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by Moyle Sherer**

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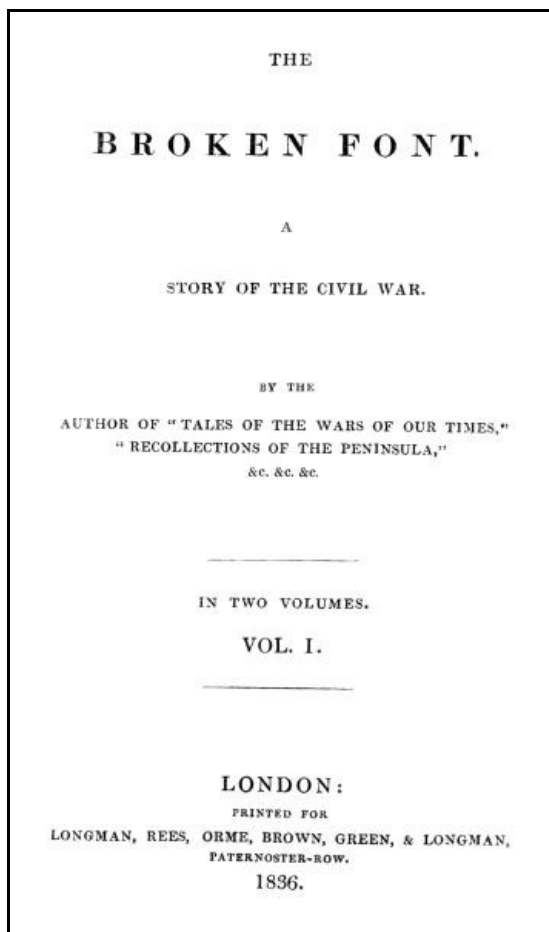
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Release date: July 20, 2013 [EBook #43261]

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BROKEN FONT: A STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR,
VOL. 1 (OF 2) ***



THE BROKEN FONT.

A

STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR.

**BY THE
AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE WARS OF OUR TIMES,"
"RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PENINSULA,"**

&c. &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1836.

LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

PREFACE.

It is impossible to read or meditate concerning that period of history in which the scene and action of my tale are laid without partaking of the feelings of both parties in that great quarrel, and "being (in an innocent sense) on both sides."

In such a spirit has my story been conceived and written. Until the sword was drawn, the more generous and constitutional Royalists were separated by but a faint line from the best and most patriotic men of the Parliament party.

I have, however, confined myself more particularly to the contemplation of those miseries and violent acts of persecution which the appeal to arms brought upon many private families, and especially upon those of the clergy.

In the contrivance of such a fiction, it became necessary to introduce pictures of fanaticism and hypocrisy, and to describe scenes of cruelty and of low interested persecution; but such parts of the story must not be considered separately from the rest. The general tenor of my volumes will, I trust, be found in strict consistency with that charity that "thinketh no evil," but "hopeth all things."

THE BROKEN FONT.

CHAPTER I.

Thus till man end, his vanities goe round,
In credit here, and there discredited;
Striving to binde, and never to be bound;
To governe God, and not bee governed:

Which is the cause his life is thus confused,
In his corruption, by these arts abused.

LORD BROOKE.

It was the early afternoon of a fine open day in the last week of April, in the year 1640. The sun shone warm; not a breath of wind was stirring the tender foliage of the tall trees, or the delicate flower of the lowly harebell beneath the hedge-rows. All was still, save that at intervals the voice of the cuckoo was heard—loud, but yet mellow—from the bosom of a neighbouring wood. The swains in the field lay stretched in the shade, as though summer were already come: in gardens and court-yards not a sound of labour or a clatter of life disturbed the silence of the hour.

