep, Robin; they are better off than I. That maidenlike friend of yours has taken possession of my bed, after your mother's routing me up as if I had been a stoat or a dormouse. Of course he is a Cavalier: I suppose he has a name; but is that, too, a secret?"

"Master Roupall," replied the other, with a look of great sagacity, "as to the person, it's hard to say who's who, these times; and as to the name, why, as you say, I suppose he has a name, and doubtless a good one, though I cannot exactly now call to mind what it is; for at court——"

"D—n court!" interrupted the other—"you're all court-smitten, I'm thinking. In plain English, I want to know who this youngster is? When Hugh is in one of his romances, he cares not who or what he sends us, either here, or, what is of more consequence, on the main-land—and we are to receive them and 'tend them, and all the time, mayhap, are hazarding our own heads; for I'd bet an even wager that one of the ferrymen is a spy in the pay of old red-nose; and it's little we get for such hazards—it's many a day since even a keg of brandy has been run ashore."

"You have sworn an oath, for which I should exact, I think, the sum of three shillings and fourpence, Jack the Rover; but, I fear me, thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy the law, even in a small thing, until thou offerest thy neck unto the halter as a sacrifice. But did Hugh Dalton ever bring you, or any man, into trouble yet?" continued Robin, composing his comic features into a grave and quiet character.

"I can't say that he did."

"I am sure he has had opportunities enough."

"I'm not going to deny that Hugh's a fine fellow, Robin; but I remember, long ago, ay, thirteen or fourteen years past, before he entered on the regular buccaneering trade, there wasn't a firmer Cavalier amongst the whole of us Kentish men. Blazes! how he fought at Marston! But a few years' sunning off the hot Havannah either scorches the spirit out of a man, or burns it in."

[30]

"And what reason have you to think that Hugh is not now a good Cavalier?"

"Pshaw! he grows old, and it's no good trying to pull Oliver down. He's charmed. Ay, you may laugh; but no one of us could have escaped the bullet of Miles Syndercomb, to say nothing of dark John Talbot:—I tell ye, he is spell-guarded. Hugh is a knowing one, and has some plan a-foot, or he wouldn't keep beating about this coast as he does, after being so long from it, and using every county but Sussex and Kent. I wonder, too, what placed you, Master Robin, in Burrell of Burrell's service: I thought you were a man of taste till then."

Robin again grinned; and, as his wide mouth literally extended from ear to ear, his face looked, as it were, divided by some accident; so separate did the chin appear from the upper portion of the countenance.

"If you wo'n't talk," growled out the trooper, "I hope you will pay those who do so for your amusement."

"Thou wouldst have me believe, then, thou art no genuine disinterested talker. Ah! Roupall, Roupall! acquaintance with courts has taught me, that nature in the first place, and society in the second, have imposed upon us mortals two most disagreeable necessities: the one is that of eating; the other, that of talking. Now nature is a tyrant, and society is a tyrant; and I, being a tyrant-hater——"

"Slife, man—or mongrel—or whatever you choose to call your twisted carcass," interrupted Roupall, angrily, "hold your jibber. I wonder Joan Cromwell did not seize upon you, and keep you as her chief ape, while you were making your courtly acquaintance. A pretty figure for courts, truly!—ah! ah! ah!" As he laughed, he pointed his finger scornfully towards Robin Hays, who, however little he might care to jest upon his own deformity, was but ill inclined to tolerate those who even hinted at his defects. As the trooper persevered, his victim grew pale and trembled with suppressed rage. The man perceived the effect his cruel mockery produced, and continued to revile and take to pieces the mis-shapen portions of his body with most merciless anatomy. Robin offered, in return, neither observation nor reproach;—at first trembling and change of colour were the only indications of his feelings—then he moved restlessly on his seat, and his bright and deeply sunken eyes gleamed with untamable malignity; but, as Roupall followed one jeer more brutal than the rest, with a still more boisterous laugh, and, in the very rapture of his success, threw himself back in his chair, the tiger spirit of Robin burst forth to its full extent: he sprang upon the trooper so suddenly, that the Goliath was perfectly conquered, and lay upon the floor helpless as an overgrown and overfed Newfoundland dog, upon whose throat a sharp and bitter terrier has fastened. At length, after much exertion, he succeeded in standing erect against the wall of the apartment, though still unable to disengage Robin's long arms and bony fingers from his throat, where he hung like a mill-stone: it was some minutes ere the gigantic man had power to throw from him the attenuated being whom, on ordinary occasions, he could have lifted between his finger and thumb. [31]

Robin gathered himself up on the spot to which Roupall had flung him; his chin resting on his knees, round which his arms were clasped; his narrow chest and shoulders heaving with the exertion of the conflict; his eyes wild and glittering, yet fixed upon his adversary, like those of some fierce animal eager to dart upon its prey. The trooper shook himself, and passed his hand once or twice over his throat, as if to ascertain whether or not he were really strangled; then returning Robin's gaze as steadily, though with a far different expression, he said,—

"Upon my soul, you are as strong a hand at a grapple as I would care to meet; nor would I believe, did I not know it, that Roupall the Rover, who has borne more blows upon his thick head than there are days in February, and rises six feet two without boots, could be half choked by little Robin the Ranger, who stands forty inches in his shoes;—but I beg pardon for offending a man of your mettle. I warrant you safe from any future jests of mine; I like not quarrelling with old friends—when there is nothing to be got by it. Tut, man! leave off your moping, and shake hands, like a Christian. You wo'n't! why you are not going to convert your body into a nursery for bad blood, are you? What would pretty Barbara Iverk say to that?"

Robin laughed a laugh so loud, so shrill, so unearthly, that it echoed like a death-howl along the walls; then stretched out and looked on his ill-formed limbs, extended his long and grappling fingers, and muttered bitterly, "Curse!—curse!—curses on myself! I am a dainty morsel for a fair girl's love! Ah! ah! ah! a dainty morsel!" he repeated, and covered his face with his broad palms. Thus, shutting out the sight of his own deformities, and rocking himself backwards and forwards, moaning and jibbering like one distraught, he remained for several minutes. At length poor Crisp, who had been a most anxious spectator of the scene, ran timidly to his master, and, standing on his hind legs, began licking his fingers with an affectionate earnestness, more soothing to his agitated feelings than all the sincere apologies of the trooper, whose rough good-nature was really moved at what had taken place. Slowly uncovering his face, Robin pressed the little animal to his bosom, bending his head over it, and muttering in a tone the dog seemed fully to understand, by the low whine with which he returned the caress. After a time his eyes met those of Roupall's, but their meaning was totally changed: they no longer sparkled with fury, but were as quiet and subdued as if nothing had occurred. [32]

"You'll shake hands now," exclaimed the trooper, "and make the child's bargain."

Robin, rising, extended his hand; and it was cordially taken by his adversary, who soon after removed the settle, and entered the concealed room to join his slumbering companions.

Whatever were Robin's plans, reflections, or feelings, time alone can develop; for, laying himself before the yet burning embers of the fire, he appropriated the stranger's cloak as a coverlet, in which to enshroud himself and Crisp; and, if oral demonstrations are to be credited, was soon in a profound sleep. [33]

CHAPTER IV.

Yet not the more
Cease I to wander, where the Muses
haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny

hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song.
* * * *
Great things, and full of wonder, in our
ears,
Far differing from the world, thou hast
revealed,
Divine Interpreter.

MILTON.

The morning that followed was rife with the sweet and balmy air and the gay sunshine, so duly prized in our variable climate, because of the rarity of their occurrence; more especially when the year is yet too young to assist with vigour the energies of all-industrious nature. The trees, in their faint greenery, looked cheerful as the face of childhood: the merry birds were busied after their own gentle fashion forming their dwellings in the covert and solitude of the wooded slopes which effectually sheltered Cecil Place from the chill blast of the neighbouring sea. The freshened breeze came so kindly through the thick underwood, as to be scarcely felt by the early wanderers of the upland hill or valley green. Even the rough trooper, Roupall, yielded to the salutary influence of the morn; and as he toiled in his pedlar's guise across the downs, which were mottled with many hundred sheep, and pointed the pathway to King's Ferry, his heart softened within him. Visions of his once happy home in Cumberland—of the aged parents who fostered his infancy—of the companions of his youth, before he had lived in sin, or dwelt with sorrow—of the innocent girl, who had loved, though she had forsaken him—all passed before him; the retrospect became the present; and his heart swelled painfully within him; for he thought on what he had been, and on what he was, until, drawing his coarse hand across his brows, he gave forth a dissolute song, seeking, like many who ought to be wiser, to stifle conscience by tumultuous noise.

About the same hour, our friend Robin Hays was more than usually active in his mother's house, which we have already described, and which was known by the name of the "Gull's Nest." The old woman had experienced continued kindness from the few families of rank and wealth who at that time resided in Shepey. With a good deal of tact, she managed outwardly to steer clear of all party feuds; though people said she was by no means so simple as she pretended; but the universal sympathy of her neighbours was excited by her widowed and almost childless state—three fine sons having been slain during the civil wars—and the fourth, our acquaintance Robin, being singularly undervalued, on the ordinary principle, we may presume, that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country." This feeling of depreciation Robin certainly returned with interest, indulging a most bitter, and, occasionally, biting contempt for all the high and low in his vicinity, the family at Cecil Place forming the only exception. Despite his defects natural and acquired, he had, however, managed to gain the good opinion of Burrell of Burrell, who, though, frequently on the island, possessed only a small portion of land within its boundary. Into his service he entered for the purpose of accompanying the knight to London as travelling-groom; and he had rendered himself so useful while sojourning in the metropolis, that Burrell would fain have retained him in his employ—a project, however, to which Robin strenuously objected, the moment it was communicated to him. "Nature," he said, "had doubtless made him a bond-slave; but he liked her fetters so little, that he never would be slave to any one or any thing beside." He therefore returned to the "Gull's Nest" on the night his late master arrived at Cecil Place, from which his mother's home was distant about three miles. [34]

Never was there a dwelling more appropriately named than the cottage of Mother Hays. It stood on either a real or artificial eminence between Sheerness and Warden, facing what is called "The Cant," and very near the small village of East Church. The clay and shingle of which it was composed would have ill encountered the whirlwind that in tempestuous weather fiercely yelled around the cliffs, had it not been for the firm support afforded to it by the remains of an ancient watchtower, against which the "Gull's Nest" leaned. Perched on this remarkable spot, and nestling close to the mouldering but still sturdy walls, the very stones of which disputed with the blast, the hut formed no inappropriate dwelling for withered age, and, if we may be allowed the term, picturesque deformity. Robin could run up and down every cliff in the neighbourhood like a monkey—could lie on the waters, and sport amid the breakers, with the activity of a cub-seal—dive like an otter; and, as nature generally makes up in some way or other for defects similar to those so conspicuous in the widow's son, she had gifted him with so sweet a voice, that the fishermen frequently rested on their oars beneath "Gull's Nest" crag, to listen to Robin's wild and mournful ballads, which full often mingled with the murmur of the small waves as they rippled on the strand. But the manikin, Robin, had higher and better qualities than those we have endeavoured to describe—qualities which Hugh Dalton, with the ready wisdom that discovers at once what is excellent, and then moulds that excellence to its own purpose, had assiduously cultivated. Many years before the period of which we treat, Robin had accompanied the Buccaneer on one or two piratical cruises; and though it cannot be denied that Hugh was a better sailor than scholar, yet he generously sought to secure for little Robin the advantages he did not himself possess; Robin, accordingly, received daily instruction in penmanship from a run-away merchant's clerk, the clerk and bookkeeper, the lubber and idler of the crew. [35]

Robin laboured to reward this kindness by unshaken fidelity, unceasing watchfulness, and a wild enthusiasm which endeared him to the rude captain, as if he were something that belonged exclusively to himself. The Buccaneer knew that secrets, where life and property were at stake,

were safe in his keeping; and as the renowned Dalton had often worked in the service of both Cavaliers and Roundheads, a person of ready wit and true heart was most invaluable as an auxiliary on the coast.

If the Buccaneer entertained any political creed, it was certainly in favour of the exiled Charles: a bold and intrepid spirit like his felt something most galling and repulsive in the stern and unyielding government of the Protector. A ruler who not only framed acts, but saw those acts enforced, whether they regarded a "Declaration for a day of Publique Thanksgiving," or "A Licence for transporting Fish in Foreign Bottoms," was not likely to be much after the taste of one who had the essence of lawgiving only within himself, and who perceived clearly enough that the royal but thoughtless Stuarts would be more easily managed—more prone, if not from feeling, at all events from indolence, to overlook the peccadilloes of such as Dalton, than the unflinching Oliver, who felt that every evil he redressed was a fresh jewel in his sceptre. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Buccaneer had decided on offering his services to the Commonwealth: he believed that Cromwell knew his talents and valued his courage; but he also knew that the Protector piqued himself upon consistency, and that, consequently, there would be vast difficulties to overcome, as a price had more than once been set upon his head.

[36]

We must, however, conduct our readers back into the fresh morning we have instanced as one of the favourites of spring. Leaving Robin to his preparations for the stranger's breakfast, and premising that he had previously dismissed the midnight revellers on their respective errands, we will roam for a while amid the sheltered walks of Cecil Place.

It was situated on the slope of the hill, leading to the old monastery of Minster. Although nothing now exists except the church, a few broken walls, and a modernised house, formed out of one of the principal entrances to what was once an extensive range of monastic buildings; yet at the time of which we treat, the ruins of the nunnery, founded by Sexburga, the widow of Ercombert, King of Kent, extended down the rising ground, presenting many picturesque points of view from the small but highly-cultivated pleasure grounds of Cecil Place. Nothing could be more beautiful than the prospect from a rude terrace which had been the favourite walk of Lady Cecil. The small luxuriant hills, folding one over the other, and terminating in the most exquisite valleys and bosky glades the imagination can conceive—the rich mixture of pasture and meadow land—the Downs, stretching to King's Ferry, whitened by thousands of sheep, whose bleatings and whose bells made the isle musical—while, beyond, the narrow Swale, widening into the open sea, shone like a silver girdle in the rays of the glorious sun—were objects, indeed, delicious to gaze upon.

Although, during the Protectorate, some pains had been taken to render Sheerness, then a very inconsiderable village, a place of strength and safety, and the ancient castle of Queenborough had been pulled down by the Parliamentarians, as deficient in strength and utility, no one visiting only the southern and western parts of the island could for a moment imagine that the interior contained spots of such positive and cultivated beauty.

[37]

It was yet early, when Constantia Cecil, accompanied by a female friend, entered her favourite flower-garden by a private door, and strolled towards a small Gothic temple overshadowed by wide-spreading oaks, which, sheltered by the surrounding hills, had numbered more than a century of unscathed and undiminished beauty, and had as yet escaped the rude pruning of the woodman's axe. The morning habit of the noble Constance fitted tightly to the throat, where it was terminated by a full ruff of starched muslin, and the waist was encircled by a wide band of black crape, from which the drapery descended in massive folds to her feet. She pressed the soft green turf with a more measured step than was her wont, as if the body shared the mind's sad heaviness. Her head was uncovered, save that, as she passed into the garden, she had carelessly thrown on a veil of black muslin, through which her bright hair shone with the lustre and richness of the finest satin: her throat and forehead appeared most dazlingly white in contrast with her sable dress.

The lady by whom she was accompanied was not so tall, and of a much slighter form; her limbs delicately moulded, and her features more attractive than beautiful. There was that about her whole demeanour which is expressively termed coquetry, not the coquetry of action, but of feeling: her eyes were dark and brilliant, her mouth full and pouting; and the nose was only saved from vulgarity by that turn, to describe which we are compelled to use a foreign term—it was *un peu retroussé*: her complexion was of a clear olive, through which the blood glowed warmly whenever called to her cheek by any particular emotion. The dress she wore, without being gay, was costly: the full skirt of crimson gingham descended not so low as to prevent her small and beautifully-turned ankle from being distinctly seen, and the cardinal of wrought purple velvet, which had been hastily flung over her shoulders, was lined and bordered with the finest ermine. Nor did the contrast between the ladies end here: the full and rich-toned voice of Constance Cecil was the perfection of harmony, while the light and gay speech of her companion might be called melody—the sweet playful melody of an untaught bird.

"You must not mourn so unceasingly, my dear Constance," she said, looking kindly into the sorrowing face of her friend: "I could give you counsel—but counsel to the distressed is like chains thrown upon troubled waters."

[38]

"Say not so, Frances; rather like oil upon a stormy sea is the sweet counsel of a friend; and truly none but a friend would have turned from the crowded and joyous court to sojourn in this lonely isle; and, above all, in the house of mourning."

"I do not deny to you, Constance, that I love the gaiety, the pomp, and the homage of our courts;

that both Hampton and Whitehall have many charms for me; but there are some things—some things I love far more. I loved your mother," she continued, in a tone of deeper feeling than was usual with so gay a spirit; "and I love the friend who, while she reproves my follies, can estimate my virtues: for even my sombre sister Elizabeth, your grave god-mother, admits that I have virtues, though she denies them to be of an exalted nature."

"Were the Lady Claypole to judge of others according to the standard of her own exceeding excellence, Frances, we should, indeed, fall far below what we are disposed to believe is our real value; but, like the rose, instead of robbing less worthy flowers of their fragrance, she imparts to them a portion of her own."

"Now should I like to call that a most courtly compliment, but for my life I cannot—it is so true."

"You pronounce a severe satire on your father's court, my friend; and one that I hope it merits not."

"Merits! Perhaps not—for, though the youngest and least rational of my father's children, I can perceive there are some about him who hit upon truth occasionally, either by chance or intention. There's that rugged bear, Sir Thomas Pride, whom, I have heard say, my father knighted with a mopstick—he, I do believe, speaks truth, and of a truth follows one scriptural virtue, being no respecter of persons. As to General George Monk, my father trusts him—and so—yet have I observed, at any mention of Charles Stuart's name, a cunning twinkling of the eye that may yet kindle into loyalty.—I would as soon believe in his honesty as in his lady's gentleness. Did you hear, by the way, what Jerry, my poor disgraced beau, Jerry White, said of her? Why, that if her husband could raise and command a regiment endowed with his wife's spirit, he might storm the stronghold of sin, and make Satan a state prisoner. Then our Irish Lord Chancellor—we call him the true Steele; and, indeed, any one who ventures to tell my father he errs, deserves credit. Yes, Sir William Steele may certainly be called a truth-teller. Not so our last court novelty, Griffeth Williams of Carnarvon, Esq., who though he affects to despise all modern titles, and boasts of his blood-ties with the Princes of Wales, Kings of France, Arragon, Castile, and Man, with the sovereigns of Englefield and Provence to boot, yet moves every secret engine he can find to gain a paltry baronetcy! Even you, dear Constance, would have smiled to see the grave and courtly salutations that passed between him and the Earl of Warwick—the haughty Earl, who refused to sit in the same house with Pride and Hewson—a circumstance, by the way, that caused Jerry White to say, 'he had too much *Pride* to attend to the mending of his *soul*.' The jest is lost unless you remember that Hewson had been a cobbler. As to John Milton——"

[39]

"Touch him not," interrupted Constance; "let not your thoughtless mirth light upon John Milton; there is that about the poet, which made me feel the very first time I saw him, that—"

'Something holy lodges in that breast.'

I remember the day well, now more than three years ago, while staying at Hampton Court, (whither your gracious mother had commanded me,) and reading to the Lady Claypole, near the small window of her dressing-room, which opened into the conservatory, one sultry July evening, when the last rays of the golden sun disturbed the sober and to me more touching beauty of the silver night—at last I could no longer see, and closed the volume; your sister, in sweet and gentle voice, stayed me to repeat some passages from the 'Masque of Comus.' How accurately I can call to mind her every tone, as it mingled with the perfume of the myrtle and orange trees, impregnating the air at once with harmony and fragrance.

'So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can
hear,
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward
shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind.
And turns it by degrees to the soul's
essence,
Till all be made immortal.'

[40]

I was so absorbed by the beauty of the poetry, and the exquisite grace and feeling with which it was repeated, that my eyes were riveted on your sister; nor could I withdraw them, even when she ceased to speak. Thus abstracted, I was perfectly unconscious that a gentleman was standing close to the great orange-tree, so that the rays of the full moon rested on his uncovered head: his hair was parted in the centre, and fell on his shoulders at either side, and his deportment was of mingled dignity and sweetness. 'John Milton!' exclaimed Lady Claypole, rising; 'I knew not,' she continued, 'that you had been so near us.'—'The temptation was great, indeed, madam: a poet never feels that he has true fame, until lips such as yours give utterance to his lines.' He bowed low, and I thought coldly, over Lady Claypole's extended hand. She walked into the conservatory, and called on me to follow. How my heart throbbed! how I trembled! I felt in the almost divine presence of one whose genius I had worshipped with a devotion which, enthusiastic as it was, I

am not even now ashamed of. I longed to fall at his feet, and implore his blessing; to kiss the hem of his garment; and thought, in my foolishness, that inspiration might be communicated by his touch. I pushed back my hair, so that I might not lose a word he uttered, or the least look he gave. 'His sight was so impaired,' he said, 'that the light of day occasioned him much pain; and of late he had been so useless to his Highness, that he feared to intrude too often into his presence.' Lady Claypole made some remark, which in truth I little heeded, for I longed again to hear the poet speak; nor did I remain ungratified. In answer to some observation, he stated, 'he was well aware that much of what he had written would not meet with the indulgence she had graciously bestowed upon his verse; for, though they both valued freedom, they widely differed as to the mode of its attainment.' To this the Lady Claypole made no reply; and presently we had issued from the conservatory, and stood for a few moments on the terrace. 'How beautiful!' said your sister, as she raised her eyes to the glorious heavens, sparkling with countless stars, whose brilliancy was showered on the now sleeping earth—'Yes, beautiful!' repeated Milton; and his voice, so musical, yet melancholy, thrilled to my inmost soul: 'Beautiful!' he said again, as if the word was pleasant in his ears; 'and yet the time is coming fast when I shall behold that beauty no more—when I shall be more humbled than the poor insects upon which I may now heedlessly tread—they creep, but see; I shall be a thing of darkness in the midst of light—irrevocably dark!—total eclipse!—without the hope of day! Your pardon, Lady; but is it not strange, that life's chiefest blessing should be enthroned in such a tender ball, when feeling is diffused all over us?'—'The Maker must be the best judge,' replied your sister.—'Tis true,' he said; 'and the same hand that wounds can heal. I will not sorrow, if I can refrain from grief, though it is hard to bear; yet often, when I look upon my daughters, I think how sad 'twill be when I no more can trace their change of form and feature. And this deep affliction comes upon me in my manhood's prime:—life in captivity—all around me grows darker each fair day I live. A bunch of violets was given me this morning; their [fragrance](#) was delicious, yet I could not discern the little yellow germ that I knew dwelt within their dark blue petals, and I put them from me because I could not see as well as smell:—'twas foolish, but 'twas natural. The moon at this very moment looks so sallow—pale—and you,' he bowed to us as he spoke, 'and you, even you, ladies, appear both dim and cold!' I thought he laid more emphasis on the word *cold* than on the other words, perhaps in allusion to the political differences between Lady Claypole and himself: your sister thought so too.—'You do us wrong,' she observed warmly; 'never, never cold to John Milton! never, indeed never! This sad affliction, if it should continue, (which the Almighty in his mercy forbid!) will create for you new worlds; when all its treasures are destroyed, you will but close your eyes on earth that you may look through heaven.' What would I not have given for such a rewarding smile as played upon without disturbing his features! Your sister, surprised into an enthusiasm that was not in keeping with her usually subdued deportment, turned aside, and taking me by the hand, presented me to him, saying, 'Here, sir, is a little girl, who, though she has only numbered sixteen summers, has learned to value Milton!' What do you think I said, Frances? Nothing:—that might have passed—but what do you think I did? I fell on my knees, and kissed his hand! I am almost ashamed to repeat such frowardness, though done in all the purity of truth;—not that I think he was displeased."

[41]

"Displeased!" interrupted the Lady Frances, who had kept silence marvellously long; "oh! no, it is not in man to be displeased with the devotedness, the love of woman——"

"I prithee, peace," interrupted Constance in her turn: for the word 'love' had called the flush into her pale cheek; "thou art ever placing earth on a level with heaven."

"And thou, my saintly friend, wouldst bring heaven down to earth. I remember my sister Claypole treating of this before, saying that Milton laid his fingers on thy forehead, and that thou didst clip off the particular ringlet pressed by them, and enshrine it in a jewelled cross."

"I confess——"

"To the folly of despoiling thy tresses?"

"Dearest Frances, you are cruel in your gaiety. How I watched his retreating footsteps as he passed under the archway, after bidding us good night! His gait was measured, but, though his sight was so impaired, I observed that his head was thrown upward, and that he walked as one having no fear."

"Well, give me Milton in the morn, but the gay Lovelace when the twilight shades come down. I know a fair gentleman who sings his ballads most sweetly. You, too, had you heard him, would have listened a second tune:—

'True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field,
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword—a horse—a shield.

'Yet this inconstancy is such
As you, too, shall adore—
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more!!

But I forget, the theme is a forbidden one; and I see, Constance, you do not like my poet, and I have a mind not to admire yours! Ah! poor Lovelace! he might have been my laureate."

[42]

"I thought the Lady Frances sighed no longer for a thorny crown."

"I may surely love the poetry of a Cavalier without wishing to be the bride of Prince Charlie. My father's fiat has gone forth against my royal lover's offer, and so I shall be the wife of some staid sober Covenanter, I suppose; that is, if I follow my father's wishes, and marry Will Dulton." [43]

"Better than be the wedded mistress of a dissolute man," said Constance, firmly. "Believe me, Charles Stuart has all his father's weakness without his father's virtues."

"Well, be it so," replied Frances Cromwell: "I did not care; but methinks I should have liked the garniture of a crown and the grasp of a sceptre. You should have been my first maid of honour.— But your pardon, lady fair—you will be the first married, if I can judge from Sir Willmott Burrell's earnestness of late." As she spoke, Constance Cecil grew deadly pale; and, to conceal her emotion, sat upon the step of the Gothic temple before which they had been standing for some minutes. Frances did not observe the change, but heedlessly continued:—"Ah! it is happy for those who can marry as they will, and him they love; to whom the odious Sound of 'state necessity' is utterly unknown."

"And think you," said Constance, in a voice struggling for composure, "think you so poorly of me, that I can *will* to marry such as Burrell, of my own free choice! Oh! Frances, Frances! would to Heaven the same grave had closed over me that closed over my mother!" She clasped her hands with an earnestness amounting to agony, and there came an expression over her features which forbade all trifling. Frances Cromwell was a warm, cheerful, and affectionate girl; but to her it was not given to understand the depth or the refinement of minds such as that of her friend. Her own home was not a peaceful one, for party spirit, that hydra of disunion, raged and ravaged there, without regard to years or sex. The Protector's most beloved child was known to be faithfully attached to the Stuart cause; while his eldest daughter was so staunch a republican, that she only blamed her father for accepting power bordering so closely upon royalty. This difference occasioned sad and terrible domestic trouble; and the man, feared, honoured, courted by the whole world, ruling the dynasties of kingdoms, could not insure an hour's tranquillity within his own palace walls! Frances, the youngest, interfered the least in their most grievous feuds. She had so many flirtations, both romantic and anti-romantic, to attend to, that, like all women who flirt much, she thought little. The perfect misery so fearfully, yet so strongly painted upon the countenance of Constance, was to her utterly incomprehensible. Had it been the overboiling of passion, the suppressed but determined rage, or the murmuring of discontent, Frances could have understood it, because it would have resembled what she had full often witnessed; but she had never before beheld the struggles of a firm and elevated mind against a cruel and oppressive destiny. Frances Cromwell looked upon her friend for some moments, uncertain what course to pursue. She knelt down and took her hands within her own; they were cold as death, rigid as marble. She bent over her!— [44]

"Constance! Constance! speak! Merciful Providence!" she exclaimed aloud, "What can I do? what shall I do? Barbara! Alas! alas! she hears me not—Dear Constance! This is worse than faintness," she continued, as exertions to restore her proved ineffectual; for Constantia, exhausted by her efforts to appear tranquil, and to chime in with the temper of her guest, until tortured at the very mention of Burrell's name, remained still insensible.

"I must leave her and seek assistance from within," repeated Frances, rapidly unclasping her jewelled mantle, throwing it over her friend, and flying, rather than running, along the shaven path they had so recently paced in gentle converse. No very long time elapsed before the lady returned, followed by Barbara Iverk and another faithful attendant.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Frances, "she must be recovered, for her position is changed." And so it was—the veil of black had entirely fallen off, and her unconfined hair reposed in rich shadowy masses on her bosom and shoulders: one arm rested on her knee, while the extended hand supported her head; the other was open on her lap, and upon its small and transparent palm lay a large locket of peculiar workmanship, set round with brilliants. On this her eyes were fixed; and when her bower-maid, Barbara, endeavoured to rouse her mistress's attention, the first symptom of returning consciousness she gave, was to hide the jewel within her bosom. She appeared like one waking from a long dream. Frances spoke to her in a tone of gentle cheerfulness,—

"Come, dearest, it is cold; we will in: you must be better presently. One moment; let me bind up this hair; it keeps back the cloak from covering your throat, and you shiver like an aspen." [45] Frances was gathering the large tresses eagerly in her hand, when she stopped, and letting them suddenly fall, exclaimed,—

"What's here to do! One of the finest of your lady's braids severed more than mid-way, and by no scissors, truly; absolutely butchered! Do but look, Barbara; I am sure 'twas not so this morning!"

The young tire-woman lifted up her hands in horror and amazement; for she very properly regarded her mistress's beautiful hair as under her own especial control, and was about to make some inquiry touching the mysterious incident, when Constance drew the cardinal completely over her head, and, leaning her arm on Barbara's shoulder, proceeded towards the house.

Notwithstanding the great anxiety of Lady Frances on the score of her friend's indisposition, and it is but justice to admit she loved her with all the constancy of which her volatile nature was capable, her affection was nearly overpowered by her curiosity—curiosity to discover how Constance obtained the locket, and how she lost her most admired tress. Yet, to neither of these perplexities had she the slightest clue. Intimate as they had been from childhood; superior as was

her rank to that of Sir Robert Cecil's daughter; yet was there no one of her acquaintance with whom she would not sooner have taken a liberty than with Constance Cecil. In the course of the day she tried every little art that female ingenuity could devise, short of saying, "How came you by that locket?" to induce her to talk on the subject—and in vain. Constance made no assertion—offered no explanation; but, when Frances appeared to come too near the subject, she silenced all farther approach to confidential communication, simply by raising her clear, calm, and holy eye, letting it fall upon the animated, restless face of her companion, and then shading its glory by the long silken lashes that almost rested on the exquisitely moulded cheek. It was this peculiar look that made her lively friend usually designate her "the awful beauty."

Still curiosity, that most busy and feminine sprite, tortured the Lady Frances with extraordinary perseverance; and, in the end, it suddenly occurred to her that Barbara might know or conjecture something about the matter: accordingly, at night, she dismissed her own women, under some pretext or other, to their chambers, and summoned the pretty Puritan to wait at her toilet. Poor Barbara was as neat and as docile a maid as any country gentlewoman could desire; but, as she had never accompanied her ladies to court, to which, because of Lady Cecil's illness, they had been rare visitors of late, she felt somewhat nervous on being called into active duty by so great a personage as the Lady Frances Cromwell. With trembling hands she unlaced the velvet bodice, released the tiny feet from their thralldom, set loose the diamond clasps of the sparkling stomacher; and, after arraying the lady in a wrapping robe of fringed linen, with point-lace collar, commenced the disentangling of her raven hair: this was a task that required skill and patience. Nature had been so bountiful to her own fair mistress, that her hair needed no art to increase either its quality or quantity: the simple Barbara consequently stood aghast when a vast portion of the fabric fell to the ground the moment a little dark band had been separated from the pretty head of the more courtly maiden. Frances laughed as the girl's astonished features were reflected in the polished mirror before which she sat: so evident was her dismay, as she held it forth, exclaiming, "I did not pull it off, my lady——"

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"Ah, wicked wench! so you would rob *my* head as well as your lady's. Now, Barbara, tell me truly, what didst do with that same lock I missed this morning?"

"I, my lady?"

"Yes, you. No one else, I suppose, dresses your lady's hair."

"That may be; but I assure your ladyship I never cut off that curl:—it is quite wonderful!"

"So it is, as you say, like a very sensible girl, 'quite wonderful;' but, Barbara, do you think you could find out who did cut it off?"

"Not unless my lady would tell me."

"But is there no way?"

"Only by asking my lady, and that I could not presume to do."

"Nor I either," thought Lady Frances: "but, [Barbara](#), you might think—or—or—see perhaps——"

"Please you, my lady, I do think a great deal, and the Rev. Mr. Fleetword said to me only this morning, that I grew in grace as much as in stature. And, as to seeing, please your ladyship——"

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"Pshaw, child! it is not that I mean. Could you not discover? Besides—the locket! did you ever see that locket in your lady's possession till this morning?"

"No, madam."

"Perhaps," continued Frances, blushing and stammering at her curiosity, "it might be well to ascertain something about both mysteries, for your lady's good."

"I am sure, my lady, I can't tell; but my mistress is very wise, and if she wished me to know any thing of such like, would direct me herself. Shall I put any of this ambergris in your ladyship's hair, or do you better like the musk-rose?"—How perplexing to the cunning is straightforward simplicity! "Now," thought Lady Frances, "one of the court waiting-maids would have comprehended my meaning in a moment; and this wench, with ten times their zeal and real sense, thinks it downright wicked to pry into her lady's secrets. I wonder my women have not taught her the court fashions.—You may go to bed, Barbara; light my night lamp, and give me a book; I do not feel at all sleepy."

Barbara, with great *naïveté*, presented to Lady Frances a small Bible that lay on the dressing-table:—something resembling a smile passed over the lady's face as she took the volume, but she only observed, "Give me also that book with the golden clasps; I would fain peruse my cousin Waller's last hymn.—What an utterly useless thing is that which is called simplicity!" she said, half aloud, as Barbara closed the door. "And yet I would sooner trust my life in the hands of that country damsel, than with the fine ones, who, though arrayed in plain gowns, flatter corrupt fancies at Whitehall or Hampton!"

CHAPTER V.

Having consigned the Lady Frances Cromwell to her perfumed couch, and the companionship of Waller's sweet and sonorous strains, we leave her to determine whether the high and mighty Lady Dorothea Sidney, the Poet's Saccharissa, or the gentle Lady Sophia Murray, the beauteous Amoret of his idolatry, were most worthy the affection he so generously bestowed on both. Waller, the most specious flatterer of flattering courts—the early worshipper of Charles the First—the pusillanimous betrayer of his friends—the adulator of Cromwell—the wit and the jester of the second Charles—the devotional whiner of the bigot James—had not, however, sufficient power to keep the lady from her slumbers long. She was soon in the refreshing sleep, known only to the light-hearted. [48]

Constance Cecil was more wakeful. After Barbara's dismissal from the presence of Lady Frances, she crept with slow and stealthy space to the chamber of her dear mistress, and softly turning the bolt, displaced the curtains of silver damask with so light a touch, that her entrance was unnoticed. The girl perceived at once that her lady was not asleep. She had evidently been reading, for the holy volume was still open, and one hand rested amid its leaves: but even Barbara was astonished when she saw that her attention was spell-bound to the mysterious locket she held in the other hand. The excellent servant, with that true honesty of mind which no education can teach, knowing that her lady had not heard her enter, and feeling, rather than reasoning upon, the indelicacy of prying into what she believed was secret, purposely let fall a chalice, which effectually roused Constance, who, placing the trinket under the pillow, called upon her attendant for her night drink, and then pointed out a particular psalm she wished her to read aloud. It was a holy and a beautiful sight in that quiet chamber: the young and high born maiden, her head resting on pillows of the finest cambric; her arms crossed meekly on her bosom, whose gentle breathings moved, without disturbing the folds of her night-tire; her eyes elevated; her lips sufficiently apart to show the small, pearly teeth, glittering in whiteness within their coral nest;—then, as promises of hope and happiness beyond the control of mortality, found voice from Barbara's mouth, a tear would steal down her cheek, unbidden and unnoticed, but not unregistered by that God who knows our griefs, and whose balm is ever for the heavy at heart.

Barbara sat on a writing stool by the bed-side, supporting the Bible on her knees, while the beams of a golden lamp, placed on a lofty tripod near the foot of the bed, fell directly on the book: the light, however, was not sufficiently powerful to illumine the farthermore parts of the chamber, whose walls were hung with figured tapestry, the gloom of which contrasted strongly with the bright blue and silver that canopied Constantia's bed. [49]

The next chamber was occupied by her father: it was lofty, but not spacious. The inside of the door was guarded by many bolts; and at the moment his daughter was seeking commune with, and counsel from, the Almighty, he was employed in examining and securing them with evident anxiety. First one, and then another, was pushed to its rest; then he turned the key in the lock—once, twice. Having shaken, or rather attempted to shake, the massive door, to determine if it were really secure, Sir Robert Cecil proceeded to inspect the window fastenings; and being convinced they were in their places, he turned to the table where the light burnt brightly, examined a brace of pistols, which he placed under his pillow, and then, took down a huge heavy sword from a shelf where it lay concealed, pulled it forth from its scabbard, and applied his thumb along the edge, to be satisfied of its sharpness. Having laid the weapon by his bed-side, he commenced, unaided, to undress. This did not occupy him long, though he stopped occasionally, his eye glancing round the apartment, his ear bent, as if some unhallowed noise had struck upon it suddenly. As he moved to his lonely couch, he passed before an immense glass, in a heavy oaken frame: his own reflection met his eye; he started as if a spectre had crossed his path—his cheek blanched—his knees smote one against the other—his respiration was impeded. At last, waving his hand, as if to dispel the phantom his imagination had conjured up, he sprang into the bed, and buried his head under its pillows.

At the end of the corridor which led to the sleeping-chambers, was the apartment appropriated to Burrell of Burrell, whenever he was a guest at Cecil Place; his visits, however, were not so frequent, or of such long duration, as might have been expected in the lover of Lady Constance Cecil. He was fast approaching the meridian of life, and his youth had been spent chiefly at court:—at both courts, in fact, for he had been a partisan of the unhappy Charles, and afterwards, at heart, as complete a regicide as any who took a more active part in the terrible transactions of the times. He joined the army of the Parliament, nevertheless, but for a short time, pleading, as an excuse, the necessity there was for remaining amongst his own tenants and thralls to keep them in subjection. Sir Willmott Burrell may well be designated a man of two characters—one for public, one for private life. His manners to his superiors, and generally to his equals, were bland and insinuating; to his inferiors he was overbearing, haughty, and severe, except when he had some particular point to carry, and then he could cringe to and fawn upon the vilest. He had a peculiar method of entering into men's hearts, and worming from each whatever best suited his purpose; but the principle upon which he invariably acted, was, to extract the honey from the rose, and then scatter its leaves to the whirlwind and the blast. Devoid of every thing like moral or religious feeling, he used Puritanism as a cloak for selfishness and sin; and though he had often cursed his good character when it stood in the way of his pleasures, yet it was too needful to be cast off as a worthless garment. A plotting mind united to a graceful exterior, is as dangerous to the interests of society as a secret mine to a besieged city, inasmuch as it is [50]

impossible to calculate upon the evils that may suddenly arise either from the one or the other.

Sir Willmott Burrell, of Burrell, had managed to make himself acquainted with many of Sir Robert Cecil's secrets; and even those he had not heard, he guessed at, with that naturally acute knowledge which is rarely in the wrong. He was too great a sensualist to be indifferent to the beauty of Constance, which, like all sensualists, he considered the sole excellence of woman; but he arraigned the wisdom of Nature in endowing aught so fair with mind, or enriching it with soul; and the dignity and purity of his destined bride, instead of making him proud, made him angry and abashed.

Constance heard of Burrell's grace, of Burrell's wit, and sometimes—though even amongst ladies it was a disputed point—of his beauty, without ever being able to discover any thing approaching to these qualities in her future husband; and certainly he never appeared to so little advantage as when in her presence: her eye kept him under a subjection, the force of which he was ashamed to acknowledge; and although there could be no question that his chief desire for the approaching alliance proceeded from a cherished affection for the broad acres and dark woods of the heiress of Cecil, yet he bitterly regretted that the only feeling the lady manifested towards him was one of decided coldness—he almost feared of contempt. The day after her mother's funeral, she had refused to see him, although he knew that she had been abroad with Lady Frances in the gardens of the Place; and though Sir Robert urged indisposition as the cause, yet his pride was deeply mortified. A weighty communication from France, where he had been a resident for some months, as an *attaché* to the English embassy, appeared to have increased the discontent of his already ruffled temper. He retired early to his chamber, and his moody and disturbed countenance looked angered and mysterious by the light of an untrimmed lamp, as he inspected various documents and papers that lay scattered before him on a table of carved oak, inlaid with silver. One letter, which he read and re-read with much attention, seemed to excite him more than all the rest: he turned it over and over—examined the seal—laid it down—took it up—put it aside again—folded his arms over his chest, and, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, appeared for a time absorbed in the remembrance of past events. Finally, he committed the letter to the flames, and then paced up and down the room with unequal steps, his head bent forward, and his arms folded, as before, over his bosom. He was evidently ill at ease with himself, and there gleamed "a lurking devil in his eye," that augured peril to some one, and bespoke a man who was neither "infirm of purpose," nor slow in the execution of whatever mischief was designed. He did not retire to his bed until the lamp gave token that its oil was expended, when, flinging himself on the coverlet without removing any portion of his dress, he sought rest.

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Nor were Sir Willmott's slumbers of long duration; before the sun had risen, he was up and a-foot. Having let himself down from his window and out at the postern-gate, he took the path that led in the direction of Gull's Nest Crag.

The night had been wild and stormy; the freshness and freedom of the air now compensated for the turmoil that had passed; but the ocean's wrathfulness was still unappeased, and Burrell listened to its roarings while it lashed the beach with its receding waves, like a war-horse pawing and foaming when the battle din has sunk into the silence that succeeds the shout of victory, as if eager again to meet the shock of death.

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Suddenly he struck out of the usual track, across a portion of waste land, the utmost verge of which skirted the toppling cliffs; and making for himself a way through tangled fern, long grass, and prickly furze, he strode on in a more direct line towards the dwelling of Robin Hays, pursuing his course, heedless of the petty annoyances he encountered, although his feet were frequently entangled among the stunts and stubs that opposed his progress, with the air of one whose mind was evidently bent on the fulfilment of some hazardous but important purpose. It was so early that not a shepherd had unpenned his fold, nor a girl gone forth to the milking: such cattle as remained at liberty during the night, still slumbered on the sward; and the wily fox roamed with less caution than was his wont, under the knowledge that no enemy was by to watch his progress.

"I may reach Gull's Nest, and return," thought Burrell, "and that before any in the house are astir." But, at the moment, a tall, lank figure, moving with measured pace, yet nevertheless approaching rapidly, from the very point towards which his steps were bent, arrested his attention; and as it came nearer and nearer, he was much disconcerted at the discovery that no other than the Reverend Jonas Fleetword, from whom he anticipated a sharp rebuke for his absence from Lady Cecil's funeral, was about to cross his path. He would have gladly hailed the approach of Birnam wood, so it could have settled down between him and the reverend Jonas; but as no place of refuge was at hand, he bethought himself of the shield of patience, drew his cloak as closely as if he were about to encounter a fierce north wind, and finally returned with much courtesy the salutation of the preacher, whose apt and ready eloquence had obtained for him the significant appellation of Fleetword. The locks of the divine, according to the approved fashion, had been cropped closely round his head, and his thin sharp visage looked of most vinegar-like tinge and character, peering, as it now did, from beneath a steeple-crowned hat of formal cut. He wore a black cloth cloak and doublet, his Flemish breeches and hose were of the same sombre hue, and his square-toed shoes were surmounted by large crape roses. Contrary, as it would seem, to the custom of a disciple of the peace-loving Saviour, he also wore a basket-handled sword, girded round his loins by a broad strap of black leather. In truth, face, figure, and all included, he was as harsh and ill-favoured a person as could have been encountered even at that day,—one whose lips would have seemed to taint the blessing to which he might have given utterance; and graceless as Burrell undoubtedly was, there was excuse for the impatience he felt

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at such an unlucky rencontre.

"It augurs well to see one whom the Lord hath blessed with all the creature-comforts of life, thus early aroused from sluggish sloth, and abroad, doubtless, on business of the faithful-minded?"

Burrell made the best reply he could, without confirming or denying the inference drawn from his early rising.

"Why tarried ye from the gathering of God's people on account of the Lady Cecil's funeral? I pray that the fleshpots of Egypt may not lure ye to perdition; or fine gold from Ophir, or the vain glories of sinful men, pilot ye unto destruction!"

"It was business connected with the state—commands from his Highness's own lips, that detained me."

"All praise to the Providence that has given his chosen people into such keeping as the Lord Oliver's! Truly may he be likened to the chariots and horsemen of Israel—to the blessed Zerubbabel, who restored the true worship, which the Jews in their blindness had cast from them; to Joshua, whom the Lord appointed as a scourge to the wicked Canaanites; to Moses, who gave both spiritual help and carnal food to those that needed; to Gideon; to Elijah; to David; to Hezekiah; to the most wise Solomon; to all the holy of the earth!" and, exhausted by the rapidity with which he had uttered the names of the kings and prophets of old, the worthy Jonas made a full stop; not with any intention of concluding his harangue, but to take breath for its continuation. As time, however, was exceedingly precious to Burrell, he endeavoured to give such a turn to the conversation, as would enable him to escape from the preacher's companionship; and therefore expressed a very deep regret that he had not been edified by the discourse which Mr. Fleetword so ably delivered, and inquired when and where it was likely he would next give his holy lessons, so that he might be comforted by the oil and honey that flowed from his lips.

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"Thou sayest truly," replied the energetic preacher; "truly sayest thou: oil and honey for the faithful, the holy, the just, in our New Jerusalem! But what, what for the unbelievers?—what for the wise in their own conceit?—what for the dwellers in Kedar? Even this—to them, my words signify bitterness, a scourge, a pestilence, an uprooting, and a scattering by the four winds of heaven! on them shall the seventh phial be poured out; for verily the Lord is weary of showing mercy to the backsliders from the congregation: they shall all perish—their limbs shall be broken asunder—yea, I will smite the uncircumcised Philistines—yea, I will smite—"

"Even as did Sampson of old," interrupted Burrell—"even as Sampson of old smote them—with the jawbone of an ass."

"Even so," replied Jonas, who, with all his bitterness, was nothing worse than a simple-minded enthusiast, and never imagined that Sir Willmott's words could convey aught than approbation of his zeal, and the right spirit that dwelt within him;—"even so; and it rejoiceth me to find thee apt and prompt in scriptural passages. Verily, I am glad of thy company; and as thou regrettest that the world's business prevented thy attendance on the lamented dead, I care not if I bestow this my present leisure unto thy edification, and repeat, nay, even enlarge upon, the words I then delivered; which exercise will be finished before mid-day—it is right that we labour unceasingly in the vineyard." So saying he drew from his bosom a clasped Bible, and, to Burrell's dismay, actually gave out the text, before he could resolve upon any plan to rid himself of the intruder, whom he heartily wished at Tophet, if not farther.

"My worthy friend, I would postpone the instruction you would give until a more convenient season; I have urgent business to attend, and must hasten its performance."

"Then will I gird up my loins, and accompany thee unto the very threshold of the house where thou wouldst enter; and as we walk, I can still convey the precious ointment of grace unto thy soul."

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"The merciless old scoundrel!" muttered Burrell between his teeth; then adding aloud, "Not so; your words are too costly to be given unto the winds; and I cannot tarry so as to drink in the full draught of satisfaction; let be, I pray you, and come down to Cecil Place to-night, or on the morrow, and then many can worship with thee."

Fleetword paused, still holding the volume in his hand:—"Besides," continued Burrell, "what I have to accomplish is the Lord's work."

"The Lord's work—the Lord's work!" repeated Fleetword,—"then go forth; why didst thou not confirm me that before? and I would have hastened, not retarded thee; for, of a verity, my outward man warreth with the inward, and these supporters of the flesh," pointing with his forefinger to the thin and meagre limbs that scarcely merited the compliment, "grow weary in well doing."

Burrell needed not a second hint to hasten, but proceeded on his way, after receiving Fleetword's benediction with all due humility.

The preacher remained some time on the spot, and his thin upright figure, seen from a distance, its outline so strongly marked against the cold grey morning sky, had a singular effect. Burrell had plunged into a dell or hollow, so that he was no longer visible.

The bleak and unclothed landscape, from which the mist was slowly rolling; the few giant trees,

that dwelling by the sea-side, and grown wise by experience, ventured not to put forth their leaves till the sun had chased the north wind to his caves; but, above all, the booming of the untranquillised ocean, might have chilled a heart within the warmest bosom;

"Yet, prophet-like, that lone one stood,
With dauntless words and high,"

and looked as if he deemed the rolling clouds his listeners. It was by no means unusual for the preachers in those days to exercise their voices over the hills and heaths of their native land: valuing, as they did, power and strength far more than melody and grace, they endeavoured to acquire them by every possible means—nor were they without hope that, (to use their own language,) "the Almighty might bless the seed thus sown, seeing that it was hard to know who might not be within hearing of the precious word."

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Burrell soon gained the sea-shore, though he was still a considerable distance from Gull's Nest Crag. On arriving at a point that commanded an unbroken prospect of the far-spread sea, he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked long and earnestly along the waste of waters. Apparently the scrutiny was unsuccessful, for he drew a telescope from beneath his cloak and gazed through it for some minutes, directing it towards several points. At length, with an impatience of manner in which, when with his inferiors or alone, he frequently indulged, he descended the cliff and pursued his way along the beach. As he drew near the little public-house, his ears were greeted by the sound of one of Waller's most popular songs, warbled in a voice so sweet, so pipe-like, that he paused, and looked round to ascertain from whence it proceeded. It ceased. Not even his keen eye could rest on aught resembling human form. He hallooed, but received no answer: yet had he not continued three steps on his way when the song was renewed, as he thought, directly over his head; notwithstanding the roaring of the waves, he even heard the words distinctly—

"Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired."

Again he shouted, and a loud and elfin laugh, that danced with the echoes from crag to crag and billow to billow, was sent forth in reply.

"Mermaid—Merman—or Demon! where be ye!" cried Burrell, loudly.

"Even here, master mine," answered Robin Hays, shaking his large head, over a midway and partly detached portion of the cliff.

"Come down, do, you will-o'-the-wisp! In Heaven's name what takes you into such breakneck places?"

"The same matter that brings you here, sir," replied Robin, skipping and crawling alternately, suiting his motions to the inequality of the place: "the very same matter that brings you here—a woman."

"How know you that, master prate-a-pace? At all events, you have no woman there."

"Why, master, seeing you were born under the planet Venus, your whole trouble must be of her making; and, as to there being no woman up here, that matters nothing, for woman's fancy mounts higher than e'er a cliff in England; and to gain their favours we must humour their fancy. A certain damsel that I know, had a curiosity to see a peewit's eggs; so I thought I'd find her some, and here they are." From a pouch made of untanned leather, which hung in front like an apron, he took two small eggs of a greenish hue, spotted with black.

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"What a fool you are," exclaimed Burrell, "to risk your neck for such trumpery! It would be long ere you would risk it for your master."

"I have known many hazard theirs for a less cause—and, to say the truth, there's a deal to be learned from the wild sea-birds," replied Robin, as if he had not heard the latter portion of the sentence; "I have a regard for the creeturs, which are like kings in the air. Many an hour have I sat up yonder, listening to the noises of earth and the noises of heaven, while the shrill note of the gull, the chatter of the guillemot, the heron's bitter scream, the hoarse croaking of the cormorant, have been all around me: and, indeed, the birds know me well enough. There's a pair of old gulls—"

"Robin! I came not here to talk of cormorants and gulls; I want to ask you a question, and I expect an honest answer."

Robin made the nearest approach to a bow he was ever guilty of.

"Honesty, Robin, is a most valuable quality."

"So it is, sir—and, like all valuables, ought to fetch a good price."

"You should be a disciple of Manasseh Ben Israel! Why, you have hardly left my service two days, and then I had a right to your honesty. You are as bad as a Jew."

"If so, I have surely a right to extort money from a Christian."

"A truce to your jests, you ill-favoured loon: I want no man's labour for nothing—there are some

broad pieces to stop your mouth; and now, when saw you Hugh Dalton?"

"Not since I had the honour to wait upon you, sir, to London."

"But he is off the coast."

"Under favour, sir, that accounts for my not seeing him on it."

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"Scoundrel!" exclaimed Burrell fiercely; "no such mummary with me, or I'll soon put you upon salt-water rations. Dalton, I say, is off the coast; I would speak with him, I *must* speak with him; and as I have good reason to know you telegraph each other, manage so that he meet me under the cavern:—do you understand, you sprat-spawn? Under the cavern; to-morrow night, at eleven; we can serve each other." Burrell, when he had retraced his steps about five yards, turned round and added, "You owe me amends for your base desertion the night before last, which I have not forgotten."

Robin, cap in hand, watched his receding footsteps with an underlook; and then, attended by his faithful Crisp, repaired to the cottage, where a cannikin of porridge, seasoned by the hand of his mother with good spicery, and more than half composed of double-dub, awaited his arrival.

CHAPTER VI.

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

SHAKSPEARE.

There is nothing in England so variable as its climate. Before the succeeding night, the very remembrance of the storm seemed to have passed away from the placid waters, which now slept in the moonbeams as tranquilly as a cradled child; the sea-bird's scream no longer whistled through the air, and the small waves murmured their gentle music along the strand. Nature was hushed and happy; but the tranquillity of external objects had little effect upon the mind of Burrell, as he strode to his trysting with the bold Buccaneer. Yet were there no outward tokens that he apprehended aught from the meeting; for, excepting the sword, usually borne by persons of all ranks and professions during the dynasty of Oliver, he was completely unarmed. The place appointed was appropriately described as "Under the Cavern." It was known to Dalton's more intimate associates, and the Cavaliers, who had from time to time obtained security therein; but, if its bare, bleak walls had been gifted with speech, they might have rehearsed such tales of rapine and plunder as few writers would venture to record. The cavern appeared, to those who might wander along the sea-shore, to be but a deep and natural excavation into a huge rock, the western extremity of which ran out into the ocean, and therefore compelled the traveller to ascend a kind of artificial steps, in order to pass to the other side: the beach was, consequently, but little frequented, as leading to no necessary point, and as the inhabitants of the adjoining cottage, with which our readers are already familiar, had taken especial care to form several paths in various directions from its door, but none leading down to this part of the neighbouring cliffs, it was but rarely that the whiteness of the rocks was defaced by any foot save that of the daring bird from whom it received its name, and by whom it was regarded as his own natural and undisputed property.

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Whether the cavern into which we are about to enter was originally framed by some freak of Nature, or was the invention and subsequent accomplishment of art, we are unable to determine. Like many a structure better formed to endure for ages, it has been long swept away by the encroachments of the sea, which, since the period we write of, has been gradually gaining upon the land. Even at the present moment, there are old men dwelling in the neighbourhood who can remember houses and corn-fields where now a proud ship may ride at anchor. From time to time, without the slightest warning, some immense rock falls, and mingles with the ocean, which soon dashes aside every trace of its existence, leaving merely a new surface, to vanish in its turn under the influence of a power, silent and patient, but inevitable and unconquerable.

Immediately as the moonlight was left behind, the cavern became high and arched, as if either Nature, or some skilful workman under her superintendence, had foreseen to what important purposes it might be applied. Huge masses of flint, and still larger fragments of granite, were scattered about as if by giant hands, yet without any seeming attention to order or regularity. The initiated, however, well knew that such was not the case. Burrell, immediately on entering, proceeded to the farther extremity, and kneeling, placed his mouth to the ground, and gave a loud sharp whistle: he then stood erect, at a little distance from the spot on which he had knelt. Presently what appeared a lump of grey stone, moved upwards, then aside, and the head and shoulders of a man from beneath sprang into its place so suddenly as to have appeared the work of magic. He leaned a little on one side, to permit Burrell to descend; and the next minute the cavern seemed as if no human step had ever disturbed its solitude. Six or eight rugged stairs brought the knight into a low but spacious apartment, from which there was no apparent exit except by an arched doorway, where the commencement of a spiral ascent was visible, leading almost perpendicularly into the secret room of the widow Hays' small hostelry, in which our acquaintance Jack Roupall and his friends had been concealed, and which, it may be here stated,

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served other purposes than to afford comfort and entertainment to the wayfarer.

It may also be observed, that, if at any time the widow's house was suspected of harbouring dangerous or outlawed persons, and consequent search was made under its roof, those to whom concealment was either convenient or necessary had a ready sanctuary in the cavern beneath, where they might either tarry until assured of safety, or whence they could easily escape on board one of the free traders which rarely passed a week without a call of inquiry at some point along the coast. The cavern was, therefore, known to many, for many were they to whom it had been a shelter and a safeguard. Not so the inner temple (if we may so apply the term), to which Burrell now sought admission through a door with the nature of which only some half a dozen were acquainted. To them the secret had necessarily been confided, but under the most awful oaths of secrecy, and a terrible pledge that the life of him who might reveal it, was to be at all times, and in all places, at the disposal of any one of those who shared with him a knowledge so fearful.

The door before which Burrell paused, was, in its way, a masterpiece of art: it consisted of a mass of clay and flint, so skilfully put together that the most acute searcher, even though he possessed the certainty of its existence somewhere, must have failed to discover it from among the natural lining of the rude but extensive cave. A low and gentle whistle was answered by a like signal, and the door was drawn gradually inwards, until sufficient space was afforded to permit Burrell to pass into a large space, but less raw and wild than that from which he had just entered.

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In one corner of this singular hall, rose a motley pile of musketry, rifles, hand-grenades, basket and cross-hilted swords, steel cuirasses, which, from their rude and sullied condition, appeared to have suffered much and hard service; buff and other coloured doublets, breast-plates, shoulder-belts with gilt and plain buckles; manacles, some rusty, others of glittering brightness: the muzzle of a small brass swivel projected from beneath a number of flags and emblems of various nations, rolled together with a degree of amity to which their former owners had long been strangers. Over these again were heaped cloaks, caps, feathers, and trappings, enough to form the stock wardrobe of a theatre. Nor were there wanting thumb-screws and other instruments of torture, often unsparingly exercised upon those who hid their treasure or retained secrets they were desired to betray. Near to this miscellaneous assemblage rose another heap, the base of which appeared to consist of some half score of elephants' teeth, rough hemp, fragments of huge cable, cable-yarn, and all manner of cordage; rolls of lewxerns', martrons', and leopard-skins; wolf-skins, "tawed and untawed;" girdles of silk, velvet, and leather; and on pegs, immediately over, hung half a dozen mantles of miniver, and some wide robings of the pure spotted ermine. Upon a huge sea-chest were heaped bales of costly Brabant, Overyssels, and other rare linens, mingled with French and Italian lawns of the finest texture; Turkish camlets, satins of China and Luca, plain and wrought, and many other expensive and highly-taxed articles. Delicious odours were diffused through the chamber from various cases of perfume, musk, ambergris, and the costly attar; while along the north wall were ranged different sized casks of Nantz brandy, Hollands, and Jamaica rum; giving to the whole the appearance of a vast storehouse. An enormous chafing-dish, filled with burning charcoal, stood near the centre, and in a deep iron pan was placed a keg of oil, a hole having been driven into its head, through which a sort of hempen wick had been introduced; it flared and blazed like an overgrown flambeau, throwing a warm and glowing light over the entire of the wild yet well-filled apartment.

But the most singular portion of the garniture of this most singular cave consisted of a number of "Oliver's Acts," pinned or nailed against the walls. If Dalton had been Lord Chief Justice, he could not have displayed a more minute attention to the products of legal sittings than distinguished his private chamber: here was set forth on goodly parchment, "An Act for the Security of his Highness the Lord Protector, his Person, and Continuance of the Nation in Peace and Safety;" there, "An Act for Renouncing and Disannulling the pretended Title of Charles Stuart, &c. at the Parliament begun at Westminster the 17th day of September, anno Domini 1656," with the names "Henry Hills" and "John Field, Printers to his Highness the Lord Protector," in large letters at the bottom, together with divers others, chiefly however relating to the excise.

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Hugh Dalton rose from his seat, and laid his enormous pipe on a pile of ebony logs that answered the purpose of a table, when Sir Willmott Burrell saluted him with more civility than he usually bestowed upon inferiors: but, despite his outlawry, and the wild course his life had taken, there was a firm, bold, and manly bearing about the Buccaneer which might have overawed far stouter hearts than the heart of the master of Burrell. His vest was open, and his shirt-collar thrown back, so as to display to advantage the fine proportions of his chest and neck. His strongly-marked features had at all times an expression of fierceness which was barely redeemed from utter ferocity by a pleasant smile that usually played around a well-formed mouth; but when anger was uppermost, or passion was subdued by contempt, those who came within reach of his influence, more dreaded the rapid motion or the sarcastic curl of his lip, than the terrible flashing of eyes that were proverbial, even among the reckless and desperate men of whom he was the chief, in name, in courage, and in skill. His forehead was unusually broad: thick and bushy brows overhung the long lashes of his deeply-set eyes, around which there was a dark line, apparently less the effect of nature than of climate. The swarthy hue of his countenance was relieved by a red tinge on either cheek; but a second glance might have served to convince the gazer that it was the consequence of unchecked dissipation, not a token of ruddy health. Indeed, notwithstanding the fine and manly character of his form and countenance, both conveyed an idea of a mind ill at ease, of a conscience smitten by the past and apprehensive of the future, yet seeking consolation in the knowledge of good that had been effected, and of more that remained

to be done. Years of crime had not altogether obliterated a natural kindness of heart; he appeared as one who had outraged society and its customs in a thousand forms, yet who knew there was that within him by which he was entitled to ask and expect a shelter within her sanctuary; and when a deep flush would pass over his features, and his blood grow chill at the recollection of atrocities at which the sufferers in a score of lands had shuddered as they talked, he endeavoured to still the voice that reproached him, by placing to the credit of his fearful account some matters to which we may hereafter more distinctly refer.

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It was before such a man that Burrell of Burrell now stood, and by whom he was addressed.

"My piping-bird, good sir, told me you wanted me; and though somewhat inconvenient at this present time, here I am. Won't you sit? This is no lady's lounging-room; yet we can find seats, and costly ones too," he added, pushing a chest of spices towards his visitor.

"Then, you were not at sea, Captain?" observed Burrell, seating himself, and unclasping his cloak.

"I did not say so," replied the other, bringing his bushy brows more closely over his eyes, and glancing suspiciously upon the questioner.

"Oh, no; I only imagined it."

"Well, sir, I was not at sea, and I care not who knows it."

"But, my worthy friend, we have been acquainted too long for you to fear my 'peaching aught concerning you or your doings."

"And did I talk of fear?" inquired the Buccaneer, with a droll and yet bitter expression. "Well, if I did, I only follow, as Robin would say, the example of my betters, by talking about what I don't understand."

"Vastly good, and true!—true as the——"

"Needle to the pole; the finest simile in nature, Sir Willmott Burrell: you were fishing for a holy one, I saw, which is what these walls don't often hear, for we've no ladders nor warpes among us."

"You've enlarged this room, and improved it much, Captain, since I last saw it."

"Humph! ay, that was, I remember, when his Highness——"

"Hush!" interrupted Burrell, changing colour, and looking round the room cautiously; "you must be very careful, Dalton, how you say any thing about——"

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"Ha! ha! ha! So you look for a troop of old Noll's Ironsides to bounce from under these packages in this good Isle of Shepey; or, mayhap, expect to see him start forth from behind his own Acts, which you perceive garnish my walls—the walls of my secret palace, so splendidly; but I may talk about his Highness, ay, and about the prisoners you escorted here, despite the loyal men of Kent, for me to ship to the Colonies—and—. But no matter, no matter; Noll knew I did it, for he knows every thing. Well, sir, you seem so alarmed, that I'm dumb as a sand-bank; only this, his Highness is far enough off to-night, and you need fear no other Olivers, for England will never see but one."

"True, true—good Dalton!—but tell me, are you often on the French coast now?"

"Yes, I'm grown old, and, though my little Fire-fly is still bright and beautiful, and her ivories as biting, her guns, sir, as musical as ever, yet I'm done with the Colonies; they ruin a man's morals and his health; but I do a little, just by way of amusement, or practice, with Flanders and France, and a run now and then to Lisbon."

"How long is it since you've been to St. Vallery?"

"Some time now; I was at Dieppe last month, and that is very near."

"Dalton, you must make St. Vallery before this moon is out, and execute a little commission for me."

"Very good, sir; we have never disputed about terms. What is it? any thing in the way of silks, or ——"

"It is flesh, human flesh, Dalton."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Buccaneer, rising and recoiling from the knight. "I've had enough of that, and I'll have no more. Sir Willmott Burrell, you must seek out another man."

"Now, Dalton," said Burrell, in his most insinuating tone, "you have not yet heard me, and I take it very unhandsome of an old friend like you to start off in such a manner without knowing why or wherefore. The matter is simply this—a girl, a silly girl, somehow or other got attached to me while I was in France. I have received letter upon letter, talking of her situation, and so forth, and threatening various things; amongst others, to come over here, unless—the idiot!—I acknowledge her as my wife. Now, you know, or perhaps you do not know, that I am betrothed to the daughter of Sir Robert Cecil; and, if I must enter into the holy state, why she is a maiden to be proud of. I have arranged it thus—written to my fair Zillah to get to St. Vallery by a particular day, the date of which I will give you, and told her that a vessel waits to convey her to England. You, Dalton, must guide that vessel, and——but you understand me; words between friends are needless."

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"The cargo for exportation; Barbadoes perhaps——"

"Or——" And Burrell pointed with his finger downwards, though, when he raised his eye to encounter that of the Buccaneer, it was quickly withdrawn.

"God, Burrell!" exclaimed Dalton, in a tone of abhorrence, "you are a greater villain than I took you for! Why can't you pay off the girl—send her somewhere—gild the crime?"

"Gold is no object with her; she desires honour."

The sympathetic chord of the Buccaneer's heart was touched, for the sentiment echoed his own.

"Then who is she?" he demanded; "I'll not stir in it unless I know all."

Burrell paused for a moment, and then said—

"You have heard of Manasseh Ben Israel, a rabbi, whom it hath pleased a great personage to distinguish with much kindness: nay, his mercy has gone so far as to contemplate receiving that unholy people into commune with us, giving them the right-hand of fellowship, and suffering them to taste of the waters——"

"Spritsail and rigging!" interrupted the Buccaneer, whose enraged spirit sought some outlet, "No conventicle lingo here—you forget your company, Sir Willmott. What of the Jew?"

"You know his highness has strangely favoured this man, and that he is much thought of. It is now more than six months since I was entrusted with a commission to Paris, and Ben Israel requested I would take charge of some packages he desired to forward to his daughter. She resided with a family whom I knew to be Polish Jews, but who conformed to the Catholic faith, and quieted the conscience of a certain cardinal by liberal offerings of silver and of gold. I discharged the commission in person, and must confess that the little black-eyed maid, seated as I first saw her, on crimson cushions of rich Genoa velvet, and nearly enveloped in a veil starred with precious gems, looked more like a houri than a woman. She pleased me mightily; and, as I had a good deal of time on my hands, I trifled it with her. This might have done well; we might have gone on pleasantly enough; but the creature was as jealous as a she-tiger, and as revengeful too. I made acquaintance with a blue-eyed Dane at the court, and—can you believe it?—she tracked my footsteps in disguise, and would have stabbed me to the heart, had I not wrenched the dagger from her little hand. She pretended to be sorry for it; and, though I never trusted her, our intimacy was renewed, until I was recalled. Particular necessities for money pressing upon me, I saw that no time was to be lost in fulfilling my contract with Sir Robert Cecil's daughter. My Jewess, however, thinks otherwise; declares she will follow me here; that if I do her not justice she will brave her father's anger, avow her intimacy with a Christian (which I believe they invariably punish by death), and forward, what she calls, proofs of my guilt to the Lord Protector. You perceive, Dalton, the creature is dangerous."

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"But what *can* she forward to Oliver?"

"Why, she was starch, and—you comprehend me—I was obliged to submit to a species of marriage ceremony; and there was a certificate and some letters. In short, Captain, knowing his highness's strictness—knowing his wish to conciliate this Ben Israel, and feeling the expediency of my immediate marriage—I tell you it would be certain destruction to suffer her to appear now."

"Then I must ship her off, so that she may never return," observed the Buccaneer, with a fierce knitting of his brows.

"Dalton, you know not what a devil she is: were she gentle, or a fond idiot, she could be managed; but she has the spirit, the foresight of a thousand women. Besides, I swore, when her hand was lifted against my life, that I would be revenged, and I never yet swore in vain."

Dalton looked upon Burrell's really handsome features, contracted and withered by the pestilence of a demoniac spirit, and loathed him from his very soul.

"I can't, Sir Willmott, I can't; flesh and blood must rise against the destruction of a loving woman. I won't, so help me God! and that's enough."

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"Very well—very well—but I'll have blood for blood, breach for breach, master; the Ironsides, Cromwell's tender pets, would have nice picking here. The Protector has already a scent of your whereabouts; he is one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Let the bold Buccaneer look to it, and I'll straight seek some less *honest* man to do my bidding."

"Heave over such jargon," replied Dalton, upon whom Burrell's threats seemed to have made no impression. "Suppose you did betray me, how many days' purchase would your life be worth? Think ye there are no true hearts and brave, who would sacrifice their own lives to avenge the loss of mine? Avast, Master of Burrell! you are old enough to know better."

"And you ought to know better than to sail against the wind. Why, man, the little Jewess is freighted with jewels; a very queen of diamonds. And I care not for them: you may keep them all—so——" The villain's lip faltered; he feared to speak of the deed his heart had planned. Dalton made no reply, but covered his face with his hand, leaning his elbow on the table. Burrell took advantage of his silence to urge the riches of the rabbi's daughter, the presents he himself would give, and wound up the discourse with protests loud and earnest of everlasting gratitude. Dalton

let him speak on, but still maintained an inflexible silence.

"Sdeath, man!" exclaimed Burrell, hastily, after a pause of some minutes; "art asleep, or stupid?"

"Neither," replied the Buccaneer. "But I will do your bidding. Now, write your directions,—here are pens, ink, paper, all that you require,—and my reward; write, sir, and then good night." Burrell did so, while Dalton paced up and down his den, as if meditating and arranging some action of importance. All matters being agreed upon, apparently to the satisfaction of both, they were about to separate, when Burrell inquired—

"Did you land any Cavaliers lately?"

"Not I; they are but a bad freight; broad pieces are a scarce commodity with Charlie's friends."

"Very strange. I met a braggart the other night, but I dare say he was one of the Syndercomb gang. His highness imagines you conveyed some of them to their head-quarters." [68]

"Does he?"

"Master Dalton, you are close."

"Master Burrell, I have agreed to do your business."

"Well!"

"I mean it to be well. Consequently, I have not agreed to tell you mine."

Burrell looked daggers for a moment, and then turned off with a hasty step and a forced laugh.

"Blasted be my hand for touching his in the way of amity!" exclaimed the Buccaneer, striking the table with a violence that echoed through the room. "The cold-blooded, remorseless villain! She is too good for such a sacrifice—I must be at work. And so, one infamy at a time is not enough for the sin-dealing land lubber; he wanted to worm out of me—Robin! ahoy! Robin!"

Dalton stepped to the outside of the still open door; and on the instant descended from the communicating stair leading to the Gull's Nest, not Robin, but him of the grey steed and black cloak, who was so near falling a victim to Burrell's treachery on a recent occasion.

CHAPTER VII.

For guilty states do ever bear
The plagues about them which they have
deserved;
And, till those plagues do get above
The mountain of our faults, and there do
sit,
We see them not. Thus, still we love
The evil we do, until we suffer it.

BEN JONSON.

The Buccaneer welcomed the young man with greater warmth than is usually displayed, except to near and dear connections. It must be remembered, also, he had arrived at that period of life when feelings of affection and friendship stagnate somewhat in the veins, and curdle into apathy. Few are there who have numbered fifty winters without wondering what could have set their blood boiling and their hearts beating so warmly some few years before. A benison upon a smiling lip, a kindly eye, and a cheerful voice!—whether they belong to the young or to the old—may all such true graces be long preserved from the blight called "knowledge of the world!" which, while bestowing information with the one hand, takes away innocence and hope with the other.—But to the story. [69]

The young Cavalier greeted his associate more as a friend than a companion: there was evidently between them that good understanding which, arising from acquaintance with the better points of character, produces mutual esteem; and although there was a degree of deference paid to Hugh Dalton by the youth, it seemed a compliment to his age and experience, gracefully and naturally rendered, and kindly and thankfully received. It was obvious that Dalton so considered it; receiving attention far less as his due, than as a voluntary offering for which he desired to show his gratitude.

There was, nevertheless, something of pity mingled with regard, which the youth manifested towards his chafed companion, as he took the seat that had been occupied by Burrell, and, laying his hand upon the powerful arm of the Buccaneer, inquired, in a touching and anxious tone, if aught had particularly disturbed him.

"Walter, no—nothing very particular; for knavery and villany are seldom rare, and I have been long accustomed to treat with both; only it's too bad to have more unclean spirits than one's own harpying and haunting a man! God! I can breathe better now that fellow's gone. Ah, Master

Walter! there be two sorts of villains in the world: one with a broad, bronzed face, a bold loud voice, a drinking look, and an unsheathed dagger—and him men avoid and point at, and children cling to their mother's skirts as he passes by:—the other is masked from top to toe;—his step is slow, his voice harmonised, his eye vigilant, but well-trained; he wears his dagger in his bosom, and crosses his hands thereon as if in piety, but it is, in truth, that his hold may be firm and his stab sure; yet the world know not that, and they trust him, and he is singled out as a pattern-man for youth to follow; and so—but we all play parts—all, all! And now for a stave of a song: Hurrah for the free trade!—a shout for the brave Buccaneers!—a pottle of sack!—and now, sir, I am myself again! The brimstone smell of that dark ruffian nearly overpowered me!" So saying, he passed his hand frequently over his brows, attempting at the same time to laugh away his visible emotion.

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"It will not do!" said the young man, whom Dalton had addressed by the name of Walter; "something has disturbed you: surely, Captain, I may ask what it is?"

"Some forty years ago I had a father," replied the Buccaneer, looking earnestly in the youth's face; "he was an aged man then, for he did not marry until he was old, and my mother was beautiful, and quitted his side: but that does not matter; only it shows how, as my poor father had nothing else to love, he loved me with the full tenderness of a most affectionate nature. He was a clergyman too, and a firm royalist; one of those devoted royalists, as regarded both God and king, who would submit, for their sakes, to the stake or the block with rapture at being thought worthy to make the sacrifice. Well, I was wild and wilful, and even then would rather steal a thing than gain it by lawful means: not that I would have stolen aught to keep it, for I was generous enough; but I loved the danger and excitement of theft, and, on the occasion I speak of, I had taken some apples from a neighbouring tree belonging to a poor woman. It was evening when I took this unlucky fruit; and not knowing a safe place in which to deposit it, I was restless and disturbed all night. The next day, from a cause I could not guess at, my father would not suffer me to go out, and was perpetually, on some pretext or other, going to and from the cupboard where my treasure had been placed. I was in agony; and as night again closed in, the agitation and anxiety I had suffered made me ill and pale. My dear father drew near him the little oak table that was set apart for the Bible, and, opening it, said that he had that day composed a sermon for my especial case. I dreaded that my apple-stealing had been discovered; and I was right, though he did not say so. He enlarged in sweet and simple language upon his text: it was this—"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Walter! Walter! the old man has been many years in his grave, and I have been as many a reckless wanderer over the face of the wild earth and still wilder sea; but I have never done a deed of blood and plunder, that those words have not echoed—echoed in my ears, struck upon my heart like the fiend's curse. Yet," he added in a subdued accent, "it was no cursing lips pronounced them: I have been the curse to the holy words, not they to me."

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"I never before heard you speak of your father," observed the youth.

"I do not like to speak of him; I ran off to sea when I was about ten years old, and when I came back he was dead. There was war enough in England at that time to occupy my active nature: I first joined the King's party, and had my share of wounds and glory at Gainsborough, where I fought with and saw poor Cavendish killed by that devil Cromwell. It was at that same battle his successes began: he had a brave horse-regiment there of his countrymen, most of them freeholders and freeholders' sons, who upon matter of conscience engaged in this quarrel under him. It was there he ousted us with his canting. Gadsooks! they went as regularly to their psalm-singing as they had been in a conventicle; and thus, d'ye see, being armed after their own fanatical fashion within, and without by the best iron armour, they stood as one man, firmly, and charged as one man, desperately.—But we have other things to talk of than him or me; so sit down, young gentleman, and let's hear the news;—or, stay, Robin must first bring us some wine—my warehouse is full of it; I must wash down the poison that fellow has crammed into my throat. Ah! ah! ah! what chafes me is, that, from my cursed reputation, greater villains than myself thrust me forward to do their work, and think they have a right to storm and stare if I have conscience in any thing. But I'll be even with them all yet—with one in particular. That villain!—shall that far greater villain have peace? 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'"

He summoned Robin, who placed on the table some meat and wine, and other matters that supplied a pretty substantial supper: a ceremony, the rendering justice to which affords us sufficient leisure to examine the form and features of the young Cavalier, who, having laid aside his enormous cloak, reclined on some piles of foreign cloths with an ease and grace that belongs only to those of gentle blood. Amid the bustle and occupation of life, it is a simple matter for people of ordinary rank to assume the bearing of the well-bred; but repose is the true criterion of a gentleman or lady, inasmuch as there is then no motion to take off from an ungraceful attitude or an awkward mien. The features of the Cavalier were almost too high for beauty; and had it not been for a playful smile that frequently flitted across his countenance, elongating his moustache, softening and blending the hard lines that even at four-and-twenty had deepened into furrows, he would have been pronounced of severe aspect. Bright golden hair clustered in rich curls over his forehead, and fell a little on either cheek, giving a picturesque character to the form of the head. His eyes appeared of a dark grey; but they were so much sunk, so overshadowed by his forehead, as to leave one in doubt as to their exact colour. His figure was unusually tall and well-formed, and his whole bearing was more that of an accomplished gentleman than of a cut-and-slash cavalier: his manner was neither reckless nor daring, but it was firm and collected. His dress was composed of the finest black cloth, with a black velvet doublet; and his sword-hilt glittered with diamonds.

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Robin did not attempt to place himself at the same table, but sat back on a lower seat and at a little distance, sharing his repast with Crisp, who had scrambled down the stairs after his master, and looked ugly enough to be, what he certainly was, an extraordinary canine genius.

Dalton and Walter laboured under no restraint because of the presence of Robin; on the contrary, he occasionally shared in the conversation, and his opinion upon various topics was frequently asked; indeed, he was fond of bestowing it gratuitously, and seemed highly pleased when called upon to express it.

"Didst hear, Robin, when Blake was expected off Sheerness with the Spanish prizes?"

"In a few days, it is said, he will either bring or send them; but my own thought is, that it will be about a week, neither more nor less, before any ship arrives."

"I must get off for the French coast in a day or two," said Dalton; "and I do not care to return until Blake with his train go up the river a bit; for it's foul sailing athwart the brave old boy: he's the only man living I'd strike flag to."

"And who has the care of the Firefly now you're ashore?" inquired the Cavalier.

"Why, Jeromio."

"I don't like him," said Robin bluntly: "foreigners are good slaves, but bad masters to us English: I'd rather trust the ship to little Spring." [73]

"He is a mere boy, and too bad a sailor; besides, he is grown so superstitious, swears the devil came to him one night I placed him a watch on yon cliff. I must leave him ashore with you, Robin, and tell you what to do with the scapegrace, if I am not back by a particular day. I must also give you a letter to take to Sir Robert Cecil, postponing an appointment I had made with him."

"You had better give the letter to that gentleman," exclaimed Robin, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to where the Cavalier sat; "he would do an errand to Cecil Place, especially if it were to the Lady Constance, right gladly."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dalton, fixing his quick eye on the youth's countenance, that betrayed uneasiness but not displeasure. "Sits the wind in that quarter? But tell us, Robin, how was it?"

"There is nothing to tell, Captain," interrupted Walter, "except that Robin accompanied me to the Place, as it is called, to show me some alterations, and point out the excellent order in which the trees are kept; and in the grounds we encountered Mistress Cecil, and, as I am informed, the Lady Cromwell."

"I wish you would keep close here though," muttered Dalton; "you'll be meeting the villain Burrell before—"

"I would fain encounter Sir Willmott Burrell once again, and make him pay the traitor's forfeit."

"Peace—peace! give Burrell rope enough to hang himself. He'll swing as high as Haman ere long. Robin told me of the coward's treachery."

"I wish Robin had not accompanied him to London," exclaimed Walter; "I hate people to carry two faces. But my wonder is that Burrell would trust him."

"Just because he could not help himself," retorted Robin. "He wanted a clever lad who had understanding. His own valet was in France on some business or another mighty mysterious; and a gentleman like him, who has a good character and a foul conscience, a good head and a bad heart, has need of a man of talent, not a loon, about his person. To do full justice, however, to his discretion, he treated me to as few of his secrets as he could, and I endeavoured to save him trouble by finding them all out." [74]

The Buccaneer laughed aloud, but the high-souled Cavalier looked serious.

"Ah! ah!" said Dalton, "you never did relish machinations, and it is well you are not left to yourself in this plan of mine: honour is not the coin to take to a villain's market."

"'Tis the only coin I will ever deal in, Captain; and I told you before I left Cologne, that on no other condition would I accompany you to England, except that of being held clear of every act unbefitting a gentleman or a soldier."

"Young sir," replied Dalton, "when you were indeed young, and long before you took your degree in morality at the rambling court of the second Charles, did I ever counsel you to do aught that your—that, in short, you might not do with perfect honour? I know too well what it is to sacrifice honour to interest ever to wish you to make the trial. As for me, I am low enough in character —"

"My kind preserver! my brave friend!" interrupted Walter, touched at his change of manner. "Forgive such unworthy, such unmerited suspicion. This is not the first time I have had to learn your kindly care for me. But for you—"

"Well, there, there boy—I love to call you boy still; I can bear my own shame, but I could never bear yours."

Dalton paused, apparently with a view to change the subject: the Cavalier observed—

"You quarrel with our young king's morality?"

"I'faith, I do!—though you will say it's ill coming from me to fault any man's conduct; but I hate your little vices as much as your little virtues: sickly, puny goods and evils, that are too weak for sun to ripen, too low for blast to break, but which endure, the same withered, sapless things, to the death-day—Augh! a bold villain, or a real downright good man, for my money. How the devil can Charles Stuart do any thing great, or think of any thing great, with his mistresses and his dogs, his gaming and—Why, it is hardly a year since I took off from Dover that poor Lucy Barton and her brat, after the poor thing suffering imprisonment in the Tower for his sake!"

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"The child's a noble child," said Walter; "but the mother's a sad reprobate, swears and drinks like a trooper."

"My mother is a woman," exclaimed little Robin, with great gravity, poising a mutton-bone between his fingers, to arrive at which Crisp was making extraordinary efforts,—and I can't deny that I've a sort of love, though it be a love without hope, for a very pretty girl, a woman also: now this being the case, I'm not fond of hearing women reflected on; for when they're young, they're the delight of our eyes; and when they're old, they're useful, though a trifle crabbed, but still useful; and a house without a woman would be like—like—"

"Robin at fault!" said Dalton: "you've given me many a comparison, and now I'll lend you one—a bell without a clapper; won't that do, Robin?" Robin shook his head.—"Ay, Robin! Robin! you're right, after all. If it were not for a woman, I'd never set foot on shore again: but I'm proud of my little Barbara; and all the fine things you tell me of her, Robin, make me still prouder;—her mother all over. I often think how happy I shall be to call her daughter, when she won't be ashamed to own me: God help me!"—and be it noted that Dalton crossed himself as he spoke—"God help me! I often think that if ever I gain salvation, it will be through the prayers of that girl. Would that she had been brought up in her mother's way!"

"What would old Noll say to that papistical sign, master?" inquired Robin.

"A plague on you and old Noll too! I never get a bit up towards heaven, that something doesn't pull me back again."

"I'll send you up in a moment," said Robin, in a kind voice. "Your daughter, Barbara—"

"Ay, that it is, that it is," muttered the Buccaneer; "my own, own child!—the child of one who, I bless God, never lived to know that she wedded (for I wedded her in holy church, at Dominica) a wild and wicked rover. Our love was sudden and hot, as the sun under which we lived; and I never left her but once from the time we became one. I had arranged all, given up my ship and cargo,—and it was indeed a cargo of crimes—at least, I thought so then. It was before the civil wars; or I had again returned to England, or traded, no matter how. I flew to her dwelling, with a light heart and a light step. What there? My wife,—she who had hung so fondly round my neck and implored me not to leave her,—was stretched on a low bamboo bed—dead, sir—dead! I might have known it before I entered, had I but remembered that she knew my step on the smooth walk, fell it ever so lightly, and would have met me—but for death! And there too sat a black she-devil, stuffing my infant's mouth with their vile food. I believe the hag thought I was mad; for I caught the child in my arms, held it to my heart while I bent over my wife's body, and kissed her cold, unreturning—for the first time unreturning—lips; then flung myself out of the accursed place,—ran with my burden to the shipowners, who had parted with me most grudgingly,—and was scudding before the wind in less than twelve hours, more at war with my own species than ever, and panting for something to wreak my hatred on. At first I wished the infant dead, for I saw her pining away; but at last, when she came to know me, and lift up her innocent hands to my face—I may confess it here—many and many a night have I sat in my cabin looking on that sleeping child, till my eyes swam in a more bitter brine than was ever brewed in the Atlantic. Particular circumstances obliged me to part with her, and I have never regretted her being with poor Lady Cecil—only I should have liked her to pray as her mother did. Not that I suppose it will make any difference at the wind-up,—if," he added, doubtingly, "there be indeed any wind-up. Hugh Dalton will never be really himself till he can look that angel girl straight in the face, and ask her to pray for him, as her mother used." Dalton was too much affected to continue, and both his auditors respected his feelings too much to speak. At length he said, "But this gloom will never do. Come, Robin, give us a song, and let it not be one of your sad ones."

[76]

Robin sung,—

"Now, while the night-wind loud and chill
Unheeded raves around the door,
Let us the wine-cup drain and fill,
And welcome social joys once more—
The joys that still remain to cheer
The gloomiest month of all the
year,
By our own fire side.

[77]

"What need we care for frost and snow?
Thus meeting—what have we to fear
From frost and snow, or winds that blow?
Such guests can find no entrance

here.
No coldness of the heart or air—
Our little world of twelve feet
square,
And our own fire-side.

"I drink this pledge to thee and thine—
I fill this cup to thine and thee—
How long the summer sun might shine,
Nor fill our souls with half the glee
A merry winter's night can bring,
To warm our hearts, while thus
we sing
By our own fire-side."

The song, however, produced a contrary effect to that the Ranger had intended. It pictured a fancied scene—one to which both Walter and the Buccaneer had long been strangers; and a lengthened and painful pause succeeded to the brief moment of forced merriment. It was broken by the Cavalier, who inquired—

"How long will it be before you return from this new trip? for remember, my good friend, that suspense is a——"

"Hell!" interrupted Dalton, in his usual intemperate manner: "but I cannot help it. It is not wise to pluck unripe fruit—do you understand me?"

"Perfectly—and I dare say you are right; but tell me, Dalton, how is it that, till lately, you so completely abandoned this island, and kept to the Devon and Cornwall coasts? I should have thought this the most convenient; your storehouse here is so well arranged."

"Ay, ay, sir; but this is over-near London, though it used to be a safe place enough; but now that Sir Michael [Livezey](#)—regicide that he is!—abides so continually at Little Shurland, what chance is there for any good to such as I? I tell ye, Cromwell's nose is ever on the scent."

"A great advantage to him, and a disadvantage to his foes," said Robin: "he has only to put the said nose to the touch-hole of the biggest cannon, and off it goes; it never costs the army a farthing for matches when he's with it."

"Pshaw, Robin! but is he indeed so [red-nosed](#)? You have often seen him, Captain."

"Ay, dressed in a plain cloth suit, made by an ill country tailor; his linen coarse and unclean; his band unfashionable, and often spotted with blood; his hat without a band; his sword close to his side; his countenance swollen and reddish; and, as to his nose, it looked to me more purple than aught else. But, sir, to see Cromwell, see him in battle—he is a right noble horseman; and the beast (a black one especially he was once so fond of) seemed to have been tutored by the evil one: its eye was as vigilant as its rider's. Cromwell sits his saddle not gracefully, but firmly, just as if he were part and portion of the animal; then, with a sword in his right hand, and a pistol in his left—Sir, it was unlike any thing I ever saw! He must have managed the horse by the pressure of his heel; for I never could make out, such was the decision yet rapidity of his movements, whether he held reins or not: now here, now there—firing—preaching—shouting—praying—conquering—yet everything done in its right place and time, never suffering the excitement of the moment to bear down one of his resolves. Had he been born a king——"

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"He would never have been what he is," said the Cavalier; "for contention is the school of greatness."

"It's mighty fine to see you two sit there," exclaimed Robin, "praising up that man in the high place: pretty Cavaliers indeed! Well, my opinion is, that—but indeed it is rude to give an opinion unasked, so I'll keep mine to myself. You were talking of the conveniences of this place; why, bless you, sir, it's nothing to fifty others along St. George's Channel. 'Twould do your heart good to see those our captain has among the Cornish rocks; such comfortable dwellings, where you could stow away twenty people, never to chirrup to the sun again; such hiding-holes, with neat little trains of gunpowder, winding like snakes in summer, so that, to prevent discovery, one crack of a good flint would send the caverns and the cliffs high into the air, to tell stories to the stars of the power of man's skill to destroy the most sublime as well as the most beautiful works of nature."

"Robin, you ought to have been a preacher."

"No," said Robin mournfully, and shaking his head, as was his custom, "for I know nothing of your book-holiness; only I can't bear anything moulded and made by the hand of God to be ruined by that of man."

"What ails ye, lad?" inquired the Buccaneer; "I thought ye had got over all your shadows, as ye used to call them."

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"Not all of them; only they do not come upon me as often as they used," he replied gravely; for poor Robin had one time been subject to periodical fits that bordered on insanity, and during such afflictions wandered about the country, without seeking repose or speaking word to any one. Constance Cecil, with her usual kindness, had him frequently taken care of at Cecil Place;

and Barbara's kind attention to him during such fearful trials was the source of as strong, as unvarying, and devoted an attachment as ever human being manifested towards another.

By degrees the conversation sunk into low confidential whispers, as if caution, even there, was necessary. It was near four o'clock in the morning before the Buccaneer departed for his ship, and then Robin escorted the Cavalier to his usual chamber in the Gull's Nest.

CHAPTER VIII.

When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
When healths and draughts go free,
Fishes that tipple in the deep
Know no such liberty.

LOVELACE.

"A blessing and a salutation, reverend sir! and may the sun, moon, and stars be sanctified unto you!"

"Ah! Solomon Grundy, would that the Lord had given thee sense to understand, as he hath bestowed upon thee talent to speak according to thy understanding! As it is, Solomon, I lament that thou art a fool, Solomon, a very fool, except in what regardeth the creature-comforts; and, of a verity, thou art worthy to send up a dinner even unto Hugh Peters, after he hath delivered a soul-converting oration before the chosen from among God's people."

"Which refection he would in nowise condemn," observed the cook of Cecil Place, whose closely-cropped head of foxy hair seemed to throw a proportionate quantity of glowing colour upon his rubicund countenance. He had all the outward marks that indicate a *bon vivant*, and words of piety came as awkwardly from his lips as sighs from the mouth of a seal or a salmon. His little grey eyes twinkled with affection for the said "creature-comforts;" and the leathern pouch he now carried over his shoulder was stocked with sundry good things appropriated from the larder for his own especial diet. He had received permission from Mistress Cecil to accompany some of his neighbours to see the grand company from London visit a first-rate man-of-war that had just arrived off Sheerness, bringing in a train of prizes which the veteran Blake had taken and sent home, himself proceeding to Vera Cruz, and which it was rumoured the Lord Oliver was about to inspect in person. This intelligence set the country in a ferment, and persons of all classes hastened to the island to witness the sight. For the English *were*, as they now *are*, a sight-loving people, who find pleasure in pageants; and then, as at present, they demanded economy; but when economy came, they designated it meanness.