In a shady alcove, which looked out on the bowling alley of Milverton House, sate the worthy old master of the mansion, with one leg crossed over the other, a book upon his knee, and a kindly smile playing across his manly features. Not far distant, upon the steps which led up to the near end of a stately terrace, was seated a fair little girl, about six years of age. A thick laurel protected her with its shadow; and it might be seen by the paper in her hand, by the motion of her lips, and by the sway of her little head and neck, that she was committing some task to memory, with that pleasure that makes a pastime even out of a lesson. Out on the smooth green an old flap-mouthed hound, whose hunting days were long past, lay basking in the sun, among the dispersed bowls, which the last players had idly neglected to put away; and with them a boy's bow and arrow had been left, or forgotten, on the ground. The child's murmur was lower than the soft coo from the dove-cote, or the gentle music of the fountain; and there was a hush of quiet about all these whispers of created life that was in harmony with the general silence.

The shadow of the dial had crept on nearly half an hour before this repose was broken. It was so at last, by a hot boy of fourteen, with vest unbuttoned, and without a hat, who came to seek his bow and arrow. The glad cry of "I have found them!" dispelled the silence: the little girl thrust her paper into her bosom, and jumped up at the sound of the welcome voice; and the old man looked up, and, putting his book down on the seat beside him, scolded the noble boy for having left the bowls out to be scorched and injured by the sun.

With no abatement of good humour, the cheerful boy, eagerly helped by the little girl, gathered them up, and carried them into the bowl-house. The old hound was too much accustomed to the thing even to stir for it, though one of the bowls almost touched his nose.

This duty done, the boy, upon whose mind one thing lay uppermost, with that abruptness which belongs to nature and to boyhood, propounded to his great-uncle, Sir Oliver Heywood, the following most startling question:—

"Was it not, sir, a very wicked thing to cut off Mr. Prynne's ears?"

Had it suddenly thundered the old knight could not have been more surprised; and, if a wasp had stung him in a tender place, he could not have been less pleased.

"Master Prynne! what do you know about Master Prynne, you foolish boy?"

"O, I know—I know very well! they cut off his ears because he didn't like plays; and that was very cruel! What a shame it would be to cut off the ears of old Josh. Cross, that takes care of your hawks, because he didn't like to hear Stephen play upon the fiddle!"

"Why, Arthur, what has come to you, boy? who has been teaching you this nonsense? If Master Prynne had lost his head, instead of his ears, it would be no more than he deserved, and I hope he may live to own it."

At this rebuke the boy coloured, and hung his head; but added, as if pleading for his fault,—

"It was Master Noble said so; and you know, sir, you have told us all to mind what he says, for he is always in the right."

Sir Oliver bade him hastily go play; and the boy, taking his little niece by the hand, they ran out of the bowling-green at one angle, while the good old knight, not a little discomposed by the incident, ascended slowly to the terrace. Here he found old Philip, the keeper of the buttery, seated at the far end, in the shade, in the calm enjoyment of a pipe. Instead of the wonted word of pleasant greeting, Sir Oliver told him, in a rough tone, to go and seek instantly for Master Noble, and send him thither.

While the kind old serving man went away with his message in no comfortable mood—for the young tutor was as great a favourite in kitchen as in hall—the old gentleman paced the terrace with a leisurely and thoughtful step; and made frequent stops and soliloquies on the strange and unexpected words and sentiments which he had just heard from the lips of his open and artless boy. While thus engaged, we will leave him for a few moments to place before our reader the state of the family at the time of which we write.

At the village of Milverton, in Warwickshire, upon a sweet spot above the valley of the Avon, Sir Oliver Heywood, the descendant of a successful and honoured merchant, occupied a fair and pleasant mansion erected in the reign of Elizabeth by his wealthy father.

The family at Milverton House consisted of the worthy knight, a maiden sister, his daughter—an only child—and a boy who was the son of a favourite nephew slain in the German wars, in which he had been led to engage as a diversion of his grief on the loss of a beloved wife.

In addition to these regular members of the family there was a little orphan girl, whom his benevolent sister had adopted. This sister, Mistress Alice, was two years the junior of Sir Oliver, and had attained the age of sixty-one. She had taken up her abode with him at the death of Lady Heywood, about four years before the period of which we now speak.

Katharine, his daughter, was in her twentieth year, and his nephew's son was about fourteen years of age.

Master Noble, of whom mention has been made, was tutor to the boy Arthur, and resided with the family.

This young scholar was the son of an old school-fellow and friend of Sir Oliver's, who held the benefice of Cheddar, in Somersetshire. Cuthbert Noble, like his father before him, had been educated at William of Wykeham's school of Winchester; but not succeeding so far as to obtain a fellowship at New College, Oxford, which is the usual aim and reward of the scholars upon the Winchester foundation, he had proceeded to

Cambridge, and there graduated with good report. He had been now six months at Milverton.

Sir Oliver's birthday was ever a high festival at the manor-house. This year it was the pleasure of his daughter to celebrate it by a masque; and all the arrangements for this masque were referred by Mistress Katharine to Cuthbert Noble. He cheerfully undertook them; and having gained some experience in these matters at college, and having some skill in painting, set himself to prepare scenes—then a very recent invention. As, with a painting brush in his hand, he was standing before a scene, nearly finished, and dashing in the white and foamy water upon canvass, that was fast changing into a torrent, falling from rocks, and rushing through a lonely glen,—and as he stood back surveying the effect, and humming the fragment of a song, Philip came slowly up the gallery, and said gravely,—

“Master Cuthbert, Sir Oliver wants to speak with you directly.”

“Where is he?”

“In the garden, on the lower terrace; and I wish he was looking more pleasant:—it's my thought, Master, there's something wrong; for it is not a small matter that can vex him.”

Cuthbert put down his brush and palette, and proceeded slowly towards the terrace. As he was descending the wide steps which led to it, he could not but observe that the good knight was serious, if not angry.

“Master Cuthbert,” said Sir Oliver with an air of gravity and displeasure, “I have sent for you to hear from your own lips some little explanation or defence of a matter that hath come to my knowledge by the accident of a child's artless utterance. It may be that it was only a word lightly dropped by you—a passing levity—a lapsus of the tongue, not of the judgment—such an indiscretion as I may pass over in one of your unripe age and little experience, without further correction than a faithful reproof, and a timely warning of the danger of such vain observations, and of their unsuitableness and impropriety in one who fills so important an office in my family, and hath so far enjoyed my confidence as to have doubtless a great influence for evil or for good.”

This long preface Sir Oliver delivered, pacing slowly on the terrace with his eyes bent upon the ground. Cuthbert walked by his side, anxious for the direct charge, now too plainly whispered from within by his own swift thoughts.

Sir Oliver paused, and, looking full and steadily upon the serious countenance of the youthful tutor, demanded of him whether it were true that he had said publicly before any of his family or household, that it was a barbarous and cruel thing to cut off Master Prynne's ears?

“I certainly so expressed myself,” was the calm answer of Cuthbert.

“Where and to whom did you thus speak?”

“It was in the library—the lady Alice was present, and Master Arthur was there at his lesson.”

“And are these the lessons that you teach in my house and to my children?—know you, sir, that Master Prynne is a traitor—that he speaketh evil of dignities, and soweth disloyalty—that he is a hypocrite and a fanatic?”

“Sir Oliver,” said Cuthbert, “there was no discourse upon this matter, save only the one remark of which you question me:—this fell from my heart when your good sister read out some news of him—and thereupon the lady Alice went forth without a word; for I presume not to intrude my poor thoughts of court affairs upon any one in this house. I know my place better.”

“Life of me! Thou dost not confess thy fault—thou dost not say thy pœnitent for teaching this false lesson to my child!”

“I would not be slow to speak out my sorrow and shame if I felt them, but I am conscience-whole in this thing,—and my few words did give no other lesson than one of plain humanity.”