[80]

The staunch Roundheads exulted at the idea of Cromwell's exhibiting himself thus openly after the upsetting of the Syndercomb plot; and the Royalists, depressed and disappointed, were content to let matters take their course, at least until they saw some prospect of a change; while the Levellers, the party most dreaded by the Protector, and which had been most fatal to the Stuarts, remained in that dangerous state of repose that is but the preparative for renewed activity.

The Reverend Jonas [Fleetword](#) had set forth from the sole desire of "beholding him who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, and whose name among the nations was wonderful." Solomon Grundy, and such other of the servants of Cecil Place as could be spared, were impelled forward by the wish of hearing or of seeing something new; intelligence not travelling upon wings of steam in the seventeenth century, and newspapers being but rare visitors at Shepey. Occasionally, indeed, there did descend from the breakfast-room of Sir Robert, unto the servants' hall, a stray number or two of the "Mercurius Politicus," the "Perfect Diurnal," or the "Parliament Scout;" the contents of which were eagerly devoured by the several auditors, while one, more gifted than his fellows, drawled forth, amid ejaculations and thanks unto the Lord, the doings of the Commonwealth, and especially of him who was a master in the new Israel. But the information of the underlings of the house was generally gathered from the pious pedlars, who sought entrance at the gate, well stocked with wares of every possible description, and with "gifts" of which they were always abundantly lavish to those who hungered or were athirst.

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The ladies of the family remained at home; the Lady Frances feeling assured that her father would not be present, as she had received no intimation to such effect from Whitehall. Constance, however, had heard too many tales of Oliver's sudden movements to feel satisfied as to the certainty of any matter in which he was concerned. It was no secret either that he had been displeased with his daughter for her obstinate attachment to Mr. Rich; and that he desired her, for the present, to remain in retirement and away from court.

We have said that Solomon Grundy had received permission to view the sight; and for a time he proceeded on his way, accompanied by the other domestics; but, under some sly pretext, he lingered behind them. The worthy preacher had not left Cecil Place so early, but, notwithstanding the ambling pace of his favourite jennet, he soon came up to Solomon, who, seated under a spreading elm by the wayside, was rapidly demolishing the contents of his wallet, freshened by frequent draughts from a black bottle of vast rotundity.

"Master Solomon Grundy," he observed, reining up his steed, "could not your stomach tarry, even for a short while? Ah! worthy cook, you have a most professional longing after the flesh-pots."

Solomon grinned, and applied himself with renewed diligence to his viands when the preacher had passed. He was now surrounded by a motley party, who had crossed from the main land, all bearing towards the same point. Puritans, whose cloaks were of the most formal cut, and whose hats emulated the steeple of St. Paul's; Levellers, with firm steps, wrinkled and over-hanging brows, and hard unchanging features, all denoting inflexibility of purpose and decision of character; Cavaliers, whose jaunty gait was sobered, and whose fashionable attire was curtailed in consideration that such bravery would be noticed and reprov'd by the powers that were; women attired in dark hoods and sad-coloured kirtles; some of demure aspect, others with laughing eyes and dimpled cheeks, who exchanged glances, and sometimes words, with youths of serious apparel but joyous countenances; while here and there might be recognised divines, whose iron physiognomies disdained to be affected by any of the usual feelings that flesh is heir to; and ladies on horseback, or in the lumbering heavy carriages, progressing from the horse ferry, "with stealthy pace and slow," towards the centre of attraction.

[82]

The English even now make a business of enjoyment; but in those days, what we designate pleasure, was known by no such unholy term; it was called "recreation," "the refreshment of the creature," "the repose of the flesh,"—by any name, in fact, except the true one. But in the particular instance to which we refer, it was considered a sacred duty to uphold and applaud the Lord Protector whenever there occurred an opportunity for so doing; and sound-hearted Puritans would make a pilgrimage for the purpose with as much zeal as ever Roman Catholics evinced in visiting the shrine of some holy saint. The ships rode proudly in the harbour, and groups of the gentry were occasionally conveyed on board by boats, that waited for the purpose both at Queenborough and Sheerness. It was an animated scene, but the soul of all was wanting, for neither Cromwell, nor any portion of the court, made their appearance. When it was noon, the people hoped he would arrive ere evening; but, as the evening advanced, and he failed to enter upon the scene, there was a general manifestation of disappointment throughout the crowd, although some few rejoiced at the occurrence, holding it a sign of fear on his part, as if he dreaded to be seen among them.

A party, consisting of ten or twelve persons, at Queenborough, had gathered round the trunk of a withered and hollow oak, growing in front of a public-house, that displayed the head of the Lord Protector—a political lure, that was certain to attract all Commonwealth people to the receipt of custom. The noble tree had been one of magnificent growth, but age or accident had severed the trunk, and within its heart decay had long been revelling. It was now perfectly hollow, and afforded a free passage; two enormous props had been found necessary, to prevent its making a last resting-place of the earth it had for ages triumphantly protected. The cavity that time had created was sufficiently extensive to afford shelter during a storm to three or four persons; and it was not unfrequently resorted to by the people of the inn, as a storehouse for fuel, or farming utensils, when a plentiful harvest rewarded the toil of the husbandman. Its branches, which had so often sheltered the wayfarer alike from the tempest and the hot summer's sun, had been hewn away, to serve the purposes of strife in the shape of spear-handles, or to the doom of the winter fire; one solitary arm of the blighted tree alone remained, extending its scraggy and shattered remnants to a considerable distance over the greensward which had been, from time immemorial, trodden by the merry morrice dancers, and broken by the curvetting of the hobby-horse and the Dragon of Wantley, sports it was now deemed sinful but to name. From a fragment of this dilapidated branch, hung the sign of mine host of the Oliver's Head; and right glad would he have been, if rumour had lied with each returning morn, so that the lie could but fill his dwelling with so many profitable guests. Thrice had the party, by whom had been appropriated the seat beneath the oak, emptied the black jack of its double-dub ale; and the call for a fourth replenishing was speedily answered, as the sun was setting over the ocean, and tinging the sails and masts of the distant vessels with hues that might have shamed the ruby and the sapphire.

[83]

"To have our day go for nothing, after a trudge of some twenty miles, to this out-of-the-way place,—Adad, sirs, it's no joke!" exclaimed a sturdy, bluff-looking man, to our friend little Robin Hays, who sat upon the corner of the bench, one leg tucked under (doubtless for the purpose of enabling him to sit higher than nature had intended,) while the other swung methodically backward and forward: "Adad, sir, it's no joke!" he repeated.

"No more it isn't, Master Grimstone; I never heard you joke yet," said Robin.

"And I aver it is an open and avowed doubting of God's providence," chimed in the cook.

"What! what!" exclaimed six or eight voices: "what do you mean by such blasphemy, Solomon Grundy? A forfeit and a fine!"

"Peace, silly brawlers!" returned he of the kitchen, who had discussed the good things thereof, until he had no room for more, and who had also quaffed largely of the forbidden beverage called 'strong waters;'—"I say peace, silly brawlers! I repeat it *is* an open and avowed doubting of Providence, that we should come thus far, and see nothing but a parcel of people—parcel of sky—parcel of water—parcel of ships—parcel——"

[84]

"Of fools!" grinned little Robin, pointing at the same time towards the oratorical cook, who so little relished the compliment, as to elevate the polished remnant of a mutton shoulder-blade, and aim a well-directed blow at the manikin, which he avoided only by springing with great agility through the aperture in the tree, so as to alight at some distance on the other side of the hollow

trunk. This harlequinade excited much boisterous laughter among the crowd; and no one joined in it more mirthfully than young Springall, who, for some reason known best to Hugh Dalton, yet sanctioned by Sir Robert Cecil, had spent the last few days in the kitchens and buttery of Cecil Place. There was another youth of the same party, who perchance enjoyed the merriment, but who looked as if he could have still more enjoyed melancholy. He was seated next to Springall, on the rude bench; and the boy-sailor treated him with such marks of attention, as manifested that he regarded him more in the light of a superior, than as an equal. The stranger, however, remained with his hat so much slouched over his face, that his features were in complete shadow, while his cloak was muffled over the lower part of his countenance.

"I say, Robin," exclaimed Springall, "come out of your shell; you have remained there long enough to tell over a dozen creeds or paters, were they in fashion—Come out, are you bewitched? Robin the Ranger, I say, come forth, and give us a taste of your calling—a melody—a melody! But you should hear our Jeromio sing his lingo songs some night astern: and though I do hate that cunning rascal, yet, my eyes! how he does sing!"

"Singing," observed Solomon Grundy, whose potatoes had wonderfully increased his piety, "singing is an invention of the beast's, yea, of the horned beast's, of him who knoweth not a turtle from a turtle-dove, but would incontinently stew them in the same caldron, over brimstone and pitch; therefore shall my voice bubble and boil over against such iniquities—yea, and my tongue shall be uplifted against them, even in the land of Ham!"

[85]

"Go to sleep, Solomon, and you, youngster, give us a song yourself," growled Grimstone, who had all the outward bearing of a savage; "the evening is nigh closing, and the birds are gone to their nests. Nevertheless, the song must be right proper: so tune up, tune up, my boy!"

Springall, with due modesty, replied, "I could sing you sea songs, and land songs, but these I leave to Robin Hays, who beats me hollow. The clerk of our ship has translated one of Jeromio's lilt, so I'll tip you a bit of sentiment.

"O'er the clear quiet waters
My gondola glides,
And gently it wakens
The slumbering tides.
All nature is smiling,
Beneath and above;
While earth and while heaven
Are breathing of love!

"In vain are they breathing
Earth, heaven—to me,
Though their beauty and calmness
Are whispers of thee:
For the bright sky must darken,
The earth must be grey,
Ere the deep gloom that saddens
My soul, pass away.

"But see, the last day-beam
Grows pale, ere it die;
And the dark clouds are passing
All over the sky.
I hear thy light footstep,
Thy fair form I see;
Ah! the twilight has told thee
Who watches for thee."

Towards the latter part of the ditty, which was but little relished by the company, it was evident that Solomon had followed Grimstone's advice, for his snoring formed a loud and most inharmonious bass to the sweet boy-like melody of Springall's ballad.

Robin had rejoined the party, but his face and lips were of a livid paleness, and he seemed labouring under evident distress.

"Art hurt, Robin?" inquired the stranger, who is known to us by the name of Walter, now speaking for the first time. Robin shook his matted head in reply.

"Something ails thee, man; something must ail thee—speak, good Robin."

[86]

"I'm neither sick, sad, nor sorry," he answered, affecting his usual easy manner; "so here's a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether at the black jack, to the health—But pardon, I had forgotten the wickedness of such profane customs." Yet Robin evidently did not hold it profane to "swill the brown bowl" so eagerly, that but the lees remained at the bottom, as he laid it down, refreshed and strengthened.

"So you won't give us a toast, Master Robin," said Springall; "well, I'll not only give ye a toast, but I'll stand the price of a fresh jack of double-dub for you all to drink it in; and I'll fight any man that says it nay, besides."

"Hold your profaneness!" exclaimed Robin, with a solemnity so opposed to his actual character as to be absolutely ludicrous: "Springall, thou hast had too much already; let us depart in peace."

"A curse on me if I do—peace me no peace."

"I tell you what," interrupted Robin, with resolute spitefulness, "if you swear, I'll lodge information against you."

"Ah! ah! ah!" shouted several of the party, "Robin Hays turned preacher! Old Noll has sent the breath of holiness before him to supply his place, and made a sudden convert of the Ranger!"

"I entreat you most meekly to be silent; if not for my sake, for your own. My brethren, you know not——"

"That here comes the black jack," interrupted Springall; "and here's to the health—But Cavaliers ——"

"We are *not* Cavaliers," interrupted Robin, in his turn; "as I hope for mercy, we are not Cavaliers:—hard—honest—pains-taking Commonwealth citizens are we; but not, I say not," and he elevated his voice to its highest pitch, "not Cavaliers."

"The devil's in the cards, and knaves are trumps," exclaimed Springall; "nevertheless I'll have my toast, and here it is.—Come, up standing,—The fairest maid in Shepey, Barbara Iverk! and may she soon be a wife'——"

"To whom?" inquired Robin bitterly.

"To whoever can win and wear her," replied Springall. "Come, come, Master Bob, you're mazed by some devilry or other; the wind's in your teeth; you've been sailing against a norwester, or have met with a witch on a broomstick the other side of this old oak: Serves an oak right to wither up—why wasn't it made into a ship? But here's to Barbara Iverk, the fair maid of Shepey!" [87]

"The fair maid of Shepey!" repeated Grimstone, after drinking the toast. "That title ought to be given to the mistress, not the maid; and I care not if I wind up the evening with a cup of Canary to the health of Lady Constance——"

"Peace, sir!" exclaimed the stranger, who had heretofore taken no note of their rioting: "I shall offer chastisement to any man who profanes that Lady's name at a vulgar revel."

"Adad! and adad, young sir, ye're a game one! What's in any woman, that a man can't name her? Flesh is flesh! and as to distinctions—we are all members of a Commonwealth! so I say a stoup of Canary to the Lady——"

"By holy Paul! if that Lady's name passes your unworthy lips, my good rapier shall pass straight through your unhallowed carcass!" exclaimed the Cavalier fiercely, at the same time throwing back his cloak, and drawing his sword more than half out of his scabbard.

"Hey ho! two can play at that: I never eat my words; so, the sword in one hand, and the Canary in the other—to the health of——"

His mouth was stopped by the application of the palm of Robin's broad hand to his unclosed lips; while he whispered some words into his ear, that had the magical effect of restoring the weapon to its sheath, and of inducing the braggart to resume the seat he had so hastily abandoned, grumbling, in an under tone, words that fell indistinctly upon the ear of his opposer.

"Let us home; it is a long and a dreary road to Cecil Place, and the night is upon us already! so up, good Solomon. Here, landlord! this fatted calf is unable to move: give him house-room till to-morrow; and mind you put him on his way in time for the dinner-hour," was Robin's parting speech. He then exchanged rough, but kindly salutations, with his boon companions; and soon the trio—Walter, Springall, and Robin had taken a by-path, leading to the part of the island in which Cecil Place was situated. [88]

CHAPTER IX.

His rude assault, and rugged handling
Straunge seemed to the knight, that aye
with foe
In faire defence, and goodly menaging
Of arms, was wont to fight.—*The Faerie
Queene.*

The three young men pursued their way; at first laughing and chatting merrily upon the events of the morning; but gradually becoming more and more silent, as persons usually do when the first flush of revelling is over. The taller of the three, who has of course been recognised as the mysterious visitor at Lady Cecil's funeral and in the cave of the Buccaneer, although he bore himself towards them with all the courtesy of a true-born gentleman, received the deference of his more humble associates only as his due, and in a manner that showed he had been accustomed to more than merely respectful treatment. After traversing much low and marshy

ground, they suddenly reached a spot where the road divided, the one path leading to Cecil Place, the other to Gull's Nest crag.

"Come with me, Robin; unless, indeed, the master wishes your company. I ask his pardon for not thinking of that afore," said Springall.

"Not I, good Springall," replied the gentleman. "I think you need a guide, for you walk the quarter-deck better than the dry land; and, if I mistake not, there are sundry pit-falls in the way to your present home. I know my path; and, besides, am a regular land-lubber."

"Save and bless your honour!" exclaimed the young sailor, holding all land-lubbers in thorough contempt: "that ye're not: land-lubber, indeed! I'll be at the Nest to-morrow early—if—"

"Hush!" said the more careful Robin, "never speak words of secret, openly—See ye yonder?"

"Yes," replied Springall, "two horsemen on the other road; too far off to hear my words, unless they had the ears of a hare."

"I had better go with you, sir," observed Robin earnestly: "I will go with you, that's the truth of it. Good night, Spring—steer to the left till you come to the red gap; after that, along the stone fence, on the right; it will lead you to the orchard, then you know your way." [89]

"Why did you not go with him?" inquired the Cavalier, kindly; "it is a dark night, poor boy, he has small skill in land-steering."

"He must learn, sir, as I do," answered Robin; "and my duty calls me to attend on you, particularly when strange people are a-stir."

"You are to be my champion, Robin?"

"Your servant, sir. A servant who learned his duty before it was the fashion for servants to forget what they owe their masters. Alack! alack! service now, like liberty, is but a name, and servants do as they please."

"Did you so with the Master of Burrell?"

"But indifferently, sir; I fled, in a very servant-like manner, as you know, when he was in danger. But I had my reasons for it, as well as for going with him to London; only I'd rather not talk of that to-night, sir. It is a mortal pity that such a sweet lady as Mistress Constance should be forced to marry such a brute; for my part, I never could discover any wisdom in those contracts, as they call them. Ah, little Barbara is a discreet girl. But I have heard some one say, that, for all her fine lands, poor lady, her heart is breaking, and chipping away bit by bit. 'Tis very fine to be rich, but, being rich, very hard to be happy, because the troubles we make ourselves are less easy to be borne, than those that come upon us in the course of nature. If I had my wish, it is not gold I'd ask for."

"Indeed! What then, Robin?"

"Just enough of beauty to win one woman's heart; I think I have wit enough to keep it."

"Pshaw, Robin! though you may not be very comely, there are many worse."

"Ay, sir, apes and baboons; but they are like their kind—while I am a poor withered creature, that Nature, in spite, threw from her, coarse and unfinished."

"I wonder a person of your sense, Robin, should fret at such trifles. Remember, beauty is as summer fruits, easy to corrupt, and quick to perish."

"But for all that we look for them in summer, sir, just as youth seeks out beauty." [90]

The stranger turned towards Robin, but made no reply; it is sometimes given to the simple to disconcert the wise, and that alone by their simplicity.

A long silence followed; each ruminating on his own prospects and projects: it was at length broken by Walter, who abruptly asked if Robin was sure he had taken the right path.

"Mercy, sir, am I sure of the sight of my eyes! Behind that tree runs the road we must cross, and then on to Stony Gap! Ah, many's the signal I've hung out for the Fire-fly from that same spot; but, if perilous times are past, and we live in days—as Master Fleetword hath it—of peace, poor Hugh's trade will be soon over. I wish he were back—the coast looks lonesome without him."

"So it does, Robin; but canst tell me what it was that made you look so dull, and astonishingly religious after the hop, step, and jump you took through the hollow oak?"

"Ah, master!"

"Well, Robin—"

"Why, you see, when I sprang through, 'thinking of nothing at all,' as the song says, I found myself on the opposite side of the tree, close—as close as I am to you, or nearly so—to—" As Robin had proceeded thus far with his recital, a sudden turn brought them to the high road, which led into a kind of hollow, flanked on either side by close brushwood. About a hundred yards from where they stood, three men were engaged in violent feud. The scene, at such a moment, and in such a place, seemed produced by the wave of a magician's wand. The Cavalier

rubbed his eyes, as if to be assured of its reality; while Robin stood aghast, bewildered, and uncertain how to act:—the moon was shining in all its brightness, so that they could see as clearly as at noon-day.

"By heaven, 'tis two to one!" exclaimed the youth, casting off his cloak, and unsheathing his rapier with the rapidity of lightning.

"So it is!" gasped Robin; "but two to such a one! Save us, sir! you're not going to draw sword for him—?" But ere the sentence was concluded, his companion was in the thick of the fray. "Oh!" exclaimed Robin, as in agony, "that I should live to see true blood stirred in such a cause!—How he lays about him! Poor boy, he little knows who's who! What a noble thrust! hand to hand—how their swords glitter!—A murrain on my shrivelled carcass! they would but laugh to see me among them! O that I could be even with Nature, and hate her as she has hated me! Yet, to be thus without a weapon!—Ah! one murderer's down, and the arch-fiend with him—now are they entwined as with the coil of deadly serpents. Treacherous dog! the other would take advantage; but, ah! well done, gallant young gentleman!—he holds him back with most wonderful strength—And now—see, see—the combatants are separated—one stands over the other! Oh God! oh God! how he stabs!—hold! hold! Now, could the moon show through those deadly wounds, twenty at the least count; and only one such would let the life from out Goliath, or the strongest man in Gath.—But see, the other shows a fleet foot; and that silly boy flies after him! Alack! that he will not learn discretion! There they go, across the fields, and not towards the ferry."

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When Robin arrived at this point in his comments, the man whose life had most probably been saved by the young Cavalier's interposition, called to him to come forward,—a summons the manikin obeyed at first but slowly: a second call, however, urged his alacrity; and he stood before one of whom he was evidently in much dread, with a bent head and a tremulous frame.

"Canst tell aught of that vile clay, whom the Lord hath delivered into my hand?" he said, pointing to the lifeless corpse, while his chest still heaved from the violence of the exertion he had undergone, although in other respects he appeared as composed as if he had gone forth only to enjoy the sweet breath of evening, and a ruder breeze than he anticipated had passed across his brow. Robin stooped to examine the distorted features of the dead, smeared as they were by the warm blood that issued from more than one mortal wound.

"He was one of thy party but three hours past," continued the stranger, speaking with energy and rapidity, "and thou knew'st him; heard I not his words beneath the oak? Ay, and if it had been left unto thee, verily I might have been given over to the destroyer, even as Hoshea was given unto Shalmaneser. Speak, thou deformity, lest, finding thy mind as base as its casket, I let it forth from its vile dwelling, even as a thing of nought."

"'Tis poor Grimstone," exclaimed Robin, rising from his scrutiny, and evidently affected by the loss of his boon companion on more occasions than one; "he was ever after some devilry—but his attack upon such as you—"

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"Silence, sir. Did I not before intimate my wishes?"

"Well, then," muttered Robin, "his attack must have been purely a matter of plunder. Grim. was never ambitious—never looked beyond a purse of broad pieces;" adding in a lower tone, "he was always a fool."

"The carrion hath fallen in a pleasant place—so let the next comer look to it, and do thou fetch hither my horse. Had it not been that my saddle-girth gave way, I could have mastered twenty such footpads."

This was said in the tone of one who, however grateful for assistance, would have been much better pleased to have found it needless, and to have worked out the victory by his own hands.

Robin hurried to secure the animal, a well-trained war-horse, which had stood quietly in the centre of the road, calmly awaiting the issue of the combat: he observed that the saddle was turned completely round, and hung under the belly. The horseman adjusted his cloak, wiped his sword with the square cape, and had just replaced it in the scabbard, when the Cavalier returned from his fruitless chase. As he advanced towards the person to whom he had rendered such signal service, he noted that he was a hale, stout man, probably past the meridian of life, of a stern and awe-striking presence; and an involuntary feeling of respect made him lift his hat from his head, and even remain uncovered while expressing hopes "that he had received no injury from the cowards who had thus beset his path." The other gave no reply to the inquiry, but fixed a shrewd and penetrating gaze upon the young man's countenance. Apparently the scrutiny pleased him, for he extended his hand, and seizing that of his preserver, held it firmly within his palm for about the space of a minute, then pressed it within his mailed grasp so strenuously, that the youth felt the blood tingle to his finger-ends.

"I owe thanks and gratitude, and would fain know to whom: your name, young sir?"

The Cavalier paused for a moment, and then said,—

"You may call me De Guerre—Walter De Guerre."

"Walter De Guerre!—an English [Christian](#) wedded to a French surname!—'tis strange, but let it pass, let it pass: you have been an instrument in the gracious preserving of one who, though unworthy, is of some account; and instruments in the Lord's hand must be regarded. My

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companions had business in this neighbourhood, and had left me but a little time, when I was set upon by these cowards; but God is merciful, and inspired you with valour. And now, sir, whither wend ye? To Cecil Place?"

"No, sir," replied De Guerre, pondering what he should answer, or how he should designate his present abode.

"To the worshipful sheriff, Sir Michael Livesey, at Little Shurland? He must look to his ferry-warden and boatmen to prevent such villainies as have now occurred."

"To none of these, sir," replied Walter; "in fact, I am a humble traveller, lodging at a humble hostelry not far from hence."

During this dialogue, Robin had adjusted the saddle-girth, and led the horse to its master, who took the bridle from his hand, and held it, examining the girth as he spoke. Robin glided imperceptibly round to De Guerre's side, and standing behind him, pulled his sleeve, and whispered,—

"Don't tell him where."

The intimation was, perhaps, not heard, certainly not heeded, for the young man added,—

"At the widow Hays'."

"I bethink me; the house near East Church. It is called Nest—Nest—Nest—ay, Gull's Nest. 'Tis but a poor abode for one who bears a diamond-hilted sword, and bears it bravely too. An everyday person, Master De Guerre, would sell the diamonds and get a gayer lodging."

"Persons differ in this and all other matters, more or less," replied the young man somewhat haughtily: "I wish you good night, sir."

"Hot!" said the stranger, at the same time laying his hand upon the arm of De Guerre: "Hot and high! Well, it is an ill tree that needs no pruning; but the preserver and the preserved must not part thus. Come with me to Cecil Place, and though I have it not to offer golden recompense, yet I can assure to you a glad welcome; for my friends all love each other."

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"Go with him, go with him; never say him nay: why should you not go when he desires it?" whispered Robin.

"But you are mounted, and well too, and I a-foot, and cannot pace it with you," replied De Guerre, hesitatingly.

"And your grey steed is too far away—even for that nimble squire to bring in good time," retorted the other, a kind of smile distending the rugged and untrimmed moustache that garnished his upper lip.

"My grey steed!" repeated Walter in astonishment.

"Yes, and a stout beast it is. But I will rein in my horse, and the Place is not so distant but we may keep together."

"Thanks for your proffered hospitality," said De Guerre; "but must we not do something with the fellow you have slain? His companion was too swift o'foot for me."

"Let the tree lie even where it fell," replied the other, looking on the body for an instant, and then mounting his horse with the greatest composure; "some one will cover it with decent earth in the morning: let us forward, my young friend."

De Guerre signified his consent, and walked, closely followed by Robin, at the stranger's side.

"And so," observed the horseman, turning to the Ranger, "you are accompanying us, uninvited, on our way. Wert thou ever engaged in any of the mummeries of Satan, denominated stage plays? Of all the tricks learned at courts, that of *tumbling* is the most dangerous; and as thy master, Sir Willmott Burrell, has not practised it yet, I am at a loss to understand how thou couldst be so perfect."

"I have served many masters, sir, and am now out of employ," replied Robin, whose ready wit appeared to have deserted him, and who kept as near as possible to De Guerre.

"Thou sayest truly; and lest one of them may have a demand upon thee ere morning, what say ye to wending onward to that unholy resort of cavaliers and smugglers, called the Gull's Nest, and leaving us to pursue our course unattended to Sir Robert Cecil?"

Robin bowed as respectfully as he could, and was about to whisper some words to De Guerre, when the stranger added, in a stern voice,—

"On, on! no whispering."

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Robin held up his hands, as if he would have said, "How can I help it?" and sprang over the adjoining fence with his usual agility.

They proceeded some little time without speaking, De Guerre, discontented with himself at the power his extraordinary companion so strangely possessed over him, yet yielding to an influence against which he felt it impossible to contend.

"And pray, sir," at length inquired the elder, "what news may be now stirring in France? You have, I presume, but recently arrived from thence?"

"I have been in France, but not lately."

"In the Netherlands, then? for I take it you are given to the carnal follies of the times, and have been cherished in the heresies, religious and political, propagated by a person or persons assuming a particular rank, which the Almighty saw fitting to wrest from them now many days past."

"I have not, as I think, been brought up in any heresy," replied the youth, gently but firmly, "and I should be sorry so brave a gentleman and so expert a swordsman thought so: though I do not feel myself bound to give you any information touching my private opinions, which I hold to be as distinctly my own property as my hat or sword——"

"And which," said the stranger, "is, perhaps, the only property you are possessed of."

"Exactly so, sir; but persons of a lower estate than mine have lately risen to high places,—ay, and carry themselves as loftily as if they were born to lord it over not only empire, but empires."

"Ah! true: then, I suppose, you would fain seek service; and if so, I think my poor word would be of use. I am somewhat esteemed by the Protector and other props of this great Commonwealth, and would gladly tender my aid to you, to whom I am already strongly bound."

"I thank you for your bounty, sir; but at present I feel inclined to sheathe, not draw my [sword](#)."

"But why? A youth like you, gifted with courage, skill, and health,—the state demands some activity at your hands; 'tis ill to be a laggard."

"Nor am I one. Frankly, I like not innovation, and this state has been experimentalising lately:—in a word, I like it not." [96]

"That is a candid confession, more candid than your former words would have led me to expect. But, young gentleman, it is not safe to trust such sentiments into a stranger's keeping: the Lord Protector has, it is said, his spies in every house; nay, it is reported the highways grow them as rife as blackberries."

"And you may be one, for aught I know or care," said the youth bluntly. "But what of that?—they say Old Noll likes in others what he hath not yet practised himself—a thing called honesty; and at worst, he could but take my life, which, after all, is little worth in comparison to those he has already taken."

A long silence followed this intemperate speech, which at last was broken by the mounted traveller.

"You spoke of innovations, and I also believe it is ill to try experiments in states, unless the need be urgent, and unless it be the reformation that draweth on the change, and not the love of change that urgeth the reformation. Is not time the greatest innovator?—is he not always changing? It hath been said that, as in nature things move violently to their place, and calmly *in* their place; so virtue in ambition is violent, in authority settled and calm. Steel sharpens steel; so one glory perfecteth another: and I am of belief, that they who are glorious, must have been factious. Yet are there degrees in honour, and amongst the first of them I should rank founders of commonwealths, or even states, such as we read of in history—Romulus——"

"And you would, I suppose, include the name of Cromwell in the list you were about to make?" interrupted De Guerre.

"And why not?" retorted the other proudly; "why not Cromwell? Is the oak to be despised because it was once an acorn? Remember what he suffers for his state; if, like the stars above us, he is much venerated, even like them he hath no rest."

"Nor doth he deserve it," said the youth.

"Ah! say'st so!" exclaimed the stranger, hastily, but instantly adding in a settled voice—"Walter De Guerre, or whatever be your name, beware, and use not such expressions when you know not your company. You said but now, your opinions were your property; then give them not away unasked where we are going. I know you to be brave, and generosity follows bravery as truly as one star succeedeth another; but discretion of speech is more valuable than eloquence. And, as to Cromwell, the people's shepherd has need to keep good count and careful watch; for wolves and foxes in sheep's clothing break into the pinfolds, kill and devour. Did he not act the part of Epimetheus (according to the profane but wise fable), who, when griefs and evils flew abroad, at last shut down the lid, and kept Hope in the bottom of the vessel, verily, indeed, his lot would be severe. We can know but little how hard it is to labour through evil report and good report. Charity in judgment is befitting in all, but most of all in the young." [97]

They were now within sight of Cecil Place. De Guerre had to contend with many painful feelings, and a provoking consciousness of the strange ascendancy his companion had acquired over him, so that he dared hardly speak his own words, or think his own thoughts. Nor could he trace this to any external influence: the man was plain almost to vulgarity; his dress common; and though his sword-blade was strong, the handle was perfectly devoid of ornament. His horse was the only thing in his appointments that indicated the station of a gentleman; but the saddle appeared so

old and battered, and withal so ill-made, that De Guerre marvelled so noble an animal would condescend to carry such a weight of old leather and damaged flock. It is true, that towards the close of their conversation he had uttered some sentiments that, for a moment, startled the Cavalier; but then he had uttered them in so unskilled and confused a manner, and with such an unmusical voice, that it reminded him, not unaptly, of a blacksmith stringing pearls, so coarse was the medium through which these fine things came. He ventured to console himself, however, by the reflection, that a man of such cool and determined bravery must be, despite external appearances, a person of some consequence: an opinion confirmed by his being a guest, and evidently a privileged guest, of Sir Robert Cecil. He arrived at this conclusion as they passed the postern-gate; and, as the night was now far gone, the old porter lighted his flambeaux to escort them to the house.

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As the old man walked some degree in advance, the elder took the opportunity to inquire of his companion,—

"Have you ever seen Mistress Cecil?"

"Seen Mistress Cecil!" repeated De Guerre, in evident embarrassment: "I have seen but few of the ladies of the country—have had few opportunities of doing so."

"Yet you resented the profanation of her name this afternoon under the oak—dost remember that?"

"I know not who you are, sir," retorted Walter, angrily, and at length fully roused from the respectful silence he had so long maintained, "that you should thus cross and question one who sought not your acquaintance. By heavens, if I were a friend (which, thank God, I am not) of him you call Protector, or King, or whatever it be, I would advise him of such persons; for it is the duty of every honest subject to watch over his ruler, as over his father, with the care and the duty—the tenderness and affection of a child. I should like to know how you knew I had a grey steed?"

"Or how I discovered your ruffle with Sir Willmott Burrell after the funeral," interrupted the other; "but be not afraid of meeting him: he left Cecil Place some days ago, to arrange some business. Nay, now, do not crow loudly your defiance, because I mentioned the word *fear*. What a game-cock it is! pity, that though there is no white feather, there should be no right feather in so gallant a crest!—Methinks the old porter is long in summoning the grooms, so I will enter in the name of the Lord; and do thou mind, 'Old Thunder,'" he added, in a gentle tone, at the same time patting the curved neck of the noble creature, who turned round his head at the caress, as if in appreciation of its value.

De Guerre took the bridle almost mechanically in his hand, and at the same time muttered, "Left here, like a groom, to hold his horse! By the Lord! I'll groom it for no man—yet, 'tis no disgrace, even to knighthood, to handle a good steed; though I'd bet my poor Jubilee against him.—Ah! here they come—" and he was preparing to resign his charge right gladly to two servants, who advanced from a side-door just as the stranger had mounted the last of a series of broad and platform-like steps leading to the principal entrance. No sooner, however, had the first of the attendants caught sight of the horseman's cloak and broad-brimmed hat of the stranger, than he sprang up the steps, and seized the garment, as the wearer was entering the hall. He turned fiercely round at the assault; but the aggressor, whom De Guerre now recognised as Springall, hung upon him too firmly to be easily shaken off:—he drew his sword half out of its scabbard, and kept his eye fixed upon the youth.

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"I was sure of it! I was sure of it!" shouted Springall; "the cloak, the hat—all! Now will I be even with thee for hanging me over the cliff, like a poor fish in a heron's claw, and all for nothing."

"Go to, Springall," said De Guerre, coming up, pleased at observing that the wrathful glance of the stranger had changed into a smiling good-humoured look at the boy's harmless impetuosity: "Go to, Springall; the double-dub and the Canary are in thine eyes, and in thy scatter-pate. What could you know of this strange gentleman?"

"I vow by the compass," replied the boy, suffering his grasp on the cloak to relax, as he gazed in no less amazement on the Cavalier; "we are bewitched! all bewitched! I left you, sir, on your way to Gull's Nest with wee Robin; and here you are keeping company with this very hey-ho sort of—But by the Law Harry! he's off again!" exclaimed Springall, whose astonishment had got the better of his watchfulness, and who perceived, on turning round, that the mysterious gentleman had disappeared.

"You are not going to be mad enough to follow any one into Sir Robert Cecil's hall!" argued De Guerre, at the same time seizing Springall's arm.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! that I should ever live to see you, sir, in league with a bogle! Why, I vow I had the mark of that devil's hand on me in black lumps, just as if I was burnt with what our scourer calls *ague-fortys*. As I am a living man, he went from off the brow of the cliff, just like a foam-wreath."

"Pshaw! Spring; how can you or any one else tell 'who's who,' on a dark night?"

"Could I be deceived in the cut of his jib or mainsail, ye'r honour? to say nothing of the figure-head!—Am I a fool?"

"You are not over wise, just now, my gay sailor; so off to your hammock."

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"And must I see no more of that old gentleman?"

"Not to-night, Spring; perhaps to-morrow he may give you satisfaction," added Walter, smiling at his own conceit.

The youth went off, not very steadily, to the little gate by which he entered; and a servant immediately announced to De Guerre, that Sir Robert Cecil waited for him in the supper-hall.

He followed the domestic through the great vestibule, which bore a more cheerful aspect than on the sad but memorable night of Hugh Dalton's most unwelcome visit. Although the spring was considerably advanced, the fagot blazed up the huge chimney, and illumined every corner of the overgrown apartment. The grim portraits which graced the walls looked more repugnant than usual in the red light that was thrown upon them by the glowing fire; while beneath hung the very suits of armour in which, if their most approved chroniclers are to be believed, they had performed feats of valour. Upon the table of massive marble were strewn sundry hawk's hoods, bells and jesses; some fishing-tackle, and a silver-mounted fowling-piece also appeared amid the mélange; while a little black spaniel, of the breed that was afterwards distinguished by a royal name, was busily engaged in pulling the ears of a magnificent hound of the wolf kind, who, shaggy and sleepy, seemed little disposed to be roused from his lair by the caprioles of the diminutive creature that hardly reached to the first joint of his fore-leg. The lesser animal, in accordance with the general custom of his kind, ran yelping and barking at the stranger as he advanced up the hall; while the more sagacious and dangerous dog raised his head, shook his ears, stretched forth his paws, and elevated his broad chest, then sniffed the air so as to be able to remember De Guerre if ever he needed to do so; seeing that he was escorted by the servant, and therefore, doubtless, a person of respectability, he composed himself again to rest as De Guerre entered the presence of Sir Robert Cecil.

A few weeks had wrought a fearful change upon his countenance and form: the eyes were more hollow, the cheeks more pale, the hair ribanded with white, where but a little before there had been few grey hairs, and the shoulders were much rounded since his interview with the Buccaneer. He proceeded courteously to meet his guest, bowing, and expressing the honour he felt in being introduced (through the Lord's mercy) to the preserver of his friend. The baronet had approached slowly towards De Guerre during this salutation, but either his dim sight, or the obscurity of the further end of the room, prevented his being at first struck with his appearance. As the young man advanced, Sir Robert Cecil's gaze was fastened on his countenance with a gasping earnestness, that shook every fibre of his frame; his lips trembled, and remained apart, and he seemed for a few moments unable to move to the seat he had quitted.

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The "friend" he had alluded to was seated in a carved chair near the fire, his foot placed upon a cushioned stool, and his arms folded over his bosom, his head rested on his chest, but his eyes were fixed on the beautiful face of Constance Cecil, who had risen on the stranger's entrance; nor did it escape the notice of so keen an observer, that the lady's cheek was suddenly suffused by a deep hue of crimson, as suddenly succeeded by a pallor and trembling, that made her cling to the arm of Lady Frances Cromwell for support.

"I beg to present," he rose, and said, "to my worthy friend Sir Robert Cecil, and to you, Lady Frances Cromwell, and to you also, Mistress Cecil, this young gentleman, by the name of Walter de Guerre, who, though of French extraction, hath doubtless had an English godfather, who hath favoured him with an English Christian name. And now, most worthy baronet, as master of this mansion, I pray you to present me to him who hath a swift arm and a ready hand for the defence of an attacked soldier."

"Major Wellmore, young gentleman; a tried and trusty friend to the English Commonwealth and its Protector!" said Sir Robert at last; adding, as if in apology for his emotion—"Constance! this strange megrim in my head!" And Constance, with the watchful care of an affectionate child, led him to his seat, presented him a glass of cordial; and not till he had declared himself quite recovered, did she return to her station on the low [sofa](#), beside her friend Lady Frances Cromwell.

De Guerre was particularly struck, during the brief repast that followed, by the extraordinary change in the manner of his companion, who, from being an animated and sensible speaker, upon matters connected with the state, had become more like a mystified and mystifying preacher than a soldier, but whose out-pourings were listened to with reverence and attention by the company. The Cavalier felt himself ill at ease in his presence, and but for a governing motive, hereafter to be explained, would have withdrawn from the house when the supper was concluded, despite the specious invitation, and much pressing to remain; he, however, accepted the apartment provided for him by Sir Robert Cecil. The ladies, attended by their women, withdrew immediately afterwards, and, as Lady Frances kissed her friend's cheek, she whispered,—

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"Didst see how Major—plague upon me to forget his name—eyed both you and the handsome stranger?" And then she whispered so as to be quite inaudible, ending by saying—while Constantia affectionately pressed her hand,—

"Ah! those holy eyes of blue, remaining so silent and so fixed, do more mischief than my poor little brown ones, that are ever roaming about seeking what they can devour, but securing no prey."

CHAPTER X.

With that smooth falsehood, whose
 appearance charms,
And reason of each wholesome doubt
 disarms;
Which to the lowest depths of guilt
 descends,
By vilest means pursues the vilest ends.
Wears friendship's mask for purposes of
 spite,
Fawns in the day and butchers in the night.

CHURCHILL.

The dwelling of Sir Willmott Burrell was about eighteen or twenty miles from the island of Shepey, on the Kentish border. The mysterious companion of De Guerre had correctly stated, that at the period of his introduction to the Cecil family the youth had little chance of meeting with his treacherous antagonist of the evening on which the remains of Lady Cecil were consigned to the tomb; the knight having been, for some days previous, occupied upon certain weighty affairs within his own house. A bad landlord can never succeed in convincing his tenantry that he is a good man. The presence of Sir Willmott was by no means desirable to his poorer neighbours and dependents, by whom he was at once dreaded and disliked. Rarely, indeed, was it that a blessing ever followed the mention of his name; and, although his influence and authority were such as to render it dangerous to murmur against the one, or oppose the other, Sir Willmott had ample reason to know that he was nowhere surrounded by so many secret enemies as when residing upon his hereditary estate. The domestics who had served his progenitors had long been dismissed, and their places supplied by more subservient creatures, and more willing panders to the vices that had increased with his increasing years. Although he had taken especial care to surround himself with knaves of great apparent devotion, in order that his character might not suffer in the estimation of the few really religious personages by whom he was occasionally visited, it required considerable care to prevent their exposing, by their own depravity, the gross and iniquitous life which their master led. It is seldom that a uniform hypocrite is found among the uneducated; a more than ordinary degree of talent and prudence being necessary to sustain a character that is but assumed. Nature may be suppressed by habitual caution; but the meaner, though not the baser, villain, finds appetite too strong for even interest to control. The household of Sir Willmott Burrell was ill-governed, and the lessons which the master sometimes taught, but never practised, the servants neglected or—despised. The butler, the housekeeper, the steward, and the numerous insubordinate subordinates were evermore in a state of riot and debauchery: the evil had at length grown to such a pitch, that Burrell saw its danger, and more than once resolved to adopt the only remedy, and discharge them altogether; but upon such occasions, he overlooked one very important circumstance, namely, that he was in their power, and was consequently any thing but a free agent in his own house. Burrell knew himself in their toils, and at their mercy. Large sums of money might, perhaps, have purchased their silence, but such a mode of procuring safety was now beyond his reach; and although deeply desirous to rid himself of them before his marriage with Constantia Cecil, he scarcely conceived it possible to escape from their trammels, without subtracting from the fortune that was to accompany her hand. He dreaded the danger of confiding his difficulties to Sir Robert Cecil, by whom they were unsuspected; and his fine property was so considerably mortgaged, as to render an appeal to his ancient friends, the usurers, a matter of much difficulty, if not totally useless. Manasseh Ben Israel, indeed, he knew had an inexhaustible store, and a not unready hand, as he had upon more than one occasion, experienced; but, villain as he was, he shrank from the idea of applying to him for assistance, at the very moment when he was thrusting the iron into his soul. [103]

Burrell was seated alone in his library, musing over the labyrinth from which he saw no immediate prospect of escape; plan succeeding plan, as, unnoticed by him, the twilight had deepened into the night. His doors were ordered to be locked at an early hour—a command which, it is to be supposed, the servants obeyed or disobeyed according to their own pleasure.

The Lords' Commissioners, Fiennes and Lisle, who were travelling round the country on special business, had been his visitors for three or four days; and on the evening on which they took their departure, he was, as we have described him, musing in his library, upon no very amicable terms with himself, when his reverie was broken by a knock against the glass of an oriel window that was sunk deep into an embrasure of the wall. He started from his seat, and was so alarmed at perceiving the face of a man close to the fretted frame-work, as to draw forth a pistol, and present it towards the intruder. In an instant the shivered fragments of an exquisitely tinted pane flew into the library, and a voice exclaimed,—

"It's me!"

"And what is the motive of this destruction?" stormed forth the Master of Burrell, in an angry tone, proceeding at the same time to open the window; "were there not people enough below to bring up your message? and are there not doors enough for you to enter, without clambering twenty feet up a straight wall, and shattering this beautiful picture, the Marriage of St. [104]

Catherine, in a thousand pieces?"

"As to the marriage of St. Catherine," observed his visiter, stepping through the casement, "I wish I could break all marriages as easily; and as to the motive, your honour, I did not like to wait quietly, and see a pistol-ball walk towards my witless pate, to convince, by its effects thereupon, the unbelieving world that Robin Hays had brains. As to the domestics, the doors were locked, and they, I do believe, (craving your pardon, sir,) too drunk to open them. As to the wall, it's somewhat straight and slippery; but what signifies a wall to one who can be in safety on a tow-line, and only that between him and eternity? Thank God! there is nothing on my conscience to make my footing tremble—or——" [105]

"Robin Hays," interrupted Burrell at last, "I have listened to you with much patience, because I know you love to hear the sound of your own voice; if you bear either message or letter from my worthy friend Sir Robert Cecil, let me have it at once."

"You are in error, sir, under favour."

"Indeed!—then to whom am I indebted for this visit; for I suppose you came not on your own account?"

"Ah, Sir Willmott!—you are always wise, Sir Willmott; truly it would be ill coming on my own account, seeing that I had no business of my own to bring me, therefore why should I come? and even if I had, Dapple Dumpling travels so slowly."

"This trifling is impertinent," exclaimed the knight angrily: "to your business."

"I hope it wo'n't end in smoke, as it begins in fire," replied Robin, slyly presenting a roll of the tobacco vulgarly called pig-tail.

"Mis-shapen wretch!" retorted Burrell in a towering passion, flinging the roll directly in his face, "how dare you to trifle thus with your superiors? art drunk, or mad?"

"Neither, an please ye, Sir Willmott," replied Robin, replacing the tobacco in his bosom; "only since you wo'n't look into the pig-tail, perhaps you will tell me what I am to say to Hugh Dalton."

"Hugh Dalton! There, give it me; why did you not tell me you came from the Buccaneer? Robin, you are a million times worse than a fool! There, sit, good Robin—But, no, light me yon lamp; the fire burns dimly. A murrain on't, I can't see! There, that will do."

While Burrell read Dalton's communication, thus whimsically but carefully conveyed, Robin had ample time to moralise on and observe all around him.

"That table," thought the Ranger, "is just a type of the times. The Bible, it can hardly be seen for the heap of foolish expositions, and preachments, in the shape of pamphlets, that crowd upon it. O, Lord! O, Lord! take from the Puritans their vain opinions, wild imaginations, false valuations, and the like, which they hang over the book that Barbara says has so much good in it (just as the Catholics at San Eustatia trick out the Saviour's figure), and what poor shrunken minds they'd have! Then the bottle and glass: that, I'm afraid, typifies the Cavalier; the poor Cavalier! who clings so firmly to the worn, and lets go the stronger, rope. But mark how the filthy liquor stands beside the pure book!—even so are the just and the unjust mingled. Ah! he has been praying with the Lords' Commissioners; then drinking, and so forth, the instant their backs were turned! Yet, God hath made the double-faced villain of good proportions, so that a woman can look on him with love, though his heart—ugh!—I wouldn't have his heart for his lands, no, nor for his fine person either. Barbara can't abide him; she always says he has a black look—and so he has. But hark! there's knocking at the gate, and loud knocking too—Sir Willmott, as the servants can't hear, so can't answer, shall I go down?" [106]

Burrell was so much occupied with his letter, that he heard neither the knocking nor Robin's question, but sat, his eyes staring on the paper, as if the words were of fire. Nor was it a long epistle, though sufficiently important to rivet his whole attention. The contents were as follows:—

April the 6th, 1656.

"SIR,

"Agreeably to your instructions, I went to the house at St. Vallery, where you told me I was to meet the lady of whom we spoke; but she had left harbour a few hours before I entered. With much trouble I succeeded in tracing her to a very odd sort of dwelling, a little outside the town, yet not in time to overtake her or her attendant. Some said one thing, and some another; but I could gather no information to be depended on. I remained nearly nine days in the neighbourhood, watching every vessel that came in or went out; nevertheless, I am persuaded that she has embarked for England: how, is still a mystery.

"Yours,
"FIRE-FLY."

"The fellow is careful enough: can it be possible he has played me false? Yet, where the motive, or what?" mused Burrell aloud. The knocking at the door was repeated, but was only answered by [107]

the loud baying of a brace of hounds. "And are the rascals really drunk?" inquired their master in a piteous tone, roused at last to a sense of what was passing around him.

"Ay, faith, sir; had I not as well go down? for, though ill-apparelled as a serving-man, methinks I could do the civilities better than the night-wind that howls so cursedly round the entry."

"Ay, go, go! only see that I be not disturbed, unless, indeed, it be some person I must see—some one of consequence."

"Ay," muttered Robin: "so much for modern hospitality!" and he hastened to undo the fastening.

As the chains fell, a small bent figure, completely enveloped in a fur cloak, entered the hall, closely followed by a swarthy attendant, whose high features, quick sparkling eyes, and downcast look bespoke him one of the tribe of Israel.

"Is Sir Willmott Burrell within?" inquired the stranger, letting fall the cloak that had been closely muffled round his face: he spoke, however, in so foreign an accent, that it was a moment or two before Robin could reply.

"I demanded of thee if Sir Willmott Burrell of Burrell was within?" repeated the old man; and as Robin observed him more attentively, he perceived that he was dressed in the peculiar fashion of the high-born Jews: his beard descended nearly to his girdle, and his head was surmounted by a perpendicular cap of yellow silk.

"Sir Willmott Burrell is not well," replied Robin; "but I will take your name, if it please ye, and return speedily with his commands."

"Manasseh Ben Israel demands instant parley with the Master of Burrell."

Robin did not bow, because, as a humble Cavalier and a proud Christian, he held it a point of duty to hate and avoid the despised race to which the stranger belonged; but he made a respectful answer, for the riches of the Rabbi and the favour of Cromwell were not to be contemned. He then proceeded along the hall, and up some narrow stairs, called private, as they led only to the library, and was crossing the apartment for the purpose of announcing Ben Israel, when the Jew, who had closely and unobservedly followed his footsteps with so light a tread as even to escape Robin's ears, passed him suddenly, and as suddenly Burrell of Burrell sprang from his seat, as if struck by a musket-ball. The old man stood before him, his features working, his lips moving, but no articulate sound coming forth—his entire frame agitated, almost convulsed; while Burrell, exerting every power of his mind to the contest, was the first to move. He stepped towards the Jew, extending his hand in token of amity. Ben Israel touched it not, but raised his arm, pointing his skinny and shrivelled finger towards Burrell, until it came on a level with his countenance; then, by a desperate exertion, the cracked, strained voice forced a passage through his parched throat, and he exclaimed,—

[108]

"My child!—my only one!—Zillah!—my beloved, my only, only child! Do ye remember your own mother, who travailed for ye, brought ye forth in pain, and carried ye, and nourished ye in her bosom? Do ye ever hope to have a child, who will tend, and serve, and watch over you, as mine once did over me? If so, tell, tell me where mine is!—I will bless you for the knowledge! I, an old man, whose beard is white, implore you, who have ruined her, to tell me where she is!"

The Jew flung his cap on the floor, and prostrated himself before Burrell, who immediately raised him, and in his most persuasive tone sought to soothe and assure the Rabbi he had been in every respect misled and misinformed.

"Sit, good Ben Israel, and comfort yourself; you have, I swear to you, been grossly imposed upon by some malignants whom I must—Robin! hunt out the knaves, and bring some wine—the best in the old bin, for my good friend. How could you, sir, suppose me capable of betraying the confidence you reposed when you introduced me to the abode in which your fair daughter dwelt? But, granting I had the ascendancy over her, which from your speech you seem to infer, how—"

"Sir Christian, stop!" interrupted Ben Israel, who, now his feelings had found vent, had composed himself, so as to meet his wily adversary with tolerable fortitude: "Sir Christian, stop! There are two classes of human kind your sect deceive without regret—betray without compunction—and destroy, body and soul, without remorse—women and Jews. It is nought, sir, nought—mere pastime—women's hearts and reputations, and old men's grey hairs! Alas! alas! and is such the religion of England!" The old man bent his head, and moaned heavily; then, after a little space of time, raised himself, and said, "In the name of the God of Jacob, I will take you point by point! Reply unto my questioning; and, if thou canst, acquit thyself."—A ray of hope darted over his expressive features, like a beam of light athwart a thunder-cloud. "But no," he continued, his countenance again darkening, "it cannot be—it cannot be."

[109]

"Worthy Ben Israel! excellent Rabbi!" replied Burrell; "dissect me as you will; and if I answer not thy expectation—"

"Too truly wilt thou answer my expectation," said the Jew. "The Lord of Hosts be praised that these iniquities are unpractised by the children of my people! The innocent lamb torn from the fold; or, what is worse, decoyed from the tents of her fathers! Had she been dead, I could have said, 'The Lord's will be done,' He hath taken the child back into her mother's bosom. But answer unto me these points—Didst often see Zillah?"

"I certainly did see your daughter at times, during my stay in Paris."

"And why, having delivered my messages? Of what importance ought thy visits to have been to one of the despised race?"

"You surely would not impute evil to my inquiring if your daughter wished to write to her father when I forwarded despatches to England?"

"Strange, then, she should never have availed herself of such kindness. Did she give no reason for this neglect of her parent?"

"I saw so little of her," replied Burrell carelessly, "that I really forget."

The Rabbi shook his head.

"Perhaps, then, Sir Willmott Burrell, you can remember this trinket, and inform me how it came into my daughter's hands: it was forced from her previous to her flight."

Burrell started, for it was a miniature of himself, which he had given her in the bud of his affection. At last he brazened out an assurance that, however like, it was not his; that he could not tell how young ladies obtained miniature pictures; that, if the Rabbi would look, he would observe the hair and eyes to be much [lighter](#). [110]

"Man!" exclaimed the Rabbi, fixing his keen black eye upon Burrell, "away from before me! Guilt and falsehood are on your lip. Your eye, the eye of the proud Christian, quails before the gaze of the despoiled and despised Jew; were you innocent, you would stand firm as I do now, erect in your Maker's image. Do you not tremble lest God's own lightnings blast you? Did you ever read, and reading believe, the Christian story of Ananias and Sapphira!"

If Burrell had possessed an atom of human feeling, he would have sunk abashed to the earth, and entreated the forgiveness of the Rabbi, whose flashing eyes and extended features glared and swelled with indignation; but the only two emotions that at the time contended within him were cowardice and pride. Had he the power, gladly would he have struck the Jew to death, as a punishment for what he deemed his insolence; but he feared the protecting and avenging hand of Cromwell, who never resigned a cherished purpose or a cherished person, and whose esteem for the learned Rabbi was perfectly known, and much talked of about the court.

"You cannot avoid crediting me for meekness, Ben Israel," he said, without, however, raising his eyes from the ground (for his blood boiled in his veins, though he spoke in a gentle tone); "you have come into my house, rated me upon a foul charge, and will not permit me to speak in my own defence. Take a cup of this wine, and then I will hear, if you can adduce it, further proof than that false portrait."

The Rabbi touched not the proffered beverage, but withdrew from his vest sundry letters, which he unfolded with a trembling hand: they were the communications he had received from the Polish Jew, with whose family at Paris his daughter had remained. He stated Burrell's extraordinary attention to Zillah, during his residence abroad—the frequent letters that passed between them under pretence of a correspondence with her father—her having received others from England since Burrell's return—her total change of manner—and, finally, her having quitted his house, and his being unable to discover where she had gone. Strong suspicions were added that she had followed Burrell to, and was now in, England; and there was a long and formal expression of regret from the Polish Jew that he had ever admitted the Christian beyond the threshold of his door. [111]

The villain breathed more freely when he ascertained that the fugitive had not been traced from St. Vallery; and he felt he could have braved the affair with perfect ease and indifference, but for the information conveyed by Dalton's letter, and the consequent dread of Zillah's appearing before him, perhaps at the very moment that the often-asserted, and sworn to, lie passed his lips. It was now more difficult to dissemble than he had ever yet found it; he saw clearly that his oaths and protestations made but little impression upon the mind of Ben Israel, who filled up every pause either by lamentations for his daughter, execrations on her seducer, or touching appeals to one whose feelings were centred in self, and who therefore had little sympathy for sorrow that would have moved a heart of stone. Burrell was so thoroughly overpowered by the events of the evening, that the only point of exertion on which his mind rallied was a strong wish to rid himself of the Jew as speedily as possible, so that he might find opportunity to collect and arrange his thoughts—it therefore occurred to him to assume the bearing of injured innocence, as protestations had been of no avail; he accordingly said, in a tone and with a manner so earnest, that at the moment it almost destroyed the suspicions of the Rabbi:—

"Sir, I have over and over again asserted enough to convince any rational person that I know nothing of the crime you impute to me; having, in my own estimation, performed all that could be required, I must now withdraw. If you please to lay your statement before his Highness, I will defend myself, as I have now done, and let him judge between thee and me."

"I have not been yet able to gain speech with the chosen in Israel," replied Manasseh: "he hath been much from home on secret service for the good of his people."

Burrell exulted at this knowledge, and again protested his innocence in the strongest terms. Manasseh rose to depart. Burrell pressed him to remain; but the old man resolutely refused. [112]

"I am about to go forth from your dwelling. If you have not been the seducer of my child, I crave your pardon in deep humility, and will do penance in sackcloth and ashes for having wrongfully accused you; but," he added, bitterly, "if you have wronged me, and devoted her soul to destruction, may the curse of the old Jew enter into your veins, and curdle the red blood to a hot and destroying poison!—may the flowers of the spring be to you scentless and revolting!—may the grass wither under your footsteps!—may the waters of the valley be even as molten lead unto your parched lips!—may—"

"Dog of an unbeliever!" exclaimed Burrell, whose temper could no longer brook the taunting curses of the old man, and whose coward spirit quailed beneath them, "hold thy foul tongue, lest I pluck it from between thy teeth. Had I been a circumcised Jew, and thou a Christian, I could not have listened with more humility; and this is the reward of my forbearance—curses deep and bitter as the waters of the Dead Sea."

"They cannot harm if thou art innocent. I have neither broken bread nor tasted salt within thy walls; and now I shake the dust from off my feet upon thy threshold. Thy words at first were of honey and the honey-comb, but now are they as gall. Others must deal with thee. The prayer of the bereaved father was as a tinkling cymbal in thine ears; but the curse—the curse knocked at thy heart, and it trembled. Others must deal with thee."

Manasseh Ben Israel repeated the curse with terrible energy; then shaking the dust from his sandals, he passed, and entered, with his attendant, the carriage that awaited him at the gate.

Burrell was convinced, and humbled by the conviction, that an irresistible impulse had compelled him to desert his sophistry, and stand forth in his real character before one who had the ear of the Protector, and whose religious persuasion had not prevented his advancement, or his being regarded as a man of extraordinary mental attainments, even in a country, the prejudices of which, always deeply-rooted, were at that time peculiarly directed against the Jews. This people were devoted in their attachment to Cromwell; and it was believed that they would not have scrupled to declare him the Messiah could they have traced his descent in any degree, however remote, to the dwellers in Judah. Manasseh had mixed so much with Christians, and had been treated by the Protector so completely as an equal, that he retained but little of the servility of tone or manner, and less of the cringing and submissive demeanour, that characterised his tribe; he therefore spoke boldly to Sir Willmott Burrell, after a burst of strong and bitter feeling. He knew himself protected by the ruler of England, and felt undaunted in the presence of one he could easily destroy; but then he was a father, and as such impelled by nature to adopt every expedient that might promote the disclosure of a secret on which almost his life depended, and which, he doubted not, was, in some shape or other, in the keeping of his wily opponent.

[113]

"A pretty scrape my villanies have brought me into!" thought Burrell, as he returned to his chamber: "the girl will come over—that stops a wedding. Suppose I were to take Zillah to wife—the old rascal would not give me a maravedi. Suppose, before I have secured Constance, Cromwell listens to the Rabbi's tale, he will forbid my marriage to please the accursed Jew, and I—may blow my brains out. Suppose I marry at once—But how? Lady Cecil not many weeks dead! I must manage it, however," he continued, pacing the apartment, while Robin, who had ascertained the impossibility of rousing the ill-governed menials from their state of hopeless debauchery, amused himself by counting the number of times the Master of Burrell walked up and down the room. At length, finding such dull watching wearisome, he ventured to enter, and inquire if he were to remain at Burrell House, or return to the Gull's Nest.

"Well thought on, Robin Hays," said the knight, as if roused, and not unpleasantly, from himself and his thoughts; "you will rest here to-night, and accompany me to Cecil Place on the morrow. See to these rioters, of whom I must rid my house."

"You had better do it, then, immediately," retorted Robin, "or they will save you trouble by ridding you of your house."

"True, good Robin; you are ready-witted."

"And, to keep up my character, I'll back to Cecil Place this very hour," muttered Robin, as he closed the door; "there is one there who must not tarry the coming of Sir Willmott Burrell."

[114]

CHAPTER XI.

But such it is: and though we may be
taught
To have in childhood life, ere love we
know,
Yet life is useless till by reason taught,
And love and reason up together grow.

SIR W. DAVENANT.

"And, indeed, my grave Lady Constance plays with the poor fish in a very sportsmanlike manner; only, methinks, a little too shy, and a trifle too sensitive! Marry, girl! what a most yielding, docile,

and affectionate wife you would make!—like one of the heroines in the ancient Spanish romances; or such a one as—Judith!—no—for you would never venture to chop off a man's head—Stay—did she so?—or—Barbara! you are well read in Scripture history; and, though you ply your needle so industriously, that will not prevent your calling to mind some of the holy women in the Bible, to whom your mistress may be compared."

Barbara Iverk, who had no other duty at Cecil Place than to wait upon the young heiress or assist in her embroidery, was considered and treated more as a humble companion than a menial; and Lady Frances Cromwell talked just as freely to Mistress Cecil in her presence as if they were perfectly alone. Nor was such confidence ever abused by the gentle girl. She moved within her small circle like an attendant satellite upon a brilliant star—silent and submissive—yet ever in her place, ever smiling, innocent, and happy,—

"A maid whom there were few to praise,
And very few to love."

Simple and single-minded, her soul had never been contaminated by the idea, much less the utterance, of falsehood. Even to Constantia, the fulness of her worth and fidelity was unknown; although the bare contemplation of Barbara's ever parting from her was one of actual pain. [115]

She replied to the lively question of the Lady Frances in her usual straightforward and unassuming manner: a manner that afforded considerable amusement to the merry trifler, by whom the little Puritan was commonly spoken of, while absent, as "the fresh primrose."

"Indeed, my lady, I do not like mixing up profane and holy things together."

"Fie, Barbara! to call your mistress profane. Constance, do put down those heavy poems of Giles Fletcher, and listen to your bower-maiden, describing you as one of the profane."

Constance looked up and smiled; while poor Barbara endeavoured to free herself from the charge with earnestness and humility.

"My Lady Frances, I ask your pardon; but I can hardly, I fear, make you understand what I mean. I know that Mistress Cecil is always aiming at the excellence to which the holy women of Scripture attained—but—"

"Then she has not attained their holiness in your estimation? She is too earthly still?"

"She is my dear and noble lady, and to know her is to love her," replied Barbara, her brown, affectionate eyes swimming in tears at the wilful perversion of her words. "May I beg, Lady Frances, that you will condescend not to question so poor and simple a girl as myself on what I know so little of?"

"There you are again in error, Barbara," retorted her tormentor, who, like most wits, cherished a jest more than the feelings of those she jested with; "I condescend when questioning, not when silent."

Barbara made no reply, and Lady Frances, who was, at the same time, pulling to pieces a superb fan of ostrich feathers, proceeded to open her light battery against Constantia.

"How is Sir Robert this morning? I wish he were rid of the rheumatism, and with us again. I have hardly seen him since the valiant De Guerre made his appearance among us, except at dinner; and, indeed, he looks ill, though—heigh ho!—I wish all papas were as accommodating, and let their daughters flirt with whom they like."

"Flirt, Lady Frances?"

"Yes, flirt, Mistress Cecil! Is there any thing appalling in the word? though I believe it somewhat of the newest. Now, poor I have no skill in these matters! If I see a pretty fellow, I care not who knows it; I like a jest, a laugh, tempered with all rightful modesty. I do not prim my mouth, tutor my eyes into sobriety, nor say Amen, like old Will's Macbeth, to those who say 'God bless us!' I laugh my laugh, and look my look, and say my say, though I am youngest, and, by God's grace, wildest of his Highness the Protector's children." [116]

"Where got you your gay spirit, Lady Frances?" said Constantia, rising and stepping towards her.

"My mother is a discreet matron as need be, but my father was not always one of the gloomy rulers of this gloomy land: he had his wild days, though it is treason to speak of them now; and, in sooth, he sometimes forgets that young blood runs swifter than old—How he lectures poor Richard!"

"The Lord Richard is not cast in his great father's mould; he is a gentler and a feebler spirit; one who loves to hear of, or to read of, great deeds, rather than to act them. Lady Fauconberg is more like your father."

"My sister Mary would certainly have made a fine man. It was one of nature's blunders to convert such coarse clay into a woman."

"She has a noble mind, Frances, though not so holy a one as the Lady Claypole."

"Well, dear Constance, you are very good to bear with me. Suppose, now, my father, instead of sending me here, had commanded that I should sojourn and mystify with that righteous Mrs.

Lambert, whom he magnifies into a model of holiness; what a time I should have passed! Why, the nuns, whom the holy Sexburga placed up yonder, had not as much loneliness; don't you think the place was admirably adapted for an elopement? I am certain—nay, you need not smile—for I am quite certain, that every one of the seventy-seven maidens, of whom history tells us, including the charming Ermenilda herself, fully made up their minds to run off with the Danes before they came to the island. I wish, though, that your father could be persuaded to consider this only a summer residence, for it must be a little dreary, I think. Not that I feel it such, for you are so kind; and just as we were beginning to grow a little dull or so, a flourish—and enter Walter De Guerre, under the auspices of Major Wellmore! Ha! ha! ha! Well it has amused me so much. He certainly is a most charming person; and if *one*, who is not here, were here, I should be inclined to tease him a little by my vast admiration of this gentleman. By the way, Sir Willmott Burrell has little reason to thank Major Wellmore for this new introduction; though it must be quite delightful to make either a lover or a husband jealous. Ah, I see you do not agree with me—I did not expect you would; but, do you know, I have taken it into my head that this De Guerre is not De Guerre."

[117]

"Indeed! who is he then?"

"That, Constantia, is exactly what I want to know—and I think you could unravel the mystery."

"My dear Frances, you are a very unaccountable person; always playing false yourself, you hardly ever give people credit for being true."

"You are vastly complimentary. Ah, Constance, when you come to Hampton, you must learn some court observances. When we were children together, we spoke truth."

"Were we not very happy then?"

"We were," said Frances, drawing a heavy sigh; "but how changed the times since then! Constance, those who walk along a precipice may well dread falling. Gay, giddy as I am, Cromwell has not a child who glories in him more than I do."

"And well you may," added Constance, whose dignity of soul led her to appreciate, with as much judgment as enthusiasm, the extraordinary man who commanded the admiration, not only of England, but of Europe. "Well may you be proud of the most successful statesman, the most resolute general, the most useful Christian that ever governed a state. By his power he holds our enemies in subjection; and guides our friends by his wisdom. I am but a poor politician, yet, methinks, I could almost worship your father for the spirit and humanity with which he succours those poor persecuted Vaudois, who have kept their faith pure as the breath of their native valleys: when I think of this, even the conqueror is forgotten in the man."

"You are a dear noble creature," exclaimed Frances, as she gazed with admiration upon the animated and expressive countenance of her companion; then encircling her neck, and kissing her cheek, with that delightful warmth of manner which can spring only from warmth of feeling, she continued, "I wish, my love, that flush were always on your cheek. You nourish some secret sorrow, Constance; nay, I am sure you do; and I will write and say so to my sister Claypole, who is worthy to be your confidant, as well as your godmother, though I am not. Nay, nay, I know it well: I admire, but do not quite understand you. The heavens are given us to hope for, and the sun to look upon, and—but dear me! that would be—a simile! I vow that sounded like rhyme; but here comes reason, in the shape of our new knight. Adieu! dear Constantia!—Barbara! that is surely Robin Hays, groping among the slopes like a huge hedgehog. Did you not want to consult him as to the management of the peewits' eggs?"

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"In truth, yes, my lady," replied Barbara, rising from a half-finished carnation:—"May I go, mistress?"

Constance assented.

"May I go, mistress?" repeated Lady Frances, mimicking Barbara's tone and courtesy, in her light-hearted gaiety.

"Yes," replied Constantia firmly, "I would rather you did; for I have something particular to say to Major Wellmore's friend."

"Now, is not that just like Constance Cecil?" thought Lady Frances, as she left the room; "another would have said any thing rather than the truth—yet is truth a noble thing: something to venerate as well as love—the best of virtues, the wisest of counsellors, and the firmest of friends."

Constance rose from her seat as the Cavalier entered; but there was an expression of deep sorrow over his whole countenance, that was almost immediately communicated to hers. What an extraordinary and undefinable tie is that which binds souls and sympathies together—the voice, that is heard only by the ear of affection—the look, that only one can understand—the silent thrill of happiness or of anguish, communicated by a smile or by a sigh! The world may sneer at, or may condemn; yet most true it is, that they who love with the most purity and the most truth, draw nearest to that great Spirit who is the perfection of both!

"I am come," said De Guerre, "to bid for awhile farewell to Mistress Cecil; to thank her for the kindness I have received under this roof; and to assure her that it can never be forgotten."

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"You have received but little attention—too little, indeed; yet, my father's health—our recent heavy affliction—will, I am sure, plead for us, and win an excuse. I was not, however, aware that

your departure would come so suddenly. Is my father apprised of it?"

"He is not:—forgive me, lady; but I could not avoid saying how much and how truly I have felt the kind consideration you have bestowed upon one who, however worthy, I hope, in many respects, has nevertheless deceived you."

"De Guerre may deceive me," replied Constance, with considerable emotion, extending one hand as she spoke, and covering her face with the other, "De Guerre may deceive me, but Walter—*dear* Walter—never."

The young man took her offered hand, and pressed it affectionately to his lips. "Ah! how soon you saw in the Cavalier the companion and playmate of your childhood, though you believed him dead! Women have quick eyes, and warm hearts for old friends. Unrecognised by my nurse—by your father—yet discovered by you—by you only, Constance! I need not say, do not betray me; do not breathe, even to those walls, who it is that has entered within them; let it remain secret as the grave. But I need not urge you thus, for treachery is not in your nature; let me talk of other things, and ask by what token, Constance, did you trace me through the disguise that years, and the burning sun of many a parched land, have thrown over my features and my form?"

"It was your voice that struck me first—some tones and modulations, that I well remembered when you called my dog:—then the unforgotten locket which you placed in my hand, which, when I had seen you, I knew could have been placed there by no other:—then——" Constance paused and blushed; she ought to have felt angry at the liberty that had been taken with her tresses, but she gave no expression to such a feeling; and the pause was broken by the Cavalier, who drew from his bosom the beautiful braid of which the maiden had been robbed.

The colour on Constantia's cheek was succeeded by a deadly paleness.

"Ah! what a moment it was, by that old temple, the lily triumphing over the rose on your fair cheek, even more than now, yet with such mild and gentle triumph, one scarce could wish it less; your eyes veiled by those soft lashes:—well, no more—I will say no more of this. I tried my poor skill to call you back to life, and, just as I succeeded, your companion and attendant came in sight. Since then, this dear memento has nestled near my heart, a shield against evil, and against evil thoughts. What! still so pale? you must be ill, my sweet friend," he inquired tenderly.

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"No, Walter, not in body; but wherefore should you bear that braid so near you?"

"Sweet Constance, may I now call you by that dear name? Oh, how my heart rebelled against the sound 'Mistress Cecil!'—Truly is love a republican, for he does not recognise titles; though, perhaps, it were better to describe him as a despot, acknowledging none that are not of his own creation. Why should I not wear the braid? Though now an outlawed man, it may not be always thus; the time will come when my own arm shall win the way to glory and to fortune."

"I doubt it not—I doubt it not;—but—save that nothing can make your fortunes a matter of indifference to the friend and companion of your childhood—I can have no greater interest in you, nor you in me. But why prevent my saying to my father that the lost bird is found? Methinks I would gladly know with him the mysteries of your disappearance, and the still greater one of your concealment; suffer that I tell——" The Cavalier smiled a smile so moody, so full of sad expression, that she paused.

"Not so; I cannot explain any thing: perhaps (if your words be serious) the time may never come when I can explain. As to your father, if you ever valued Walter, I charge you, even as you now value his life, that you give hint to no human being of his existence. I am sure you will keep my secret; strange as may seem the request, still you will grant it."

"Yet surely, Walter, you may confide in one who sorrowed for her playmate, with a lengthened and deep grief; but—" she slowly added, observing the altered expression of his countenance, "remember, I can only be to you a friend."

The words were uttered in a tone not to be misconceived. The Cavalier understood and felt it.

"Better, then, that I had gone forth, as I was about to do, in ignorance that any here recognised the ruined and outcast Walter! Can there be truth in the rumour, that one so young, so beautiful, bearing the softened impress of a noble and immortal mind upon a brow so lofty, is a willing sacrifice to a coward and villain? Did I not hear you, with my own ears, protest to the Lady Frances Cromwell, that, of your own free will, you would never marry this Sir Willmott Burrell? and, if it be so, if you spoke truth then, who dare compel you, wealthy and high-born, to give your hand where your heart is not? Oh, you are not the free, true-hearted girl, that, twelve years ago, leaped upon your native hills to meet the sunshine and the breeze, and often—alas! alas! that it should only have been in mere sportiveness—declared that—but no matter—I see it all, and future Lady of Burrell, bid you farewell and for ever."

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Constance replied with tears, yet calmly and firmly: "Walter, be not cruel; or, at least, be not unjust. You were ever impetuous, but also ever ready to repair the evil you had done. It is ill of you to use so harsh a word against one who has never wronged you. Alas! could you but read my heart, you would also judge of me otherwise; but think of me as your friend—your fervent and faithful friend—I will not prove unworthy."

The Cavalier was about to reply, when Robin Hays was ushered into the room by Barbara, who immediately withdrew. After bowing with due respect to Constance, he was about to whisper into

the ear of the Cavalier, who, however, desired him to speak out, as he had nought to conceal from that lady. The Ranger seemed but little astonished at receiving such a command, and without further ceremony proceeded.

"I did hope, sir, that you would have left Cecil Place before this; Sir [Willmott](#) Burrell will, I am certain, arrive within an hour; and you know it is the Skipper's earnest desire that you should not meet."

"Robin, you told me all this but a little time past; and I know not why I am to hear it again. I have nought to fear from this Burrell."

"It would be certainly unsafe, were there a possibility of his suspecting you, for his——" Again Constantia interrupted herself; she had been on the point of betraying her knowledge of Sir Willmott's jealous and impatient temper; and, after a pause, she added, "but there is little danger of that: as a boy, he never saw you; and he must respect the friend of Major Wellmore." [122]

"Ah, madam!" observed Robin, "he is no respecter of persons; and I see no reason why two should meet again, who have already so roughly handled each other."

"Where did they meet?" inquired Constance eagerly.

"There is no time to tell the story now, lady," replied Robin impatiently. "As I see you know this gentleman, and knowing him, are too generous not to be interested in his favour, urge, I beseech you, his instant departure from Cecil Place. Surely I can explain every thing as well as he. It was Dalton's wish——"

"I bitterly grieve to hear that you have aught to do with so bold, so bad a man as Dalton," said Constance hastily; "his name brings to my remembrance feelings of undefined pain, for which I cannot account. It is long since I have heard of him; but something poor Barbara communicated to me in her innocence, made me suspect he had been here. Go then; and take my prayers, and (though nothing worth, it may be,) my blessing. And now, farewell—farewell—at least for a time!"

"We must meet again, Constance! say only that you will see me once more before——"

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Robin, "you stand dallying here, and there is Sir Willmott himself coming down the avenue at full speed! Lady, I entreat your pardon for my boldness—But go, lady go!—in God's name!—then, and not till then, will he depart."

Constance did not trust herself in the room a moment longer. After briefly collecting her thoughts, which had laboured unceasingly to unravel the mysteries that surrounded the Cavalier, she entered her father's chamber. He had been evidently suffering from illness, and was seated in a large easy chair, his feet resting upon cushions, while the Reverend Jonas Fleetword read from time to time out of sundry pious books that were placed on a table before him. The preacher paused as she approached, and signified his intention of walking forth "to meet the man Burrell," who, he understood from the wild youth called Robin Hays, was to arrive ere noon. It was a precious opportunity, one not to be neglected, for cultivating the rich seed sown in that holy land. [123]

When the worthy divine was fairly out of the room, Constance delivered a message from the Cavalier, stating that he had been obliged to leave Cecil Place without taking a personal leave of his kind host; and repeated his expressions of gratitude for the attentions he had experienced during his brief sojourn.

"Thank God, he is gone!" replied the baronet, drawing his breath freely, as if relieved from a painful oppression. "Introduced as he was, it was impossible not to treat him with respect, but he strangely disturbed me. Did you not think him a cold, suspicious youth?"

"I cannot say I did, sir."

"You are singularly unsuspecting, Constance, for one so wise: you ought to learn distrust; it is a dark, a dreadful, but a useful lesson."

"Methinks one has not need to study how to be wretched; suspicion has to me ever seemed the school of misery."

The baronet made no reply to this observation, but soon after abruptly exclaimed,—

"He will not come again, I suppose."

Constance did not know.

He then fancied he could walk a little; and, pressing to his side the arm on which he leaned, said,
—

"Ah, my child! a willing arm is more delightful to a parent than a strong one. Wilt always love thy father, Constance?"

"My dear father, do you doubt it?"

"No, my child; but suppose that any circumstance should make me poor?"

"You will find what a nice waiting-maid your daughter is."

"Suppose I was dishonoured?"

"Public honour is given and taken by a breath, and is therefore of little worth; but the private and more noble honour is in our own keeping: my father keeps it safely."

"But suppose that I *deserved* the ill word of all mankind?"

"My dear father, why trouble yourself or me with such a thought?—if it so happened, you would still be my parent; but such an event is impossible." [124]

The baronet sighed, as if in pain. Constance looked anxiously into his face, and noted that a cold and clammy perspiration stood thickly on his brow.

"You had better sit down, dear sir."

"No, my child, I shall be better for a little air; let us go into the library."

As they entered the room, a scene of solemn drollery presented itself, that a humorous painter might well desire to portray. Kneeling on a high-backed and curiously-carved chair, was seen the lean, lanky figure of Fleetword, placed within a foot of the sofa, on which, in the most uneasy manner and discontented attitude, sat the Master of Burrell. The preacher had so turned the chair that he leaned over it, pulpit-fashion; holding his small pocket Bible in his hand, he declaimed to his single auditor with as much zeal and energy as if he were addressing the Lord Protector and his court. The effect of the whole was heightened by the laughing face and animated figure of Lady Frances Cromwell, half-concealed behind an Indian skreen, from which she was, unperceived, enjoying the captivity of Burrell, whom, in her half-playful, half-serious moods, she invariably denominated "the false black knight." Fleetword, inwardly rejoicing at the increase of his congregation, of whose presence, however, he deemed it wisdom to appear ignorant, had just exclaimed,—

"Has not the word of the Lord come to me, as to Elisha in the third year? and shall I not do His bidding?"

"Thou art a wonder in Israel, doubtless," said Burrell, literally jumping from his seat, and that so rudely as nearly to overturn the pulpit arrangement of the unsparing minister; "but I must salute my worthy friend, whom I am sorry to see looking so ill."

"Perform thy salutations, for they are good," said the preacher, adjusting the chair still further to his satisfaction, "and after that I will continue; for it is pleasant repeating the things that lead unto salvation."

"You would not, surely, sir," said Lady Frances, coming forward and speaking in an under-tone, "continue to repeat poor Lady Cecil's funeral sermon before her husband and daughter?—they could not support it."

"You speak like the seven wise virgins," replied Fleetword, putting one of his long limbs to the ground, as if to descend; and then as suddenly drawing it back, he added, "But the Lord's servant is not straitened; there are many rivers in Judah, so the faithful may drink at another stream." [125]

"I wish you would come with me," said Lady Frances, rightly interpreting the entreating look of Constantia: "or rather, come with *us*, for I am sure Mistress Cecil has much to say to, and I have much to hear from, you: we will leave Sir Robert and Sir Willmott to talk over the affairs of this great nation; temporal matters must be attended to, you know: and though"—she looked for a moment at Burrell, whose countenance had not yet regained its usual suavity—"I am sorry to be the means of depriving Sir Willmott of much necessary instruction—I have no doubt you will make up the deficiency to him at some future time."

CHAPTER XII.

The soote season that bud and blome
forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke
the vale,
The nightingale with fethers new she
sings,
The turtle to her mate hath told the
tale,
Somer is come, for every spray now
springs.
* * * * *
And thus I see among these pleasant
things,
Eche care decay; and yet my sorrow
springs.

SURREY.

It may be readily imagined that Burrell remained in a state of extreme perplexity after the receipt

of Dalton's letter, and the departure of Ben Israel. He saw there was now but one course that could preserve him from destruction, and resolved to pursue it:—to cajole or compel Sir Robert Cecil to procure the immediate fulfilment of the marriage contract between himself and Constance. This was his only hope, the sheet-anchor to which he alone trusted; he felt assured that, if the Protector discovered his infamous seduction of the Jewess, Zillah, he would step in, from a twofold motive, and prevent his union: in that he esteemed both the Rabbi's wisdom and his wealth, and was most unlikely to suffer one on whom his favour had been bestowed so freely, to be injured and insulted with impunity; and next, inasmuch as he entertained a more than ordinary regard for Constance Cecil, the child of an ancient friend, and the god-daughter of the Lady Claypole. Of this regard he had, within a few weeks, given a striking proof, in having selected Cecil Place above more splendid mansions, and the companionship of its youthful mistress, in preference to many more eager candidates for such an honour, when, for certain weighty reasons, he deemed a temporary absence from the court essential to the comfort and prosperity of the Lady Frances.

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The friendship that had subsisted between the family of the Protector and that of Sir Robert Cecil was, as we have intimated, not of recent growth; the Lady Cromwell and Lady Cecil had been friends long before the husband of the former had been called to take upon him the high and palmy state that links his name so gloriously, so honourably—but, alas! in some respects, also, so unhappily—with the history of his country. When an humble and obscure individual at Ipswich, the visits of the Lady Cecil were considered as condescensions, upon her part, towards friends of a respectable, yet of a much inferior, rank. Times had changed; but he who was now a king in all but the name, and far beyond ordinary kings in the power to have his commands obeyed as widely as the winds of heaven could convey them—remembered the feelings that held sway in lowlier, yet, perhaps, in happier days; and, although rarely a guest at Cecil Place, he continued a staunch friend to the family, to whom he had, upon several occasions, extended the simple hospitalities of Hampton Court.

Towards the Lady Constance, his sentiments of respect and regard had been frequently and markedly expressed. When he beheld the fading beauty of the mother reviving with added graces and attraction in the fair form and expressive countenance of the daughter, it was with feelings of pride, unusual to him, that he remembered his wife had been among the first to cherish and estimate the promise which the youth had given, and which the coming womanhood of Constance was surely about to fulfil.

Moreover, two sons of Sir Robert had fought and died by the side of the Protector, having been schooled in arms under his own eye; and had there been no other motive for his interference, he was not a man to have looked on the dead features of his brave companions, and have felt no interest in the relations who survived them. To the only remaining scion of a brave and honourable race, Cromwell, therefore, had many reasons for extending his protection and his regard. Sir Robert, perhaps, he considered more as an instrument than as a friend; for Cromwell, like every other great statesman, employed friends sometimes as tools, yet tools never as friends—a distinction that rulers in all countries would do well to observe. It is an old and a true saying, "that a place showeth the man;" few, at that time, could look upon the Protector, either in a moral or political point of view, without a blending of astonishment and admiration at his sudden elevation and extraordinary power; and, more especially, at his amazing influence over all who came within the magic circle of which he was the centre. Burrell of Burrell he regarded as a clever, but a dangerous man; and was not, perhaps, sorry to believe that his union with so true a friend to the Commonwealth as Constance Cecil would convert him from a doubtful adherent, into a confirmed partisan, and gain over to his cause many of the wavering, but powerful families of Kent and Sussex, with whom he was connected.

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Burrell, however, had succeeded in satisfying Cromwell that the proposed union had the full consent and approbation, not only of Sir Robert Cecil, but of his daughter. The protracted illness of Lady Cecil had much estranged Constance from her friends; and, as the subject was never alluded to in any of the letters that passed between her and her godmother, it was considered that the marriage was not alone one of policy, but to which, if the heart of Constance were not a party, her mind was by no means averse. Of the Protector's views upon these several topics, Burrell was fully aware; and he dreaded the discovery, not only of his own conduct, but of the feelings that existed towards him on the part of his affianced bride; there were other topics that did not so readily occur to the mind of Burrell, but that would have been of themselves sufficiently weighty to have confirmed his worst fears for his own safety—the Protector's stern love of justice, and his especial loathing of that vice of which the villain had been guilty. Had the Jew, Ben Israel, and the maiden, Constance Cecil, been indifferent persons in his sight, the double treachery of Burrell would have been requited upon his head.

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Next to Hugh Dalton, no man possessed so unbounded, and, so apparently, unaccountable, an influence over Sir Robert Cecil as Sir Willmott Burrell: he knew, as we have elsewhere stated, many of his secrets, and shrewdly guessed at others of more weighty import; while, with the ready sagacity of an accomplished knave, he contrived to appear well acquainted with matters of which he was altogether ignorant, but the existence of which he had abundant reasons for suspecting. The enfeebled health and growing infirmities of the baronet rendered him an easy prey to his wily acquaintance, who, driven to his last resource, resolved upon adopting any course that might save him from destruction, by inducing Sir Robert, not only to sanction, but command an immediate marriage with his daughter.

In commencing the conversation with Burrell, Sir Robert peevishly complained of the annoyance

to which he had been subjected in receiving and accommodating the young friend of Major Wellmore, although he abstained from the indulgence of feelings similar to those he had exhibited in the presence of his daughter. He then murmured bitterly of sleepless nights—of restless days—of watchings and weariness—of hideous dreams—of the toils, turmoils, and unfaithfulness of the world—the usual theme of those who have done nothing to merit its fidelity; and, as Sir Willmott Burrell looked upon him, he marvelled at the change that but a few weeks had wrought in his appearance; his mind seemed so enfeebled, that he deemed it even more altered than his body. He was, moreover, much astonished to find that he dwelt so little upon his recent and most heavy loss; for the attachment between Sir Robert Cecil and his wife had been remarkable at a time when domestic happiness was even the court fashion. But here Burrell was at fault; he knew nothing of the position in which Sir Robert at present stood with regard to Hugh Dalton, and was therefore ignorant of the positive peril by which he was encompassed: a peril so great and so immediate, as to render him, in a degree, insensible to the affliction under which he had so recently and so painfully laboured. Often, in his dreary night watches, when sleep set no seal upon his aching lids, or when they closed for a little over the strained and worn eyeballs, and then opened in terror at frightful images that haunted his fevered fancy—often, at such times had he endeavoured to offer up a thanksgiving, that she was gone from the wrath, the avenging horrors—the approach of which he dreaded a thousand times more than death.

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The application that had been made to the Protector for Dalton's pardon, had been treated as he expected; and his only chance of accomplishing the object of the Buccaneer, now rested on the possibility of his gaining over certain persons of the court, to exert their influence with Cromwell in the outlaw's behalf. Sir Robert's personal interest did not extend far, but the influence of his gold did. The Protector could free himself from outward sinners, but he could not rid himself of the more smooth, and consequently more dangerous, villains, generated by the peculiar forms and habits of the times. To some of these, Sir Robert had secretly offered temptation in every way: the stake was large, the danger certain; for he well knew the inflexibility of Dalton's character, and that he would not fail to perform that upon which he had resolved. It had occurred to him, more than once, to consult Burrell on the subject; but a dread of his future son-in-law, for which he could not account, had hitherto prevented his naming to him the Buccaneer's desire to be a legalised commander. His anxiety to carry his point now, however, overcame his timidity, and he resolved to speak to him on the matter, at the very time the knight had decided on addressing the baronet—under equal weighty circumstances—on the subject of his marriage. Unfortunately for Sir Robert Cecil, he was the first to unfold his plan; and thus gave the wily Burrell another and a firmer hold than he had yet possessed. After repinings over his health, and murmurs against mankind, had somewhat lessened that secret and consuming misery that enveloped him as with a winding sheet, he inquired if Burrell had lately encountered a man they must both remember,—Hugh Dalton,—a bold, but reckless fellow, who had played cavalier, buccaneer, and a thousand other characters in turn—all characters, in fact, save that of a coward. Burrell replied in the negative; but confessed he knew the man had been upon the coast; cunningly adding, that since his affections had been so entirely fixed upon Constantia, he had given up every connection, every idea, that might hereafter draw him from a home where all blessings would be united.

Sir Robert was never insensible to his daughter's praise, but it did not prevent his continuing the subject. He stated that Dalton was a clever, experienced seaman;—that his knowledge of foreign seas and foreign affairs in general might be made most useful to government, if government would avail itself of such advantages;—that the Buccaneer was a bitter thorn in the side of the Protector, as he had been known to convey malcontents to England, as well as to ship them off;—that his Fire-fly might be termed a meteor of the waters, now here, now there, shining like a blazing star—stealing like a moon-beam—in the Texel, in the Thames, in the Baltic, or the Black Sea—as occasion required; everywhere when mischief was doing, nowhere when it was to be remedied:—that all this evil might be avoided by giving Dalton a pardon and the command of a Commonwealth ship; that he would accept, indeed he (Sir Robert) was sure that he desired, such an employment, and that it would be a grievous thing for the state if an arrangement could not be made to purchase his future services and his good conduct at so small a price.

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Burrell was astonished, but saw clearly enough that there must be some covert motive for such deep and unaccountable anxiety: he dexterously set forth the various arguments that might be urged by government against a man of Dalton's character; the ill example, the dangerous precedent of one so circumstanced taking his place amongst honourable men, and so forth; mooted a variety of points, in order that he might judge of Sir Robert's object by his manner of answering objections.

The baronet was caught in the toils; he betrayed so much anxiety, so much panting eagerness in the Buccaneer's behalf, as to satisfy Burrell that hardly any thing less than a cause of life and death could create such intense earnestness on such a subject in a person who seemed balancing between this world and the next. Various surmises and conjectures, which he had heard in former times, strengthened the opinion. Having assured himself upon this point, he ventured upon one of those daring falsehoods that had hitherto been the principal means of his success: he assured the baronet, in the most solemn manner, that he had a secret way, one which he could not explain, but it was a species of promise for service performed, of winning from Cromwell the desired pardon and appointment;—that he had avoided asking such a favour until something particular occurred, something of deep value and importance;—that he was willing to sacrifice his own prospects to oblige his friend; and the only favour he asked in return was one that, though above all price in his estimation, could be easily bestowed by Sir Robert Cecil—the

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immediate gift of his daughter's hand. He did not wish her feelings to be wounded by a public ceremony so shortly after the loss they had all sustained; nay, he would prefer receiving her from her father in the ruined but beautiful little chapel that belonged to the house: all he requested, all he entreated, was that the marriage should be speedy. Then, with the power of one deeply skilled in deceitfulness, he wound up the whole by tender allusions to the weakness, the precariousness of Sir Robert's health, and the despair he might experience on his death-bed, if he expired with the knowledge that his beloved, and only child, had no earthly protector.

Sir Robert remembered his promise to his wife, that he would never urge his daughter's marriage with Burrell; and although he avoided noticing this as an apology to the knight, yet he firmly stated his dislike to press Constantia on the subject; and earnestly inquired if there were no other way by which he could show his gratitude than by interfering in the matter, at all events, until the year of mourning for Lady Cecil had expired.

Burrell feigned astonishment at this reply: the hand of Mistress Cecil, he said, had long been betrothed to him; he confessed that he did not think Sir Robert would for a moment have hesitated to comply with his most reasonable request: he urged various motives for hastening the union, and finally entreated the baronet's permission to address his daughter herself on the subject. To this Sir Robert offered no opposition; he was ignorant of the strength of Constantia's feelings with regard to Burrell. She had been affianced to him in her early girlhood, when much too young to have an opinion on the matter; and as the union had never been pressed upon her, she had not been called upon to state any objections to it. Her poor mother had seen, with the clearness of a mother's love, that the marriage would never tend to her child's happiness: she had observed both characters narrowly, and was perfectly convinced of Burrell's worthlessness. She could not impress this conviction on Sir Robert's mind; but in her last moments she extorted from him the promise that he would never urge the union. This was, as we have seen, all she could obtain; and Sir Robert was content to "keep the word of promise to the ear," without reference to the sense. [132]

Burrell seemed perfectly satisfied with the permission he had obtained, and left Sir Robert in the library, expressing his determination to speak to Mistress Cecil on the subject that evening.