“Master Cuthbert, I do believe thee a true and gentle youth, of best intentions, and thou comest of a good stock. Thy father is my good friend from the gladsome days when we were school-fellows together at St. Mary, Winton; and where hath church or state a better parson or better subject than he? therefore, I would for his sake, as for thine own, entreat thee mildly. Youth is warm and tender, and wanting a far sight to the great end of punishment—the axe might rust and the scourge gather cobwebs before hearts like thine would give rogues their due.”

“I am of sterner stuff, Sir Oliver, than to wish a rogue safe from the beadle, or a traitor from the headsman; but I am not so taught as to think the mistakes of a severe piety treasons deserving of torture.”

“Odd's life! I see how it is—thou art bitten by these gloomy fanatics—the venom is in thy veins:—well for me that I have seen its first workings. By my fathers! these new papists, these worse Carthusians, would drive sunshine from the earth, and kill the flowers, and stop the singing of birds, and give us a world of rock and clouds—hard as their stony hearts, and gloomy as their cold minds! Master Cuthbert, we must part. I'll not have the path of my boy shadowed over before it be God's will. The earth is green and goodly, and pleasant to the eyes; and long may his heart rejoice in it, as mine has before him. Look you, we must part.”

“At your pleasure I came, Sir Oliver, and I am ready, at your pleasure, to return to my father's. My stay with you has been short, and I would fain hope that I have not failed in my duty to you. May you be more fortunate in your choice of a tutor for Master Arthur than you have been in me!”

Cuthbert spoke these words with so much self-command that not one syllable trembled in the utterance; yet the tone was at once mournful and resolved.

The better feelings of Sir Oliver were touched: the expression of his eye showed plainly that he was repenting of his hastiness, relenting in his decision. What his reply might have been, may, in its spirit, be easily imagined; but a sudden interruption checked the words that were rising to his lips; and a sounder and more prudential reason for desiring the departure of Cuthbert was presented to his judgment than any objection which could have been urged at that time, with any semblance of fairness, against his errors as a churchman, or his sins as a subject.

“Master Noble,” called a rich clear voice from above them,—“Master Noble, we poor players do wait your pleasure, and are ready with our parts; but we cannot go on with our rehearsal till the manager doth come to us.” Looking up, Sir Oliver saw his daughter leaning over the balustrade, with a paper in one hand, and a tall

wand wreathed with flowers in the other; and, as he turned his eyes upon Cuthbert Noble, the strong emotions with which Cuthbert was evidently struggling did not escape his observation.

"I have business with him just now, Kate," said her father: "go thy way. He shall come to thee in the hall anon." But as he spoke, the boy Arthur came down the steps, leading in his hand the little girl; and, running up to Cuthbert with joyous eagerness, cried out, "Kitten can do her part—she can say every word quite perfect—you must hear her." With that, the little girl letting go his hand, and putting back her sunny curls, which had fallen over her blue eyes, repeated, with an air of sweet intelligence and pretty innocence, these lines:—

"I do childhood represent,
Listen to my argument:
Mine the magic power to bring
Pleasure out of every thing;
Sunbeams, flowers, and summer air,
Music, wonders, visions fair,
All my happy steps attend;
Mine is peace without an end;—
All things are at peace with me,
Beast in field, and bird on tree;
The sheep that lie upon the grass
Never stir as I do pass;
If by the singing bird I stray,
He never quits his chosen spray;
If to the squirrel's haunt I go,
He comes with curious eye below;
Earth and I are full of love,
I fear no harm from Heav'n above,
For there, as here, all things do tell
A Father God doth surely dwell:—
O! could I be a child alway,
How happy were life's holyday!"

The countenance of Sir Oliver recovered all its wonted expression of good humour, as the child prettily recited these lines; and patting her on the head, as she concluded, he turned to Cuthbert and said, in his usual kind tone, "We will talk our matter over another time: I see that you are no joy-killer, and would never mar an innocent pleasure-making—I was ever fond of a good play—a pox on these prick-eared knaves that would forbid them!

"'Why kings and emperors have taen delight
To make experience of their wits in plays,'

as Master Kyd hath it, in his Spanish tragedy."

Cuthbert said nothing; but having a recollection of the passage from which Sir Oliver had quoted, thought he might have found a more comfortable sanction and a much better authority.

"But, prithee," continued Sir Oliver, "whose rhymes be these that the child has just spoken?"

"They are my poor doggerel," answered Cuthbert; "for this dear child would give me no rest till I made a part for her in the Birthday Masque."

"Marry," rejoined the knight, "the fancy of them pleaseth me, and for the verse I care not."

They all now turned to ascend the steps; and as they did so, apparent at the same instant to both Sir Oliver and Cuthbert was Mistress Katharine, leaning over the balustrade of the upper terrace, with an air of grave and perplexed curiosity.

As soon as they reached the top, which was level with the lawn in front of the mansion, Katharine caught Kitten in her arms, kissed her fair brow, and ran with her towards the house; the happy child calling out the while, "Come along, Master Noble, pray, come," and at the same time clapping together her two little hands at thought of the coming pleasure.

CHAP. II.

"White, I dare not say good, witches (for woe be to him
that calleth evil good!) heal those that are hurt, and help them
to lost goods.

"Methinks she should bewitch to herself a golden mine, at
least good meat, and whole clothes."

FULLER'S *Profane State*.

While a select few among the maidens and the serving men, who were, to their great contentment, to figure beneath strange dresses and uncouth vizards in the antimasque, and while some neighbouring gentles of quality, who were to take part in the masque itself, were rehearsing in the hall, old Philip, the butler, betook himself to the outer gate, and there sitting down on the porter's stone, replenished his pipe, and fell a-thinking about Sir Oliver and Master Noble. But the more he thought, the more he was puzzled; and so he opened his vest to catch the breeze from the valley, and smoked with half-closed eyes, too much accustomed to the glorious scene before him to be always moved by its beauties. Below him, in the rich bottom of the vale, flowed the shining Avon. The white foam of the water at Guy's mill might be seen, and the rush of it might be almost heard.

The cliff of the renowned Guy presented a fine scarp of stone, the summit of which was overhung with knotted and rude shrubs of a fantastic growth; and far away to the left, at a distance of two miles, might be seen the lordly towers, and the tall and ivied wall of Warwick Castle. Such were the objects, which might, we say, have been discerned from the spot where old Philip sate, together with broad and pleasant meadows, well stocked with kine and sheep, and many goodly trees of a stately size, and many a distant coppice of rich underwood. Doubtless the old man had often felt the glad influence of that scene,—but now, overcome with heat, tobacco, and the labour of perplexed guesses about the grave mood of his master, he fell fast asleep. Philip was one of those good faithful old creatures whose world was his master's, and whose greatest sin was the love of victual. This sin was duly punished by black dreams; and now, as he lay snoring against the wall, his indulgence over a rich mutton pie at dinner was visited with the terrors of one of those nightmare visions with which he was deservedly familiar. He dreamed that it was the statute fair, and that they were roasting an ox whole in the market-place of Warwick. The frontlet of the poor beast was gaily gilded, and the horns were painted blue, and gilt at the tips. The mighty spit turned slowly round. On one side stood a fat cook basting the brown loins that the beast might not burn, and on the other a stout and expert carver occasionally stopped the rude spit, and with a long broad knife detached savoury portions for the greedy by-standers, who, on receiving the same, dropped their penny of thanks into the cap of the carver, and, slipping out of the crowd, made way for others. Dreams are to the dreamer realities. Philip's mouth watered: he thought he had never before seen beef so delicious; fat and lean in their exact proportions; the meat of the finest grain, juicy, and full of gravy; but then his suit, his badge, his pride of place, forbade his wishes: partake of the dainty he could not, but he might go near, just out of curiosity, and for mere amusement. Lo and behold! with an angry bellow forth leaped the furious beast, his eyes all fire, the spit point issuing from his foaming mouth, his carcass smoking and dripping, and half the sirloins cut away. He singled old Philip from the crowd; he lowered his blue and gilded horns; he shook the spit between his grinning teeth; and as he made his rush, old Philip died a thousand deaths in one, and woke into another world,—that other he had so shortly quitted. Nor was the object on which his waking eyes first rested exactly calculated to compose his terrors. A crowd of noisy clowns was standing round him; and in the midst of them, upon a hurdle, they bore an old withered and bony woman, crooked and blear-eyed, who was counted the witch of that neighbourhood, and well known by the name of yellow Margery of the Sand Pit.