"And he will make her a very affectionate husband," mused Sir Robert, after his departure: "how can he do otherwise? But I do not interfere in it; I know she has no other attachment; and my Constantia's sense of duty will oblige her to love her husband. Oh, yes, she will be happy—happy—happy"—he said, as if the repetition of the word could give birth to the feeling.

It was the clear and balmy twilight; the sun had left the west in glory, and the delicious breeze of evening was mingling among the young leaves of the shrubs and trees; all appeared in contentment and at peace, when the Lady Frances Cromwell and Constance sat together upon a mossy bank, but a few yards distant from the house, yet so overshadowed by venerable trees, that not a turret nor a vestige of the building was to be seen. The spot they had chosen for their resting-place was known as "the Fairy Ring:" it was a circular mound, girdled by evergreens, which, in their turn, were belted by forest-trees, that spread in an opposite direction to the house, into what was called the Ash Copse. The dark green of our winter shrub, the spotted laurustinus, was relieved by the golden tassels of the laburnum, just opening into bloom; the hawthorn contended for beauty and perfume with the delicate blossoms of the purple lilac; while its modest sister, the white, sent forth her pale green leaves, and delicate buds, over a bed of double violets:—

"Where all the earth beneath—the heaven
above,
Teem'd with the earliest spring of joyous
youth,
Sunshine, and flowers, and vague, and
virgin love."

The quiet and serenity of the evening communicated its tone and character to the buoyant mind of Lady Frances Cromwell.

"I am sober as the twilight, Constance, because I have been thinking of sober matters. Alas! alas! we have all our twilights.—Youth's twilight is soft and perfumed as that which hovers over us,—tranquil—but it is the tranquillity of hope. The twilight of middle life is, methinks, nearly allied to that of an autumn evening,—doubts hover and come upon us as the falling leaves; the wind whistles like the wailing of departing days; there is but little tranquillity then, because the hope that is left is enough to agitate by its vain dreams, but not to soothe. What shall I say of the twilight of age? I do not like to think of it—its tranquillity appears to me so closely linked with despair." [133]

"No, Frances, not despair: it is only the moody and abstracted silence of guilt that claims such awful kindred. I think age more beautiful—more hope-giving, than youth; though its beauty is far different, and its hope sublime, instead of joyous. Ask the most prosperous—the most fortunate man in existence—one on whom the eyes of the whole world are turned in admiration and its attendant, envy—ask such a one if he would live over his life again, and he will answer, 'No!'"

"This speaks badly for the happiness of life," said Lady Frances.

"I do not think it does," replied Constantia; "every evil has either a remedy or an anodyne: but,

unfortunately, we are more prone to dwell upon evils than upon blessings—yet this should make us less satisfied with earth, as we draw nearer heaven."

"Constance, are you a philosopher?"

"No; for I am a woman! and what is called philosophy is sadly at war with both our mental and our bodily endowments. I have heard there are lands in which certain persons think they confer honour upon our sex, by mixing us more up with the bustle and turmoil of the world—methinks they would strangely pervert our natures."

"I agree with you, Constance: let men have all the public, and women all the private business of life to manage, and my word on 't, the balance of power is with us. Our tongues have enough to do at home, without chattering in high places; and as to our arms! mine could ill wield battle-axe or broadsword. I suppose these people of whom you speak would invent a new sex to look after domestic matters, while we assist in the broil and the battle! We shall lose our influence, depend on 't, the moment we are taken out of our sphere—we shall lose caste as women, and be treated with contempt as men. What *I* like, Constance, is to have my own dear little way, by my own pretty little manœuvres—behind the bush—thrust another into the breach, and then, if evil arise, the man gets the blame, while I retreat in safety."

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"Then the Lady Frances would take one of the other sex as a shield?"

"Yes, Constance; they would do as well to be shot at as ourselves, you know."

"Ah, Frances, you are no true woman, unless, if there were real danger, you would thrust yourself between it and the life a thousand times more precious than your own. Suppose, for instance, that sudden danger menaced the life of——"

"Hush, dear Constantia; the idea of such an event is enough. It is easier to sacrifice life when the sacrifice is demanded by affection, than to resign one selfish indulgence."

"Ah! because, in the first case, we gratify ourselves; in the second, others."

"You are a mental chemist, Constance: but here comes the maid called Barbara, with hoods and cardinals, signifying that the dew is falling, though we feel it not."

"I sought you, mistress," said Barbara, "all over the house, for Sir Willmott Burrell advised me that he wished to speak with you in the oak parlour, if it so please you, or in the library; my honoured master was present."

"Did my father too want me?"

"No, madam; he said he would go to his chamber, for a little, before the evening meal."

The young ladies, followed by Barbara, entered the house, and, as Frances Cromwell pressed Constantia's hand, she felt it clammy and chilling cold: she would have spoken, but, while arranging the necessary words, her friend, with a more than usually dignified deportment, entered the parlour. It was a dark, dim room, the frettings and ornaments of black carved oak.

"Tell Sir Willmott Burrell I await him here," she said to Barbara, while passing the threshold.

Frances Cromwell, over whose mind a feeling of terror was imperceptibly stealing, would have remained, but Constance intimated that she would receive Burrell alone.

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CHAPTER XIII.

—I am sworn brother now
To grim Necessity; and he and I
Will keep a league till death.

SHAKSPEARE.

"My blood seems to curdle in my veins," murmured Constance, as she rubbed the palm of one hand against the back of the other; "my very blood seems to curdle in my veins, and a shadow, as of the vampire's wing, is over me. But why is this? Is God less present with me here than beneath the heavenly atmosphere I have just now breathed?" And then she uttered a few words of prayer, so earnestly, that Burrell had entered the room before she was aware of his presence.

"You are not well," he observed, seating himself in a chair beside that into which she had sunk: "I hope I do not disturb you unpleasantly. You keep watch too anxiously by your father's couch."

"I am better now," she replied; "but that of which you speak, my thought of the living and the dead, although it may have somewhat touched my health, has been my happiest duty."

"Perhaps you would rather hear what I have to say to-morrow," he observed, a momentary feeling of sympathy forcing itself upon his mind, as he noticed her white lip, and still whiter cheek.

"I pray you, sir," she replied proudly, "to proceed: I am as ready now as I can be on the morrow to

listen to aught it may be your pleasure to advance. Your observations, if it please you, now."

"I have no 'observations' to offer, Mistress Cecil,—may I say Constance? for so I used to call you in the early days of our betrothment,—though I have much to request. I confess, I have felt hurt, and aggrieved, at the small show of courtesy you have vouchsafed me; but, as I believe that sorrow, and an habitual reserve, have wrought this manner, I do not blame, though I regret it deeply. The time, I hope, fair lady, is not far distant when you will ratify my claim to your hand; then the devotedness of my future life,—the entireness of my attachment,—the depth of my love ——" [136]

"Sir Willmott Burrell," interrupted Constantia, "*the grass upon my mother's grave is not yet green; and would you talk of love?*"

For a moment the knight was silent.

"Reasons—reasons that I will explain hereafter, make me exceedingly desire that the contract should be immediately fulfilled. Nay, lady, do not start, and shudder," he continued, taking her hand, that hung listlessly, and without motion, within his grasp; "even should you not love as I do, affection will make you all mine own, within a little time."

"Believe it not, Sir Willmott," said Constantia, at length disengaging her hand; "I can never love you."

Men have been accustomed, in all ages, to hear simple truths, of such a description, declared in so simple a manner. Ladies rant, and protest that they abhor and abominate,—or they weep, and shriek, and call the gentleman odious, or horrid, or some such gentle name; which the said gentleman perfectly understands to mean—any thing he pleases; but Constantia's perfect truth, the plain earnestness of that brief sentence, carried conviction with it; and the handsome Burrell paced three or four times the length of the oak parlour, before he could sufficiently bring his mortified feelings under necessary subjection: he then resumed his seat.

"I think otherwise; a woman can but require devoted affection, constant watchfulness, and tender solicitude. All, all this will be yours. Besides, a daughter of the house of Cecil would not break faith. I could *command* your hand—I only solicit it."

"Sir Willmott, you well know, that when the unhappy contract was entered into, I was of tender age; too young, indeed, to comprehend its nature. Ought you in honour to urge it on me, when I frankly tell you by word of mouth, what my demeanour must have informed you long, long since, that—I can never love you?"

"You have said it once, lady; and the sentence cannot be pleasant to the ears of your affianced husband. The turmoils of the times, and the service I so largely owed to the Protector, have called me much from home; and though my heart lingered here, I was forced away by duty to the state: surely you would not love me less because it was rigidly performed?" [137]

"You would not wish me your wife," said Constance, in a faltering tone, resolving to make trial of Sir Willmott's generosity, while her strength seemed to rise with her honest purpose,—"you would not wish me your wife; for not only do I not love you, but—I love—another."

Now, Sir Willmott Burrell did not start from his chair, nor did he pace up and down the polished floor,—he fixed his eyes upon Constantia, as if he would have read within her soul *who* she loved; but the expression gradually changed, from a deep and perilous curiosity, to one of firm resolve, until, drawing his breath between his set teeth, he said, slowly and deliberately, but in a restrained tone, as if the voice came from the fiend within him,—

"I am sorry for it, Constantia Cecil; for it cannot prevent your being mine—mine—and, by the God that hears me, mine only, and for ever!"

Constantia rose slowly from her seat, and said, in a firm voice, "I did not come here to suffer insult, sir."

She walked across the room with so dignified a step, that she had nearly reached the door, before Burrell acquired sufficient courage to stay her departure. He laid his hand on her arm as she touched the lock, but she shook it off as coolly, yet as firmly, as the apostle threw from him the viper into the flames at Melita. Burrell, however, had too much at stake tamely to relinquish his purpose. He spoke in a constrained voice, and said,—

"I entreat you to remain; if it be not for your own good, it will be for your father's that you do so."

The mention of her father's name at once commanded her attention. She desired Burrell to speak on; without, however, resuming her seat. He paused for so considerable a time that she at length observed,—

"I wait, Sir Willmott, and will wait patiently, if it be necessary: but methinks your silence now is as uncourteous as your speech a brief while since."

"It is because I feel for you, Mistress Cecil,—feel for you acutely, that I thus hesitate. I would spare you the pain I know my words must inflict; and therefore, once more, calmly, but energetically, implore you to consent to the immediate fulfilment of the contract existing between us." [138]

"This is trifling, sir. I desire that you suffer me to pass forth. I might have known you had nothing

to say that concerned my father; and, as to myself, if you could be mean enough, under such circumstances, to accept my hand, I cannot be base enough to give it."

"A fine sentence!" exclaimed Burrell, sneeringly. "I make bold to tell you, lady, I care not so much as you may imagine for your affections, which I know you have sufficient principle to recall, and bestow upon the possessor of that fair hand, whoever he may be. Nay, look not so wrathful, for I know *that* which would make your proud look quail, and the heiress of Cecil rejoice that she could yet become the wife of Sir Willmott Burrell!"

Constantia trembled. She had never before listened to such language; and she felt there must be something appalling in the motive that could give it utterance. Although her hand rested on the massive lock of the door, she had not power to turn the handle. If looks could wither, the Master of Burrell would have shrunk before her gaze; yet he bore her indignant frown with more audacity than he could have believed he possessed.

"If your communication concerns my father, speak, sir; if not,"—she paused, and he took up the sentence—

"If not, Constantia casts me off for ever! Yet," he added, in a tone of insulting pity, "I would spare your feelings, for you have been a most affectionate child."

"Sir," interrupted Constance, "I hope I am too true a daughter to hear those taunts with patience: your insinuations I despise, and I *defy* you to utter an accusation against him that could summon a tint of crimson to my cheek!"

"But I could speak *that* which would make the red cheek pale, lady—what think you of—of—of MURDER?"

Constantia's eye gleamed for a moment, like a meteor, and then it became fixed and faded; her form assumed the rigidity of marble, and at each respiration her lips fell more and more apart. The villain became alarmed, and, taking her hand, would have led her to a seat; but his touch recalled her to herself: she darted from him to the centre of the room, and there, her arm extended, her fine head thrown back, every feature, as it were, bursting with indignation, she looked like a youthful priestess denouncing vengeance on a sinful [world](#).

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"If I could curse," she said, "you should feel it heavily; but the evil within you will do its own work, and my soul be saved from sin. Away! away! And you thought to fright me with that horrid sound! My dear, dear father!"

"I declare before Heaven," interrupted Burrell, "it is to save him I speak! The damning proofs of his guilt are within my hold. If you perform the contract, neither tortures nor death shall wring them from me; if you do not—mark me—I will be revenged!"

"Silly, wicked that I was," exclaimed Constance, "not to command you before him instantly, that the desperate lie might be sent back into your throat, and choke you with its venom! Come with me to my father!—Ah, foul coward! you shrink, but you shall not escape!—To my father instantly!"

Burrell would have restrained her, but it was impossible. Finding that he did not move, she was rushing past him, when he arrested her progress for an instant, saying,—

"Since you will thus dare the destruction of your only parent, it is fitting you know of whose murder he is accused." He drew nearer to her, so near that she felt his hateful breath upon her cheek, as, like the serpent in the garden of Eden, he distilled the deadly poison into her ear. A slight convulsion, succeeded by an awful paleness, passed over her countenance; but, rallying, she darted on him another look of defiance and scorn, and flew to her father's chamber.

The old man had been sleeping, but awoke as she entered, and probably refreshed by the short repose he had enjoyed, stretched forward his arms to his daughter with an expression of confiding fondness, which, in the then state of Constantia's feelings, but added to the agony she endured. She could not resist the mute appeal; falling on her knees, she buried her face amid the drapery of his robe. In this posture she continued for a few minutes: her lips uttered no word, but her bosom heaved as if in mortal struggle, and her hard breathings were almost groans. At length, still kneeling, she raised her head, her hands clasped, her swollen but tearless eyes fixed upon the pale, anxious, and alarmed countenance of her parent. He would have spoken, but she raised her finger in token that she entreated silence; a moment afterwards she addressed him in broken and disjointed sentences.

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"I can hardly give it utterance—and when I think upon it, I know not why I should intrude so vile a falsehood on your ear, my father; but Burrell seemed so real, so fearfully real in what he said, that I tremble still, and my voice comes heavily to my lips." She paused for breath, and pressed her clasped hands on her bosom.

Sir Robert, imagining that she alluded to her marriage, which he knew Burrell must have been urging upon her, replied,—

"My dearest child knows that I have not pressed her union; but Sir Willmott is so anxious—so attached—and, I must say, that my grey hairs would go peacefully to the grave were I to see her his wife. I am almost inclined to think my Constance capricious and unjust upon this point; but I am sure her own good sense, her regard for her father—"

"Merciful powers!" interrupted Constance, wildly; "and is it really possible that you knew of his proposal? Ay, ay, you might have known *that*, but you could not know the awful, the horrid threat he held out to me, if I did not comply with his demand—ay, *demand* for an immediate union?"

"It was very imprudent, very useless, in fact," said the baronet, peevishly, his mind reverting to the proposals of the Buccaneer, which he believed Burrell had communicated to Constantia; "very absurd to trouble you with the knowledge he possesses of my affairs—that is strange wooing—but good will arise from it, for you will now, knowing the great, the overpowering motive that I have for seeing your union accomplished——"

The baronet's sentence remained unfinished, for the look and manner of his daughter terrified him. She had risen from her knees, and stood, her eyelids straining from her glaring eyes, that were fixed upon her father, while her hands were extended, as if to shut out the figure upon which she still gazed.

"It is all madness—moon-struck madness," she exclaimed, and her arms dropped at either side as she spoke; "some cruel witchery surrounds me; but I will speak and break the spell. Father, you are not a murderer? you did not murder——" and she, too, whispered a name, as if it were one that the breath of heaven should not bear. [141]

The baronet sprang from his seat, as if a musket ball had entered his heart.

"'T is false!" he exclaimed; "there is no blood upon my hand—look at it—look at it! Burrell has no proofs—unless that villain Dalton has betrayed me," he added, in a lower tone; "but I did not the act, the blood is on *his* head, and not on mine. Constance, my child, the only thing on earth *now* that can love me, do not curse—do not spurn me. I ask not your sacrifice, that I may be saved;—but do not curse me—do not curse your father."

The haughty baronet fell, humbled to the dust, at his daughter's feet, clasping her knees in awful emotion, but daring not to look upon the face of his own child.

It would be as vain to attempt, as it would be impossible to analyse, the feelings of that high-souled woman during moments of such intense misery. She neither spoke nor wept; nor did she assist her father, by any effort, to arise; but, without a sentence or a word, folding her mourning robe around her, she glided like a ghost forth from the chamber. When she returned, her step had lost its elasticity, and her eye its light; she moved as if in a heavy atmosphere, and her father did not dare to look upon her, as she seated herself by the chair he had resumed.

She took his hand, and put it, but did not press it, to her lips: he thought he felt a tear drop upon his burning fingers; but the long hair that fell over her brow concealed her face. He was the first to break the dreadful and oppressive stillness.

"I would speak with Burrell: there must have been treachery. Of himself, believe me, he knew nothing: but I was so taken by surprise, that I did not consider——"

"Stop, sir, I entreat you," interrupted Constance. "There is now no motive for consideration. I have just seen, and promised to be the wife of Sir Willmott Burrell within this week—and three of its days are already past:—*his* silence, and *your honour* are secured."

The unhappy man was powerless and subdued; he hid his face amid the pillows of the chair, and wept bitterly. Constance walked to the window: the beams of the silver moon dwelt with more than usual brightness on the tops and around the foliage of the trees that encircled the Fairy Ring, where, but an hour before, her footsteps had lingered with her friend. All around seemed buried in the most profound stillness; not the bay of a dog, nor the hum of an insect, disturbed the repose that slept on every plant and flower, and covered the earth as with a garment. Suddenly a nightingale flew past the window, and resting its breast on the bough of an old thorn, poured forth a delicious strain of melody. Constance leaned her throbbing forehead against the cold stained-glass, and the tenderness of the wild bird's untaught music penetrated her soul; large tears flowed down her cheeks, and her seared heart was relieved, for a little, of its overwhelming horrors. She then returned to her father's side; and again taking his hand in hers, said, in a calmer voice, [142]

"Father, we have both need of consolation—let us read and pray together."

"It is too late to attempt deceiving you longer, Constance; yet I would fain explain——."

"Not now, father. We will pray."

"And you will be happy; or if not, you will not curse him who has wrought your misery?"

"I have too much need of blessing. Bless, bless you, my father!—Let us now seek consolation where only it is to be found."

"But may I not speak with Burrell? I want to know——"

"Father! I entreat you, peace. It is now useless; the die is cast—for me—for us—in this world—useless all, except the aid that, under any trials, we can ask and receive from Heaven."

"My child, call me your dear father, as you were wont; and let your soft lips press upon my hand as there were fondness in them. You said you would not curse me, Constance."

"Bless, bless you, my *dear* father!" She kissed his hand; and having lighted the chamber lamp,

read one of the penitential psalms of the King of Israel, when sin, and the wretchedness that follows sin, became too heavy for him to bear.

"And now let us pray," said Constantia, conceiving that her father's mind was more composed; "let us offer up petitions to the source of all mercy and forgiveness."

"I cannot pray," he said; "my lips may move, but my heart is hardened."

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"We will learn of Him who softened the stony rock, that the children of promise might taste of the living waters in a strange land."

And her earnest and beautiful prayer floated to the Almighty's throne, from that dull and heavy chamber, a record of the faithful and self-sacrificing spirit whose purest earthly temple is a woman's heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

Yet, spite of all that Nature did
To make his uncouth form forbid,
This creature dared to love.

* * * *

But virtue can itself advance
To what the favourite fools of chance
By fortune seem design'd.

PARNELL.

"Is your sweet lady out yet, pretty Barbara?" inquired Robin Hays of Barbara Iverk, as he met her in the flower-garden of Cecil Place, when it was nearly midday.

"My poor lady is, I am sure, very ill; or, what is still worse, ill at ease," replied the maiden. "She has not been in bed all night, I know, for the couch was undisturbed this morning, so I just came here to gather her some flowers: fresh flowers must always do one good, and I think I never saw so many in bloom so early."

"Barbara, did you ever hear tell of a country they call the East?"

"A country!" repeated Barbara, whose knowledge of geography was somewhat more extensive than that of Robin, although she had not travelled so much, "I believe there are many countries in the East."

"Well, I dare say there may be. Mistress Barbara: you are going to chop scholarship with me; but yet, I suppose, you do not know that they have in that country a new way of making love. It is not new to them, though it is new to us."

"Oh, dear Robin! what is it?"

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"Why, suppose they wished you, a young pretty maiden as you are, to understand that I, a small deformed dragon, regarded you, only a little, like the beginning of love, they would—" Robin stooped as he spoke, and plucked a rose-bud that had anticipated summer—"they would give you this bud. But, suppose they wanted you to believe I loved you very much indeed, they would choose you out a full-blown rose. Barbara, I cannot find a full-blown rose; but I do not love you the less for that."

"Give me the bud, Robin, whether or no; it is the first of the season:—my lady will be delighted with it—if, indeed, any thing can delight her!"

"I will give it you to keep; not to give away, even to your lady. Ah, Barbara! if I had any thing worth giving, you would not refuse it."

"And can any thing be better worth giving, or having, than sweet flowers?" said the simple girl. "Only it pains me to pull them—they die so soon—and then, every leaf that falls away from them, looks like a reproach!"

"Should you be sorry if I were to die one of these days, Barbara," inquired the Ranger, "like one of those flowers?"

"Sorry! have I ever appeared ungrateful, Robin? When first I came here, you used to be so kind me:—indeed, you are always kind—only I fear lately you are displeased with me about something or other. You have avoided me—are you angry, Robin?"

"Indeed I am not; nor do I forget how often you have driven away the 'shadows' that used to come over me."

"And do you—I mean, do you esteem me as much as ever?"

Robin looked earnestly into her face, and then taking her hand, gently replied:—

"I do esteem you, as you term it, more than ever; but I also love you. When a little helpless thing, I took you from your father's arms: I loved you then as a parent would love a child. When Lady Cecil took you under her care, and I saw you but seldom, my heart leaned towards the daughter of my best friend with a brother's love. And when, as I have just said, the sunlight of your smile, and the gentleness of your young girlish voice, dispelled much melancholy from my mind, I thought—no matter what. But now the case is altered—you see in me a mere lump, a deformed creature, a being unseemly to look upon, a wretch—!" [145]

"Robin Hays, you wrong yourself," interrupted Barbara; "I do not see you thus, nor think you thus. The raven is not a beautiful bird, nor hath it a sweet voice, yet it was welcomed and beloved of the prophet Elijah."

"So it was, Barbara; but why?—because it was *useful* to him in his hour of need. Think you that, in the time of his triumph and prosperity, he would have taken it to his bosom, as if it had been a dove?"

"I do not see why he should not," she said: "God is so good, that he never takes away one beauty without bestowing another; and the raven's glossy wing might be, to some, even more beautiful than the purple plumage of the dove: at all events, so excellent a man would not be chained by mere eye-beauty, which, after all, passeth quickly. Though I think it was very uncourteous of Mr. Fleetword to say, in my hearing, Robin, that the time would come when Mistress Constance would be as plain-favoured as old Dame Compton, whose countenance looks like the worm-eaten cover of Solomon Grundy's Bible."

"Ah, Barbara! you are a good girl: but suppose I was as rich as I ought to be before thinking of marrying—and supposing you came to the knowledge of your father, and he agreed—and supposing Mistress Cecil did not say nay—supposing all this——?"

Robin paused, and Barbara, with her eyes fixed on the ground, commenced pulling to pieces the rose-bud he had given her.

"Supposing all this, Barbara——?"

"Well, Robin?"

"Do you think, Barbara, you would then—marry me?"

"I never thought of marriage, seeing that I am too young, and, withal, too inexperienced; but there is one thing, Robin——"

"I knew it," interrupted the Ranger, in one of his sudden bursts of bitterness; "I might easily have known it—Beauty and ugliness!—Fool! fool! to imagine that a girl could look on me without loathing! There—go to your mistress, go to your mistress, and make gay sport of Robin Hays!"

The soft eyes of Barbara filled with tears; she made no reply, but prosecuted her attack on the rose-bud so vigorously, that nought but the stem remained in her fingers. [146]

"You need not have torn that rose to bits before my face! Ay, trample on its leaves as you do on my heart!—Why do you not go to your mistress?"

"You are very wayward, Robin; one time smooth, at other times, and without cause, rugged as a path through a thorny common: I can only pray that the Lord may teach you better than to misinterpret my words, and mock a poor girl who never entertained a thought to your disadvantage."

She could say no more, for the large round tears forced their way down her cheeks, as she turned towards the house with a bowed head and a feeble step. But Robin's mood had again changed.

"I beg your pardon, Barbara: forgive me; and think, that if my mind sometimes takes a crooked turn, it is the fault of my damnable body!"

"Do not swear; it is the profaneness of your words, and, I fear me too truly, of your life also, that hurts me. Oh, Robin! do tell me who my father is, that I may find him, and have some heart to lean upon that will not always cause me tears. My lady is ever sad, and you are ever wayward and uncertain: I am a double orphan; and were it not for the consolation afforded me by better thoughts, should be most miserable."

"Forgive me, girl, forgive me; but every one alludes to this cursed deformity, and it is ill to bear —" said Robin, walking by her side.

"I never alluded to it, never even thought of it," replied Barbara, sobbing: "if the voice and the eye is kind, and, above all, if the face become familiar, it is one, all one, whether the features be formed according to beauty or otherwise. I never thought of looking into little Crisp's face, when he licked my hand but now; I only felt that the creature loved me."

"Crisp is no more a beauty than his master," observed Robin, patting the dog, who leaped to the caress: "but you cannot like him as well as black Blanche, or Bright-eye, your mistress's silken favourites, who show their teeth at the poor fellow whenever he approaches the entrance?"

"Bright-eye is a trifle conceited, I grant; but Blanche is like a lamb, only what can she do? Crisp comes gammocking up, wagging his tail, seeming in the best of good humours; poor Blanche receives him kindly, and sometimes walks before him to the buttery; then, all of a sudden, just as [147]

she is thinking how very glad she is to meet Crisp—thinking, too, that notwithstanding his shaggy coat and crooked legs, he is a thousand times more to be esteemed and liked than the fine and conceited Bright-eye—at that very time, and just as suddenly as you fly into your passions, Crisp stops, grins, twirls his tail, and will neither return her civility nor accept her invitation. What can poor Blanche do, Robin?"

This statement was made by the pretty Puritan with a mingling of simplicity and shrewdness, for which, to have looked in her innocent face, one would scarcely have given her credit. The tears of youth dry as quickly as the dews in summer; and the young heart rebounds from grief as swiftly as the arrow from the bow. Robin looked upon her with doubting, but with strong affection. He knew, though he struggled with hope against the conviction, that Dalton's friendship would hardly induce him to bestow his daughter upon such an unpropitious personage as himself; and he felt assured—or, at least, believed, in his more gloomy moments, that so it must be—no woman could, by any possibility, feel affection for him. He was also, at times, under the full assurance that Barbara only laughed at his addresses; and though she had more than once given him all reasonable encouragement, he most industriously placed it to the account of the universality of female coquetry, a theory in which he most conscientiously believed.

Without, therefore, any notice of her little fable, or the visible inference so easily drawn from the comparison between Crisp and himself, he started off from the subject nearest his heart, with an abrupt inquiry as to whether her mistress would be likely to go abroad that evening.

"I dare say she will come out in the twilight," replied Barbara, who had sufficient of the sensitiveness of her sex to feel deeply mortified at Robin's heedlessness of her delicate allusion, adding, "Good day; I cannot stay any longer with you; so give you good day;" and she added in a lower tone, "a more gentle humour when next we meet." Woman's pride impelled her footsteps with extraordinary alacrity; woman's affection, or curiosity, both of which are oftentimes at war with her reason, obliged her to look back as she entered the postern, and then she enjoyed the little triumph of observing that Robin remained on the same spot gazing after her.

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"I don't think I said any thing very unkind to him," she thought while passing along the gallery. "I have a great mind to go back and ask him if he wanted to send any message to my lady; I did not give the poor fellow time to speak—I ought not to serve anyone so. What would good Mr. Fleetword say, if he knew I spoke so snappishly to any fellow-christian?—Keep your cold nose away from my hand, Master Bright-eye; you forget how you behaved to my friend Crisp yesterday."

Just as she arrived at this point of her soliloquy, she stood before a window, overlooking the part of the garden where she had left Robin.—He was no longer there! and the fond heart of little Barbara, at once forgetful of the harshness and waywardness of her early friend, was only aroused from profound reasoning upon her own unworthiness, by a smart tap on the shoulder from the fair hand of Lady Frances Cromwell.

"Pretty Barbara in meditation!" she exclaimed;—"but this is no time to ask upon what or why. What is the meaning of your lady's sudden resolve?"

"What resolve, madam?"

"Why, a resolve to marry Sir Willmott Burrell within this week."

Barbara was panic-struck: she remained silent for a few minutes, and then clasping her hands, implored Lady Frances to do—she knew not what.

"Ah! she will die, my lady, she will die! for who could live married to such a man? He is, indeed, a fearful husband for such a one. My lady, I know she does not love him—she never did—never could. I have heard her say in her sleep—"

"What, good maid?" asked Lady Frances eagerly, and with her usual curiosity. But the habitual integrity of Barbara's mind was awakened: with tears and sobs she replied,—

"What I must not, as a true girl, repeat. I crave your pardon, my lady, but it would ill become me to speak of what is said in sleep: only, dear, dear lady, if you love my dear mistress—if her life be dear to you—prevent, if possible, this marriage."

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CHAPTER XV.

And them beside a ladie faire he saw,
Standing alone on foote in foule array;
To whom himself he hastily did draw,
To weete the cause of so uncomely fray,
And to depart them, if so be he may.

SPENSER.

The Lady Frances Cromwell was not likely to keep secret, grief or any thing else she had the power of disclosing: forthwith she proceeded to assail Constance Cecil with a torrent of

exclamations and expostulations, to support which no inconsiderable degree of philosophy was requisite. The intention, however, sanctified the deed, and Constance, for some time, only pressed her hand in reply: at length she said,—

"You see me, dearest Frances, at present under much depression:—a dark cloud is over me; but, I entreat you, heed it not. I am about to do what is right, and not even the commands of his Highness, your father, could prevent it, if indeed you were to act upon the hint you have given me, and procure his interference. My fate is sealed, irrevocably sealed! And do you wonder that I tremble at the change I am about to undergo, the awful change, from maid to wife? Barbara, good maid, let me see no more of tears, but smiles, as in past times. And now I entreat you both, sweet friends, (for that humble girl has a heart formed by tenderness for what is more exalted—friendship,) leave me. You, my dear Lady Frances, will to-day, for my sake, and for his, be as much as possible with my father; he must grieve at this parting—it is but natural;—and you, girl—there, go to your embroidery."

Barbara looked into her lady's face, seized her hand, and pressed it alternately to her heart and lips.

"I will sit in yonder nook, dear mistress; I will not turn towards you, nor speak, nor breathe—you may fancy me a statue, so silent, so immovable will rest your little Barbara. Blanche and Bright-eye, and even that black wolf-hound, remain in the chamber, and why not I? Am I less faithful, or less thoughtful, than a dog? and would you treat me worse? Besides, dear lady, your wedding-clothes! There is not a satin or a silver robe, nor farthingale, nor cardinal—not a lone ostrich-plume, that is not of six fashions past! Good, my lady, if it is to be, you must wed as of a right becomes your high descent. My Lady Frances can well speak of this; and as there is no time to send to London now, her tire-women would help me to arrange the robes necessary upon such occasions."

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"Peace, Barbara! I mean to dress as well befits this bridal; so trouble not thyself as to the tiring; but go, my gentle girl, go, go."

"And may I not crouch yonder, where so often I have read to you, and sung the little ballads that you taught me for pastime?"

"Or those that poor Robin taught you? I wish that young man, Barbara, had a more settled way of life; for, despite his awkward form, there is much that is noble and elevated about him. However, make no haste to wed, and, above all, guard well your heart; keep a keen watch over your affections—ay, watch them, and pray, pray fervently, poor girl, that they may go to him who may have your hand."

"They *shall* go," said Barbara, rising to follow Lady Frances, who had abruptly left the chamber to conceal her tears; "I would not marry a king—I mean, madam, a governor—if I did not love him! Why should I?"

"Why should you, indeed, my kind Barbara! There, go and tell your master, tell also Sir Willmott, that I have much to do and much to think upon; so that to-day they must excuse my absence. It is an awful thing this marriage—an unknown, or at least uncharted course to enter on;—to virgin minds," she murmured, as her faithful attendant left the room, "at all times full of doubts, ay, even when love is pilot and the fond soul brim-full of hope. I too, who had such dreams of happiness, of good and holy happiness—the interchange of kindness, the mutual zeal, the tender care—the look, so vigilant and gentle, so full of pure blandishment—the outpouring of thoughts on thoughts—the words, so musical because so rich with the heart's truth; and so I fancied love and its fulfilment, marriage. Well knew I of the contract: yet still I dreamed and hoped, yes, slept and dreamed; but to be awakened thus—to such unutterable horror! Thank God, my mother is in heaven!—that is the solitary drop of comfort in my life's poison-bowl.—My mother's death a comfort! Alas, alas!"

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She covered her face with her hands, and we draw the Grecian painter's veil over the contending feelings it would be impossible adequately to portray.

Sir Willmott Burrell bustled and chafed, and gave orders to his serving-men, and to those now called tailors; visited the neighbouring gentry, but spoke not of his approaching marriage, which he preferred should take place as silently as might be. Nevertheless he had far too much depending upon the succeeding hours to pass the day either in quiet or composure. He had braved through his interview with the unhappy Sir Robert Cecil, and urged, as an excuse for his conduct, the extremity to which his love was driven by Constantia's decided rejection of his suit, carefully, however, concealing from her unfortunate parent the fact that she loved another.

Sir Robert had sent several messages to his daughter, imploring her to see him, but in vain—she resolutely refused, wisely dreading the result of such an interview. "This day and to-morrow is all the time," she said, "I can call my own, until—for me—time has entered upon eternity. All I implore then is, that I may be alone, the mistress of myself during such brief space."

When the sun was set, Barbara entered her room with a slight evening meal. Her mistress was sitting, or rather lying on a low couch, opposite a table, upon which stood a small dial, mounted in chased silver, representing a garland of flowers.

"Lay it down, good girl; I cannot taste it at present. I have been watching the minute-hand pace round that dial.—Is it, indeed, near seven? It was an ill thought of the foreign craftsman to set

Time amid roses; he should have placed it among thorns. Is the evening fine?"

"Fine, but yet sober, my lady; the sun has quite set, and the birds are silent and at roost, except the old blackbird, who whistles late, and the wakeful robin, who sometimes bandies music with the nightingale.—Would you like to hear them, madam?" [152]

"Not just now, Barbara: but leave out my hood. Did my father again ask for me?"

"Not since, mistress. Mr. Fleetword is with him." Barbara left the room.

"I cannot tell why, my lady," she said earnestly to Lady Frances, whom she met in the vestibule—"I cannot divine the reason, but this bridal has to me the semblance of a funeral. God shield us all from evil! there is a cold deathlike chill throughout the house. I heard—(though, my lady, I do not believe in such superstitions,) but I heard the death-watch tick—tick—ticking, as plain as I hear the old clock now chime seven! And I saw—I was wide awake—yet I saw a thin misty countenance, formed as of the white spray of the salt-sea wave, so sparkling, so shadowy, yet so clear, come between me and the moonbeams, and raise its hand thus.—Oh, mercy—mercy—mercy!" she shrieked, so as to startle the Lady Frances, and then as hastily exclaimed, "La! madam, to think of the like! if it isn't that little muddy, nasty Crisp, who has found me out! I will tell you the rest by and by, madam, only I want to turn this little beast into the shrubbery, that he may find his master."

At another time Lady Frances would have rallied her for accompanying, instead of dismissing Crisp to the garden; but a weight of sorrow seemed also to oppress her. Her usually high spirits were gone, and she made no observation, but retreated to the library.

A few moments after the occurrence of this little incident, Constance was seated on the bank in "the Fairy Ring," pondering the dread change that had taken place since the previous night.

The evening, as Barbara had expressed it, was fine but sober. The lilac and the laburnum were in full blossom, but they appeared faded to Constantia's eyes; so completely are even our senses under the control of circumstances. Sorrow is a sad mystifier, turning the green leaf yellow and steeping young roses in tears. She had not been long seated, when a step, a separating of the branches, and Walter De Guerre was at her feet. Constance recoiled from what at heart she loved, as it had been a thing she hated; and the look and motion could not have been unnoticed by her lover. [153]

"I have heard, Mistress Cecil—heard all!—that you are about to be married—married to a man you despise—about to sacrifice yourself for some ambitious view—some mad resolve—some to me incomprehensible determination! And I swore to seek you out—to see you before the fatal act, had it been in your own halls; and to tell you that you will never again feel what happiness is——"

"I know it!" interrupted Constance, in a voice whose music was solemn and heavy as her thoughts: "Walter, I know it well. I never shall feel happy—never expect it—and it would have been but humanity to have spared me this meeting, unwished for as it now is. You, of all creatures in this wide, wide world, I would avoid.—Yes, Walter, avoid for ever! Besides," she continued with energy, "what do you here? This place—this spot, is no more safe from *his* intrusion than from yours. If you loved, if you ever loved me, away! And oh, Walter! if the knowledge—the most true, most sad knowledge, that I am miserable—more miserable than ever you can be—be any soothing to your spirit, take it with you! only away, away—put the broad sea between us, now and for ever! If Sir Willmott Burrell slept with his fathers the sleep of a thousand dead, I could never be yours. You seem astonished, and so was I yesternight; but it is true—true—true—so put the broad sea between us quickly, Walter—now, and for ever!"

The Cavalier looked as if he understood her not, or thought her senses wandered: at last he said, "But why need you, with a fortune to command, and a spirit to enjoy whatever is bright, or beautiful, or glorious—why should you fetter your free-born will? There is a cunning mystery about it, Constance" (Constance shuddered, and hid her face, lest its expression should betray something of her secret); "a mystery I cannot solve: confide it to me, and solemnly I swear, not only never to divulge, but to peril, with my good sword, my heart's richest and warmest blood, in any cause that can free you from this bad man. Nor do I expect aught of you in return, nor any thing ask, save that you may be happy, with any, any but this——I cannot speak his hated name."

Constance was too agitated to reply. Under present circumstances, she would have given worlds not to have seen Walter; and, having seen him, she knew not what to say, or how to think or act: the painful struggle she endured deprived her of the power of utterance. [154]

"It is not for myself I speak, Constantia; though now I need not tell you that the love of boyhood has never been banished from my bosom. The remembrance of the hours we spent together, before a knowledge of the world, before a change in the constitution of our country, shed its malign influence, not over our hearts, but over our destinies—the remembrance of those hours has been the blessing, the solitary blessing, of my exile; it has been the green oasis in the desert of my existence: amid the turmoil of battle, it has led me on to victory; amid the dissipation of the royal court, it has preserved me from taint. The remembrance of Constance, like the night-star that cheers the mariner on the wide sea, has kept all holy and hopeful feelings around my heart; telling of home, my early home, and its enjoyments—of Constance, the little affectionate, but high-souled girl—the——"

"Stop!" interrupted Constance, with an agonised expression—"Stop, I conjure you! I know what

you were going to say; you were about to repeat that which my mother loved to call me—your wife! She did not mean it in mockery, though it sounds so now, like a knell from the lower earth. But one thing, Walter, one request I have to make—you pray sometimes?—the time has been when we have prayed together!—when *next* you pray, thank God that SHE is dead!"

"How! thank God that my kind and early friend—that your mother is dead!" repeated the young man, in a voice of astonishment.

"Even so, Walter. You would not see her stretched upon the rack? would not see her exposed to tortures, such as, at no very distant period, the saints of our own church endured?—would not see her torn limb from limb by wild horses?"

"Heavens! Constantia, are you mad?" exclaimed Walter, terrified at her excited and distraught manner.

"I am not mad," she replied, in a changed and subdued tone; "but do not forget (and let it be on your knees) to thank God that my mother is dead; and that the cold clay presses the temples, which, if they were alive, would throb and burn as mine do now."

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She pressed her hands on her brow; while the youth, appalled and astonished, gazed on her in silence.

"It is well thought on," she said, recovering her self-command much more quickly than he could have imagined possible. "I will give it you; it would be sinful to keep it after that dread tomorrow; even now, what do I with your gift?" She drew forth from her bosom the locket of which we have before spoken, and, looking on it fondly for a moment, thought, though not aloud, "Poor little fragment of the glittering sin that tempts mankind to their destruction! I heeded not your chasing nor your gems; but once (forgive it, God, forgive it!) thought far too much of him who gave it: I should have known better. I will not look on you again, lest you take root within the heart on which you have rested: though it was then in innocence, yet *now* it is a crime; there—" she held it towards him with a trembling hand. While her arm was thus extended, Burrell rushed from behind the covert of a wide-spreading laurel, and, with an action at once unmanly and insulting, snatched the trinket from her hand and flung it on the sward.

Magic itself could not have occasioned a greater change in the look, the manner, the entire appearance of the heiress of Cecil. She drew herself up to her full height, and instantly demanded, "How Sir Willmott Burrell *dared* to act thus in her presence?"

The Cavalier drew his sword from its sheath; Burrell was not backward in following the example. He returned Constantia's look of contempt with one of sarcasm—the peculiar glance that becomes so effective from under a half-closed lid—and then his eye glared like that of the hooded snake, while he replied,—

"Methought the lady in her chamber: the destined bride, during the day, keeps to her own apartment; 'tis the soft night that draws her forth to interchange love-pledges and soft sayings."

"Villain!" exclaimed De Guerre with startling energy, "hold thy blaspheming tongue, nor dare to imagine, much less express, aught of this lady that is not pure as heaven's own firmament!"

"Oh, my good sir," said the other, "I know you now! the braggart at my Lady Cecil's funeral—the pall-bearer—the church-yard lounge—the—!"

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"Hold, coward!" interrupted the Cavalier, grinding the words between his teeth. "Lady, I entreat you to retire; this is no scene for you:—nay, but you must!"

"Touch her not," exclaimed Burrell, the brutality of his vile nature fully awakened at perceiving Walter attempt to take her hand; "touch her not, though you are doubtless the youth to whom her heart is given."

"Forbear, sir!" ejaculated Constance; "if you have the spirit of a man, forbear!"

"Oh, then, your passion has not been declared by words—you have spoken by actions!" he retorted with redoubled acrimony.

The reply to this gross insult was made by the point of De Guerre's sword resting on Burrell's breast.

"Defend yourself, or die like a vile dog!" thundered the Cavalier, and Sir Willmott was obliged to stand on his defence.

The feelings of the woman overcame those of the heroine, and Constance shrieked for help, when she beheld the combatants fairly engaged in a feud where the shedding of blood appeared inevitable. Her call was answered, but not by words; scarcely more than three or four thrusts had been made and returned, when a stout gentleman, clad in a dark and tight-fitting vest, strode nearly between them, and clashed the tough blade of his broad basket-hilted sword upon their more graceful, but less substantial, weapons, so as to strike them to the earth. Thus, without speaking word or farther motion, he cast his eyes, first on the one, then on the other, still holding their weapons under, more, however, by the power of his countenance, than of his arm.

"Put up your swords!" he said at length, in a low stern voice—"put up your swords!" he repeated; then, seeing that, though Burrell's rapier had leaped into its rest, De Guerre retained his unsheathed, "put up your sword, sir!" he said again in a loud tone, that sounded awfully through

the still twilight, and then stamped upon the ground with force and energy: "the air is damp, I say, and good steel should be kept from rust. Young men, keep your weapons in their scabbards, until God and your country call them forth; then draw according to the knowledge—according to the faith that is in ye; but a truce to idle brawling."

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"I would first know who it is," demanded Walter, still in fierce anger, "who breaks in upon us, and commands us thus?"

"Have you so soon forgotten Major Wellmore, young man?" replied the stranger in his harshest voice: "I little thought that he of the English graft upon a French stock would have carried such brawling into the house of my ancient friend.—Sir Willmott Burrell, I lament that the fear of the Lord is not with you, or you would not use carnal weapons so indiscriminately: go to, and think what the Protector would say, did he find you thus employed."

"But, sir," said De Guerre, in no degree overawed by the imperative manner of Major Wellmore, "I, at least, care not for the Protector, nor am I to be baffled of my just revenge by any of his officers."

"Wouldst fight with me, then?" inquired the Major, with much good temper, and placing himself between the opponents.

"If it so pleasure you," replied the youth, abating not a jot of his determination; "when I have made this treacherous and false fellow apologise to the Lady Constance, and afterwards to me, for his unproved and unprovoked words."

During the parley, Constance had remained fixed and immovable; but a new feeling now seemed to animate her, as she approached, and, clinging to Major Wellmore's arm for support, spoke in an audible but tremulous voice,—

"Walter, I entreat, I command you to let this matter rest. I shall not debase myself by condescending to assert, what Sir Willmott Burrell ought, and does believe—that I came not here to meet you by any appointment. I say his heart tells him, at this moment, that such a proceeding would be one of which he knows I am incapable."

"If any reflection has been made upon Mistress Cecil," observed Major Wellmore, "I will be the first to draw steel in her cause. Sir Willmott, explain this matter.—Young sir," he continued, noting Walter's ire and impatience, "a soldier's honour is as dear to me as it can be to you."

Burrell felt and appeared exceedingly perplexed; but with his most insinuating manner, and a tremulous voice, he replied:—

"Mistress Cecil will, I hope, allow for the excess of affection that gave rise to such needless jealousy. On consideration, I perceive, at once, that she would not, could not, act or think in any way unworthy of herself." He bowed profoundly, as he spoke, to Constantia, who clung still more closely to Major Wellmore's arm, and could hardly forbear uttering the contempt she felt; at every instant, her truthful nature urged her to speak all she thought and knew, to set Burrell at defiance, and hold him up to the detestation he merited: but her father, and her father's crime! the dreadful thought sent back the blood that rushed so warmly from her heart in icy coldness to its seat; and the high-souled woman was compelled to receive the apology with a drooping head, and a spirit bowed almost to breaking by intense and increasing anguish.

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"And you are satisfied with this!" exclaimed the Cavalier, striding up to her; "you, Constance Cecil, are satisfied with this! But, by Him whose unquenchable stars are now shining in their pure glory over our heads, I am not!—Coward! coward! and liar! in your teeth, Sir Willmott Burrell! as such I will proclaim you all through his majesty's dominions, by word of mouth and deed of sword!"

"Walter, Walter!" exclaimed Constance, clasping her hands.

"I crave your pardon, Lady," said Burrell, without altering his tone; "but do not thus alarm yourself: my sword shall not again be drawn upon a low and confirmed malignant. Sir," turning from his opponent and addressing the stranger, "heard you not how he applied the forbidden title of majesty to the man Charles Stuart; shall I not forthwith arrest him for high treason?—runneth not the act so, formed for the renouncing and disannulling of the pretended title of the late man's progeny?"

"Perish such acts and their devisers!" shouted the Cavalier, losing all prudence in the excitement of the moment. "Let the lady retire, while we end this quarrel as becomes men!"

"Heed him not, heed him not, I implore, I entreat you!" exclaimed Constance, sinking to the earth at the feet of Major Wellmore, by whom the hint of Burrell was apparently unnoticed; "the lion takes not advantage of the deer caught in the hunter's toils, and he is distraught, I know he is!"

"I am not distraught, Miss Cecil, though I have suffered enough to make me so: what care I for acts formed by a pack of regicides!"

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"Young man," interrupted the old officer with a burst of fierce and strong passion that, like a mountain torrent, carried all before it, "I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth and its Protector! A night in one of the lone chambers of Cecil Place will cool the bravo-blood that riots in your veins, and teach you prudence, if the Lord denies you grace."

He laid his hand so heavily on De Guerre's shoulder, that his frame quailed beneath its weight, while the point of his sword rested on the peaceful grass. Burrell attempted, at the same instant, to steal the weapon from his hand: the Cavalier grasped it firmly; while Major Wellmore, darting on the false knight a withering look, emphatically observed, and with a total change of manner,—

"I can, methinks, make good a capture without *your* aid, kind sir; although I fully appreciate your zeal *in the cause of the Commonwealth!*" The latter part of the sentence was pronounced with a slow and ironical emphasis; then, turning to De Guerre, he added, "I need not say to you that, being under arrest, your sword remains with me."

De Guerre presented it in silence; for the result of his interview with Constantia had rendered him indifferent to his fate, and, although but an hour before it would have been only with his life that his sword had been relinquished, he now cared not for the loss of either.

Major Wellmore took the weapon, and appeared for a moment to consider whether he should retain it or not: he decided on the former, and in a cold, calm voice commanded his prisoner to move forward. De Guerre pointed to Constantia, who had neither shrieked nor fainted, but stood a mute statue of despair in the clear light of the young spring moon, whose early and resplendent beams fell in a silver shower on her bared and beautiful head.

"I will take care of Mistress Cecil," said the insidious Burrell.

As he spoke, Lady Frances, who, alarmed at the absence of her friend, had come forth to seek her, bounded into the Fairy Ring, and as suddenly screamed, and stood irresolute amid the dread circle. The Major immediately spoke:—

"Lady Frances, pray conduct your friend: Sir Willmott Burrell, we follow you to the nearest entrance." [160]

"And now," said Constantia, as her head fell on the bosom of her friend, "he is in the lion's den—fully and for ever destroyed!" Nature was exhausted: it was long ere she again spoke.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

The doubt of future foes exiles my present
joy,
And wit me warns to shun such snares
As threaten mine annoy;
For falsehood now doth flow, and subject
faith doth ebb,
Which would not be, if Reason ruled, or
Wisdom weav'd the web.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

While the headstrong Cavalier was confined in "the strong room" of Cecil Place, he had ample leisure to reflect upon the consequences of his rashness, and to remember the caution he had received from Major Wellmore on the night of their first meeting—to be guarded in his expressions, where danger might arise from a single thoughtless word. He surveyed the apartment with a careless look, as if indifferent whether it were built of brick or of Portland stone, glanced upon the massive bars of the iron-framed windows, and scarcely observed that the walls were bare of tapestry, and that dampness and decay had mottled the plastering into a variety of hues and shades of colour. His lamp burned brightly on the table; the solitary but joyous light seemed out of place; he put it therefore aside, endeavouring to lessen its effect by placing it behind a huge worm-eaten chair, over which he threw his cloak. Thus, almost in darkness, with a mind ill at ease, brooding on the events of the day, which had perhaps perilled his life, although life had now become of little value, we leave him to his melancholy and self-reproachful thoughts, and hasten to the chamber of Constance Cecil.

It has already appeared that an early and a close intimacy had subsisted between her and Walter De Guerre; but we must leave it to Time, the great developer, to explain the circumstances under which it originated, as well as those by which it was broken off.

Lady Frances Cromwell had left her friend in what she considered a sound slumber; and sought her dressing-room only to change her garments, so that she might sit with her during the remainder of the night. Barbara, however, had hardly taken the seat the lady had quitted, when her mistress half arose from the bed, and called her by name in so hollow a voice that the poor girl started, as if the sound came from a sepulchre. [162]

"The night is dark, Barbara," she said, "but heed it not; the good and the innocent are ever a pure light unto themselves. Go forth with courage and with faith, even to the Gull's Nest Crag; tell Robin Hays that Walter De Guerre is a prisoner here, and that, unless he be at liberty before sunrise, he may be a dead man, as surely as he is a banned one; for some covert purpose lurks under his arrest. Tarry not, but see that you proceed discreetly, and, above all, secretly. It is a long journey at this hour; the roan pony is in the park, and easily guided—he will bear you along quickly;—and for security—for you are timid, Barbara—take the wolf-hound."

Barbara had long known that a servant's chief duty is obedience, yet she would just then have done errand to any one rather than to Robin Hays; she however replied,—

"Please ye, mistress, the roan pony is easy to guide, if you happen to be going the way he likes, and that is, ever from the park to the stable, from the stable to the park; otherwise, like the Israelites of old, he is a stiff-necked beast, whom I would rather eschew than commune with. And the wolf-hound, my lady, behaves so rudely to little Crisp, holding him by the throat in an unseemly fashion, and occasionally despoiling him of a fragment of his ears, toes, or tail, as it pleasures him, that I had rather take black Blanche if you permit me—she can soon find Crisp or Robin either."

"As you please, Barbara; only silence and hasten."

"My mistress," thus ran Barbara's thoughts as she wended on her way through the night, "is a wonderful lady; so good, so wise, so rich, yet so unhappy! I wouldn't be a lady for the world!—it is hard fate enough to be a woman, a poor, weak woman, without strength of limb or wisdom of head; and, withal, a fond heart, yet afraid and ashamed to show its fondness. If I was my lady, and my lady I, instead of sending my lady to tell Robin Hays to let the poor gentleman out, I'd just go and let him out myself, or send my lady (supposing her the maid Barbara) to let him out, without telling anybody about it. And I am sure she loves that poor gentleman; and yet she, wise, good, rich, and wonderful, is just going, in the very teeth of her affections, to marry that black Burrell! I am very happy that I'm not a lady, for I'd die, that I would ten times over, sooner than marry any one I didn't love. It will kill her, I know—I feel it will: yet why does she marry him? And she keeps such deep silence too.—Down, pretty Blanche, and do not rouse your sleek ears: your ears, Blanche, are lady's ears, and so ought to hear nothing frightening—and your eyes, Blanche, are lady's eyes, and should never see any thing disagreeable.—What ails thee, doggy? Nay, wag ye'r tail, and do not crouch so; 'tis but the shadow of a cow, I think.—How my heart beats!"

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The beating of the maiden's heart accelerated her speed, and she ran with hasty and light footsteps a considerable distance before either dog or girl paused for breath. At length they did pause, and Barbara saw with much satisfaction, that she had left far behind the shadow which caused Blanche and herself so much alarm. She reached the Gull's Nest without any misadventure, and now her object was to draw Robin forth from the hostelry without entering herself. Through a chink in the outer door (the inner being only closed on particular occasions) she discovered Robin and his mother, and one or two others—strangers they might be, or neighbours—at all events she did not know them. Presently Crisp stretched his awkward length from out its usual coil, and trotted to the door, slowly wagging his apology for tail, as if perfectly conscious of the honour of Blanche's visit. Miss Blanche, in her turn, laid her nose on the ground and snorted a salutation that was replied to by a somewhat similar token from master Crisp. Robin, who was the very embodiment of vigilance, knew at once there was something or someone without, acquainted and on friendly terms with his dog, and he quietly arose and opened the door without making any observation to his companions. He was, indeed, astonished at perceiving Barbara, who put her finger on her lip to enjoin silence. He immediately led her to the back of the house, where none of the casual visitors could see them, and she communicated her lady's message quickly but distinctly. She would have enlarged upon the danger, and expatiated on the interest she took in the cause of the Cavalier, had Robin permitted her, but she saw he was too much distressed at the magnitude of the information to heed the details, however interesting they might have been at any other time.

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"But I don't understand it," at length murmured Robin; "I can't see it: how could he possibly suffer Sir Willmott Burrell to place him in confinement?"

"It was not he at all," replied Barbara; "it was Major Wellmore, and he is at the Place now."

"Death and the devil!" exclaimed Robin, at the same instant pressing his back against the wall beside which he stood: it instantly gave way, and Barbara was alone—alone in that wild and most dreary-looking place.

She summoned Blanche, but Blanche was far away over the cliffs, exploring, under Crisp's guidance, the nooks and intricacies of the hills and hollows. She would have called still louder, but her quick eye discerned not now a shadowy figure, but Sir Willmott Burrell himself, within a distance of two or three hundred yards, and approaching towards her. She was concealed from his sight by a projection of the cliff: but this she never considered, alive only to the feelings his appearance at once suggested. She had noted the spot where Robin had disappeared, and, urged by terror, flung herself against the same portion of the wall, with such success, that it gave way before her, replacing itself so suddenly that, in an instant, the light of the bright stars in the blue heavens was shut out, and she stood in total darkness, within the recess that had so mysteriously opened to receive her.

When she became a little collected, she distinctly heard the sound of voices at no great distance,

and groping about in the same direction, discovered a narrow flight of stairs, which she immediately descended, imagining that she was following the course which Robin had pursued. Her progress was soon arrested by a door, which she attempted to shake, but in vain; she leaned against it, however, or rather sank down upon the steps, worn out by fatigue of body and anxiety of mind. She could not have lain there a moment, when the door opened, and Robin literally sprang over her in his haste to re-ascend. She started from her position on perceiving before her the well-remembered figure of the Buccaneer, who was about to mount also, evidently with as much eagerness, though with less activity, than Robin Hays.

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The sight of a stranger at their most secret entrance, even though that stranger was a woman, sent Hugh Dalton's hand to the pommel of his sword, but it was as quickly stayed by Robin's cry of, "It is Barbara."

The Buccaneer had just time to catch the fainting form of his daughter in his arms, and the wild and reckless seaman was so overpowered by the unexpected meeting, that he thought not of inquiring how she had obtained admittance. We have observed that women in the inferior ranks of society continue much briefer time in hysterics, swoons, and such-like, than the highborn and well educated, who know how to make the most of all matters of the kind. Barbara rapidly revived, and as rapidly urged Robin to heed her message, and to take her away, informing him in the same breath, that she had pushed against that portion of the wall where he had so strangely disappeared, because she had seen Sir Willmott Burrell approaching the spot with determined speed.

"Listen at the secret door," exclaimed the Buccaneer. "When he cannot find you above, he will seek you at the only entrance he knows of: I need not say, answer not the sign."

"Robin, Robin!" ejaculated Barbara, "take me, oh! take me with you!—You are not, surely, going to leave me in this horrid place, and with a stranger too!"

Poor Dalton! what painful and powerful emotions convulsed his heart and features!—"a stranger!"—a stranger, indeed, to his own child!

Robin quitted the place without replying to her entreaty; and when the Buccaneer spoke, it was in that low and broken voice which tells of the soul's agony.

"Why call me stranger?" he said, approaching, and tenderly taking her hand; "you have seen me before."

"Yes, good sir, the night previous to my dear lady's death—it is an ill omen to see strangers for the first time where there is death. I thank you, sir, I will not sit. May I not go after Robin?"

"Then you prefer Robin to me?"

"So please ye, sir; I have known Robin a long, long time, and he knows my father: perhaps you, too, may know him, sir; you look of the sea, and I am sure my father is a sailor. Do you know my father?"

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The gentle girl, forgetting her natural timidity under the influence of a stronger principle, seized the hand of the Buccaneer, and gazed into his face with so earnest and so beseeching a look, that if Robin had not returned on the instant, the Skipper would have betrayed the secret he was so anxious to preserve until (to use his own expression) "he was a free man, able to look his own child in the face."

"He is at the entrance, sure enough," said Robin; "but it will occupy him longer to climb the rocks than it did to descend them; we can take the hollow path, and be far on the road to Cecil Place before he arrives at the summit."

"But what can we do with her?—She must not longer breathe the air of this polluted nest," argued Dalton, all the father [overflowing](#) at his heart; "if we delay, Burrell may see her: if so, all is over."

"I can creep along the earth like a mocking lapwing," she replied. "Let me but out of this place, I can hide in some of the cliff-holes—any where out of this, and," she whispered Robin, "away—above all things away—from that fearful man."

"To Cecil Place at once then, Captain; the delay of half an hour may seal his doom. I will place Barbara in a nook of the old tower, where nothing comes but bats and mice; and, as it overlooks the paths, she can see from it the road that Burrell takes, and so avoid him when returning."

Dalton looked at Barbara but for a moment, then suddenly clasping her with rude energy to his bosom, he darted up the stairs, holding open the door at the top, so that he might see her forth in safety.

The terrified girl passed tremblingly before him; and wondered not a little at the strong interest the wild seaman manifested towards her. Only one way of accounting for it occurred to her simple mind—that he had known her father;—the idea was strengthened, when she heard him murmur, "Thank God! she breathes once more the uncontaminated air of heaven!" He strode a few hasty steps forward, then turned back, and said emphatically to Robin,—

"Place her in safety, as you hope for salvation!"

"And am I to stay by myself in this horrid place, Robin?" inquired Barbara, as he seated her in the

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window of a portion of the old tower, from whence a large extent of country was visible, steeped in the pale moonlight.

"Fear nothing," he replied; "I must away: only do not leave this until you see—which you can easily do by the light of the bright moon—Sir Willmott Burrell take his departure."

"And will that rude old sailor help the young gentleman from his confinement?"

"He will, he will."

"One word more, Robin, and then my blessing be with you! Did he know my father?"

"He did."

"But one syllable more: Did he love him?"

"So truly, that he loves you as if you were his own child."

"Then," thought Barbara, in the fulness of her innocence, "I am happy—for no one is loved, even by the wicked, who is not good."

Her clear eye observed that Robin took the same path as the Buccaneer; though, had she not known them, she could hardly have recognised their figures, because of some disguise they must have suddenly assumed. They had scarcely faded from her sight, when she discovered the tall person of Burrell standing at no great distance on the brow of the cliff, and apparently surveying the adjacent landscape. He rapidly approached the Gull's Nest; and soon after she heard the shrill voice of Mother Hays, protesting over and over again, that "Robin had been there not twenty, not fifteen—no, not ten minutes past;—that she had searched every where, and that he was nowhere to be found;—that she had not seen Hugh Dalton for a long, long time; and that, to the best of her belief, he had not touched the shore for many a day;—that the men within were good men, honest men—one in particular, who would be happy to serve him, as he seemed so earnest to see Robin—Jack, true Jack Roupall, a tried, trusty man:—could he be of any service, as that ne'er-do-good, Robin, was out of the way ever and always when he was wanted? To be sure, she could not even give a guess at any thing his honour might want; but perhaps Jack might do instead of Robin." It occurred to Burrell at the moment, that Roupall might serve his purpose even better than Robin Hays, for he was both a strong and a desperate man; and he bade the old woman send him forth; telling her at the same time, and in a significant tone, that he was well acquainted with the talents and character of her guest. [168]

The fragment of the tower in which Barbara was perched was a small projecting turret-room, standing on the top of a buttress, and had been, doubtless, used in the early ages, as a species of sentry-box, from which a soldier could command a view of the country and the coast. It was with feelings of extreme terror that she perceived Burrell and Roupall close beneath her, standing so as to be concealed from the observation of any passenger who might go to or from the dwelling. She drew her dark cloak over her head and face, leaving only an opening to peep through, anxious to avoid, by every means in her power, the hazard of a discovery. She could gather from the conversation between the two, that Burrell was describing to Roupall something that he must do, and offering him a large reward for its completion; she listened eagerly, and heard them frequently speak of Cecil Place and Walter De Guerre. Her attention, however, was soon drawn away by the appearance of a third person—unseen by the others—creeping round a projecting corner, like a tiger about to spring upon its prey, and then crouching close to the earth. The form was that of a slight youth, clad in a tight-fitting doublet and vest, and, it would seem, armed only with a dagger, which, however, he carried unsheathed, and so openly that the moonbeams danced upon its polished point, as lightning on a diamond, whenever he changed its position in his hand (which he did more than once). He crept on so silently that neither were at all aware of his approach, but continued talking and bargaining as before. Barbara felt that danger was at hand; and yet, had she the inclination, she had not the power to speak, but sat breathlessly and tremblingly awaiting the result. Suddenly, but still silently, as though the figure were a phantom, and the dagger air-drawn, the boy rose from the ground, and held the weapon as if irresolute whether to strike or not. The manner in which he stood fully convinced Barbara Iverk that Burrell was the object of some intended attack—she tried to shriek, but the voice choked in her throat. As rapidly as this mysterious being had risen from, he sank into his former crawling attitude, and disappeared. All this occurred in much less time than has been occupied in relating it, and the poor maiden almost thought she had been deceived by some supernatural appearance. She was soon aroused from her painful state of voiceless terror by the words of Burrell, who now spoke more loudly than at first. [169]

"I will give him his liberty this very night, which of course, under the circumstances I have mentioned, he cannot fail to consider a most deep obligation—an act of disinterested generosity. I will give it him secretly, of course; and you meet him on his exit. As we go along, I will settle the where—and then—the matter is easily concluded."

"Very easily for you, doubtless," retorted Roupall; "you had ever the way, master, of keeping your neck out of the noose. How much of the coin did you say?"

Barbara did not hear the reply.

"Why it's only one more. Is he young?"

"Yes."

"I don't like young customers. It's a charity to put the old out of the way; for, be they ever so well off, they must be sick and weary of the world. But the young—I don't like it, master."

"Pshaw! it's only saving him in time from that which gives old men trouble; and life can go but once: besides, I will not stand for the matter of a few broad-pieces. I care not if I make the sum half as much more, provided it be done safely."

"Will you give me your note of hand to it?"

"Do you take me for a fool?—or did you ever know me to break my word?"

"I never took ye for the first, Sir Willmott, and, as to the other, we've had no business between us lately. Half as much more, you said?"

"Half as much more."

"Well, it is but one, and then—ah! ah! ah!—I'll reform and turn gentleman. No, d—n it, I hate gentlemen, they're so unprincipled; but you must double—double or quits."

"Jack Roupall, you are an unconscionable scoundrel."

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"By the lady-moon, then, there be a pair of us."

Burrell muttered some reply that Barbara did not hear, but again the grating voice of Roupall ascended.

"Double or quits; Lord, ye needn't be so touchy about a little word of familiarity—such fellowship makes all men equal."

"Well then, double, if so it must be; only remember, Roupall, there is some difference between the employer and the employed," was the knight's answer. And the high-born and the low-born ruffian walked away together; and the bright beams of the holy moon and the unsullied stars fell upon them as gently, as if they had been good and faithful ministers of the Almighty's will.

The two leading features of Barbara Iverk's character were, fidelity and affection; all her feelings and actions were but various modifications of these great principles—in every sense of the word, she was simple-minded. After the men had departed for some time, still she could hardly bring herself to understand or believe the nature or extent of the crime they meditated.

It was surely a most singular manifestation of God's providence, she thought, which placed her there, that she might overhear, and it might be prevent the great wickedness of those evil men. She descended from the window with haste, but with caution also, for the stones crumbled from beneath her feet as she moved along. She had scarcely set her foot on the grass turf, when the dog was at her side, whining and fawning with delight at again meeting with her friend and mistress. Barbara crossed the wild country, and gained the park-wall without encountering any danger. When there, she paused breathlessly under an oak, and would have given worlds to see and speak to her friend Robin. Amid the deepness of night, and among the foliage of the trees, she thought she discerned the figure of a person creeping beneath the boughs—now in shadow, and now casting his own shadow upon what had shadowed him. This appearance terrified her so exceedingly that she did not gain courage to proceed, until she saw that he turned into a distant path; she then stole slowly along under the shelter of the wall, and when she came to a small gate which opened into the park, within view of the mansion, she pushed through it, and just gained the lawn, when the sound of a pistol, and a flash through the darkness, terrified her so much, that she fell, faint and exhausted, on the sward.

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CHAPTER II.

A mystery! ay, good, my masters.
———there's mystery
In a moonbeam—in a gnat's wing—
In the formation of an atom—
An atom! it may be a world—a peopled
world—
Canst prove that it is not a world? Go to,
We are all fools.

Old Play.

Hugh Dalton and Robin Hays had hastily proceeded to Cecil Place, discoursing, as they went along, upon the probable consequences of their friend's arrest. Bitterly did the Buccaneer comment upon the rashness and impetuosity so frequently evinced by De Guerre.

"It is perfectly useless," he said, "attempting to curb these boy heroes! the rushing blood must have its way until arrested by age, not wisdom; the hot head must be cooled by the ice of time, and not till then will the arguments or experience of others be regarded as they merit."

"It is Burrell, I fear," retorted Robin; "there is but one hope in that quarter—he cannot know

him."

"But he may hear."

"How?"

"God knows; only I have ever observed that the keenness of such men exceeds that of better and wiser ones."

"Ay, ay," said Robin; "but we must sharpen our wits in due proportion: though, at present, I suspect it is arms we shall want. I know the room well, and there is a lot of creeping ivy and such plants under the window; the greatest difficulty will be with the iron stanchions."

"The greatest difficulty, methinks, will be to escape from the arrester; and you seem to think nothing of the danger I run in trusting myself within the grasp of such a man."

"The Cavalier is worth all risks."

"I know it, Robin. Did I ever shrink from peril in such a cause?"

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"Faith, no!" replied the other with his usual chuckle; "if God had willed you to be born a snail, you would have crept out of your house, so careless are you in all things."

"Do you think there is aught of danger for Barbara?" said the Buccaneer, his manner clearly showing that, if he did not care for himself, there was something he did care for.

"If she is timid as a hare," replied Robin, "she is, as a hare, heedful and light-footed; no fear for her. How your heart clings to her, Captain!"

"So it does; and yet some strange shadow comes over me when I think of her—as if I knew she would despise, perhaps hate me—she has been brought up in such strict principles; still, I would not have her less right-minded."

He paused, and they proceeded silently on their way, Dalton pondering on the best method of procuring De Guerre's liberty, and then thinking of his sweet and gentle child.

Nature may lie buried or be stifled for a time—an apathetic temperament will seek to smother, a harsh one to bind, a strong one to subdue it—but it overcomes them all; and though a man's speech may run according to his learning, and his deeds according to his habits, yet nature thinks and speaks within him, often in direct opposition to the words that fall from his lips, and the actions in which he may be engaged. Thus it was with the Buccaneer; despite the fearful course his outlawed life had taken, the remembrance of his child would arise to his imagination, shaded by sorrow, or sunned by happiness, according to his mood of mind—but always as his child—the being upon whom his very existence seemed to hang.

"There is little light from his window," said Robin, as they came within view of the house; "let us over the fencing.—Hush!" he continued, elevating his hand so as to command the attention of his companion, at the same time bending his ear to the earth. Dalton listened, but, it would seem, heard no sound, for he exclaimed hastily,—

"Hush me no hush!—you are ever fancying something or other out of the way."

Robin repeated the signal.

"What mummery!" said the Buccaneer; "I hear nothing, and see nothing."

Robin laid himself on the ground, while the impatient and irritated seaman fumed and moved about, a curse whizzing from between his teeth as ever and anon he looked at Robin, and from Robin to the house.

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"If you must have employment," said the Ranger at last, in a low tone, "see to your arms. Are your pistols loaded muzzle high?—are your weapons sharp?—Hush!"

The Buccaneer knew that these hints were not given in wantonness, and calmly examined his fire-arms.

"The tramp of horses!" continued Robin, "and of heavy ones too; but they are going from, not coming towards us. Ah! heard ye not that?"

He raised himself from the ground, and the neigh of a horse was borne to them on the blast. They both stood in breathless silence, the Buccaneer with his hand suspended over, but not touching, his sword-handle—Robin with open mouth and extended hands, as if the very movement of his limbs could destroy the quietness around, or impede the sound they watched for. Again the neigh was repeated, but more faintly, and evidently from a greater distance.

"Safe from one at least," said Robin, jumping in ecstasy, but yet speaking in a subdued voice. "I would know the neigh of that black steed amid a thousand; its tone is like that of a trumpet, mightiest among its kind. I feel as if the weight of a hundred stone was off my heart—don't you?"

Dalton replied not, for he was fearlessly striding towards the house, not, as before, sneaking among the bushes.

"Let us to the window, Captain," said Robin.

"Not I," he replied. "What care I for any of them *now*? I shall *demand* Walter from Sir Robert."

"You are foolhardy. What can be done quietly, ought to be done quietly. If we cannot succeed so, why dare both Sir Robert and Sir Willmott?"

"I believe you are right, though I hate sailing on a lee-shore. The open, open sea, for my money! Hark ye! Cecil *dare* not refuse me this."

"Or any thing else, I suspect—though I know not why," replied Robin, as he commenced climbing by the creeping plants to the prison-window, beneath which they now stood. "How delighted he will be to see my ugly face, poor fellow!"

Robin continued muttering broken sentences all the while he ascended, having previously arranged with the Buccaneer that he was to remain below. "Ah! firm footing this old ivy. There, now we are up!—Master Walter! Master Walter!—He sleeps behind that screen, I warrant me, little thinking of his faithful friends. So, so! the rust has done its duty. Strong room! strong walls they mean; but what signify strong walls without strong windows?—Good! There goes another, and another—better still! And now——"

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He entered the chamber, passed to the front of the screen, opened the large cupboard, cast his eyes upon the untrimmed lamp, and then perceived that the door was slightly ajar; but no vestige remained of Walter De Guerre, except his cloak, that was flung over the chair. His first movement was to close and bolt the door, and then call softly to the Buccaneer to ascend.

"He is gone!" exclaimed Robin with a trembling voice, as Dalton entered the room.

"Gone!" repeated the Skipper: "then is there treachery. My brave boy, that I loved as my own son! By Heavens! I'll rouse the house! Had it not been for my accursed plots, he would not have come over. I'll have him delivered up to me, did Sir Robert plan his destruction as skilfully as he plotted that of——"

Hugh was prevented from finishing his sentence by the sudden entrance of Sir [Willmott](#) Burrell, who appeared in the room they could not tell how, as the chair was still against the door, and there were no visible means of admission except by the window.

Dalton and the knight eyed each other with evident astonishment, but the fiery Buccaneer was the first to speak.

"And you are here, Sir Willmott! and for no good, or your face would not be so smooth, or your lip so smiling. Where, sir—where, I say—is your prisoner?"

"My prisoner, good Captain! I had no prisoner."

"Death and d—n! Sir Willmott, dare not to trifle with me. Where is the young man? where is Walter De Guerre? You know; you *must* know. Why come you here silently, secretly? Answer me, Sir Willmott Burrell. Where is the young man?"

"Captain Dalton," replied Sir Willmott, "although your anxiety about this malignant convinces me that you are not the man my friendship thought you, yet I confess that I came here for the express purpose of forwarding his escape. Doubt me if you will; but see, I am unarmed, and here is the secret key for unfastening the grating, which I suppose you, and my quondam servant, have so unceremoniously removed."

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Dalton looked at him, and then at the key, which he took from his hand and scrupulously examined.

"Sir Willmott Burrell," he said, after a few moments' deliberation, "why did you this? You are not one to do an act of good—whatever you might of evil—for its own sake."

"Why?" repeated Burrell.

"Ay, why? Your motive, sir—your motive?"

"Motive? What motive had you for bringing over this fly-away Cavalier, and, when I questioned you, denying any knowledge of the youth?"

"Sir Willmott, my question was first asked, and must be first answered."

"Then, sir," replied Burrell, drawing himself up, "let it be enough that such was my pleasure. Now, Captain, your answer to my question."

"Your answer will save me the trouble," replied the Buccaneer, with as much height, if not as much dignity of manner. "Apply it in the same way."

"I must call you to account for this, as well as other matters; but now, think that considering who sleeps under this roof, it would be only wise to withdraw. It is somewhat upon my mind, despite your well-feigned surprise, that you have spirited away this fellow—if so——"

"Stuff, stuff!" interrupted the Buccaneer: "there has been here a stronger spirit at work than either yours or mine; and, as to calling me to account, you always know where I am to be found."

"I sought you there to-night on this very errand," replied the wily Sir Willmott, "but you were absent."

"Still I repeat, you know where to find me. And now for my parting words. Observe, I dread no meeting with any; you have more reason to tremble than I have, if all were known. But now—see that no harm happen to the Cavalier, who, but an hour since, occupied this chamber; for, by the God of heaven! if but a hair of his head fall to the earth, I will hunt you to your own destruction! Never tell me that you have no power, no control, over him or his destiny. All I say is,—see to it. It would be better that you had been drowned, like a blind kitten, at your birth, than that any harm happened to Walter De—De—De——" Dalton looked confused, then, recovering himself, he glanced a fierce look at Sir Willmott, and commenced his descent from the window, muttering, "Devil! I forgot his name; couldn't he have taken an English one? D—n all foreigners!" With this John-Bullish exclamation, which seems so natural to the natives of "Old England," the Skipper reached the ground. Nor was Robin long in following his example: he cared not to tarry Sir Willmott's questioning, and touched the earth sooner than his friend, inasmuch as he sprang down, when midway, with his usual agility.

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They had not gone three steps on their path when Sir [Willmott's](#) voice arrested their progress.

"Hist, Dalton! hist!—here is the youth's cloak—put it on, good Dalton, the night is raw; here it goes. Well caught, Robin; make the Captain put it on; you can return it to the Cavalier when you see him, which you doubtless will, and soon—I entreat you put it on. The path by the lake leads straight to the Gull's Nest. I wish, Robin, you could tarry here till morning—I shall want you on business of importance."

Robin shook his head in denial. Dalton threw the cloak over his shoulder, and almost mechanically took the path that Burrell had pointed out. Sir Willmott immediately withdrew from the window. They had not gone more than a hundred yards when Robin looked back towards the house, and, by the light of the moon, caught a glimpse of the Master of Burrell, as if intent on their movements. He at the time took no notice of this to the Buccaneer, but they no sooner arrived at a spot where the branches of the trees overshadowed their path, than Robin plucked the cloak from the shoulders of his companion.

"Well, Robin!" exclaimed the Skipper in astonishment.

"It is not well," replied the manikin; "it cannot be well when the devil turns nurse-tender. He would not have been so careful of your health, if he thought your life would be of long duration. And why point out this path?—it is not the shortest; and if it were, what cares he for our legs? Wanting me to stay at the Place too—it's all ill. Besides, I saw him watching us from the window: why should he watch us? was it love, think ye? Go to, Master Dalton, you are not the man you were: let us strike into another path; I will be all ears and eyes, and do you keep your arms in readiness."

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"You are right, Robin; you are right—right in one thing, at all events," replied Dalton, leaning his arm against a tree, and pressing his forehead with his hand; "I am not, indeed, the man I was! The lion spirit is yet within me; but, Robin, that spirit which never quailed to mortal authority, is become weak and yielding as a young girl's heart, to the still, but appalling voice of my own conscience. After every effort there is a re-action:—the blood!—the blood, shed through my instrumentality, and often by my own hand, rises before me, like a crimson cloud, and shuts out all that is pure and holy from my sight. It used not to be thus! My passions—my whirlwind passions, that carried me forward for so many years—are dead, or dying. It takes time to wind me up to a brave action:—my joints are stiffening, and crack within their sockets, when called upon to do their duty. The very good I would, I cannot! This Walter, whom I love next to my own Barbara—to find him in the lion's net! That Jewish girl I sought, merely to save her from yon hell-hound's grasp!—she unconsciously eludes my search; in some shape or other she will be sacrificed. I am sick—sick of villains and villany! With wealth enough to purchase lands, broader and fairer than these we now tread upon, I would thank God, night and day upon my bended knees, to make me as one of the poor hinds, who has not wherewith to purchase a morning meal—or as a savage—a wild untamed savage—who hunts the woods for food!"

"You'd do foolishly then, Captain; under favour, very foolishly," replied Robin, yielding to the Buccaneer's humour, and yet seeking to calm it away. "Know ye not that every rose has its own thorns, and every bosom its own stings? Besides," he continued, faintly, "the wealth you speak of will richly dower Barbara; make her a match for a gentleman, or mayhap a knight!"

"Did you say a gentleman? No, no, I will never marry her to one who would take her as so much ballast to her gold, and scorn her as the Rover's daughter."

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"But you would scorn a poor man for her?"

"Blessed poverty!" exclaimed the sailor; "how would I hug it to my heart—make it joint partner with my child in my affections, if it would only bring a fair unspotted name in exchange for the gold it might take away. Blessed poverty!"

It would appear that Robin was too much occupied by his own feelings to be on the alert as usual; for Dalton was the first to perceive a man stealing along by the side of, but not on, the path they had quitted; he pointed him out to Robin's attention. In an instant the little Ranger commenced reconnoitring; and came back without delay, to tell the Captain that it was no other than Jack Roupall.

"Jack Roupall!" repeated Dalton, returning instantly to the path they had quitted, saying aloud at the same time, "Why, Jack, what sends you on this tack?"

Whether from some sudden tremor or astonishment, it cannot be ascertained, nor could the ruffian himself account for it, he discharged a pistol, evidently without aim, and Robin as instantly struck it from his hand.

It was this report that had so terrified Barbara. But there was another ear upon which it struck—in the solitude of that wild room in Cecil Place. It sent the blood rushing to his evil brain;—he clasped his hands in exultation; for the death-sound was to him the voice of security; and he prayed—(that such wretches are allowed to pray!)—that the bullet was at that moment wading in the life-stream of the Buccaneer.

CHAPTER III.

Brother of Fear, more gaily clad,
The merrier fool o' th' two, yet quite as
mad;
Sire of Repentance! child of fond Desire!
That blow'st the chymic's and the lover's
fire,
Leading them still insensibly on
By the strange witchcraft of "anon."

COWLEY AGAINST HOPE.

To account for Walter De Guerre's sudden departure, we must revert to the time when, silent and solitary, he shaded the glare of the night-lamp from his eyes, and threw himself along the black oak form to meditate and mourn over events that appeared to him, at least, now beyond his own control. [179]

Whatever others may think as to our bringing on our own misfortunes, we hardly ever agree in the hard task of self-condemnation—a task of peculiar difficulty to the young and the ardent. They may even be inwardly dissatisfied with themselves, yet they care not to express it openly, lest they may be thought little of;—a timidity natural in youth, and arising, not unfrequently, from diffidence in its own powers. Age may improve the understanding, but it chills the affections; and though the young are ever fitter to invent than to judge, and abler for execution than for counsel; yet, on the other hand, they are happily free from that knowledge of the world which first intoxicates, and then, too frequently, leaves its votaries with enfeebled heads and palsied hands. Had not Walter been schooled in adversity, he would have been as haughty and as unyielding a cavalier as ever drew sword in the cause of the unhappy Stuarts; but his boyhood had been passed amid privations, and they had done the work of wisdom. As in books, so it is in life, we profit more by the afflictions of the righteous Job, than by the felicities of the luxurious Solomon. The only break of summer sunshine in his short but most varied career was the time he had spent with Constance Cecil; nor had he in the least exaggerated his feelings in saying that "the memory of the days passed in her society had been the soother and brightener of his existence." He sorrowed as much at the idea that she was sacrificing herself from some mysterious cause, as at the termination his affection was likely to suffer. That so high souled a being was about to make such a sacrifice from worldly motives, was, he knew, impossible; and among the bitterest of his regrets was the one, that she did not consider him worthy of her confidence.

"I could give her up, almost cheerfully," he would repeat to himself, "if her happiness depended on it; but I cannot support the idea that she thinks me undeserving her esteem." As to his arrest, he cared but little for it: at another time it would have chafed and perplexed him in no small degree; but Constance—the beloved Constance—the playmate of his childhood—the vision of his boyhood—the reality of his maturer years, was alone in his mind. Often did he wish he had not seen her in her womanly beauty; that he had not spent a day beneath the roof [where](#) he was now a prisoner; that she had been any thing but worthy of the passionate affection he endeavoured vainly to recall. Had she been less perfect, he thought he could have been less devoted; and yet he would not have her other than she was. But for such a one to be the victim of Sir Willmott Burrell—a traitor! a coward—the thought was insupportable. After many contending ideas, he came to the resolution that, cost what it would, he would put the case in all its bearings to Major Wellmore—another mystery he vainly sought to unravel, but who had evidently powerful interest with the family at Cecil Place. True, he was a partisan of the Protector; but, nevertheless, there were fine manly feelings about his heart; and it was, moreover, clear that he was by no means well inclined towards Sir Willmott Burrell. With this resolution on his mind, bodily fatigue overcame even his anxieties, and he fell into a deep slumber. [180]

He had slept but for a short time, when he was suddenly awakened by the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder; he looked up, and by the dim light of the fading lamp saw it was Major Wellmore who disturbed his repose. He started at once from his couch; but the officer seated himself upon an opposite chair, placed his steeple-crowned and weather-beaten hat on the floor, and resting his elbows on his knees, and his chin between the palms of his hands, fixed his keen eyes upon the young Cavalier, who, when perfectly awake, perceived that his [visitor](#) was dressed and armed as usual.

"Is it morning, sir?" inquired De Guerre, anxious to break the silence.

"No, sir," was the concise reply.

"The whole house sleeps," resumed Walter; "why then are you up and dressed? and why am I disturbed?"

"You are mistaken, young man. Know you a pretty, demure, waiting-gentlewoman, called Barbara?"

"Mistress Cecil's attendant?"

"The same:—she has but now left the house, to communicate, I suppose, with your respectable friends at the Gull's Nest, and devise means for your escape."

"If so, I am sure I know nothing of the foolish plan."

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"I believe you. There is another who slumbers not."

"What, Constantia!—is she ill?" inquired the Cavalier, with an earnestness that caused something of a smile to visit the firm-set lip of the hardy soldier.

"No; I know nothing of young ladies' slumbers; I dare say she and her loquacious friend, Lady Frances, have talked themselves to sleep long since."

"Lady Frances, I dare say, has," persisted Walter: "light o' lip, light o' sleep."

"I spoke of neither of the women," said the Major, sternly; "I allude to Sir Willmott Burrell—he sleeps not."

"By my troth I am glad of it," exclaimed the Cavalier; "right glad am I that slumber seals not the craven's lids. Would that I were by his side, with my good steel, and where there could be no interruption; the sun should never rise upon his bridal morn."

"Ah! you would show your regard for Mistress Cecil, I presume, by destroying the man she has chosen to be her husband; such is the Malignant's love!"

"Love, sir! I have not spoken of love. But could Constantia Cecil love a dastard like this Burrell? Listen!—I thought to tell you—yet, when I look on you, I cannot—there is that about you which seems at war with tenderness. Age sits upon your brow as if it were enthroned on Wisdom—the wisdom learned in a most troubled land—the wisdom that takes suspicion as its corner stone; yet once, mayhap, blood, warm and gentle too, flowed in those very veins that time hath wrought to sinews; and then, sir—then you looked on love and youth with other eyes:—was it not so?"

"It may have been," replied the soldier: "speak on."

"In my early youth, nay, in very childhood, I was the playmate of her who is now ripened into glorious womanhood. I will not tell you why or wherefore—but 'tis a strange story—my destiny led me to distant but far less happy scenes: my heart panted to be near her once again; yet it was all in vain; for, in truth, I was cast upon the waters—left—"

"Like the infant Moses, doubtless," interrupted the Major; adding, "But found you no Pharaoh's daughter to succour and take pity? Methought there were many to become nursing fathers and mothers to the spawn, the off-sets, of monarchy."

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"Sir!" exclaimed the Cavalier with emotion, "why this needless insult? You told me to proceed; and now—"

"I tell you to desist. What care I to hear of the love you bear the woman Cecil? She is the betrothed of another man; and were she not, think you I could wish her wedded to one holding principles such as yours? Have not her gallant brothers, boys fostered, nurtured in freedom, soared to taste the liberty of heaven? Have they not yielded up their breath, their life-blood in the holy cause? The saplings were destroyed, although the Lord's arm was outstretched, and mighty to save! And think ye I would see her, who is part and parcel of such glorious flesh, wedded to one who yearns for the outpouring of slaughter, and the coming again of a race of locusts upon this now free land?"

"If Lady Constance would have broken the unjust contract," replied Walter, reasoning for once with something like coolness, "I should not have thought of asking your opinion, or consulting your wishes, Major Wellmore."

"And yet, had you been different, had the Lord given unto you to discern the right, I could, I might, I would say, have had sufficient influence to order it otherwise—that is, if her affections be not placed on Burrell; for I hold it as a fleshly and most carnal act to bestow the hand in marriage, where the heart goeth not with it."

"If Mistress Cecil were asked," said Walter, "she would not, I am sure, deny that the man is held by her in utter abhorrence."

"I have heard of this," replied the veteran, "but look upon the information most doubtingly. Constantia Cecil is a truth-loving and a God-fearing woman, and I deem her to be one who would die sooner than plight a false faith: it would be difficult to find a motive strong enough to destroy her sense of religion, or the rectitude springing therefrom."

"Ask yourself, acquainted as you are with both natures," persisted De Guerre, "if one like Mistress Cecil could love such as Sir Willmott Burrell?"

"I grant the apparent impossibility of the case; but mark ye, it is easier to believe in the existence of impossibilities, paradoxical as such a phrase may sound, than to fathom the mind of a woman, when she pleases to make secret what is passing within her, or when she has taken some great charge into her heart. Howbeit, whether she loves Sir Willmott or not, she is little likely to love one who seeks, like you, the ruin of his country." [183]

"The ruin of my country!" repeated the Cavalier.

"Even so: dissatisfied with present things in England, you cannot deny that you hunger and thirst after a Restoration, as the souls of the Israelites thirsted after the luxuries of Egypt, and would have endured a second bondage to have tasted of them again. Young man, you should know that those who bring war into their country care little for its prosperity."

"I shall not deny that I desire a change in this afflicted kingdom," he replied; "but as to bringing war again into England, those who first drew the sword should think of that."

Major Wellmore knit his brows, and looked fixedly at the Cavalier. Then, after a few moments' pause, recommenced the conversation, without, however, withdrawing his eyes from their scrutiny.

"We will again talk of your own individual affairs, good youth; for we are not likely to agree upon the political bearing of this land. You believe that Mistress Constance is but little affected towards the man she is about to marry?"

"Affected towards him!" repeated Walter, kindling at the idea. "Unless affected by deep hatred, nothing else affects her, as far as he is concerned. I could swear to the truth of that conviction, on the Saviour's Cross—on the hilt of my own sword, were it necessary."

"Which it is not," observed the Major. "But how reconcile you that with the high opinion you entertain of the lady?"

"I cannot reconcile it. If I could, I should feel almost at peace with her and with myself. It is mystery all—except that the accursed bridal will be the stepping-stone to her grave! That is no mystery."

"You would prevent this marriage?"

"Yes, truly, were my heart's blood to rush forth in so doing; if," he added sorrowfully, "its prevention could be indeed accomplished;—but it is too late now." [184]

"It is not too late," said the old officer, "if you will listen calmly, and learn that there is no necessity for such profaneness as you have used. Oaths and exclamations cannot destroy facts, any more than sunbeams can dissolve iron: so, avoid, I pray you, idle or wicked words, and listen. You would prevent this marriage?"

"Most undoubtedly, were it possible; but I know, I feel it is too late:—the damning——"

"Sir!" interrupted the Roundhead warmly, "I have just cautioned you against the use of profane words; yet you stuff them down my throat. I am crammed, sir, with your blasphemy."

"Is this a time to stand on words?" inquired De Guerre, with great quietude of manner. "We have different modes of expression, but they tend towards the same end—at least so you would have me believe. We have both in view the happiness of Mistress Cecil."

"You speak truly," replied the other; "and having so good an object to attain, it is meet that we use the worthiest means to achieve it; a lily should not be trained and nourished by a sullied hand."

The youth bowed, though, when he afterwards thought upon the simile, he pondered on the strangeness that one like Wellmore should seek metaphors from the flowers of the field. But nature and its feelings are rooted in the heart of the warrior and the statesman, as well as in that of the tenderest maid who tends the sheep or milks the lowing kine; the difference alone is that many things besides find place within the worldling's bosom, while her breast is one sweet and gentle storehouse for God and for his works.

"You would prevent this marriage?" reiterated the soldier. Walter again bowed; but the gesture intimated impatience.

"You are opposed to the present system, and would have it changed?" he continued.

"Where is the use of this repetition?" said De Guerre. "You know all this, and from myself: imprudent I have been, but not deceitful."

"And you would see the Protector of these realms brought to the—— Can you not finish the sentence?"

"I would, and I would not, see him brought to the block," replied Walter, with manly frankness. "I come of a race who loved the Stuarts; in some degree I have been cherished by them. Yet, though a most desperate——" [185]

"Out with it, sir," said the Major hastily, filling up the pause in De Guerre's sentence. "Out with it! I am accustomed to hear him abused."

"A most desperate villain; still there is a boldness—a native majesty—a— Dalton has so often praised his bravery."

"Dalton! Did Dalton speak well of Cromwell?" interrupted Wellmore.

"Yes, well, greatly of him, as an intrepid soldier, as a being to wonder at. Yet he has no right to the high place whereon he sits; and——"

"You would pull him down?"

"I confess it."

"The time will come when I will discuss the merits of this case with you," said Wellmore, after a pause; "albeit I like not discussion; 'tis not a soldier's weapon; but you are worthy of the effort. I like you, though you are mine enemy, and that is more than I can say of many friends. You know nothing of what the country suffered. You know nothing of the sacrifices that man has made for its good. Were not Cromwell and Ireton accused by their own party of favouring the man Stuart? Was not Cromwell obliged to say to Ashburnham and Berkeley, who came to him, as the Parliament thought, on all occasions, and about all things, 'If I am an honest man, I have said enough of the sincerity of my intentions; and if I am not, nothing is enough?' Was he not overpowered by the people's clamours?—They would have a king no longer; the name, sir, the very name was as a foul stench in their nostrils; the time had arrived when the lawgiver was to depart from Judah. Could he, or could any man—ought he, or ought any man to fight against the Lord, or the Lord's people?" He spoke thus far with strength and energy, then suddenly pausing, he added, "But, as I said before, there is time enough for this. As to yourself, young man, if your love towards the lady be firm and true, if your wishes for her welfare be pure and holy, if you are a true patriot—behold! I will tell you—for this came I hither—say that you will be one of the standing army of England! say but the word—to enjoy rank, opportunities of distinction, honour, and Constance Cecil as your bride!"

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He paused as for reply, but the Cavalier made none; he only leaned his head against his hand, as if communing with himself.

"She will be miserable," persisted the crafty soldier; "inevitable misery will be her lot; and you can prevent it, if you please." He fixed his eyes upon Walter, as if to read the secrets of his soul; then, unsatisfied with the scrutiny, continued—"Burrell, as you have observed, cannot make her happy: so much beauty, so much worth!—you cannot hesitate—your single arm could not accomplish the end you aim at."

"Peace, tempter, peace!" exclaimed the Cavalier, bursting as fearlessly and as splendidly from his repose as the sun from behind a dark but yet silent thunder-cloud. "You might have conquered," he continued in a more subdued tone, "had not the knowledge of the love of Constantia Cecil saved me, as it has often done. She would only loathe the man who could change his principles from any motive but conviction. Enough, sir—enough, sir! I know not who you really are; but this I know, I would no more see her despoiled of her rectitude than of her chastity. Had she been here, she would have acted as I have done:—no, she would have acted better, for she would not have hesitated."

The veteran remained silent for a few moments after this burst of strong and noble feeling; he then slowly and deliberately put on his hat, drew the thick buff gloves over his muscular hands, resumed the cloak that had fallen from his shoulder, and pointed to the door.

"Do you mean," inquired Walter, "that I am at liberty to depart?"

"You are to go with me; but you are still to consider yourself under arrest."

"To go—whither?"

"You go with me. You might have been at liberty; but now—you go with me. And, one word more. Walk gently if you value life, or what may be dearer than life. I am not one to have my will disputed. You will learn as much; but now, I say, walk gently. I wish not to disturb this giddy household: they prate, like others of their sort, of people's doings, and 'tis not meet to grant them opportunity."

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"I am a man of desperate fortunes now," thought the young Cavalier, as he followed his mysterious guide through some winding and to him unknown passages of the mansion—"a man of desperate fortunes, and care not where I go."

As they passed through the shrubbery, he saw distinctly the rays of a lamp stream from Constantia's window. The light fell on a clump of early roses that grew upon a flat and ancient wall, the vestige of some old moat or turret. As they passed nearly at its base, Walter sprang up and pulled one, then shrouded it within his bosom, as he thought, unobserved by his stern warder; but it was not so—the veteran noted the little act, and, noting, understood it. There was a time when he could feel and not define; that time was past, and succeeded by the present, when he could define, but hardly feel. In this instance, however, his memory did him good service; and the remembrance of what his own course had been came upon him with all the freshness of renewed boyhood, so that he could have pressed his youthful and ardent antagonist to his bosom.

This sunbeam of the past was not to continue, for he opened a wicket-gate leading into the park, and blew one note, not loud, but clear, upon a whistle. In an instant, as if the grass had produced men, Walter found himself in the midst of mounted soldiers. He looked around him in amazement, and even touched the nearest horse, to be certain that it was not a dream! There they stood, the moonbeams, broken by the overshadowing trees, coming down in dappled spots upon the chargers and their iron-looking riders: carved centaurs could not be more immovable. True, Walter had been absorbed; yet was all this real! There was for him, too, a stout steed, which he was twice desired to mount ere he obeyed.

CHAPTER IV.

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Jointure, portion, gold, estate,
Houses, household-stuff, or land,
(The low conveniences of fate,)
Are Greek no lovers understand.

COWLEY.

"Verily the Lord scattereth!" was the exclamation of the Reverend Jonas Fleetword, as he passed from one to another of the apartments of Cecil Place, seeking for some one with whom to hold converse, yet finding none. Sir Willmott Burrell was abroad, even at an hour so early; Lady Frances Cromwell closeted with Constantia; Sir Robert Cecil particularly engaged; even Barbara Iverk was not to be found—and the poor preacher had but little chance of either a breakfast or a gossip, or, as he termed it, "a commune." In the course of his wanderings, however, he at length encountered Solomon Grundy, puffing and courtesying under the weight of a huge pasty he was conveying, by a prodigious effort, to the buttery.

"Ah, Solomon, my friend," said Fleetword, "of a truth it is a pleasant thing to see thee."

"You mean that you behold something pleasant with me," retorted the cook; "and of a verity, your reverence——"

"You must not call me reverence; it is one of the designations of the beast;—my voice is raised against it—against the horned beast."

"This was a horned beast once," again replied Solomon, observing that the preacher's eye was fixed upon the pasty; "nature may be changed by cookery. It hath lost all the sinful qualities that you talk about, and hath become most savoury and nourishing food: doth it resemble the change that, you say, takes place in the spirit?"

"We must not so mingle profane and sacred things," murmured Fleetword, placing his forefinger upon the tempting dish, with a longing and eager look; for he had walked far and was fasting. "Is this one of the baked meats thou art preparing for the coming festival?"

"What festival?" inquired the cook, surlily: "I know of no festival. Of a surety, have I laboured in my calling, to furnish forth something worthy of this house; yet, from what I hear, there will be few at this wedding to profit by my skill. I little thought to see our dear young lady so wedded." [189]

"Solomon, feasting is foolishness; it savoureth of the mammon of unrighteousness: yet was Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord, and Isaac loved seethed kid. Couldst thou extract a morsel of meat from that compound, for of a truth I am an hungered?"

"What! spoil my garnishing!" exclaimed Grundy. "look at the frosting of that horn, and the device, the two doves—see'st thou not the doves?"

"Yea; but methinks thou mightest take away a portion, without injury to the goodly fabric.—Behold!" and the Reverend Jonas lifted, with the cook's long knife (which he snatched in unbecoming haste from the girdle), the paste of the edge of the gigantic pie, and stole a weighty slice of the venison from beneath.

"Ah, ah!" grinned Solomon, evidently pleased at the distinction bestowed upon his compost. "Is it not passing good? But you taste not of the gravy—the gravy!"

"It is unseemly to dispose one's heart towards such luxuries; though the saints stand in need of food no less than the young ravens—only it should be in moderation."

The preacher gulped down a ladleful of the pottage, and gasped for another, unmindful of his own precept, while the gravy lingered on his lips.

"Such as that would soon make you another man," said Solomon, glancing at Fleetword's slender and spindle shanks; "there's nourishment in it."

"We all stand in need of regeneration, Solomon, and should desire improvement, even as the hart panteth for the water-brooks; be it improvement of body, or improvement of mind. There was a wise King of Israel of thy name."

"What! Grundy, sir? the Grundys were of Lancashire," said the gratified compounder of kitchen-

stuff.

"Not Grundy; heard ye ever in Scripture of a name like that?" retorted the preacher. "It was Solomon the wise."

"I remember him now; he had a many wives. But you can call to mind, sir, when I only wanted to put away old Joan, and marry Phœbe Graceful, you, sir, wouldn't let me. But them old Christians had a deal more liberty." [190]

"Peace, fool!" exclaimed Fleetword, somewhat in anger. "Solomon was a Jew."

"A Jew!" repeated the cook—"I wonder at your holy reverence to think of such wickedness; surely your reverence does not want me to be like a Jew?"

"Solomon, thou art a fool—in bone, in flesh, in marrow, and in spirit. Have I not told thee of the ungodliness of these thoughts?" replied the preacher, as he finished his last morsel. "But, unless I answer thee according to thine own foolishness, I cannot make thee understand. Get me a flagon of double-dub."

"With a toast in it?" demanded Grundy, slyly peering out at the corner of his eye.

"Thou canst comprehend *that*," replied Fleetword: "truly—truly, the creature comforts have absorbed thy whole stock of ideas. Thou art like a sponge, Solomon—a mere fungus. Thou may'st put in the toast. And hark ye! if ye see Barbara, tell her I would speak with her; not here—not here—that would be unseemly—but in the oak parlour, or the library, I care not which."

"Now do I wish for Robin Hays," muttered the shrewd yet ignorant cook; "for he would expoundiate, which signifies, make clear—why a parson must not meet a maid in the buttery.—But he is not a parson—Then he is a man—But not only a man, he must be something else, methinks. But why not Barbara go to the buttery? Just in time, here comes Robin; so I'll e'en ask him.—Give you good day, my Kentish man; it was a pity you were not here last night, as you so love a fray. The handsome youth, who had been staying on a visit, was cooped up, because he and Sir Willmott fought about my Lady Constance. And then the Major—he has been here two or three times, and they call him Wellmore—although worthy Jabez Tippet, the boatman, swears—no, not swears—declares, that no such person ever crosses the ferry:—yet is he dumb as a tortoise as to who does. Well, the Major and the young gentleman went off in a flash of lightning, or something of the sort; for Sir Willmott and my master could not find him. And I asked Barbara about it! but marry, she knows nothing, and therefore says nothing——" [191]

"Which proves her different from the other sex; for they sometimes know next to nothing, yet say a great deal," retorted Robin, sarcastically.

"Humph!" replied Grundy; "you look chuffish this morning, Master Robin: have you got any thing ready for the bridal?"

"Don't worry me," exclaimed Robin; "what care I for bridals, or bridles either, unless I could fix one in your mouth? Where's Barbara?"

"The very thing I want to know; for that holy man, the preacher Fleetword, having communed with the pasty, would fain commune with the maid—not in the buttery though. And now, methinks, I had a question to put to you—Why is it unseemly for a man to——" The cook held up his hand in his usual oratorical style, so that it stood out like a substantial fan before his face, and touching the second finger of his left with the forefinger of his right, was proceeding with his inquiry, when he perceived that Robin had vanished! "Robin! Robin Hays! oh! thou heedless, and most faithless person! thou Jacky Lantern!" he exclaimed, and then followed, as he thought, the passage that Robin had taken. It happened, however, to be the opposite one, so that he received not the required information.

Robin sought Barbara in every place where it was likely she might be found, but without success; being unable to enter the more private apartments of the dwelling, he applied to one of the damsels of Lady Frances' suite.

"Oh, you seek Mistress Barbara, do you, young man?" and she cast her eyes over Robin's misshapen figure with an expression of contempt that could not be mistaken; then passed her finger along the braid of hair that bounded the border of a plain cap, made of the richest lace; pulled down her stomacher, and apparently waited for the Ranger's reply. Robin reddened to the eyes, for he could but impatiently brook such personal scrutiny; and his annoyance increased when he saw that his embarrassment was noticed by his courtly companion.

"We do not call her mistress here," he said at length; "but I pray you tell me where she is—I mean the Lady Constantia's attendant, little Barbara Iverk." [192]

"I know who you mean perfectly well," replied the pert woman in authority; "we of the court are not thick-headed, as you of the country may be, so I will explain fully to your——" she tittered rudely and loudly; but Robin's pride was nettled, and he heeded it not; "to your——but I wouldn't laugh, if I could help it. Barbara wished to know how the attendants were dressed when my Lady Mary was married so very lately to my Lord Fauconberg; and, as we of the court always carry our wardrobes with us, and the simple girl being my size—she hath a marvellously fine person for one country-bred—I dressed her as was fitting in my robes: a white striped silk petticoat, and a white body made of foreign taffeta, the sleeves looped up with white pearls, no cap upon her head, but

a satin hood just edged with Paris lace. 'Od's Gemini! young man, if you had but seen her. Then all of a sudden her lady wanted her to get some flowers, and she had only time to throw on her cardinal and run for [them](#)."

"Then she is in the garden?"

"By the Fairy Ring, I take it; for there the best flowers grow."

Robin did not tarry to thank the court damsel for her information, but bounded right away to the garden, cursing the rude laugh that again insulted him.

As he drew near the Ring, he heard a faint shriek. His quick ear knew at once that it came from the lips of Barbara; and bursting through the trees, he was in an instant by her side.

It will take many words to describe what had passed in a single moment.

Barbara, dressed as Lady Frances' woman had described, was on her knees before a slight, sallow youth, who held an unsheathed dagger in one hand, and spoke in a language that was a mixture of some foreign tongue and most imperfect English. Barbara, pale and trembling, evidently did not understand a word the other said, yet knelt with hands and face upturned, while the boy brandished the weapon, as if in the act of striking. As his dark eye flashed upon his victim, it caught sight of the Ranger, who rushed from the thicket to her side. With a piercing cry, the boy sprang away into an almost impenetrable underwood, that skirted the portion of the Fairy Ring most distant from the house. Barbara no sooner saw Robin than she attempted to rise; but she was unequal to any further exertion, and sank fainting on the grass. [193]

When she recovered, she found herself in the same spot, with her head on Robin's shoulder. Her spirits were relieved by a burst of tears; and, withdrawing her head, she wept plentifully in her hands, heedless of the drops that crept through her small fingers, and fell abundantly on the white silk petticoat the waiting-maid so highly prized. Robin had always thought her beautiful, but he had never avowed it to himself so decidedly as now. Her long, luxuriant hair, no longer twisted and flattened under her Puritan cap, flowed over the simple, but, to Robin's eyes, superb dress in which she was arrayed; the drapery rather added to, than lessened, the pure and holy look which is the soul and essence of virgin loveliness; and he never felt his own worthlessness so much, as while thus contemplating Barbara at the very moment when she was a thousand times dearer to him than ever.

She was the first to speak, as passing her hand over her eyes, then looking up between their long silken lashes, smiling as a young child at the danger that was past, and retaining only the remembrance of it, because it brought to her gentle and affectionate mind another proof of Robin's attachment and protecting care, she stretched out her hand, all gemmed as it was, and sobbed, even while smiling,—

"Dear, good Robin! he would have killed me. Are you quite sure he is gone? Come near me, Robin; he will not come back while you are here. I am sure he mistook me for some one else, for —" she spoke in a low tone, "I saw him once before, Robin Hays," still lower, "at the Gull's Nest Crag, only last night."

"I knew the little rascal was after no good; and to pretend dumbness too!"

"Dumbness!" repeated Barbara. "Did he pretend to be dumb?—and do you know him?"

"I do know that he, in some degree, stole his passage over in — But no matter; I'll clip his wings, and blunt his dagger, I warrant me; he shall play no more such pranks. To frighten *you*, my Barbara!—what could be the motive? serious injury he could not intend."

"Ah, Robin!" said Barbara, shuddering, "you did not see his eyes as I did, or you would not say so; such eyes! Ah, I should have been bitterly frightened had I not prayed this morning. Dear Robin, why do you not pray?" [194]

Robin looked at her and sighed—"Could you understand nothing of what he said?" inquired he.

"I heard him repeat the name of Burrell, and that of my dear lady, two or three times; but what he meant I cannot fathom. Oh, but he had a wild and terrible look! Why should he seek to harm me?"

"Why, indeed!" echoed Robin; "it must be seen into, and that immediately. I'll speak anon of it to Dalton."

"To Dalton!" in her turn echoed the girl—"Oh! that fearful man——"

"There is no one under the sun who has more love for you than he has—than Hugh Dalton."

"I am sure he knew my father."

"He did, indeed: but question me no farther now, sweet Barbara; make your mind quite easy, the outrage shall not be repeated. Perhaps the boy is crazed. Let's think no more of it, my gentle girl. I must bid you farewell."

"Farewell, Robin! Why—wherefore? Tell me, where are you going? When do you return? How long do you stay?"

"Now, if I were a king, and one that woman could look upon and love, I would give the half, the

whole of my kingdom, to be sure she feels as earnestly as she speaks," thought Robin. She perceived the coldness of his look, and continued, though with a changed expression,—

"What ails you? Have I angered you? Will you be thus wayward with your poor Barbara?"

"My Barbara!" he repeated bitterly, and he touched the Frenchified hood that hung over her shoulders: "my Barbara! would these trappings become any one that belonged to such a thing as me? Rare contrasts we should be! Methinks such bravery does ill adorn a simple Puritan; one professing such principles should don a plainer robe. Gems, too, upon your sleeves!—is not a bright, but modest eye, a far more precious jewel? If it can be outshone by any other ornament, it is worth nothing."

He turned from her as he spoke, and tears again gathered in her eyes.

"Robin," she said in a broken voice, "it was Mistress Alice put them on, to show me the proper tiring for a bower-maiden at a great festival—such as my lady's ought to be.—But I will take them off—all off, if you like them not." [195]

"Nor sigh for them again?"

"Sigh for such as these!" she repeated, looking on her finery with disdain. "No, Robin, young as I am, I have learned better things. The linnet would look ill tricked out in parrot's feathers. Not but I think the bravery becoming, though, perhaps, not to me;—surely no, if you like it not! But whither are you going? only tell me that. Alas! that dark and black-browed boy has so confounded me, that I know not what I say. The last night's fray has sore distressed me too:—you know it all."

"Hush, Barbara! 'Tis of that I would speak; it is that which takes me from you—but only for a few days—it cannot be very long;—yet I must find out where he is. I know the hands his wilfulness has thrown him into, but I think they will save him from worse treachery. Nevertheless, I must to London, and, if I cannot find him there, I must elsewhere seek him out. If any ask for me, you will remain silent; and, dear girl, if chance should throw you in Dalton's way, (it is likely he may be here in a few days, perhaps before I return,) speak him kindly and gently; bear with him, as you have borne with me."

"That is impossible," interrupted Barbara, "for there is no reason why I should do so. He was never kind to me."

"But the time is coming when he will be kind. And now adieu, Barbara. I desired much to remain; but I cannot. I imagined I might be useful to Mistress Constance, but I could not; it rests not with me."

"I am very sorry you are going, Robin; for now, when I think of it, my heart is heavy within my bosom; I know not why it should be so. You are sure you can prevent that wild bad boy from frightening me again?"

"Quite sure. I'll lock him up within the Crag till my return."

"Thank you, Robin; but he will be kindly treated."

"To be sure he will."

"Thank you again;—but still the weight is here—*here* on my heart. Do you think it would be very wrong to wear this dress at my lady's bridal?" [196]

Robin smiled at the earnestness and simplicity that characterised this child of nature.

"Oh, no; but if you love such, I can get you far finer garments."

"Can you indeed?" she exclaimed joyfully:—"But no," she added in a sadder voice, "no bravery for me after this bridal. I dreamed a dream last night. Do you believe in dreams, Robin? Listen: I thought we were all standing at an altar in the ruined chapel."

"Who? All?" inquired the Ranger, eagerly.

"My lady and that man, and——" she paused.

"Who?" again inquired Robin.

"Why you: 'twas but a dream, you know," she added, blushing to the temples. Then, as the colour faded from her calm face, even more quickly than it came, she continued, "And we all looked so beautiful! and I thought you so like the Cavalier Walter, and I felt so peaceful and happy. But just as you touched my hand, there came a mist between us—a dense and chilling mist, that made the marrow curdle in my bones, and my joints stiff and iron-bound; and a voice, a low mournful voice, like the wail of a dying bird, said, 'Come!'—and I attempted to answer, 'Not yet;' but my tongue felt frozen to my teeth, and my teeth were as icicles within my lips; and I was enshrouded in the mist. Then suddenly a pang shot through my heart, as if it were the dart of death, and I would have screamed, such was its agony; but still my tongue was frozen! And I suffered, I cannot tell you what: when suddenly a soft breath breathed upon my cheek, and it felt warm and soothing, and a voice—sounding—I may as well tell it all, Robin—so like yours, said, 'Pray.' And as I prayed—not in words, but in spirit, the pain departed from me, and the blood flowed again through my veins; and gazing upwards, I found that I was not in the ruined chapel, but in the presence of the blessed Saviour! He looked upon us—upon us both——"

"Stop, Barbara!" exclaimed Robin, whose imagination, at all times easily worked upon, now became absolute torture, "for mercy, stop! It was but the dream of a weak girl."

For the first time since she had grown to woman's estate, he pressed her to his bosom, and then silently walked with her to the little gate that led to the garden. [197]

"Let Crisp stay with me. Bright-eye and he agree better than usual," said Barbara with a quiet smile.

"I will," replied Robin, adding, as he turned away, "Trust in the God you worship, and put no faith in dreams."

CHAPTER V.

Tell men of high condition
That rule affairs of state,
Their purpose is ambition,
Their practice only hate;
And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lie.

Tell Wit how much it wrangles
In tickle points of niceness—
Tell Wisdom she entangles
Herself in over-wiseness;
And when they do reply,
Straight give them both the lie.

JOSHUA SILVESTER.

Robin had, doubtless, good reasons for the hint he had given Barbara, that she might soon again see the Buccaneer, and that she would do well to use that forbearance towards him which she had so kindly and so invariably practised towards the Ranger. After leaving her, as we have stated, in safety at one of the entrances to Cecil Place, he proceeded to the Gull's Nest. His first inquiries were concerning the boy who had contrived to steal a passage on board the Fire-fly from France to England, and who had pretended dumbness. How the youth got on board his vessel, Dalton could not imagine; although, when the discovery was made, his feigning the infirmity we have mentioned succeeded so well, that the Buccaneer absolutely believed he could neither hear nor speak, and sympathised with him accordingly. The indignation of Dalton was quickly roused by the outrage described by Robin Hays: he was, moreover, much exasperated that such a deception should have been successfully practised on himself. Nothing is so sure to anger those who duly value their penetration, as the knowledge that they have been duped by those they consider inferior to themselves: indeed, the best of us are more ready to pardon bare-faced wickedness than designing cunning;—we may reconcile ourselves to the being overpowered by the one, but scarcely ever to the being over-reached by the other. [198]

Springall had quitted Cecil Place the morning after his encounter with Major Wellmore, of whom he persisted in speaking as "the strong spectre-man;" and neither Robin's entreaties nor Dalton's commands could prevail on or force him again to take up his abode within the house.

"I know not why I should remain," he said; "the girls flout and laugh at my 'sea-saw ways,' as they call them; and though Barbara is a trim craft, well-built and rigged too, yet her quiet smile is worse to me than the grinning of the others. I'll stay nowhere to be both frightened and scouted: the Captain engaged me to weather the sea, not the land, and I'd rather bear the cat a-board the Fire-fly, or even a lecture in the good ship Providence, than be land-lagged any longer."

He was present in the room at the Gull's Nest when Robin recounted to the Buccaneer the peril in which Barbara had been placed; and the young sailor speedily forgot the meek jesting of the maiden in the magnitude of her danger.

"The black-eyed boy has not been near the house all day," added Springall, "and my own belief is, that he's no he, but a woman in disguise. My faith on it, Jeromio's in the secret, as sure as my name is Obey Springall! Jeromio understands all manner of lingo, and would be likely to consort with any foreigners for filthy lucre: he has ever ventures of his own, and this is one."

"There may be wisdom in thy giddy pate," observed the Buccaneer thoughtfully. "God help me! dangers and plots gather thickly around, and my wits are not brightening with my years."

"Marry, it's no woman," observed Mother Hays; "I could not be deceived—it's a dark-browed boy," lowering her voice, "very like what Prince Charlie was, as I remember him, but with rather a Jewish look for a Christian prince."

"Robin," said Dalton, taking the Ranger aside, "if this most loathsome marriage cannot be stayed—if what I mean to do should fail—my daughter must seek another home and another protector. Were Miss Cecil to become the wife of Sir Willmott Burrell, under *their* roof Barbara should not [199]

bide—the kite's nest is a bad shelter for the ring-dove."

"Where would you take her?—who would protect her?" inquired Robin earnestly.

"Faith, I know not. I'll to Sir Robert Cecil this day—speak to him about some matters of our own, and then be guided by circumstances as to the disposal of my daughter.—My daughter! that word sends the blood to and from my heart in cold and then in hot gushing streams! But, Robin, you must not tarry; close watch shall be set for this dangerous imp, to prevent farther mischief; and if Springall's conjecture should be right—yet it is most wild, and most improbable!—What disguise will you adopt in this pursuit of our heedless friend?"

"As yet, I know not; I must suit it to the times and to the persons I encounter; a pedlar's will do me best at present; a pack is a fitting nook for concealment. Dear Captain, look well to Jeromio; he never meant you honest."

"I believe you are right, Robin; and yet why should I quarrel with men's honesty? they have as good a right to label mine with the foul word 'spurious.' This damning thing within my breast, that saints call conscience, how it has worked me lately! Poison is nothing to it: but it will soon be over, if the boy were safe, and my own Barbara would but pray for me, after the fashion of her mother." He paused, then striking his forehead violently, as if to banish thought, continued, "You go to London straight?"

"Ay, sure, and have secreted the invoices you spoke of, for the good merchant beyond St. Paul's, who ordered the rich velvets, counting, perhaps, upon a coronation."

"I hope he has a better chance of selling them than that affords. Noll will hardly dare it; his name—Protector—gives as much power, and 'tis as a fencing-master's guard, ever at hand to turn aside the sneers against his ambition. Thought'st thou of the pearls for my Lord Fauconberg's rich jeweller?"

"Ay, master, they are safe; those I will myself deliver; though, from what the journals say, his Lordship has small need of new trimming. 'Twas the public talk, when you made me act the respectable character of spy in Sir Willmott Burrell's service—at the court, sir, they talked of nothing else—how the King of France, with his own hands, made him a present of a gold box, inlaid with diamonds, that had upon the lid, on the outside, the arms of France, composed of three large jewels, and, in the inside, the monarch's own picture;—the Cardinal Mazarine, too, gave him a dozen pieces of the richest Genoese velvet; and then his Lordship, not to be outdone, made him a gift of equal value;—and then, I forget me what was the next—and the next—and the next—and the next; but it was mighty fine trafficking, that I know."

[200]

"Ay, Robin, 'nothing for nothing' is the statesman's motto. Now, give you good speed and success! You can send to me almost from any part of the kingdom in a few hours. Spare no efforts for *his* freedom—Jack Roupall's confession proves but too truly, that Sir Willmott is sworn against his life; and, till that ruffian is done for, or quieted, there is no safety for Walter. I have sent Jack on private work to the West; so he is out of the way—that's one comfort. Great interest have I in the boy; next to my own child, there is nothing I love so much. And now, Robin, farewell!"

When Robin bade adieu to his mother, she began to weep and wail, after the natural custom of mothers, high and low. "Ah! you are ever on the rove; ever on the wander! You will be on your ranges, some of these odd days, when I depart this life; and then you'll never know what I have to tell you."

"If it were any thing worth telling, you would have told it long ago; for a woman cannot keep a secret, that we all know."

"Ah, boy! boy! God bless you, and good-by! I wonder will that wench, Barbara, think to send me a bit of the bride-cake? I warrant I have a sweet tooth in my head still, albeit I have but two." And after some more idle talk, and much caressing, they parted.

"My poor old mother!" thought Robin Hays, "she does excellently well as a mother for me; but think of such as Barbara calling her by such a title!" And he whistled on his way, though not "for want of thought;" his feelings and affections were divided between Barbara Iverk and Walter De Guerre.

We must now proceed with Hugh Dalton a second time to Cecil Place. His interview with the baronet was of a nature very different from that with which our narrative commenced. Sir Robert seemed as if the weight of a hundred years had been pressed upon his brow; indeed, Time could not have so altered any man. It was not the deed of Time that made the eye vigilant, even in its dimness—the hand, though trembling almost to palsy, fumble with the sword-handle—that racked the poor, withering, and shrinking brain, within its multiplied cabinets, by a thousand terrors—such was not the work of Time. How different was his, from the hoary, but holy age, that ushers an aged, and it may be a worn, but godly and grateful spirit, to an eternity of happiness!—when the records of a good man's life may be traced by the gentle furrows that nature, and not crime, has ploughed upon the brow—the voice, sweet, though feeble, giving a benison to all the living things of this fair earth—the eye, gentle and subdued, sleeping calmly within its socket—the heart, trusting in the present, and hoping in the future; judging by itself of others, and so judging kindly (despite experience) of all mankind, until time may have chimed out his warning notes!

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A thousand and a thousand times had Sir Robert cursed the evil destiny that prompted him to confess his crime to his daughter; and his curses were more bitter, and more deep, when he

found that Sir Willmott Burrell had played so treacherous a part, and inveigled him under total subjection.

"And is it Sir Willmott Burrell who is to procure me a free pardon and an acknowledged ship? Trust my case to Sir Willmott Burrell!" growled Dalton, as he sat opposite the enfeebled baronet: his hands clenched, his brows knit, and his heart swelling in his bosom with contending feelings. "Trust my case to Sir Willmott Burrell!" he repeated. "And so, Sir Robert Cecil, you have sold your soul to the devil for a mess of pottage, a mess of poisoned pottage! You have not, you say, the poor power of obtaining the most trifling favour for yourself. But I say again, Look to it; for, by the God in heaven, I will have my suit or my revenge."

"Revenge has come!" groaned forth the unfortunate man. "Is it not enough that my child, that high-souled, noble creature, knows of my guilt! All this day, and yesterday too, she would not see me. I know how it is—I am as a leper in her eyes."

"Your daughter!—your daughter know your crime!" said the Buccaneer: "How, how was that?— [202] Who told, who could have told her such a thing?—who had the heart?—But stay!" he continued, with his rude but natural energy, the better feelings of his nature coming out at once, when he understood what the baronet must have endured under such circumstances:—"stay, you need not tell me; there is but one man upon earth who could so act, and that man is Sir Willmott Burrell.—The villain made a shrewd guess, and fooled ye into a confession. I see through it all!—And are you so mean a coward?" he continued, turning upon Sir Robert a look of ineffable contempt—"are you cowardly enough to sacrifice your daughter to save yourself? I see it now; the secret that Burrell has wormed from you is the spear that pushes her to the altar; and you—*you* suffer this, and sell her and her lands to stay his tongue! Man, man, is there no feeling at your heart? Have ye a heart? I—I—a rude, untaught savage, whose hands are stained with blood, even to the very bone; who have been as a whirlwind, scattering desolation; over the deck of whose vessel has floated the pennon of every land, working destruction as a pastime; I, myself, would brand myself as a brigand and a Buccaneer—scorch the words, in letters of fire, on my brow, and stand to be gazed upon by the vile rabble at every market-cross in England, sooner than suffer *my* humble child to sacrifice the least portion of herself for me!"

Dalton paused for breath; Sir Robert Cecil hid his face from the flashing of his angry eye.

"Dalton!" he said at length, "I cannot do it, honoured as I have been, bearing so long an unspotted name, venerated at the court, praised by the people! Besides, I am sure Sir Willmott loves her; his whole conduct proves——"

"—Him to be what I have often declared him, and will again once more—a double-distilled villain!" interrupted the Buccaneer with renewed energy. "But what is this to me?" he added, stopping abruptly in the midst of his sentence—"What have I to do with it? My revenge upon you both is certain, unless my own purpose be accomplished—and it shall be accomplished for my child's sake. I will find out Sir Willmott, and tell him so to his teeth. Sir Robert Cecil, farewell! You, I suppose, are a courtly, a gentlemanly father! Pity that such should ever have children!" and gathering his cloak around him, he left the room without uttering another word. [203]

We may omit our account of the interview between the Buccaneer and Sir [Willmott](#) Burrell; merely observing that it had the effect of chafing both in no ordinary degree.

"If I did but dare show myself at Whitehall," muttered Dalton, as he quitted the room in which he had conversed with his base opponent, "how I should be revenged! Nay, the delight I should feel in giving their deserts to both would make me risk my life, were it not for my girl's sake; but my pardon once obtained, sets me at liberty in England—Let them look to it, then."

As he loitered in one of the passages leading to the back entrance, Barbara crossed his path. At first she did not recognise him, for in the day-time he wore many disguises; and his present one was, a Geneva band and gown, covered with a long cloak of black serge. Having coldly returned his salutation, she turned into a closet to avoid further parley; but he followed, and shut the door. Barbara, who on all occasions was as timid and as helpless as a hare, trembled from head to foot, and sank on the nearest seat, her eyes fixed upon the Skipper and her quivering lip as pale as ashes.

"Barbara," he said, "you are afraid of me—you are afraid of me, child," he repeated, almost angry with her at the moment, although the feeling was so perfectly natural.

"Robin told me not to be afraid," she replied, at last; and then looking about for a chair, pointed to one at the farthest corner of the small room. "There is a seat, sir!"

"I see you want me to be as far away from you as possible, Barbara," he replied, smiling mournfully.

"Not now," she said, rising, and moving nearer, until she stood at his side and looked into his face, pleased at the softened expression of his features; "I am not, indeed, afraid of you now, sir. The first thing I did not like you for, was for offering me money; the second—but I beg your pardon" (bowing her head)—"I make too free, perhaps?" Dalton, gratified at any mark of confidence, encouraged her to go on—"The second was—your name;—I heard of a daring man called Hugh Dalton—a ruthless, cruel man—a man of——"

"Speak out, Barbara; you cannot anger me."

[204]

"A man of blood!" and she shuddered at her own words. "But I am sure one thing Mistress Cecil said was true— 'that we are not to put faith in all we hear.' Now, I believe all she says, and all Robin Hays says; and he speaks so kindly of you. And another thing, sir, makes me think so well of you is—that you knew my father—Nay, I am sure you did," she continued, laying her hand on his arm and looking into his countenance, which he turned away to conceal his emotion. "I am certain you did, Robin told me as much, and Mistress Constance did not deny it; and now that you are here, so gentle, and so kind, I am sure you will tell me. Do, dear, good sir. Did you not know my father? my poor dear, dear father!"

All Dalton's resolutions of silence, all his resolves melted into airy nothings at the sound of that sweet soft voice. Tears, the only tears of pleasure that had for years moistened the cheek of the reckless Buccaneer, burst from his eyes: he could not speak; he felt weak as a new-born infant; his limbs trembled; he would have fallen to the ground, had not the feeble girl supported him. In a moment she perceived and understood the whole truth, and exclaimed,—

"You—you are my father!"

"And you do not shrink? Do not turn away from me," he said fondly. "How like your mother you are, now that your eyes are filled with love, not fear!"

"And my mother loved you?" she inquired.

"Ay, girl. Why do you ask?"

"Because," replied Barbara, laying her head on his bosom, as, if, like a young bird, she had found a home and peace within the parent nest, "because, if my mother loved you, you cannot be a bad man; and I am satisfied."

The most beautiful feature in Barbara's character was, as we have said, her trustfulness; she had no idea of guilt. She heard of crime as a thing abroad in the world, but she could never identify it with persons: her mind was a compound of feeling and affection; and with the beautiful and earnest simplicity of truth, she perfectly believed that her father could not be wicked.

"I will tell my lady how my mother loved you, and then she will know you cannot be the wild man we took you for."

"Tell her nothing, sweet, about me. In a little time I shall be able to take you to a proper home; only mark this, you must never go to the home of Sir Willmott Burrell." [205]

"Ah! he is very wicked, I have heard; and yet you see how wrong it is to believe evil of any one; but I know that he is evil, if ever man was," was the maid's reply, reverting almost unconsciously to her father's situation.

"Let us talk of nothing evil, Barbara, during the few moments I can remain with you now. Remember, you are to tell your lady nothing about me."

"I do not see how I can help it."

"Why?"

"Because she has ever told me to tell her all things, and I have obeyed. Ah, sir—father, you know not how good she is to me, and how she cries, dear lady! Ever since this marriage has been fixed upon, she has wept unceasingly."

The Buccaneer felt at the moment as all parents must feel who desire to preserve their children in innocence, and yet themselves lead vicious lives. To the wicked, lies are as necessary as the air they breathe, as common for use as household stuff. Had Barbara been what is now termed a clever girl, the Buccaneer might have employed her, not as an agent of falsehood—*that* his delicate love of his child would have prevented—but as an instrument, perhaps, to work some delay in a wedding that humanity, independent of one or two new and latent causes, called upon him to prevent; but in any plot where finesse was necessary, he saw that Barbara would be perfectly useless; and before taking his departure, he only told her she might, if she pleased, inform Mistress Cecil, but at the same time begged of her not to repeat to any one else that he had been there. This Barbara promised to do; and on the assurance that he would soon return, and enable her to show her lady that, instead of being the wild man they both took him for, he was a very peaceable (how the Buccaneer smiled at the word!) person, she suffered him to depart, and then went into her little room, to arrange her ideas, and mingle thanksgivings that she had found a father, with prayers for his safety. [206]

CHAPTER VI.

But now, no star can shine, no hope be
got,
Most wretched creature, if he knew his
lot,
And yet more wretched far because he
knows it not.

* * * * *

The swelling sea seethes in his angry
waves,
And smites the earth that dares the
traitors nourish.

GILES FLETCHER.

The Buccaneer failed not to inquire relative to the pretended dumb boy, but without success: he appeared to have vanished suddenly from before their eyes, and had left no trace behind. After despatching one or two trusty messengers on some particular embassies, Dalton concealed himself in the secret recesses of the crag until the evening fell sufficiently to enable him to get off to the Fire-fly without attracting the observation of any stragglers, or persons who might be on the watch for him or his vessel, which he had left, as before, under the superintendence of Jeromio, with strict orders to move about off Shelness Point, and the strand at Leysdown, and to be ready, on a particular signal, to heave-to and cast anchor nearly opposite the Gull's Nest. Three times had Dalton lighted his beacon on the top of the ruined tower, and three times extinguished it: the signal was at length answered, although not according to his directions, which were light for light. The Buccaneer was, however, satisfied; descended by the private stair to the shore, and pushed off his little boat, having called in vain for Springall, whom he had left at Gull's Nest in the morning.

The motion of the oars was but a mechanical accompaniment to his thoughts, which wandered back to his child, to his next beloved, Walter, and to the events through which his chequered life had passed during the last year. Strong as was now Hugh Dalton's affection for his daughter, it is doubtful if it would have had force enough to make him relinquish so completely his wandering and ruthless habits, and adopt the design of serving for a little time under the banner of the Commonwealth, before he completely gave up the sea, had not his declining constitution warned him that at fifty-five he was older than at thirty. He had grown a wiser and a better man than when, in middle age, he ran full tilt with his passions at all things that impeded his progress or his views. A long and dangerous illness, off the Caribbees, had sobered him more in one little month, than any other event could have done in years. Away from bustle and excitement, he had time for reflection, and when he arose from his couch, he felt that he was no longer the firm, strong man he had been. The impressions of early life, too, returned: he longed for his child, and for England; but when he remembered her mother, he could not support the idea that Barbara should know him as he really was. Still his restless mind suggested that occupation would be necessary, and his busy brain soon fixed upon the only way by which honourable employment could be obtained. England had been, for a long series of years in a perturbed and restless state, and Dalton had made himself well known, both by his ingenuity, energy, and bravery: he had been useful as a smuggler, and imported many things of rich value to the Cavaliers—trafficking, however, as we have seen, in more than mere contraband articles.

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Sir Robert Cecil, as we have shown, was not always the possessor of Cecil Place; and the secret of whatever course he had adopted, or crime he had committed, to obtain such large possessions, was in the keeping of Hugh Dalton.

Cromwell had not at all times watched as carefully over the private transactions of individuals, as he was disposed to do during the later years of his Protectorate. Persons obnoxious to the Commonwealth had frequently disappeared; and though Oliver's system of espionage was never surpassed, not even by Napoleon, the Cromwell of modern years, yet it had been his policy to take little or no note of such matters: uniting in himself the most extraordinary mixture of craft and heroism that ever either disfigured or adorned the page of history.

Dalton and such men were no longer necessary to bear from the shores of England the excrescences of royalty. Time, the sword, or stratagem had greatly thinned their numbers; yet many recent events proved that loyalists were imported, and assassins hired, and let loose in the country by contraband ships; until, at length, the Protector was roused, and resolved to check the pirates and smugglers of our English strands, as effectually as the gallant and right noble Blake had exterminated them on the open sea.

No one was better acquainted with the character, the deeds, and misdeeds of Hugh Dalton, than the all-seeing Cromwell; and so firm a heart as the Protector's could not but marvel at and admire, even though he could neither approve nor sanction, the bravery of the Fire-fly's commander. Dalton knew this, and, in endeavouring to obtain an authorised ship, acted according to such knowledge. He felt that Cromwell would never pardon him, unless he could make him useful; a few cruises in a registered vessel, and then peace and Barbara, was his concluding thought, whilst, resting on his oars, he looked upon his beautiful brigantine, as she rode upon the waters at a long distance yet, the heavens spangled with innumerable stars for her canopy, and the ocean, the wide unfathomable ocean, spreading from pole to pole, circling the round earth as with a girdle, for her dominion.

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It was one of those evenings that seem "breathless with adoration;" the gentleness of heaven was on the sea; there was not a line, not a ripple on the wide waste of waters; "the winds," to use again the poet's eloquent words, "were up, gathered like sleeping flowers." There was no light in the vessel's bow—no twinkle from the shore—no ship in sight—nothing that told of existence but his own Fire-fly, couching on the ocean like a sleeping bird.

"There is a demon spirit within her," whispered Dalton to himself; "the sight of her sends me wild again. Devil that she is! so beautiful! so well proportioned! Talk of the beauty of woman!—But I'll look to her no more—I'll think of her no more!"

He again applied himself to the oar, and was pulling steadily towards the ship, when his eye rested upon something black and round in the water. Again he paused in his exertions, and lay-to: the substance floated towards him. He would have shouted, but—no sailor is ever free from superstitious qualms of one sort or another—he remained silent, fixing his eye steadily upon the object. At last it came close, quite close to the boat; and in another instant, Springall was seated in the prow.

"Good God! Spring, what's the matter? are you mad? Has anything occurred yonder?" exclaimed Dalton, somewhat alarmed.

"Hush!" replied the panting youth; "I can hardly breathe yet." The Skipper was going to pull towards the ship; but the youth laid his hand on that of his master, and ejaculated, "Wait!"

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Dalton complied, and when Springall could speak, he communicated what astonished the Buccaneer in no small degree:—He said that, having hunted about for the strange blade to no purpose, he tacked off towards the ship, and told Jeromio his master had found that the boy was no boy, but a girl in disguise; that he therefore desired Jeromio to tell him who she really was, as he had secreted her on ship-board, knowing perfectly well she was neither deaf nor dumb:—That Jeromio said, as the master had fished it up, there was no use in making any bones about the matter; for how it happened was, that when they were lying off St. Vallery, this girl, whom he believed to be a Jewess, offered him a large sum of money if he would secrete her on board, at all events until the ship sailed, and if—after concealment was impossible—he would not betray her. She stipulated to be landed upon the Kentish coast; and Jeromio added, that he was sure she had a design upon the life of somebody, and it might be easily guessed who, as she prevailed on him to show her the use and management of fire-arms, and had, besides, a dagger, which she usually carried in her bosom:—That, as she wrote English very imperfectly, she had bribed him to write a letter to Mistress Cecil, saying that, before God, she was the wife of Sir Willmott Burrell, and that if she (Mistress Cecil) persisted in marrying him, she would be revenged!—That he (Jeromio) kept back this letter, because he feared his hand-writing might eventually lead to a discovery that he had been the means of bringing her to England.—Springall detailed this intelligence in much less time than it has occupied us to repeat it; and then pausing, added,—

"But the worst is yet to come. Jeromio—Master, I was right about that fellow!—had hardly finished this account, when a boat hove out, and, at first, we thought it was you, but presently who should come on board but Sir Willmott Burrell, as large as life! Well, Jeromio was precious frightened, as you may suppose, and said it was to inquire after the Jewess; but he took the Italian into your cabin, and—I can't but own I was vastly anxious to know what they were saying —"

The greatest villain in the world dislikes to be thought a listener, on the same principle that men would rather be accused of crime than cowardice—of vice than folly; poor Springall stopped and stammered until commanded to go on.

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"It was a fine day, and, thinking I should like a bath, I let myself down close by the cabin window with a rope. The window was open, and as I hung half in and half out of the water, I could hear every syllable they said, the sea was so calm. Not a word about the Jewess; but that precious villain was listening to a proposal made by the other villain to seize you, this very night, in your own ship, and murder you outright! It's true, master, as I'm alive! Then Jeromio said it would be better to deliver you up, as a rover, to the government; but Sir Willmott made reply, *that* might answer *his* purpose, but it would not do for *him*. Then he promised him a free pardon, and tempted him with the riches of the Crag, and other things;—and, as well as I could understand, they fully agreed upon it. And then, for fear of discovery, I was mounting up, when the rope, as ill-luck would have it, broke, and I went tilt splash into the water! Well, Jeromio looked out, and swore at me; but it mattered not: I scrambled up, resolving, as you may suppose, to keep a good look-out; but that double devil, Sir Willmott, was at it again, and would have it that I was listening, and so I was clapped under hatches; and hard enough I found it to steal off to you."

"The villain!" exclaimed the Buccaneer. "But the thing is impracticable; there are not more than ten or a dozen of her crew ashore: my brave fellows would never see their captain murdered!"

"On what pretext I know not, but he has, during the afternoon, sent the long-boat off with the truest hands aboard. I heard the men talking, as they passed backwards and forwards, that Bill o' Dartmouth, Sailing Jack, Mat Collins, and the Fire-fly rovers, as we used to call them—those boys who had been aboard with you in foreign parts—had gone ashore by your orders; and I know there are five or six—those Martinicos and Sagrinios, and the devil's own O's, that are 'fore and aft in all things with Jeromio. There's no putting faith in any of them, seeing they have a natural antipathy towards us English. So, now, let us put back, sir."

"Put back!" repeated Dalton, casting a look of scorn upon poor Springall; "the man's not born who could make me put back!—The ship's my own—and the sea, the broad sea we look upon, is mine, as long as I have strength to dip an oar in its brine, or wit to box a compass! Avast! avast! boy; you know not what you speak of when you talk to Hugh Dalton of putting back!"

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"They'll murder us both!" said Springall, in a mournful, and almost a reproachful tone.

"My poor boy!" replied Dalton looking in his face, and poising on high the oar he had so vigorously dipped in the blue wave—"My true-hearted boy! it would be, indeed, a bad recompense for your devotedness, to lead you into the tiger's den;—for myself, I have no fear;—I will put you on shore, and return."

"Never, master!" exclaimed the lad. "There is no one in the wide world I care for but yourself. To serve you, I would venture all. No, no, master, I may be but a poor weak boy in some things, but in this I am a man. I will never leave you while I have power to serve you."

"And you will not repent it," observed the Buccaneer; the spirit of former days rallying round his heart at the idea of danger, which ever appeared to him the path to glory: "you will not repent it—in a right cause too. What can I have to fear? I know that the instant I show myself among them, they will return as one man to their duty; and IF THEY DO NOT——"

As they neared the vessel, they perceived that not more than five or six of their comrades were, like shadowy things, pacing the deck. Jeromio himself, however, they noted, waiting to receive them.

Dalton, who was vigilant as brave, had previously thrown his boat-cloak over Springall, so that he might not be recognised, and handed him a cutlass and pistol. Whether the appearance of two, when he only expected one, or whether the natural dread with which he always, despite himself, regarded his captain, overpowered Jeromio, we may not guess; but as the Buccaneer strode up the ladder, his penetrating look steadily fixed upon the wily Italian, his quick eye perceived that twice he attempted to level a pistol; while his more cowardly accomplices crowded behind him. Had the villain possessed courage enough to fire as Dalton was ascending, his life would in all probability have been the sacrifice; but once upon the deck of his own ship, he was indeed a seaking! For an instant he stood proudly before Jeromio; then, presenting his pistol to the head of the Italian, who trembled violently, he said as calmly as if he were in the midst of friends,—

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"One moment's prayer; and thus I punish traitors——"

There was a breathless silence; one might have heard a pin drop upon the deck; the very air seemed to listen within the furled sails. Jeromio's pistol fell from his grasp; he clasped his hands in agony, and falling before the Buccaneer, upon his knees, uttered a brief prayer, for well he knew that Dalton never recalled a doom, and he felt that all had been discovered! In another instant a flash passed along the ship, and danced in garish light over the quiet sea! The bullet shattered a brain ever ready to plot, but never powerful to execute. With unmoved aspect Dalton replaced the weapon, and planting his foot upon the prostrate dead, drew another from his belt. Springall was still by his side, ready to live or die with his commander.

"Come on! come on!" said Dalton, after surveying the small and trembling band of mutineers, as a lion of the Afric deserts gazes upon a herd of hounds by whom he is beset. "Come on!" and the sentence sounded like the tolling of a death-bell over the waters, so firmly yet solemnly was it pronounced, as if the hearts of a thousand men were in it. "Come on! Are ye afraid? We are but two. Or are ye still men; and do ye think upon the time when I led ye on to victory, when I divided the spoil of many lands among ye? Ye are friends—countrymen of this—that was a man; yet if ye will, ye shall judge between us. Did I deserve this treachery at his hands? Can one of ye accuse me of injustice?"

A loud, a reiterated "No," answered this appeal, and the mutineers rushed forward, not to seize on, but to lay down their weapons at the feet of their captain.

"Take up your arms," said Dalton, after casting his eye over them, and perceiving at a single glance that they had truly delivered them all. "Take up your arms: ye were only beguiled; ye are too true to be really treacherous."

This most wise compliment operated as oil on the tumultuous sea: the ship-mob fancied they were acting according to the dictates of reason, when they were really under the influence of fear, and then they aroused the tranquillity of the night, shouting long and loudly for the Fire-fly and the brave Buccaneer!

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Although Jeromio had cunningly despatched several of Dalton's most approved friends in the long-boat to the shore on some pretended business, yet others had been secured below; and, when they were liberated, they created great and noisy jubilee at what they jestingly called "the Restoration." Springall had orders to distribute among them, and without distinction, abundance of rum, while Dalton retired to his cabin, still unmoved, to pen some despatches, which he deemed necessary to send to the main land that night.

When he returned on deck, the revellers had retired, and the watch was set. Many of the stars that had witnessed the events we have recorded had sunk, and others had risen in their stead. The midnight air was chill and cold; Jeromio's body lay where it had fallen, stiffening in its gore; for no one cared to meddle with it till the Skipper's pleasure was known as to how it was to be disposed of. Dalton gazed upon it but for an instant, and then ordered that a man named Mudy, the black, and butcher of the ship, should attend him.

"Here, Mudy," he exclaimed, "chop me off that rascal's head—quick, do it!" The brute carelessly performed his task. "Now roll the carcass in a sail, and, being well leaded, throw it overboard. Wrap me the head in a clean napkin; I would fain make a present to Sir Willmott Burrell—a wedding present he may think it, if he will. The head to which he trusted will serve the purpose

well. I will not send you, Springall, on this errand," he continued, laying his hand gently on the shoulder of the trembling boy, who sickened at the disgusting sight. "Go to your hammock; you shall not sleep there many nights more. You are too good for such a life as this!"

He then directed two of his men to row to land, and leave the parcel at the gate of Cecil Place. He also gave them other packets to deliver, with orders to those of his crew who were still on shore; and then, his ship being under sail for another division of the coast, like a mighty but perturbed spirit, he paced the deck till morning.

CHAPTER VII.

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I am not prone to weeping as our sex
Commonly are; the want of which vain
 dew
Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have
That honourable grief lodg'd here, which
 burns
Worse than tears drown.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is curious to note how differently persons known to each other, and, it may be, endeared by the ties of relationship, or the still stronger ones of friendship, are occupied at some precise moment, although separated but by a little distance, and for a brief space of time. Life is one great kaleidoscope, where it is difficult to look upon the same picture twice; so varied are its positions, and so numerous its contrasts, according to the will of those who move and govern its machinery. While the hand of the Buccaneer was dyed in blood, his child was sleeping calmly on her pillow;—Sir Robert Cecil pondering over the events of the day, and drawing conclusions as to the future, from which even hope was excluded;—Sir Willmott Burrell exulting in what he deemed the master-stroke of his genius;—and Constance Cecil, the fountain of whose tears was dried up, permitted Lady Frances Cromwell to sit up with her, while she assorted various letters, papers, and other matters, of real or imaginary value, of which she was possessed. Within that chamber one would have thought that Death was the expected bridegroom, so sadly and so solemnly did the bride of the morrow move and speak. She had ceased to discourse of the approaching change, and conversed with her friend only at intervals, upon topics of a trifling nature; but in such a tone, and with such a manner, as betrayed the aching heart; seldom waiting for, or hearing a reply, and sighing heavily, as every sentence obtained utterance. Her companion fell into her mood, with a kindness and gentleness hardly to be expected from one so light and mirthful.

"I am sure," she observed, "I have deeper cause for grief than you, Constantia; my father is so obstinate about Mr. Rich. He treats his family as he does the acts of his parliament, and tries to make use of both for the good of the country."

Constantia smiled a smile of bitterness; Lady Frances little knew the arrow, the poisoned arrow, that rankled in her bosom.

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"Oh, I see you are preserving Mrs. Hutchinson's letters. How my sister Claypole esteems that woman! Do you think she really loves her husband as much as she says?"

"I am sure of it," was Constantia's reply, "because he is worthy of such love. I received one letter from her, lately; she knew that I was to be—to change my name—and kindly (for the virtuous are always kind) wrote to me on the subject; read over these passages."

Lady Frances was about to read them aloud, but Constantia prevented her.

"I have read it over and over, dearest, though wherefore I hardly know; my lot is cast in a way so different from that she imagines. The precepts are for the promotion of happiness, which I can never expect to enjoy—never to be cited as an example of connubial excellence. I shall leave no record that people in after years will point at, and say, Behold, how lovingly they lived together! But read it, Frances, read it: to you it may prove salutary, for you will be happy in your union, and with one whom you can love."

The Lady Frances took the letter with a trembling hand, and read as follows:—

"Richmond, 1657, the 2d day of June.

"Your letter, which I had the happiness to receive some time since, my dear young friend, notwithstanding its melancholy theme, afforded me real satisfaction. It is true that your loving mother has been removed; but blessed is the knowledge which instructs you that she and all her excellences came from God, and have now but been taken back to their own most perfect source; that you are parted for a moment, to meet again for eternity! Her soul conversed so much with God while it was here, that it rejoices to be now freed

from interruption in that hallowed exercise. Her virtues were recorded in heaven's annals, and can never perish: by them she yet teaches us, and all those to whose knowledge they shall arrive. 'Tis only her fetters that have been removed; her infirmities, her sorrows that are dead never to revive again—nor would we have them: we may mourn for ourselves that we walk so tardily in her steps, that we need her guidance and assistance on the way. And yet, dearest Constance, but that the veil of tearful mortality is before our eyes, we should see her, even in heaven, holding forth the bright lamp of virtuous example and precept, to light us through the dark world we must for a few years tread.

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"But I have heard tidings lately, and from the Lady Claypole too, of which, methinks, to your mother's friend, you have been over chary. Ah! maidens care not to prate of their love affairs to matrons. Silly things! they would go their own course, and think for themselves! without knowing how to go, or what to think! The besetting sin of youth is—presumption: but it is not your sin, my gentle girl; it was some species of modesty withheld your pen—yet I heard it. My husband, albeit not a very frequent guest at Whitehall, pays his respects there sometimes, mainly out of his duty and regard to the Lady Claypole; for he is no scorner of our sex, and holds it a privilege to converse with wise and holy women. She informed him, and not as a matter of secrecy, that you would soon be wedded to Sir Willmott Burrell; and, although we know him not, we readily believe that he is a good and honest gentleman, commanding our esteem, because beloved of you—the which, I pray you, advise him of—and say we hope he will number us among his friends. I never doubted your wisdom, Constantia, and those cannot wed well who do not wed wisely. By wisely, I do not mean that longing after foolish gain and worldly aggrandisement, which vain women, alas! covet more than the enjoyment of their lives and the salvation of their souls. I would have a woman seek for her husband one whom she can love with an ardent, but not idolatrous passion; capable of being a firm, consistent friend; who has sufficient knowledge and virtue to sit in council within her bosom, and direct her in all things. Having found such, the wife should desire and strive to be as a very faithful mirror, reflecting truly, however dimly, his own virtues. I have been long wedded, and, thank God, most happily so. We have become as a proverb among our friends; and matrons, when they bless their daughters at the altar, wish them to be as happy as Lucy Hutchinson. Had your blessed mother lived, my advice might have been almost impertinent; but now, I am sure you will not take it ill of a most true friend to speak a little counsel: my words may be but as dew-drops, yet there is a spirit within you that can convert them into pearls. But counsel ought to be preceded by prayer—and I have prayed—Will you take ill the supplication? I know you will not.

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"I am also sure that you will not consider unacceptable the prayer I am about to transcribe in this my letter. It was written by my dear husband, some time after the exceeding goodness of God made us one; and we feel much comfort and encouragement in repeating it each morn and eve, ere the cares and turmoils of the day are come, or when they have departed. May it have a like influence on you, my sweet friend! May your destiny be as mine!

"O Lord, divine uniter of true hearts! Grant to thy servants an increase of that blessed gift of grace which is wrought into the soul by thy regenerating Spirit, that so the whole creature may be resigned unto thy will, human love be subservient to that which is heavenly, and all its thoughts, hopes, and actions be directed to thy glory, with whom is its source, and from whom its blessing cometh: Two pray unto thee as one, one in heart, one in interest, one for time, one for eternity. So may it ever be, O Lord! our Maker and our guide, our protector and our friend. We bless and thank thee for the comfort we have found in each other, for the worldly prosperity to which virtue, trustfulness, and faith in thy care have conducted us; for the mutual esteem, confidence, and affection that sway and direct our frail natures, but, above all, for the sure and certain knowledge that when our mortal shall have put on immortality,

we shall be one—undivided, inseparable, and eternal.'

"'Tis brief, Constantia, but long supplications too often lose in spirit that which the heart cannot make up in words. Prayer should be the concentrated essence of Humility, perfumed by Hope, and elevated by Faith; but you know all this as well as I. I would not presume to instruct, or give you advice upon any point, save this most blessed or most miserable one (to a mind like yours it can have no medium)—marriage! Many young females are beguiled by evil counsel, and thus commence in a careless or obstinate course, which leads them into the thorny path of discontent, and consequent wretchedness. And, first of all, do not fancy that petty tyrannies become a bride. It is the habit of the bridegroom to yield to such like; but, trust me, he loves you not the better for weak fantasies, unless he be a fool; and I pen no lines for fools, or fools' mates. I have no sympathy with a woman weak or wicked enough to wed a fool. In the honeymoon, then, study your husband's temper; for the best of men—and women too—carry (it may be unconsciously) a mask during the days of courtship, which, if not taken off, wears off, and you must strive to know him as he really is; remembering that though lovers may be angels, husbands are only mortals. Looking within at the imperfection of our own nature, we learn to make allowance for the faults they may possess.

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"For my own part, my only wonder has been how a man, like Colonel Hutchinson, could so kindly pity my infirmities, and correct them after such a fashion that his blame has ever sounded sweeter in my ears than the praise of the whole world besides. He has looked upon my errors with an indulgent eye, and not suffered them to detract from his esteem and love for me, while it has been his tender care to erase all those blots which made me appear less worthy the respect he every where pays me.

"One thing, although I hardly need recall it to a mind like yours, is, above all else, necessary to be remembered—that a maiden has only her own honour in keeping, but a wife has her husband's as well as her own. It was a fine saying that of the ancient Roman: 'The wife of Cæsar must not be suspected.' Suspicion is too often, as the plague-spot, the intimator of a disease, which may either break out, or be suppressed by care or circumstances; but still the intimation has gone forth. Reserve is the becoming garment for the wedded wife—that sweet reserve springing from holy love, which the chastened eye, the moderated smile, the elevated carriage—all betoken;—a something which a pure heart alone can teach, and that a sullied woman never can assume. Study the accomplishments your husband loves with continued assiduity: he may delight in seeing the beauties of his estate miniaturized by your pencil, or the foliage of a favourite tree doomed to perpetual spring on your obedient canvass; or, peradventure, delight more in the soft touching of your lute or harpsichord: whatever it may be, study to do it quickly, and cultivate your taste unto his pleasure. I say, do it quickly, in the early days of marriage, because habit is a most tyrannical master. Then, when your affections and your customs tend to the same end, and are, moreover, guided by the all-powerful hand of duty, and under the especial control of godliness, I have little doubt that you will make all that a wife should be.

"I would fain counsel you on the custom of a neat and becoming attire; but I have observed that you ever habit yourself, from an innate consciousness of what is just and becoming in your station, and that not from any caring for occasion or love of display. A tall and stately figure, like yours, becomes well the rich satins of France, and the still richer velvets of Genoa; yet I prefer to see a British woman adorned by the artisans of her own land, and I have lately seen some articles of such manufacture of most rare beauty. As to your jewels, consider your husband's desire; if he care for them, deck yourself with much attention, and wear those that please him best. Your mother's diamonds were of the finest water, as befitted her rank, and I am sure you will never carry counterfeits, whether of gems or of gold. I have heard of those who affect the vanity of great expenditure at small cost, and I hold them in contempt; for every thing about a woman should emblem her own heart, and be pure, even as she is pure. Simplicity in dress is ever in harmony with beauty, and never out of place; yet are there state times when it is expected that the high-born carry bravery, as the

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horses bear high and waving plumes—to make the pageant grand; and though his Highness, at first, deemed it expedient to lessen such extravagance, yet my dear husband assures me that his children lack nothing worthy the state of princes.

"But all these matters must be left to the discretion of your judgment, which, if well-tempered, will direct them in a fitting manner; always remembering, the most seemingly insignificant point that contributes the smallest atom to domestic happiness is worthy the attention of a truly wise and peace-loving female. It is better not to be concerned about trifles; but some men, and men not of particularly small minds either, are very anxious as to things which appear of no moment: in that case, the best way is to humour them, and then, by introducing some strong motive, wile them on to better: this must be done skilfully, or it will fail of success. A woman's first desire should be her husband's goodness; her next, his greatness. Matrimony is a bondage, but one that carries with it the protection which is as necessary to a woman as the air she breathes; with a tender husband, after a little time, she will find the chains so overgrown by affection, which is the woodbine of the moral garden, that, instead of being enslaved, behold, she finds peace, love, and safety within the charmed circle.

"I commenced a letter, my sweet friend, yet, I fear me, have written an homily; but forgive it, Constance, and take it as it is intended.

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"I hear the Lady Frances is with you. I pray you call me to her remembrance. She is a lively but honourable lady, and I should be glad that Mr. Rich found favour in the sight of her father; for I do believe her heart has been fixed, at least more fixed upon him than upon any other, for some time. We have been passing a few days in this dear spot—the nest, I may well call it, of our affections. My husband, in the days of his bachelorhood, had been cautioned to take heed of Richmond, as a place so fatal to love, that never any disengaged young person went thither who returned again free; and I wonder not at it, for there is a sober and most happy beauty in its very aspect, that tranquillises and composes the thoughts to gentleness and affection. We have visited our old music-master, at whose house we both boarded for the practice of the lute! He was so pleased to find I still studied! observing that many married ladies relinquished it soon; and he praised my husband's execution on the viol in no small degree.

"Adieu, my dear young friend. We crave earnestly to be kindly thought of by him whom your soul 'delighteth to honour!' May the blessing of the Lord dwell within your house, and sanctify all things for your good! Such is the prayer of your true and loving friend,

"LUCY HUTCHINSON.

"My husband, who is indeed a most kind counsellor in all things, says that I ought to tender any assistance I can offer, seeing that I am near London, and you may require sundry habits befitting a bridal; if so, command my services as fully as you do my affections."

Lady Frances placed the letter on Constantia's writing-table, and for some time offered no observation on its contents.

"Is not she a beautiful model for a married woman?" inquired Constantia.

"It was very good of her to remember a giddy pate like me," replied Frances; "and I do confess that she is one of my perfections, though in general I hate your pattern-women, where every thing is fitted and fitting—women of plaster and parchment—to cut one's character by; who are to be spoken of, not to; who can make no excuse for people's failings, because they think they are themselves exempt from fault; who study devout looks, and leer at their lovers from under their hoods—hole-and-corner flirts, yet held up as pattern-women, bless the term! to innocent and laughter-loving maidens like myself, who having no evil to conceal, speak openly, and love not the conventicle."

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"But Mrs. Hutchinson is none of these," interrupted Constance. "She is pure in heart—in word—in look. She really has nothing to conceal; she is all purity and grace, and with her husband shared for years the friendship of the illustrious Selden and Archbishop Usher."

"Well, I am willing to admit all this," retorted Frances, eager to catch at any thing to divert her friend's melancholy. "But, for all that, I never could feel easy in the society of your very wise people; it is not pleasant to know that those you are speaking to regard you as a fool, though they may be too well-bred to tell you so. And now I remember a story about Selden that always amused me much. When he was appointed among the lay members to sit in the Assembly of

Divines at Westminster, one of the ministers, with all the outward show of self-sufficient ignorance, declared that the sea could not be at any very great distance from Jerusalem; that as fish was frequently carried from the first to the last place, the interval did not probably exceed thirty miles! and having concocted this opinion, he gave it forth, as it had been one of the laws of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not! Well, the Synod were about to adopt this inference, when Selden quietly observed, that in all likelihood it was 'salt fish!' Was not that excellent?"

"Yet his wit, in my estimation, was his least good quality. Methinks the Commonwealth has reason to be most proud of two such men as John Selden and Archbishop Usher."

"But the glory has departed from Israel," was Frances' reply, "for they are gathered to their fathers."

"The sun may be shorn of its beams," said Constantia, with something of her former energy of manner, "but it is still a sun. Cromwell is the Protector of England!"

That was the rallying point of Lady Frances' feelings, and she embraced her friend with increased affection.

"I love you more than all," said the kind girl, "for your appreciation of my father; I only hope that posterity may do him equal justice. But why, I ask again, dear Constance, have you not permitted me to speak to him about this wedding? You reap sorrow, and not joy, of the contract. Well, well," she continued, perfectly understanding Constantia's mute appeal for silence, "I will say no more, for I ought to be satisfied with the privilege of being thus enabled to disturb the solitude you consider so sweet." [222]

"How lessened," exclaimed Constance, "I must appear in the eyes of all good and wise people! How they will jeer at the lofty Mistress Cecil selling herself—for—they know not what!"

"Lessened!" repeated Frances; "on the contrary. You certainly do sacrifice yourself to fulfil this contract; but that deserves praise. Besides, Burrell is a man whom many admire."

"There, talk not of it, Frances—talk not of it: henceforth, the world and I are two—I mix no more in it, nor with it."

"Now, out upon you for a most silly lady!" retorted Lady Frances. "It may be my fate, despite the affection I bear *poor* Rich (I like the linking of these words), to wed some other man—one who will please my father and benefit the state. Is not the misery of being chained to a thing you loathe and detest sufficient cause for trouble, without emulating bats and owls! No, no; if I must be ironed, I will cover my fetters with flowers—they shall be perfumed, and tricked, and trimmed. I shall see you gay at court, dear Constance. Besides, if you are to be married, you must not twine willow with your bridal roses—that will never do."

There was no smile upon Constantia's lips at her friend's kind and continued efforts to remove the weight that pressed upon her heart.

"This is the last night that I can dare trust myself to speak of Walter. Frances," she said, after a long pause, "I have no fears for his personal safety, because I know with whom he left this house: but, one thing I would say; and if, my dearest, kindest friend, I have not prated to you of my sorrows—joys, alas! I have not to communicate—it is because I must not. With all the childish feeling of a girl you have a woman's heart, true and susceptible, as ever beat in woman's bosom. I know you have thought me cold and reserved; an iceberg, where nothing else was ice:—true, I am chilled by circumstances, not by nature. I am sure you can remember when my step was as light, and my voice as happy, though not as mirthful, as your own: but the lightness and the mirthfulness have passed:—only, Frances, when the world dyes my name in its own evil colour, I pray you say——" She paused as if in great perplexity. [223]

"Say what? Surely all the world can say is, that you did what thousands of devoted girls have done before you—married to fulfil a contract," observed Lady Frances, who well knew that some deadly poison rankled in her heart, and almost overturned her reason.

"True, true," repeated Constance—"I had forgotten; for I am, as you may see, bewildered by my misery. But one thing, dear Frances, you can surely do:—take this poor trinket—it perplexed you once—and if ever you should meet the Cavalier who parted lately in such company, give it him back. That simple girl, poor Barbara, found it to-day within the Fairy Ring, and brought it me:—it is the only memento I had of him," she continued, placing it in Lady Frances' hand—"the only one—there, put it away. And now, dear Frances, since you will companion me through this last night of liberty, go, fetch your lute, and sing me all the songs we learned together; or talk in your own sweet way of those we knew, esteemed, or jested at."

"When I do sing, or when I talk, you do not listen," replied the youngest of Cromwell's daughters, taking down her lute and striking a few wild chords: "your ears are open but their sense is shut."

"Forgive me; but, even if it is so, your music and your voice is a most soothing accompaniment to much bitterness; it is a pretty fable, that of the nightingale resting her bosom on a thorn, while warbling her finest notes."

"It proves to me that the nightingale who does so is a most foolish bird," retorted Frances, rallying, "inasmuch as she might select roses, instead of thorns, and they are both soft and fragrant."

"And fading," added Constance: "you perceive I heard you."

"Your heart, my dear friend," replied Lady Frances, "only echoes one tone, and that is a melodious melancholy. Shall I sing you 'Withers' Shepherd's Resolution,'—my father's rhyming 'Major-general,' who lorded it so sturdily over the county of Surrey? For my own part, I like the spirit of the man, particularly as it comes forth in the third verse." And with subdued sportiveness she sung:— [224]

"Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or her well deservings knowne,
Make me quite forget mine owne?"

"Be she with that goodness blest
Which may merit name of best;
If she be not such to me,
What care I how good she be?"

"Great or good, or kind or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve.

"If she slight me when I woove,
I can scorne and let her goe,
If she be not fit for me,
What care I for whom she be?"

"Do you not admire it, Constantia?" she said.

"Admire what?"

"Why, the conceit of the song."

"I fear I did not heed it. I was thinking of—of—something else."

"Shall I sing it again?"

"Not to-night, dearest: and yet you may; methinks it is the last night I shall ever listen to minstrelsy—not but that there is philosophy in music, for it teaches us to forget care; it is to the ear what perfume is to the smell. How exquisite is music! the only earthly joy of which we are assured we shall taste in heaven. Play on."

Lady Frances again sung the lay, but with less spirit than before, for she felt it was unheeded by her friend, and she laid the lute silently on the ground when she had finished.

"Do you know," said Constance, after a time, "I pity your waiting lady, who was married to Jerry White, as you call him, so unceremoniously."

"Pity her!" repeated Lady Frances, with as disdainful a toss of her head, as if she had always formed a part of the aristocracy. "Pity her! methinks the maid was well off to obtain the man who aspired to her mistress." [225]

"But she loved him not," observed Constantia, in a sad voice.

"Poor Jerry!" laughed Lady Frances, "how could she love him; the Commonwealth jester; wanting only cap, bells, and a hobby-horse, to be fool, *par excellence*, of the British dominions? And yet he is no fool either; more knave than fool, though my father caught him at last."

"It was a severe jest," said Constantia.

"Why, it was—but verily I believe my father thought there was danger of having two fools at his court, instead of one. It was after this fashion. Jerry presumed a good deal upon the encouragement his Highness had given him—for the Protector loves a jest as well as any, when there is nobody by to repeat it to the grave ones: and his chaplain, Jerry White, chimed in with his humour, and was well-timed in his conceits; and this so pleased my good father, that he suffered him much in private about his person. So he fell, or pretended to fall, desperately in love with my giddy self. It was just at the time, too, when Charles Stuart made his overtures of marriage, that so caught my mother's fancy; and my imagination was marvellously moved by two such strings to my bow—a prince and a preacher—a rogue and a fool:—only think of it, Constantia! However, Jerry grew much too tender, and I began to think seriously I was going too far; so I told my sister Mary, and I am sure she told my father; for, as I was passing through a private anteroom at Whitehall, his reverence was there in ambush, and commenced his usual jargon of love and dove, faithfulness and fidelity, gentleness and gentility, and at last fell upon his knees, while I, half laughing, and half wondering how his rhapsody would end, as end it must—Well, there! fancy Jerry's countenance, clasped hands, and bended knees! and I pulling my hood (I had just returned from a walk) over my face to conceal my merriment, trying to disengage my hand from the creature's claws—when, I really don't know how, but there stood my father before me, with a half smile on his lip, and his usual severity of aspect.

"My chaplain at prayers! you are mighty devout, methinks," he said, in his coldest voice. Jerry

stammered, and stumbled, and entangled his leg in arising with the point of my father's sword; and then my father's choler rose, and he stormed out, 'The meaning, sir, the meaning of this idolatrous mummary? what would ye of my daughter, the Lady Frances Cromwell?' And Jerry, like all men, though he could get into a scrape, had not much tact at getting out; so he looked to me for assistance—and I gave it. 'He is enamoured, please your Highness,' said I, with more wit than grace, 'of Mistress Mabel, my chief lady.' Then, having got the clue, Jerry went on without hesitation: 'And I was praying my Lady Frances that she would interfere, and prevent Mistress Mabel from exercising so much severity towards her faithful servant.' 'What ho!' said his Highness, 'without there!—who waits?' One of the pages entered on the instant. 'Send hither,' he commanded, 'Mistress Mabel, and also that holy man of the Episcopal faith, who now tarrieth within the house.' Jerry looked confounded, and I trembled from head to foot. Mabel, with her silly face, entered almost at the moment. 'And pray, Mistress Mabel,' said my father, 'what have you to say against my chaplain? or why should you not be married forthwith to this chosen vessel, Jeremiah White?' And Mabel, equally astonished, blushed and courtesied, and courtesied and blushed. Then my father, flinging off his hat and mailed gloves, ordered the Episcopalian to perform the ceremony on the instant, adding, he would take the place of father, and I that of bridesmaid. It was like a dream to us all! I never shall forget it—and Jerry never can; it was most wonderfully comic—Only imagine it, Constance!"

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Lady Frances had been so carried away by her mirthful imagining, that she had little heeded her mournful friend; nor was it till her last sentence—"Only imagine it, Constance!"—that she looked fully upon her.

"Hush!" murmured Constantia in a hollow tone; "hush!" she repeated.

"Merciful Heaven! what is it?" inquired Frances, terrified at her earnestness.

"Hush!" again said Constantia: adding, "Do you not hear?"

"Hear? I hear nothing but the tolling of the midnight bell—'Tis twelve o'clock."

"It is," said Constantia, in a voice trembling with intense suffering; "it is twelve o'clock—My wedding-day is indeed come!"

CHAPTER VIII.

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When all the riches of the globe beside
Flow'd in to thee with every tide;
When all that nature did thy soil deny,
The growth was of thy fruitful industry;
When all the proud and dreadful sea,
And all his tributary streams,
A constant tribute paid to thee,
Extended Thames.

COWLEY.

The country through which Robin travelled on his journey to London presented an aspect very different from that which it now assumes. Blackheath was noted for highwaymen; and there was a fair and reasonable chance of being robbed and murdered between Greenwich and London. The Ranger never paused from the time he set out until he found himself under a portion of the long brick-wall that still divides the richly ornamented park from the arid and unfertilised heath. He sat down beneath its shadow, and regaled himself with a morsel of ship-biscuit and a mouthful of brandy; then undid the fastening of his wallet, and selected from amid its contents a neatly and skilfully made hump, which, having previously removed his coat, he dexterously transferred to his shoulder, and then donned a jacket into which the hump fitted with extraordinary exactness. He next drew from his bosom a small hand-glass, and painted and dyed his face with different preparations, so that even Barbara would have failed to recognise her friend and admirer. Having placed a patch over one eye, and stuck a chin-tuft of black hair under his lip, he seemed satisfied with his appearance, replaced the glass and sundry other things in his sack, then, with his usual agility, mounted one of the overhanging trees, and concealed it amid the branches. As he resumed his journey, he might have been taken for a gipsy minstrel, for suspended round his neck was a small cracked gittern, retaining only two strings. This, as if in mockery of his assumed misfortune, he had rested on the hump, while the riband, which was of bright scarlet, encircled, like a necklace, his swarthy neck, that was partially uncovered. In his steeple-crowned hat was stuck a peacock's feather; and any passenger would have been puzzled to ascertain whether the motley deformed being was a wit or a fool.

"Now"—thus ran his thoughts—"Now do I defy any of the serving-men at Whitehall to recognise their play-fellow, Sir Willmott Burrell's valet, in the gipsy-looking rascal into which I have, of myself, manufactured myself! Verily, Robin, thou art a most ingenious fellow! Apt at contrivances—even nature is thy debtor, for thou hast increased her deformity! I could gain no tidings of the Cavalier in my own proper person—of that I am certain; because the people there will either not know, or be so effectually cautioned—there would be no use in fishing in such water. Ah! your

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heart's blood Puritans will never defile themselves by questioning such as me. 'Slife, I think Old Noll himself could hardly make me out! I wonder what would Barbara say now, if she were to behold me in this disguise! I should not like her to see me, and that's the truth; for no man likes to look worse than he is to his mistress, and, the devil knows, I can ill spare my beauty! My *beauty!*' he thought again, and then chuckled one of his vile laughs, the most decided indicators of a scornful and bitter temper.

Robin did not pursue the high London road, but struck across the Park; and his love of fine scenery induced him to pause at the top of Greenwich Hill, and look around on the richness and beauty of the prospect. Flowing to the right, the broad and glorious Thames turned its liquid mirror to the skies, and reflected every passing cloud upon its translucent bosom. But our noble river had more than clouds to shadow it;—the treasures of the universe floated for us upon its wave—the spoils of conquered and humbled nations left their track along its shores; Spain, France, and either India—the whole world, rendered us homage and paid us tribute, and proud was our own Father Thames to bear that homage and that tribute to his favoured city. Well might the great cupola of St. Paul erect its heavy but majestic head, and peer forth through the first beams of day upon the rich and blessed river! Robin felt his heart swell within his bosom when he looked down upon the waters and the land of which every Englishman is so justly proud. "It is my own country!" was his emphatic ejaculation, as he gazed on this picture of English wealth and English cultivation. The little village of Greenwich, straggling at the foot of the hill, approaching closely to the palace, and then wandering along the great Dover and London road, formed a more pleasant object than it does now that it has been magnified into a great and populous town. Many wooden cottages nested under the Park walls, and sent their smoke curling through the foliage of the fine trees that formed a bold, rich back-ground. The palace, extending its squares and courts along the river's brink, gave an air of dignity to the whole scene; while the tinkling music of the sheep-bells, echoing from the heath, lent to it a soft and harmonising effect. On the river, in the extreme distance, an English vessel was towing up some of the Spanish prizes which the gallant Blake had forwarded to their future home: they trailed the water heavily and gloomily, like captives as they were; and their dismantled and battered aspect afforded ample subject for discourse to a group of old sailors, who, though not yet possessed of their Palace-Hospital, found many convenient dwellings in the village, and added not a little to the picturesque appearance of the hill, as, congregated in a small party, they handed a rude spy-glass from one to another,

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"And told how ships were won."

"Ah!" said one veteran, "I heard old Blake myself say, soon after his Highness was made the same as a king, and many lubberly scoundrels put up their backs at it—'Boys,' says he, and, my eyes! how nobly he does stand upon the deck o' his own ship, the Triumph!—'Boys,' says he, 'it isn't for us to mind state affairs, but keep foreigners from fooling us.' D—n it, *that's* what I call English."

"So it is," continued another, whose weather-beaten body was supported on a pair of wooden legs, and who had just joined the little party of which Robin made one; "so it is, Jack, and what I call English, worth ten books full of other lingo; wasn't I with him in Fifty-three, when, with only twelve vessels, he beat Van Tromp, who had seventy ships of the line and three hundred merchantmen under convoy? and hadn't the Triumph seven hundred shot in her hull? Well, though it was there I lost my precious limbs, I don't grudge them, not I: it's as well to go to the fish as to the worms, and any how we have the king's pension."

"Jemmy," said a waggish-looking sailor, with only one eye and half an arm, twirling some tobacco in his mouth at the same time—"Jemmy, it's rum talking about royalty—you forget—"

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"It's no such thing as rum talking, Terry; I don't mind who governs England—she's England still. It warms my blood, too, to think of the respect paid the Union Jack by all nations. When our admiral, God bless him! was in the road of Cadiz, a Dutch fellow didn't dare to hoist his flag; so, ye see, the Dutch knows what's what, though both men and ships are heavy sailors."

"Yes," chimed in the first speaker, "that was the time when his health was drunk with a salute of five guns by one of the French commanders: and it's noble, so it is, to see the order he keeps those Algerines in. Why, if in searching the Sallee rovers they found an English prisoner aboard, they sent him off to Blake as civil as possible, hoping to get favour. But that didn't hinder him from peppering both the Dey of Algiers, and the infidel rascal at Tunis."

"I hear that the burning of the Spanish ships in the Road of Santa Cruz was the most wonderful thing ever done," observed he of the wooden legs; "and it's desperate bad news that he's taken on for sickness; for sure am I, that the Protector will never have so faithful a friend, or so good a servant. And so I told the sergeant, or whatever you choose to call him, of the Ironsides, who stopped at the Oliver's Head, down below yesterday, to bait horses, or some such thing:—says I, 'If Blake goes, let your master look to himself.'—But I hate all soldiers—lubberly, sulky, black-looking fellows—no spirit in them, particularly now, when it's the fashion not to drink, or swear, or do any thing for divarsion—ugh!" And the old man's ire against the "land-lubbers" grew so hot, that he turned away, and stumped stoutly down the hill. Robin was not tardy in following, nor long in getting into conversation, though the remembrance of the "land lubbers" still rankled in the old man's mind.

"Here's a most excellent glass," said Robin, pulling a pocket-glass from his vest, and showing it to the sailor; "you can count the very shot-holes in the vessel they are towing up."

The sailor took it with a sneer of incredulity and a glance of distrust at the speaker, but neither

were of long duration.

"Yes," said he, after gazing through it attentively for some minutes; "yes, that is something like what I call a glass. 'Gad, it makes me young again to see those marks—every bullet had its billet, I warrant me. The eye you have left, my friend, does not look, though, as if it wanted such a helper." [231]

"Nor does it," said Robin; "and, as a token of the great honour which I bear to the wooden walls of Old England, you are welcome to keep it."

"Keep your glass, sir!" repeated the wooden-legged hero; "no; you don't look like one who could afford to make such a present. But I'll buy it, I'll buy it, if you'll let me—that I will."

"I'd rather you would take it," replied Robin with much courtesy, and in a well-feigned foreign accent; "for though I am a poor wanderer, one of another country, trying to pick up a little by my skill in music, and from those charitable Christians who pity my deformity, yet I love the very look of a sailor so much, that I would give even my gittern to a true son of the sea."

"Say you so, my boy?" shouted the old tar, "then d—n me now if I do take it, nor I'll not buy it either; but I'll swop for it any thing I have, and then, d'ye see, we'll have something to remember each other all our days."

"The sailors of England," pursued the crafty Robin, "are never seen but to be remembered—feared on sea and loved on land."

"You're the best-hearted foreigner I ever fell in with," said the old man; "so let us make full sail for the Oliver's Head, and settle the matter there; perhaps you'll give us a taste of your calling," touching as he spoke the cracked gittern with the point of his stick. "My eyes! how Ned Purcell will stare at this glass! His own! why his own an't a fly-blow to it."

"The Oliver's Head" was a gay hostelry by the road-side, with what was called in those days a portraiture of the Protector swinging from a post which stood on the slip of turf that skirted the house. It was kept by a bluff landlord and a young and pretty landlady, young enough to be her husband's daughter, and discreet enough to be an old man's wife with credit and respectability. There were benches all round the house, one side of which looked towards the river, and the other out upon the heath, and up the hill; and a pleasant view it was either way; but the sailor chose the water-prospect, and established himself and Robin on a small separate bench that was overshadowed by a green and spreading cherry-tree. Having settled the exchange, which ended in Robin's receiving a small Spanish dagger in exchange for his glass, the seaman insisting on his taking a glass of another sort; to which Robin was by no means averse, as he had not yet been able to obtain the desired information relative to the Ironsides. [232]

While they sat under the cherry-tree, however, the wished-for opportunity occurred.

"What a pity it is," observed Robin, "that they don't cut canals through the country, and do all the business by water instead of land. They do it, you know, in Venice."

"There'd be sense and reason in that," replied the sailor in great glee. "I never could see much use in the land at any time."

"And then we should have all sailors and no soldiers," continued Robin.

"Ah!" said the sailor, "I doubt if the Protector could ever be brought to see the good of that; he's mortally fond of the army."

"You had some of his own Ironsides here yesterday, you said?"

"Ay, they were after something or other, I'll answer for that; for though they never go the same road twice, if they can by any means help it, yet they have been about the place, and round the neighbourhood, very much lately. I did hear that Noll was after some smuggling, or devilrie, down a little beyond Gravesend. He never can let a thing alone when once he gets scent of it."

"Was there any one, any prisoner, or chap of that sort, with them last night, or yesterday?" Robin ventured to ask.

"No, not that I saw or noticed," said the sailor.

"Yes, there was," replied the landlady, who had been leaning over the hatch-door, listening to their conversation, and scrutinising the person of her new guest. "There was a young gentleman, not like a prisoner either, only I fancied under some restraint; and I brought him a better stoup of wine than I brought the rest. Poor gentleman! he seemed downhearted, or like one crossed in love."

"Crossed in a fiddlestick!" said the bluff old landlord: "your woman's head is ever running on love."

"Then it does not run on you, I am sure," retorted Robin. "Your stick would get no music out of any fiddle." [233]

"I could make as good music out of a currycomb, as you out of that cracked thing that sits perched on your hump—like a monkey on the back of a dromedary."

"Get your currycomb, and we'll make a wager of it," replied Robin, unslinging his gittern, while

some of the old sailors crowded round the challenger, and voted it a fair challenge.

"Ugh!" grunted forth the bluff landlord, turning away. "When I play, it shall be against a Christian Englishman, and none of your foreign jigmaries."

"Play, play, nevertheless," said the young landlady, handing Robin at the same time a measure of fine ale; then stooping as if to untie the knot that fastened the gittern, she whispered in his ear. "And there was one who, with a few others, left the party, rode on, and took no refreshment. I knew him well; but if the youth be a friend of yours, depend upon't he's kindly thought of, for the leader put a broad-piece into my hand as he passed, and told me to see that the Cavalier was properly attended to."

"Took they the London road?" inquired Robin.

"Ay; though 'tis hard to say how long such as they continue on any path."

"What are you doing, Maud?" inquired the rough landlord, who had just returned, and was lounging against the door-post.

"There! I have broken the string that went round his neck," she said aloud, without heeding the question. "I must get you another."

When she returned with a flaming red riband, that glared in cruel mockery at the shabby gittern, she contrived to add, "I have a brother in the Ironsides, and he said he thought they were bound for Hampton Court; but it might have been only his fancy."

It was a quaint but pretty sight under that green Kentish cherry-tree, and upon the bank of that beautiful river, to see the weather-cock Robin in his motley dress, the long peacock's feather ever and anon lifted from his hat by the fresh breeze that came from the water, while he sung with sweet and animated voice a song that suited well the tastes and feelings of his hearers.

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"Oh, the sailor's home is the boundless
sea,
The sea, the sea, the sea!
He loves it best when waves are high,
And a fierce nor'-wester shakes the sky.
Oh, the sea, the sea, the sea—
Oh, the sailor's home is the home for me!

"Away we go, o'er our own blue sea,
The sea, the sea, the sea!
We are ocean lords, for the winds obey,
And the raging billows own our sway.
Oh, the sea, the sea, the sea!—
Let my home be the sailor's home—the
sea!

"A proud man well may our captain be,
The sea, the sea, the sea!
But our noble ship a bride shall be
To five hundred men as good as he.
Oh, the sea, the sea, the sea—
'Tis a fitting mate for the brave and free!

"Give the land to slaves, but give us the
sea—
The sea, the sea, the sea!
Our hopes, our joys, our bed, and our
grave,
Are above or below the salt-sea wave.
Oh, the sea, the sea, the sea—
Hurrah for the sailor's home—the sea!"

Then leaning over the hatch-door, her rosy cheek half-resting on the rough shoulder of her rough husband, was the pretty Mistress Maud, the personification of rustic English beauty; then the picturesque grouping of the old and worn, but still gallant and manly sailors—our friend of the wooden legs a little in the fore-ground, supported by the quizzical seaman, and a tall stiff bony-looking "Black Sal" of a woman on the other, whose complexion was contrasted by a snow-white cap, somewhat pointed at the top, which hardly concealed her grizzled hair. She was both exhibiting and admiring in dumb show the telescope so lately in the possession of our friend Robin; while Ned Purcell, a little dumpy, grey-headed mariner, who had heretofore been considered the owner of the best glass in Greenwich, was advancing, glass in hand, to decide which was really the best without farther parley. As Robin was obliged to sing his song twice, we may be excused for having given it once, though certainly it received but little advantage from the miserable accompaniment of the wretched instrument that had just been so gaily adorned by the hands of Mistress Maud.

When the song was fairly finished, Robin arose to depart, for he had been long anxious to proceed on his way, though the scene we have described, and the conversation we have

recorded, had passed within the compass of an hour. They all pressed him to remain. Even the bluff landlord tempted him with the offer of a pint of Canary, an offer he would not himself under any circumstances have declined. Robin, however, bade them a courteous farewell; but he had hardly reached the outskirts of the village, when he heard a light step, and felt a light hand press upon his shoulder. He turned round, and the blithe smile of mine hostess of the Oliver's Head beamed upon his painted face.

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"Robin Hays!" she said, "I would advise you never to sing when you go mumming; you did well enough till then; but, though the nightingale hath many notes, the voice is aye the same. The gentleman you were speering after, dropped this while making some change in his garments; and it looks so like a love-token, that I thought, as you were after him, you would give it him, poor youth! and my benison with it."

"Yes," replied the Ranger, taking from her the very lock of hair which the Cavalier had severed, with his own hand, from among the tresses of Constantia. "I'll give it him when I can find him; yet, had you not better wrap it up in something? It pains the heart to see such as this exposed to the air, much less the eyes of any body in the world." Maud wrapped it in a piece of paper, and Robin placed it carefully in a small pocket-book.

"The devil's as bright in your eyes still, Maud, as it was when you won poor Jack Roupall's heart, and then jilted him for a rich husband. I did not think any one would have found me out."

"If I did sell myself," replied the landlady, "I have had my reward"—the colour faded from her cheek as she spoke—"as all will have who go the same gait. But ye ken, Bobby, it was not for my ain sake, but that my poor mother might have a home in her auld age—and so she had, and sure that ought to make me content." The tears gathered in her eyes, and the Ranger loudly reproached himself for unkindness, and assured her he meant no harm.

"I am sure o' that; but when any one evens Jack to me, it brings back the thought of my ain North to my heart, and its words to my tongue, which is no good now, as it becomes me to forget both."

"God bless you, Maud!" said Robin, shaking her affectionately by the hand: "God bless you! and if any ask after the Ironsides, see you say nothing of the young gentleman, who is as dear to me as my heart's blood; and do not tell to any, even of our own set, that I passed this way; for it's hard to tell who's who, or what's what, these times."

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"So it is," replied the dame, smiling through tears; "and now God be wi' ye, Robin!" And presently he heard her voice carolling a North country ballad, as she returned to her own house.

"Now is her heart in her own country," muttered the Ranger, "though her voice is here; and those who did not know her little story would think her as cheerful as the length of a summer's day; and so she ought to be, for she performed her duty; and duty, after all, when well performed, seems a perpetual and most cheerful recompense for care and toil, and, it may be, trouble of mind and pain of heart."

Robin having obtained the clue to the secret of which he was in search, wended his way towards the metropolis. The steeples of a hundred churches were soon in sight.

CHAPTER IX.

But yonder comes my faithful friend,
That like assaults hath often tried;
On his advice I will depend
Whe'er I shall win or be denied;
And, look, what counsel he shall give,
That will I do, whe'er die or live

HENRY WILLOBY.

Robin, when he arrived in London, loitered away an hour around Whitehall and the Park, before he proceeded farther, and easily ascertained that the Protector was then at Hampton Court; as to who went with him, how long he would remain, or when he would return, he could receive no intelligence; for the best of all possible reasons—the movements of his Highness were secrets even from his own family.

There was much talk, however, and considerable speculation among all classes of people, as to whether he would yield to the eager entreaties of a certain party in the parliament, who were urgently pressing forward a motion, the object of which was, that Cromwell should exchange the title he had heretofore borne, and adopt the more time-honoured, but, alas! more obnoxious one, of King. Some of the more rigid sects were busily discoursing in groups, respecting Walton's Polyglott Bible, and the fitness or unfitness of the committee that had been sitting at Whitelock's house at Chelsea, to consider properly the translations and impressions of the Holy Scriptures. Robin received but surly treatment at the palace-gates, for minstrelsy was not the fashion; and he almost began to [think](#) the disguise he had selected was an injudicious one. He hastened on to the city, along the line of street now called the Strand, but which was then only partially skirted by

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houses, and delivered Dalton's invoices to the merchant beyond St. Paul's, who had need of the Genoa velvets; then proceeded to the dealer in jewels, by whom the pearls had been commanded. Here it appeared no easy matter to gain admission; but a few words mysteriously pronounced to a grave-looking person, whose occupation was half porter, half clerk, removed all obstacles, and he found himself in a dark, noisome room, at the back of one of the houses in Fenchurch Street—at that time much inhabited by foreign merchants, who were generally dealers in contraband goods, as well as in the more legitimate articles of commerce.

As soon as the wayfarer entered, he disburdened himself of his hump, and from between its folds produced strings of the finest pearls and heaped them on the table. The dealer put on his glasses, and examined them separately, with great care, but much rapidity; while Robin, like a good and faithful steward, kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the jewels, never losing sight of them for a single moment, until his attention was arrested by a person entering and addressing the merchant. Robin immediately recognised the stranger as the old Jew, Manasseh Ben Israel, whom he had seen at Sir Willmott Burrell's.

"Excuse me, I pray you, for a few moments, good Rabbi," observed the merchant, who was now occupied in entering the number, size, and quality of the pearls in a large book.

"I cannot wait, friend," was the Jew's quick reply, "for I am going a journey, and the night draws on darkly."

"Whither, sir, I pray you?"

"Even to Hampton House," replied Ben Israel, "to commune with his Highness, whom the God of Abraham protect!—and I am sorely perplexed, for my own serving-man is ill, and I know not whom to take, seeing I am feeble and require care, unless you can lend me the man Townsend: Samuel assures me he is a person of trust." [238]

"Townsend is, unhappily, gone on secret business to a long distance, set off not an hour since: would that I had known it before!"

"There is no lack of servants," continued the Rabbi, "but there is great lack of faithfulness. I know not what to do, for I must see his Highness to-night."

"If it so please you," said little Robin, eagerly stepping forward, "I will go with you; I am sure this gentleman can answer for my fidelity, and I will answer for my own fitness."

The Rabbi and the merchant looked at each other, and then the latter observed,—

"I can well answer for this young man's trust-worthiness, seeing he has been engaged to bring me goods such as these, from secret sources, the nature of which you understand, excellent Ben Israel. But what know you of the service befitting a gentleman's servant?"

"I have been in that capacity, too," replied little Robin Hays.

"With whom?" inquired Manasseh.

"With one I care not much to name, sirs, for he does me no credit," was Robin's answer; "with Sir Willmott Burrell."

The old man shuddered, and said in an agitated voice—"Then, indeed, you will not do for me on this occasion."

"Under favour," persisted Robin, "I know not the occasion, and therefore cannot judge, if I may speak so boldly; but I have seen you before, sir, and can only say, that knowing all his manœuvres well, I am just the person to be trusted by his enemy."

"Young man," said the Jew, severely, "I am no man's enemy; I leave such enmity as you speak of to my Christian brethren. I ask only justice from my fellow mortals, and mercy from my God."

"But, sir, I thought you had sustained some wrong at the hands of Sir Willmott Burrell, from your visit at such an hour, and your manner on that night."

"Wrong! ay, such wrong as turns a father's hair grey, his veins dry, and scorches up his brain." [239] The old man paused, for his feelings had overpowered him.

"I know none more faithful than Robin Hays," urged the pearl-merchant; "and now that I call to remembrance, the time he served that same knight, (who, I hear, is going to repair his fortunes by a wealthy marriage,) I think he did well as a lackey; though, to own the truth, I should fancy him more in his place, and to his liking, as the servitor to a bold Buccaneer."

"Buccaneer!" repeated Ben Israel—"What Buccaneer?"

"Oh!" said the merchant, smiling, "Hugh Dalton—the fairest man in the free trade."

"Hugh Dalton!" repeated the Jew, slowly: then adding, after a lengthened pause, "Art cunning in disguises?"

"As cunning as my body will permit," replied Robin.

"You have seen my faithful Samuel?"

"I have, sir."

"Then array thyself on the instant as much after his dress and fashion as is possible."

Robin hastily and right cheerfully obeyed this command; and, in less than half an hour, was rolling along the road to Hampton Court, in the guise of a serving Jew.

CHAPTER X.

Vengeance will sit above our faults; but
till
She there do sit,
We see her not, nor them.

DR. DONNE.

It is hardly necessary to direct the reader's attention to the quickness and ingenuity at all times displayed by Robin Hays, or the facility with which he adapted himself to any circumstance or situation that was likely to favour or further his designs. The moment the Rabbi had stated his intention of visiting Hampton Court, he perceived that, as a Jewish servant, he might have abundant opportunities of ascertaining the precise condition of the Cavalier: fortunately for his purpose, the mention of Hugh Dalton's name at once decided Ben Israel in granting his request. [240]

The Jew had received intimation that the noted and well-known commander of the Fire-fly had been lying off St. Vallery, and making many inquiries relative to his daughter, who had at length been traced on board his cruiser by her continental friends. "Doubtless," thought the Rabbi, "I may be enabled to draw forth, or bribe forth, from this his associate, whatever knowledge he may possess of the views and objects which they contemplate as regards my most wretched daughter." In pursuance of this plan he commenced a series of examinations as they journeyed towards Hampton Court; which Robin, with all his dexterity, would have found it difficult to parry, if he had had any intention or desire so to do. Suddenly it occurred to the Ranger that the pretended dumb boy was no other than Ben Israel's daughter, and he frankly mentioned his suspicions.

The old man at first shrank from the supposition with extreme horror. "It was impossible," he said, "that his child should so far forget her birth and station, as to degrade herself by assuming male attire;" but Robin reminded him that when a woman loves, as she must have done, and has once sacrificed her duty, perhaps her honour, all obstacles become as nought. The Jew groaned heavily, and remained long silent; she was his only, and his beloved one; and, though the Jewish laws were strict, even unto death, against any who wedded with strangers, yet he loved her despite her disobedience, and the more he thought, the more resolved he became to punish the betrayer of her innocence and faith.

Robin was also greatly distressed; the fear of some evil occurring to Barbara took forcible possession of his mind. Why should this girl, if indeed Jeromio's charge was actually a girl, why should she menace Barbara? What had Barbara to do with the foul transaction? Could it be possible, that, from her being tricked out with so much finery, the stranger mistook the maid for the mistress; and with impotent rage, was warning or threatening her, in an unknown tongue, against a marriage with Burrell! He could not comprehend the matter; and the more he was at fault, the more anxious he became. He, in his own mind, reproached even the Buccaneer for imparting to him only half measures.

"Had I known," thought Robin, "the true particulars about Sir Willmott's affairs, of which I am convinced, from many circumstances, Dalton was in full possession, I could have assisted in all things, and prevented results that may hereafter happen." There was another idea that had lately mingled much with the Ranger's harassed feelings—Constantia's intended marriage. Robin was satisfied that a strong regard, if not a deeply-rooted affection, existed between Walter De Guerre and Barbara's kind mistress; and he thought that Hugh Dalton's manifesting so little interest on the subject was not at all in keeping with his usually chivalrous feelings towards woman-kind, or his professed esteem and affection for his young friend. He knew that the Buccaneer's heart was set upon attaining a free pardon; and he also knew that he had some powerful claim upon the interest of Sir Robert Cecil; he knew, moreover, Dalton's principal motive for bringing over the Cavalier; but with all his sagacity, he could not discover why he did not, at once and for ever, set all things right, by exhibiting Sir Willmott Burrell in his true colours. Robin had repeatedly urged the Buccaneer on this subject, but his constant reply was,— [241]

"I have no business with other people's children; I must look to my own. If they have been kind to Barbara, they have had good reason for it. It will be a fine punishment, hereafter, to Sir Willmott; one that may come, or may not come, as he behaves; but it will be a punishment in reserve, should he, in the end, discover that Mistress Cecil may be no heiress." In fact, the only time that the Buccaneer felt any strong inclination to prevent the sacrifice Constantia was about to make, was when he found that she knew her father's crime, but was willing to give herself to misery as the price of secrecy; then, indeed, had his own pardon been secured, he would have stated to the Protector's face the deep villainy of the Master of Burrell. Until his return on board the Fire-fly, and his suppression of the mutiny excited by Sir Willmott and the treachery of Jeromio, he had no idea that Burrell, base as he knew him to be, would have aimed against his life.

The Buccaneer was a brave, bold, intrepid, careless man; more skilled in the tricks of war than in tracing the secret workings of the human mind, or in watching the shades and modifications of the human character. His very love for his daughter had more of the protecting and proud care of the eagle about it, than the fostering gentleness with which the tender parent guards its young; he was proud of her, and he was resolved to use every possible means to make her proud of him. He had boasted to Sir Robert Cecil that it was his suspicions made him commit "*forged* documents to the flames," at the time when the baronet imagined that all proofs of his crimes had been destroyed; but, in truth, Dalton had mislaid the letters, and, eager to end all arrangements then pending, he burned some papers, which he had hastily framed for the purpose, to satisfy Sir Robert Cecil. When in after years it occurred to him that, if he obtained those papers he could wind Sir Robert to his purpose, he searched every corner of the Gull's Nest Crag until they were discovered; so that, in fact, he owed their possession to chance, and not to skilfulness. Even the boy Springall had seen through the Italian's character; but Dalton had been so accustomed to find his bravery overwhelmingly successful, and consequently to trust to it almost implicitly, that his fine intellect was suffered to lie dormant, where it would have often saved him from much that he endured. If he had thought deeply, he would have seen the impropriety of trusting the Fire-fly at any time to Jeromio's command, because, as he had found him guilty of so many acts of treachery towards others, he should have known, that it only needed sufficient bribery, or inducement of any other kind, to turn that treachery upon himself.

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His last interview with Sir Robert Cecil had made him aware that the baronet had really lost the greater part of the influence he once maintained at Whitehall; and since he had been so much off and on the English coast, he had heard enough to convince him that Cromwell granted few favours to those who had not much usefulness to bestow in return. Sir Robert was broken in intellect and constitution: he had no son to whom the Protector could look for support in case of broil or disturbance, and the Buccaneer was ignorant of the strong and friendly ties that had united the families for so long a series of years. He had fancied that fear would compel Sir Willmott Burrell to press his suit; but the atrocious attempt upon his life assured him that there was nothing to expect from him but the blackest villany. When, therefore, he despatched, with all the ferocity of a true Buccaneer, the head of Jeromio as a wedding-present to Sir Willmott, he at the same time transmitted to the Protector, by a trusty messenger, the Master of Burrell's own directions touching the destruction of the Jewish Zillah, and stated that if his Highness would grant him a free pardon, which he had certain weighty reasons for desiring, he believed it was in his power to produce the Rabbi's daughter. His communication concluded by entreating that his Highness would prevent the marriage of the Master of Burrell, at all events until the following week.

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His envoy had particular orders neither to eat, drink, nor sleep, until he had found means of placing the packet in the hands of the Protector. Dalton having so far eased his mind, bitterly cursed his folly that he had not in the first instance, instead of proceeding to St. Vallery in search of the Jewess, informed Ben Israel of the transaction, who would at once have obtained his pardon, as the price of his daughter's restoration and Burrell's punishment.

It will be easily conceived that on the night which Burrell expected to be the last of the Buccaneer's existence he neither slumbered nor slept. The earliest break of morning found him on the cliffs at no great distance from the Gull's Nest Crag, waiting for the signal that had been agreed upon between Jeromio and himself, as announcing the success of their plan. There was no speck upon the blue waves between him and the distant coast of Essex, which, from the point on which he stood, looked like a dark line upon the waters; neither was there, more ocean-ward, a single vessel to be seen. He remained upon the cliff for a considerable time. As the dawn brightened into day, the little skiffs of the fishermen residing on the Isle of Shepey put off, sometimes in company, sometimes singly, from their several anchorings. Then a sail divided the horizon, then another, and another; but still no signal told him that treachery had prospered. At length the sun had fully risen. He then resolved upon hastening to the Gull's Nest, with the faint hope that some message from Jeromio might have been forwarded thither. Time was to him, upon that eventful morning, of far higher value than gold; yet above an hour had been spent in fruitless efforts to learn the result of an attempt on which he knew that much of his future fate depended. He had not proceeded far upon his course, when he was literally seized upon by the Reverend Jonas Fleetword, who ever appeared to the troubled and plotting Sir Willmott in the character of an evil genius.

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"I have sought thee as a friend," observed the simple-minded man,—"*as a petitioner, I had almost said, so earnest was the lady about it—from the Lady Frances Cromwell, to beg that the bridal, which even now, according to thy directions, he of the Episcopalian faith was preparing to solemnise, might be delayed until evening, in consequence of Mistress Cecil being somewhat ill at ease, either in body or in mind, or, it may be the Lord's will, in both;—very ill of a surety she is.*"

"This is trifling," exclaimed Burrell in anger. "She asked delay, and I granted till this morning. I can brook no such vain excuse."

"Of a verity," quoth Fleetword, "thy reply is, as I deem it, given in a most unchristian spirit. Thy bride elect is ill; and instead of a shower (which is emblematic of tears) cometh a storm, which (in poetic language) signifieth anger!"

"Forgive me, sir," replied Burrell, who perceived that the delay, under such circumstances, however dangerous, must be granted; "but it is natural for a bridegroom to feel disappointed

when there arises any postponement to his long looked-for happiness, particularly when there be reasons strong as mine against it."

Fleetword little comprehended the meaning of this last sentence; but drawing forth a pocket Bible, which on more than one occasion had given much trouble to Sir Willmott Burrell, he told him he had considered that admirable portion of the Scripture touching the duty of husband and wife, so well set forth therein, and that he had composed a discourse thereon, which he meant to deliver unto them after the holy ceremony, but that he would now expound much upon the subject, as they journeyed homeward.

"I am not going direct to Cecil Place," was Burrell's excuse; "I am looking after one Robin Hays, who dwells somewhere near, or at, a place called the Gull's Nest Crag: he was once my servant, and I desire to see him."

"It is even one with me," replied Fleetword; "I know the lad Robin, too; so I will go with thee, and read the while. I covet a holy exercise; and for it every time, yea, and every place, is fitting."

Most cordially did Burrell wish the good preacher—no matter where; but his wishes availed nought, for he remained close to his side, holding forth, without intermission, in the same monotonous tone, that sounded like the ding-dong, ding-dong of a curfew-bell to the knight's bewildered ear. [245]

Yet this was not the only source of embarrassment Sir Willmott was that morning doomed to encounter. We have elsewhere had occasion to mention an old tower that supported Gull's Nest, in which Barbara Iverk found shelter the evening she did her lady's errand to the Crag: as Burrell and his companion turned the corner by this tower, Zillah Ben Israel, still habited as a boy, but wearing a tunic of cloth that reached below her knee, stood before him!

Had a spectre sprung from the earth, Sir Willmott could not have regarded it with greater astonishment or dismay. He would have passed, but she still stood in his path, her head uncovered, and her black luxuriant hair braided around it, displaying to full advantage her strikingly beautiful but strongly marked Jewish features: her eyes, black and penetrating, discovered little of gentle or feminine expression, but sparkled and fired restlessly in their sockets: her lips curled and quivered as she sought words, for some time in vain, in which to address the false, base knight.

Fleetword was the first to speak.

"In the name of the Lord, I charge thee, avoid our path, young maniac! for, of a truth, there is little sobriety, little steadiness, in thy look, which savoureth neither of peace nor contentment. What wouldst thou with my friend?—This is his bridal-day, and he has no leisure for such as thee."

"The devil take thee with him, thou everlasting pestilence!" exclaimed Burrell to the preacher, fiercely, forgetting all moderation in the excess of his passion; for at the word "bridal" a change as awful as can be imagined to shadow the face of woman rested on the countenance of Zillah. "Avoid me, both of ye!" he continued; "and you, young sir, who so eagerly rush upon your own destruction, avoid me especially: the time for trifling is past!"

During this burst of rage, the Jewess kept her eyes steadily fixed upon Burrell, and held her hand within the bosom of her vest. When he paused, she addressed him at first in broken English, and then finding that she could not proceed with the eagerness and fluency her case required, she spoke in French.

She first appealed to her seducer's honour; referred to his marriage with her; called to mind his protestations of affection, and used all the entreaties which a woman's heart so naturally suggests, to arouse his better feelings on her behalf. All was in vain; for Burrell parried it all, managing to recover his self-possession while she exhausted herself with words. She then vowed that, if he failed to render her justice, she would, as she had threatened at a former time, throw herself, and the proofs she possessed of his villany, at the Protector's feet, and be his ruin. Sir Willmott then sought to temporise, assured her that it was necessity obliged him to forsake her; and would have persuaded her to meet him or go with him into the house, where, he assured her, he could perhaps arrange—perhaps— [246]

"No," she replied, in the less strong, but more poetic language of France, "I will go under no roof with you, I will exchange no token, no pledge with you. I believe you would follow me to the death; and if you fail to do me justice, I will pursue you to the same, and not you alone. No woman but myself shall ever rest upon your bosom. I swear by the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, that I will have vengeance, though my nation should spill out my blood as a sacrifice before the Lord for my iniquities, the next hour!" She shook back her head as she pronounced the vow, and her hair, loosened from its confinement, cloaked her slight figure with a robe of darkness.

"Acknowledge your marriage with me before this holy man," she continued: "although he is a Christian, I have heard that he is honest—and I will leave you for a time."

"Peace, Zillah!" interrupted Burrell; "there was no marriage. It is a fable of your own invention—you have no proof."

"Have I not?" she replied, and, with woman's luckless imprudence, she drew forth a small packet

and held it for an instant towards him. That instant was enough: he snatched the documents from her hand, and held them before her with the exultation of a demon. His triumph, however, was but short-lived, for Fleetword, who comprehended what had passed, was sufficiently alive to its importance to seize the papers from the Master of Burrell before he had the least idea that the preacher would have dared such an act. Sir Willmott stood amazed at his presumption: but instantly Fleetword drew forth the basket-hilted sword we have before noticed, and with more real intellect, and excellent feeling, than a cavalier would have believed he possessed, exclaimed,

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"Sir Willmott Burrell! When Solomon sat in judgment in Israel, he despised not the cause even of the worst. It hath been given me to understand the tongues of many lands—not by the intervention of the Holy Spirit, but by the industry and labour of my poor brain, aided, as all just and fitting things are, by the blessing of the Lord! If what this person says is true, it would be most unseemly for you to become the husband of Mistress Constantia Cecil; if it is not true, why the person must fall by its (for of a truth I cannot determine the sex)—its own falsehood! But keep off, Master of Burrell! Jonas Fleetword can fight for the truth by strength of hand as well as of voice; the documents shall be heard of at the seat of judgment in our New Jerusalem."

Sir Willmott, thus run down on all sides, had now recourse to stratagem. After a brief pause, during which both Zillah and the preacher, as if having come to the same determination, kept silence, he said,—

"Well; perhaps it is best. Will you, Zillah, go with me to Cecil Place?"

"No!" was her reply. "I will meet you there; but I frankly tell you, I will not trust myself in your company under any roof, unless it be with many persons."

"Then come there at seven o' the clock this evening—and I swear——"

"I have no faith in your oaths—but I will trust to this man; and if he assures me that the accursed marriage shall not take place until I hold commune with the woman you would wed—safe, and undisturbed commune—I will leave you until night."

"Then I assure you of it," replied Fleetword; "and let this convince you of my truth, that I love the sweet lady, Constance Cecil, too well, to see her shadowed even by such dishonour as your words treat of.—Sir Willmott, Sir Willmott! you have shown the cloven foot!"

"Look out on the waters, Sir Willmott Burrell," shouted the Jewess, in her wild voice: "look out on the waters, and see the sail and the signal of the brave Buccaneer!"

Burrell looked anxiously, and earnestly; but he could perceive nothing of which she spoke. When he turned towards the spot where Zillah had stood—she was gone!

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"All this is of the evil one," said Fleetword, after peering among the old walls, and approaching his nose so closely to the larger stones, that it might be imagined he was smelling, not looking at them.—"Whither has the creature escaped?"

"Verily, I know not," was Burrell's reply. "Best come with me into the Gull's Nest; I would speak with Robin."

The unsuspecting preacher did as he was desired.

Sir Willmott inquired for the Ranger. His mother said, truly, "He was gone a journey."

"For Hugh Dalton?"

"He had joined his ship."

He then managed privately to ask for the secret key of a place called "the Cage," where contraband goods, not wanted for ready sale, were generally deposited. It had no communication with any of the private chambers, except by a narrow passage, which, leading to no other place, was seldom traversed. Into this cage he managed to get Fleetword, saying, "It was one of the ways out;" and while the preacher was looking round with much curiosity, he turned the key, placed it safely in his vest, and, without saying a word to Mother Hays, who, at such an early hour was just beginning to be very busy, left the Gull's Nest with much self-congratulation.

"Stay safely there but till another morning, poor meddling fool!" he murmured; "and then, for your sweet Constantia's sake, you'll keep my secret, and resign these cursed papers."

It is not to be imagined that Sir Willmott Burrell would, upon any account, have suffered Zillah to make her appearance at Cecil Place. His existence seemed now to hang upon her destruction; but instruments were wanting: Roupall had been sent out of the way by Hugh Dalton, and tidings were in vain expected of or from Jeromio. The slight relief afforded by the imprisonment of Fleetword was speedily succeeded by a state of mind bordering on madness.

Stopping for a few moments at the lodge of Cecil Place, he warned the old porter not to admit, but to detain, any person, man or woman, who might inquire for him, no matter under what pretext entrance might be demanded; for he assured the old man there was a deranged youth, who pretended to have known him abroad, and who, he was informed, had used unaccountable threats against him. Sir Willmott, moreover, enforced his instructions by a handsome present, and was proceeding to the house, when the gate-bell rang, and a man, habited as a travelling merchant, presented a parcel, directed "For Sir Willmott Burrell. These——"

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Burrell commanded the messenger into the lodge room; the stranger, after some hesitation, entered. Sir Willmott briefly dismissed the old porter, and undid the packet; when, lo! the matted and gory head of the Italian, Jeromio, rolled at his feet. There it lay, in all the hideous deformity of sudden and violent death! the severed throat, thickened with gouts of blood! the dimmed spectral eyes starting from their sockets! the lips shrinking from the teeth of glaring whiteness—there it lay, looking up, as it were, into the face of the base but horrified associate. His utterance was impeded, and a thick mist came over him, as he sank into the old porter's chair.

"What does this mean?" he said at length to the man, whom he now recognised as one of the sailors of the Fire-fly.—"What means it?"

"A wedding present from Hugh Dalton, is all I heard about the matter," returned the fellow, quietly turning a morsel of tobacco in his mouth, and eyeing the knight with ineffable contempt.

"You must give information of this most horrible murder—you witnessed it—it will make your fortune," continued Sir Willmott, springing from the seat, and, like a drowning man, seizing even at a straw. "I can take your deposition—this most foul murder may make your fortune—think of that.—What ho!" he would have called the porter, but the man prevented him, and then burst into a laugh, wild as a wild sea-wave.

"Lodge informations! You a law-maker! May I never spin another yarn, but ye are precious timber! Shiver and blazes! haven't ye with your palaver and devilry worked harm enou' aboard our ship, but ye want me to be pickled up, or swing from the yard-arm! No, no, master; I'll keep off such a lee-shore. I've no objections in life to a—any thing—but ye'r informations. Ah! ah! ah! what sinnifies a hundred such as that," and he kicked at the bloody head, "or such as you," pointing to Sir Willmott, "in comparison to the bold Buccaneer! Look here, master—whatever ye'r name be—they say the law and the pirates often sail under false colours; and blow me but I believe it now, when sich as you have to do with one of 'em. Bah! I'd cry for the figure-head of our ship, if she had sich a bridegroom."

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"You shall not escape me, villain!" exclaimed Sir Willmott, rendered desperate by his adverse fortunes, and springing towards the seaman.—"But stay," he added, drawing back, "you," hesitatingly, "you are honest to your captain: well, there is something you could do for me, that ——" He paused—and the sailor took advantage of the pause to say,—

"A farewell and foul weather to ye, master! Look, if you could make ye'r whole head into one great diamond, and lay it at my feet, as that carrion lies at yours, may I die on a sandbank like a dry herring, if I'd take it to do one of the dirty jobs ye're for ever plotting!"

Oh, what a degrading thing it is to be scoffed at by our superiors! How prone we are to resent it when our equals meet us with a sneer! But when the offscouring of society, the reptiles that we could have trodden under foot, may rail at and scorn us with impunity, how doubly bitter, how perfectly insupportable must it be! The very ministers of evil scouted him, and sin and misery thought him too contemptible to deal with! Burrell gnashed his teeth and struck his temples with his clenched fist—the room turned round—the bloody head of Jeromio uplifted itself to his imaginings, and gibbered, and cursed, and muttered, and laughed at him in fiendish merriment! If Zillah could have seen Burrell at that moment, she would have pitied and prayed for him: the strong man trembled as a weak girl in the shiverings of a mortal fever—his heart shuddered within his bosom—he lost all power of reasoning, and it was not until huge drops of perspiration had forced their way along his burning brow, that he at all recovered his faculties. He gazed around the small apartment; but the man was gone. The lodge window that looked on the road was open, and the knight's first effort was to reach it. The pure air of heaven, breathing so sweetly upon his pale and agonised countenance, revived him for the moment, and his energetic mind in a short space was restrung and wound up to fresh exertion. He resolved to set some of his own people to watch about the grounds, in case Zillah should attempt to obtain entrance; and though he felt assured they would do but little for him, yet he knew they would do much for gold, and that he resolved they should have in abundance. The marriage once over, he fancied himself safe—safe from all but the Buccaneer. Hope is strong at all times, but never more so than when we are roused from despair. He turned from the window, and his eye fell on the bloody head of the traitor Jeromio. He knew that, if the porter saw it, there would be an outcry and an investigation, which it was absolutely necessary, under existing circumstances, to avoid; for old Saul was one of those honest creatures who hold it a duty to tell all truth, and nothing but truth, to their employers. He therefore wrapped it carefully in the napkin in which it had been originally enveloped, and then covered it over with his own kerchief. After another moment of deliberation, he summoned the old man, and directed him to bear it to the house.

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"But where is the stranger, sir?" inquired Saul.

"Oh, he passed from the window, to save you the trouble of unclosing the gate."

It was fortunate for Sir Willmott Burrell that age had deprived Saul of more faculties than one.

CHAPTER XI.

Where though prison'd, he doth finde,

Hee's still free, that's free in minde;
And in trouble, no defence
Is so firm as innocence.

WITHER.

When the poor preacher found that Burrell was really gone, and had left him a prisoner, without the remotest prospect of escape, he felt (to use his own expression) "rather mazed," and forthwith applied his hand to the lock, with the vain hope of extricating himself as speedily as possible: he found, however, the entrance closed firm and fast, and, moreover, of so solid a construction, that, with all his effort, he was unable to move it in the slightest degree. He would have welcomed the idea that the Master of Burrell did but jest; yet there had been that about his demeanour which excluded all thought of merriment, and Fleetword felt his limbs tremble beneath him when he reflected on the desperate character of the man with whom he had to deal. "The Lord can make a way for safety even from this den," he muttered, "yea, even from this fastness, which, of a truth, is most curiously fashioned, and of evil intention, doubtless." The little light that was admitted into the cell came through an aperture in the cliff at so great a height from the floor that it could hardly be observed, even if it had been left unprotected by a ledge of stone that projected a considerable distance under the opening, which was scarcely large enough to permit the entrance of a sufficient quantity of air. The atmosphere was therefore dense and heavy, and the preacher drew his breath with difficulty. The chamber, we should observe, was directly over that in which we have heretofore encountered the Buccaneer; for the interior of the cliff was excavated in various parts, so as more nearly to resemble the formation of a bee-hive than any other structure. It was filled, as we have stated, with a variety of matters, for which either there was no immediate demand, or that time had rendered useless. Of these, Fleetword piled a quantity one over the other, and standing tiptoe on the topmost parcel, succeeded in peeping through the aperture, but could perceive nothing except the broad sea stretching away in the distance until it was bounded by the horizon. As he was about to descend, one of the packages rolled from under the rest, and the hapless preacher came to the ground amidst a multitude of bales of cloth, logs of ebony, cramps, and spoiled martin-skins, and found himself half in and half out of a box of mildewed oranges, into which he had plumped, and which repaid the intrusion by splashing him all over with their pulpy and unpleasant remains. It was some time before he could extricate himself from this disagreeable mass, and still longer before he could cleanse off the filthy fragments from his garments. When he had done so, however, his next care was to bestow the papers he had rescued from Burrell into some safe place. "The Lord," he thought, "hath, at his own good pleasure, given Satan or his high priest dominion over me, and it may be that I shall be offered up upon the altar of Baal or Dagon as a sacrifice; but it shall be one of sweet-smelling savour, untainted by falsehood or dissimulation. Verily, he may destroy my body—and I will leave these documents, which by an almost miraculous interposition of Providence have been committed to my charge, so that one time or other they may be found of those by whom they may be needed."

He carefully sought and ransacked every parcel he could find in search of pencil, ink, or any thing by which he could direct a letter; but in vain. He discovered, however, some parchments, whereon the words "Oliver Lord Protector" were frequently inscribed: he cut off a slip containing this sentence, and having encased the papers he had seized, in many folds, pinned it upon the parcel, so that it might serve as a direction. He then corded it so firmly that it would require both industry and patience to dissever the several knots and twistings. Having performed so much of his task, he set himself to consider what possible means he could devise to secure its safe delivery. He had previously shouted and called with all his strength; but when he remembered the length of the passage he had traversed with his subtle guide, and the little appearance there was of any apartment near the one in which he was confined, he desisted, wisely determining not to waste, in such useless efforts, the breath that, perhaps, he would be suffered to retain only for a few short hours. Greatly he lamented his want of caution in accompanying Burrell; and bitterly wept at the fate that awaited his favourite, Constantia. At length, after much deliberation, he determined on building a more secure standing-place, mounting once again to the window, fastening the longest string he could find to the parcel, and merely confining it to the inside of the cave in so slight a manner, that it might be detached by the least pull. He would have thrown it down at once, trusting that some one on the beach would find it; but he was aware that the tide at high water washed up the cliffs, so that there was but small chance of its not being borne away upon the waters. He also remembered that there were sundry little pathways winding up the chalky rocks, where he had seen people walk; and that, by God's good blessing, the packet might be found by some one wandering there. Having accomplished this object, he took his seat on a pile of moth-eaten clothes, and drawing forth his little pocket Bible, set himself to read the Holy Scripture, with as much diligence as if he had never before opened the blessed and consoling volume.

Two classes of persons peruse the Sacred Book; one from pure love of, and entire dependence on, the words and precepts contained therein; the other from habit—"their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers did so before them—always on a Sunday—and sometimes (when they had time) during the week—and God forbid that they should ever be worse than their ancestors!" The Reverend Jonas Fleetword belonged partly to the one class, partly to the other: his progenitors, for upwards of a century, had been foremost in forwarding the religion of the Gospel; they had fought for it both with carnal and spiritual weapons, and he had followed in their footsteps without swerving either to the right hand or the left; but, to do him justice, he was

stimulated to activity in his vocation by a better motive than that which arises either from custom or an estimate of hereditary right—he was at heart, as well as in word, a Christian, and the promises contained in, together with the prospects held out by, the book he perused so eagerly, had been, from the moment when reason dawned, the ruling principle by which his life was governed. We pause not to inquire whether he had duly weighed or correctly interpreted all its precepts—whether the hastiness of his nature was not at times opposed to the meek and unupbraiding example of his Divine Master—whether he did not now and then mistake bitterness for sincerity, and persecution for zeal; such errors were but too common to the age in which he lived, and with the church of which he was a member. Never did Gospel hope and Gospel consolation visit him with greater welcome than at the moment of which we write. He entertained little doubt but that his enemy meditated towards him some evil that placed his life in danger: such, however, was not the case; Burrell had agreed to defer the marriage until six of the clock that evening; and, after the ceremony had been concluded, he entertained no doubt that the preacher would retain the secret now in his possession for Constantia's sake.

At Cecil Place all was confusion, for the mind of its afflicted mistress was scarcely able to bear up against the weight of misery that pressed upon it; and Lady Frances Cromwell felt happy and relieved when, about eight in the morning, she fell into an apparently sound sleep. The preparations for the wedding devolved entirely upon her; but, like most persons of an exalted rank, although she knew when things were properly done, she was ignorant how to do them: she, therefore, contented herself with directing her women to make all matters in order; while they, proud and pleased at the commission, gave every body as much trouble as possible. Sir Robert wandered about the house like a troubled spirit, anxious, yet dreading, to see his child; while Sir Willmott, after using every precaution within his power against Zillah's appearance, endeavoured to find occupation by inspecting the carriages that were to convey them to his aunt's house in Surrey, where he had previously determined that they should pass many of the succeeding days—an object not only of convenience, but of necessity, inasmuch as he could thus gain time to arrange with his servants and tenantry at his own dwelling.

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Mrs. Claypole had written to Lady Frances, stating that the Protector did not wish his daughter to accompany her friend to the abode of Sir Willmott's aunt, and would, therefore, send a suitable escort to conduct her to Whitehall immediately after the ceremony was concluded. Mrs. Claypole also added that she had left Hampton Court for the purpose of meeting her dear sister Frances in London, as her mother had been indisposed, and could not conveniently do so. The letter prayed for many blessings on the head of their sweet friend Constantia, adding that, from what she heard of her decision on the subject, she could hardly believe contradictory reports—as to her heart being given elsewhere, inasmuch as she must know it to be less evil to break a contract made in youth, with which the mind and feelings had no connection, than to register a solemn pledge of affection and faithfulness before the Lord, where in fact there could be no affection, and faithfulness must be a plant of forced and not of natural [growth](#).

"Yet would they all wax marvellously wroth," said Lady Frances, "if I were to draw my own conclusions from this opinion, and act thereupon. I wonder, does my being the daughter of his Highness the Lord Protector make it less necessary for me to be true and upright? and can a woman be either, yet pledge her hand and faith to one for whom she cares not?—Yet—" She paused, for she had perused the letter within the chamber, and beside the couch on which Constance was still sleeping, and as her eyes fell upon her friend, she could pronounce no harsh judgment upon an act performed by one she loved so dearly, and of whose truth and uprightness there could be no doubt.

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While the note was yet open before her, the door opened, and Sir Robert Cecil entered. Lady Frances motioned him that Miss Cecil slept, and the old man stooped over her bed with clasped hands, scarcely breathing, lest he should disturb her rest.

"Has she slept thus all the night?" he whispered.—"Has she slept thus soundly all the night, Lady Frances?"

"No, sir," was the reply; and it was delivered in a tone of unusual sternness; for it must be remembered that she entertained much anger against Sir Robert, for permitting the marriage to take place so manifestly against the inclination of his daughter. "No, sir, it is many nights since she has slept soundly."

"But, lady, see how sweet, how gentle her repose! Surely, she could not sleep thus with a heavy heart?"

"Sir Robert," replied Lady Frances, "the heart's heaviness will make heavy the eyelids; nay, with greater certainty, when they are swollen with weeping."

The baronet stooped down, as if to ascertain the correctness of what the lady had said, and at the instant a tear forced its way through the long fringes that rested on his daughter's pallid cheek. He groaned audibly, and left the apartment with the stealthy step and subdued deportment of a proclaimed criminal.

"They are all mystery, one and all, mystery from beginning to end," thought Lady Frances, as with a heavy heart she went in search of her women to ascertain how they were fulfilling her directions.

In one of the passages she met Barbara weeping bitterly.

"Tears, tears! nothing but tears!" said the Protector's daughter, kindly. "What ails thee now, girl? Surely there is some new cause for grief, or you would not weep thus?"

"My lady, I hardly know what is come over me, but I can scarcely stanch my tears: every thing goes ill. I sent two of the serving maidens to gather flowers, to help to dress up the old chapel, that looks more like a sepulchre than any thing else. And what do you think, my lady, they brought me? Why, rue, and rosemary, and willow boughs; and I chid them, and sent them for white and red roses, lilies and the early pinks, which the stupid gipsies brought at last, and I commenced nailing up the boughs of some gay evergreens amongst the clustering ivy, that has climbed over the north window—the lower one I mean; and just as I had finished, and was about to twist in a garland of such sweet blush roses, an adder, a living adder, trailing its length all up the fretted window, stared with its dusky and malignant eyes full in my face, and pranked out its forked tongue dyed in the blackest poison. Oh, madam! how I screamed—and I know the creature was bent on my destruction, for, when I jumped down, it uncoiled, and fell upon the earth, coming towards me as I retreated, when Crisp (only think, my lady, of the wisdom of that poor dog!)—little Crisp seized it, somewhere by the neck, and in a moment it was dead!" [257]

"You should smile at that, not weep," observed Lady Frances, patting her cheek as she would that of a petted child.

"Oh, but," said Barbara, "it was so horrid, and I was almost sorry Crisp killed it! for it is an awful thing to destroy life, yet it was wickedly venomous."

"Ah, my poor maid! you will have worse troubles soon than that which bids you mourn over an adder's death."

"Do not say so, sweet lady," interrupted Barbara: "ah! do not say so: for I feel, I can hardly tell how, so very, very sad. My poor lady, and my poor self! and you going away, madam—you, who keep up the life of every thing; and, though your waiting maids seem so rejoiced to get back to the court! I don't know what I shall do, not I. I only wish——" She paused abruptly.

"Tell me what you wish, my pretty Barbara—a new cap, kirtle, hood, or farthingale? What, none of these!"

"I was only wishing that Robin Hays was come back, because he would understand my troubles."

"You pay a poor compliment to my understanding, Barbara," observed Lady Frances, with whom Barbara was at all times an especial favourite.

The simple maid courtesied respectfully, while she replied, "My lady, it would ill become me to make free with such as you, but I have many small causes of trouble, which, even if you did hear, you could not comprehend. The brown wren would not go for counsel to the gay parrot, however wise and great the parrot might be, but seek advice from another brown wren, because it would understand and feel exactly the cares and troubles of its own kind." [258]

"What a little fabulist thou art, pretty Barbara! But, if you had been at court, you would not have likened a lady to a parrot."

"Not to a parrot!" repeated Barbara; "such a beautiful bird! that looks so handsome and talks so well!"

"No: but here is a parting present for you, my fair maid; a chain of gold. Stay, I will clasp it on your slender neck myself; and listen to me, Barbara. The daughters of the Protector of England would be ill worthy their father's name or their father's honours, did they not seek to protect the women of their country, and to keep them in virtue and innocence, as he protects the men, and guides them to war and victory, or to peace and honour! Would to God, fair girl, that, notwithstanding your simplicity, the maidens of Britain were all as right-minded and gentle as yourself! As a proof how highly I value your faithful and true affection, I bestow upon you an ornament I have long worn, not to feed your vanity (for we are all vain, more or less,) but to strengthen your principles. If ever you should encounter real sorrow, and I can aid you, send me the clasp of this chain, and I will attend to your request, be it what it may." Lady Frances turned from her with more gravity of aspect and more dignity of demeanour than was her custom, and proceeded to look after the arrangements for her friend's nuptials.

Barbara stood for some time after the lady's departure, holding the gift upon the palm of her small and beautifully formed hand, which no rough labour had hardened or sullied. Her eye brightened as she gazed upon the rich gift; but, in a moment, her thoughts reverted to those with whom were the best feelings of her happy and innocent heart.

"Oh, that Robin had but been here!" she said, "to have heard it all. To think of her who is as great as a princess! What was it? 'faithful and true,' and, oh! how proud—no, I must not be proud—how grateful I am! If my father, *my* father, too, had heard it; but I can show this to them both. I will not again think of that horrid adder." And with this resolution she crept softly into the chamber of her still sleeping lady.

Poor fool! she thought herself in wondrous
 price
 With God, as if in Paradise she were;
 But, were she not in a fool's paradise,
 She might have seen more reason to
 despair,
 And, therefore, as that wretch hew'd out
 his cell
 Under the bowels, in the heart of hell!
 So she, above the moon, amid the stars
 would dwell.

GILES FLETCHER.

We must leave Cecil Place for a while—suffer Manasseh Ben Israel to pursue his journey to Hampton Court—offer no intrusion upon the solitude of the preacher Fleetword—take no note of aught concerning Walter De Guerre or Major Wellmore—nor heed, for a time, whether the Buccaneer steered his course by land or water: attend to nothing, in fact, for the present, except the motives and actions of Zillah Ben Israel.

The Jewish females were brought up, at the period of which we treat, with the utmost strictness, and kept in great seclusion, scarcely ever associating but with their own people, and enduring many privations in consequence of never mixing in general society. It is true they had companions of their own nation, and amusements befitting (according to the notions of the Elders) their state and age; but, nevertheless, they were held under much and injudicious restraint, the result of which was evil. It is seldom that the young can be held back by a tight and galling rein, without either biting the bit, or breaking the bridle. Zillah was the only child of her father, and nothing could exceed the expense or the care lavished upon her. Had Manasseh himself superintended her education, it is but fair to infer that his wisdom and judgment would have curbed the headstrong and stubborn nature of her mind and temper; but, deprived in her infancy of a mother's watchfulness, and Ben Israel's duty and business calling him continually from one country to another, she was necessarily intrusted to the care of certain relatives of his own, Polish Jews; who, though excellent friends in their way, and well versed in all the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, were totally ignorant of the proper course to be pursued with a wild, high-spirited girl, fully aware of the importance of her father's wealth and influence, and panting for the time when she should share in both. The people with whom she resided perceived her wilfulness; but, instead of combating it with reason, they sought to overcome it by force—and the best of all force, according to their ideas, was that which a staid and sober husband might exercise. The person upon whom they fixed was a Jew diamond-dealer, who had numbered about as many years as her father, but was greatly his inferior both in sagacity and power; indeed, there were very few who could compete with the learned Rabbi, Manasseh Ben Israel, in either of these qualities. Cromwell thought most highly of his talents, and bestowed upon him a degree of confidence he reposed in few, treating him with a respect and attention which all classes of Christians thought he carried much too far; for, at that time, Toleration was only in its infancy, and true peace-loving Religion suffered much from the persecutions with which the successful party never failed to visit those over whom they had triumphed. Catholic against Protestant—Protestant against Catholic—Sectarian against both—both against Sectarian—all against Jew—and the defamed and despised Israelite obliged, in self-defence, to act by subtlety (for his strength had departed from him) against all! Cromwell took advantage of this state of things, and with much policy, but it is to be hoped also with much sincerity, exerted himself continually to render England a place of security and happiness to the wandering children of Israel. To quote his own words, his opinion was, "Since there was a promise that they should be converted, means ought to be used to that end; and the most likely way was, the preaching of the Gospel in truth and sincerity, as it was then in Britain—devoid of all Popish idolatry, which had rendered the Christian religion odious to them." But the design was so violently and so generally opposed, that it came to nothing. Many scrupled not to affirm, that the Protector had secured a conditional bribe, to an enormous amount, in case he procured for them equal toleration with English subjects; while others, with more show of truth, declared, that when Cromwell "understood what dealers the Jews were every where in that trade which depends on news, the advancing money upon high or low interest, in proportion to the risk they ran, or the gain to be made as affairs might turn up, and in the buying and selling of the actions of money so advanced, he, more upon that account, than with a view to tolerate their principles, brought a company of them over, and gave them leave to build a synagogue." It is certain that they were sure and trusty spies for him, especially with relation to Spain and Portugal, and that they never betrayed his confidence.—Is it not, however, most extraordinary, in these our own times, when the spirit of liberty is bestriding the whole earth "like a Colossus," that a people so faithful, so influential, and so peaceable, should be deprived of so many privileges?—privileges, which we are labouring with mind, pen, and purse, to procure for tribes of ignorant and uncivilised savages, who as yet are utterly unable to comprehend the nature of the freedom we seek to thrust upon them, but who are too often ready and eager to bite the hand that would bestow it? God forbid that we should desire it to be withholden from a single human being, whether black or white, who bears the impress of his Maker. But reason, policy, and humanity, may alike teach us that the blessing should *first* be shared by those who have done most to deserve it—who know best how it should be used—and who have the most powerful hereditary claims upon the sympathy and consideration of Christians. The time is surely at hand, when the badge of ignominy shall be removed from them—

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at least in Britain—where, but for the exception to which we refer, Freedom is the birthright of every native of the soil. Cromwell knew their value to a state; and had he lived a few years longer, the Jew would have been at liberty to cultivate his own lands, and manure them (if it so pleased him) with his own gold, any where within the sea-girt isle of England.

We must no longer digress, although upon a most important and most interesting topic, but proceed to inform our readers what they must already have anticipated, that Zillah had little inclination towards the husband procured for her by her injudicious friends. The Rabbi thought it altogether a suitable match, particularly as Ichabod could trace his descent from the tribe of Levi, and was of undoubted wealth, and, according to belief, unspotted reputation; but Zillah cared little for reputation, she knew not its value—little for wealth, for the finest and rarest jewels of the world sparkled in gorgeous variety upon her person, so that she moved more like a rainbow than a living woman—little, very little for the tribe of Levi, and less than all for Ichabod. His black eyes she likened to burnt cinders; she saw no beauty in a beard striped and mottled with grey, although it was perfumed with the sweets of Araby, and oiled with as pure and undefiled an unction as that which flowed from the horn of the ancient Samuel upon the head of the youthful David. His stateliness provoked her mirth—his deafness her impatience; and when she compared him with the joyous cavaliers, the brilliant and captivating men who graced the court of the gay and luxurious Louis, for whose gallant plumes and glittering armour she so often watched through her half-closed lattice, she turned from the husband they would have given with a disgust that was utterly insupportable. [262]

Her father had prevailed upon the family with whom she lived to remove to Paris during his residence in England, which had been prolonged from day to day, in compliance with the desire of the Protector. He was anxious that his child should be instructed in such elegant arts as those in which the ladies of France and England excelled—not remembering that, in a young, forward, and ill-educated woman, the dangerous desire of display succeeds the acquirement of accomplishments as surely and as regularly as day follows night.

Thus, shut up in one of the most gloomy hotels in Paris—conveyed in a close carriage once or twice a week to the Bois de Boulogne, or the gardens of Versailles—fearing to express delight, lest she should be reproved for levity—or desire for any thing, lest it should be the very thing she would not be permitted to possess—the proud, warm, frank-hearted Jewess became gradually metamorphosed into the cunning, passionate, deceptive intriguante, only waiting for an opportunity to deceive her guardians, and obtain that which, from being so strictly forbidden, she concluded must be the greatest possible enjoyment—freedom of word and action. Alas! if we may use a homely phrase, many are the victims to strait-lacing, both of stays and conscience!

But if the old, grey-bearded Ichabod had been an object of dislike to the youthful and self-willed Jewess before she saw Sir Willmott Burrell, how did she regard him afterwards!

Manasseh Ben Israel had, as we have intimated, intrusted some packages for his daughter to the charge of the treacherous knight; and how he abused the trust has been already shown. But the poor Jewess found to her cost, that though she loved him with all the warmth and ardour of her own nature, he regarded her only as an object of pastime and pleasure; the idea of in reality marrying a Jewess never once entered into his calculation, though he was obliged to submit to something like the ceremony, before he could overcome scruples that are implanted with much care in the heart of every Jewish maiden. Although she deceived her guardians and her antiquated lover with great dexterity, it never occurred to her that Sir Willmott could be so base as to deceive her. She was new to the world and its ways; and the full torrent of her anger, jealousy, and disappointment burst upon him, when she found that the charms of a fair-haired lady had superseded her own, and that Burrell was already treating her with coldness. Of all the passions inherent in the heart of a woman, that of jealousy is the most dangerous to herself and others: it is fierce and restless in its nature; when infuriated, nothing can oppose its progress; and although most powerful in the most feeble-minded, it frequently assumes the semblance of intellectual strength. Zillah's jealousy kept pace with her headlong love, and in one of its most violent paroxysms she made the attempt on the life of Burrell, which, it is easy to believe, he never forgave. Subsequently, and during the remainder of his stay in Paris, he humoured her fancy, and led her to imagine that he had sufficient influence with Cromwell to prevail on him to interest her father on her behalf, and do what no Israelite of the time had ever done—recognise a Christian son-in-law. After Burrell's departure, however, she soon saw how little reliance was to be placed upon his promises, and therefore resolved to act for herself. Suspicion and jealousy divided her entire soul between them; and she determined not to trust Dalton to bring her over to England, because Burrell had recommended her to do so. Jeromio was known to the person at whose house she lodged at St. Vallery, and, hearing that she wanted to get to England, and would dispense much largess to secure a passage, he thought he could make something by secreting her on board, and then passing her off to his captain as a dumb boy. To this plan Zillah readily agreed, for her imagination was at all times far stronger than her reason. She had cast her life upon a die, and cared not by what means her object was to be secured. [263] [264]

It is one of the most extraordinary anomalies in the female character, that, having once outstepped the boundaries that are never even thought upon but with danger, it plunges deeper and deeper still into irretrievable ruin. Perhaps it is because women must feel most acutely that society never permits them to retrieve, or, what is much the same, takes no cognisance of their repentance, be it ever so sincere: their station once lost is never to be regained; it would seem as if Dante's inscription on the gates of Hell were to be for ever their motto—"All hope abandon." Man may err, and err, and be forgiven; but poor woman, with all his temptations and but half his

strength, is placed beyond the pale of earthly salvation if she be but once tempted into crime! It is a hard, even though it may be a salutary law.

It must be borne in mind that Zillah had committed as great an iniquity in the eyes of her people by marrying as by intriguing; nor could she expect pardon for either one or the other, except by some wonderful and powerful interposition, such as Burrell held out. It was astonishing to witness the fortitude with which the fragile and delicate Jewess, who had been clothed in purple and fine linen, fed on the most costly viands, and slept on the most downy couch, encountered the illness, terrors, and miseries attendant on a sea voyage in the vessel of a Buccaneer. The Fire-fly certainly deserved every encomium bestowed upon her by her captain; yet was she not the most pleasing residence for a delicately-nurtured female. No murmur escaped her sealed lips, nor, in fact, did she perceive the inconveniences by which she was surrounded; her mind was wholly bent upon the prevention of Sir Willmott Burrell's marriage, of which she had heard from undoubted authority; and it would appear that she had no feelings, no ideas to bestow upon, or power to think of, other things.

Jeromio's plotting but weak mind, never satisfied with the present, eager for the future, and anxious to make it better by foul means, had contrived to bring into use an abandoned excavation under the old tower we have so frequently mentioned, which had been forsaken by Hugh Dalton's party from its extreme dampness. They had filled the entrance with fragments of rock and large stones; but it was known to Jeromio, who, thinking that during his occasional visits to Gull's Nest he might manage to smuggle a little on his own account, assisted by two other Italians as evil-minded as himself, arranged the stones so as to permit one person at a time to creep into the wretched hole, where he stowed away such parts of the cargo of the Fire-fly as he could purloin from his too-confiding commander. He admitted Zillah to a knowledge of this cave, as a place in which she might shelter. He knew her to be a female of wealth and consequence; yet had no idea of her connection with the Master of Burrell, whom he had rarely seen; and though of necessity she occasionally mixed with the people of the Gull's Nest, yet she expressed so strong a desire for some place of privacy in the neighbourhood of Cecil Place, and paid so liberally for it withal, that he confided to her the secret of this cave—the entrance to which was nearly under the window of the tower in which Barbara Iverk had been concealed on the night when, by her lady's direction, she sought to communicate to Robin Hays the perilous situation of the young Cavalier. At that time, also, the Jewess saw Sir Willmott for the first time in England. She had been on the watch ever since her landing, but terror for her own wretched life had prevented her addressing him openly. The tones of his well-known voice had reached her miserable cavern, and roused her from a troubled slumber. She understood too little of his language to comprehend the nature of his communication to Roupall, and her first impulse was to strike a dagger to his heart; but this, her womanly affection prevented, and she suddenly withdrew. Subsequently, she wrote to Mrs. Constantia, and trusted much to her generosity and truth of character, of which she had heard in France; but poor Constance, through the cowardice of Jeromio, never received her packet, and, enraged and maddened by the reports of his immediate marriage, she resolved on seeing Mistress Cecil, and accomplished her purpose, as she thought, when in fact she only saw Barbara. Her jealousy and violence defeated her purpose at that time; but still her determination remained fixed to prevent the union, if her life were to be the forfeit. After meeting with the knight, she retreated into the earth, from which she had so suddenly appeared, much to the Master of Burrell's astonishment, who had no knowledge whatever of the cave, though he doubted not it was of Dalton's preparing. After securing the preacher, he examined every portion of the ruins most attentively, but without success, for she had learned to be as wily as a fox, and had carefully secured the aperture, through which even her delicate form passed with difficulty.

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It would have touched a heart, retaining any degree of feeling, to see that young and beautiful woman within that damp and noisome excavation—so damp that cold and slimy reptiles clung to, and crept over, its floor and walls, while the blind worm nestled in the old apertures formed to admit a little air; and the foul toad, and still more disgusting eft, looked upon her, as they would say, "Thou art our sister."

"And here," thought she, "must the only child of Manasseh Ben Israel array herself, to meet the gaze of the proud beauty who would not deign to notice the letter or the supplication of the despised Jewess; to meet the gaze of the cold stern English, and of the cruel man who points the finger of scorn against her he has destroyed. Yet I seek but justice, but to be acknowledged as his wife, in the open day and before an assembled people, and then he shall hear and see no more of the Rabbi's daughter! I will hide myself from the world, and look upon all mankind as I do upon him—with a bitter hatred!—Yet I was not always thus," she continued, as she clasped a jewel on her arm: "The bracelet is too wide for the shrunk flesh! Out, out upon thee, bauble! O that I could thus—and thus—and thus—trample into this black and slimy earth, every vestige of what I was, and have no more the power to think of what I am! Is this the happiness I looked for? Are these the feelings of my girlhood? My heart seems cold within me, cold to every thought but vengeance! Even the burden I carry—it is part of him, and with the groans that come in woman's travail I will mingle curses, deep and blasting, on its head. O that I could cast it from me! And yet—and yet it will be my own child!" And the feelings of the mother triumphed; for, at that thought, the Jewess wept, and tears are as balm to an overwrought mind, at once a relief and a consolation. Zillah wept, and was humanised. After a little time, she arrayed herself in befitting garments, but placed pistols within her bosom. Long before the appointed hour, and despite the watchfulness of Sir Willmott's spies, she was secreted near the ruined chapel adjoining Cecil Place.

Hither, th' oppressed shall henceforth
 resort,
 Justice to crave and succour at your
 court,
 And then your Highness, not for ours
 alone,
 But for the world's Protector shall be
 known.

WALLER *to the Protector.*

It was past midnight when Manasseh Ben Israel, accompanied by Robin Hays, as his own servant, and disguised as we have seen him, arrived at Hampton Court. The night was murky, and the numerous turrets of the great monument of Wolsey's grandeur and ambition were seen but dimly through the thickened air, although looked upon with feelings of no ordinary interest by both Jew and servitor.

The carriage was stopped at the outer court by the sentries on guard, and some little delay occurred, apparently to ascertain if the Rabbi could be admitted at so late an hour.

Robin looked from the carriage-window and saw, what appeared to him, scores of mailed and armed warriors reclining on the stone benches of a spacious but low guard-room, while others crowded over a large fire, which the chilliness of the night rendered, at least, desirable. The glaring of the flames showed brightly on their polished armour, and their firm immovable features looked of a piece with the iron itself. Nothing could be more imposing, or afford a more correct idea of Cromwell's perseverance and judgment, than his well-trained soldiery. Obedience, inflexible obedience to their commander, seemed the leading, almost the only principle upon which they acted: not that slavish obedience which is the effect of fear, but the obedience which is the result of confidence. "God and the Protector" was their faith, and they knew no other. As the Jew gazed upon those invincible men, he shrouded himself still more closely within his furred cloak, and shuddered. Robin's eye, on the contrary, brightened, for he was born of England, and proud of her greatness. Ah! Englishmen in those days had a right to be proud.

There was another difference in the conduct of the Protector's troops from those of every other time and every other nation: they had none of the reckless wildness, none of the careless bravery which is supposed necessarily to belong to the profession of arms. Their habits were staid and sober; and if any Cavaliers did enter in among them, they were forced to behave themselves according to the fashion of their associates, which habit, in a little time, tamed their heedlessness into propriety. There was no singing of profane songs in the guard-room, no filthy jesting or foolish talking; no drinking; their very breathing seemed subdued, and nothing frightened the tranquillity which rested on the turrets at Hampton, and pervaded its courts, save the striking of some iron heel on the ringing pavement, or the neighing of some gallant steed in the not distant stables. [268]

Once, indeed, a psalm wailed through the casement from one of the inner courts: it was sung at first in a troubled tone, and in a low key, but afterwards the sound was increased by other voices; and it swelled upon the ear in long and loud continuance.

"He has departed, then!" observed one of the sentries, to an armed man who stood near the carriage.

"I suppose so, and, I trust, in the Lord," was the reply.

"Doubtless—yet the heart was strong for life. His Highness will be sorrowful."

"He will; but grace abounded greatly; he was one of the Lord's best soldiers, and fought well in the good cause."

"Would that my time was passed! I would fain uplift my voice with theirs."

"I will go there forthwith," replied he in armour; and Robin heard the echo of his step die in the distance. Ere the messenger, despatched by the officer of the guard, had returned, a sort of rambling drowsy conversation was carried on by the soldiers within, which only reached the quick ear of the Ranger at intervals.

"His Highness has been tormented to-night; methinks the length of a summer day ought to satisfy those who want to see him."

The sun had set a good hour or more, when Sir Christopher Packe, the worshipful Lord Mayor, passed in.

"His Highness," replied the stern gruff voice of an old soldier, "is of the people; and he knows that his duty—next to awaiting the Lord always—is to wait on them."

"His time is not an easy one, then," thought Robin; and as he so thought, the messenger returned [269]

with an order that the Rabbi should be immediately admitted. The lumbering carriage passed under one archway, and traversed a small court—then under another—then across the next—then stopped, and one of the principal servants opened the door, and requested Manasseh to descend.

"Her Highness," he said, "had been indisposed; the Lord Protector, therefore, hoped the worthy Israelite would not object to walk across the next court, as her chamber was nearly over the entrance."

The Jew leaned upon Robin for support, as they mounted the flight of steps leading to the grand entrance hall. He paused once or twice; they were many in number, and hard to climb for one bent with age, and now bowed down by trouble. When they arrived at the great door, he perceived that, instead of two, there were four sentries, who stood, two on each side, like fixed statues, and the torch their conductor carried glittered on the bright points of their swords that rested on the ground. The stair was faintly illumined by one large massive iron lamp, hanging from the ceiling, and flickering, so as to show the outline, not the minutiae of the objects.

When they had fairly entered the great hall, Robin truly and sincerely wished himself safely out again; the more particularly when he saw, mingled with the pages and servants in waiting, some tried and trusty soldiers, by whom, if his disguise were penetrated, he would be better known than trusted. It was one thing to steal and pry about a place, and another to be only separated by a single plank of oak from Cromwell—the all-powerful, all-seeing Protector of England—liable to be called at once into his presence; for the Jew might mention—doubtless would mention—that one who had served Sir Willmott Burrell, and knew much of his doings, was in attendance.

This magnificent room, though used as a hall of audience on state occasions, was generally occupied by the guards, retainers, and petitioners of the Protectorate. There was a long table of rude workmanship near the door at which they entered—above was a lamp, similar in size and construction to that which swung outside:—many assembled round, or sat close to, this table, while others walked up and down—not passing, however, the centre of the hall, which was crossed by a silk cord of crimson, fastened in the middle to two brass poles, standing sufficiently [270] apart to permit one person at a time to enter; and also guarded by a single sentinel, who walked so as to pass and repass the opening every half minute. Manasseh paced slowly towards the soldier, still leaning on Robin. His conductor kept a little in advance, bowing on either side, while a conciliating smile lingered on his lip, until he came to the silken line.

"Only one may pass!" was the soldier's brief notice; and the Rabbi, grasping his staff more firmly, walked to the door opposite the great entrance, which was guarded also by another sentinel.

"You can find a seat—that is, if you choose to sit," said the servitor sneeringly, to Robin, pointing at the same time to an empty corner of the hall.

"Or would it please you I descend to the apartments of the lower servants?" inquired the Ranger, remembering the meekness befitting the character of a Jew.

"None leave this hall, after entering it by his Highness's permission, till they receive orders to that effect," he replied, turning from Robin, who slunk to the place assigned him, in no very agreeable mood.

If his imaginings were of an unpleasant description, still more so were the observations made aloud by the pages, flippant both by nature and usage, and the sarcastic and cool jests, given forth at his expense by the more sober persons of the assembly.

"Wouldst like any refreshment, friend?" inquired a youth in a sad-coloured tunic and blue vest, over which fell a plain collar of the finest Valenciennes' lace, so as to cover his shoulders. "And yet," continued the malapert, "methinks there is nothing to offer thee but some ham, or preserved pigs' tongues, which, of course, thou tastest not of."

"No, I humbly thank ye, young sir," replied Robin; "I do not need the pigs' tongues, having tasted of thine."

"What mean you by that, Jew dog!" said the boy fiercely, laying his hand on his sword.

"Nothing, fair gentleman, except it be that thine, though well preserved, would fain take up the business of thy white teeth."

"How, knave?"

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"Become biting," replied Robin, bowing.

"Ah, Morrison! the Jew is too much for ye," said another youth, who was just roused from a half slumber in a high-backed chair.—"Where got ye yer wit?"

"Where you did not get yours, under favour," was Robin's ready reply.

"And where was that?"

"From nature; too common a person for so gay a young gentleman to be beholden to," he retorted, bowing again with even a greater show of humility than before.

At this reply, Sir John Berkstead, formerly a goldsmith in the Strand, but gradually raised to the dignity of chief steward of Oliver's household, approached Robin with his usual shuffling gait, and said,—

"Hey! young gentlemen—hey! young gentlemen, what foolish jesting is this? what mean ye? It is his Highness's pleasure to receive the master, and what for do ye treat the man with indignity? My worthy Samuel," he looked closer—"but it is not Samuel," he continued, peering curiously at Robin, "it is not Samuel. What ho! Gracious Meanwell! did this man enter with the learned Manasseh Ben Israel?"

"Yes, please ye, Sir John," replied the page, humbly.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, surveying Robin attentively. "But where is the Rabbi's usual attendant, whom I have before seen?"

"He is sick even unto death, unless it please the God of Abraham to work a miracle in his favour," replied Robin: thinking to himself, "he remembers enough, at least, of his old trade to know all is not gold that glitters."

Sir John Berkstead withdrew, only observing to the page, who stood back, boy-like, longing for any frolic likely to relieve the monotony of so dull a court, especially at midnight, "See ye do not treat him uncourteously. The Rabbi has always been permitted to bring his attendant, almost to the anteroom: a favour seldom granted—but his Highness is gracious in remembering that his bodily infirmities need support. So see that he is treated with all courtesy, for his Highness is wishful that Christian toleration be exercised towards this and all other Jews."

More than one Roundhead looked at another during this declaration; and all but the two youngsters appeared more than usually intent upon whatever they were employed about before the Rabbi's entrance. Youth is a bad courtier, ever preferring frolic and amusement to sobriety and attention. They had been at once piqued and pleased by Robin's smartness, and resolved to whet their own wit upon so well-tempered a steel. [272]

"Wert ever at court before?" inquired the younger.

"No, sir, an' please ye."

"And what think ye of it?"

"Nothing as yet, sir."

"Nothing! how is that?"

"Because I have not had time; and, if the small things of life require thoughtfulness, how much more must the great things of a court!"

"Shouldst like to turn Christian and live at court?"

"Heaven forbid! All I should be turned to would be ridicule, and that is a wonderful lowerer of the consequence of even a serving man——"

"Hush!" said the elder page—"there goes Colonel John Jones."

As the brother-in-law of the Protector approached, the several persons in the hall rose and saluted him with considerable respect. His aspect was stern and rigid: his whole person firm and erect; and whatever his faults might have been, he gave one the idea of a person who, doing wrong, thought it right. His eyes were generally upturned, and there was a good deal of enthusiasm in the expression of the upper portion of his countenance, while the firm-set mouth and broad muscular chin betokened the most inflexible resolution. He proceeded towards the cord we have before mentioned, exchanged a few words with the sentry, and then returned to the door whereby he had entered. While unclosing it, he perceived Robin, and, struck by his Jewish appearance, altered his course and approached him.

The Ranger bent most lowly to the ground, for he well knew the veneration this man excited both amongst soldiers and Puritans.

"One of the cast-aways within the sanctuary!" he said in a stern reproving voice. "How is it?" [273]

"Sir, his master, the Rabbi, tarrieth with his Highness," replied the elder page.

"It is evil, and of evil," returned Colonel Jones, with still more severity, "The clean and the unclean, the believer and the unbeliever, the offscouring of the earth with the chosen of the Lord! Why is he not cast forth, yea into outer darkness? Why should the filthy vulture make his nest with the eagles? Dog of a Jew, out, into the highway!"

"May it please ye," interrupted Gracious Meanwell, "his Highness has just issued express orders that this man be carefully tended, and kept within."

The Colonel cast a look full of displeasure at the messenger, and without trusting himself to utter another word, strode from the hall.

"You see where we would send Jews," observed one of the lads.

"Even where they would rather be."

"How, where?"

"Far from ye."

"And deem ye it not an honour to be admitted within these walls?"

"Ay, sir, such honour as a poor merlin would feel at being caged with honourable and right honourable eagles. But would ye unravel me, kind young gentlemen, if Colonel Jones is often seen without his Patients?"

"Oh! you mean the preacher, do ye? Why, yes, frequently now-a-days."

"Ah! what a blessing that must be!"

"As how? master Jew."

"Because others can have their soles mended."

The jest upon the miserable fanatic Patients, who had been a stocking-footer in London, was not lost upon the lads, though they dared not countenance it by a very boisterous laugh: they resolved, however, to become more intimately acquainted with the facetious Jew.

"You ought not to laugh so loud, Morrison," said the elder page. "You know you are a sort of nephew to his Highness, now that your uncle, Doctor Wilkins, is married to the Lady French, his Highness's sister."

"And here is my uncle," returned the other. "He said he had permission to call for me. Ah! he is never angry at a little jest, so long as it is innocent. I heard a gentleman say last night that 'he was by nature witty, by industry learned, by grace godly.' What think ye of that for a character?" [274]

As the subject of this panegyric drew near, Robin thought he had never seen a more sweet or gracious countenance: he looked "peace on earth and good will towards men." His entire expression was that of pure benevolence; and though the eye was something wild and dreamy, yet it was gentle withal, and of marvellous intelligence. He seemed like one, and such he truly was, to whom the future as well as the present would be deeply indebted. The use he made of his alliance with the Cromwell family must ever be regarded as most noble; instead of aggrandising himself and his friends, he rendered it only subservient to the great wish of his heart—the promotion of learning, which, it cannot be denied, was at that time in danger of being overthrown by bigotry and fanaticism: for this reason it was that he opportunely interposed to shelter Oxford from the moroseness of Owen and Godwin. Well might his eye look dreamy. How could that of the author of a "Discovery of a New World" look otherwise? He openly maintained that, not only was the moon habitable, but that it was possible for a man to go there. His reply to the Duchess of Newcastle, herself a visionary, when she jested a little at his theory, although sufficiently known, is still worthy of repetition.

"Where am I to find a place for baiting at, in my way up to that planet?" she inquired of the Doctor.

"Madam," replied he, "of all the people in the world, I never expected that question from you, who have built so many castles in the air, that you may lie every night at one of your own."

As he conducted his nephew to the door, he turned back to look on Robin: "You have not teased the poor Jew, I hope?" he said to the page.

"No; but he has worried us, uncle; you know not what a wit-snapper it is."

"Indeed! art thou a Solomon, friend?"

"An' please ye, sir, the wisdom, as well as the glory, has departed from our people," said Robin.

"I care little for the glory," observed the Doctor, who was Warden of Wadham College; "I care very little for any earthly glory: but canst tell me where the wisdom is gone—the wisdom, Jew, the wisdom! Where is that to be found?" [275]

"Usually at the College of Wadham," replied the crafty Robin, bowing respectfully, "though sometimes it wanders abroad to enlighten England."

"Go to; you are a most cunning Isaac," said Doctor Wilkins, laughing; and at the same time throwing Robin a piece of silver, which he caught, with much dexterity, ere it touched the ground.

"This is the only unwise thing your worship ever did," continued Robin, depositing the silver safely in his leathern purse.

"How so, most cunning Jew?"

"Bestowing money—when there can be no interest thereupon."

"You have never heard, I fear," said Doctor Wilkins, who, with true Christian spirit, was ever ready to speak a word in season—"you have never heard of laying up treasures in a place where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through and steal?"

"I have heard some Christians speak of such a place," replied Robin, "though I did not think they believed in its existence."

"Why so?"

"Because they seemed so little inclined to trust their property in that same storehouse."

"You say but too truly; yet it is written 'that charity covereth a multitude of sins.'"

"Then that is reason why so many sins are roaming abroad 'naked but not ashamed.' Ah, sir! it is a marvellously scarce commodity that same charity; when Christians spit upon and rail at the poor Jew, they lack charity; when they taunt me with my deformity, they lack charity; when they destroy the web of the spider, that toileth for its bread, and useth what the God of Moses gave it to catch food, they lack charity. Sir, I have walked by the way-side, and I have seen a man tread into the smallest atoms the hill of the industrious ant, and say, it stole the peasant's corn; and yet I have known that same man make long prayers and devour widows' houses. I have watched the small singing-bird, trolling its sweet song on the bough of some wild cherry-tree, and a man, whose hair was combed over his brow, whose step was slow, whose eyes appeared to seek commune with Heaven, killed that bird, and then devoured all the cherries. A little of that red fruit would have served the singing-bird for the length of a long summer's day, and it could have sung to its mate till, when the night came, they sheltered in each other's bosom; yet he, the man with the smooth hair and the holy eye, killed the small bird; but mark ye, sir, he ate the cherries, all, every one. Though I am as one lacking sense, and only a serving Jew, I trow he lacked charity!"

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"Uncle," whispered the page, creeping up to his ear, "can this man be indeed a Jew? He hath a blue eye and an English tongue; and surely not an Israelitish heart; see that he deceive us not."

"My dear boy, peace," said the simple yet learned Doctor; "let the wisdom of this poor child of Israel teach thee to be more humble-minded; for, look ye, who might not profit by his words?"

The excellent man would have spoken much more to our friend Robin, who might not inaptly be likened to a dark-lantern, within which is much light, though it is only occasionally given forth; but on the instant Gracious Meanwell summoned him to appear before the Protector.

"The Lord deliver me! the Lord deliver me!" muttered Robin, as he followed his conductor past the silken barrier—"The Lord deliver me! for, of a truth, my head is now fairly in the lion's mouth."

The room into which he was ushered thus abruptly was hung with ancient tapestry, and furnished after the strangest fashion. Robin had little inclination to examine either its proportions or arrangements, but tremblingly followed until his guide paused with him opposite a long narrow table, at the further end of which, his hand resting upon a pile of books, stood the Protector—Oliver Cromwell.

It was impossible to look upon him without feeling that he was a man born to command and to overthrow. His countenance, though swollen and reddish, was marked and powerful, and his presence as lofty and majestic as if he had of right inherited the throne of England. However his enemies might have jested upon his personal appearance, and mocked the ruddiness of his countenance, and the unseemly wart that disfigured his broad, lofty, and projecting brow, they must have all trembled under the thunder of his frown: it was terrific, dark, and scowling, lighted up occasionally by the flashing of his fierce grey eye, but only so as to show its power still the more. His dress consisted of a doublet and vest of black velvet, carefully put on, and of a handsome fashion; a deep collar of the finest linen, embroidered and edged with lace, turned over his vest, and displayed to great advantage his firm and remarkably muscular throat. His hair, which seemed by that light as dark and luxuriant as it had been in his younger age, fell at either side, but was completely combed or pushed off his massive forehead. He looked, in very truth, a most strong man—strong in mind, strong in body, strong in battle, strong in council. There was no weakness about him, except that engendered by a warm imagination acting in concert with the deepest veneration, and which rendered him ever and unhappily prone to superstitious dreamings.

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When Robin entered, there was no one in the room but the Lord Broghill, Manasseh Ben Israel, and a little girl. My Lord Broghill, who was one of the Protector's cabinet counsellors, had been sent for from Ireland to go to Scotland, and be President of the Council there, but soon wearying of the place, had just returned to London, and posted down immediately to Hampton Court:—he was bidding the Protector good night, and that with much servility. The presence of Robin was yet unnoticed save by the Jew. Before his Lordship had left the chamber, even as his foot was on the threshold, Cromwell called him back.

"My Lord Broghill."

The cabinet counsellor bowed and returned.

"I forgot to mention, there is a great friend of yours in London."

"Indeed! Please your Highness, who is it?"

"My Lord of Ormond," replied the Protector. "He came to town on Wednesday last, about three of the clock, upon a small grey mule, and wearing a brown but ill-made and shabby doublet. He lodges at White Friars, number—something or other; but you, my Lord," he added, pointedly, [will](#) have no difficulty in finding him out."

"I call the Lord to witness," said Broghill, casting up his eyes after the most approved Puritan fashion—"I call the Lord to witness, I know nothing of it!"

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Cromwell gathered his eyebrows and looked upon him for a moment with a look which made the

proud lord tremble; then sending forth a species of hissing noise from between his teeth, sounding like a prolonged hish—h—h—h. "Nevertheless, I think you may as well tell him that I know it. Good night, my Lord, good night!"

"He's had his night-cap put on, and now for mine," thought little Robin, who, as he advanced, bowing all the way up the room, could not avoid observing, (even under such circumstances, there was something singularly touching in the fact,) that a little girl, a child of about six or seven years old, sat on a stool at the Protector's feet, her fair arms twined around his knee; and her plain, but expressive face, looking up to his, and watching every movement of his features with more than childish earnestness. As Robin drew near, she stood up, and contemplated him with very natural curiosity.

"Closer, young man—still closer," said the Protector; "our sight grows dim; and yet we will see distinctly, and with our own eyes too—for the eyes of others serve us not."

Robin did as he was commanded, bowing and shaking all the time like the figure of a mandarin. The Protector advanced one step towards him; and then plucked at the Ranger's beard with so strong a hand, that it deserted his chin, and dangled between Cromwell's fingers. At this, the child set up a loud and merry shout of laughter; but not so did the incident affect the Protector, to whose mind treachery was ever present; he instantly exclaimed,—

"Guards! what ho! without there!" Five or six rushed into the room and laid hands upon Robin, who offered no resistance, submitting to their mercy.

"Your Highness has mistaken," said Ben Israel; "there is no treachery in the young man. I have told your Highness how he came to me, and what he knows. Your servant has not spoken words of falsehood, but of truth."

"But you did not tell me he was not a Jew: you know him not as I do," was the Protector's reply: "he consorts with—" then suddenly checking himself, he continued, addressing the soldiers: "But search him gently withal—peradventure he has no secret weapons—we would not deal unjustly; but, of late, there has been so much evil intended us by all classes of Malignants, that it behoves us to be careful. Methinks, friend Manasseh, there was no need of this disguise?" [279]

"It was to avoid the scandal of my own people, please your Highness, who would marvel to see any other than one of our tribe about my person."

The little girl, who was no other than Bridget, a great favourite of Cromwell's, and one of the youngest children of Ireton, the Protector's son-in-law, seemed much amused at the search, and the extraordinary materials it brought to light. There was a whistle, a string of bells, a small black mask, quantities of paint and patches, and various other things; but no arms of any kind, save the small Spanish dagger which Robin so lately exchanged with the sailor at Greenwich. The Protector took this up, examined it attentively, placed it in a small drawer, then briefly dismissed the attendants, and seating himself, apologised to Ben Israel for the delay.

"This person will not wonder at it," he continued, looking at Robin; "for he knows what excellent reason I have to believe him an adept in falsehood."

"No one ever heard me speak a lie, please your Highness," said Robin, in a hesitating and tremulous voice.

"I cannot call to mind your speaking lies; but you are famous for acting them: however, I desire you speak none here."

"Please your Highness," returned Robin Hays, regaining his self-possession, "I do not intend it, for it would be useless."

"How mean ye?"

"Because your Highness can always tell truth from falsehood; and say who is the speaker, no matter how hidden from others."

A smile relaxed for a moment the full, firm, but flexible mouth of Oliver Cromwell, at this well-timed compliment to that on which he so much prided himself—his penetration. He then commenced questioning the Ranger upon his knowledge of Sir Willmott Burrell and the Rabbi's daughter. Robin did not in the least degree equivocate; but related every particular as minutely and distinctly as he had done to Ben Israel; not omitting his knowledge that Sir Willmott meditated the destruction of Walter De Guerre. Cromwell listened to the details with much attention; but it was not until this portion of his story was concluded, that, with his usual wiliness, he told the Ranger, that, as it had nothing to do with Manasseh Ben Israel, it need not have been mentioned. [280]

The Protector then commanded Sir John Berkstead to his presence, and directed that a troop of horse should be had in immediate readiness, and that, in a few minutes, he would name to Colonel Jones the officer who was to accompany them, and the place of their destination.

"And now let us to bed. Will my little Bridget bid her grandfather good night?" and he kissed the child with much tenderness.—"People wonder why I trust thee in my councils; but God hath given thee a soul of truth and a secret tongue; thou growest pale with late sitting, and that must not be." The Protector clasped his hands, and said a few words of prayer over the girl, who knelt at his feet.

"Good Manasseh, I would recommend your resting here to-night; you need repose, but I must detain your serving-man. Without there!"

An attendant entered.

"Conduct this person to——" A whisper told the remainder of the sentence, and Robin was led from the apartment.

Very few lingered in the great hall; the pages were sleeping soundly; and, though they encountered Colonel John Jones, he did not recognise Robin, who, despoiled of his beard and black hair, looked so much like the servant of Sir Willmott Burrell, as to be thought such by more than one of the attendants. As he passed through the second court, his guide suddenly turned into a small arched door-way, and directed Robin to proceed up a narrow flight of winding stairs, that appeared to have no termination. Robin once halted for breath, but was obliged to proceed, and at length found himself in a small, cell-like apartment, with a narrow sky-light, opening, as he conjectured, on the palace roof.

Here his attendant left him, without so much as "good night," and he had the satisfaction of hearing the key turn within the rusty lock.

The mistiness of the night had passed away, and the moon looked down in unclouded majesty upon the courts and turrets of "the House at Hampton." [281]

Robin seated himself on his truckle bedstead, upon which merely a rude straw mattress, covered with a blanket, was thrown, and which, for aught he knew, had been occupied by a thousand prisoners before him; but, however bitter and sarcastic his mind might be, it was not given to despond; and he soon began to reflect on what had passed. Although it was not by any means the first time he had been face to face with the Protector, yet it was the first time he had ever seen him with any of the indications of human feeling. "He has made many children fatherless," thought the Ranger, "and yet see how fond he is of that ill-favoured girl, who is the very picture of himself! Poor Walter! Well, I wonder what has been done with him; I had a great mind to ask, but there is something about him, that, were he never a Protector, one would just as soon not make free with." As Robin thought thus, his eyes were fixed on the light and flitting clouds, and he was longing to be free and abroad in the moonbeams, that entered his cell only to smile on his captivity; when some opaque body stood between him and the light, so that he was for a moment almost in darkness. About three minutes after, the same effect occurred; and presently a man's face was placed close to the glass, evidently with the design of seeing into the room.

"A-hoy there!" shouted the Ranger. The face was withdrawn, and no answer returned, but immediately afterwards the key grated in the lock, and the Protector himself entered the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

Grundo. And what did they there talk about?

Julia. I'faith, I hardly know, but was advised
"Twas a most cunning parley.

Grundo. I do well credit it.

Old Play.

"I would rather talk to him in that old tapestried hall," thought Robin, "than in this narrow chamber. There I could have a run for my life; but here, Heaven help me! I am fairly in for it." [282]

"The room is passing close, the air is heavy," were the Protector's first words: "follow me to the palace-roof, where there can be no listeners, save the pale stars, and they prate not of man's doings."

Robin followed Cromwell up a narrow flight of steps, so narrow that the Protector could hardly climb them. They were terminated by a trap-door leading to the roof; and there these two men, so different in station and in stature, stood together on a species of leaden platform, which by day commands a most beautiful and extensive view of the surrounding country;—at night there was nothing to be seen but the dim outline of the distant hills, and the dark woods that formed the foreground.

Scarce a sound was heard, save of the breeze wailing among the many turrets of the proud palace, and now and then the tramp or challenge of the sentries at the different outposts, as they passed to and fro upon their ever-watchful guard.

"I believe your real name is Robin Hays?" said the Protector.

"Your Highness—it is so."

"And you are the son of one Mary or Margery, proprietor of an hostelry, called the Gulls Nest?"

"The son of Margery Hays, as your Highness has said, who, God be thanked! still lives in a quiet corner of the Isle of Shepey, and of her good husband Michael, who has now been dead many years."

"I take it for granted that you know your own mother; but it is a wise son who knows his own father. Impurities are, praised be the Lord! fast fleeing from the land; but they were rife once, rife as blackberries that grow by the roadside. Yet this is nought; what business brought you here?"

"Your Highness knows: I came with the Rabbi Ben Israel."

"Parry not with me," exclaimed the readily-irritated Cromwell.—"I repeat, why came ye here?"

"Your Highness is acquainted with the reason of my coming."

"I *do* know; but I also choose to know it from yourself. Why came ye here?"

"Just then to seek out one who has fallen into your Highness's clutches; with favour, I would say, under your Highness's care," replied Robin, who felt himself not over comfortably situated.

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"His name sir—his name?"

"Walter De Guerre."

"And who advised you he was here?"

"I found it out; I and another of his friends."

"You mean Hugh Dalton?"

"I do, please your Highness."

"You have some secret communication for this Walter?"

"Your Highness, I have not; yet, if he is here, I humbly entreat permission to see him; for, as it is your pleasure that we be detained, I am sure it would be a comfort to him to meet some one who has his interest firmly, humbly at heart."

"Why came he to England?"

"I believe, that is known only to Hugh Dalton."

"Where got ye that Spanish dagger?"

"Please your Highness, from a sailor at Greenwich, a pensioner."

"You had other business in London than seeking out this Walter?"

"Please your Highness, I had."

"What was its nature?"

"Your Highness must pardon me—I cannot say."

Cromwell, during this examination, had walked backward and forward on a portion of the roof, bounded at either end by a double range of turreted chimneys: at the last reply of Robin Hays he suddenly stopped and turned short upon him, paused as if in anger, and then said,—

"Know you to whom you speak? Know you that the Lord hath made me a judge and a ruler in Israel? and yet you dare refuse an answer to my question!"

"Your Highness must judge for me in a righteous cause. From infancy I have been cherished by Hugh Dalton: if my lowly mind has become at all superior to the miserable and deformed tenement in which it dwells, I owe it to Hugh Dalton—if I have grown familiar with deeds of blood, still I owe it to Hugh Dalton that I saw deeds of bravery; and to Hugh Dalton I owe the knowledge, that whatever is secret, is sacred."

"Honour among thieves, and rogues, and pirates!" exclaimed the Protector, chafed, but not angry. "Your Dalton had a purpose of his own to serve in bringing over this scatter-pate Cavalier, who has too much blood and too little brains for aught but a cock-throw. Young man, I know the doings at your Gull's Nest Crag—I have been advised thereupon. Listen! there has been hardly a malecontent for months in the country who has not there found shelter. Were I inclined to pardon vagabonds, I might bestow the mercy with which the Lord has intrusted me upon poor misguided wretches; but Dalton has been a misguider himself. With my own good steed, and aided by only three on whom I could depend, I traced two of those leagued with Miles Syndercomb to their earth, at the very time when Hugh Dalton was lying in his Fire-fly off the coast.—What waited he for there? That Buccaneer has imported Malignants by dozens, scores, hundreds, into the Commonwealth; and now the reever expects pardon! for I have been solicited thereon. Mark me! the Lord's hand is stretched out, and will not be withdrawn until his nest be turned up, even as the plough uprooteth and scattereth the nest of the field-mouse and the blind mole; and mark yet farther, Robin Hays—there is a book, in which is written the name of every one concerned in those base practices; and opposite to each name is a red cross—a red cross, I say—which signifieth the shedding of blood; and as surely as the stars above us know their secret course along the pathway of the resplendent heavens, so surely shall all those traitors, reevers,

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buccaneers, upsetters, perish by the Lord's hand—unless it pleaseth the Spirit to infuse its moving power into some of their hearts, so that one or more of them may point the secret entrance into this cavern, where there is great treasure, and whereby blood-shedding and much trouble may be spared. If such an influence was happily exercised—was, I say, happily exercised over the minds or mind of any one of this accursed crew, he might not only be spared, but rewarded with much that the heart of man longeth after." Cromwell paused, and fixed his eyes on the Ranger, who spoke no word, and made no gesture of reply.

"Could not such be found?" he continued, addressing Robin more pointedly than before.

"A person found, did your Highness ask, who would betray his comrades unto death, and give up his master's property to destruction?"

"No, I meant not that: but think ye, is there not one, who, convinced of the wickedness of his past ways, would lead blind Justice on the right track, insomuch that plundered property might be restored to its rightful owners, and the cause of the Lord and his people be forwarded many steps?" [285]

"May I speak to your Highness as a man, or as a servant?" inquired Robin.

"Even as a man—I am neither a king nor a tyrant."

"Then, with all respect, I say that such men may be found; but they would be unworthy pardon, much less reward. May it please your Highness, a Buccaneer is, to my mind, only one who takes advantage of troubled times to secure unto himself the most power and the most property that he can. The sea is as free to him as the land to—to any other man. His is no coward's trade, for he risks his all, and is neither an assassin, nor a traitor, nor a rebel, nor a——"

"Peace, atom, peace!" interrupted Cromwell; "I did not want to hear your reasons on the legality, and justice, and mercy of the Buccaneer; I only gave you to understand (and I know ye to be quick of comprehension) that I wished for information touching this retreat—this maze—this labyrinth—this embowelling of nature, formed in the cliffs—ay, and that in more than one place, along the Kentish coast—that so I might erase one red cross at the least. Mark ye, knave—your own name is in the list, though I may regret it, seeing that there is a mixture of honest blood in your veins, and a sprinkling of wit in your head, which might lead to some distinction. Worse men than you have risen to high places."

"Your Highness mocks me! Wit!—high place! With this mis-shapen body tackled to a world of wit—a place as high as any of those turrets that cut the midnight air, still should I be a thing for men to scorn! Your Highness bitterly mocks me!"

"I mock no one; it is ill Christian sport. But at your own pleasure—within the space of fifteen minutes you may go forth from this our house, conduct a chosen few to the Gull's Nest Crag—point out its ways—give us the necessary information as to the other smuggling stations—telegraph the Fire-fly into smooth water, and the next sun will rise on a rich, ay, and a well-favoured gentleman!"

"With a damned black heart!" exclaimed Robin, whose faithful spirit beat so warmly in his bosom that he forgot for an instant in whose presence he stood, and gave full vent to his feelings, which doubtless he would not have done had he seen the expression of Cromwell's countenance—that awe-inspiring countenance which had full often sent back the unspoken words from the open lips of bolder men who looked upon him. [286]

"With that I have nothing to do," said the Protector calmly, after taking another turn along the platform: "but you mistake the case—it is only justice, simple justice."

"My Lord Protector of England," said Robin, whose thin, disproportioned figure, as it moved in the dim light, might have been taken for a dark spirit summoned to some incantation—"My Lord, with you it may be justice: you believe the Buccaneer deals not only in the free trade, but imports persons who endanger your Highness's life and the peace of your protectorate. I believe, from my soul, that he never bore off or brought over one of the Syndercomb gang, or any that had evil intent against your person. There are others who deal in that way; and now, when he is soliciting your mercy, it would speak but little for his wisdom if he went on provoking your vengeance. My Lord, Hugh Dalton has a daughter, and it is to save her name from ever-continuing disgrace, that he pants for honest employment. And may it not offend your Highness, for one so ill-read as myself in aught that is good or godly, to remind you that the Bible somewhere tells of those who were received into pardon and glory at the eleventh hour. As to myself, could your Highness make me what my heart has so panted after, but as vainly as the carrion-crow might seek to be the gallant falcon of the chase—could you give me a well-proportioned figure—make me one who could repel an injury or protect a friend—stretch out this dwarfish body to a proper length—contract these arms, and place the head right well upon a goodly pedestal—then give me wealth—rank—all a man's heart covets in this most covetous world—weigh these advantages against a portion of Hugh Dalton's life;—the scale turns in the air, my Lord—there's nothing in't!"

Cromwell folded his arms in silence, while Robin, who had been much excited, wiped the night-dew from his brow, and sighed heavily, as having rid himself of that which weighed upon his conscience.

"One word more, young man—those who hear the Protector's wishes, and in some degree can draw conclusions as to his projects—if—mark ye well—if they act not upon them, if they agree not [287]

with them, they are seldom of long life."

"I understand your Highness."

"To your cell——"

Overpowered and heart-stricken, for he hoped to have been granted speech of the Cavalier, Robin obeyed the mandate, and the Protector of England passed alone along his palace-roof.

"Ever in the ascendant!" he said, casting his eyes on the star of his nativity, that shone brightest among the countless multitudes of night. "High, high, highest, and most powerful," he repeated, gazing upon his favourite planet with that extraordinary mixture of superstition and enthusiasm which formed so prominent a part of his most singular character. "I never saw thee brighter" (he continued) "save upon Naseby-field, when I watched thy pathway in the heavens, while hundreds of devoted soldiers couched around me, waiting the morrow's fight. I prayed beneath thy beam, which, as the Lord permitted, fell right upon my breast, glistening upon the bright and sturdy iron that openly, and in the sight of all men, covered it then—pouring into my heart courage, and confidence into my soul! Would that I might sleep the sleep of death upon that same field, that you might again watch over this poor body which now panteth for repose! Yea, there, under the turf of Naseby, shall my grave be made; there shall I sleep quietly—quietly—quietly—with thee to keep watch above the bed in which this poor body shall be at peace, when the ever-restless spirit is with Him whose right hand led me through the furnace, and made me what I am. Shine on still, bright star, even to the fulness of thy splendour; yea, the fulness of thy splendour, which is not yet come. Ah! well do I remember how you lingered in the grey dawn of morning, eager to behold my glory—my exceeding triumph upon that eventful field; and thou hast seen me greater than I dreamed of, great as I can be—or if I can be greater, to thee all is known, yea, all of the future as well as of the past is known to thee."

And as he walked along, and again and again traversed the leaded space, his step was as the step of war and victory; but suddenly it lingered, and came more heavily, and his foot was more slowly raised, and his eyes, that so lately drank in the rays of his own star with so much exultation, fell upon the spot where the little deformed prisoner, even Robin Hays, of the Gull's Nest Crag, was incarcerated. Again he spoke: "Complimented by the subtle Frenchman, feared by the cunning Spaniard, caressed by the temperate Dutch, knelt to by the debased Portuguese, honoured by the bigoted Pope, holding the reins of England—of Europe—of the world, in these hands—the father of many children—have I so true-hearted a friend, as to suffer the scale of his own interests to turn in the air, my life weighing so much the more in the balance? Truly my heart warmed at his fidelity; it is worth all price, yet no price that I can offer will purchase it. In my youth a vision said I should be greatest in this kingdom. Greatest I am, and yet I may be greater; but will a name, the name at which I scorned, increase my power? He from whom I took that name was more beloved than I. Oh, 'tis a fearful game, this game of kingdoms! crowns, ay, and bloody ones, bloody crowns for foot-balls! while treachery, dark, cunning, slippery treachery, stands by with many a mask to mock and foil our finest sporting! God to my aid! Now that success has broken down all opposition, I am in the face, the very teeth of my strongest temptations; forbid, O Lord! that they should conquer me, when I have conquered all things else! God to my aid! One foot upon the very throne from which I—not I alone—praise Heaven for that—not I alone, but many dragged him——!" Again for a brief time he stood with folded arms, his back leaning against a turret; and afterwards his step was quick and agitated, and much he doubtless meditated upon the crown which he well knew a strong party of the parliament would tender for his acceptance; and then he paused and muttered as before. "My children princes! May be wedded to the mightiest! But will they? Stiff-necked and stubborn! There is but one who loves me—only one on whom I doat, and she, like all things loved and lovely, fading from before mine eyes, as the soft mist fades from the brow of some harsh and rugged mountain, which is shrouded, and softened, and fertilised before the proud sun climbed the highest arch of heaven!—Ah! the sentry at the outward gate is sleeping. Let him rest on, poor wretch. I cannot sleep. And there's a light in the apartment of my Lord Broghill: perhaps he writes to his friend Ormond. I had him there; how pale he grew! I have them—know them all! could crush them in this hand; yet God knows I would not; it has had enough to do with that already."

And then sobs, sobs that came from the Protector's heart, burst from his lips, and he fell into one of those passions of tears and prayers to which of late he had been often subject. It soon subsided, and the man so extolled and admired by the one party—so abused and vilified by the other—so feared by all—retired in silence and in sorrow to his couch.

CHAPTER XV.

What is the existence of man's life?

It is a weary solitude
Which doth short joys, long woes include;
The world the stage, the prologue tears,
The acts, vain hope and varied fears;
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death.

"And it's come to this, is it?" exclaimed Solomon Grundy, who sat enthroned like a monarch of good cheer among the beings of his own creation in the buttery at Cecil Place—"And it's come to this, is it? and there's to be no feasting; a wedding-fast in lieu of a wedding-feast! No banquet in the hall—no merry-making in the kitchen! I might have let that poor shrivelled preacher cut into the centre of my pasty, and ravish the heart of my deer; stuffed, as it is, with tomatoes and golden pippins! he might have taken the doves unto his bosom, and carried the frosted antlers on his head; they would have been missed by no one, save thee, Solomon Grundy. And those larded fowl! that look like things of snow and not of flesh; even my wife praised them, and said, —'Grundy,' said she—'Solomon, my spouse,' said she, 'you have outdone yourself:—that *was* praise. But what signifies praise to me now? My master wo'n't eat—my mistress wo'n't eat—Barbara, she wo'n't eat! I offered her a pigeon-pie; she said, 'No, I thank ye, Solomon,' and passed away. That I should ever live to see any one pass away from a pigeon-pie of my making! Sir Willmott Burrell, he wo'n't eat, but calls for wine and strong waters in his dressing-room: it's a queer bridal! Ah! there's one of the Lady Cromwell's women, perhaps she will eat; it is heart-breaking to think that such food as this"—and he cast his eye over a huge assemblage of sundries, that [290]

"Coldly furnish'd forth the marriage tables"—

"such food as this should be consumed by vulgar brutes, who would better relish a baron of beef and a measure of double-dub, than a trussed turkey and a flagon of canary."

Solomon, however, succeeded in prevailing upon Mistress Maud to enter, and then had but little difficulty in forcing upon her some of the confections, though all his efforts could not extort a compliment to his culinary accomplishments.

"They are wonderful, considering they are country made," she said, after discussing a third tartlet; "but there must be great allowance for your want of skill; and you ought to esteem yourself fortunate (I'll take another jelly) that there is to be no banquet; for—though it is evil to give one's mind to fleshly tastes or creature comforts—these things would hardly be deemed fit for a second-table wedding at Whitehall!"

Solomon was deeply mortified. He had great veneration for court, but he had greater for his own talent, and he loved not to hear it called in question: he therefore scanned the waiting-maid after his peculiar mode, and then drawing himself up, stroked his chin, and replied, "That great men had sat at his master's table, and had, he was well assured, praised his skill in words which could not be repeated—that Lady Frances herself had condescended to ask his method of blanching almonds, and lauded his white chicken soup; and that he should not dread being commanded to serve a banquet unto the Lord Protector himself."

Mistress Maud sneered, and examined a third jelly, which she was reluctantly compelled to quit by a summons from her lady.

"What robe would your ladyship desire?" she inquired of Lady Frances, whose eyes were red with weeping, and who appeared astonishingly careless upon a point that usually occupied much of her attention. "Would your ladyship like the white and silver, with the pearl loopings and diamond stomacher?" [291]

"What need to trouble me as to the robe?" at length she replied with an irritability of manner to which she too often yielded. "Why do I entertain two lazy hussies, but to see after my robings, and save me the trouble of thinking thereon?—Go to!—you have no brain."

Maud and her assistant laid out the dress and the jewels, yet Lady Frances was ill satisfied.

"Said I not that the stomacher needed lengthening?—The point is not a point, but a round!—Saw one ever the like?—It is as square as a dove's tail, instead of tapering off like a parrot's!"

"Did your ladyship mean," said the elder of the bewildered girls, "that the stomacher was square or round?"

She perfectly agreed with her mistress in thinking a stomacher a matter of great importance, but was most sadly perplexed that Lady Frances should so markedly object to that which she had so warmly praised on a former occasion.

"Square or round!" repeated Lady Frances impetuously—"neither:—it is to be peaked—thus!"

The poor maid, in her eagerness to hold the stomacher for her lady's inspection, let it fall—the principal jewel-band caught in a hook, and was scattered in fragments upon the ground. This was more than Lady Frances could bear, and she turned both women out of the room, commanding them to send Barbara in their stead. The little Puritan had been weeping plentifully, but when she came, Lady Frances appeared to have forgotten her wrath, and greeted her with much gentleness.

"Your mistress, my pretty maid—is she dressed?"

"No, my lady."

"See what havoc these girls have wrought with my stomacher! Pick me up the jewels, Barbara, if

your mistress can spare you such brief time."

"I was not with her, my lady: she said she would call when I was wanted. I can hear her in this chamber."

While Barbara was gathering the jewels, her tears fell fast upon them. Lady Frances observed it, and smiling said,—

"You are gemming my ornaments, setting them in crystal instead of gold."

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"I can't help my tears, dear lady, when I think how she weeps. Oh, it is a mournful thing to see an oak bend like a willow, or a stately rose low as a little wild flower! Something has crushed her heart, and I cannot help her. I would lay down my life to make her happy, if I knew but how! The very dogs hang their tails, and steal across the rooms they used to gambol in! Ah, madam, she has wealth, and rank, and all that a poor girl would call great glory. Yet her step is like the step of an aged woman, and her head is bent, though not with the weight of years. I think of a little poem I knew when I was a child. I believe I heard it before I could speak the words thereof, yet it is so perfect on my mind. Did you ever hear it, madam? it is called 'The Lady of Castile.'"

"Never; but I should like to hear it, Barbara, while you hook on the diamonds those careless minxes scattered so heedlessly. What tune is it to?"

"I know not the tune, madam; nor could I sing it now if I did. I often wonder how the birds can sing when they lose their mates; though their notes are not, as at other times, cheery; and no wonder. It's very cruel to kill poor innocent birds."

"Let me hear the ballad, Barbara."

"I fear me, it has gone out of my head; but, madam, it began thus, something after a popish fashion; but no harm, no great harm in it:—

"The lady was of noble birth,
And fairest in Castile,
And many suitors came to her——"

And many suitors came to her," repeated Barbara. "I forget the last line, but it ended with 'feel.' I am sorry, madam, that I have lost the words, quite lost them to-day, though I could have said them all yesterday. But the lady had many sweethearts, as my lady had, and like my lady sent them all away; only she was over nice. And she made up her mind at last to marry one whose name was ill thought of, and her wedding day was fixed; and the night before, as she was sleeping, who should visit her (it is here comes the Popery) but the Virgin? And the Virgin gave her her hand, and led her to a beautiful grove; and this grove was filled with the most beautiful birds in the world; and the Virgin said to her, take any one of these birds that you choose, and keep it as your own; and you may walk to the end of the grove and take any one you meet; but you must choose it before you come back, and not come back without one; you must not have the power to take one after you begin to return. And the bird you take will be lord of your estates, and of yourself, and the eyes of all Castile will be upon him. And the lady was very beautiful, as beautiful as my lady, only not good or well-taught like her. If she had been, she would not have believed in the Virgin. So the lady walked on and on, and the sweet birds were singing to her, and courting her, and striving to win her favour all the way. They were such birds as I never heard of but in that song—with diamond eyes, and ruby wings, and feet of pearl; but she found some fault with every one she met, and fancied she might find a better before her walk was done. And, behold! at last she got to the end of the grove without having made any choice; and what think you, my lady, sat there? why a black vulture, a wicked, deceitful, cruel bird. And she was forced to take him. She had passed by many good and beautiful, and their sweet songs still sounded in her ears; yet she was forced to take that hideous and cruel bird. Only think, my lady, how horrid! The poor lady of Castile awoke, and began thinking what the dream could mean; and after praying awhile, she remembered how much she wished in her sleep that she had taken the first bird she saw. And it brought back to her mind the companion of her youth, who had loved her long, and she likened this gallant gentleman to the sweet bird of her dream. So she put away him whose name was ill thought of, and wedded the knight who had loved her long. And so the song finishes with

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"Happy lady of Castile!"

"And a good ending too," said Lady Frances; "I wish our wedding was likely to terminate so favourably."

"Amen to that prayer!" said Barbara, earnestly, and added, shuddering as she spoke, "It is very odd, madam, but one of your ladies, who was arraying the communion-table, scared away a great toad, whose bloated sides were leaning on the step, and, she says, on the very spot where Sir Willmott Burrell must kneel to-night.—Hush! that was his door which shut at the end of the corridor—the very sound of his foot-fall makes me shudder—the Lord preserve us! It is astonishing, my lady, the wisdom of some dumb animals: Crisp can't bear the sight of him; but Crisp is very knowledgeable!"

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"There will be another miserable match," thought Lady Frances; "that pretty modest creature will sacrifice herself to that deformed piece of nature's workmanship; even his nasty cur, long-backed and bandy, shares her favour: I will beg her of Constantia, take her to court, and get her a proper

husband.—Crisp is an ill-favoured puppy, Barbara," she said aloud, "and the sooner you get rid of him the better. You must come to court with me, and be one of my bower-girls for a season; it will polish you, and cure your Shepey prejudices. I shall ask Mistress Cecil to let you come."

Barbara thought first of Robin, then of her father; and was about to speak of the latter, when she remembered her promise of secrecy.

"Thank your ladyship; a poor girl, like me had better remain where—where—she is likely to bide. A field-mouse cannot climb a tree like a gay squirrel, my lady, though the poor thing is as happy on the earth as the fine squirrel among the branches, and, mayhap, a deal safer: and as to Crisp! beauty is deceitful—but honesty is a thing to lean upon—the creature's heart is one great lump of faithfulness."

"You must get a courtly husband, Barbara."

"Your ladyship jests; and so would a courtly husband, at one like me. Mayhap I may never live to marry; but if I did, I should not like my husband to be ashamed of me.—The jewels are all on, my lady!"

"Should you not like to be as my maidens are?"

"Thank you, madam, no: for they have too little to do, and that begets sorrow. Were my lady happy, and—and—But that is my lady's call. Shall I send your women, madam?"

"I have often thought and often said," murmured Lady Frances, as Barbara meekly closed the door, "that nothing is so perplexing to the worldly as straight forward honesty and truth. It is not to be intimidated, nor bribed nor flattered, nor destroyed—not destroyed even by death. I would give half my dowry—alas! do *I* talk of dowry?—great as my father is, he may be low as others, who have been as great. And now I must accompany my sweet friend to the altar on which she is to be sacrificed. Alas! better would be for her if death were to meet and claim her upon the threshold of the chapel she is about to enter!"

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CHAPTER XVI.

Nought is there under heaven's wide
hollownesse
That moves more dear compassion of
mind,
Than beautie brought t'unworthie
wretchednesse
Through envious snares or fortune's
freaks unkinde.
* * * * *
To think how causeless of her own accord
This gentle damzell, whom I write upon,
Should plunged be in such affliction,
Without all hope of comfort or reliefe.

SPENSER.

"I am driven to it, I am driven to it!" repeated Sir Willmott Burrell, as he attired himself in his gayest robes, while his eyes wandered restlessly over the dial of a small clock that stood upon the dressing-table. "No one has seen her—and I have forced Constantia to wed at six, instead of seven. Once wed—why, there's an end of it; and if the worst should come, and Zillah persecutes me still, I can but swear her mad, and this will terminate her fitful fever." He placed a small pistol within his embroidered dress, and girded his jewelled sword more tightly than before. "The minutes linger more tardily than ever," he continued: "full fifteen to the time.—Would it were over! I am certain Cromwell would not interfere, if once she was my wife; he loves her honour better than the Jew's."

Again he drew forth the pistol and examined it, and then replaced it as before—again girded his sword; and having drunk copiously of some ardent spirit, a flask of which had been placed near him, he descended to the library.

The only person in the apartment was Sir Robert Cecil: he was leaning, in the very attitude in which we first met him, against the high and dark chimney-piece of marble; but, oh, how altered! His hand trembled with emotion as he held it to Sir Willmott, who took it with that air of easy politeness and cordiality of manner he could so well assume.

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"The hour is nearly arrived," said the old man, "and you will become the husband of my only child. Treat her kindly—oh, as you ever hope to have children of your own, treat her kindly: be to her what I ought to have been—a protector! Sir Willmott, I cannot live very long; say only that you will treat her kindly. Whatever I have shall be yours: you will be kind, will you not?" And he looked at Sir Willmott with an air of such perfect childishness, that the knight imagined his mind had given way.

"Sit down, my good sir; compose yourself—you are much agitated—I pray you be composed."

"Broad lands are a great temptation," continued Sir Robert, with the same appearance of wavering intellect—"Broad lands and gold are great temptations, and yet they do not make one happy. Stoop your head—closer—closer—there:—now I will tell you a secret, but you must not tell it to Constantia, because it would give her pain—I have never been happy since I possessed them! Stop, I will tell you all, from beginning to end. My brother, Sir Herbert—I was not Sir Robert then—my brother, I say—"

"Some other time, my dear sir," interrupted Burrell, whose apprehension was confirmed; "you must cheer up, and not think of these matters: you must take some wine." He filled a goblet from a silver flagon that stood with refreshments on the table; but the baronet's hand was so unsteady, that Sir Willmott was obliged to hold the cup to his lips. "Now, my dear sir, collect your thoughts; you know all things are safe and secret: there is no possibility of your ever being otherwise than beloved and respected."

"Not by my child," said the unhappy man two or three times, twisting his hands convulsively—"Not by my child, my pride, my Constantia! Her kiss is as cold as ice upon my brow; and I thought—perhaps 'twas but a dream, for I have been sleeping a little—I thought she wiped her lips after she kissed me. Do you think she would destroy the taste of her father's kiss?"

"Most certainly not: she loves you as well and as dearly as ever."

"I cannot believe it, Sir Willmott, I cannot believe it;—besides, there's no safety for me till Hugh Dalton's pardon is granted." [297]

"Damn him!" growled Burrell, and the curse grated through his closed teeth—"Damn him, deeply, doubly, everlastingly!"

"Ay, so he will be damned," replied Sir Robert, in a calm, quiet tone, "and we shall all be damned, except Constantia; but he must be pardoned—on earth I mean—for all that."

Burrell looked daggers at Sir Robert Cecil, but he heeded them not, saw them not. Sir Willmott's first suspicion was right—the injured were avenged! The unhappy man retained his memory, though his words and actions were no longer under the control of reason: his conscience lived on—his intellect had expired. "It is even so," thought Sir Willmott the next moment: "and now, Constantia, despite your scorn, your hatred, your contempt, I do pity you."

Burrell understood not how superior was Constance in every respect, either to his pity or his praise.

Exactly as the clock struck six, the doors at the bottom of the room were thrown open, and Lady Frances Cromwell entered with her friend; Barbara and the waiting-maidens of Lady Frances followed; but nothing could exceed Burrell's displeasure and mortification, when he perceived that his bride was habited in the deepest mourning. Her hair, braided from her brow, hung in long and luxuriant tresses down her back, and were only confined by a fillet of jet. Upon her head was a veil of black gauze, that fell over her entire figure; and her dress was of black Lucca silk, hemmed and bordered with crape. She advanced steadily to her father, without noticing her bridegroom, and, throwing up her veil, said, in a low voice,—

"Father, I am ready."

Burrell, who feared that even in the very brief space which now remained, Sir Robert would betray the weakness of his mind, stepped forward, and would have taken her hand; but she put him from her, with a single gesture, saying,—

"Not yet, sir, I am still *all* my father's.—Father, I am ready."

It was pitiable to see the vacant eye which Sir Robert fixed upon her pale, fine face, and most painful to observe the look of anxious inquiry with which she regarded him. [298]

"Dear father," she exclaimed at length, sinking on her knees, "dear father, speak to me."

The gesture and the voice recalled him for a little to himself. He kissed her cheek affectionately, and, rising with much of the dignity of former years, pressed her to his bosom.

"Forgive me, child;—my Lady Frances, I crave your pardon—I am myself again—I was a trifle indisposed, but it is over. Fill me some wine," he commanded to the attendants, who gathered in the doorway—"Yes—up—full—more full; I drink—" he continued, with a gaiety of manner suiting ill with his grey hairs and pallid face—"I drink to the happiness and prosperity of my daughter and her bridegroom!" He quaffed to the bottom of the cup, then flung it from him.

"Now go we to the bridal," he said, leading Constantia forward, while Sir Willmott conducted Lady Frances, who hardly condescended to touch the hand he presented to her. As they passed an open court, leading to the little chapel, Sir Robert stopped abruptly, and addressing his daughter, said,—

"But I have not blessed you yet; you would not like to die without my blessing."

"Die, my father!" repeated Constance.

"I pray your pardon, child," he replied, in a half muttering, half speaking voice—"I was thinking of

your mother: but now I quite remember me, this is a bridal," and he hurried her forward to the altar where the clergyman stood ready to receive them.

"Sir Willmott Burrell," said Constantia to the knight, as he placed himself at her side, "my father is ill, and I cannot think upon what his malady may be with any thing like calmness; if what I dread is true, you will not force me from him."

"Let the ceremony proceed, and, villain as I know you think me, I will not oppose any plan you may form for him," was Burrell's reply. Lady Frances stood close beside her friend; and Barbara, in her white robes and simple beauty, headed the group of servants who crowded round the steps.

The clergyman commenced the service according to the form of the Established Church, and concluded the opening address without any interruption. He then proceeded to the solemn and beautiful appeal made as to the liberty of those who present themselves at the altar. [299]

"I require and charge you both, (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed,) that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it?"

At this point Sir Robert Cecil, his enfeebled mind still more relaxed after the strong effort made at self-possession, and weakened and heated by the wine he had taken, exclaimed,—

"Those two joined together in matrimony! It is impossible—she has not on a wedding-garment! What does she here?" Then looking round, he left his daughter's side, and seizing Barbara's hand, dragged her to the altar, saying, "This must be our bride—our lady bride—no one would wed in sables."

It is impossible to describe the consternation which this circumstance occasioned; but the baronet had hardly uttered the words, when the window that Barbara had taken so much pains in adorning, was darkened by a figure springing into and standing on the open casement, and the shrill voice of the Jewess Zillah shouted, in a tone that was heard most audibly over the murmurs of the little crowd, and echoed fearfully along the chancel, "Justice—vengeance!" and, suiting the action to her words, she discharged a pistol with but too steady an aim at the innocent Barbara, whom on this occasion, as before, she had mistaken for her rival, Constantia Cecil.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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VOLUME THE THIRD.

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CHAPTER I.

Behold!
What blessings ancient prophesie
foretold,
Bestow'd on her in death. She past away
So sweetly from the world, as if her clay
Laid onely downe to slumber. Then
forbeare
To let on her blest ashes fall a teare.
But, if th'art too much woman, softly
weepe
Lest grief disturbe the silence of her
sleepe.

HABINGTON.

Barbara, the young, the beautiful, the innocent Barbara, fell, as the bullet struck her, upon the arm of the imbecile Sir Robert Cecil. It is impossible adequately to describe the scene that followed. Constantia caught the maiden from her father, who shrank at the sight of blood, and drew himself gradually away, like a terrified child from a frightful object, while his daughter, kneeling, supported the stricken girl upon her bosom. After the deed was done, the Jewess stood for a moment with an air of exultation upon the ledge of the oriel window, and then disappeared; but Sir Willmott, who saw that the time was come when, if ever, his prey was to be secured, rushed to the open door, with a view to seize her as she descended, and at once rid himself of all danger by her destruction. At the instant his evil purpose was about to be accomplished, his course was arrested, as he reached the postern, by a powerful arm, which grappled at his throat. The stentorian voice of Dalton shouted "Villain!" so loudly, that many, who had crowded round

the dying Barbara, turned in alarm to ascertain who spoke.

"Hinder me not," said Sir Willmott, gasping for breath, "but help me to secure the murderer—the girl is slain!"

"God of Heaven!—what girl?—Who was it fired?" exclaimed the Skipper.—"What means this?" he continued, relaxing his grasp, and advancing up the chancel with a beating heart and a rapid step. Burrell took advantage of the momentary reprieve, and was hastily proceeding round to the window, when the tramp of many horses came upon his ear. The steel caps and polished blades of a detachment of Cromwell's own Ironsides glittered amid the ruins and trees that surrounded the chapel, and his progress was again stayed by no other than Colonel John Jones.

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"Sir Willmott Burrell," said the Puritan soldier, in a slow and deliberate tone, "his Highness commands your immediate presence at the house of Hampton, profanely denominated Hampton Court; and I have his Highness's commands also to prevent the taking place of any union between you and Mistress Constantia Cecil."

"It has taken place," interrupted Burrell, turning pale, and trembling.

"It has *not* taken place," interrupted in her turn Lady Frances, whose habitual and active kindness had prompted her to seek assistance for Barbara, so that she encountered the troop under the command of her step-uncle—"I say it has not taken place—half a ceremony is no marriage. But have you any with you skilled in surgery? for here has been a most foul murder: come with me into the chapel, and behold!" Lady Frances returned, followed by Colonel Jones, Sir Willmott as a prisoner, and the greater number of the soldiery.

Constantia Cecil, still kneeling, supported Barbara, whose life was ebbing fast, as the blood trickled from a small wound, where the ball had entered a little above her right shoulder. Her eyes, gentle and expressive as ever, were fixed upon her father, who stood speechless and powerless by her side. The women gathered, weeping, around. The good clergyman approached to offer spiritual consolation to the departing girl. Hugh Dalton had heard the story of the fatal act repeated by at least a dozen persons, who were ignorant that they spoke in the presence of the poor maiden's parent; but he heeded not their words; he did not even ask how or by whom the dreadful deed was done. Enough to him was the certainty that his daughter was dying, dying before him—that she, to whom his heart had clung through evil report and good report, in sorrow and in sin, but always with confidence and hope, as the star that would at length guide him into a haven of peace and joy, which had been rapidly growing out of repentance; that she, his only, his beloved, his most excellent, and most unspotted child, would, within an hour, become as the clay on which he trod—that her mild, cheerful, and patient spirit, was passing to the God who gave it—unrepiningly passing; for no groan, no murmur came from her lips—lips that had never been stained by deceit or falsehood. Still her eyes rested on her parent, and once she endeavoured to stretch forth her weak arms towards him, but they fell powerless at her side; while he, still mute and motionless as a statue, seemed rooted to the earth. The clergyman spoke a few words of an approaching eternity. It was only then the Buccaneer replied; without a tear, without a sob; or any outward demonstration of sorrow: though all who heard him felt that the words came from a man whose sole sensation was despair.

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"No need, sir, to speak so to her. She knows about these things far more than we do. Hush! for the sake of God, and let me hear her breathing."

"Some ten of you look out for the murderer," commanded the stern voice of Colonel Jones, who had by this time received the whole account from the Lady Frances.

"You will not be able to find her," exclaimed the alarmed Burrell, dreading that, if she were secured, she might communicate the secret she still retained. "You will not, I assure you, be able to find her," he repeated, as the sturdy soldiers prepared to obey their officer's command.

"You know the person, then, Sir Willmott," said Colonel Jones, coldly. Burrell looked abashed. "Mistress Constantia will, I hope, forgive me," added the rough soldier, walking towards the steps of the altar, where the lady of Cecil Place still supported the fading form of the poor faithful maiden she had so truly loved—"Mistress Constantia will forgive one of her father's oldest friends for thus breaking in upon and disturbing a most solemn ceremony. His Highness has commanded her bridegroom to be brought before him, and the marriage to be stayed, inasmuch as he charges Sir Willmott Burrell with being already wedded!"

The maiden to whom he spoke looked up, and gazed into the countenance of the speaker; but it would have been difficult to determine the nature of her feelings, save by the cold shudder that seemed to pass over her whole frame.

On Sir Robert Cecil the information made no impression, for he understood it not, though he smiled and bowed several times to his old companion in arms. But the Buccaneer started, roused for a moment from the one absorbing sorrow of his whole soul, but still heedless of the danger he encountered in thus standing face to face with a troop of the hardiest soldiers of the Commonwealth. Turning eagerly towards their officer, he exclaimed,—

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"Ha! it is known!—then the papers were received."

"Traitor! double traitor! I have ye now!" shouted Burrell, presenting his pistol at the head of the Buccaneer. Instantly Barbara, as with a last effort, sprang from the arms of the Lady Cecil, and threw herself on her father's bosom. The effort was not needed, for the weapon was snatched

from the villain's hand. He had now to encounter the reproof of Colonel Jones.

"Sir Willmott, I thought I could have taken your word, that you had no arms except your sword. I was mistaken."

"That fellow is the famous Buccaneer, Hugh Dalton, upon whose head a price is set. Arrest him, Colonel Jones!" exclaimed Burrell, skilfully turning the attention from himself to the Skipper, who stood embracing the lifeless form of his daughter—gazing upon eyes that were now closed, and upon lips parted no longer by the soft breath of as sweet a maiden as ever was born of woman.

"Are you the Malignant of whom he speaks?" inquired the stern colonel.

"He is the unhappy father of that murdered girl," interposed Constantia.

"Whoever refuses to seize him deserves a traitor's death," reiterated Sir Willmott.

The troopers stood with their hands on their swords, awaiting their officer's commands.

The Buccaneer turned fiercely round, still pressing his child to his bosom with one arm, and holding a pistol within the other hand.

"I am," he said in a bold and fearless, but not an arrogant tone, "I am he whom that accursed villain names. But ye had better not rouse a desperate man. Dare not to touch me; at your peril stay my course. Colonel Jones, tell the Protector of England, that Hugh Dalton craves no pardon now. This, this was my hope—my pride; for her I would have been honest, and well thought of! Behold! she stiffens on my arm. She is nothing now but clay! Yet, by the God that made her! no churlish earth shall sully this fair form. She was as pure as the blue sea that cradled her first months of infancy; and, mark ye, when the rays of the young sun rest upon the ocean, at the morning-watch, by my own ship's side, in the bosom of the calm waters, shall she find a grave. I will no more trouble England—no more—no more! Gold may come dancing on the waves, even to my vessel's prow, I will not touch it. Cromwell may take me if he will, but not till I perform for my good and gentle child the only rite that ever she demanded from me."

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Even as the tiger-mother passes through an Indian crowd, bearing the cherished offspring of her fierce but affectionate nature, which some stray arrow has destroyed—terrible in her anguish and awful in her despair—her foes appalled at her sufferings and the bravery of her spirit, though still panting for her destruction—their arrows are on the string—yet the untaught, but secret and powerful respect for the great source of our good as well as of our evil passions—Nature—works within them, and she passes on, unmolested, to her lair:—even so did Dalton pass along, carrying his daughter, as she were a sleeping infant, through the armed warriors, who made way, as if unconscious of what they did;—some, who were themselves fathers, pressed their mailed fingers on their eyes, while others touched their helmets, and raised them a little from their brows.

"Colonel Jones," exclaimed the enraged Burrell, "you will have to answer for this to a high power. The Protector would give its weight in gold for the head of that man; and the weight of that again for a knowledge of his haunts."

"Sir Willmott," was the soldier's reply, who, now that Dalton was really gone, began to fear he had done wrong in permitting his escape, and therefore resolved to brave it haughtily, "I can answer for my own actions. Methinks you are cold and hot as best serves your purpose!" Then turning abruptly from him, he added, "We will but intrude upon the hospitality of this mourning bride," glancing at Constantia's dress, and smiling grimly, "until some tidings be obtained of the person who has perpetrated this horrid murder; and having refreshed our horses, return forthwith; for his Highness is impatient of delay, and 'tis good fifty miles to London. Our orders were, Sir Willmott, that you hold no communion with any; so that, if you have aught to say to Mistress Cecil, it must be said at once."

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"I can only offer my protestations against this tyrannical—ay, sir, I speak boldly, and repeat it—this tyrannical mandate—and assure the fair dame that I consider her my lawful wife."

Constantia made no reply. Colonel Jones then gave the Lady Frances a slip of paper from the Protector, which merely stated that he thought she ought to remain with her friend, until the mysterious rumour was either cleared up or confirmed. Lady Frances right joyfully assented; and Constantia, overpowered by a multitude of contending feelings, led the way with her father, who seemed as passive and as uninterested in the events of that most eventful hour, as if he were a child of a twelvemonth old. The soldiers who had been sent to reconnoitre soon returned, for night was closing upon them, and they had searched the ruins of Minster, and galloped over the wild hills of Shepey, without being able to trace the misguided Jewess. Colonel Jones could, therefore, do nothing more than advise Sir Michael Livesey (the sheriff, who resided, as we have stated, at Little Shurland) of the circumstance that had occurred, and send off to King's Ferry, Sheerness, Queenborough, and all the little hamlets along the coast, information of the melancholy event, with orders to prevent any stranger, male or female, from quitting the island, until his Highness's future pleasure was known.

The murder of Lady Cecil's favourite was calculated to excite strong feelings among all classes; for the poor had long considered the residence of so good a family on their island as a blessing from Heaven; more particularly, as the former possessor, Sir Herbert, Sir Robert's elder brother, only lived at Cecil Place occasionally, being of too gay, too cavalier a temperament, to bide long in so solitary a dwelling. He had been warmly attached to the house of Stuart; and while his younger brother sought, and made friends of the Parliamentary faction, he remained steady in

his loyalty, and firm in his attachment to the unfortunate and unpopular Charles. Upon this topic we may hereafter treat: at present, we have to do with the living, not the dead.

We cannot now intrude upon the privacy of either Lady Frances or Constantia; we must content ourselves with simply stating that Colonel Jones took his departure, leaving, at Lady Frances's request, a guard of six soldiers at Cecil Place—a precaution he felt justified in adopting when he had taken late events into consideration, and was made acquainted with the miserable condition of Sir Robert's mind, to whom also he undertook to send immediate medical advice. The servants, particularly Lady Frances's women, assembled in the great hall, and with many tears, real and unfeigned tears, lamented the loss of poor Barbara—talked of the mystery of her birth, and the sudden and almost supernatural appearance of her father. Greatly did they blame themselves for permitting him to remove the body, "not knowing," as they said, "but he would give it heathenish and not Christian burial." [307]

After a little while they conversed upon the malady that had overtaken their master, and then hints and old tales were thought of, and almost forgotten rumours of Sir Herbert and his revelries repeated; and as the lamps burned still more dim, and the embers of the fire dropped one by one into that grey and blue dust that heralds their perfect decay, the legends of the isle were rehearsed—How Sir Robert de Shurland, a great knight and a powerful thane, being angry with a priest, buried him alive in Minster churchyard; and then, fearing the king's displeasure, and knowing he was at the Nore, swam on a most faithful horse to his majesty from the island, to crave pardon for his sin; and the king pardoned him; and then, right joyfully, he swam back to the land, where, on his dismounting, he was accosted by a foul witch, who prophesied that the horse which had saved him should be the cause of his death; but, in order to prevent the accomplishment of the prophecy, he slew the faithful animal upon the beach;—how that some time afterwards he passed by the carcass, and striking a bone with his foot, it entered the flesh, which mortified, and the tyrant died; in testimony whereof the tomb stands in Minster church until this day, in the south wall, under a pointed arch, where he lies, leaning on his shield and banner, and at his feet a page, while behind him is carved the horse's head that caused his death:—and, moreover, how his spirit is seen frequently leaping from turret to turret of the house of Great Shurland, pursued by a phantom steed! Of such like legends did they talk. Then they thanked God that their lady was not likely to be Sir Willmott's wife, and spoke of Dalton and his daring, and many of the old servants shuddered. [308]

Then again they reverted to Barbara, and the women crept more closely together, like a flock of frightened sheep, when one older than the others affirmed that no true maid could ever rest in the ocean's bed, unless a Bible were slung about her neck; and as Dalton, of course, had no Bible, their beloved Barbara could have no rest, but must wander to all eternity on the foam of the white waves, or among the coral-rocks that pave the southern seas, or sigh in the shrouds of a doomed ship. But again, some other said, as she was so pure a Christian, perhaps that would save her from such a fate; and one of the soldiers who sat with them reproved their folly, and lectured, and prayed for their edification, with much zeal and godliness; and when he had concluded, the thought came upon them that the Reverend Jonas Fleetword had not been there since the earliest morning, when somebody declared he was seen talking with Sir Willmott Burrell near the Gull's Nest, and fear for the preacher came over them all—why, they could not tell.

CHAPTER II.

Poesy! thou sweet'st content
That e'er Heaven to mortals lent,
Though they as a trifle leave thee
Whose dull thoughts cannot conceive
thee;
Though thou be to them a scorn
That to nought but earth are born;
Let my life no longer be
Than I am in love with thee.

GEORGE WITHER.

There are two things that to a marvellous degree bring people under subjection—moral and corporeal fear. The most dissolute are held in restraint by the influence of moral worth, and there are few who would engage in a quarrel, if they were certain that defeat or death would be the consequence. Cromwell obtained, and we may add, maintained his ascendancy over the people of England, by his earnest and continually directed efforts towards these two important ends. His court was a rare example of irreproachable conduct, from which all debauchery and immorality were banished; while such was his deep and intimate, though mysterious, acquaintance with every occurrence throughout the Commonwealth, its subjects had the certainty of knowing that, sooner or later, whatever crimes they committed would of a surety reach the ear of the Protector. His natural abilities must always have been of the highest order, though in the early part of his career he discovered none of those extraordinary talents that afterwards gained him so much applause, and worked so upon the affections of the hearers and standers by. His mind may be compared to one of those valuable manuscripts that had long been rolled up and kept hidden [309]

from vulgar eyes, but which exhibits some new proof of wisdom at each unfolding. It has been well said by a philosopher, whose equal the world has not known since his day, "that a place showeth the man." Of a certainty Cromwell had no sooner possessed the opportunity so to do, than he showed to the whole world that he was destined to govern. "Some men achieve greatness, some men are born to greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." With Cromwell, greatness was achieved. He was the architect of his own fortunes, owing little to, what is called, "chance," less to patronage, and still less to crime, if we except the one sad blot upon the page of his own history, as connected with that of his country. There appears in his character but a small portion of that which is evil, blended with much that is undoubtedly good. Although his public speeches were, for the most part, ambiguous—leaving others to pick out his meaning—or more frequently still, having no meaning to pick out—being words, words, words—strung of mouldy sentences, scriptural phrases, foolish exclamations, and such like; yet, when necessary, he showed that he could sufficiently command his style, delivering himself with so much energy, pith, propriety, and strength of expression, that it was commonly said of him, under such circumstances, "every word he spoke was a thing." But the strongest indication of his vast abilities was, the extraordinary tact with which he entered into, dissected, and scrutinised the nature of human kind. No man ever dived into the manners and minds of those around him with greater penetration, or more rapidly discovered their natural talents and tempers. If he chanced to hear of a person fit for his purpose, whether as a minister, a soldier, an artisan, a preacher, or a spy—no matter how previously obscure—he sent for him forthwith, and employed him in the way in which he could be made most useful, and answer best the purpose of his employer. Upon this most admirable system (a system in which, unhappily, he has had but few imitators among modern statesmen,) depended in a great degree his success. His devotion has been sneered at; but it has never been proved to have been insincere. With how much more show of justice may we consider it to have been founded upon a solid and upright basis, when we recollect that his whole outward deportment spoke its truth. Those who decry him as a fanatic ought to bethink themselves that *religion was the chivalry of the age in which he lived*. Had Cromwell been born a few centuries earlier, he would have headed the Crusades, with as much bravery, and far better results than our noble-hearted, but wrong-headed "Cœur de Lion." It was no great compliment that was passed on him by the French minister, when he called the Protector "the first captain of the age." His courage and conduct in the field were undoubtedly admirable: he had a dignity of soul which the greatest dangers and difficulties rather animated than discouraged, and his discipline and government of the army, in all respects, was the wonder of the world. It was no diminution of this part of his character that he was wary in his conduct, and that, after he was declared Protector, he wore a coat-of-mail concealed beneath his dress. Less caution than he made use of, in the place he held, and surrounded as he was by secret and open enemies, would have deserved the name of negligence. As to his political sincerity, which many think had nothing to do with his religious opinions, he was, to the full, as honest as the first or second Charles.

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Of a truth, that same sincerity, it would appear, is no kingly virtue! Cromwell loved justice as he loved his own life, and wherever he was compelled to be arbitrary, it was only where his authority was controverted, which, as things then were, it was not only right to establish for his own sake, but for the peace and security of the country over whose proud destinies he had been called to govern. "The dignity of the crown," to quote his own words, "was upon the account of the nation, of which the king was only the representative head, and therefore, the nation being still the same, he would have the same respect paid to his ministers as if he had been a king." England ought to write the name of Cromwell in letters of gold, when she remembers that, within a space of four or five years, he avenged all the insults that had been lavishly flung upon her by every country in Europe throughout a long, disastrous, and most perplexing civil war. Gloriously did he retrieve the credit that had been mouldering and decaying during two weak and discreditable reigns of nearly fifty years' continuance—gloriously did he establish and extend his country's authority and influence in remote nations—gloriously acquire the real mastery of the British Channel—gloriously send forth fleets that went and conquered, and never sullied the union-flag by an act of dishonour or dissimulation!

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Not a single Briton, during the Protectorate, but could demand and receive either reparation or revenge for injury, whether it came from France, from Spain, from any open foe or treacherous ally;—not an oppressed foreigner claimed his protection but it was immediately and effectually granted. Were things to be compared to this in the reign of either Charles? England may blush at the remembrance of the insults she sustained during the reigns of the first most amiable, yet most weak—of the second most admired, yet most contemptible—of these legal kings. What must she think of the treatment received by the Elector Palatine, though he was son-in-law to King James? And let her ask herself how the Duke of Rohan was assisted in the Protestant war at Rochelle, notwithstanding the solemn engagement of King Charles under his own hand! But we are treading too fearlessly upon ground on which, in our humble capacity, we have scarcely the right to enter. Alas! alas! the page of History is but a sad one! and the Stuarts and the Cromwells, the Roundheads and the Cavaliers, the pennons and the drums, are but part and parcel of the same dust—the dust we, who are made of dust, animated for a time by a living spirit, now tread upon! Their words, that wrestled with the winds and mounted on the air, have left no trace along that air whereon they sported;—the clouds in all their beauty cap our isle with their magnificence, as in those by-gone days;—the rivers are as blue, the seas as salt;—the flowers, those sweet things! remain fresh within our fields as when God called them into existence in Paradise—and are bright as ever. But the change is over us, as it has been over them: we, too, are passing. O England! what should this teach? Even three things—wisdom, justice, and mercy. Wisdom to watch ourselves, and then our rulers, so that we neither do nor

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suffer wrong;—justice to the memory of the mighty dead, whether born to thrones or footstools;—mercy, inasmuch as we shall deeply need it from our successors.

We must not longer trifle with or mingle among forbidden themes, but turn to that which lightens many a heart, and creates of its own power a magic world of pure and perfect enjoyment.

Many there were, before and during those troublous times, who, heedless of the turmoils that were taking place around them, sang, as birds will sometimes sing, during the pauses of a thunder-storm. We would fain con over the names of a few of those who live with the memories of peace, and hope, and love, and joy—as so many happy contrasts to the wars and intrigues, that sin, and its numberless and terrible attendants, have brought upon this cheerful, and beautiful, and abundantly gifted earth.

A blessing on sweet Poesy! whether she come to us mounted on the gallant war-horse, trumpet-tongued, awakening our souls and senses unto glory, hymning with Dryden some bold battle-strain that makes us crow of victories past, present, and to come;—or with a scholar's trim and tasselled cap, a flowing gown of raven hue, and many tales of Chaucer's—quaint, but pleasing—good reading under some old tree close by a quiet brook, where minnows sport and dart with silver flight beneath the broad-leaved lilies, whose white and yellow chalices are spread full to the cheerful heavens, wherein the sun rides like a monarch in his azure kingdom;—or, better still, mounted on a green dragon with glaring eyes and forked tongue, looking for encounter with some Christian knight, who, "full of sad feare and ghastrly dreariment," would nathless risk life, honour, all—for his faire ladie love. Beloved Spenser! age withers not thy beauty.

Or Poesy may come in the cool twilight, when the garish day is past, and the young modest flowers, which refused their perfume to the sun, that, with his hot and fiery beams, sought to command their incense, now welcome back the evening, and become prodigal of sweetness;—within some rustic temple, clustered with woodbine, where the robin or the tiny wren hath formed a nest of matchless skill and neat propriety, and trembles not at the approaching footstep, while the soft breath of heaven plays with those blossoms of the sun—the painted butterflies—[313] that fold their wings and fain would sleep till morning. There let her come, and with her bring more blessed children of the olden time,—

"Whose names
In Fame's eternal volume live for aye."

The gallant handsome Surrey, tutored by Love into our first, if not our sweetest sonneteer; and Michael Drayton, with his apt crest—Mercury's bright cap, blazoned with sunbeams. Old Fletcher, floating towards his Purple Island, in the same graceful bark that bears his more thoughtful, it may be sombre, brother Giles. Then, garlanded with the rich thistle in all its purple glory; the perfume of his braes, and burns, and heather, reeking amid his clustering hair; his cheerful plaid, and his gay bonnet, graced by the heron's plume; his voice subdued by sorrow, but still sweet and free, singing of "Sion's flowers"—Drummond of Hawthornden! welcome from bonny Scotland, herald of a line of poets, who fling their music on the breezy air, that floats along in melody.

Our gentle Lovelace! thee too I hail—beauty in all thy lines, so quaint yet graceful. A fopling poet though thou wert, dainty and perfumed, yet still a poet, sweet in a lady's bower, where all is fashioned as befits the place and time: a poet indeed! and, what is more, never wert thou turned from thy chosen path of duty by praise or purse—although a poet and poor all the days of thy most checkered life. Alas! must we contrast thee with the weathercock of the rhyming folk, bowing to kings, protector, lords, and all that could pay golden coin for his poesy? Many there be among the scribbling tribe who emulate a Waller's practice, and amble in his ill-chosen path; how few have the redeeming gift that was his so largely!

And thou must not be forgotten, "O rare Ben Jonson!" for whom a single sentence doth suffice. And him, "the melancholy Cowley!" let him come too, with his honeyed wisdom: it will be still the sweeter if we think upon his stern bitterness in prose. Let him reprove the muse to whom he owes his fame,—

"Thou who rewardest but with popular
breath,
———And that too after death:—"

let him reprove, yet not come without her. Ah! the poet is but a sorry politician after all.

Ye cannot do ill if ye pile the verdant turf breast high with those old masters; those mighty monarchs of sweet song,—

"Blessings be with them and eternal
praise,
The poets!"

Bring them all, all, from the ancient of days, who have gained this "praise eternal," to those of our own age, who have laboured for, and will also obtain it. And chiefly among such as have sweetly carolled among us—still more, if ye be young and warm-hearted, with the affections pure and true within you—bring the dear lays of a poet—a ladye poet—a poet who will hold rank among the best, when life shall have given place to immortality.—How gladly do I add the tribute

of admiration to the gift of friendship.—In her own eloquent words may we give our thoughts utterance.

"Methinks it is not much to die—
To die, and leave behind
A spirit in the hearts of men,
A voice amid our kind;
When Fame and Death, in unison,
Have given a thousand lives for one.

"Our thoughts, we live again in them,
Our nature's noblest part;
Our life in many a memory,
Our home in many a heart:
When not a lip that breathes our strain,
But calls us into life again."

But fail not, above all, to bring the one who comprehends the whole; whose name is to be found in every school-boy book, written in living letters—words that breathe; to whom the hearts of multitudes were as one most simple instrument, which he could tune and tone unto his pleasure. The birds taught him their language—the forest leaves had life within their veins, and talked with him of Nature's mysteries. The broad sea sent its homage by a thousand sprites, fresh from their coral beds, who watched him in his dreams, or by those sylvan glens wherein he wandered—riding the salt-sea foam, or the light spray of the wild cataract, they sung the melodies of river and of ocean into his soul. The beings of air, that, atom-like, float in the clearest ether, bathe in the liquid dew, or drink their nectar from the honey-bells of the wild heather bloom, called him their brother, and prated of their tricks in gay familiarity. Oh, world! art thou the self-same world that Shakspeare trod upon? [315]

And there's another too, who stands alone in his sublimity—who dared the mysteries of Paradise, and communed with angels—angels both of hell and heaven—a giant-master, yet a man of beauty, wisdom, simplicity, knowledge. Behold him as he sits, within the tapestried chamber at Hampton Court! 'Tis the same room in which the Protector sat last night; but how changed its aspect, just by the presence of that one man! How different is the feeling with which we regard men of great energy and men of great talent. Milton, blind—blind, powerless as to his actions, overwhelming in his genius, grasping all things and seeing into them, not with the eyes of flesh, but those of mind, altering the very atmosphere wherein we move, stilling the air that we may hear his oracles!

The room is one of most curious fashion, and hung with the oldest tapestry in England, lighted on either side by long and narrow windows, that are even now furnished as in the time of the old cardinal who built them. On the low seat formed within the wall the poet sat. Who would suffer a thought of the ambitious Wolsey or the sensual Henry to intrude where once they held gay revels and much minstrelsy in their most tyrant pastimes? Cromwell, the great Protector, even Cromwell is forgotten in the more glorious company of one both poor and blind! He sat, as we describe him, within the embrasure of the narrow window; the heat and brightness of the summer sun came full upon his head, the hair upon which was full and rich as ever, parted in the centre, and falling in waving curls quite to his shoulders; his eyes were fixed on vacancy, but their expression was as if communing with some secret spirit, enlivening thus his darkness; he seemed not old nor young, for the lines upon his face could not be considered wrinkles—tokens were they of care and thought—such care and such thought as Milton might know and feel.

He was habited with extraordinary exactness; his linen of the finest quality, and his vest and doublet put on with an evident attention to even minute appearance. His hands of transparent whiteness were clasped, as if he were attending to some particular discourse; he was alone in that vast chamber,—yet not alone, for God was with him—not in outward form, but in inward spirit. It was the Sabbath-day, and ever observed in the Protector's family with respect and reverence. The morning-meeting was over, and Cromwell in his closet, "wrestling," as he was wont to term it, "with sin." Silence reigned through all the courts—that due and reverend silence which betokens thoughtfulness, and attention to one of the Almighty's first commands—"Keep holy the Sabbath-day," given when he ordained that man should rest from his labours in commemoration that he himself set an example of repose after calling the broad earth into existence and beauty. The poet sat but for a little time in that wide silence; yet who would not give a large portion of their every-day existence to have looked on him for those brief moments, moments which for their full feeling might play the part of years in our life's calendar? Blessed holy time!—when we can look on genius, and catch the gems that fall from its lips! Yet Milton spoke not—he only looked; and still his looks were heavenward—turned towards that Heaven from whence they caught their inspiration. He heard the sound of coming footsteps, and loving quiet on that holy day, withdrew to his own chamber. How empty now appeared the tapestried hall! as when some great eclipse shuts to the golden portals of the sun, and steeps the earth in darkness! [316]

Soon after Milton's departure, the Protector entered, in conversation with his secretary, Thurloe; and although it was the Sabbath, there was an air of anxiety and eagerness about him, which made his step more hurried, more abrupt than usual. He suddenly stopped, and said,—

"Pray God that Colonel Jones and the troop arrived in time! Lady Frances, methinks, must have known something—seen something—however, now all shall be investigated. Pray God they

arrived in time!"

He then took from a large pocket-book a set of tablets, and having read therein for a few minutes, suddenly turning to Thurloe, exclaimed, "What! is this indeed the tenth?"

"Even so," replied the secretary.

"Then have I business which requires immediate attention," said his Highness. "Behold! I had nearly forgotten both the promise and the appointment; but spare nor haste nor trouble! Under the archway, at the left-hand side of Gray's Inn, after you pass the house whose corners are bound with white stones, the walls being of red brick—under that arch you will see a man—now mark me—a man wearing a green cloak, the collar being of velvet; and, to distinguish him the more perfectly, you will perceive that his hat is banded by a small blue riband, of the narrowest breadth: his left hand will be uncovered, and placed upon his breast, and on its centre finger will be a broad hoop ring of jet. Be there exactly as the clock of St. Paul's strikes three-quarters past four; and speak thou no word, nor make sign, except to put this bill into his hand, which, as thou seest, is for twenty thousand pounds, payable to the bearer at Genoa."

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"Is it your Highness's pleasure that I take no receipt?"

"It is not needed—you can return hither by the evening meal."

The secretary bowed, and withdrew; and at the same moment, the trampling of many horses sounded in the paved court-yard; and looking from the window, Cromwell beheld the arrival of Colonel Jones, and his prisoner, Sir Willmott Burrell.

CHAPTER III.

The base and guilty bribes of guiltier men
Shall be thrown back, and Justice look as
when
She loved the earth, and feared not to be
sold
For that which worketh all things to it,
gold.

BEN JONSON.

"The course of justice must not be delayed, although it be the Sabbath," said the Protector; and, having hastily ascertained that his officer had arrived at Cecil Place in time to prevent the intended marriage, he immediately ordered that Colonel Jones and Sir Willmott Burrell should be at once ushered into his presence. At the same time he despatched one of his pages to command the attendance of Manasseh Ben Israel.

When the knight entered, he was received by Cromwell with his usual show of courtesy. He appeared, however, with a downcast look, his hands folded over his bosom, and his mind made up to the approaching contest with one whom he well knew to be as profound and accomplished a dissimulator as himself, when dissimulation was the weapon wherewith he designed to fight.

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Sir Willmott briefly apologised for his travel-worn and soiled habiliments, and displayed a due portion of surprise and indignation at being torn from his bride in the midst of the marriage ceremony. The Jew trembled with agitation, and would have interrupted the Protector's more slow, but not less sure, proceedings, had he not been prevented by a timely check from Cromwell, who bent his brow towards him with a peculiar and warning expression.

"It cannot be supposed, Sir Willmott," he observed, in a calm, and even friendly tone, "but that I regret exceedingly being compelled to trouble you in this manner, and at such a time. You will be made aware that I have been called upon to perform a double duty; first, to my worthy and excellent friend Manasseh Ben Israel, with the nature of whose suspicions (it maketh a Christian soul shudder to think upon it) you are already acquainted—and next, to the lady who was about to become your wife. Her Highness has long and truly loved her; and she is, moreover, somewhat related (although only after the Episcopalian fashion) to my most beloved daughter. I was, therefore, bound to have especial care concerning the maiden's bridal."

"The Lady Frances Cromwell could have informed your Highness that Mistress Constantia was, of her own free will, a party to the ceremony."

"I do not dispute it. Now our business is to satisfy the mind of our friend here, as to your alleged conduct towards his only child. It is a noble matter in our laws, and one that we may well be proud of, that, by God's blessing, every man is considered innocent until he be proven guilty. The Lord forbid that I should lay aught of sin unto your charge!—you, who have appeared at all times a sure and a safe prop unto our Commonwealth. Doubtless you saw the lady—Zillah: say you not, worthy Rabbi, that the maiden's name was Zillah?"

"Even so," replied the Jew, with a bitter sigh; "she was named after her mother."

"You, doubtless, saw her, and, struck by her beauty, which we hear was most marvellous, paid her more courtesy than was quite fitting in a betrothed man. But Satan lays many snares for the unwary, and beauty is a peril that few men altogether escape. Verily, it is of the evil one. But there are excuses; at least there may be excuses, especially in such a land as France, where temptation assumes every seducing form; and a young woman, like this lady, might have been easily led to believe your courtliness to be that of the heart, whereas it was only that of the manner." [319]

The rabbi stood aghast, his friend Cromwell talked in a tone so much more moderate than he had expected—he knew not what to think. Even Burrell, who had anticipated a thunder-storm, was deceived by the calm; and, after considering a moment that the Protector would not speak thus if he had really received any communication from Hugh Dalton, replied, breathing freely for the first time since he received the mandate to appear at Hampton Court,—

"It is possible she might have been led to such belief, though, as I have before assured her father, I had no intention so to mislead his daughter. It is very hard to be suspected of a crime so base; and——"

"But innocence wears a robe of such pure light," interrupted the Protector, "that it will shine in the darkest night, as yours will, if you are innocent. Know you how the fair Jewess became possessed of this picture? Nay, I should hesitate to think harshly of you, even if you had given it to her, which you might have done in pure friendliness, although the world—it is a harsh and ill-judging world—might condemn you on such ground. But we have ourselves suffered so much from its wrong judgment, as to have learned mercy towards others. Friendship, excellent, right, true friendship, may exist between man and woman in our advanced—ay, and in our young years. Why should it not? Or, as the picture is of excellent painting, and the young lady, it would seem, desired accomplishment in that useless art, you might have lent it her as a study—or——"

"I certainly did not give it," replied Burrell; "but I have some idea of having lent it, with sundry Flemish drawings. Your Highness may remember that several gentlemen, attached to the embassy at Paris, came away hastily. I was one of those."

Hereupon the Rabbi would have spoken, for he remembered how Sir Willmott had told him that the picture was not his; but the Protector again stayed him, seeking to entangle Burrell in a web of his own weaving. [320]

"You visited the lady frequently?"

"Not very frequently. I told Manasseh Ben Israel, when first he injured me by this most unjust suspicion, that I did not often see her, and when I did, it was to ascertain if there were any letters she desired to transmit to England."

"Not from the carnal desire of paying her homage?"

"How could your Highness suppose it was?"

"You but now confessed she might so have interpreted your civilities. But—know you aught of one Hugh Dalton, a free-trader?"

"Know—know—know, your Highness? I know him for a most keen villain!" replied the Master of Burrell warmly.

"Indeed!—But you scorned not to employ him."

Burrell was silent; for, though he had journeyed full fifty miles, he had not been able to form any plan of defence, if Cromwell should really be aware of the arrangements entered into in the cavern of the Gull's Nest Crag. Such he now dreaded was the fact, not only from the appearance of a paper the Protector drew forth, but from the fact that the seeming calmness was fading from his brow. All that remained was stoutly to deny its being in his hand-writing: it was a case that finesse could in no way serve.

"Did your Highness mean that I employed this man?" he said at last, with a clever mingling of astonishment and innocence in his voice and manner.

During a brief pause that followed, the eye of Cromwell was, as it were, nailed upon his countenance.

"I do mean, Sir Willmott Burrell, that you scorned not to employ this man. Know you this hand-writing?"

Sir Willmott's worst fears were confirmed.

"Permit me," he said, glancing over the document; then, looking from it with most marvellous coolness, he raised his eyes, exclaiming, "Sir, there is a plot for my destruction! This hand-writing is so well feigned, that I could have sworn it my own, had I not known the total impossibility that it could so be!"

"I have seen your hand-writing before:—write now, sir." [321]

Burrell obeyed—took the pen in his hand, and Cromwell noted that it trembled much.

"Sir Willmott, I believe you in general place your paper straight?"

"Please your Highness, I do; but I am not cool—not collected enough to act as calmly as at my own table. The knowledge in whose presence I sit, might agitate stronger nerves than mine. Behold, sir, the villain counterfeited well; the *W* is exact, even in the small hair-stroke—the *t*'s are crossed at the same distance, and the *l*'s are of the height of mine:—a most villanous, but most excellent counterfeit!"

"Which?" inquired the Protector: "which mean ye is the counterfeit—the writing or the writer?—Without there!—Call in Robin Hays. Sir Willmott Burrell, Sir Willmott Burrell! the Lord deliver me from such as thou art!" he continued, swelling and chafing himself into anger, 'pricking the sides of his intent,' that so he might overwhelm the dastard knight. "We doubted, sir, at first, but we doubt no longer. Sir, you have robbed that old man of his daughter! You have, by so doing, perjured your own soul, and brought most foul dishonour upon England. I once heard you talk of patriotism: a true patriot loves his country too well to commit a dishonourable action! Sir, I have learned that you were married to the Jewish girl."

"Please your Highness," interrupted Manasseh at length, "I do not wish the marriage: if there be, as we suppose, a marriage, I wish it not kept; I only want my wretched and deluded child."

"Your pardon, good Rabbi. I am protector of the rights, and not the fantasies, of those who inhabit England, and I hold no sinecure. You may well turn pale, Master of Burrell!—O Lord! that such should dwell in the tents of Judah!—that such should remain sound in life and limb, blessed with carnal and fleshly comforts!—that such reptiles should crawl among us—be fed by the same food, warmed by the same sun, as just men! No, no, Manasseh; if there *has* been a marriage, as sure as the Almighty governs heaven, it shall be kept! Nay, Sir Willmott Burrell, never dare to knit your brows. Justice, sir, justice to the uttermost, is what I desire in this country! Dost remember the fate of Don Pantaleon Sa, the Portugal ambassador's brother—a knight of Malta, and a person eminent in many great actions? Dost remember him, I say—that he died the death of a murderer, according to the Scripture, 'he that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Justice shall be satisfied!—Not that I seek to confound you without a hearing. But here comes one, once a retainer of your own, who can point out where the lady is."

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Robin Hays, little conscious of the fate that had befallen Barbara, entered with much alacrity, for he was glad of anything that afforded him change of place.

"What, Robin Hays!" said Burrell. "Methinks your Highness has assembled most creditable witnesses against me—a Jew, and a thing like that!"

"No sneering, sir. This person asserts that Zillah Ben Israel came over in the Fire-fly."

"Ah! with Hugh Dalton," said Sir Willmott, thrown off his guard at what he conceived the Skipper's utter faithlessness; then muttering, "I thought——"

"No matter what. Methinks *this* confirms the document you denied," observed the Protector, whose rage had somewhat subsided. "No, not with Hugh Dalton, as you imagine, Sir Willmott, but with a man of the name of Jeromio, an Italian. The description answers in every respect—the dark eye, the black hair, the sallow aspect—all."

"Indeed!" said Colonel Jones, who had been present during the examination, leaning against one of the window-frames, and taking much note of all that passed. "Indeed! then doth the Lord work marvellously, and wonderful is his name! for it was to all appearance a foreign woman, or rather fiend—one with a pale cheek and jetty locks, who interrupted the bridal at Cecil Place, and slew the fair young maid that waited on Mistress Cecil!"

"Why told ye not this before?" inquired Cromwell hastily, while the Rabbi advanced towards the soldier with great eagerness as the Protector spoke. But there was another whose blood ran icy cold as the words of Colonel Jones were uttered. He stood for a moment as if suddenly smitten with some cruel malady, the next touch of which would be death; then he pushed boldly past Sir Willmott, and grasping the soldier's arm, said in a broken husky voice, "In God's name, who was slain?"

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"A modest-looking maid, whom they called Barbara,—yes, Barbara was the name."

Robin spoke not again, nor did he move from the Colonel's side, though his hand relaxed its grasp: he stood and looked like a creature to whom the grave had refused rest—a being whose breath and blood were frozen and congealed, at the moment when life and its energies were most needed; strong passion, powerful feeling were upon his countenance, and remained there as if the spell of some magician had converted him to stone. The effect which this scene produced upon the Protector was evidence that he had a heart where the milk of human kindness flowed, and must once have flowed abundantly, however circumstances might have chilled its generous source. Deeply anxious as he was as to the result of the investigation, running full tilt at the difficulty he encountered, having the means of overwhelming the Master of Burrell within his reach, he suffered the Jew to continue a series of questions to Colonel Jones, while he spoke to Robin—soothing and caressing him as a father would have soothed and caressed an afflicted child. But this unbending of his sterner nature was lost upon the unhappy Ranger; he could not have replied if he would; all his faculties were suspended, and he remained in silence and without motion, unconscious of the Protector's condescending kindness.

"'Tis ever thus," ejaculated Oliver, looking upon the sad figure now by his side. "'Tis ever thus; there never was a noble heart but the blight fell on it; doubtless he loved the maid: the Lord be

with us! He is seized—pray the Almighty not for death." He struck his dagger on a hand-bell that lay upon the table, ordered that his own surgeon should attend Robin with all due speed, and then walked kindly by his side to the opened door, where he delivered him to a favourite attendant. Those in the ante-room who had witnessed Cromwell's gentleness to Robin Hays were profuse in their offers of assistance to one, whom, but a little while before, they had jested at and insulted. Courtiers are as ripe in republics as in king-governed countries. Your sycophants bow to the power, and not to the person. Dress but a dog in royal robes, and call him Emperor—Protector—King, and thousands will rejoice loudly if he but wag his tail.

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Cromwell returned to his investigation, and interspersed his questionings with much bitterness of remark—the more so as he feared his chain of evidence was in some degree incomplete, although no moral doubt could remain on the mind of any person as to the Master of Burrell's guilt. Colonel Jones failed not to show how anxious Sir Willmott had been that Zillah should escape, and the Rabbi's agitation bordered on madness when he contemplated the new crime into which his wretched daughter had been led.

"Brand me as you please; think of me in your good judgment as you will. I am a free man; free to go as to come; and as your Highness cannot detain me on legal grounds, I am at liberty to depart."

Sir Willmott had scarcely finished the sentence, when Gracious Meanwell, having first knocked, and received permission to enter, advanced with a small and peculiar-looking packet in his hand; it was composed of slips of parchment, and the direction was in printed, not written letters.

"I crave your Highness's pardon; but a sailor-like lad brought this to the great gate, and would take no denial, but that it should be given immediately to your Highness, saying that he found it hanging in some out-o'-the way place, betwixt heaven and earth, far off in the Isle of Shepey, and seeing that it was directed to your Highness, he came straightway to deliver it; he prevailed on the porters to forward it up, which they did, knowing that your Highness wishes nothing of the sort to be kept back."

While Meanwell spoke, Cromwell was undoing, or rather tearing open the parcel; and the man was about to withdraw with all the court observance which the Protector would not lack.

"The manifestation of the Lord! The manifestation of his righteous judgments! His ways are clear in Israel, and mighty is his name!—Look here, Colonel Jones; my worthy friend Manasseh Ben Israel, behold! Is it not wonderful! Gracious Meanwell, see that the bearer of this be well cared for, but safely kept. We will speak with him ourselves. Of a truth it is wonderful!"

Such were the words of Cromwell as he scanned, with a rapid but scrutinising glance, each of the several papers contained in the parcel;—first, a certificate of marriage between Sir Willmott Burrell and Zillah Ben Israel, as performed by one Samuel Verdaie a monk residing at the Benedictine Friary in the "Faubourg St. Antoine," at Paris—next, many letters from the said Sir Willmott Burrell to the Jewess—and lastly, a love document given before their marriage, wherein he pledged himself to marry Zillah, and to use his influence with Cromwell (whom he facetiously termed *vieux garçon*), to induce her father to pardon the undutiful step she was about to take.

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"This is also a counterfeit, Sir Willmott, I presume," continued the Protector, pointing to the document; "nor is this in your hand-writing—nor this—and this is not your seal—and there is no such person as Samuel Verdaie—nor such place as the Benedictine Friary, or Paris, I suppose? What! have you lost the power of speech? Shame! shame! shame! and the curse of shame fall upon you! It is such men as you—such crimes as yours, that bring disgrace upon England. Sad will be the day for her, when she sinks in the estimation of the world as a moral nation. Behold her, a small speck in the immensity of the globe; yet great is her name among the kingdoms of the earth! A Briton carries, or ought to carry, ten times the influence of any other man, because our power is over the mind, over the respect, over the veneration of mankind. Go to, sir, you are no Englishman! Behold, how ill prosper your evil contrivances! Sir, I say again, you have robbed that old man of his daughter.—What say *you*?"

"It was to spare that old man's feelings I denied the act," said Sir Willmott, again rallying, yet wanting the courage that forms a respectable villain; "it was to spare him. But the marriage is nought! a Popish priest, a Protestant gentleman, and a Jewess! I knew not your Highness would sanction such unholy rites. Besides, despite all this, the Lady Constantia will wed me yet."

"By the holy heavens, she shall not!" exclaimed Cromwell, forgetting the Puritan Protector in the soldier, the soberness of the age in the energy of the moment; then as suddenly adding, "The Lord forgive me! the Lord blot out mine iniquities! See what it is to have to do with sinners!"

"Shall not!" repeated Burrell, who was as much of the bully as the coward, and still trusted his cause to the knowledge of Constantia's filial affection, and her readiness to sacrifice all for her father; "let the lady decide."

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"So be it; though I hardly think it—there must be some hidden motive. Yet no, Sir Willmott Burrell, I will not,—even if *she will*, I will it otherwise. Ah! think ye to control me? Didst ever hear of one Cony? or of Maynard Twisden, and Wyndham, his counsel? What if I imprison ye, Sir Willmott, till this Jewess be found, and compel ye to wed her again, even here in England! What say ye now?"

"Would you have me wed a murderess?" inquired the villain, in a calm tone.

"My child is not that," said the heart-broken father, who had been examining the papers, with overpowering anxiety.

"What! good Manasseh?" inquired Cromwell.

"That which he did call her," replied the Jew.

"There needs no farther parley. Colonel Jones, we will ourself accompany our worthy friend to the Isle of Shepey, and investigate more minutely this most unhappy business. You will take all requisite care of Sir Willmott Burrell, who goes with us—willing or unwilling—Perhaps he would like to appeal from our decree? To-night we will set forth, so as to arrive at King's-ferry before tomorrow's sunset; for we must stay an hour at Whitehall, and say a word in passing to Colonel Lilburne, at Eltham."

"How does your Highness travel?"

"As befits our state," replied the Protector. "Worthy Rabbi, be not cast down; all may yet be well."

"Your Highness is ever kind; but justice is inflexible. My child!—that which he called my child, rings in mine ear—pierces it! O Father Abraham! I knew not the curse that fell upon Israel until this day!"

"All may yet be well, I say again," observed the Protector, "know ye not what was said by the prophet of old—the prophet of the Lord—'Now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not!'"

"May I return and commune with your Highness?" craved Colonel Jones, as he escorted Burrell to the door—"there is much that I would mention, although this is the Lord's day."

"Ay, certainly.—Gracious Meanwell! I would speak with him who brought this parcel."

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A lad was introduced; but he could tell nothing, except that passing along the crags of the Gull's Nest, (the Protector started at the name,) he saw the packet dangling in the air; he pulled at it, and it came easily away in his hand; and finding it directed to his Highness, he had been recommended to bring it forthwith—that he had ridden part of the way in company with some who were coming as far as Gravesend, and had 'lifted' him. He looked like what he was, part oyster-dredger, part smuggler. Cromwell saw nothing in him that would justify detention, and dismissed him with a liberal gratuity.

"We shall solve the mysteries of this Gull's Nest Crag before we leave the island," thought the Protector, and then proceeded to the almost hopeless task of comforting the humbled and afflicted "Master in Israel."

CHAPTER IV.

Where I, a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely
draw
The air, imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught.
But here I feel amends,
The breath of heaven fresh blowing, pure
and sweet,
With day-spring born.

MILTON.

My readers will, doubtless, be more interested in visiting Robin Hays than in noting the preparations made and the order observed by the Protector for his intended journey. When Cromwell put his state upon him, he did it with all dignity; there was no sparing of expense, no scant of attendants, no lack of guards—boldly and bravely were his arrangements formed; for he wisely knew that plainness and simplicity, although they may be understood and appreciated by the high-minded, are held in contempt by the low and the uneducated, because imagined to be within their own attainment. Had Cincinnatus ruled in England, he would never have abandoned a kingdom for a ploughshare; such an act would have been looked upon, at least by more than half the nation, as proceeding from weakness rather than from true strength of mind. The English, notwithstanding all their talk about equality, have not enthusiasm enough to understand or to feel the greatness that slights, and even scorns, magnificence! a gilded pageant wins their hearts; and a title overturns their understandings. We will here hazard the assertion, that if Cromwell had listened to a very powerful party, and had accepted, instead of having declined the name, while he possessed the station of a "King," he would have conquered all the obstacles by which he was surrounded, and have bequeathed a throne to his son, that in all human probability would have been continued in his family, even to our own day. We must leave this sentence, startling though it may be, without the arguments necessary to support it; certain it is, however, that so thought the Protector himself, who considered that the people of England, like the Israelites of old, would never be at rest until they had "a king to rule over them."

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It would be a vain attempt to describe the sufferings of Robin Hays, from the moment when the news of Barbara's death fell upon him like a thunderbolt, and he quitted the presence of the Protector without the power of reply. He was sensible of only one feeling—awake to only one emotion—his heart echoed but to one sensation—his eyes burned within their sockets—all things before him were confused; and there was but a single image present to his mind. As if in compassion to his personal deformity, Nature had endowed him with a degree of sentiment and refinement perfectly at war with his habits and pursuits. But in his case, such compassion was, if we may so speak, cruelty. Had he been born to a higher station, it might have been a blessing—in his present sphere it was a curse—a curse which the Ranger had felt most constantly and most acutely. He had been laughed at by such as Roupall, who exulted in the possession of mere brute strength; and he had been sneered and scouted at by the giddy and the vain, who, dreading his sarcasms, repaid themselves by finding out his one vulnerable point, and probing it to the quick. Barbara had stolen into his heart unconsciously, as a sweet and quiet stream insinuates itself through the bosom of some rugged mountain, softening and fertilising so gently, that its influence is seen and acknowledged while its power is unaccounted for and its source unknown. The belief that the young Puritan entertained an affection for him, was a belief he hardly dared to cherish; but there were times when he did cherish it; and it was at such times only that his turbulent and restless mind was enabled to find repose: then the memory of her kindness, her gentleness, her tenderness, would come upon him like sleep to the eyes of the weary—like a fresh well in a sandy desert—like a gentle spring after a stormy winter—in a word, like woman's love, where it is most hoped, but least looked for. Whenever he indulged the idea of her affection, he felt like one uplifted above the world—its base sorrows and still baser joys;—earth had for him but one sound of comfort—it was the name of her he loved! but one promise of happiness; and from her it was never for a moment severed—hope, love, faith, centred in her—she was his world, and though his wandering employments might summon him elsewhere, it was in her presence alone that he relished, or even felt existence. At times, when the acidity of his nature forced him to distrust her smiles, and he upbraided her though she deserved it not, hours of penitence could not blot out from his own remembrance the act of weakness and injustice: he pondered upon it long after the gentle girl had forgotten that ever unkind word had passed between them. Beings of a gross and fettered nature cannot conceive of a love so pure as that which Barbara felt for the mis-shapen Robin—so perfectly devoid of earthly passion, yet so faithful—so exalted—so devoted—so engrossing! She had looked so long on his deformities, that she had ceased to perceive them; and often paused and wondered what people meant by flouting at his plainness. But the excellent and gentle girl was now to the unfortunate Ranger only as a dream of the past—vanished from off the earth like a sweet perfume, or a sweeter melody, with the memory of which comes the knowledge that it can be enjoyed no more.

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After he had been conveyed to another chamber, the physician ordered restoratives and immediate bleeding;—but time did more than the leech's art; and the first wish he formed was, that he might once more wend his way to the Isle of Shepey, and gaze again, and for the last time, upon the form of her he loved.

Once aroused from his torpor, the means of effecting his escape was the first thing he considered. He had been removed to one of the lower rooms, and his apartment could not be termed a prison, though the door was fastened on the outer side—for the window was not more than ten feet from the ground, and unbolted; it looked out into the garden, and the sentinel placed beside that portion of the building had a longer range than was usually allotted to the palace guard. Robin soon observed that the lawn beneath was planted with rich clusters of young trees. The hour for evening prayer had arrived; so that the household would be most probably engaged, and the garden free from [visitors](#). He looked from the window; it was one of the loveliest days of summer—a day that at any other time he would have welcomed with all the enthusiasm of a true lover of nature; so warm the air, so sweet the flowers, so silently flitted the small insects, as if dreading to disturb the repose of the sunbeams that slept on the green turf. Nothing could be more unlike the vicinity of a court; the very sentry seemed to tread it as hallowed ground—his step was scarcely heard along the soft grass.

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Robin did not attempt to assume any disguise.

"I shall walk boldly when I get out of the garden," he thought, "and if I am taken before Cromwell, I will say why I desire liberty; I only wish to see her once more, and then farewell to all! the red cross against my name, in Oliver's dark book, may be dyed still redder—in my heart's blood!"

Although his arm was stiff from the bleeding he had undergone but an hour before, he watched till the soldier's back was turned, and dropped from the window. He had scarcely time to conceal himself beneath a row of evergreens when the sentinel turned on his path. Robin crept on, from tuft to tuft—now under the shadow of a tree—now under that of a turret, until he found himself close to a high wall which flanked the side next the river; and then he became sorely perplexed as to the method of his further escape. To the right was a gate which, from its position, he judged led into one of the outer courts, and, notwithstanding his first resolve of braving his way, habit and consideration induced him to prefer the track least frequented or attended with risk. At the extremity of the wall, where it turned at a right angle to afford an opening for a gateway, grew an immense yew-tree, solitary and alone, like some dark and malignant giant, stretching out its arms to battle with centuries and storms; softened by no shadow, cheered by no sunbeam, enlivened by no shower, no herb or flower flourished beneath its ban, but there it towered, like the spirit of evil in a smiling world. The wall, too, was overgrown with ivy—the broad ivy, whose spreading

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leaves hide every little stem that clasps the bosom of the hard stone, and, with most cunning wisdom, extracts sustenance from all it touches. Robin's keen eye scanned well every nook and corner, and he then mounted the tree, conceiving he might, with little difficulty, descend on the other side, as he perceived that the branches bent over the wall. He had hardly reached midway, when a voice, whose tones he well remembered, fell upon his ear, and for a moment called back his thoughts from their sad and distant wanderings. He paused: the sound was not from the garden, nor the roof. After much scrutiny, he discovered a small aperture of about a foot square, that was originally a window, but latterly had been choked by the matted ivy which overspread its bars. The voice was as of one who has tasted the weariness of life, and would fain put away the cup that was all bitterness. It sung, but the song was more a murmur than a lay, sorrowful as the winter's wind that roams through the long and clustering grass in some old churchyard, telling,—

"Of blighted hopes and prospects shaded,
Of buried hopes remember'd well,
Of ardor quench'd, and honour faded."

With a trembling hand the Ranger sought to disentangle the ivy; but this he found it almost impossible to effect in consequence of the pain arising from his left arm whenever he slung himself by it. At length he in some degree succeeded, but could see nothing, except that light came up from a chamber, which, he then believed, must be lighted from beneath, though the window did not look into the garden. The voice still continued; it was one of the songs of Provence that was sung—the wail of a young girl over the body of her dead lover, the burthen of which was that of the Psalmist of old:—

"I shall go to thee,
But thou canst never come to me."

There was no poetry in the song, but the sentiment touched the heart of the afflicted Robin. His breast heaved and heaved, like the swell of the troubled sea, and then tears burst in torrents from his eyes, and relieved his burning and dizzy brain.

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"I never thought to have wept again," he said, "and I bless God for the ease it gives me; yet why should I bless that which has cursed me?" And again his heart returned to its bitterness; the hand that so often had attuned it to gentleness, was cold—cold in death. Alas! resignation is the most difficult lesson in the Christian code; few there are who learn it to perfection—it requires a long and a melancholy apprenticeship!

Again he endeavoured to withdraw the ivy, and once ventured to speak; but he dreaded to raise his voice. "At all events," thought Robin, "I will send him a token;" and, extending his hand, he dropped the paper containing the lock of hair which had been given him by the blithe landlady of the Oliver's Head. The ringlet was received, for on the instant the singing ceased, and presently Walter De Guerre called aloud, "In the name of God, who sends me this?"

Bitterly did Robin regret that he was totally unprovided with pencil, tablets, or aught that could convey intelligence to Walter. At another time his active genius would have found some means of communication, but his faculties were only half alive, and he could but regret and listen. It would appear, however, that, as Walter spoke, he was interrupted by some one entering his chamber, for his voice suddenly ceased, and though Robin heard it again, it was in converse with another. He listened attentively for some time, but could catch nothing of the subject upon which they spoke.

As suddenly as the interview had commenced, so suddenly did it terminate; for, though Robin threw pieces of stick and fragments of mortar into the aperture, to intimate that he continued there, no answering signal was returned. The evening was drawing on, and persons passed and repassed beneath the tree—some of them with hurried, some with slower steps: at last the self-same page with whom he had jested rushed forward in company with the sentinel, and Robin heard him say,—

"I tell you, his Highness will wait no forms; he commanded you instantly to come to him. It is impossible that a cat could fall from that window without your seeing it, unless you were asleep on your post."

"I had no caution about the window, master; and, at all events, nothing, I am sure, could pass from it, except a spirit," replied the soldier.

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Immediately after the guard passed for the purpose of replacing the sentinel; and about half an hour afterwards, there was a bustle in the courts, the tramping of brave steeds, and the rolling of carriage-wheels; then the braying trumpet sounded "to horse!" and soon the noise of much and stately pageantry was lost in the distance. Robin Hays cared not to move until the palace was more at rest; but his meditations were continually disturbed by the passers-by. Had he been disposed to listen or pay any attention to those who came and went, he could have heard and seen things, from which much that was bitter and much that was sweet might have been gathered. He might have observed that a plain coat or a simple hood changes not the nature of those who wear it; yet, on the other hand, he would have noted that the plain coat and simple hood preserve from outward vice, however the inward thoughts may triumph. But the watchful lynx-eyed ranger was changed, sorely, sadly changed; in four brief hours he had lived more than treble the number of years. He patiently lingered, till the shades of evening closed, to effect an

escape, that had now become more easy, inasmuch as the inmates of the palace had nearly all retired to their apartments. Through the agency of the yew-tree, he arrived at the highest portion of the wall, and looking over, perceived that a roof descended from the large coping-stones on which he stood, in a slanting manner, and that the building communicated by an arched covering to the palace: the Thames was not distant from the base of the building more than sixty yards, so that once down, his escape was certain. Watching the movements of a sentry, posted at some little distance from the gate, he slid along the roof, stretching himself at full length, and without any further mishap crawled to the river's brink, plunged in, and arrived at the Surrey-side of the silver Thames in perfect safety. He resolved to cross the country to Bromley with as little delay as possible, inasmuch as he had friends there who would hasten his journey;—and as concealment was no longer needed, he thought that a good steed would be most valuable; he therefore availed himself of one who was enjoying its evening meal quietly among the Surrey hills; for the credit of his honesty, however, it is fair to record, he noted the place, so that one of his agents could restore the animal in the course of the following night. By this manœuvre, and urging its utmost speed, together with the assistance he received at Bromley, Robin arrived at King's-ferry before the morning was far advanced. He did not now, as on former occasions, cross the Swale to Elmley or Harty, with a view to avoid observation, but threw himself into the boat of Jabez Tippet, the ferryman, to whom, as it may be supposed, he was well known.

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Jabez carried about him all the external distinctions of Puritanism—a cropped head—a downcast eye—a measured step, and a stock of sighs and religious exclamations. There was one maxim that found a ready response within his bosom. "He was all things to all men;" could aid a smuggler, drink with a Cavalier, pray with a Roundhead. He was, moreover, a tall, powerful man—one who, if he found it fitting, could enforce a holy argument with a carnal weapon; cutting a man's throat, while he exclaimed, "It is the Lord's will! it is the Lord's will!" There was nothing peculiar in his dress, except a huge pair of loose boots, of the thickest untanned leather, that reached considerably above his knees, and from frequent immersion in the tide had assumed a deep brown hue. His hat was conical, and only distinguished by a small dirk glittering in the band, which he carried there as a place of safety from contact with the sea-water.

"My gay Ranger travelling in open day, when there is such wild news abroad!" he said.

Robin made no reply; and Jabez, who was pulling at the huge cable, which then, as well as now, towed the boats across, stopped and looked at him.

"My bonny Robin, what ails ye, man? Hast been cheated by the excise, or plundered by the Roundheads, or does the strange trouble they say has come upon Hugh Dalton affect ye so much?"

Robin turned his head away; his grief was too deep to covet witnesses.

"There's a guard of Ironsides at Cecil Place by this time," continued the man, who began to think that Robin was relapsing into one of his taciturn fits, "and Noll himself on the road, which I heard, not an hour past, from two soldiers, who have been sent on with his own physician to Sir Robert, who's gone mad as a March hare; and they do say that his Highness has a plan of his own to destroy all free trade on the island for ever: but I'm thinking Hugh has scented it, and is far enough off by this time."

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Robin looked inquiringly into the man's face, but did not speak.

"Some time or other, master," continued the ferryman, whose boat now touched the strand, "you'll maybe condescend to unriddle me how Dalton could have a daughter brought up by—"

Robin Hays did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence, but sprang right on the land, with the air of a man bereft of reason, confirming Jabez in the idea that he was again labouring under his old infirmity.

The Ranger took not the direct road to Minster, which he ought to have passed on his way to the Gull's Nest, where he resolved to ascertain if Barbara's body was at Cecil Place; but after crossing the downs, that were brightening in the summer's sun and alive with multitudes of sheep, wound round the base of the hill on which the mansion stood, and as its mixture of ancient and modern architecture became developed, he paused to look upon a spot so endeared by many affectionate recollections. The trees that encircled the fairy ring were conspicuous for their height and beauty of colour; there, too, was the casement window which he had so often watched, knowing that Barbara must pass it in her morning and evening attendance on her lady; there, peeping from beneath a turret, the lattice admitting light to Barbara's own little chamber; there, the window of Constantia's sitting-room; there— But he could gaze no longer, his heart sickened within him, and covering his face with his hands, he rushed into a narrow glen that skirted the hillside, and was completely overshadowed by trees, whose unpruned branches were matted and twined together in most fantastic and impervious underwood. He pursued this track, with which he was well acquainted, as leading directly to the back entrance, where he more than once resolved to inquire where Barbara's remains were placed; but he had scarcely proceeded a dozen yards towards the house, when his attention was excited by a sudden and loud rustling amongst the bushes, and on looking towards the spot, he saw first one and then another raven mount in the air, uttering, at short intervals, the peculiar dull and complaining cry of rapacious birds when frightened from their prey. The creatures evidently meditated another descent, for, instead of betaking themselves to the neighbouring trees, they circled round and round in the air, now higher, now lower, mingling their monotonous notes with an occasional scream—thus

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inharmoniously disturbing the sweet solitude by their unholy orgies. In the mean time, the rustling beneath was renewed, and then as suddenly ceased; but the birds, instead of descending, whirled still higher, as if the object they had sought was for a time hidden from their sight. The Ranger proceeded more cautiously than before, and peering into the bushes, descried one whom he immediately recognised as Jack Roupall, unfastening something of considerable bulk that was contained in a handkerchief, and had apparently lain there for some days, as the grass from which it had been taken was completely levelled by its pressure. Roupall's ears were nearly as quick as those of Robin, and an exclamation of recognition escaped his lips as he turned round to where the Ranger stood.

"Ah! our little Ranger," said the man, extending his rough hand, "it charms me to see you! I feared you were nabbed somehow, for I knew you'd be cursedly down in the feathers from what the whole island is talking of.—Hast seen the Skipper?"

"Where is he?"

"That's exactly what I want to know; but no one has seen him, that I hear of, since he seized the poor girl, dead as she was, and carried her through the midst of the soldiers, who had too much fear or too much nature in 'em to touch him—I don't know which it was. I'm thinking he's off to the Fire-fly, for he said he'd bury her in the sea;—or hid, maybe, in some o' the holes at the Gull's Nest—holes only known to a few of the sly sort, not to us strappers."

"Good God!" exclaimed Robin.

"Ah! you may well say, good God," said Roupall, putting on a look of great sagacity, "for I'm come to the determination that there's much need of a good God in the world to circumvent man's wickedness. Why, look ye here now, if here isn't the head of that infernal Italian, Jeromio! and what I'm puzzled at is, that, first, it's wrapped in a napkin which I swear is one of them Holland ones I had o' the Skipper, and which he swore I could have made more of, had I took them on to London, instead of tiffing them at Maidstone; and this, outside it, is Sir Willmott Burrell's—here's the crest broidered in gold:—it's the finest cambric too," he added, relieving the muslin of its disgusting burden, and folding it with care, "and 'tis a pity it should be wasted on filthy flesh; so I'll take care of it—ah! ah! And the napkin's a good one: it's sinful to spoil any thing God sends—ah! ah! The fellow used to wear ear-rings too," he continued, stooping over the festering head, while the ravens, whose appetites had increased when they saw the covering entirely removed, flapped the topmost branches of the trees with their wings in their circling, and screamed more vigorously than before.

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"How came it—how happened it?" inquired Robin, perfectly aroused to the horror of the scene, to which Roupall appeared quite indifferent.

"I know no more than you," replied the good-humoured ruffian, holding up a jewelled ear-ring between his fingers—"I know no more than you;—Gad, that's fit for any lady's ear in Kent!—Only I heard it was believed among the sharks, that my friend Sir Willmott excited a mutiny aboard the Fire-fly, which this fellow, now without a head, headed—and so, ye understand, lost his head, as the Skipper's punishment for mutiny. How it came here—where it may stay—I know not. There, Robin, there are a pair of rings fit for a queen: maybe, you'll buy them; they're honestly worth two dollars. Well, you would have bought 'em if she'd ha' lived."

"Me!—her!" exclaimed Robin, closing his teeth, and glaring on Jack Roupall with fiendish fierceness.

"Keep off!" ejaculated Roupall, securing the ear-rings, and placing himself in a posture of defence—"Keep off! I know ye of old, Robin Hays, with your griping fingers and strong palms! Never quarrel with a man because he doesn't understand ye'r delicacies, which are things each makes in his own mind, so that no one else can taste 'em. I meant no harm; only, mark ye, ye sha'n't throttle me for nothing the next go; so keep off; and I'm off, for sides o' flesh and sides o' iron are astir up there; so this is no place for me. I shall be off, and join King Charlie: he's much in want of strong hands, I hear, and who knows but the time is coming when 'the king shall enjoy his own again?'"

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"Do but bury *that!*" said Robin: "I would stay and do it, but that I must to the Nest at once."

"No, no," replied Roupall, striding away in an opposite direction; "let it stay where it is, to poison ravens and the carrion-birds. It is fitting food for them. They had nobler banquets at Naseby and at Marston."

CHAPTER V.

Down, stormy Passions, down; no more
Let your rude waves invade the shore
Where blushing Reason sits, and hides
Her from the fury of your tides.
* * * * *

Fall, easy Patience, fall like rest,
Where soft spells charm a troubled

We believe that even those who are anxious to learn if the Protector travelled in safety to his place of destination, and what he did when he arrived there, will scarcely murmur at the delay which a brief visit to Constantia Cecil will necessarily occasion.

We must not leave her alone in her sorrow, which, of a truth, was hard to bear. A temporary respite had been afforded her by the terrible events of the evening; it was, however, a respite that was likely, in her case, only to bring about a more fatal termination. What was to prevent Sir Willmott Burrell from branding her father—from publishing his crime, now that he was to receive no benefit by the terrible secret of which he had become possessed? Although she might be preserved from the dreadful and dreaded doom of marrying a man she could neither regard nor respect, it was equally certain that an eternal barrier existed between her and the only one she loved—a barrier which not even the power of Cromwell could break down or remove. It has been said, and said truly, that there are few things reason can discover with so much certainty and ease as its own deficiency. Constantia was a reasoning being, and she appeared ever placid in situations where her fine mind was overwhelmed by a painful train of circumstances over which she had no control: the sins for which she suffered were not of her own committing. [339]

She had often gloried in days past at the prospect of fame—the honest, upright fame which appeared the guiding principle that influenced her father's actions, when the seeking after glory seemed to her as a ferment thrown into his blood to work it up to action; and though she sometimes apprehended that he used his will with his right hand and his reason with his left, she never imagined the possibility that his pomp was furnished by injustice and his wealth dyed in blood. It was, in truth, a fearful knowledge she had acquired—a knowledge she could not communicate, and upon which she could never take advice. Her misery was to be endured not only with patience, but in secret and without complaint. That destiny was indeed severe which compelled her to anticipate a meeting with Walter as the greatest evil which could befall her; yet ardently did her soul yearn to know his fate. She sat by her father on the first night of his affliction, and on the long, long day that followed, guarding him through his dreadful malady with the watchfulness of a most devoted child, and the skilfulness of a most wise physician. Almost every word he uttered was as a dagger to her heart; yet she saw and knew the necessity that must soon exist for others to hear him speak, and shuddered at the thought.

"God! God! have mercy on me!" she murmured, clasping her hands, as she looked upon his features, which, when it was nearly morning, had been tranquillised into forgetfulness—"God have mercy upon me—and upon him, poor sleeper!"

"Who sleeps?" he exclaimed, starting from his couch—"He will not let me sleep!—There! Constance, Constance, the ship is under weigh—she spreads her white sails to the breeze, the ocean breeze—the breeze that will not cool my brow!—And there—they drag him from the hold!—Look how he struggles on the vessel's deck!—Spare him!—But no, do not spare him: if he returns, where am I? Hush! did you hear that?—Hush! hush! hush!" He stretched his hand, and bent his head in an attitude of deep attention; then seizing her arm, repeated "hush!" until at last she again inquired what disturbed him. "'Tis your mother, child; heard you not that she said I murdered you? Speak, Constantia,—you are not dead? I did not murder you—speak! I fired no pistol, and you did not fall!" The sleep she had so unintentionally broken had been but of short continuance during those weary hours; and the day was far advanced before she had leisure to bestow a moment's thought upon the probable turn that might be given to her future prospects by the sudden summons of Sir Willmott Burrell to Hampton Court. But, upon whichever side she turned, her destiny was dark, lowering, and fearful as the thunder-storm. How her heart fainted when the form of her favourite Barbara was present to her imagination, as she last held it bleeding on her bosom! How mysterious was that death! how terrible! She would have given worlds to look upon her but once more, for she could ill reconcile the idea of that gentle girl's having a stormy sea-bed at her father's hands—that rude, unhallowed man, the origin and nature of whose influence over her own parent she now understood but too well. [340]

Lady Frances Cromwell would have soothed her affliction had she known how to do so, but comfort cannot be given to a sorrow whose source is unknown. She entered her friend's watching-room, but could not prevail upon her to take either repose or food; and hoping to catch the earliest view of the physician, whose arrival she knew must be soon, she called one of her women to attend her, and wandered up the hill to Minster, where the beautiful ruins of Sexburga's nunnery commanded so extensive a view of the entire island, and a considerable portion of the adjoining country. The day had risen to one of unclouded beauty; the marshy coast of Essex was cleared of its hovering fogs; and its green meadows stretched away in the distance, until they were lost in the clear blue sky. The southern part of the island, flat and uninteresting as it is, looked gay and cheerful in the sun-light; for every little lake mirrored the smiling heavens, and danced in diamond measures to the music of bee and bird.

The cliffs at East-Church towered away for nearly six miles, broken here and there by the falling of some venerable crag, hurled, as it were, into the ocean by the giant hand of changing nature; while, as a sentinel, the house at Gull's Nest Crag maintained its pre-eminence in front of the Northern Ocean. The two little islands of Elmley and Harty slept to the south-east, quietly and silently, like huge rush-nests floating on the waters. Beyond East-Church the lofty front of the house of Shurland reared its stone walls and stern embattlements, and looked proudly over its [341]

green hills and fertile valleys—while, if the eye wandered again to the south, it could discern the Barrows, where many hundred Danes, in the turbulent times long past, found quiet and a grave.

Several large men-of-war, with reefed sails and floating pennons, lay at the entrance of the Nore, while a still greater number blotted the waters of the sluggish Medway;—still the sun shone over all; and what is it that the sun does not deck with a portion of its own cheerfulness and beauty?

"Mount up the tower, Maud," said Lady Frances, "the tower of the old church; it commands a greater range than I can see; and tell me when any cross the ferry; thy eyes, if not brighter, are quicker far than mine."

"Will ye'r ladyship sit?" replied the sapient waiting-maid; "I'll spread a kercher on this fragment of antiquity; ye'r ladyship can sit there free from any disturbance. I can see as well from this high mound as from the castle, or church-steeple, my lady; it is so hard to climb."

"Maud, if you like not to mount, say so, and I will go myself. You are dainty, young mistress."

Maud obeyed instantly, though with sundry mutterings, which, well for her, her lady heard not; for the Lady Frances was somewhat shrewishly given, and could scold as if she had not been a princess, the rank and bearing of which she was most anxious to assume, and carry as highly as the noblest born in Europe.

"See you aught?" she inquired, at last looking up to Mistress Maud, whose head, surmounted by its black hood, overlooking the parapet wall, showed very like a well-grown crow.

"A shepherd on yonder hill, lady, waving his arm to a dog down in the dingle, and the beast is driving up the fold as if he were a [man](#)."

Lady Frances bent over a tombstone near her and read the inscription. It described in quaint, but touching language, the death of a young woman, about her own age, the day before her intended bridal. There had been a white rose-tree planted close to the rude monument, but its growth was impeded by a mass of long grass and wild herbage, so that there was but one rose on its branches, and that was discoloured by a foul canker, whose green body could be seen under the froth it cast around to conceal its misdeeds. Lady Frances took it out, destroyed it, and began pulling up the coarse weeds. [342]

"Such a tomb as this I should have liked for Barbara," she said aloud, sighing heavily as the words escaped her lips.

"She will not need it," replied a voice from under an old archway, close beside where she sat.

Lady Frances started.

"Will you tell your friend, Mistress Cecil," continued the same voice—Lady Frances could not see the speaker, although, as may be readily believed, she looked around her with an anxiety not divested of terror—"Will you tell your friend, Mistress Cecil, that old Mother Hays, of the Gull's Nest Crag, is dying, and that she has something to communicate which it concerns her to know, and that the sooner she comes to the Gull's Nest the better; for the woman's spirit is only waiting to tell her secret, and go forth."

"Methinks," replied Lady Frances, "that her own child—I know she has one—would be a fitter depositary for her secret than a lady of gentle blood. But why come ye not forth? I hate all jugglery."

"Her own child, Robin, is away, the Lord knows where; and those who are not of gentle blood are as eager after secrets as other folk. Your father has had rare hunting after the Cavaliers and their secrets, though his blood has more beer than Rhenish in it, to my thinking."

Lady Frances stamped her little foot with rage at the insult, and called, in no gentle tone, "Maud! Maud!" then raising her voice, which she imagined could be heard below, as the garden of Cecil Place joined the ruins of Minster, she shouted, in a way that would have done no discredit to any officer in the Commonwealth service, "Below there!—turn out the guard, and encircle the ruins!"

"Turn out the guard, and encircle the ruins!" mimicked the voice, which was evidently receding; "the little Roundhead's in a passion!—"Turn out the guard! ah! ah! ah!" and the laugh appeared to die away beneath her feet.

Maud had hastened down right joyfully at the summons, and stood beside her mistress, whose temper had by no means cooled at the term "Roundhead," as applied to herself; and broke forth in good earnest, when noting a smile that elongated her woman's lip, as she said,— [343]

"Law! daisy me, my lady! I thought you were run away with, seeing I have just seen two ravens come out o' the glen—the Fox-glen, as we call it."

"Run away with!" repeated Lady Frances, bridling; "have the goodness to remember to whom it is you speak—woman—Here has been a—a—voice—Why turns not out that coward guard? we are too long peaceful, methinks, and need a stir to keep our soldiers to their duty."

"A voice, my lady!" repeated Maud, creeping to Lady Frances, and remembering the legends they had talked of in the hall—"Did it speak, my lady?"

"Fool! how could I know it a voice if it had not spoken?" replied Lady Frances, who, as her

temper subsided, felt that she was making herself ridiculous, as it would not be in keeping with her dignity to repeat the words she had heard.

"Shall I go down and call up the guard, and the servants, my lady, to see after this voice?" persisted Maud, with the stupid obstinacy of a person who can only see one thing at a time.

"Go up to the steeple, and look out—But—no—follow me to the house; and remember," she added, with all the asperity of a person who is conscious of having permitted temper to overcome judgment, "that we are in the house of mourning, and ought not to indulge in any thing like jest—say nothing of my alarm—I mean of what I heard, to your companions: it is not worth recording ___"

"My lady!"

"Silence, I say!" returned Lady Frances, folding her robe round her with the dignity of a queen. The woman certainly obeyed; but she could not resist muttering to herself, "She never will let a body speak when she takes to those stormy fits. Marry, come up! I wonder who she is!—Well, she's punishing herself; for I could have told her that out by East-Church I saw two soldiers and another, who seem to have taken the wrong instead of the right road; and, after still staying a little at the Cross, turned back on their steps, so as to come to Cecil Place."

How many bars and pitfalls are in the way of those who would climb highly, even if they wish to climb honestly and holily! If they stand as the mark for a multitude's praise, they have also to encounter a multitude's blame—the rabble will hoot an eagle; and the higher he soars, the louder will they mock—yet what would they not give for his wings! [344]

Lady Frances's woman found within her narrow bosom an echo to the sneer of the mysterious voice; yet, could she have become as Frances Cromwell, how great would have been her triumph! How curious are the workings of good and evil in the human heart! How necessary to study them, that so we may arrive at the knowledge of ourselves.

Yet Maud loved her mistress; and had not Lady Frances reproved her harshly and unjustly, she would never have thought, "Marry, come up! I wonder who she is!" The spirit of evil worked at the moment in both—in the lady, as a triumphant tyrant—in the woman, as an insolent slave.

We leave it to our philosophical readers to determine which of the two manifestations was the most dangerous: we hope their displeasure against either will not be very violent; for we have but too frequently observed the self-same dispositions animate bright eyes and open coral lips. Women are frequently greater tyrants than men, because of their weakness: they are anxious for power as the means of strength; and therefore they more often abuse it than use it properly; and men are better slaves than women; because an innate consciousness of their strength, which they are apt to believe they can employ whenever a fitting opportunity occurs, keeps them tranquil. It has been often noted, that in popular tumults women are frequently the most busy, and the least easy to be controlled.

No one would have supposed that Lady Frances's temper had been ruffled, when she crept into the room where Constantia was watching her still sleeping father, and communicated the news of the anticipated death of Mother Hays, with her strange request, in so low a whisper, that happily he was not disturbed.

She quitted the apartment when her father's physician was announced; but not until he had informed her that his Highness was about to visit the Island, inquire personally after the health of Sir Robert Cecil, investigate the strange murder that had occurred, inspect the fortress of Queenborough, and ascertain if useful fortifications might not be erected at Sheerness; thus mingling public with private business. [345]

CHAPTER VI.

This deadly night did last
But for a little space,
And heavenly day, now night is past,
Doth shew his pleasant face:
* * * * *
The mystie clouds that fall sometime,
And overcast the skies,
Are like to troubles of our time,
Which do but dimme our eyes;
But as such dewes are dried up quite
When Phoëbus shewes his face,
So are such fancies put to flighte
Where God doth guide by grace.

GASCOIGNE.

It would be an act of positive inhumanity to leave the unfortunate preacher any longer to his

solitude, without taking some note, however brief it may be, of his feelings and his sufferings. After consigning his packet (which, as we have seen, was not only received, but appreciated by—the Protector) to the rocks and breezes of the Gull's Nest Crag, he sat him down patiently, with his Bible in his hand, to await whatever fate was to befall him, or, as he more reverently and more properly termed it, "whatever the Almighty might have in store for him, whether it seemed of good or of evil." The day passed slowly and heavily; but before its close he had the satisfaction of ascertaining that the parcel had disappeared. Again and again he climbed to the small opening: at one time he saw that the fierce sunbeams danced on the waves, and at another that they were succeeded by the rich and glowing hues of the setting sun; then came the sober grey of twilight—the sea-birds screamed their last good-night to the waters—one by one the stars came out, gemming the sky with brilliancy, and sparkling along their appointed path. The preacher watched their progress and meditated on their mysteries; though his meditations would have been more cheerful could he have partaken of any of the "creature comforts" appertaining to Cecil Place, and under the special jurisdiction of Solomon Grundy. It was in vain that he had recourse to the crushed oranges—they merely kept his lips from parching and his tongue from cleaving to the roof of his mouth, and by the dawning of the Sabbath morn he was "verily an hungered"—not suffering from the puny and sickly faintness of temporary abstinence, but literally starving for want of food. He paced his narrow cell—called loudly from the window—exhausted his strength in fruitless endeavours to shake the door which the treacherous Burrell had so securely fastened, until, as the day again approached to its termination, he threw himself on the ground in an agony of despair.

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"To die such a death—to die without a witness or a cause! If the Lord had willed that I should suffer as a martyr for his holy word, Jonas Fleetword would not have been the man to repine, but gladly would have sacrificed his body as a proof of his exceeding faith, and as an example to encourage others; but to be starved for Sir Willmott Burrell's pastime—to starve in this horrid cell—to feel nature decaying within me, while not even the ravens can bring me food! O God! O God! pass thou this cup from me, or implant a deep spirit of patience and resignation within my soul!"

The unfortunate man continued praying and exclaiming, until nature became almost exhausted, and he sat opposite the aperture, his eyes fixed on the heavens, from which the light was once more rapidly receding.

"If the villain willed my death, why not exterminate me at once?" he thought; and then he prayed again; and as his fervour increased, the door opened, and, by the dim light that entered his cell, he discovered the figure of a tall stalwart man, who was in the middle of the chamber before he perceived that a living being occupied any portion of it.

"The Lord has heard!—the Lord has answered! the Lord has delivered!" exclaimed the preacher, springing on his feet with astonishing agility; then going up closely to his deliverer, he scanned his features with an earnest eye, and continued, "It is not the chief of cunning, art, and bloodshed, albeit one who appears skilled in the habits of warlike people. Friend, my inward man doth greatly suffer from long abstinence, seeing I have not tasted any thing but a fragment of bitter orange in a state of decomposition, to which I should soon have been reduced myself but for thy timely arrival! Behold, I have been compelled to tarry here a prisoner for the space of thirty-six hours, computing by the rising of the sun and the setting thereof.—Art thou a friend to Sir Willmott Burrell?"

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"D—n him!" replied the stranger with a startling earnestness that left no doubt of his sincerity, at the same time returning to his belt the pistol he had drawn forth at the sight of a stranger in one of the most secret apartments of the Crag.

"Friend!" exclaimed the poor preacher, greatly offended, despite his hunger, at the man's unblushing profaneness, "I cannot commune with thee if thou art of the household of evil-speakers: it is not in thy power to set the mark of destruction on any, though, doubtless, that evil man is in danger of hell-fire. I like not to seem as caring for the creature, but the Creator hath given the things of earth for man's support—hast thou food?"

"Follow me," was the brief reply; and Fleetword did follow as quickly as his exhausted state permitted, to the large vaulted room in which we have heretofore encountered the Buccaneer.

Hugh Dalton, for he it was who had so unexpectedly, but so fortunately, broken in upon the dreary solitude of the preacher, pointed to a rude table, upon which stood fragments of a substantial meal: these Fleetword immediately attacked, while the Skipper re-ascended the stairs, down which he had conducted his unlooked-for guest, and disappeared. When the worthy man had satisfied his hunger, he glanced from flagon to flagon, piled one over another upon the floor.

"They are, of a truth, dangerous; yet here is no water, and I am, of a verity, much athirst."

He seized one that had been opened, and drank so eagerly, that, unused as he was to such potations, his head in a very short space of time became incapable of directing his motions; and when Dalton returned, the simple-minded man was sleeping soundly, his forehead resting on his arms, that were crossed on the table. Dalton looked upon him for a few moments, and a curse—one of those to which he was unhappily familiar—burst from his lips.

"I cannot learn how he came there," he said; "the thing will sleep till morning:—a pretty nursery my Crag has become!" He moved towards the portion of the wall we have formerly mentioned as

being covered with the skins of various animals, and holding them out from the side of the cave, discovered a very small arched chamber, which, as well as the one where Fleetword had just partaken of "the creatures comforts," was lighted by a small iron sconce, carefully guarded by a horn shade. Directly opposite the entrance a female was seated after the Eastern fashion, cross-legged, upon a pile of cushions. She placed her finger on her lip in token of silence, and the Buccaneer returned the signal by beckoning her forward; she rose, though with some difficulty, and as a rich shawl, in which she had been enveloped, fell from her shoulders, her appearance denoted her a married woman. Dalton pointed to Fleetword, and the instant she saw him, she clasped her hands, and would have rushed towards him; but this the Skipper prevented, and they exchanged a few sentences in a strange language, the apparent result of which was, that Dalton proceeded to examine the pockets of the sleeper, and even thrust his hand into his bosom, without, however, it would seem, finding what he sought. There was the small Bible, a handkerchief, a reading-glass, some fragments of orange-peel, which, perhaps, he had unwittingly thrust there, one or two old religious pamphlets, a newspaper—and a strip of parchment. The foreign lady shook her head, as Dalton laid each upon the table. After a few more words, both the Buccaneer and the stranger were secreted in the arched chamber, and the curtain of skins again fell over the entrance.

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It was past the hour of the next day's noon before the preacher recovered from the effects of potations so unusual to him. It was then that Dalton questioned him, and discovered the artifice and cruelty of the treacherous Burrell, in abandoning the poor preacher to starvation: a consequence that must have occurred, had not the Skipper providentially stood in need of some articles of bedding, that were kept in this chamber, as matters rarely needed by his crew.

Fleetword, having explained what he had done with the required papers, would have willingly departed, but Dalton detained him, frankly saying, that he cared not, just then, to trust any one abroad, who had seen so much of the mysteries of his singular palace. Without further ceremony, he was again confined, in a small cupboard-like cavity, close to the hostelry of the Gull's Nest.

It was not long after the preacher's second imprisonment, that Robin Hays might have been seen, treading the outward mazes of the cliff, and, without pausing at his mother's dwelling, approaching the spot where, on a former occasion, Burrell had received the signal for entrance from Hugh Dalton. He was ignorant of his mother's illness; but the information that Jack Roupall unwittingly communicated was not lost upon him; and he had earnestly scanned the waters, to see if the Fire-fly were off the coast. Though the gallant sparkling ship hardly hoisted the same colours twice in the same week, and though she had as many false figure-heads as there are days in January, yet Robin thought he never could be deceived in her appearance, and he saw at once, that though there were many ships in the offing, she certainly was not within sight of land. The feeling that he should look on Barbara no more was another source of agony to the unhappy Ranger. Yet he could hardly believe that the Buccaneer would so soon part with the beautiful form of a child he so dearly loved. He struck his own peculiar signal against the rock, and it was quickly answered by the Skipper himself, who extended his hand towards his friend with every demonstration of joy. Robin started at seeing the Buccaneer in so cheerful a mood, and was endeavouring to speak, when the other prevented his words from coming forth, by placing his hand on his lips. The Ranger's head grew dizzy—his knees smote against each other, and he gazed on Dalton's countenance, eager to ascertain if there was a possibility of hope, or if excess of grief had deranged his intellect.

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"Silence! silence! silence!" repeated the Buccaneer, in the subdued voice of a puny girl; and Robin thought his eye glared wildly as he spoke.

"Where—where is she?" muttered Robin, leaning for support against a projecting stone, that served as one of the slides for the rough, but skillfully-managed doorway—his heart panting with anxiety to behold, and yet dreading to look upon the form of the dead Barbara. The Buccaneer pointed to where the skins had hung when Fleetword was in the chamber, and the Ranger attempted to move towards it; but his feet were as if rooted to the earth. Dalton watched his agitation with a curious eye; yet Robin perceived it not. He made several ineffectual attempts to stir from his position; but continued fixed in the same spot, unable to withdraw his gaze from the opening. At length the blood circulated more freely in his veins, his chest heaved, as if the exertion of breathing was an effort he could not long continue; and he staggered, as a drunken man, towards the entrance. The uncertainty of his step was such that he would have fallen into the chamber, had not the Buccaneer seized him within his powerful grasp, on the threshold of the inner chamber, and silently directed his attention towards a pile of cushions, covered with a variety of coloured silks and furs, on which lay a form he could not mistake. The hair, divested of its usual cap, rested in shadowy masses on the throat and bosom, and the light of the small lamp fell upon a cheek and brow white as monumental marble. By the side of this rude, yet luxurious couch, crouched another female, holding a fan, or rather a mass of superb ostrich feathers, which she moved slowly to and fro, so as to create a current of air within the cell. It contained one other inmate—the little and ugly Crisp—lying, coiled up, at the foot of the cushions, his nose resting between his small, rough paws; his eyes fixed upon his master, to hail whom he sprang not forward, as was his custom, with a right joyful and doggish salutation, but, mutely and quietly, wagged his dwarfish tail—so gently, that it would not have brushed off the down from a butterfly's wing.

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Robin grasped his hands convulsively together—shook back the hair that curled over his forehead, as if it prevented his seeing clearly—his breathing became still more painfully distinct—large drops of moisture burst upon his brow—his tongue moved, but he could utter no sound—

his under lip worked in fearful convulsion—and, despite Dalton's efforts to restrain him, he sprang to the side of the couch with the bound of a red deer, and falling on his knees, succeeded in exclaiming,—

"She lives! she lives!"

The sweet sleeper at once awoke; the long dark lashes separated, and the mild hazel eye of Barbara turned once more upon Robin Hays; a weak smile separated lips that were as white as the teeth they sheltered, as she extended her hand towards the Ranger. But, as if the effort was too much, her eyes again closed; and she would have looked as if asleep in death, but that Robin kissed her hand with a respectful feeling that would have done honour to men of higher breeding. The maiden blood tinged her cheek with a pale and gentle colour—the hue that tints the inner leaves of a blush rose.

The Buccaneer had been a silent spectator of this scene, and it had taught him a new lesson— one, too, not without its bitterness. When Robin, with more discretion than could have been expected from him, silently withdrew into the outer room, he beheld Dalton standing in an attitude of deep and painful thought near its furthest entrance. As the Ranger approached, his heart swelling with an overflowing of joy and gratitude—his head reeling with sensations so new, so undefinable, that he doubted if the air he breathed, the earth he trod on, was the same as it had been but an hour, a moment before—yet suffering still from previous agony, and receiving back Barbara as an offering from the grave, that might have closed over her;—as the Ranger approached the Buccaneer, in a frame of mind which it is utterly impossible to define, Dalton threw upon him a look so full of contempt, as he glanced over his diminutive and disproportioned form, that Robin never could have forgotten it, had it not passed unnoticed in the deep feeling of joy and thankfulness that possessed his whole soul. He seized the Skipper's hand with a warmth and energy of feeling that moved his friend again towards him. The generous heart is rarely indifferent to the generous-hearted. Dalton gave back the pressure, although he turned away the next moment with a heavy sigh.

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Ah! it is a common error with men to believe that women value beauty as much as it is valued by themselves. Such a feeling as that his daughter entertained for Robin Hays, Dalton, even in his later years, could no more understand than an eagle can comprehend the quiet affection of the cooing ring-dove for its partner: the one would glory in sailing with his mate in the light of the tropical sun, would scream with her over the agonies of a dying fawn, and dip the beaks of their callow young in blood; the other, nested in some gentle dell, the green turf beneath watered by a brook, rippling its cadences to his sweet, though monotonous, melody—would peel for his companion the husk from the ripening corn, and shadow his brood from the noonday heat. Yet the love of both is perfect, according to its kind.

The time had been when, as Hugh Dalton walked on the deck of his bright Fire-fly, and counted the stars, guided the helm, or watched the clouds flitting past the disk of the silver moon, he thought that, if his pardon were granted, and he could bestow his ship upon one in the beauty and prime of manhood, who would take Barbara to his bosom, and call her by the hallowed name of "wife," he could lay his head upon his pillow, and die in peace, the grandsire of a race of sons, who would carry the name of Dalton honourably over the waves of many lands. He had never, in all his adventures, met with a youth who had gained so much upon his affections as the lad Springall. He knew him to be brave and honest, of a frank and generous nature, well calculated to win the heart of any maiden; and he had arranged for the youth's temporary residence at Cecil Place, at a time when he knew the baronet could not refuse aught that he demanded, with a view to forward a long-cherished design.

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"Barbara will see, and, I am sure, love him," quoth Dalton to himself: "how can it be otherwise? Matters may change ere long, and, if they do— His family is of an old Kentish stock, well known for their loyalty, which, in truth, made the boy quit the canting ship, the Providence, when he met with a fitting opportunity. She cannot choose but love him; and even if, at the end of ten or twenty years, he should turn out a gentleman, he'll never scorn her then; for, faith, he could not; she is too like her mother to be slighted of mortal man!" And so he dreamed, and fancied, as scores of fathers have done before and since, that all things were going on rightly. When Springall held occasional communication with him, he never saw him tread the deck without mentally exclaiming, "What a brave skipper that boy will make! He has the very gait of a commander: the step free, yet careless; the voice clear as a warning bell; the eye keen, and as strong as an eagle's." Then he would look upon his ship, and, apostrophising her as a parent would a fondling child, continue,—

"Ah! your figure-head will be all the same when he has the command, and your flag will never change. You may double the Cape then without dread of a privateer; crowd sail beneath the great ship Argo, or be rocked by any land-breeze in Britain without dread of molestation. The lad may look, as I have often done, over the lee-gangway, during the morning watch, seeking the sight of the far off fleet—the fleet that will hail him as a friend, not a foe! And he will love every spar of your timber for the sake of old Dalton's daughter!"

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The feelings of the Buccaneer towards Robin Hays were of a very different nature. He loved and esteemed the manikin, and valued his ready wit and his extreme honesty. He was also gratified by the Ranger's skill in penmanship and book-learning, and took marvellous delight in his wild sea-songs; but, that he could look to be the husband of his daughter, had never for a moment entered his thoughts. Now, however, the unwelcome truth suddenly flashed upon him; there were signs and tokens that could not mislead: the fearful agitation of the one—the evident joy of the

other—the flush that tinged her cheek, the smile that dwelt, but for a moment, upon her pallid lip, gave such evidence of the state of the maiden's heart, that Dalton could not waver in his opinion—could not for an instant doubt that all his cherished plans were as autumn leaves, sent on some especial mission through the air, when a whirlwind raves along the earth.

To the Buccaneer it was a bitter knowledge; the joy that his daughter was of the living, and not among the dead, was, for the time, more than half destroyed by the certainty that she had thrown away the jewel of her affections upon one whom, in his wrath, Dalton termed a "deformed ape."

The Buccaneer turned from the Ranger in heavy and heart-felt disappointment; then walked two or three times across the outward room, and then motioned Robin Hays to follow him up the stairs, leading to the back chamber of the small hostelry of the Gull's Nest Crag.

CHAPTER VII.

Good sir, look upon him—
But let it be with my eyes, and the care
You should owe to your daughter's life
and safety,
Of which, without him, she's uncapable,
And you'll approve him worthy.

MASSINGER.

The apartment which the Buccaneer selected as his place of conference was at some distance from, though on a line with, that which Fleetword had so unwillingly tenanted. Its entrance was by two doors, one of secret construction, leading to the stairs, the other opening into the passage that was frequented by all who were connected with the Fire-fly. [354]

"Now—now," said Robin, "tell—tell me, captain, how all the wonderful things of the past days have happened: it is a strange mystery, yet it was a horrid dream!"

Dalton again sighed, but more heavily than before, as he replied, "My adventures are soon told. I had despatched to the Protector such documents as I knew would lead him to prevent the marriage of Lady Constantia; my heart relented towards her, and I saw that Providence was working its reed in other ways without my aid. Secreted in one of the chapel vaults, I watched the coming of those who were to stay the ceremony. I knew the certainty that come they would, for I could rely upon the speed of the man I trusted, and that Oliver would act upon the instant I had no doubt. I have long had my own plans of revenge against the villain Burrell, but they were too slow for one so perfect in iniquity. Robin! he would have murdered me on board my own ship. I listened for the tramp of the soldiers—gloating in my own mind over his disappointment, and exulting in his fall, thinking how his proud spirit would be brought low amid the crowded court! But they tarried—I could not hear the sound of their horses' hoofs—although within the old abbey chapel were the bride, the bridegroom—(curse him!)—and their attendants. Again I listened—the ceremony began—I sniffed the breeze like a war-steed—I heard them coming, but the Preacher was speaking the words, and they would arrive too late. All consideration for my own safety was lost in my longing for revenge, and, I will add, my deep desire to save the lamb from the tiger's fangs. I rushed towards the chapel—there was a pistol-shot—it gave speed to my steps. At the door I encountered Burrell; and he—he, the fiend, screamed into my ears that my child was slain!"

Dalton and Robin Hays both shuddered, and some minutes had elapsed before the Buccaneer resumed his story.

"I know not what I did, except that the place was filled with armed men, and the dastard Burrell commanded the fanatic Jones (I remembered him well) to seize me; moreover, he would have fired, I believe he did fire, but my memory is sadly confused.

"Then Barbara, whose blood was streaming from her wound, sprang to my bosom—sweet girl!—and hung, as I thought, a corpse upon my arm. When I looked upon her pallid cheeks and livid lips, I could have braved a thousand deaths sooner than have left her to be buried in their black and filthy clay; and I spoke from my heart to them, and I think Lady Constantia spoke too; and they let us pass, me and my dead child! [355]

"I carried her round the chapel, and sank with her into the vault, where I had been concealed—that which contains the passage leading up to Minster, and then sloping down the hill; and I placed my daughter on the ground and closed the entrance, as we have ever done. And then I sat on the earth and raised her head and shoulders on my knees, and loosening her kerchief to look at the wound, which I had no doubt had been inflicted by the Jewess Zillah—shall I ever forget the sensation!—I cannot describe it, so different from anything I ever felt—ever can feel:—her bosom was warm, as the fleece of a young unshorn lamb, and her heart palpitated within it." The rugged Buccaneer covered his face with his hands, and Robin, in a voice which strong emotion rendered almost inarticulate, said,—

"I know what must have been your feelings from what I myself felt so short a time past."

Hugh Dalton slowly withdrew his broad palms from his countenance, and looking somewhat sternly on the Ranger, replied, "Young man, that you love my daughter, I have seen but too plainly; and I take it ill that you told me not of it before." Robin would have interrupted,—but he motioned him to remain silent. "We will talk of it hereafter;—only this—you may love her, but you cannot love her with a parent's love. It is as deep as it is mysterious; it comes with the first look a father casts upon his babe; the infant, which to the whole world seems a mis-shapen, an unpleasant thing to look upon, to him is a being of most perfect beauty—the hope—the prop—the stay of his future life. Upon that weak, helpless, inanimate creature, his heart leans—the heart of the strongest man leans upon it. The world holds out no promise to tempt him like the well-doing of his child. It is a wonderful mystery," continued the Buccaneer, reverently uncovering his head, as men do when they are about to enter a place of worship; "it is most wonderful, the holy love which comes upon us, for the simple, senseless, powerless things, that fill us with so much hope, and strength, and energy! I saw a whale once, who, when her young one was struck by the harpoon, came right between it and the ship, and bore the blows, and took the fatal weapons again and again into her bleeding body; and when she was struggling in her flurry, and the sea around was dyed as red as scarlet, still she tried to save her offspring, and managed so as to die lying over it. It was the very time that I was bringing my own girl to England—a little creature, sleeping in my bosom—and it was by a vessel in our company the poor whale was killed; for I would not suffer one of my men to have a hand in such a sickening job:—but I never forgot it—never—how she lay over her young, shielding it to the last with her own body! I used to pray—I could pray whenever I took my Barbara into my arms!—I thought it a duty then to pray for her, and I trusted that she would hereafter pray for me. Had I always her sweet face to look upon, I should be free from many a crime!—It is a beautiful mystery, I say again; and no one but myself, young man, can ever tell what I felt when I knew that she was yet alive! As soon as I had sufficiently collected my senses, I examined the wound. Often had I looked on blood; and wounds were familiar to me, as blackberries to a schoolboy; but I trembled from head to foot, as if I had never seen either. The ball had made its own way out under the shoulder; and, as consciousness was fast returning, I endeavoured to staunch the stream, which flowed so copiously that I began to dread the destruction of my newly raised hopes. While I was thus occupied, I heard so deeply drawn a sigh from some one close to me, that I started back, and was horrified at seeing the source of all the evil—the Jewess Zillah—pale as ashes, standing by my side. I cursed her with a wicked curse, and was about to inflict instant, but most unjust punishment. The unfortunate creature prostrated herself at my feet, and explained, as briefly as her sobs permitted, that, enraged at Burrell's treachery—finding herself deserted by Fleetword, whose faith she relied upon—imagining that Mistress Cecil was leagued against her, from the circumstance of her never taking notice of the communications she wrote and confided to Jeromio's care—wrought up, in fact, to a pitch of frenzy, she determined on destroying Burrell's destined bride, whose appearance she had confounded with that of my poor Barbara! Nothing could exceed her penitence. She had groped her way to the secret entrance into the tomb. It had been revealed to her by the traitor Jeromio. She returned with us after nightfall to this horrid place; and has ever since watched my poor child with the earnestness and care of a most devoted sister. I am astonished how she escaped Sir Willmott's vengeance. He was so hemmed in by difficulties, that he had no power to act, though he tried hard for it. The villain Jeromio——"

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"I heard of that," interrupted Robin; "Roupall told me all: he met me but a little time past in the Fox Glen; and there, too, I saw the traitor's head, with the ravens feasting on their prey!"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Dalton, "is that the way Sir Willmott treats his wedding present! The Fox Glen is beneath his chamber window; so I suppose he cantered it out to find its own grave in the grassy hollow."

"Is this Barbara's father!" thought Robin, "and the man who would not kill a cub-whale?—How wonderful! how strange his modifications of feeling: the older he grows, the more incomprehensible he becomes."

Robin then detailed the particulars of his journey since he left the Gull's Nest, which, as we are already acquainted with them, need not be repeated here, and raised himself considerably in the Buccaneer's estimation by his attention, shrewdness, and, above all, by the account he gave of his interview with Cromwell.

"I believe it, Rob, I believe it—I am sure you would not betray me! But I fear we must abandon this place—this and all others of a similar description. I knew that as soon as internal commotions ceased, old Noll would root us out. He will set Burrell on the trail, if he can get no other informer; for he has never been too great not to make use of filthy tools to effect his purpose. He had been here long ago but that he dislikes to employ such troops as he has trained in hunting up moles and water-rats. Yet he thinks it a disgrace to his policy not to know all things, even the hiding-places along the coast. There's good nesting in the Cornish cliffs; but I have done with it, pardon or no pardon. Sir Robert Cecil's gone mad, and I have a game to play there still. What you tell me of Walter is most strange; yet I feel certain he is safe, and my course, in reference to him, must be guided by the events that a very few hours will doubtless produce. Cromwell—Roundhead and rebel as he is—unless he be marvellously changed—has generosity enough to guarantee the youth's safety, were he a thousand times more dangerous than he can be. Whatever may be my fate, his will be a happy one. They may leave me to rot upon a gibbet, so he and my sweet Barbara are safe."

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"But," observed Robin, "I dread no such peril for you. Even if danger awaits you in England, there are other lands—"

"Ah! but my child—my child! Shall I leave her among strangers, or take her into a world that will rob her of her wealth—innocence?"

"Gold will do much; there are many about the court of Oliver who love the yellow colour and the pleasant chink of coin."

"No, I have other and stronger means of buying mercy. But mercy is not all I want—I sometimes think, that were I to walk up to Whitehall, banned as I am, Cromwell would not touch a hair of my head. I would say, 'God direct me for the best!' only I fear He has no thought of me, except for my girl's sake: and, Robin, touching her, I must again say, that—"

Whatever the Buccaneer would have added, Springall's entrance at the moment prevented. He seemed delighted at meeting Robin, and inquired in the same breath if he had been with his mother. Robin said, "No." Springall then told him she was ill—fancied herself dying, and that, as the old dame seemed so wishful to see Mistress Cecil, saying she had something important to communicate to her, he had gone up to Cecil Place, and found a strange messenger to do his bidding. Robin needed no urging to seek his mother, whom he tenderly loved; and when he had left the room, the Buccaneer could not help observing, that a parent's first thoughts after a journey are with the child, but that a child does not always first fly to the parent: "And yet," pursued Dalton, "the boy loves his mother!"

"Captain o' mine," said the ever-joyous and affectionate sailor, who deserved the attachment bestowed upon him by the skipper—"Captain o' mine, I have news for you. You see, I sailed right for the old port, and just as I was going to steer into harbour, I spied one of the steel-caps lounging about the great gate, and peeping through the bars like a lion that would and couldn't; but I knew he was one who could if he would, and though I had a message for Mistress Cecil, yet I didn't see the good of trusting him; and so I crowded sail to-leeward into the Green Cave, and on under the arch that has openings enough; but no one could I see until I was just by the church at Minster, when, on the look-out, I got a glimpse of a sail, and suspecting it to be something in the privateer line, I hove-to and used my trumpet, and who should it turn out to be but the young Cromwell! and I couldn't for the life of me help hoisting false colours and dealing in the spirit line; so she took me for a ghost when I delivered Mother Hays's message to Mistress Constantia: then she blew out like a nor'-wester, and flouted, and called names; and what else do ye think she did? By Jove, she shouted, 'Below there!—turn out the guard!' and stamped her little foot. Never trust me, if her ankle isn't as neatly turned as the smoothest whistle that ever hung from a boatswain's neck! After a while she said something about jugglery, and I called her a little Roundhead; and, to be sure, how she did stamp! Then presently down tumbled Mistress Maud from the steeple, where, I guess, she had been making observations, and Lady Frances rated the waiting-maid soundly, which I didn't grudge her—the frippery, insolent baggage! It isn't a month since she called me a chip of the jib-boom and an ugly fellow!—Ugly fellow, indeed;" repeated Springall, twitching up his trowsers—"I wonder what she meant by ugly fellow!"

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"So do I," said the Skipper, with a sigh; for his mind was still 'harping on his daughter:' "So do I, but women have strange fancies. Let me now ask you what news you have, for I cannot see how this concerns me."

"Let me read my log my own way, or I cannot read it at all—and you know, master, I never spin a long yarn, except when I can't help it."

Dalton smiled, for, of all the youths he had ever known, Springall loved the most to hear himself talk.

"When I had delivered my message, and had the satisfaction of knowing that a rascally Roundhead, and a princess (as they call her,) was employed in doing my bidding," continued the lad, "I tacked about, and loitered along, looking at the queer tackling of the hedges, and the gay colours hoisted by the little flowers, and wondering within myself how any one would like to be confined to the land with its hills and hollows, where it's the same, same thing, over and over again; when I spied two steel caps and a gentleman in black steering along the road to Cecil Place. So I thought it would be only civil to go with them, seeing they were strangers; but I did not care to let them spy me, so I anchored in the hedge till they came up, and then crept along—along, on the other side, like a tortoise, and as slowly too, faith! for the road is so bad they were forced to lead their horses, except the black one, who, I found, was the Protector's own doctor going to cure Sir Robert Cecil! What do you think of that, captain?"

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Dalton saw no necessity for reply, and Springall continued:—

"I gathered from their talk that Cromwell himself was on the road, coming bodily to inquire into the murder, (as they supposed,) and to rout out the smugglers; and the rascals were even talking about the prizes, having heard the place was full of riches; and they said they were sure that more than one thing brought his Highness such a journey. At every stumble their horses made, the psalm-singing scoundrels offered up an ejaculation. May I never reef a sail, captain, if they didn't pray more, going that length of road, than you, and I, and all [the](#) crew of the Fire-fly put together, have prayed during the last twelve, ay, twice twelve months!—How is Mistress Barbara?"

"What a giddy mind is yours, Springall," said Dalton; "in the same breath you speak of danger, and ask for my peace-loving child."

"More than she would do for me," replied the boy, sulkily, adding, with some of the wisdom of

matured manhood, "she must not remain here, though, no, not another night, for who knows what those rascals would be at? I am much inclined to think with the crop-eared fellows, that his Highness (the devil take such highnesses, say I!) would never lay to windward and trust himself on the island, unless he had good reason to think he could kill two, ay, ten birds with one stone; he is too old a man now to go dancing about the country because of a murder, or a wedding—neither of which he cares much about."

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"Except when they come home—quite home—and Mistress Constantia is to him like an own child. There's a deal of difference in the colour of our own blood and that of other people. But we must see to it, Springall, and without delay. The Fire-fly is, as you know, tricked out like a Dutch lugger, masts—sails—all! I defy even Robin Hays to know her; and I had a report spread at Sheerness and Queenborough that she had the plague aboard. Tom o' Coventry, and another o' the lads have talked of nothing else at the hostelries; and not an hour ago I sent a message to Jabez Tippet, with a three gallon memorandum of the best Nantz, so that he might prate of it to all who crossed the Ferry. Her cargo is nearly discharged, and there are but four men aboard; they walk the deck by two, as sentries, to keep up the deception; but evil is in the wind when the Protector is stirring. I should have got her out, far out before, had I not been obliged to move her backwards and forwards, owing to the cursed mischances of the times; and, Springall, I am not the man I was."

"Look, captain!" said the boy, energetically; "I would rather set a torch to the powder-chest of that gay ship, than have her turned into a Roundhead. Didn't I with my own eyes see a lubberly rascal take a chisel, or some o' their land tools, and shave every lock of hair off the figure-head of the 'Royal Charles,' and even off the beard, shorten the nose into a stub, and then scrawl under it, 'The blessed change; this regenerated vessel will be known hereafter as the Holy Oliver'? Wasn't that blasphemy? Come, captain, rouse yourself; let's call a council—there's little Robin Hays, he loves her timbers as he loves his life—there's the boatswain, and a lot of honest hands. Let's ship the ballast—the women I mean—and off for the Americees. Let them blow Gull's Nest to the devil, if they like; so our trim ship is safe, what need we care? Ill luck is in the land to any who touch it, save to put off a rich cargo or take in fresh water."

Dalton shook his head, and his heart sank within him; his mind becoming more and more perplexed, when he remembered the two helpless females who depended on him—the one for life, the other for justice—his own desire for pardon, too, struggling with his affection for his vessel.

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He paced the room for a few moments, and then, accompanied by the animated and daring young sailor, sallied forth in search of Robin Hays, having first resolved that the preacher Fleetword should be sent to keep watch by the bedside of the dying woman.

CHAPTER VIII.

E'en such is Time; which takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, and all we have;
And pays us nought but age and dust,
Which in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wander'd all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

Robin, when he quitted the Buccaneer, proceeded not towards his mother's house, but again entered the chamber in which Barbara lay: he paused, and listened to ascertain if she again slept. He heard no sound, and at length ventured to divide the drapery, and look within. The motion, slight as it was, was noticed by the gentle maid, who beckoned with her finger, and her lover was in an instant by her side.

"I shall be well—soon well again, Robin," she murmured; "and I know you will be glad when I am so."

Robin made no reply, but stood wondering at the exceeding beauty of the beloved object that lay upon that strange, but not ungraceful couch. He had heretofore only seen Barbara in the oddly-fashioned dress, and with the humble bearing of a servant; but now, reclining on piles of skins and velvets, her hair falling in unconstrained and untutored profusion over her white throat, and shrouding her slight figure, she seemed to him the embodying of all he had ever imagined as belonging to the exquisite creatures of other worlds. Sour and sarcastic as he was, there were few in that age who had more frequently dreamed of the pure and holy beings that people the imagination of richly-endowed minds. Solitude is the nurse of all that is good within us. The world stains what it touches; and the more we withdraw from it, the better we become. Robin knew much of its wickedness; but, fortunately, had ever sufficient leisure and sufficient loneliness for reflection. Never tell us, that a man can walk beneath the rainbow's arch, and not think of the power that placed it there! that he can stand on the tall cliff's peak, and not drink in the fullness of God's exceeding glory—that he can hear the small lambs bleat, or inhale the perfume of the hawthorn, without thankfulness to the great Author of all! Devoid of any thing like a settled

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creed, he still had many vague, yet sublime conceptions of the mightiness and the goodness of a Power that fills the universe with His presence. Many there are with such belief; and many, whose hearts aspire to a more defined and intimate knowledge of the Great Fountain of Life; and for lack of opportunity—for want of proper direction, either plunge amid the pitfalls and quagmires of infidelity, or are lost amid the equally dangerous fallacies of various and contradictory interpretations of the same perfect and beautiful creed. Happy was it for the Ranger that she he so truly loved was religious in its purest and simplest sense—gifted with that gentle and holy wisdom, which instructed her in the honest rule of right, and rendered her unobtrusively impervious to temptation.

"I shall be soon well again," she repeated; "and do not look so sadly on me, Robin; indeed I shall soon be well."

"Thank God for that, Barbara!" he replied. "I bless God that it is so!"

"Robin! Do you really mean that you do thank God: is it your heart, or your lips that speak?"

"As God sees me, I think that both speak, Barbara."

"Then," said the girl, "I bless God more for that than for the saving of my life. I pray daily for those to whom I owe much; but for you and my father I say double prayers."

"Because you think we need them doubly?" inquired the Ranger, smiling.

"Even so; for since I have lain here, not being able to talk much with that kind stranger, who has more than atoned for what she did by her present goodness to me, I have had time for reflection; and—and—I have prayed very much for you, Robin Hays."

"Perhaps," said the Ranger, (his strong and turbulent feelings struggling painfully in his bosom,) "perhaps, Barbara, your prayers are all you mean to give me?"

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"Robin," replied the maiden, while a flush passed over her pale cheek, "you are often unjust; but I forgive it: for you are abroad in the world, which, I believe, makes people unkind. And yet I did not mean you were unkind, Robin. Now do not turn away so strangely. I would give the life that has been so lately restored to me, that your faith was as my faith,—that your God was my God."

The Ranger fell on his knees by the side of the couch, and clasping his hands energetically together, replied, not in a loud, but in a low, earnest tone,—

"Barbara, teach me your faith, and I will learn it—learn any thing from your lips: I will cast aside my waywardness—my nature shall be changed—I will become gentle as a babe. And as to your God, I am no heathen, Barbara, but an Englishman, and all so born know there is but One to worship!"

"Ay, but One," replied the gentle and thoughtful girl; "yet a wild, reckless temper like yours is ever verging to idolatry, to the formation of many gods. Do you not worship Mammon when you risk body and soul to procure ill-gotten gold?"

"Reformation is the work of time, and there will be time for it, Barbara, when you are better. I will sit during the whole length of the Sabbath-days, winter and summer all the same, from sunrise to sunset, and listen to the word of God: I will not speak, I will not look except to you, and you shall read to me from the beginning to the end, and explain, and pray: and even on week-days I will hear it for one hour each evening, from Monday till Saturday, week after week, till I understand what you expound. Will not that improve me, Barbara?"

A smile, succeeded by an expression of much anxiety, passed over her innocent countenance, and then she spoke.

"God knows, Robin, that I have much trouble—my father, I see, I feel, loves his ship better than any earthly thing; and though it would anger him to know it, yet I do wish from my heart the vessel would fade from the waters as a shadow from the green hill's side. He will never become a staid man—never set his heart on things above—never either be happy, or make me so, until no plank floats upon ocean that calls him master. Ah me, Robin! Mistress Cecil used to say that age brought wisdom; and, if so, methinks wisdom brings sorrow."

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It was some minutes before the Ranger offered any comment on her words. At length he assured her how fully he agreed in believing that Dalton would be much more happy if his ship "faded," as she termed it, "from the waters; and yet," he added, "it would be as the separating of soul and body!"

"A fearful separation that would indeed be, and one I could not bear to think on. Ah, Robin! I felt death in a dream once, and once almost in reality;—and yet my dear father, he is the soul, and the ship the body—the worthless body that ties him to the earth!"

"And has Barbara no little fable of her own to make that come out prettily?"

"Ah, Robin! I think of fables, as you call them, as much as ever, but am not able to speak them now; so, good b'ye, Robin, and let not the promise you have made me be like the flower of the wild rock-rose, which blooms and blights within a single day. When we indeed sit together, and read and pray, remember the pledge you have now given freely to one who will labour to make you happy all the day long."

Robin again pressed his lips upon her hand, and left the chamber with feelings of deep joy and gratitude that mock description. He had, however, to witness a scene of a nature very different.

The last interview between him and his mother was brief, for duties towards those who lived could scarcely yield their influence even to those which the dying claimed at his hands. The kind and affectionate heart of the Ranger was chilled as he entered the small and scantily-furnished chamber in which his mother lay, suffering in body, but still more in mind. Had her son been a ministering angel, she could not have welcomed him with greater joy, although her eyes were dim, and her voice was almost inarticulate as she pressed her shrivelled lips to his cheek.

"Raise me up, Robin—Robin—and move that chest on my right. Gently, gently, Robin; it contains much that will make you rich when I am gone. It would have been hard if the poor widow had not her tithe out of those who came and went. I have sent for Mistress Cecil, but she has not come: she thinks little about the lone widow of the Crag."

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"Mother," replied Robin, "her own troubles are many."

"Ah! she knows not what secrets are in the old woman's keeping. She comes not, and I have a story to tell that would be as poison to her—ay, to body and soul! You must hear it, Robin, if no one else will. But, first, hand me a drink of the strong waters. Ah, that will put fresh life into me! Let the preachers preach their fill, nothing rouses one like the strong waters!"

Robin did as she desired, but with evident unwillingness.

"Many years have gone," she continued, "yet, to the aged, many years appear as yesterday. I was sitting by the door of this very cottage, which had just been made public—for your poor father—(honest man that he was, far above your mother in wisdom and goodness)—your poor father, I say, had been drowned the winter before, and I was obliged to do something to keep the children, and so thought of making the cottage a public; well—I sat at the door, and you were in my arms."

The aged woman's mind appeared to wander for a few moments, as if she was calling her thoughts from a long distance.

"It was night, dark, dark night, and many runagades had been about the coast all day trafficking and trading and smuggling, and the gentry helping them, for things were not strict then:—it was pitch dark, with now and then a gleam of light from a bright cloud; and there came towards me a gentleman I knew full well—a gallant, handsome gentleman: he stood upon the rock that hangs over the sea, where the sea is ever wildest. Presently some of the strange-looking men joined him, and they talked and talked, though I heard them not, for the wind was whistling around me, and I was watching you asleep."

The woman again paused, but soon resumed her story.

"Well, as I was saying, they talked; but soon I heard a cry through the storm, and the next minute there was a gleam of light—I saw him struggling; but darkness fell again, and on a sudden, while you would clap your hands, came a scream for help. O God! O God! I hear it now!—now I hear it!—Robin, another drink of the strong waters, that will silence it!"

"Mother," said the Ranger, as he held the cup which her skinny fingers were extended to grasp, while her parched lips clanked against each other impatient of moisture—"Mother, take but [little](#) for you have need of prayer; that will stifle the cry far better than this."

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"And I will pray," returned the woman, "when my tale is finished. There was but that one loud, loud scream, and a heavy splash in the ocean, and with it the darkness again passed: but, Robin Hays, Robin Hays, the men had passed too, and one of them returned no more! And why did he not? He had broad and fair lands, such as make people cling to their own country, but he came not back. Soon after, I heard the noise of oars, and—mind your mother now, Robin,—another man came to the cliff—to the brow of the same cliff—I saw him look down, and along the waves, and, all of a sudden, a pistol flash from the boat sprang through the darkness, and he who came last stood while you could count ten, and passed away. But mind again, Robin, he came with a weak step, and he went as a strong man."

Robin shuddered; his mother after a brief pause continued.

"Now, who think you, Robin—my child, Robin, who think you was the murdered man—and who think you was he who came last, and saw the murderers departing in peace—who? I will tell it, before my breath is for ever stopped: the one was Robert Cecil, and the other his father's son, the first-born of his own mother!"

"Oh God!" exclaimed Robin, adding in a muttering tone, "I see through it all, the hold that Dalton has over the wretched, wicked man! But could Dalton do this?"

"Did you say any thing of Dalton?" inquired Mother Hays, whose quickness of hearing appeared increased; "it was his ship that was off the coast, though I could not swear he was himself there. Such things, I have heard, were often done in those wild times, and it made a noise then, and Sir Robert seemed like one mad about his brother; though people did whisper, for they were set against one another to the knowledge of all, and of different parties. And in time the lands all fell to him; and the Parliament since, I heard, made out, that Sir Herbert, being a friend to the king, even if he were alive, shouldn't have his own, which was all made over to the present man. But, as sure as there is a God, so sure He is just! Is it not plain? Of all the fine boys his lady bore him,

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not one is left! And, as to the daughter, look, if she knew as much of Sir Willmott Burrell as I do, she'd make her night-posset with the mermaids before she'd wed him. Well, Robin, Sir Herbert had once a son—an only son, and, as his lady died in childbed, Sir Robert's wife had taken great delight in the boy, and brought him up with her own children; and a pretty boy it was, so fond of the sea! He would sit for an hour together on my knee, and always called me nurse, and used to play with you as if you were his equal, and call Mistress Cecil, that now is, his wife! Sweet lamb that he was! Robin, Robin, he went too; how, I never knew, but I guess: the murderer of the father thought he should be more safe if the boy was away, and he pretended grief, and his poor lady felt it. Now it is of that boy I would have spoken to Mistress Cecil, for my heart misgives me —"

Farther communication was interrupted by the entrance of Constantia's maid, who came to ascertain if the widow Hays were really dying.

"My lady has trouble enough of her own, the Lord knows; but she will leave watching by the bedside of my poor distraught master, if she can render any aid."

"Robin, raise me up," exclaimed the dying woman, with a gesture of great impatience; "raise me up, Robin, and push the hair from my ears, that I may hear distinctly. Did you mean, young woman [L] that Sir Robert was distraught—mad?"

"Alack! yes," replied the girl; "mad, poor gentleman!"

"It is enough—enough—enough! I knew it would come in some shape; yet madness must be mercy to him!" Having so said, she sank back, while the serving wench stood in astonishment: and at length inquired, "What she meant?"

"She raves," was Robin's reply, drawing the girl out of the chamber: "give my humble duty to your lady, and tell her that the son of Mother Hays is with her, and that she lacks nothing the world can give her now." As the girl departed, Springall came to the door.

"Robin Hays! you must leave even your dying mother—something must be determined on. He is come! Listen to the guns at Sheerness, telling the island who has touched the soil on this side of the ferry."

Robin stood for a moment at the porch, and heard the booming of cannon heavily passing through the air, traversing the low downs, and roaring from crag to crag, as if rejoicing in liberty; the ships that lay out at sea sent forth a reply, and in a moment their flags were waving in the wind. [369]

Robin returned for a moment to his mother's room.

"Mother," he said, "for one hour I must leave you, but I will send some one to watch by your bedside. Pray to God, a God of mercy, who has but lately opened my heart: pray to Him, and He will answer. I will be with you soon—a hundred lives may rest upon that hour!"

His mother appeared scarcely conscious of what he said, but with her finger pointed to the chest.

A new, but a most unwelcome light had broken in upon the mind of the unhappy Ranger. The father of his beloved Barbara he had long known to be a reckless and a daring man, with the stains of many crimes upon his soul; but he had now the terrible knowledge that the Buccaneer was a cold-blooded and hired assassin, who for gold, for there could have been no other temptation— The thought was perfect agony, yet the Ranger resolved to face the man he at once loved and dreaded, and boldly charge him with the act his parent in her dying moments had communicated.

"It will all be known," he thought; "there can be no pardon for the murderer—no peace for Barbara—the sinless child of sin!"

CHAPTER IX.

Mainly they all att once about him laid,
And sore beset on every side arownd,
That nigh he breathless grew: yet nought
dismaid
He ever to them yielded foot of grownd.

SPENSER.

Robin followed Springall into the room he had so recently left, and stood at the entrance; fixing at the same time his eyes, which, it must be confessed, were of unrivalled brilliancy and blackness, upon the Buccaneer, he said—

"Captain, I would speak a few words with you in private, after which we will talk of the danger that surrounds us."

Dalton and Robin withdrew together, and remained alone for more than twenty minutes, during [370]

which Springall and three or four others of the crew, who had crowded, like crows into a rookery in dread of an approaching storm, debated upon and formed plans for the safety of their vessel.

"Were all hands aboard," said Springall, whose youth joyed in perpetual hope—"were we all aboard, I would undertake to pilot that vessel over and under or through any one or any number of ships between Sheerness and Chatham!"

"Through their hulks, do you mean?" inquired Jack Roupall, who had but just joined the party.

"I don't pretend to speak grammar or book-English, Jack," retorted the young sailor, "no more than yourself; but all who have ever sailed in the Fire-fly, as both you and I have done, know her quality, and that anything can be made of her: I tell you, every beam of her timbers has life in it—every spar is a spirit!"

"What sort of spirit?—Is it rum, brandy, or Hollands?" inquired Roupall, who could see no more value in the timbers of the Fire-fly than in those of any other ship that carried a good cargo. Springall's enthusiasm was wasted on him; but it was followed by a reply from the hot-headed lad that would have led to more than words, if another of the party had not interfered.

"For shame, Spring, to be so fiery! Sure you know of old, that Jack will have his joke, and means no harm. Besides, he's only a land-lubber, after all."

"Well, pepper away, brave boys! pepper away! I'll have my revenge on you all yet!" continued the trooper.

"You won't inform, will you?" exclaimed Springall, ever ready for a fray, pushing his beardless face close to the weather-beaten countenance of sturdy Roupall.

"Will you keep your face out of my mouth?" replied the man-mountain, stretching his jaws at the same time, and displaying a double row of the most enormous teeth, and a gulf which really looked as if it could contain the animated countenance of the young sailor, who, as easily moved to mirth as anger, burst into a merry laugh at the prospect before him.

"There, boy," said the Goliath, "take it easy, and talk reason about the ship, and talk the reason reasonably, and I'll join ye; but Spring has a dash o' poetry about him—I think it's called poetry:—verse-making and verse-thinking, that never did anything in the way of ship-building or ship-saving since the world was a world, that I know. Now look, lads; here's a man-a-war, a heavy, sluggish thing, whose guns could take no effect on the Fire-fly, because their shot would go right over her, and only anger the waters. Her long boats, to be sure, could do the business; but she has no more than two and the captain's gig a-board—as I heard this morning at Queenborough. The evening is closing, and neither of the other ships—whose slovenly rigging wants Blake's dressing—hae any guns a-board to signify."

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"Ay," said another, "so much for our near neighbours: what say you to our farther ones, at t'other side the island—just at the entrance to the Mersey?"

"Say!" said Springall, "why, that they could be round in less than no time if they knew who's who."

"Which they do by this: what else would bring the steel caps, and the Devil himself amongst us? besides, there's others off the coast, as well as we. Do you think old red-nosed Noll would come here about a drop of blood—a little murder, that could be settled at the 'sizes? There's something brooding in another direction, that 'ill set his hot blood boiling: but as it's purely political, all honest men, who have the free-trade at heart, will keep clear of it. May be he's heard the report that black-browed Charlie's thinking of pushing on this way,—though I don't believe it; it's too good to be true: it would soon make us tune up 'Hey for Cavaliers!' and bring the old days back again."

"But let us," chimed in Springall—"let us keep clear of every thing of the sort till our ship's safe. Why, in half an hour they might split her spars as small as jack-straws!"

"Which they won't, I think; because, if they know who she is, they know her cargo's safe—where Noll himself can't get at it, unless he drags the cellars—and the stomachs too, by this time—of half his prayer-loving subjects along the Kent and Essex coast."

"Stuff, stuff! every enemy destroyed is a shade nearer safety," said Springall; "and Noll knows it."

"That's well said, Spring," replied Jack, winking on his companion; "and I'll tell you what's true, too, shall I?"

"Ay, ay."

"Young geese are the greatest cacklers."

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"I'll tell you what," retorted the lad, drawing himself up with some dignity, and reddening to the eyes, "I may be but a boy; but have the goodness to remember, that every oak was a sapling, and every sapling an acorn. If men trample on the acorn, it will never grow to be the oak; for, little as it is, the spirit of the oak is in it.—D'ye read my riddle?"

A good-humoured burst of approbation followed Springall's speech, which was hushed by some one of the party saying,

"Here comes our Captain, and we can form no plan till he is present."

The door accordingly opened after the hand, applied at last to the latch, had evidently wandered over the panel, seeking the fastening which at first it could not discover, and making outside a noise resembling the scratching of a cat.

No race of beings so decidedly differ from every other in the world as sailors: no matter whether they belong to a king's ship, to a smuggler, or a merchantman. Though there may be shades among them, yet the grand distinction between men of the sea and men of the land endures,—it is impossible to confound them together. A seaman is ever so easily amused, so reckless of consequences, so cheerful amid difficulties, so patient under privations. His blue jacket is a symbol of enterprise and good humour. Even his nondescript hat—black, small, and shining as a japanned button, adhering to the back of his head by a kind of supernatural agency, with which landsmen are unacquainted—can never be seen by a true-born Englishman without feelings of gratitude and affection, which, at all events, no other hat in the world can command. Although the crew of the Fire-fly would have been looked upon by your genuine seaman as a set of half-castes, which they really were, yet they had, if possible, more recklessness of character than ever belonged to any number of persons so congregated together; they had so often jested at, and with death, in all its shapes, that it was little more than pastime; and they had in their own persons experienced so many hairbreadth 'scapes that they looked upon Springall's great and very natural anxiety for the fate of the ship he loved, as a species of madness which a little experience would soon cure him of. The elder ones certainly knew that there was little use in their forming plans or projects, as their commander would as usual adopt his own, and adhere to them without their council or approval. It must be confessed that lately they regarded his lying so constantly off so exposed a coast, a proof of want of energy and forethought they had never noticed before; but his prompt punishment of Jeromio had set his character again on a firm footing; for, as Roupall said; "It proved that the Captain was still himself."

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When the door of the room in which they were assembled was opened, instead of the Skipper, the long, lanky figure of the Reverend Jonas Fleetword presented itself in the opening; his coat and hose unbrushed, his pinnacle hat standing at its highest, and his basket-hilted sword dangling from the belt carelessly and rudely fastened.

Those of the men who had been sitting, stood up, while others rushed forward. Some laid their hands upon his shoulders, and all demanded whence he came, and what he wanted.

Poor Fleetword had long since arrived at the conclusion that he had unconsciously committed some crime, for which he was doomed to much suffering in the flesh: first imprisoned, and destined to endure starvation at the hands of Sir Willmott Burrell; then fed, but caged like an animal, by one whom he denominated "a man of fearful aspect, yea, of an angry countenance and fierce deportment, yet having consideration for the wants of the flesh;" then, when he had been liberated as he thought, for the express purpose of affording consolation to, and praying with a dying woman, and bound by his sacred word not to leave Gull's Nest, he found himself in the midst of the most unamiable-looking persons he had ever seen assembled; and his pale eye grew still more pale within its orbit from the effects of terror.

"Cut him down!" exclaimed one ruffian, drawing a cutlass, long and strong enough to destroy three at a blow.

"Fill his pinnacle hat with gunpowder, and blow him to the devil!" said another.

"He is a spy and a Roundhead," vociferated a third, "and, wherever there's one, there's sure to be more o' the breed."

"Search his pockets," shouted a fourth; "I'll lay my hand there's villany in them."

"I'm the best at that work," exclaimed Jack Roupall, spinning the long-legged preacher round and into the midst of the men before he had time to utter a syllable of explanation. The change produced on them by this display of Roupall's dexterity was like magic, for, in an instant, they were to a man convulsed with laughter: the poor preacher retained most motley marks of the bruised oranges upon his hinder garments, which were, moreover, rent by various falls, or, as he would designate them, "perilous overthrows;" and there was something so ludicrous in his whole appearance, spinning on one leg, (for he was obliged to keep up the other to maintain his balance,) and looking more like an overgrown insect, called by children "daddy long-legs," than any other creature dwelling upon earth, that the mirthfulness of the sailors might well have been pardoned.

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"Children of Satan!" he said at last, recovering his breath during their laughter—"Imps of darkness!" he added, holding out both hands in front, as he would keep them from contaminating him by their touch—"if that ye ever hope for pardon—"

"I told ye he was a Roundhead—a negotiator," shouted one of the rudest; "stop his gab at once—yard-arm him."

"Peace, peace!" interrupted young Springall; "he is part of our skipper's cargo, a harmless mad preacher, and no spy; he'd talk to ye by the hour, and make as rare sport as a mass-service at Lisbon—if ye hadn't something else to think of."

"Hear him, hear him!" exclaimed the thoughtless fellows, who forgot their own and their ship's danger in expectation of some revelry.

"Hear him," repeated Roupall, while occupied in searching his pockets.

"Albeit I was not sent unto ye, ye worthless, blasphemous, and accursed crew—" began Fleetword.

"Above there!" sung out a little one-eyed seaman, squinting up at our friend, and poising a long lath so as to arrest his attention by a smart blow across the knees, which made the poor man elevate first one limb and then the other, in what soldiers term 'double quick time.' "Keep a civil tongue in your head," he added, threatening to renew the salute.

"For shame, Tom o' Coventry," said Springall, who had more generosity in his nature; "if you don't behave, I'll spit ye as neatly as ever top-mast studding sail was spitted on the broken stump of a boom in a smart gale,—d'ye hear that, master officer—that was—but is not?"

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This insult could not be received quietly, because it was deserved, and the diminutive sailor applied the weapon to Master Springall's shins, so as to set his hot blood raving for encounter. Fleetword heeded not this, but rejoicing sincerely in any event that gave him opportunity of speech, proceeded to anathematize the whole assembly as confidently as if he had been the pope's legate. Roupall, having finished his investigation of Fleetword's pockets, advanced one step, and, taking Tom o' Coventry by the collar, shook him and Springall apart as if they had been two puppy dogs, while the others bawled loudly for fair play. At this instant the door opened, and Dalton strode into the midst of them with that lordly step and dignified aspect he could so well, not only assume, but preserve; even Fleetword was silenced, when the Skipper, turning to him, demanded how he came there, and if he had forgotten that a dying woman had solicited his aid.

"Of a truth," he replied, "I mistook the apartment: ye cannot suppose, most worthy commander of this enchanted and impish conservatory, that, of my own free will, I would choose such company. Where is the sinner?"—Dalton desired Springall to show him to the room of Mother Hays.

The Buccaneer offered no comment on the fray, for he had often observed that little good arises from lecturing people for their faults at the very time you want their services. He explained to them briefly but fully, and with as much clearness and wisdom as if he had been for hours in deliberation, the danger by which they were encompassed; the more than fear for their ship—that they themselves were in the most perilous situation they had ever experienced, clogged by the land, and not free on the sea: that as the evening was fast closing in, and the moon did not rise until near midnight, their enemies could do little until after the lapse of a few hours—that those who wished, might disperse themselves along the shore, and escape to Sussex, or any other smuggling station, as they best could; sending intimation to their friends as to their movements: and he was the more particular in giving this permission, as to each and every one had been distributed full pay and profits;—that those who loved the Fire-fly, and would risk their lives for her, or with her, were to conceal themselves along the coast, and ere the moon rose, make their way a-board. This they could easily effect under the thick darkness, and in so calm a night. There was not one who could not steer a plank, in quiet water, from Essex to Sheerness; and in default of that, they were all good swimmers.

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"And now, my brave fellows," he added, "I may, or I may not, meet you on the deck, where I have so often trod and triumphed. One great account I have to settle with the land before I leave it. I may swing from a gibbet before to-morrow's sun sets; or I may secure— But if I am not with you," he added, breaking off his sentence abruptly, "before the moon rises, Mathews will take the helm; for I see by his eye that he will not leave the ship he has mated with so much steadiness and good seamanship for so long a time. The long-boat must have a light placed like ours; and false canvass hung round, so as to make a bulk, while the Fire-fly steals silently and darkly on her way. This, if well managed, will give an hour's start—But you understand all that. Make up your minds, among yourselves, who's for the land, who for the sea; and I will join you again in five minutes." As Dalton (who was more agitated than his crew had ever seen him) withdrew, he heard Roupall mutter—

"Confound all she-things! This circumbendibus is all owing to his daughter: 'twould be a precious good job if she had never been born, or being born, was dead in earnest, which I hear she is not—He's not the same skipper he was afore he took to land and sentimentality! Confound all she-things, again say I! they are tiresome and troublesome."

We trust none of our readers will echo the prayer of Jack Roupall, as we draw towards the conclusion of our story.

CHAPTER X.

Vain is the bugle horn,
Where trumpets men to manly work
invite!
That distant summons seems to say, in
scorn,
We hunters may be hunted hard ere
night.

Constantia Cecil watched with much anxiety the progress of the carriages and horsemen which composed the train and body-guard of the Protector, as they passed slowly along the road that led to Cecil Place. A troop, consisting of twenty men, preceded; their bright arms, and caps, and cuirasses, reflecting back the blaze of the setting sun, like so many burnished mirrors. Then came Cromwell's own carriage, drawn by four strong black horses;—they had need of strength, dragging, as they did, a weight of plated iron, of which the cumbrous machine was composed. The windows were remarkably narrow, and formed of the thickest glass, within which was a layer of horn, that, if it were shattered by any rude assault, would prevent the fragments from flying to the inside. Behind this carriage rode four mounted soldiers; it was succeeded by another, and at each side a horseman rode; a third conveyance, the blinds of which were closely drawn, brought up the procession; and behind this was only a single soldier. At some distance, perfectly unattended, and seeming as if unconnected with the party, came the simple vehicle of the Jew Manasseh Ben Israel. However great was Cromwell's partiality for this learned and distinguished man, he was fully aware of the impolicy of permitting one of so despised a race to associate with him publicly, or to travel abroad under his direct protection. [377]

Frances Cromwell joined her friend at the window from whence she looked, and at once congratulated her on the tranquillity Sir Robert had enjoyed during the last two hours.

"The physician has done much," she replied; "yet I can hardly trust myself to cherish any feeling that tells of peace or hope. Dearest Frances! what will be the fate of your poor friend?"

Constantia hid her face on the Lady Cromwell's shoulder, and wept; but her grief appeared of a less feverish kind than heretofore.

"Hope for the best—my father can work marvels when he wills. He may read all right; and as yet you are unwedded."

"He cannot restore the sweet life of one I loved so dearly,—one whose place I can never see filled, and upon whose innocent countenance I can ne'er again look."

"I wonder who is in my father's carriage?—Colonel Jones, I dare say, and a couple more of the same severe cast," observed Lady Frances, trying to divert her friend's attention from the thought of poor Barbara; "not a joyful face amongst a troop of them; the very soldiers look like masses of grey stone, stuck on the horses' backs with iron paste." [378]

"The second carriage," said Constantia, "looks as if it contained a prisoner—see, a soldier rides at each door." She turned still paler as she spoke, and grasped the arm of Lady Frances with all her strength, though support was required but for a moment. The motion was unnoticed by her friend, who added in her usually gay tone—

"A good guess! And who is in the third? some other caged animal; one of my father's pet lions, or leopards, or creatures of that sort: pet or no pet, I would rather see what it contains than all the others put together—so much for woman's curiosity!"

"The guard are entering the great gates," said Constantia, "and whether he bring me weal or woe, friend or foe, I must receive the Protector, so as to show our sense of the more than honour he has done us."

"Constantia!" exclaimed Lady Frances, who still lingered at the window, "there is a fourth carriage, a foreign-looking one, with an overgrown boot, and no attendants—coming behind the train, like the last bit of paper at the tail of a boy's kite. I marvel more than any who that can contain?"

"Will you not come with me to receive your father?" said Constantia, extending her hand to her friend. Lady Frances tripped across the room and took it within hers.

"Constantia, nothing frights you from your propriety!—I am ready."

The sudden, though anticipated visit of the Protector, produced a proportionate degree of embarrassment and confusion among all the inmates of Cecil Place. At any other time, the bare intimation of such an honour would have turned their heads, and inspired their heels with the alacrity of St. Vitus himself; but they had felt too much interest in the events of the past week to experience the full joy to which, at any other time, they would have yielded. As it was, housekeeper, porter, steward, cook, butler, and their subordinates, set about the necessary preparations with the dexterity and alertness of servants who know that their first duty is obedience, not only of their employer's words, but their wishes:—not one but felt the warmest interest in all that concerned their dear master, and still more dear mistress; they would have gladly sacrificed their lives to make her happy: in them was clearly shown the "constant service of the antique world." Solomon Grundy, as usual, having the smallest quantity of brains, was the most noisy, and the least useful, though the creature was affectionate enough in his way, and, as we have stated, marvellously skilful in his calling. He stood with the rest of the servants, about twenty in number, who had assembled to await Cromwell's entrance, and do honour to their young lady by as numerous and well arranged a show as they could collect. They were all dressed in deep and decent mourning, except the women of Lady Frances, who walked behind her to the great entrance, where she and Constantia stood ready to receive his Highness. As he alighted, the advanced-guard formed a semicircle beside the carriage; and when his foot rested on the first [379]

step of the entrance-stairs, the two ladies passed the threshold, to meet him with due respect. It was a picturesque sight—the meeting of that rugged and warlike man with two such females;—for Lady Frances, though deficient in what may be termed regular beauty, had an air and fascination about her that was exceedingly captivating; and as she waited, one foot a little in advance, her head thrown back, and the jewels of her clasped stomacher distinctly marking the outline of her full and graceful bust, she formed a considerable, but still a pleasing contrast to the high-souled beauty of her dignified friend. Constantia, at the moment Cromwell alighted, trembled lest the next person should be Sir Willmott Burrell; and the terror she naturally felt, lent an air of embarrassment to her pale, high features, to which they were generally strangers. Her long mourning veil fell, as usual, to her feet; and the folds of her rich velvet robe concealed the change which but a little time had wrought in her exquisitely moulded figure. The arched hall was crowded on either side by her domestics, whose dresses formed a gloomy back-ground, which, nevertheless, accorded well with the hatchment that hung over the entrance,—a memorial of Lady Cecil's recent death. Lady Frances, as she glanced on the sober, but well-arranged party in front, their bright armour and broad swords flashing in the light, the prancing of the brave horses, and the smiling face of her uncle's favourite page—her own cousin, who followed close to his indulgent master—the mixture of carriage and cuirass, of spear and pennon, set out against the green meadows, and still farther off the blue and beautiful sea—all this looked to her cheerful mind as if hope and happiness were about once more to enter Cecil Place. The impression was so strong upon her mind, that she only regretted she could not speak of it to Constantia, who bent her knee to salute the hand of her friend—the Protector of England! while he, gallantly removing his hat, raised her from the ground, and imprinted a grave and respectful kiss upon her brow—then, having saluted his own daughter after the same fatherly fashion, he presented a hand to each of the ladies, and walked, bareheaded, into the hall, returning the salutations of the delighted domestics as he passed, and inquiring in a low, earnest tone, after the health of his worthy host and friend, Sir Robert Cecil. As they entered the apartment, in which a suitable refectory had been prepared, Constantia was about to return to receive her other guests.

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"Not so," observed the Protector, retaining her hand. "I have taken upon myself for one day and one night the wardenship of Cecil Place, if your excellent parent will so permit it; with the Lord's help we will discharge the trust well and faithfully. Such as I wish to introduce to you will join us soon, and to those who will not I have allotted chambers. Our mutual friend, Major Wellmore," he added, smiling, "has instructed me so perfectly in the bearings of this fine house, that I do not at all feel as a stranger within its walls."

Constantia bowed, and from her heart thanked the Protector for the kindness and delicacy of his thoughts.

"Great and glorious I knew him ever," she said to herself, "but I was unprepared for the tenderness we usually consider the exclusive attribute of our own sex."

Some five or six of the officers and gentlemen of Cromwell's household were, in their turn, presented to her; but Sir Willmott Burrell came not among them. Constantia trembled as often as she turned her head towards the opening door.

During the time occupied in partaking of the abundant repast, upon which the delighted Solomon had expended all due care and anxiety, there were few words spoken, and neither healths nor toasts passed round—the Puritans holding all such observances as profane things; nor was there any allusion made to the unfortunate occurrences of the past days, except as regarded the disappearance of the Preacher Fleetword, a circumstance which weighed heavily on the mind of Constantia.

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"I assure your Highness," said Lady Frances, "this is a perfect island of romance; there has been as much mystery, and as many misunderstandings, as would form a Spanish play."

"I am sorry, Mistress Frances," replied Colonel Jones, "to find your thoughts still turning to these follies—follies anathematized in this regenerated land."

A smart reply mounted to the lady's lip, who was annoyed that the plain mistress had taken place of the title so universally ceded to her, but she dared not send it forth in her father's presence.

"I assure Lady Frances," observed her father, rising from the table at the same time, and laying a particular emphasis on the word *lady*, as if he would reprove Colonel Jones's plainness—"I assure *Lady* Frances that I am a most excellent unraveller of mysteries,—of *all* mysteries," he repeated with a stress on the word *ALL*, that made the blood rush into his daughter's cheek. "And if I may presume on such an accomplishment, I would request the honour of a private interview with Mistress Cecil."

Cromwell conducted the lady from the room with an air that would not have disgraced the descendant of a race of kings.

CHAPTER XI.

If you, my son, should now prevaricate,
And, to your own particular lusts, employ

So great and catholic a bliss; be sure
A curse will follow, yea, and overtake
Your subtle and most secret ways.

BEN JONSON.

Whatever passed between Cromwell and the Lady Constantia must remain secret, as neither were of a particularly communicative disposition. Lady Frances, indeed, laboured hard to succeed and comprehend the whole matter, but in vain. She waylaid her friend on her passage from the room of audience, and observed, in a tone and manner that betrayed her anxiety on the subject, [382]

"My father and you have had a long conference!"

"He has indeed honoured me by much condescension and kindness," was Constantia's reply.

"Do you know whom he has closeted up so strangely in Cecil Place? I was going into the oak parlour, when a sentry at the door—(What rough fellows those soldiers are!)—cried 'Stand!' as if I had been a statue. With that I repaired to the small oriel chamber; but there, too, was another 'Stand!' Why, the house is at once a prison and a garrison!"

"Not quite."

"Oh, you take it more gently than I should—to have persons in your own house, and not know who they are."

"Your father, I suppose, knows them; and I may have sufficient confidence in the Protector of England to believe in the wisdom of all he does—nothing doubting."

"My father is very anxious about Sir Robert."

"He is indeed."

"And to search out the destroyer of our poor Barbara."

"He has ever been to justice as its right hand."

How poor Lady Frances longed to ask of Constance if her father had talked about Sir Willmott—if there were any tidings of Walter De Guerre, or where he had been since his disappearance with Major Wellmore! but she could not—she dared not ask another question: indeed, Constantia effectually prevented her so doing, for, taking her hand with that extraordinary combination of frankness and reserve which is ever the characteristic of a great and honest mind, she said—

"My sweet friend, do not question me; I have either answered your father's questionings as I answer every one, truly, in word and spirit, or told him, when he asked what I must not reveal, that I could not tell. I never equivocated in my whole life; equivocation is a subterfuge, mean as well as sinful—the special pleading of a lie."

"My dear Lady Perfection!"

"Do not mock me, sweet Frances: the world will say, and say rightly, you are much nearer perfection than I am; you have far more of the woman—the open, cheerful, confiding woman. But hear me say a few words more,—and apply them as you will. I once saw a young fresh tree—it was an oak—a bright tree and a beautiful! It flourished on the hill-side, and injured nothing; for its shadow was harmless, and served but as a kindly shelter for the modest violet and the pale primrose. The woodcutter looked upon it as he passed it by, and said it would grow to be the pride of the forest;—the village children held their innocent revelry beneath its gay branches:—but, Frances, dear Frances, the storm gathered, and the thunder leaped from cloud to cloud in the angry heavens, and the lightning—the forked lightning, darted among its leaves, and struck it to the heart. The next morning the sun saw that it was blighted; and the sun said, 'My beautiful tree and my brave, that my beams delighted to shine upon, is blasted; but I will throw forth my warmest rays, and my favourite shall revive, and again be glorious!' And the sun came in all its power, and it shone upon the tree; but the more it shone, the more quickly the tree withered—for it fainted beneath the kindness which had the will, but not the gift, of renovation." [383]

Lady Frances turned from her friend with tears, and asked her no more questions. Constantia wept not, but passed towards the servants' hall to give some directions. The evening had quite closed, and the earth slept under the broad grey wings of twilight; as she crossed the corridors, she would have been bewildered by the darkness, had not her feet been acquainted with every winding passage.

As she passed one of the deep and sunken entrances for light, that seemed constructed for the purpose of expelling and not admitting the beams of day, so narrow and complicated was its framework, something struck violently on the glass. She started on perceiving a small figure enveloped in a woman's cloak. Late occurrences had made her cautious; but she was quickly assured of safety on hearing her name pronounced by the voice of Robin Hays. In a low but somewhat confident tone he informed her of his desire to see the Protector upon a matter of life and death.

"Only ask him if he will see me, dear lady!—I would not come openly, because I know he loves mystery in all things, and likes not that the world should be able to prate of his interviews.—But

ask quickly, dear lady—quickly, as ye would seek heaven!"

"See you, Robin! The Protector see and counsel with you, Robin?"

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"Ay, dear lady—the lion and the mouse—the lion and the mouse—only let it be quickly—quickly."

"Stay, Robin; you of all men are the most likely to know—can you tell me aught concerning one, I believe, we both loved?"

"Ask me not, dear mistress, now; only quickly, quickly to the Protector."

In a few minutes Robin Hays again stood before the great and extraordinary man he both respected and feared.

There was a mingling of kindness and warmth in Cromwell's manner, as he desired the manikin to come forward, and, having first questioned him about his health, commanded him to tell his business.

"I have intruded on your Highness, which is a mark of great boldness in a creature of such low degree," commenced the Ranger in obedience to the Protector's orders, "and it is on behalf of one to whom I am much bound. Alack! great sir, it is a sad thing when a man of spirit, of power, and of bravery, has no friend to speak for him but one that Nature threw from her as unworthy of the neat finishing she bestows on others:—when our parent discards us, what have we to expect from mankind?"

"Do you speak of the youth called Walter, whose gallant Jubilee waits impatiently till his master is at liberty to boot and saddle? He shall mount him soon."

"With all humility, your Highness, no:—I would speak of Hugh Dalton and the Fire-fly."

"Of his ship, which may be at sea, say you?"

Robin ventured one glance at Cromwell's countenance, doubtless with the intention of ascertaining if he knew the position of the vessel: but there was no expression on those features that could lead to any conclusion, and the Ranger skilfully evaded the question.

"It is indeed of Hugh Dalton I would speak," continued Robin, "and intreat in his behalf, what I need myself, yet ask not for—a pardon."

"Pardon!" repeated Cromwell, "Pardon!—on what grounds?"

"Those of mercy—upon which your Highness has pardoned many; and, please your Highness, if I may make bold to say so, this same man has some reason, however small, to offer. The Jewess Zillah——"

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"Ah! what of her?"

"Is in his keeping, and a certain preacher also—a worthy, simple, yet, withal, a keen man, whom Sir Willmott Burrell, as I understand, entrapped and shut up, with famine as his only associate, because he had become possessed of some papers proving Sir Willmott's marriage with the Jewish lady."

"And Dalton——"

"Saved this Fleetword!"

"Ah, Fleetword!" interrupted Cromwell, "I have heard of his disappearance—and he is safe?"

"Perfectly."

"I bless the Lord for his unravelling! But why comes not this man forth from his den? Methinks, if he have rendered such service to the Jew, who is our friend, he has some claim to our consideration, and might hope—perhaps, hope for pardon. But, if I judge rightly, he expected more than pardon,—pardon for his ship also, and farther grace towards himself:—ran it not thus?"

"Please your Highness, yes. The man loves his ship, which is but natural; and then his men——"

"What! the reaving ravenous set who have carried destruction as their flag, and filled the coast with desolation; aided and abetted in plunder, and brought over malcontents from evil lands, and scattered them like flax-seed over the country! Cornwall—Devon—Essex—Kent—Sussex—everywhere;—disturbed ourselves, so that by night as well as day we lack repose; and are forced to be our own watch-dog, to the great discomfort and danger of our body, and the vexation of our soul! Pardon for such as they! Dalton we might pardon, we have reasons for it; but his ship—it shall burn upon the high seas, as an example to all like it; and, as to his crew,—why not a scoundrel could be found robbing a hen-roost who would not declare himself one of Hugh Dalton's gang! To send you, too, as his ambassador!"

"Please your Highness," interrupted Robin, "he did not send me, though he knew of my coming. The man is watching by the side of his child."

"His child, said you—I heard he had but one, and that, through some mystery, the girl was here, and——"

Cromwell would have added, "shot," but he remembered what Robin had suffered at Hampton Court, when Barbara's death was mentioned before him, and, though chafed at the picture he had himself drawn of the ravages of the Buccaneer, yet the kind feelings of his nature prevented his opening the green wound in the Ranger's heart. No matter what distinction rank makes between man and man, Nature has instituted a moral freemasonry, by which all her children understand the signals and symptoms of goodness and greatness in each other's bosoms. Robin blessed him for his forbearance with the fresh warm blessing of an affectionate heart; and the blessing ascended to the Almighty's throne, although breathed into no mortal ear!—it ascended, not on the wings of the wind, for the wind heard it not; yet there it was, and there it remains, registered in the book of life, amongst the few but holy offerings which are paid to the mighty, in secret, by those who look to them for aid,—whose homage is generally of the lip, not the heart. [386]

After a pause, more full of meaning than if it had been crammed with words, Robin said—

"Please your Highness, the girl is not dead, though badly wounded."

"I thank God!—I thank God for every blessing. Have you so said to the Lady Constantia?"

"I did not like to mention it, yet, as I did not know—"

"Right, right," interrupted Cromwell, not permitting him to finish the sentence, "a silent tongue is ever harmless, and with it there is safety. But I must see Fleetword and the Jewess forthwith: say unto Dalton that so I desire it."

"The Skipper has secrets touching this family in his keeping which I have reason to think he will retain, unless—"

Wily as he was, Robin now paused, for he dreaded to rouse the Protector's ire, and Cromwell, seeing his hesitation, exclaimed,

"Speak on—speak out, young man—this fellow would dictate to us—but speak—speak, I say; what are his gracious terms?"

Although the last words were uttered in an ironical tone, Robin did speak, and boldly.

"Pardon for himself, his registered followers, and safety for his ship; I know such to be his feelings, and know he would so say." [387]

The Protector replied calmly—"To the pardon for himself, I say, ay; to the other conditions, no. Once spoken is enough. My words are for eternity, young man; it is much that I pardon even him. Go to—what hinders that I blow not his nest into the sky? what care I for the vultures of his eyrie!

"But the doves, your Highness,—the doves that shelter there!"

"Look ye, sir ambassador," returned Cromwell, "were I to twine a wreath of gunpowder round his nest, think ye he would suffer his child to perish, whatever fate in desperation he might award himself?"

"My Lord, he can look the sun in the face at noon-day; he could weigh with an unquailing eye the bullet that brought him death—he is a man of unspeakable firmness."

"Granted," said the Protector; "but I am a father—so is he; you are not, or you would feel that, were the female a vulture, not a dove, still he could not peril her life. She is his child. I forget, while I now speak, that which I am; for I could not speak thus if I remembered it. I send you to Dalton, to tell him, that in humble, most humble, imitation of the blessed God, whose unworthy servant I am, I say that 'though,' in the eyes of the world, 'his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool;' they shall be blotted from my memory, and I will stretch forth my right hand to save and not to punish; so much as regards himself, I will not hint at his misdeeds, provided that—" he stopped abruptly, and fixed his eye upon the timepiece that was set over the chimney—a huge heavy iron machine, that one would fancy even Time found it difficult to deal with. "You see the hour—the hand is on the stroke of nine: provided that, before that same hand rests upon the single figure which heralds in the morning, the Preacher, the Jewess, himself and his daughter are within this room—provided they are here I will seal his pardon: he shall go forth, or remain, a free subject of the Commonwealth. And more than this, my soldiers sleep till midnight, so that men, *all* men may travel in safety,—in safety *by land*, I mean; for if the slightest attempt be made to rid the harbour of the pestilential vessel, whose crew keep such careful, or rather such prudent, watch upon her deck, if that the night were dark as blackness itself, there are eyes that see, and hands that avenge! The ship must not remain unpunished; of her, justice *shall* have its due. Your Buccaneer should think of this, and bless the God that has made us merciful." [388]

"The Fire-fly, to be towed into Chatham and about, and pointed at by the cowardly land-lubbers, as Hugh Dalton's fine vessel! 'Twould kill him, please your Highness, it would kill him. He would not take his life on such terms—"

"Let him lose it, then. Think ye that, though you were honest, there are not many who pant to discover the secrets of that nest? Came I here for pastime? The Lord he is righteous and merciful. The cavern and its wealth is ours. The goodness of the Lord is over all the earth; yet such is the corruption of all things that we have no leisure for repose, much less pastime. Men's passions and evil propensities devour us, and fright comfort and often holy communing from our pillow. Go to, then. We have one who could lead us blindfold through your crag and its chambers. If we find Dalton armed, justice must take its course; even I could not save him then."

"It is little your guide would know what awaited him, if he did conduct the soldiers of your Highness," replied Robin, perhaps in a tone of momentary familiarity, the result of his long conference.

"It is enough," said Cromwell. "Though you have denied that you were directed by him to see us on this matter, yet you will not scruple to do our bidding. I need not repeat—within four hours from this time,—the Jewess, the man of God, Dalton and his daughter—secretly, mark, *secretly*—within this chamber. During this period my soldiers sleep; but the vessel must not be unmoored. Remember, if its anchor is weighed—or slipped," he added, with that extraordinary penetration which saw every possibility of even equivoque, and guarded against it, "the Buccaneer's life is forfeit."

Robin bowed with great submission, but still lingered.

"Please your Highness, he does so love that vessel!"

"You practise on our humanity, young man, and forget to whom you speak."

Robin bowed again more lowly than before, and retreated down the room. While closing the door, he looked to where the Protector sat; Cromwell, observing the movement, raised his hand, and pointed to the time-piece, whose iron finger was fast travelling round the dial.

CHAPTER XII.

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So up he arose upon his stretched sails,
Fearless expecting his approaching
death;
So up he arose, that the air starts and
fails,
And overpressed sinks his load beneath;
So up he arose, as doth a thunder cloud
Which all the earth with shadows black
doth shroud;
So up he arose.

PHINEAS FLETCHER.

"The Lord deliver me! once more, say I," ejaculated Robin Hays, "and the Lord deliver Dalton! He would sooner submit to have his limbs hewed one by one from his body, than permit a single plank of his good ship to be touched: he loves it far more than his own life. I will not speak with him about it. There is no possibility of a hundred of our men, if we could summon them from the different stations, encountering the well-disciplined soldiers now upon the island. Nothing legal or illegal can withstand the power or turn aside the will of that most wonderful man. It is useless to commune more with Dalton; but I will save him, though I perish in the attempt!"

It may be almost said that he flew to the Gull's Nest. When there, he turned with a stealthy step towards the chamber which his mother occupied. There was no living being in the room save one, and she was busied in composing the limbs and features of his dead parent, chanting, in a low monotonous tone, fragments of old songs and snatches of ballads appropriate to the gloomy task.

Robin clung to the door-post. However little he might have respected his mother, he knew she had loved him; and it is sad, in a world where so few affectionate ties are formed, to see the nearest and the dearest severed. He stood for a little watching the slow movements of the old crone, who was so withered and woe-looking that, with but slight effort of imagination, he might have believed the grave had given up one dead to prepare another for the sepulchre. The small lamp sent forth but little light, and the features of his mother, not yet decently arranged, had a scared and frightened look, as if terror, at the oncoming of death, had left her a powerless though unwilling captive.

"Has the spirit long passed!" at length inquired Robin, in a voice so low that the aged woman started, as if the whisper sounded from below the earth. [390]

"Anan, Master Robin, is it you? Ah! I little thought you'd ha' been away; not that I fancy she missed ye much, for she didn't make much struggle—that is, not to say much at the very last—

'And at the last your bed shall be,
Ay, near the broad and briny sea!'"

She gave out the rhyme while smoothing back the hair from the haggard features of the corpse; and her trembling treble voice, so weak, so shrill, added a most miserable and desolating effect to the awful scene.

"Do it decently, good dame, decently and gently too, and you shall be rewarded," said Robin, deeply affected,—aware how impossible it was for him to remain and see that every thing was well ordered.

"Ay, ay, I warrant it shall all be done rightly, master, as rightly as if she decked herself, poor soul! which she was well fond of in days long ago."

Robin turned towards the cliff. As he commenced the descent, the wail of the corpse-dresser fell upon his ear with the sighing of the wind that was straying amongst the many hollow crags—the mysterious wind that comes—whence?—we know not; and goes—where?—we cannot tell—yet moves along upon its appointed way—felt, although unseen, on the vast earth and the wide sea—now rejoicing over pleasant fields, and filling the leaves with harmony—kissing in its gentleness the blushing bosom of the rose, and wafting the humble bee on its industrious voyage!—then stirring up oceans by its breath, and shouting to the clouds its mandates!—Thou playfellow of thunder, and mate of the fierce lightning! whether as a hurricane or a zephyr, great source of good and evil, hail to thee on thy way!

Robin stood on the smooth beach at the bottom of the cliffs, and, taking in at one glance all the objects within sight, perceived that the government ships had certainly moved closer to the vessel, whose identity had puzzled even him, keen observer though he was. The night was dark but clear—no haze, no moon—the clouds not heavy nor light, yet few stars made their appearance: now and then, as a shadow passed, one would twinkle for a moment, until obscured by some ambitious vapour soaring from earth to become purified by heaven. The ocean was calm and still, sleeping the sleep of waters in their immensity! Persons unaccustomed to such scenes could hardly have distinguished the vessels in the offing, so much of the same colour did they appear with the waves themselves. Robin then scanned the cliffs as he had done the ocean, and whistled soft, low, but audibly,—a note like that of the frightened plover. It was speedily answered, and in a moment Roupall stood by his side.

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"Are any gone off to the ship?—and where is the Skipper?"

"The Skipper's with the women, and, I think, has been looking out for you," replied Roupall.

"Tell him, then,—tell all—that it will not be safe for any of ye to venture off to the Fire-fly till I give ye a signal. The ships have got closer to her, and a boat going off now would be sunk by a shot, for, night as it is, they can see; and, if it continues clear over head, the moon will not be needed to light to mischief—the stars shine bright enough for that. And now, Jack, I'm going to make a confidant of you—a proof that I think ye an honest rascal, at all events. Do not give what I am going to write on this parchment to the Skipper until I have made a signal from the ship. He is too old a sailor not to be on the look out; but you and Springall must be with him. You owe me thus much service for a wrong you once did me. It is meet that I forget and forgive it now."

"As to the wrong, Robin, it is clear out of my memory," replied Roupall. "Gad! you must be a good scholar to write in the dark; but, I say, your signals and book learning could be much clearer, if you would just step in to the Skipper and explain. Here are we, like a parcel of bats and owls, stowing away in the cliffs, waiting to get out to the ship; and I know, from what old Hugh said, he is only watching for some messenger, with some answer or another. I know he is about a negotiation, which I'd never consent to, but fight a thousand troopers, had it not been that as good as eight or ten took his permission, and walked off for the other holdfast—fellows, to be sure, that never cruised with him above once. Let us a-board, and we're safe. Would that the night were darker! for I think, by the movement of the watchers, (to the Devil with them!) that they suspect—ah! now you've finished, pray tell me what the signal will be—a red light?"

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"A red light!" repeated Robin musingly, as he rolled up the parchment; "oh, yes! it will be a very red light."

"But, Bob, won't that alarm the ships?"

"Never mind if it does," replied Robin, casting off his boots, and throwing away all the loose portions of his dress, so as to stand only in his shirt and hose; "Give me your belt—it is broader than mine."

Roupall did as he requested, demanding, in his turn, if Robin was mad enough to think of swimming to the Fire-fly.

"Yes," was the Ranger's concise reply. "And now," he added, "Jack, remember, the moment you see my signal, deliver this to the Skipper; but, as you value your life, not before."

He plunged into the ocean as he spoke; and presently, the sound of the dividing waters was lost in the distance.

"Well!" exclaimed Roupall, "that beats all the freaks I ever knew even Robin to be after! Why, the vessel's near a mile off; and, now I think of it, I never asked him what we were to do when he gave the signal; but I suppose his paper tells. Lying about here, in such peril! But it's always the way—the minute a sailor touches land, good-by to his well-doing."

Before the speaker had climbed the topmost cliff, he met the Buccaneer.

"Hast seen Robin Hays?" was his first question.

"Ay, sir; and, if it was day, you might see him too—at least, the best part of him—his head, yonder—making for the Fire-fly."

"How! making for the Fire-fly! What do ye mean. Jack? this is no time for jesting."

"I mean, Captain, that Robin Hays is swimming to the Fire-fly; and that he told me to watch for a signal he would make; and——"

"And what?"

"Why, he is to make a signal—a red light from the ship."

"Red light from the ship!" repeated the Buccaneer, in a voice of astonishment; "He has lost his senses! What can this mean? Left he no message for me?"

"None," replied Roupall; thinking to himself, "a piece of parchment's no message, so that's no lie."

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Dalton paced to and fro on the small ledge that had been beaten smooth by the step of many an illegal sentry in days gone by: beneath his feet lay the subterraneous apartments of the Gull's Nest; and before him (although the night had so darkened that it was no longer visible), before him was his own vessel anchored. At any other time he would have felt secure of refuge in the one resource or the other; but circumstances combined to convince him there was now no certain safety by sea or land. At one moment, he thought of manning his boat, and carrying his daughter boldly to the ship. Had he been alone, such would at once have been his determination—but he could not expose much less leave her to peril. With the common blindness of those who argue only on their own side of the question, he could not see why the Protector should object to the preservation of the Fire-fly; and he had hoped for Robin's return with tidings that would have made his child's heart, as well as his own, leap with joy. He knew that Cromwell would make a large sacrifice to secure the Jewess, Zillah; and he had also reasons to believe the Protector suspected there were other secrets within his keeping, the nature of which he would give much to learn. Robin's motive, in thus visiting the Fire-fly, was beyond his comprehension; and he had no alternative but to await the promised signal with all the patience he could command. As he paced the ledge, now with a slow now with a hurried footstep, the darkness increased, and the stars twinkled less frequently:—there was no storm—no fierce blast swept along the heavens, or disturbed the earth, but dense heavy clouds canopied the the ocean as with a pall. Roupall was seated on a huge stone, his elbows resting on his knees, his eyes fixed on the "multitudinous sea," silently, and not less anxiously, watching for the flash which he expected would disturb the dull and sleepy night. Ever and anon, the querulous voice of the woman, keeping watch by the lifeless clay, which she had laid in decent order upon its humble pallet, in the Gull's Nest, floated over the cliffs, and died away on the bosom of the waters. At times, Roupall would growl and fret as a chained mastiff; but the anxiety of the Skipper had so increased, that he ceased moving, and stood on the bold brow of the crag, like a black monument of stone.

Suddenly, a strong light, a fierce blaze, as if the ocean had thrown up one immense pyramid of flame, to dispel the darkness and divide the clouds, sprang into the heavens! and then a peal, loud as the straggling thunder! The cliff shook beneath their feet—the sea-birds started from their nests, and flew, and screamed, and wheeled in the air! From behind the different points and crags along the shore rushed forth the smugglers, who had lain to, watching the time when it would have been prudent for them to put off their boats and join the ship, as Dalton had directed. The old death-dresser forsook the corpse, and standing on the highest crag, her long hair floating backwards on the breeze, her arms tossing from the effects of terror and astonishment, looked like the [sibyl](#) whose spells and orgies have distracted nature by some terrible convulsion. The cliffs and strand at the moment formed a picture that Salvator would have gloried in conveying to his canvass—the line of coast now rising boldly from the ocean, each projecting point catching the glaring blaze, and seeming itself on fire—the caverns overhung by creeping plants, revelling in gorgeous colours from every changing light that touched their beauties:—then the wild figures clasping by the rocks, panting with terror and excitement—the sibyl on her pinnacle—the gigantic frame of Roupall, rendered still more gigantic to the eye by the position in which he stood, breathless, with the written parchment in his hand, yet unable to move or direct Dalton's attention to it. The Skipper, still like a monument of stone, but called to animation by astonishment and dismay, while the light played with the grace and brilliancy of lightning on the bright mountings of his pistols. Still the flames towered brightly to the heavens, while each fresh explosion separated their condensed effect, and sent a portion of them higher in the clouds, or hissing over the variegated and sparkling sea, which rolled to the shore in masses of glowing fire.

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"Read! read!" at length exclaimed Roupall, thrusting the parchment into the hand of the Buccaneer. "Read! read!" he repeated, for Dalton heeded him not.

"Read what?" said the Skipper, in a voice which entered the heart of all who heard it; "do I not read—do I not read—black, bitter, burning treachery?—It is my own ship—I know every spar that flits like a meteor through the air. My heart was never crushed till now."

"Read—I will read it, if I can," said Springall, who had joined the party. With some difficulty he succeeded in making audible its contents.

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"Dalton, you are safe! it may be that I perish: I knew you would never sacrifice your ship for your own life, so I have done it for you. Go with the Jewess, your daughter, and the Preacher, immediately to Cecil Place, to the small passage leading to the purple chamber, and demand admittance. You are pardoned—and all the rest may leave the island, provided they depart before the hour of one."

The Buccaneer apparently heard it not: the communication made no visible impression upon him; he stood in the same position as before. Even Springall spoke no word, although his feeling of

attachment to Dalton was rendered sufficiently obvious by his creeping close to his side, and grasping his arm with a gesture which said, "I will not be separated from you."

At this moment a cry arose from the beach, and, though the flames were fading, it could be seen that several of the men had rushed to the water's edge, and assisted a creature to the shore who was unable to struggle longer for himself; soon, however, he contrived to mount the cliff on which Dalton still remained a living statue of despair, and faint, dripping, unable to utter a single word, Robin stood, or rather drooped, by the side of the Buccaneer. He came too soon; Dalton, irritated, maddened by the loss of his ship, was unable to appreciate the risk which the Ranger had run, or the sacrifice he had made. He thought but of what he had lost, not of what he had gained; and saw in Robin only the destroyer of his vessel, not the obtainer of his long sought-for pardon. Urged by uncontrollable frenzy, he seized his preserver with the grasp and determination of a desperate man, and, raising him from the ledge, would have hurled him over the cliff, had not one, weak and gentle, yet with that strength to which the strongest must ever yield, interposed to thwart his horrid purpose. It was Barbara, who clung to her father's arm: feeble as she was, the death-throes of the gallant vessel had frightened her and her companion from their retirement, and she now came, like the angel of mercy, between her parent and his ill-directed vengeance. When the Buccaneer found that his arm was pressed, his impulse was to fling off the hand that did it; but when he saw who it was that stayed him, and gazed upon the bloodless face and imploring eyes of his sweet daughter, he stood a harmless unresisting man, subdued by a look and overpowered by a touch. [396]

Barbara never was a girl of energy, or a seeker after power. She considered obedience as woman's chief duty—duty as a child to the parent—as a wife to the husband; and, perhaps, such was her timidity, had there been time to deliberate, she would have trembled at the bare idea of opposing her father's will, though she would have mourned to the end of her days the result of his madness; but she acted from the impulse of the moment. Nothing could be more touching than the sight of her worn and almost transparent figure, hanging on her father's dark and muscular form, like a frail snow-wreath on some bleak mountain.

Robin, whose resentments were as fierce as his fidelity was strong, felt in all the bitterness of his nature the indignity the Buccaneer had put upon him, and stood panting to avenge the insult and injustice, yet withheld from either word or deed by the presence of Barbara, who remained in the same attitude, clinging to her father, unable, from weakness, either to withdraw or to stand without assistance.

Springall, who did not love her so much as to prevent his being useful, was the first to regain his self-possession; he brought in his cap some water that was trickling down the rock, and threw it on her pallid brow—while Zillah chafed her hands, and endeavoured to separate her from her father. At last she spoke, and, though her voice was feeble as the cry of infancy, the Buccaneer heard it, and withdrew his gaze from the remains of his burning vessel to look on the living features of his child.

"Father! you frighten me by those wild passions—and this wild place! let us go from it, and be at peace; poor Robin is your true friend, father. Be friends with him."

"You speak as a woman, a young weak woman, Barbara," replied the Skipper, evincing his returning interest in present objects by passing his arm round his daughter, so as to support her on his bosom. "Look out, girl, and say what you see."

"Father, huge masses of burning wood, floating over the ocean, and borne to other shores by the rising breeze."

"And know you what that burning wood was scarce a minute since?"

"Father—no."

"Those blazing masses were once the Fire-fly—my own ship—my own ship!"

"And Robin—?"

"Has been the means of its destruction."

"Has he?" Barbara paused after she had so exclaimed, and then, clasping her hands, raised them upwards as she continued, "a blessing, a thousand blessings on him! for what he does is ever good, and full of wisdom. Ah! now I see it all: he destroyed the bad vessel that you, dear father, might no more to sea; but stay on shore with us—with *me*, I would have said—" she added, hiding, as she spoke, her face on her father's shoulder.

Five or six of the crew had clambered up the cliff, and clustered round their Skipper. Roupall, Springall, and the Jewess were close to Barbara, and Robin stood exactly on the spot where Dalton's rage had left him—one foot on the edge of the crumbling cliff, his long arms enwreathing his chest.

The red glare had faded from the waters, the sea-birds were settling in their nests, but the government-ships were alive with lights, and, suddenly bursting through the night, came the shrill blast of a trumpet from Cecil Place. It called Robin Hays into activity, and, while the men were looking on each other, he advanced and spoke.

"Hugh Dalton, the ship was yours, and yours alone, and to you the parchment which Springall

holds accounts for its destruction; that destruction, Captain, ought to prove one thing, and one thing only—that I loved you better than the Fire-fly. Both could not have been preserved. You have treated me as a dog, to whom you would have given a dog's death; and I shall not forget it."

"Robin!" exclaimed a small soft voice.

"I cannot forget it," repeated the Ranger; and then the voice again said, "Robin," in a tone of such sweetness, that all present were moved. After another pause, hardy Jack Roupall put in his word.

"The Skipper was hurt, and no marvel, to see her burning. You mustn't be spiteful, Robin Hays,—only what hindered to get her out?"

"She was known, marked, and watched, as I am well assured of," he replied. "Had you attempted to weigh anchor, every man on board would have been blown to atoms. Not a life would have been spared. The men who had charge of her are safe. I sent them to the Essex side—though they little thought why." [398]

Another trumpet-blast mounted with the breeze, and Robin exclaimed,

"Away, away, lads! It is not yet midnight, and no hindrance will be offered to any who quit the island before the hour of one. Away, away! Ye are foxes, and have earths in plenty. Away, for your lives away!"

"Away!" replied Roupall. "Whither, good Ranger? Heard ye not the trumpet, and know ye not that every outlet will be guarded, every man on the watch after such a sound?"

"Had your safety not been cared for, there need have been no trumpet-blast. I pledge my faith—my life—for your security," exclaimed Robin, energetically. "Only away, and quickly!"

One or two of the men sullenly and quietly dropped down the cliff; but there were others who would not thus part from their captain,—sailors, who had braved danger, disease, and death in his company; these would not leave him now, but, as if in expectation of an attack, they looked to their pistols and jerked their daggers sharply in their sheaths. Dalton still remained, uncertain, perhaps, or careless as to his future course, with Barbara still hanging on his arm, while the Jewess clung closely to her side.

"Springall!" said Robin, "you have influence with him. Use it for his good: his pardon is secured if he complies with the terms I have mentioned."

"Great tidings! glad tidings!" exclaimed a hoarse voice a little above them. "The Philistines will be overthrown, and the men of Judah triumph! I have heard in my solitude, yea in my extremity, tidings of exceeding gladness: and, albeit not of quick hearing, the tramp of Joshua and his army hath come upon mine ear. Oh, ye Canaanites! ye dwellers in the accursed land!"

"Fetch him down!" shouted Roupall.

"For your lives touch him not, but to your earths!" exclaimed Robin impetuously. "The Gull's Nest will be no place of safety now." Then, springing on Dalton, he snatched the pistols from his belt and flung them into the sea.

He had hardly done so, when spears and helmets glittered in the faint starlight on the higher cliff. It was no time for deliberation. Roupall and the others slunk silently and sorrowingly away, and the little group—Dalton, Barbara, the Jewess, Fleetword, and Robin—stood nearly together on the ledge. [399]

Colonel Jones had accompanied the soldiers by direct orders from the Protector, who, from the firing of the ship, imagined for a time that Dalton and Robin had acted with treachery—treachery which, with his usual promptness, he adopted the immediate means to counteract.

Robin advanced to meet the troop, and addressing Colonel Jones respectfully, said,

"You will have the goodness to observe, sir, that Hugh Dalton is not only unarmed, but has assembled round him those whose presence were commanded at Cecil Place before the hour of one."

Colonel Jones vouchsafed no reply to Robin's observation; but it was not the less heeded on that account. He inquired, in a stern voice,

"By what means have ye wrought the destruction of yonder vessel?"

"I will tell hereafter" was the only reply he could elicit from Robin Hays. It was repeated more than once—"I will tell hereafter."

By this time the little party was surrounded. The Buccaneer attempted no resistance. His strength, his spirit, seemed gone; his child lay fainting, weak, and exhausted at his feet. Colonel Jones felt, though he did not then express it, much joy at seeing alive the girl he believed dead. Dalton attempted to raise and carry her with him, but in vain. He staggered under the light load as a drunken man. One of the troopers offered horses to the females. Dalton would not commit her to other guidance than his own, and, mounting, placed her before him.

Robin would have turned to the room that contained his mother's corpse, but Colonel Jones forbade it.

"My mother, sir, lies dead within that hut," expostulated the Ranger.

"That may be," replied the soldier; "but I say, in the words of Scripture, 'Let the dead bury their dead.'"

The party then proceeded towards Cecil Place, Zillah entrenching herself under the protection of the Preacher Fleetword.

CHAPTER XIII.

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Weep no more, nor sigh nor groan,
Sorrow calls no time that's gone.
Violets pluck'd, the sweetest rain
Makes not fresh nor grow again.
Trim thy locks, look cheerfully;
Fate's hidden ends eyes cannot see.
Joys, as winged dreams, fly fast:
Why should sadness longer last?
Grief is but a wound to wo:
Gentlest fair! mourn, mourn no mo.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

It was with feelings of considerable anxiety that the Protector waited the return of Colonel Jones from the second task assigned him in the Isle of Shepey.

The routing out of a band of lawless smugglers, although commanded by so daring a skipper as Hugh Dalton, was to him a matter of little consideration, compared to the restoration of Zillah Ben Israel, and the positive saving of Constantia Cecil from worse than death: these two motives weighed deeply upon Cromwell's mind, and he would have made any sacrifice to have been assured that his purpose, with regard to both, might be effected before the morning's dawn. When the explosion of the Fire-fly disturbed his solitude in the purple chamber at Cecil Place, he directed immediate inquiry to be instituted as to its origin, and quickly ascertained that it was caused by the destruction of some ship at sea; his suspicions were at once directed to the vessel of the Buccaneer.

There was no time to lose; Colonel Jones, whose courage and coolness were proverbial amongst soldiers more celebrated for these qualities than even British soldiers have ever been before or since, was instantly dispatched to the Gull's Nest. At first the command of the Protector was to "mount silently;" but his pledge to Robin Hays was remembered, and, at the very moment when the glare of the burning ship was illumining the island, he could not bring himself to determine that the little deformed being, with whom he had held commune, had betrayed the confidence reposed in him.

"Let him know who are coming and prepare for it," thought Cromwell, whose caution was really subservient to his enthusiasm, powerful as was at all times this latter quality; and then he gave, in a low, but earnest and energetic tone, the order, "Sound a brief 'to horse!' trust in the Lord, and see that your swords be loose in their scabbards."

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The troop, on its return, was met by Cromwell himself at the gate to which we have so frequently alluded. His anxiety had not been often greater than on that occasion, and it was manifested by an impatience of manner that almost terrified the attendants who waited in his presence. He was accompanied by only two officers, and his first question was if "Colonel Jones had secured Dalton and the Jewess?" A reply in the affirmative evidently afforded him great relief and satisfaction; but the feeling was quickly succeeded by one of extreme anger when informed of the total destruction of the Fire-fly, which he had desired to preserve for his own special purpose. Yet, until the prisoners had been conducted into Cecil Place by the private entrance, as he had previously arranged, his displeasure only found vent in occasional exclamations. The house was alive with alarm and curiosity, but its inmates received little information to quiet or to satisfy their eager thirst for intelligence. As the soldiers passed the gates, lights floated through the dwelling, and the windows were crowded with inquisitive countenances; great, therefore, was the disappointment when they observed the party separate, and one portion of it take a private path, leading to the Protector's apartments, while the other proceeded round an angle of the building to the stables. Many of the domestics met them at the stable gates, but could learn nothing from those trusty soldiers, who perfectly understood, and invariably acted upon, their master's favourite motto, "safety in silence;"—still they could not rest, no one went to bed, for all were in expectation of—they knew not what.

The clock struck one; about five minutes afterwards Cromwell had closed the door of his chamber; the half-hour chimed. Constance was looking on her father, sleeping calmly in his chair, in a closet that opened into his favourite library. He had not been in bed for several nights, and, since his afflicting insanity, could seldom be prevailed on to enter his own room. After pausing a few minutes, while her lips appeared to move with the prayer her heart so fervently formed, she undid the bolt, quietly opened the door, then partially closed it, and left her wretched parent

alone with his physician.

She could hear within the library, in which she now stood, the heavy breathings of the afflicted man. A large lamp was burning on the massive oak-table: it shed a cheerful light, but it was a light too cheerful for her troubled and feverish spirit—she sank upon a huge carved chair, and passed her small hand twice or thrice over her brow, where heavy drops had gathered; then drew towards her the large Bible that had been her mother's. On the first page, in the hand-writing of that beloved mother, was registered the day of her marriage, and underneath the births of her several children, with a short and thanksgiving prayer affixed to each; a little lower down came a mournful register, the dates and manner of her sons' deaths; but the Christian spirit that had taught her words and prayers of gratitude, had been with her in the time of trouble; the passages were penned in true humility and humble-mindedness, though the blisterings of many tears remained upon the paper. [402]

Constantia turned over the leaves more carelessly than was her custom; but her eye dwelt upon one of the beautiful promises, given with so much natural poetry by the great Psalmist,—“I have been young, and now am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.” “Alas!” she thought, “I can derive only half consolation from such as this. One of my parents was indeed righteous; but, alas! what has the other been?” She bowed her head upon the book, and did not again raise it, until a soft hand touched her shoulder, and a light voice whispered “Constance!”

It was Lady Frances Cromwell.

“My dear Constantia! here's a situation! I never knew any thing so provoking, so tantalising! My father, they say, has taken as many as twenty prisoners, of one sort or another; and has caged them up in that purple-room with himself, examining into and searching out every secret—secrets I want so much to know. He has got the Buccaneer, they say.”

“Who says so?” inquired Constance eagerly.

“Why, everybody. Maud says so. And I have been to the door at least ten times; but even the key-hole, I verily believe, is plugged. I am sure it is, for I tried hard to see through it.”

“The crisis of my fate is indeed come,” murmured Constantia. Then, after a pause, she was about to address her friend: “My dear Lady Frances—” [403]

“Don't Lady Frances me,” interrupted the young maiden, pettishly. “I hate to be Lady Frances. I should know more about every thing if I were a chamberlain's daughter.”

“Your father can discover nought to your prejudice. I confess I both dread and hope to hear news of the Gull's Nest. There is nothing which can affect you there.”

“How can I tell? Poor Rich chooses queer postmen sometimes! And that Manasseh Ben Israel! he is as anxious as myself to know what is going on. Two rooms locked up! Constance, I wonder you have not more spirit than to submit to such proceedings. I would not.”

“I am sorry for it; because it shows that your confidence in your father is overbalanced by your curiosity.”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the lady, turning from her friend, just in time to see the doors at the bottom of the room thrown open with much ceremony:—the Protector, attended by his pages, followed by Dalton, Fleetword, and Robin, entered.

Constance rose respectfully from her seat, glanced upon the form of the fearful Buccaneer who now stood before her, and laying her hand on the arm of her friend, would have withdrawn, had not Cromwell commanded her to stay.

“Mistress Cecil, you will remain;—both remain,” he said, while an expression of exceeding kindness lent to his harsh countenance the effect that sunlight gives to a rugged landscape, softening without destroying a single point of its peculiar and stern character. “I have no dread of objection on the part of the Lady Frances, and I must request your presence.” He took a large chair at the head of the table, and seating himself, delivered a slip of writing to his page, who immediately quitted the room.

“Our young friend will pardon this intrusion upon her privacy, and moreover allow us to continue an investigation that has already been attended with much pain, but we should hope with some satisfaction also.”

As he spoke, the door again opened, and Manasseh Ben Israel, pale and trembling with agitation, walked, or rather, so submissive was his attitude, crept forward, saluting the Protector and the ladies as he advanced.

“Will your Highness permit?” inquired Constantia, rising from her own seat, and pushing it towards the Rabbi.

“Most certainly,” was Cromwell's prompt reply; “our friend is aged, but he is welcome; and we have news that will gladden his heart.” In an instant all trace of the servility which custom had imposed upon the manners of the children of Israel vanished. The Rabbi stood upright, and clasping his hands together, exclaimed, “My child! my child!” [404]

“The lost sheep is found—blessed be the Lord!—safe here, within this house—and I lay my

commands upon her father that she be received as a stray lamb from the fold, and warmed within his bosom. We have all children, good Rabbi; and the Lord judge between us and them, they are stiffnecked and stubborn! All, more or less, all—except one or two who shine forth as bright examples;—such is my own Elizabeth, and such also is Mistress Constantia here."

"She is found!" repeated the Jew; "but they talked of crime—of her having—I cannot speak it, please your Highness, but you know what I would say. Peradventure gold might be made to atone."

"Peace, good friend!" interrupted Oliver sternly; "justice must have its due; and, by God's blessing, while we are Protector, all the gold your tribe is worth shall not turn the scale! We would be merciful for mercy's sake; but for justice—Yet pardon me," he added in compassion to the Rabbi's horror, "I would not trifle with a father's feelings—she is guiltless of murder."

He struck the table with the butt-end of his pistol—a private door of the library opened as of itself—not one, but two females stood beneath its shadow, each supporting each, as if the one weak creature thought she could lend a portion of much needed strength to the other. Lady Frances and Constantia sprang from their seats—all distinction of rank was forgotten, and Mistress Cecil wept over her affectionate bower-maiden, as an elder over a younger sister, or even as a mother over a beloved child. She asked no questions, but kissed her brow and wept; while Barbara stood curtsying, and smiling, and crying, and glancing with evident satisfaction, amid her tears, towards her father and Robin, as if she would have said, "See how my lady, my grand lady, loves me!"

It did not escape the observation of Lady Frances that Barbara wore the chain she had given her, and she most heartily wished her father at Whitehall, or elsewhere, that she might have an opportunity of asking all the questions at once suggested by her busy brain. [405]

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the meeting between the Jew and his daughter. It was with feelings of terror, more than of affection, that Zillah prepared to encounter a justly offended parent. She had heard and believed that crime such as hers—marrying or intriguing with Christians—was punished by a lingering and cruel death; and scarcely could the word of Cromwell, pledged twice for her safety, convince her that such would not be her fate. She instantly prostrated herself at the Rabbi's feet; and it would seem that, assured of his daughter's life—assured of her safety under laws—British laws—his eastern notions with regard to the submission due from woman to her master, man, returned to him in full force; for he suffered her to remain, her forehead resting on the ground, and her hands clasped around it, although he was so deeply agitated that he clung to a pedestal for support.

The Protector arose from his seat, and, advancing, kindly and tenderly raised the poor victim of confiding but too violent passion, and placed her leaning on her father's shoulder.

"Manasseh!" he said, "at times our speech is obscure, and men see through it darkly. We hope it will not be so now. Your daughter is no harlot, but a wedded woman who will soon become a mother, and, in virtue of her husband and her child, is a subject of our own. We regret the violence of which she has been guilty, but Satan is ever busy in his work of temptation. If you cast her from you, we take her to ourselves; as our blessed Lord would have received the prodigal—the sinful, but repentant son—even so will we receive her. Poor prodigal," he added, after waiting for a reply from the Rabbi, which came not, for the feelings of the tribe were struggling with those of the father—"Poor prodigal! we will not desert thee in thy hour of trial—but seek to preserve thee from worse crimes than even those of which thou hast been guilty."

Although Cromwell had placed Zillah resting on the shoulder of her father, he made no effort to support or keep her there, and the Protector was in the act of leading her towards his daughter, when Ben Israel raised a great cry, for the father had triumphed over the Jew, and snatching her to his bosom, he burst into a fervent but almost inaudible prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude, that entered the hearts of those who heard it, and witnessed the terrible strength of his emotions. The Lady Constance was suffering from various causes; the nature of which, from past events, may be more easily imagined than described. Nor were those sufferings either terminated or relieved, when, on Cromwell's striking the table again in the same manner as before, Sir Willmott Burrell stood in the apartment. [406]

His entrance caused a sensation of astonishment and confusion through the whole group. Constantia Cecil unconsciously moved her seat nearer to that of the Protector. An expression of satisfaction crossed the anxious and feverish brow of Robin Hays. Dalton folded his arms across his bosom, and advanced his right foot, as if strengthening his position. Preacher Fleetword, who had hitherto leaned against a high-backed chair, his eyes glaring from their sockets on the countenance of "the Lord's anointed," and drinking in, with open ear and mouth, every word he uttered—now shrank into the farthest portion of the room, skilfully keeping a chair in the direction of Burrell, as a sort of fortification against violence or evil, while he muttered sentences of no gentle or complimentary nature, which, but for the august presence in which he stood, would have burst forth in anathemas against the "wolf in sheep's clothing," by which title he never failed in after years to designate the traitor. The Jew trembled, and partly rose from his seat; while Zillah, whose love had turned to hate—whose affection had become as wormwood—stood erect as he advanced, with a pale but firm look. Prepared to assert her rights to the last, she was the very model of a determined woman, who, having been greatly wronged, resolves to be greatly avenged. If her lip quivered, it was evidently from eagerness, not from indecision; and her eye had the lightning of hell, not of heaven, in its glance. Barbara crouched at the feet of her

mistress; and Lady Frances, to whom something new was synonymous with something delightful, was tip-toe with expectation. She believed, from what her father had hinted, that Constantia was free, and might wed whom she pleased: this imparted an hilarity to her countenance and manner, totally different from the aspect of all others within that room. Burrell himself looked like a bull turned into the arena, from whence there is no escape. His deep-set eyes were grown red and dry: but they rested, for a moment, while he saluted Constance and Lady Frances; their next movement showed him Zillah and her father, and he shrank within himself, and quailed beneath the defying gaze of the woman he had so deeply injured. For an instant, and but for an instant, eye met eye, and glance encountered glance: the Master of Burrell was overthrown, and looked round for some relief; but like other sinners, when the hour of retribution comes, he found none; for those he next saw were Dalton, Fleetword, and Robin Hays.

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"We have more than circumstantial evidence to show now, Sir Willmott Burrell," exclaimed the Protector, after surveying him with a look of terrible contempt: "what say you to this lady? Is she, too, a counterfeit?"

Burrell remained silent; and while Cromwell paused, as if expecting an answer, the Preacher could no longer hold silence, but vociferated from behind his intrenchment:—

"Under favour of the Greatness before whom I speak—under the shadow of his wing—I proclaim thee to be a sinner—even as those who stoned the holy Stephen, when he was about the Lord's bidding—even as those——"

"Peace!" exclaimed Cromwell, in a voice that sounded like thunder in the Preacher's ear. "Sir Willmott Burrell, there are now sufficient proofs—what have you to say why this lady be not declared your lawful and wedded wife?"

"I desire it not! I desire it not!" murmured the Rabbi: "my wealth he shall not have, nor my child."

"But I desire it—I demand it!" interrupted Zillah; "not for my own sake, most gracious judge," and she bent her knee to the Protector; "for never will I commune with my destroyer after this hour—but for the sake of an unborn babe, who shall not blush for its parent, when this poor head and this breaking heart have found the quiet of the grave!"

"May it please your Highness," replied Burrell, "the marriage in a foreign land is nought, particularly when solemnised between a Christian and a Jew, unless ratified here; and I will submit to that ratification, if the Lady Constantia Cecil, whom I was about to wed, and whom the person your Highness designs for my wife sought to assassinate, will agree to it,—taking on herself the penalty to which her breach of contract must of necessity lead."

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All eyes were now turned to Constantia, who sat labouring for breath, and struggling with an agony to which it almost seemed her life would yield.

"We have ourselves provided for the Lady Constantia a fitting mate, good Master of Burrell," replied the Protector; "think ye that the fairest of our land are to be thrown to the dogs?" Again he struck his pistol upon the oak table, and after a breathless silence, during which Burrell never removed his eyes from Constantia—(Lady Frances afterwards said she noted they had all the evil expression of those of the hooded snake, when preparing to dart upon its prey)—the villain contrived to move more closely towards his victim, whose misery was but faintly painted on her blanched cheek.

"A little time," she murmured; "a little time to deliberate."

"Not a moment—not a moment," he replied; "and remember——"

The words had hardly passed from between his closed lips, when Walter de Guerre was ushered in, and Burrell's brow flushed one deep hue of crimson. A murmur of congratulation escaped from several of the party; the Protector turned towards Constantia with the look and manner of one who has planned what he believes will be a joyful surprise—to be gratefully received and appreciated as such; instead of beholding her face beaming with love and hope, he saw that every fibre of her frame became rigid; and she endeavoured to bury her face in her hands.

"Mistress Cecil seems to approve our choice no better than her father's," he said, after a pause of intense anxiety to all present: "We would have taught this youth what is due to ourself and our Commonwealth, by the gentlest means within our power. Methinks, women are all alike."

"Father! she is dying!" exclaimed the easily-alarmed Lady Frances.

"One moment, and I shall be well," said Constantia: and then she added,

"Sir Willmott Burrell, you pant for vengeance, and now you may have it. Believing that lady, in the sight of God, to be your wife, I cannot wrong her; though I would have sacrificed myself to— to—." She was prevented from finishing her sentence by the Protector's exclaiming with the energy and warmth of his natural character,

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"We knew it; and now let me present your bridegroom. Frances, it was excess of joy that caused this agitation."

Constantia interrupted him.

"Not so, your Highness. Alas! God knows, not so. But while I say that the evil contract shall never be fulfilled—though I will never become the wife of Sir Willmott Burrell, I also say that the wife of

Walter de Guerre I can never be. Nay more, and I speak patiently, calmly—rather would I lay my breaking heart, ere it is all broken, beneath the waves that lash our shore, than let one solitary word escape me, which might lead you to imagine that even the commands of your Highness could mould my dreadful destiny to any other shape."

There was no mistaking the expression of the Protector's countenance; it was that of severe displeasure; for he could ill brook, at any period, to have his wishes opposed and his designs thwarted. While Constance was rising from her seat, Sir Willmott Burrell grasped her arm with fiendish violence, and extending his other hand towards the door leading to the closet, where she had left her sleeping father, he exclaimed:

"Then I accuse openly, in the face of the Protector and this company, Robert Cecil, who stands *there*, of the murder of his brother Herbert, and of the murder of Sir Herbert Cecil's son; and I assert that Hugh Dalton was accessory to the same!"

A shriek so wild and piercing issued from Constantia's lips that it rang over the house and terrified all its inmates, who crowded to the portal, the boundary of which they dared not pass.

It was little to be wondered that she did shriek. Turning toward the spot at which the villain pointed, the Protector saw the half-demented Baronet standing in the door-way. He had opened the closet, and come forth during the momentary absence of his attendant, and now stood moping and bowing to the assembly in a way that would have moved the pity of a heart of stone.

"Fiend!" shouted the Protector, grasping in his great anger the throat of Sir Willmott, and shaking him as he had been a reed—"tis a false lie! He is no murderer; and if he had been, is it before his daughter that ye would speak it! Hah! I see it all now. Such is the threat—the lie—that gave you power over this excellence." He threw the ruffian from him with a perfect majesty of resentment. Gross as was the deed, the Protector condescending to throttle such as Burrell, the manner of the act was great: it was that of an avenging angel, not of an angry or impetuous man.

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Sir Willmott regained his self-possession, although with feelings of wounded pride and indignation; fixing his eye upon Constantia with, if possible, increasing malignity, he spoke:—

"His Highness much honours his subject; but Mistress Cecil herself knows that what I have spoken is true—so does her father—and so does also this man! Is it not true, I ask?"

"No! I say it is false—false as hell!" answered the Buccaneer; "and if his Highness permits, I will explain."

"You say—what?" inquired Constantia, her whole countenance and figure dilating with that hope which had so long been a stranger to her bosom.

"I say that Robert Cecil is no murderer! Stand forth, Walter Cecil, and state that within the two last years, you saw your father in a Spanish monastery; and that——"

"Who is Walter Cecil?" inquired Burrell, struggling as a drowning man, while losing his last hope of salvation.

"I am WALTER CECIL!" exclaimed our old acquaintance Walter; "my *nom de guerre* is no longer necessary."

"It needed not that one should come from the dead to tell us that," said the Protector, impatiently; "but there are former passages we would have explained. What means the villain by his charge? Speak, Dalton, and unravel us this mystery."

"It is well known to your Highness, that few loved the former powers more than Sir Herbert Cecil; and truth to say, he was wild, and daring, and bad——"

"Dalton!" exclaimed the young man, in an upbraiding tone.

"Well, young master, I will say no more about it. Gold is a great tempter, as your Highness knows; and it tempted yonder gentleman, with whom God has dealt. He is a different sight to look upon now, to what he was the morning he sought me to commit a crime, which, well for my own sake, and the sake of others, I did not commit. He came to me——"

"Mercy! mercy! I claim your Highness' mercy!" said Constantia, falling on her knees, and holding her hands, clasped and trembling, above her head. "It is not meet that the child hear thus publicly of her father's sin! The old man, your Highness, has not power to speak!"

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"Lady," continued Dalton, "he could not deny—But my tale will soon be finished, and it will take a load off your heart, and off the hearts of others. Sir Herbert did not die. I conveyed him to another land; but the papers—the instructions I had received, remained in my possession. Sir Herbert's wild character—his fondness for sea-excursions—his careless life, led to the belief that he had perished in some freak, in which he too often indulged. His brother apparently mourned and sorrowed; but, in time, the dynasty of England changed, exactly as he would have wished it—the Commonwealth soon gave the missing brother's lands to the man who was its friend, who had fought and laboured in its cause, and seemed to forget that any one else had any right to the possessions:—but the son of the injured remained as a plague-spot to his sight. I had but too good reason to know how this son of this elder brother was regarded, and I had learned to love the lad: he was ever about the beach, and fond of me, poor fellow! because I used to bring him little gifts from foreign parts—by way, I suppose, of a private atonement for grievous wrong. I took upon

myself the removing of that boy to save him from a worse fate, for I loved him as my own child; and there he stands, and can say whether my plain speech be true or false. I was myself a father but a little while before I spirited him away from a dangerous home to a safe ship. Sir Robert believed they were both dead, and sorrowed not; although he compassed only the removal of the brother, yet the going away of his nephew made his possessions the more secure; for, as he said, times might change, and the boy be restored if he had lived. His disappearance made a great stir at the time; yet there were many went from the land then and were seen no more. I thought to rear him in my own line, but he never took kindly to it, so I just let him have his fling amongst people of his own thinking—gentry, and the like—who knew how to train him better than I did. I kept Sir Herbert safe enough until the act came out which gave Sir Robert right and dominion over his brother's land, declaring the other to have been a malignant, and so forth;—but the spirit was subdued within the banished man; he was bowed and broken, and cared nothing for liberty, but took entirely to religion, and became a monk; and his son, there, has seen him many a time; and it comforted me to find that he died in the belief that God would turn all things right again, and that his child would yet be master of Cecil Place. He died like a good Christian, forgiving his enemies, and saying that adversity had brought his soul to God—more fond of blaming himself than others. As to Walter, he had a desire to visit this country, and, to own the truth, I knew that if Sir Robert failed to procure the pardon I wanted, the resurrection of this youth would be an argument he could not withstand.

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"Perhaps I was wrong in the means I adopted; but I longed for an honest name, and it occurred to me that Sir Robert Cecil could be frightened, if not persuaded, into procuring my pardon. God is my judge that I was weary of my reckless habits, and panted for active but legal employment. A blasted oak will tumble to the earth, if struck by a thunderbolt,—like a withy. Then my child! I knew that Lady Cecil cared for her, though, good lady, she little thought, when she first saw the poor baby, that it was the child of a Buccaneer. She believed it the offspring of a pains-taking trader, who had served her husband. She guessed the truth in part afterwards, but had both piety and pity in her bosom, and did not make the daughter suffer for the father's sin. I loved the girl!—But your Highness is yourself a father, and would not like to feel ashamed to look your own child in the face. I threatened Sir Robert to make known all—and expose these documents—"

The Skipper drew from his vest the same bundle of papers which he had used in that room, almost on that very spot, to terrify the stricken Baronet, a few months before. Sir Robert Cecil had remained totally unconscious of the explanations that had been made, and seemed neither to know of, nor to heed, the presence of Dalton, nor the important communication he had given—his eyes wandering from countenance to countenance of the assembled group,—a weak, foolish smile resting perpetually on his lip; yet the instant he caught a glimpse of the packet the Buccaneer held in his hand, his memory returned: he staggered from his daughter—who, after her appeal to Cromwell, clung to her father's side, as if heroically resolved to share his disgrace to the last—and grasped at the papers.

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"What need of keeping them?" said the Protector, much affected at the scene: "give them to him, give them to him."

Dalton obeyed, and Sir Robert clutched them with the avidity of a maniac: he stared at them, enwreathed as they were by his thin, emaciated fingers, and then, bursting into a mad fit of exulting laughter, fell prostrate on the floor, before any one had sufficiently recovered from the astonishment his renewed strength had occasioned, to afford him any assistance. He was immediately raised by Constantia and his attendants, and conveyed to his own apartment, still holding fast the papers, though he gave little other sign of life. There was another, besides his daughter, who followed the stricken man—his nephew Walter.

"It is ill talking of marriage," said Cromwell, as the young man paused, and requested permission to leave the room,—*"It is ill talking of marriage when Death stands at the threshold; but I have little doubt you will be able to obtain the hand which I could not dispose of. When I first saw you, I expected to see a different person—a director of spies—a chief of discord—a master, not a servant. Walter Cecil, although a bold Cavalier, would hardly have had power to draw me to the Isle of Shepey, had he not, on board the Fire-fly, chosen to embrown his face, and carry black ringlets over his own; a trick, perchance, to set the Protector on a wrong scent. Never hang y'er head at it, young man—such things have been from the beginning, and will be to the end. Methinks that old oaks stand friends with the party;—but I quarrel not with the tree—if it shielded the worthless Charles at Worcester, it revealed the true Walter at Queenborough. Yet I thank God on every account that I was led to believe you one whose blood I would fain not shed, but would rather protect—if that he has the wisdom not to trouble our country. I thank God that I was brought here to unravel and wind up. A ruler should be indeed a mortal (we speak it humbly) omnipresent! As to yonder man—devil I should rather call him—he has, I suppose, no farther threats or terrors to win a lady's love. Sir Willmott Burrell, we will at least have the ceremony of your marriage repeated without delay:—here is my friend's daughter—this night—"*

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"Not to-night," interrupted Zillah; "to-morrow, and not to-night; I can bear no more to-night."

"Sir [Willmott](#) Burrell," said Dalton, walking to where he stood, beaten down and trampled, yet full of poison as an adder's tooth, "be it known that I pity you:—your dagger has been turned into your own heart!—The human flesh you bribed me to destroy, lives! What message brought Jeromio from the ocean?"

Dalton was proceeding in a strain that would have quickly goaded Burrell to some desperate act; for, as the Buccaneer went on, he was lashing his passion with a repetition of the injuries and

baseness of his adversary, as a lion lashes himself with his tail to stimulate his bravery; but the Protector demanded if Hugh Dalton knew before whom he stood, and dared to brawl in such presence. Silenced, but not subdued, he retreated, and contented himself with secret execrations on his enemy.

"We have rendered some justice to-night," said Cromwell, after striding once or twice the length of the apartment. "Yet is our task not finished, although the morning watch is come. Without there! Desire Colonel Jones that he remove Sir Willmott Burrell to the apartment he before occupied. The morning sun shall witness the completion of the ceremony between him and her he has so deeply wronged. We will then consider the course that justice may point out to us. Dalton, you are a free man, free to come and free to go, and to go as soon and where you please. Observe, I said *as soon*." Dalton bowed lowly, and moved to raise his daughter from the spot on which she had crouched by the seat of her beloved mistress; Robin instinctively moved also.

"Stay!" continued the Protector, "there is yet more to do. Young man, you must be well aware your act of this night demands some punishment. The ship which you destroyed—" Dalton writhed at the remembrance, and Barbara half unclosed her gentle lips.

"Please your Highness, I knew the man's affection for his ship, and I loved him better than the timber; he would have destroyed me in his anger but for poor Barbara."

"That is nothing to us; at the least, fetters must be your portion."

Barbara involuntarily sank on her knees, in an attitude of supplication. Robin knelt also, and by her side. [415]

So touching was the scene, that Cromwell smiled while he laid his hand on her head, and with the other raised the long chain his daughter had given the modest bower-maiden, and which had remained suspended from her neck, he threw it over the shoulders of Robin, so that it encircled them both.

"We are clumsy at such matters," he continued, "but the Lord bless you! and may every virtuous woman in England meet with so warm a heart, and so wise a head, to love her and direct her ways—though the outward fashioning of the man be somewhat of the strangest."

CHAPTER XIV.

Know then, my brethren, heaven is clear,
And all the clouds are gone;
The righteous now shall flourish, and
Good days are coming on:
Come then, my brethren, and be glad,
And eke rejoice with me.

FRANCIS QUARLES.

Over the happy and the miserable, the guilty and the good, Time alike passes; though his step may be light or heavy, according to the feelings of those who watch his progress, still he pursues, with sure and certain tread, a course upon which he never turns.

We are about to bid farewell to those who have been our companions through a long but we trust not a weary path; and we delay them but for a short space longer to learn how felt the household of Cecil Place, after the events and excitements of a day which gave birth to so many marvels, and unravelled so many mysteries.

We have, however, yet to deal out perfect justice,—and would fain tarry a moment to remark how rarely it is that, even in the sober world of Fact, the wicked finish their course—and vengeance has not overtaken. Truly has it been said that "virtue is its own reward:" as truly has it been added, that "vice brings its own punishment."

How lightly, and with how deep a blessing, did Constance Cecil, when the day was breaking, offer up a fervent thanksgiving to God that her only parent, though deeply sinful in intent, was free from blood, and, though worn in body, was sleeping as quietly as a wearied child when its task is ended. Her mother's spirit seemed to hover over and bless her, and imagination pictured another by her side who came to share the blessing—it was the companion of her childhood, the chosen, and loved, and trusted of a long and happy and prosperous after-life. [416]

Constantia pressed her couch; but, with the exception of the worn and weary Sir Robert, whose existence quivered like the parting light of an expiring lamp, no eyes slumbered in Cecil Place. The Lady Frances Cromwell, upon that morning, took not up the lays of the foolish Waller, but the precious volume that, in her vanity, she had too often slighted—she read therein,—

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And as she so read, a more calm and settled expression spread over her features; and after much musing and much thankfulness, she sought the chamber of her friend. Constantia was not alone,

for, pale and weak, and trembling,—still like the aspen which every breeze may agitate,—the little Puritan Barbara crouched on an old cushion by the side of her lady's bed.

It did not escape the Lady Frances, that however thankful and comforted was Constantia by her release from the terrible doom of a union with Sir Willmott Burrell, she was deeply humbled and smitten by the publicity that had been given to her father's meditated crime, and she skilfully avoided any allusion to the scene of the night. The feelings of the maiden were, however, elicited sufficiently to satisfy even the curiosity of Frances Cromwell, by one of those simple incidents that speak more eloquently than words. As Barbara sat on the cushion, she could see into the garden beneath: the window overhung the very spot where Walter had gathered the wild rose as he went forth a prisoner, with Major Wellmore, from the house in which he was already considered a master; and the simple girl discerned, amid the foliage of the trees, even Walter himself, whose gaze was fixed upon the casement above.

"Look, Mistress, look!" she exclaimed.

Lady Frances and Constantia did look both at the same moment, and saw the same sight. They also both at once withdrew their glance, and, as the eyes of the ladies encountered, a blush, not of shame, or pride, or anger, overspread the fine features of Constantia—it was the pure bright colouring of assured affection; it said more than if volumes had been written to express her feelings. If she seemed less dignified, she looked more lovely than ever: it was as sunshine lending new warmth and fresh beauty to a landscape, which needed that alone to vivify and enlighten, to cheer and charm, to gladden and give life.

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"Thank God!" exclaimed Frances, clasping her hands—"thank God!—after all, Constantia, you are but a woman!"

"My dear friend," replied the lady, literally turning on her couch to hide her blushes, "this is no time to trifle: the melancholy——"

She paused for want of words: that proneness to dissemble, which inevitably attends all women who ever were or ever will be in love, was struggling with her high and truthful nature. But Constantia was still Constantia, and could not depart from truth, so as successfully to feign what she did not feel: her sentence consequently remained unfinished, and Lady Frances was left at full liberty to draw her own conclusions therefrom,—a matter of no great difficulty.

"I have received a letter from my sister Mary," she said, kindly changing the subject, "and it will please you to know that my lordly father is inclined to listen to reason, and manifests a disposition to admit the reasonableness of his daughter Frances becoming Rich. Beshrew me! but most fathers like that distinction for their children; only, alas! in this instance, Rich and riches are not synonymous. What think you of that? His Highness has not said a word to me on the subject. There is your prim Barbara smiling. Ah! you too, I suppose, will soon be saluted as Mistress or Dame Hays. Fie, fie, Barbara! I thought you had better taste. But never mind, I will not say a word to his disparagement—no, nor suffer one of the court curs to growl at Crisp when he visits the buttery at Whitehall or Hampton. What have you done with the Lady Zillah?"

"So please you, madam," replied Barbara, "the Rabbi would not be separated from his daughter. He seems to think her only safe under his own eye. So he forced her to lie on his own bed, and she has fallen, poor lady, into a deep sleep—and he sits by her side, sometimes gazing upon a dim old book, full of strange marks and characters, but more often looking upon the face of his child, until his eyes fill with tears; and then he clasps his hands, and mutters, what I know must be a blessing, it is so earnest; and then, if perchance she moves and the pillow swells, or the coverlet be disturbed, he smooths it so gently you would think it was a woman's hand, and not that of a man. Ah, my lady! love makes all things gentle."

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"I wonder," observed Lady Frances, "will she turn Christian?"

"She has been a kind nurse to me, in my trouble," replied the puritan; "but our good preacher says her heart is far from being humbled. She has a high mind, and is proud of her tribe. While we were in the cell, Master Fleetword took a deal of pains with her, and expounded most wonderfully for hours together; but I fear me the seed fell upon stony ground: for, though she sat still enough, I know she did not listen."

"Where is your father?"

Barbara started at the abruptness of the question, and colouring, she knew not why, said,

"Please you, my lady, though his Highness at first commanded him hence, he has graciously suffered him to remain until to-morrow's noon. Ah, madam!" she continued, sinking on the ground at Lady Frances's feet, "if you would only, only remember the promise you made when you gave me this,"—she held the clasp of the golden chain towards Lady Frances,— "and intercede with him, to whom is given the power of life and death, to pardon to the uttermost, and suffer Hugh Dalton to tarry on this island, I would—I would—alas! my lady, I am but a poor girl, and have nothing to give save blessings, and they shower so upon the heads of greatness that they must weary and not gladden; but my blessing would come from the heart, and it is not always, I hear, that the heart beats when the lips speak. So good, my lady, think upon your own great father; and think that as great as he have ere now asked for mercy; and then think upon mine—mine, who is as brave, and—and—will be as honest as the best man in all England. Then, gracious madam, it is not from presumption I speak, but Robin has wit and wisdom, and wit and

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wisdom are sometimes needed by those in high places; but he would lend—ay, give it all, to serve any one who pleased me in a smaller thing than this. I can do nothing; but Robin is one who can always do much."

When Barbara had pleaded thus far, she could get no farther, but trembled, so that Lady Frances placed her on her cushion, and smilingly replied,

"So, for this woodbine-sort of assistance, you would have me rouse the British lion, who has been in such marvellous good temper lately that I fear me the wind will shift soon; but Cromwell, girl, is not one to halve his mercy. I can promise, not from my influence, but the knowledge of his mind, that Hugh Dalton will not be banished; nay, I am sure of it. But see ye there, the helmets are stirring already. Constantia, your chamber is delightful for a heroine, but a melancholy one for a curious maiden. Only behold! one can scarcely catch a glimpse of the court-yard. When I build a castle, I'll construct a turret with eyes, commonly called windows, all round it: nothing shall be done in secret!—Good morn to you, sweet friend! I can soon find out what the stir is about from the head of the great staircase."

"Adieu, fair Lady Curiosity," said Constantia, as Lady Frances tripped with a light step on her [inquisitive](#) mission: "I will now go to my father's chamber;" and thither she went, resolved to perform her duty to the last, though she shuddered at the remembrance of the crime he had once meditated, and humbly, earnestly prayed that the sin might be washed away from his soul.

CHAPTER XV.

This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd
chalice
To our own lips.

SHAKSPEARE.

As the grey and misty twilight brightened into the glowing and happy morn, there were two men prying about and around the otherwise deserted cavern of the Gull's Nest Crag.

Nothing is more dreary and lonely to look upon than a scene, where bustle and traffic have but lately been, changed, as if by magic, into a place of stillness—forsaken by those who gave to it animation and existence which before it knew not, and may never know again. [420]

Solitude now covered it as with a pall. At the door of the once noisy and frequented hostelry, instead of the bent but busy figure of old Mother Hays, two sea-gulls stalked, and flapped their wings, and screamed, and thrust their bills into the rude cooking-pots that stood without.

The two persons, who appeared intent upon investigating the mysteries of the place, could not be seen without bending over the edge of the topmost cliff. It was then at once perceived that they were occupied in fulfilling no ordinary or every-day task. They moved in and out of the lower entrance like bees intent on forming new cells. For a considerable time no word was spoken by either: at length the object they had in view appeared accomplished, and, after climbing to the highest cliff, they sat down opposite each other, so as to command a full prospect of both sea and land.

"It was only a little farther on—about a quarter of a mile nearer Cecil Place—that I first set foot on the Isle of Shepey," said the younger, "and a precious fright I got—a fright that never was clear explained, nor ever will be now, I guess."

"I little thought matters would have had such an end," replied the other. "Gad, I'm hardly paid for the powder of the train by the few bits I've picked up inside. I couldn't believe, unless I'd seen it myself, that the place was so cleared out: except the furs and shawls belonging to the women, there wasn't the wrapping round my finger of anything worth having. Well, Hugh had many friends—I never thought he'd turn tail."

"Turn tail!" repeated the youth: "who dares to say he turned tail? If any one repeats that before me, I'll make free to give him a dose of cold lead without farther ceremony!"

"All our chickens are game-cocks now-a-days!" returned the elder one, half laughing: "but, Springall, could you swear that the Skipper and Robin Hays didn't concert it all together?"

"Let me alone, Jack, and don't put my back up. I'll lay my life, if there was any concerting in it, 'twas between Robin and the maid Barbara. Well, girls have queer fancies!—Who'd ha' thought she'd ha' fancied [Robin?](#)—though he's a brave sound-hearted little fellow; yet who'd ha' thought she'd have preferred him to—to—" [421]

"To you, I suppose. Lord, Springall, there's no coming up to the women. Bless ye, I've seen those who loved apes, and parrots, and puppy-dogs, and took more pride and pleasure in them than in their own lawful husbands and born children! What d'ye think o' that? Why, would you believe it? a girl I loved better than my heart's blood took a fancy to an old man, and sent me adrift, though I was a likely fellow then—ah! different, very different to what I am now;" and Jack Roupall,

leaning his elbows on his knees, that were wide apart, commenced drawing, with the butt end of his pistol, figures on the sand, which the wind, whether in anger or sportiveness, had flung upon the crag. After a lengthened pause, he looked suddenly up at the youth Springall, who still sat opposite to him, and said abruptly, "Are you sure you made no mistake?"

"Am I sure of the sight of my eyes, or the hearing of my ears?" returned the lad. "I was as close to the troopers as I am to you, though they saw me not, and their entire talk was of the Gull's Nest, and how they were all to be down here soon after sunrise; and a deal of jokes, in their own way, they passed upon it—stiff dry jokes, that were as hard to swallow as a poker."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the smuggler; "how they will pray when they see the crag dancing in the air! It would be ill done towards the secret stations of our friends on other parts of the coast, to let these fellows find the ins and outs of such a place as this; it would be holding a candle to the devil—giving them a guide to lead them on through all their plans henceforward and for ever. The Gull's Nest shall go after the Fire-fly. It gives me joy to mar their sport—their peeping and prying. But we will not let off the train until we see them pretty close upon us. The Roundhead rascals shall have the full benefit of our gay bonfire. 'Ods rot it! what else could we do, but make a gay ending of it at once. A gay ending!" he repeated—"a gay ending! No rock to mark the spot of so much merriment, so much joviality, so much spoil! Ah! in a hundred years, few can tell where the watchers of the Gull's Nest Crag lighted beacon and brand for the free rovers of the free sea!"

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Another pause succeeded the rhapsody of Jack Roupall and then Springall inquired how it was that he could not open the strong room where the preacher had been left to his prayers.

"How it was? why, because I had not the key. And I am sure there's nothing in it. I was in with the skipper after the long-legged puritan was out, and I could see only squashed fruit, broken boxes, and old good-for-nothing rags. Whatever had been worth moving was moved; but that room will mount as high as any of them, I warrant me. I laid a good lot of combustibles to the door. Ah! there was the gleam of a spear, to my thinking." And he arose as he spoke, groaning out a curse against Springall the moment after. "My back—a murrain upon you and upon me too! —aches like the rheumatism from the weight of that old hag's coffin, which you would have me carry from the Gull's Nest out yonder, for fear it should be blown up with the crag. What did it signify if it was, I wonder?"

"You wouldn't like the body of your own mother to go heavenward after such a fashion, sinner as ye are, would ye, Jack?"

"They are coming," observed the rover, without heeding Springall's words, "they are coming."

It was a fine sight to see even a small number of such well-disciplined soldiers winding their way under the shadow of the hill nearest the scene of so many adventures.

Roupall and the youth crept stealthily down the cliff by a secret path; then, with the greatest deliberation, Jack struck a light, and prepared to fire the train they had connected with those within the nest, to which we alluded at the commencement of our narrative; while Springall proceeded to perform a similar task a little lower down the Crag, towards the window from whence the preacher, Fleetword, slung the packet which so fortunately arrived at the place of its destination.

The instant their purpose was effected by a signal agreed upon between them they quickly withdrew, and sheltered beneath the shade of a huge rock left bare by the receding tide, where no injury could befall them. It was well they did so, for in a moment the report as of a thousand cannon thundered through the air, and fragments of clay, rock, and shingle fell, thick as hail, and heavy as millstones, all around.

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Immediately after a piercing cry for aid burst upon their ear, and spread over land and water.

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed Springall, "it is not possible that any human creature could have been within the place!" and he stretched himself forward, and looked up to where the cry was uttered.

The young man, whose locks were then light as the golden beams of the sun, and whose step was as free as that of the mountain roe, lived to be very old, and his hair grew white, and his free step crippled, before death claimed his subject; he was moreover one acquainted in after years with much strife and toil, and earned honour, and wealth, and distinction; but often has he declared that never had he witnessed any thing which so appalled his soul as the sight he beheld on that remembered morning. He seized Roupall's arm with convulsive energy, and dragged him forward, heedless of the storm of clay and stones that was still pelting around them. Wherever the train had fired, the crag had been thrown out; and as there were but few combustibles within its holes, and the gay sunlight had shorn the flames of their brightness, the objects that struck the gaze of the lookers on were the dark hollows vomiting forth columns of black and noisome smoke, streaked with a murky red.

As the fire made its way according to the direction of the meandering powder, which Dalton himself had laid in case of surprise, the earth above reeled, and shook, and sent forth groans, like those of troubled nature when a rude earthquake bursts asunder what the Almighty united with such matchless skill. The lower train that Springall fired had cast forth, amongst rocks and stones, the mass of clay in which was the loophole through which Fleetword had looked out upon

the wide sea. Within the chasm thus created was the figure of a living man. He stood there with uplifted hands, lacking courage to advance; for beneath, the wreathed smoke and dim hot fume of the consuming fire told him of certain death; unable to retreat,—for the insidious flame had already destroyed the door which Roupall had failed to move, and danced, like a fiend at play with destruction, from rafter to rafter, and beam to beam, of the devoted place.

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"Ha!" exclaimed the reckless rover, with a calmness which at the moment made his young companion upbraid him as the most merciless of human kind; "ha! I wonder how he got there? I heard that some how or other he was in limbo at Cecil Place; he wanted to make an escape, I suppose, and so took to the old earth. Ay, ay! look your last on the bright sun, that's laughing at man and man's doings—you'll never mount to where it shines, I trow."

Sir Willmott Burrell—for Roupall had not been deceived either as to the identity of the person, or the motive which led him to seek refuge in the Gull's Nest—had effected an almost miraculous escape, considering how closely he was guarded, a few hours before, and secreted himself in the very chamber where he had left poor Fleetword to starvation, little imagining that he was standing on the threshold of retributive justice. He had caught at flight, even so far, as a sort of reprieve; and was forming plans of future villany at the very moment the train was fired. God have mercy on all sinners! it is fearful to be cut off without time for repentance. Sir Willmott had none. In the flower of manhood, with a vigorous body and a skilful mind, he had delighted in evil, and panted for the destruction of his fellows. His face, upon which the glare of the garish fire danced in derision of his agony, was distorted, and terrible to look upon: brief as was the space allotted to him, each moment seemed a year of torture. As the flames rose and encircled their victim, his cries were so dreadful, that Springall pressed his hands to his ears, and buried his face in the sand; but Roupall looked on to the last, thinking aloud his own rude but energetic thoughts.

"Ah! you do not pray, as I have seen some do! Now, there come the Ironsides," he added, as those grave soldiers drew up on a projection of the opposite cliff, which, though lower than the ruined Gull's Nest, commanded a view of the cavern and its sole inmate; "there they come, and just in time to see your departure for your father the devil's land. You don't even die game! What an end one of those Ingy chiefs would ha' made of it on such a funeral pile; but some people have no feeling—no pride—no care for what looks well!"

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At that instant the Preacher Fleetword, who had accompanied the troops, stood a little in advance of the Protector himself. Cromwell had a curiosity to inspect the resort of the Buccaneers; and, perfectly unconscious of Sir Willmott's escape, was petrified with horror and astonishment on seeing him under such appalling circumstances; the tumbling crags—the blazing fire—the dense smoke mounting like pillars of blackness into the clear and happy morning sky—and, above all, the agonised scorching figure of the wretched knight, writhing in the last throes of mortal agony!

"The Lord have mercy on his soul!" exclaimed Fleetword: "Pray, pray!" he continued, elevating his voice, and hoping, with a kindness of feeling which Sir Willmott had little right to expect, that he might be instrumental in directing the wretched man's attention to a future state. "Pray! death is before you, and you cannot wrestle with it! Pray! even at the eleventh hour! Pray!—and we will pray with you!"

The Preacher uncovered: the Protector and his soldiers stood also bareheaded on the cliff. But not upon the prayers of brave and honest soldiers was the spirit of active villany and cowardly vice to ascend to the judgment seat of the Almighty—before one word of supplication was spoken, a column of flame enwreathed the remaining portion of the crag: it was of such exceeding brightness that the soldiers blinked thereat; and, when its glare was past, they looked upon a smouldering heap at the foot of the cliffs: it was the only monument of "The Gull's Nest Crag;" and the half-consumed body of Sir Willmott Burrell was crushed beneath it.

While the attention of Cromwell and his friends was fixed upon the desperate end of the miserable man, Roupall was crawling under a ledge of black rock, that stretched to a considerable distance into the sea, where he calculated on remaining safe until high tide drove him to another burrow. Not so Springall: the moment he saw the Protector on the cliff, he appeared to have forgotten every thing connected with disguise or flight; he no longer sought concealment, but hastened to present himself in front of the soldiers, who still remained uncovered, expecting, doubtless, that such an event would be followed by exposition or prayer.

Nothing daunted, he advanced with a steady and determined step, without so much as removing his hat, until he stood directly opposite to Cromwell, whose countenance, under the influence of awe and horror, had something in it more than usually terrific. The clear blue eye of the young intrepid boy encountered the grey, worn, and bloodshot orb of the great and extraordinary man.

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For an instant, a most brief instant, eye rested upon eye—then the young seaman's dropped, and it would seem that his gay and lofty head bent of itself, the hat was respectfully removed, and he confessed to himself that he trembled in the presence of the mysterious being.

"We would not quench the spirit," said the Protector, addressing Fleetword, "but let your prayer be short—a word in season is better than a sermon out of season. We have somewhat to investigate touching the incendiaries by land as well as sea."

For the first time in his life Springall considered that a prayer might not be of wearisome length. There he stood, as if nailed to the same spot, while the smoke of the Gull's Nest ascended, and

the soldiers remained with their helmets in their hands.

Cromwell manifested an occasional impatience, but only by moving first on one leg, then on the other; which, however, escaped the observation of Fleetword, who most certainly became a more dignified and self-important person ever after the hour when he was "permitted to speak in the presence of the ruler in the New Jerusalem."

His address was brief and emphatic; and upon its conclusion the Protector commanded Springall to advance.

"It appears to us that you had something to communicate."

"I believe I made a mistake," replied the boy, "I took you—your Highness, I should say—for one Major Wellmore."

"We know you to be a faithful watchman, but it remains to be proved if you are an honest witness. Canst tell how came about this business, and how Sir Willmott Burrell escaped, and took refuge there?"

"It was always settled, please your Highness, that, if any thing happened, whoever could was to fire off the trains, which were always ready laid, to make an ending when needed: we little thought that there was any living being within the nest; but Sir Willmott had access to many of the cells, being as deep in their secrets as other resorters to this place—only he never had the bravery of the free trade about him, seeing he was far from honest." [427]

Springall observed not the warning finger of Robin Hays, nor heard the murmured sentence of caution that fell upon his ear from the lips of Walter Cecil. Although he had assumed an attitude of daring, his whole thoughts were fixed on the Protector. He was proceeding in the same strain, when Cromwell interrupted him.

"Peace, youngster! it is ill from one who has committed evil, like yourself, to speak evil of the living, much less the dead;—it was you, we take it, who reduced this place to destruction?"

"Please your Highness, I did."

"You and another?"

"Well, sir, there was another: but he's gone—no use in trying to find him, he's away. If," added the young man, with his usual recklessness, "there should be punishment for destroying a wasp's nest, your Highness shall see that I will bear it as well as—"

The Protector again interrupted the youth's eloquence by adding, "As well as you did the hanging over yonder bay? No, no—we can discriminate, by God's blessing, between the young of the plundering fox and the cub of a lion: both are destructive, but the one is mean and cowardly: the other—it shall be our care to train the other to nobler purposes."

Springall raised his eyes, almost for the first time, from the ground, and started at seeing his friends standing on a level with the Protector. Robin's cheek was blanched, and his ken wandered over the blazing gulf which had swallowed up the dwelling of his early years.

Springall, with the quickness of feeling that passes from kind heart to kind heart, without the aid of words, sprang towards him, and catching his arm, exclaimed,

"Your mother's body! it is safe, safe, Robin, under the dark tree, by the cairn stones. Surely I would not let it be so destroyed."

Cromwell's veneration for his own mother was one of the most beautiful traits in his character; from that instant the Protector of England took the boy Springall unto his heart: there was something in common between them—out of such slight events are destinies moulded. [428]

"Your Highness," said Walter, whom we must now distinguish as WALTER CECIL, "will pardon one who is indebted to you, not only for a restored fortune, but for his hopes of happiness. Your Highness will, I trust, pardon me for so soon becoming a suitor:—that boy—"

"Shall be cared for—it pleased the Almighty that Major Wellmore encountered more than one brave heart and trusty hand in this same Isle of Shepey. After a time we trust to show you and your cousin-bride, when she visits her god-mother, how highly we esteem your friendship; and we trust, moreover, that the awful lesson of retributive justice, it has graciously pleased the Lord to write in palpable letters of fire, will be remembered by all those who hear of Hugh Dalton and the Fire-fly. Great as is the power given into our keeping, we would not have dared to execute such awful judgment as that which has fallen upon the man of many sins. And behold, also, by the hands of the ungodly righteous punishment has been dealt unto the sticks and stones that have long given to rapine most unworthy shelter. The wheat, too, mark ye, young sir!—the wheat has been divided—glory be to God! for it is his doing. The wheat has been divided from the tares—and from amid the lawless and the guilty have come forth some who may yet take seats among the faithful in Israel."

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

Twelve years—twelve eventful years—had passed, and, ere our work is done, we must entreat our readers to visit with us, once again, the old Isle of Shepey. The thoughtless, good-tempered, dissipated, extravagant, ungrateful, unprincipled Charles, had been called by the sedate, thinking, and moral people of England to reign over them. But with English whim, or English wisdom, we have at present nought to do; we leave abler and stronger heads to determine, when reviewing the page of history, whether we are or are not a most change-loving people—lovers of change for the sake of change.

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Our business is with an aged man, seated, on a pleasant evening of the year 1668, under a noble oak, whose spreading branches shadowed a brook that babbled at his feet.

The beams of the setting sun were deepening the yellow tints of yet early autumn, and many of the trees looked as if steeped in liquid gold. In the distance, the ocean, quiet, calm, unruffled, was sleeping beneath the sober sky, and not a breeze wafted its murmurs to the little streamlet by the side of which that old man sat. He was but one of a group; four healthy and handsome children crowded around him, watching, with all the intense hope and anxiety of that happy age, the progress of his work. He was occupied, as grandfathers often are, in constructing a toy for his grandchildren. The prettiest of the party was a dark-eyed rosy girl of about four, perhaps five—for her countenance had more intelligence than generally belongs to either age, while her figure was slight and small, small enough for a child not numbering more than three years: she, too, was employed—stitching, with a long awkward needle, something which looked very like the sail of a baby-boat. A boy, somewhat older than herself, was twisting tow into cordage, while the eldest, the man of the family, issued his directions, or rather his commands, to both, in the customary style of lads when overlooking their juniors. The next to him was probably grandpapa's especial pet, for he knelt at the old man's knee, watching patiently, and taking good note, how he secured the principal mast steadily in the centre of the mimic vessel, it had been his kind task to frame for the youngsters' amusement.

It must not be forgotten that a very pretty spaniel crouched at the little maid's feet, and ever and anon lifted its mild gentle eyes to the countenance of its mistress.

"Con," said the eldest boy, "you are making those stitches as long as your own little fingers; and you must remember, that if the work is not done neatly, the wind may get into the turnings and throw the ship on her beam-ends."

"Grandfather!" exclaimed the child, holding up her work with an imploring look, "be those stitches too long? If you say so, grandfather, I will take them all out, because you know."

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"They will do very nicely indeed, Conny," replied the old man, with an approving smile; "and as for you, Master Walter, I wish that your work was always done as well as your sister's. Bless her! how like her mother she is!"

"I wish I was like my mother too," said Walter, "for then you would love me."

"Boys and girl, I love you all, and thank God that, in these bad times, you are as good as you are! But, Watty, you must never think of the sea; you were not intended for a sailor, or you would not talk of wind getting into the stitchings of a topsail, and throwing the ship on her beam-ends—ha, ha!"

The proud boy turned blushing away, and began playing with, or rather teasing, a very old nondescript dog, who was lying comfortably coiled up on the youngest lad's pinafore, under shelter of the grey stone which the grandfather used as his seat.

"Wat will be a soldier," said the second boy, whose name was Hugh; "his godpapa, Sir Walter, says he shall. But you will teach me to be a sailor before you die, and then I may live to be as great as the great man you and father talk about, the brave Blake. Oh! how proud I should be if you could live to see that day," he continued, his bright eyes dancing at the anticipation of future glory. "And you may, dear grandfather, for mother says that Crisp is older now for a dog than you are for a man. Watty, you had better not tease Crisp, for he has three teeth left."

"Three!" interrupted little Con, whose fine name of Constantia had been diminished to the familiar appellation—"three! he has four and a half and a little piece, for I opened his mout and counted them myself."

"When do you mean to speak plain, and be a lady, Miss Con?"

The child looked into her brother's face, and laughed a gleesome laugh, one of those burstings of a joyous heart that come, we know not how, but never come after the dancing pulse of youth changes into a measured time, when we look upon the dial's hand, and note that hours are passing.

"Grandfather," said Hugh, when the mast was fairly established, and the rigging properly arranged, "may I call my vessel the 'Firefly?'"

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From whence came the rich warm blood that in a moment suffused the old man's cheek, as his unconscious grandchild pronounced the name of his darling, his long-lost, but not forgotten ship? He grasped the boy's arm with the energy of former times, and shook him as he never thought to have shaken the child of his own Barbara.

"Where heard you those words—where, I say?" he demanded of his namesake, while the boy

cowered, and the other children stood aghast.

"I heard that wild old man who died in our barn last week, although mother made him so comfortable, and you and father were so kind to him, say that was the name of a ship you once had," sobbed little Hugh: "and I only thought I should like to call mine after it."

"And was that indeed all?" inquired the aged Buccaneer, relaxing his grasp, but still looking into the boy's ingenuous countenance, as if he expected some evil tidings.

"It was all that I understood," replied the child, now weeping from pain and terror, "except that I remember he asked to be buried at [East-Church](#), because that was nearer what he called the Gull's Nest Crag than the old church of Minster."

"Poor Jack!—poor Jack Roupall!" exclaimed Dalton, forgetting his momentary displeasure, and musing aloud upon the end of his ever reckless follower—"Poor Jack! The nut *had* been good, fresh, sweet, wholesome, though the rind was rough and bitter; it was the canker that destroyed it: and I should have been as bad—as blighted—lost—but for my own sweet child." And then Hugh Dalton's eye fell upon the pouting boy, whose arm he had, in the anguish of his remembrance, pressed too roughly, and he caught him to his bosom, and blessed him with all his heart and soul.

Little Con crept round, and, seeing where her brother's arm was still red, held it to her grandfather's lip, saying,

"Kiss, kiss it, and make it well."

The old man did as that child in her simplicity directed; and, when she again looked upon it, there was more than one tear glistening on the fair firm flesh.

"Let us call her 'King Charles,'" exclaimed the eldest boy, as the gallant little vessel moved down the stream; while the children, who not ten minutes before were trembling with alarm at their grandfather's displeasure, now, with the happy versatility of youthful spirits, shouted gaily at the ship's progress over the unrippled waters. [432]

"You will call it by no such name," said Dalton gravely. "Yonder comes your mother, and she or your father can best christen your little ship."

The old man, who had launched their fairy boat, turned towards where once Cecil Place had stood. From some peculiar feeling in the bosoms of Sir Walter and Lady Cecil, for which it would not be difficult to account, only a portion of the old structure remained—sufficient, and just sufficient, to lodge Robin, and Robin's wife, and Robin's father-in-law, and Robin's children. The fine old gateway was fast crumbling to decay, and, indeed, it was well known that a kindly sentiment towards the Buccaneer decided Sir Walter on keeping even so much of the place standing, as the old man's only wish now was to die in the Isle of Shepey; and it will be readily believed that Hugh Dalton's wishes were laws to the family of Cecil. The trees had in many places been levelled, and the only spot which remained perfectly untouched in the gardens was one called "The Fairy Ring." The neighbouring peasantry believed that it was hallowed by some remembrance of which both Lady Cecil and Barbara partook; for the latter tended every herb and flower therein with more than common care—with perfect devotion. Did we say there was but one spot cherished? faithless historians that we are! there was another—a rustic temple; and, about ten years before the period of which we now treat, something resembling an altar had been erected therein, with a quaint device carved in white stone, a braid of hair encircling two hearts, and a rhyme, or, as it was then called, a posy, the words of which are not recorded, but were said to have been written by Lucy Hutchinson, as a compliment to her friend Constantia Cecil.

The old man, as we have said, turned towards Cecil Place, which then presented only the appearance of a small and picturesque dwelling. Issuing thence were two persons whom we may at once introduce as the manikin, Robin Hays, and the little Puritan, Barbara Iverk, of our story. Manikin, indeed! He of the gay pink doublet, silken hose, and plume hat, would little thank us for the term! He was rather over than under-dressed, more fine than might be expected in a country gentleman in so lonely an island; but it was evident he loved finery, and loved to deck his own person: his long black hair curled naturally and gracefully over his shoulders; his eyes had more to do, during latter years, with love and home, than with hate and adventure; consequently they sparkled with pure and kindly feeling; and if sometimes sarcasm lighted its beacon within their lids, it was quickly extinguished by the devoted affection and gratitude of his right excellent heart. His figure appeared much less disproportioned than when first we saw him taunted into fury in his mother's hostelry by poor Jack Roupall's ill-timed jests on his deformity: he was much stouter; and the full cavalier dress was better calculated to hide any defects of person, than the tight fitting vests of the bygone Roundheads, who looked to every inch of cloth with a carefulness altogether scouted by their more heedless successors. He had a free and open air, and a smile of dazzling brightness. What can we say of Barbara? Female beauty is seldom stationary; there is no use in disguising the fact, that after twenty—dear, sweet, fascinating twenty! the freshness of the rose is gone. We have said freshness—*not* fragrance. Fragrance to the rose, is what the soul is to the body—an imperishable essence, that lasts after the petals have meekly dropped, one by one, upon their mother-earth. A blessing upon the fragrance of sweet flowers! and a thousand blessings upon the power that gifted their leaves with such a dowry! Oh, it partakes of heaven to walk into the pastures and inhale the goodness of the Lord, from the myriad field-flowers that gem the earth with beauty! And then in sickness! What, what is so refreshing as the perfume of sweet plants? We speak not of the glazed and costly things that come from foreign lands, but of the English nosegay—(how we love the homely word!)—the sweet briar, lavender, cowslip, violet, [433]

lily of the valley, or a sprig of meadow sweet, a branch of myrtle, a tuft of primroses, or handful of wild thyme! Such near the couch of sickness are worth a host of powdered doctors! Again we say, a blessing on sweet flowers! And now for one who loved them well, and learnt much wisdom "from every leaf that clothed her native hills." Barbara was no longer the slight, delicate girl, tripping with an orderly but light step to do the behests of those she loved; but a sober, diligent, affectionate matron, zealous in the discharge of her duty, patient in supporting pain, whether of mind or body; a sincere Christian, a kind mistress, a gentle daughter, a wise mother, but, above all, a devoted, trusting wife, still looking upon Robin—her Robin, as the English Solomon,—a system we advise all wives to follow—when they can. The manner in which this truly pious woman yielded to all her husband's whims was almost marvellous—one of the miracles of that miracle-worker—LOVE! With the simple, yet discriminating tact, of itself a gift from nature, which no earthly power can either bestow or teach, she understood the wishes of Robin almost before he was himself acquainted with his own thoughts. And had she been on her death-bed, that excellent creature could have declared before Him, to whom all things are known, that "God and her husband" had been her true heart's motto.

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Even Robin's weaknesses were hallowed, if not cherished things—she innocently catered to his personal vanity, for she really loved to see him well appointed; and she avoided every thing bordering on gaiety of dress, manner, or society, because she felt that jealousy was one of his infirmities; thus by never arousing his evil passions, their very existence was forgotten, and the violent, capricious Ranger would have been hardly recognized (except by his very intimates), as the self-satisfied, and somewhat important manager of Sir Walter Cecil's estates.

As Robin and Barbara drew near their father and the children, they perceived a Cavalier well mounted, and attended by two serving men, also on horseback, winding along the hill path, or road, as it was called; and the younger dog—by the way a daughter of our old acquaintance Blanche—gave notice to the little mariners of the approach, by bristling her silken hair and rounding her flapping ears, while she barked long and loudly at the unusual arrival.

The Buccaneer shaded his eyes with his hand and looked out. Robin jerked his hat a little more on one side, while Barbara drew the Flanders lace of her silken hood more closely round her face.

"It is a Court Cavalier," exclaimed *Master Hays*, as he was respectfully termed by his associates, "with two attendants and a dog; beshrew me! but a noble dog from foreign parts; some friend of our kind master is that gentleman. One would think he was reconnoitring, so earnestly does he look out from place to place. Father," he continued, drawing towards Dalton, "do you note how he peers out yonder, towards where once—you understand me——"

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"I do," replied the old man, "I do note it; and I note also that yon same Cavalier is no other than one we both knew well. There! he sees us—his hat is off—he hails us right joyfully. Know you not the bold brow, and the bright eye—blue, blue as the waters and the heavens he has so long looked upon? Off with ye'r hats, my boys," he added to the children; "and, Robin, is yours nailed to your head, that it answers not his signal?—it is the young sea captain of whom, even here, we have heard and read so much. It is Springall!"

And so it was; distinguished by the Protector at the very moment when to be so distinguished makes a man's fortune, the bold intrepid boy quickly ripened into the able and experienced seaman. His promotion was rapid, because his talents were appreciated—and, after the death of Cromwell, he had been too much occupied with England's enemies at sea, to suffer from the moral blight of Charles's court on shore.

"Now, Springall—I love to call you by that name," said the Buccaneer, "though you have taken your old one, and made it even more honoured than it was before,—the evening has closed in—the children a-bed—God bless them! We will draw nearer round our cheerful hearth, and talk of days long gone. Barbara, let's have some fresh logs on the fire; and now, for past and present times."

"I am a bad hand at a long yarn—you know I always was so, captain,"—said the naval officer, smiling, "and the news of poor Jack's death has damped my canvass. I always thought he'd make a queer end of it—so fond of plunder—so careless—so unprincipled—but brave, brave to the backbone."

"Do you remember what he dared, by way of adventure, not a hundred miles from this; when Major Wellmore and Walter De Guerre were masquing it here so gaily?" inquired Robin.

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"Ay, ay! But he and Grimstone were both half-seas over, or they'd have hardly ventured it:—poor Grim paid the penalty."

"And deserved it too," added Robin. "He whom they assaulted was a wonder—a being that will serve future ages to talk about, when the rulers of the present day are either execrated or forgotten. Marry! but it makes one's head swim to think of the warm blood and true that has been spilled and wasted to raise up a throne for obscenity and folly! Chambering and wantonness walk together as twin-born, along the very halls where Cromwell, and Ireton, and Milton, and—my head's too hot to recollect their names; but they are graven on my heart, as men who made England a Queen among the nations."

"Then their Popery plots!" chimed in the Buccaneer; "the innocent blood that has flooded the scaffold, as if the earth was thirsty for it—and upon what grounds? the evidence, I hear, of one villain, supported by the evidence of another! I grieve for one thing, truly—that I was ever instrumental in forwarding the King's views. Robin said a true word in jest the other day, that men as well as puppies were born blind, only it takes a much longer period to open our eyes, than those of our four-footed friends."

"So it does," said Springall, laughing; "that was one of Robin's wise sayings. Barbara!—I beg your pardon,—Mistress Hays—do you think him as wise as ever?"

"I always thought him wise; but I know it now," she replied, smiling.

"Sit ye down, Barbara," said Robin, "and our friend here will tell you how much he admires our children; they are fine, healthy, and, though I say it, handsome—straight withal—straight as Robin Hood's own arrow; and I do bless God for that—for that especially! I would rather have seen them dead at my feet than—"

"Now, God forgive you, Rob! so would not I. I should have loved them as well, had they been crooked as—" interrupted his wife.

"Their father!"

"For shame, Robin!"

Robin looked at Barbara and laughed, but turned away his head; and then he looked a second time, and saw that a deep red hue had mounted to his wife's cheek, while a tear stood in her eye; and he forgot the stranger's presence, and converted the tear to a gentle satisfied smile, by a kind and affectionate kiss. How little tenderness, how little, how very little, does it take to constitute the happiness of a simple mind! [437]

"There was a strange long preacher here, ages ago," inquired Springall, filling his silver cup with sherris; "he surely did not migrate with the higher powers?"

"No!" replied Dalton, whose eyes had been fixed upon the burning logs, as if recapitulating the events of former days; "he was a staunch and true-hearted Puritan, apt to take wrong notions in tow, and desperately bitter against Papistry, which same bitterness is a log I never could read, seeing that the best all sects can accomplish is to act up to the belief they have. But, as I have said, he was true-hearted, and never recovered the tale we heard, as to the way in which the new directors insulted the remains of one whom they trembled even to look at in his lifetime. He died off, sir, like an autumn breeze, chilly and weak, but praying, and thankful that God was so good as to remove him from the blight of the Philistines, who covered the earth as thickly as the locusts overspread the land of Egypt."

"I never did, nor ever can believe," said Robin, "it was permitted that such cravens should insult the body of so great a soul. The Protector wished to be buried on the field of Naseby, and something tells me he had his wish."

"Your politics changed as well as mine!" replied the sea-captain; "what cavaliers we were in the days of our youth—heh, Commandant!"

"It is very odd, Springall," replied the old Skipper; "but somehow, my heart is too full for words; I seem to be living my life over again; and but now could have sworn I saw poor Sir Robert, as I saw him last, clutching those dreaded papers. What a night that was, and what a day the next!"

"And the poor Lady Zillah, when she heard of Sir Willmott's end!" said Barbara. "She spoke no word, she made no scream; but her trouble came quickly, and hard and bitter it was; and the child her hope rested on breathed no breath—there was no heir to the house of Burrell; and she and her father passed from the land, and were seen no more."

"Seen no more, certainly; but many were the jewels and costly the tings she sent from foreign parts to my lady's firstborn," continued Robin. [438]

"And to me she sent baubles,—not baubles either," added Barbara, "but things too costly for one in my state. Her last gift was the most precious in my sight—a gold cross, and along the top these words—'Thy God shall be my God;' and down the centre—'Thy people my people!' It gave me great consolation; it was like a token of resignation and peace, and a wonderful working of God's providence." And after she had so said, she went out of the room, to conceal the emotion she always felt when speaking of the Jewish lady.

"So it was undoubtedly," rejoined Robin, who had not noted Barbara's departure.

"Despite your bravery, Master," said the seaman, "I think you have got a touch of the past times yourself; I have not heard the breath of an oath from either?"

"Hush!" replied Robin, looking round the room, and right pleased to find that Barbara was absent: "were it only to avoid giving her pain, it would ill become either of us to blaspheme Him in whom we trust."

"And so you say," commenced Dalton, uniting the thread of the discourse, which had been broken, "that Sir Walter and Lady Cecil are seldom seen at court? I heard this before, but not for certain."

"Seldom, you may well say," returned Springall; "the king presented Lady Castlemaine to the Lady Constantia, at one of the drawing-rooms; and our right noble dame declared it was the last she would ever attend. It was said that the king spoke to Sir Walter about it; and I think it likely, as he knew him abroad so well. And Sir Walter was even more high on the matter than his lady had been; and the king jested, and said it was only the court fashion; to which Sir Walter returned for answer, that, however it might be the court fashion, it was scarce courtly to present an immodest to a modest woman. With that the king chafed, and said he supposed Lady Constantia's friendship for Dame Frances Russell was stronger than her loyalty, for she regarded Cromwell's daughter, both as RICH and RUSSELL, more than she did his favour. And Sir Walter, making a low bow, replied that Lady Constantia had little thought to displease her king by her attachment to a lady who had once been honoured by the offer of his hand. Upon which the king bit his lip, turned upon his heel, and spoke no farther word to Sir Walter Cecil."

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"Good! good! good!" exclaimed Robin with manifest delight, chuckling and rubbing his hands, "that was good! How it warms my heart when an honest subject speaks to a king as man to man, feeling he has no cause to dread his frown or court his smile. Brave! brave, Sir Walter! There is a moral dignity, a fearlessness in truth, that makes one not tread—not tread, mind ye, but spurn the earth he walks upon. If we would not be of the earth, earthy, but of the heavens, heavenly, we must be independent in thought and action! Brave, brave Sir Walter!"

"Master Robin," said the captain, looking earnestly in his countenance, and half-inclined to smile at his enthusiasm—"Master Robin, *that's* not the court fashion."

"D—n the court!" shouted the Ranger; then suddenly checking himself, he added, turning to his wife, whose return he had not heeded,—"I beg your pardon, my dear Barbara,—it was his fault, not mine. Nay, I have said nothing half so wicked this long, long time. Come, tell me, did you see Sir Walter's children, Captain? Oliver, he is the first-born, a noble boy? Then,—I forget their names; but I know there is neither a Herbert nor a Robert among them. Alas! there are good reasons why it should so be. I think Richard Cromwell stood godfather to the eldest."

"Richard Cromwell!" repeated Springall, in a tone of contempt.

"He was wise, though; he felt that he had not his father's talents, consequently could not maintain his father's power," observed Robin.

"Master Hays," inquired Springall, wisely avoiding any topic likely to excite political difference, "you are an oracle, and can tell me what has become of my worthy friend, that most excellent compounder of confections, Solomon Grundy?"

"Poor Solomon!" replied Robin, "he accompanied the family after Sir Robert's death,—which was lingering enough, to set forth more brightly the virtues of both daughter and nephew,—to London, and was choked by devouring too hastily a French prawn! Poor Solomon! it was as natural for him so to die as for a soldier to fall on the field of battle."

"So it was," replied the seaman; "but having discussed the events and the persons with whom we had most to do in past years, let us, before entering on other subjects, fill a bumper to the health of my long cherished, and, despite his faults, my trusty beloved friend—the OLD BUCCANEER! Much has he occupied my thoughts, and it joys me to find him, and leave him, where an old man ought to be—in the bosom of his true and beautiful family. We have all faults," continued the officer, somewhat moved by the good sherris and his own good feeling—"for it's a well-written log that has no blots; but hang it, as I said before, I never could spin a yarn like my friend Robin here, either from the wheel, which I mean to typify the head—or the distaff, which, be it understood, signifies the heart: So here goes—" and, with a trembling hand, and a sparkling eye, the generous Springall drained the deep tankard, to the health of his first sea friend.

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"It is not seemly in woman to drink of strong waters or glowing wine," said Barbara, whose tearful eyes rested upon the time-worn features of her father: "but, God knows, my heart is often so full of grateful thanks, that I lack words to speak my happiness; and I have need of constant watchfulness to prevent the creature from occupying the place of the Creator. My father has sometimes hours of bitterness, yet I bless God he is not as a brand consumed in the burning, but rather as gold purified and cleansed by that which devoureth our impurities, but maketh great that which deserveth greatness. As to Robin—"

"Don't turn me into a fable, wife!" exclaimed Robin, playfully interrupting her:—"I am, in my own proper person, an Æsop as it is. There has been enough of all this for to-night: we will but pledge another cup to the health of Sir Walter, the Lady Constance, and their children—and then to bed; and may all sleep well whose hearts are innocent as yours, Barbara! and I hope I may add without presumption, purified as mine. You see, Springall, the earth that nourishes the rose may in time partake of its fragrance."

THE END.

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TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

Every effort has been made to replicate this text as faithfully as possible, including obsolete and variant spellings, and inconsistent hyphenation. Obvious typographical errors in punctuation have been fixed. Corrections [in brackets] in the text are noted below:

title page caption:

carved chair, which he leaned over pulpit-fashion, was seen the lean, lanky figure of [Fleetwood\[Fleetword\]](#).

page 13: added missing quote

"In mine!" ejaculated the Baronet with well-feigned astonishment; [\["\]](#)you mistake, good Dalton, I have no interest at

page 15: added missing quote

her goodness to my child! Remember," he added, closing the door, [\["\]](#)remember--one month, and Hugh Dalton!"

page 41: typo fixed

around me grows darker each fair day I live. A bunch of violets was given me this morning; their [fragance\[fragrance\]](#) was delicious, yet I could not discern the little yellow germ that I

page 46: typo fixed

"Nor I either," thought Lady Frances: "but, [barbara.\[Barbara\]](#) you might think--or--or--see perhaps----"

page 57: spurious quote removed

"Robin![\["\]](#) I came not here to talk of cormorants and gulls; I want to ask you a question, and I expect an honest

page 65: typo fixed

"Then who is she?" he demanded; "I'll not stir in it [uness\[unless\]](#) I know all."

page 77: typo fixed

used to be a safe place enough; but now that Sir Michael [Livesay\[Livesey\]](#)--regicide that he is!--abides so continually at Little

page 77: spurious quote removed

"Pshaw, Robin! but is he indeed so red-nosed?[\["\]](#) You have often seen him, Captain."

page 80: typo fixed

The Reverend Jonas [Fleetwood\[Fleetword\]](#) had set forth from the sole desire of "beholding him who was anointed with the oil of

page 92: typo fixed

"Walter De Guerre!--an English [christian\[Christian\]](#) wedded to a French surname!--'tis strange, but let it pass, let it pass:

page 95: typo fixed

"I thank you for your bounty, sir; but at present I feel inclined to sheathe, not draw my [swoad\[sword\]](#)."

page 101: typo fixed

he had declared himself quite recovered, did she return to her station on the low [fofa\[sofa\]](#), beside her friend Lady Frances

page 110: spurious quote removed

that, if the Rabbi would look, he would observe the hair and eyes to be much lighter.[\["\]](#)

page 121: typo fixed

"I did hope, sir, that you would have left Cecil Place before this; Sir [Wilmott\[Willmott\]](#) Burrell will, I am certain, arrive

page 131: typo fixed

she had observed both characters [narrowy\[narrowly\]](#), and was perfectly convinced of Burrell's worthlessness. She could

page 139: spurious quote removed

feature, as it were, bursting with indignation, she looked like a youthful priestess denouncing vengeance on a sinful world.[\["\]](#)

page 142: added missing quote

"And you will be happy; or if not, you will not curse him who has wrought your misery?[\["\]](#)

page 156: added missing quote

"Touch her not,[\["\]](#) exclaimed Burrell, the brutality of his vile nature fully awakened at perceiving Walter attempt to

page 166: typo fixed

breathe the air of this polluted nest," argued Dalton, all the father

~~overflowing~~ at his heart; "if we delay, Burrell may see

page 174: typo fixed

Hugh was prevented from finishing his sentence by the sudden entrance of Sir ~~Wilmott~~ Burrell, who appeared in the

page 176: typo fixed

They had not gone three steps on their path when Sir ~~Willmott's~~ voice arrested their progress.

page 180: typo fixed

had not spent a day beneath the roof ~~were~~ he was now a prisoner; that she had been any thing but worthy of the

page 180: typo fixed

eyes upon the young Cavalier, who, when perfectly awake, perceived that his ~~visiter~~ was dressed and armed as usual.

page 181: added missing quote

~~"~~Lady Frances, I dare say, has," persisted Walter: "light o' lip, light o' sleep."

page 188: added missing quote

~~"~~We must not so mingle profane and sacred things," murmured Fleetword, placing his forefinger upon the tempting

page 189: typo fixed

"What! spoil my garnishing!" exclaimed Grundy~~"~~ "look at the frosting of that horn, and the device, the two doves--see'st

page 192: typo fixed

sudden her lady wanted her to get some flowers, and she had only time to throw on her cardinal and run for them~~"~~."

page 203: typo fixed

Buccaneer and Sir ~~Wilmott~~ Burrell; merely observing that it had the effect of chafing both in no ordinary degree.

page 237: typo fixed

for minstrelsy was not the fashion; and he almost began to ~~thing~~ the disguise he had selected was an injudicious one.

page 238: spurious quote removed

~~"~~The old man shuddered, and said in an agitated voice--"Then, indeed, you will not do for me on this occasion."

page 255: spurious quote removed

and faithfulness must be a plant of forced and not of natural growth.~~"~~

page 277: added missing quote

or other; but you, my Lord," he added, pointedly, ~~"~~will have no difficulty in finding him out."

page 296: typo fixed

"Sit down, my good sir; compose ~~yourelf~~--you are much agitated--I pray you be composed."

page 330: typo fixed

engaged, and the garden free from ~~visiters~~. He looked from the window; it was one of the loveliest days of summer--a

page 338: added missing quote

"Do but bury *that!*" said Robin: ~~"~~I would stay and do it, but that I must to the Nest at once."

page 341: added missing period

down in the dingle, and the beast is driving up the fold as if he were a man~~"~~."

page 354: added missing quote

~~"~~Then Barbara, whose blood was streaming from her wound, sprang to my bosom--sweet girl!--and hung, as I thought,

page 355: added missing quote

~~"~~I carried her round the chapel, and sank with her into the vault, where I had been concealed--that which contains the

page 360: duplicate word removed

didn't pray more, going that length of road, than you, and I, and all the ~~the~~ crew of the Fire-fly put together, have prayed

page 367: spurious quote removed

clanked against each other impatient of moisture--"Mother, take but little~~"~~ for you have need of prayer; that will stifle

page 368: added comma
the hair from my ears, that I may hear distinctly. Did you mean, young woman[,] that
Sir Robert was distraught--mad?"

page 394: typo fixed
effects of terror and astonishment, looked like the [sybil\[sibyl\]](#) whose spells and orgies
have distracted nature by some terrible convulsion.

page 414: typo fixed
"Sir [Willmot\[Willmott\]](#) Burrell," said Dalton, walking to where he stood, beaten down
and trampled, yet full of poison as an

page 419: typo fixed
Frances tripped with a light step on her [inquisiitive\[inquisitive\]](#) mission: "I will now go
to my father's chamber;" and thither she went,

page 421: spurious quote removed
and the maid Barbara. Well, girls have queer fancies!--Who'd ha' thought she'd ha'
fancied Robin?["]--though he's a brave sound-hearted little fellow; yet who'd ha'
thought

page 430: added missing quote
"They will do very nicely indeed, Conny," replied the old man, with an approving smile;
["]and as for you, Master Walter,

page 431: typo fixed
asked to be buried at [East-church\[East-Church\]](#), because that was nearer what he
called the Gull's Nest Crag

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