They set down the hurdle close at Philip's feet, and called loudly for justice and Sir Oliver. "Hag!"—"Crone!"—"Beldame!"—"To the faggot!"—"To the river,"—"Justice in the King's name!"—were the various cries by which the impatient rustics frightened all the household of Milverton from their propriety and their pleasures, and brought most of them forth to the gate, and the rest to the hall steps, or the casements. Sir Oliver himself came forth, among the first, loudly rating them. "Why, how now, ye rude varlets; is Milverton a pot-house, and the seat of justice an ale bench? Speak—what would you?—speak, you, Morton,—you should know better than to head a rabble rout of this fashion."

"Why then, troth, Sir Oliver, as thou art a worshipful knight, and a king's justice, not man, woman, nor child in the whole parish can sup their porridge in peace or sleep o' nights for this old witch Margery: we've crown witness enough to hang, drown, and burn her twenty times over."

"Not so fast, not so fast, neighbour," said Sir Oliver, seating himself on the stone from which old Philip had retired melting with fear. "Where are the witnesses, and what have they to say? Let them stand forth."

"First, here's Master Crumble, the clerk; then, afore him, here's Master Screw, the great witch-finder from Coventry; and here's Jock, my carter; and old Blow, the blacksmith, and Pollard, your worship's woodman."

"Stop, stop, I can't hear all at once,—say thy say, Crumble."

"Why, your worship, my sow—your worship, my sow is dead: all of a sudden, this blessed morn, as I poured out her wash, down she lay all in the shivers; and if the poor dumb creature had been her own flesh and blood, my old woman could not ha' taken on more. Says I, directly, 'This is a bit of Margery's work; for I see her brush the old sow with her black petticoat at the lane end, Sunday was a week.' It's quite a plain case you see, Sir Oliver."

"Stand back, you silly man."

"Silly, forsooth. I am thirty-seven year clerk of the parish, come next Lammas, and I say it's writ on the Bible, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.'"

"That is true enough—it is so; but how do you know a witch?"

"Why, I know that a man's not a witch."

"That is true, thou art a man and no witch. But how dost thou know one?"

"Why, it is an old woman, not to say any one, but a crook back, with a hooked nose, and a peaked chin like Margery."

"Master Crumble, I have done with thee, and in the matter of thy sow's death do acquit Margery."

"That's not crown law, nor Gospel charity," said the old clerk, as he stepped back into the crowd, who muttered and whispered among each other till the next witness spoke out. This was the witch-finder.

"Please your worship, I am ready to make oath that she hath a familiar, always about her in the shape of a brown mouse; for I have seen it crawling about her neck, and playing and feeding in her hand."

Here there was a mixed utterance of triumph and horror in the crowd, and Sir Oliver himself looked

grave.

"What dost thou answer to this, Margery?"

"They say true in that they say I have a tame mouse; and haven't court ladies their monkeys, and their parrots, and their squirrels, and their white mice,—and why mayn't an old lone woman have her pet as well as they?" As thus she spoke, she held out her open hand, and a lively brown mouse sat up quietly on the palm seemingly quite tame. There was a slight shudder ran through the veins of all present; and Cuthbert Noble, fearing lest this mode of defence might rather hinder than help her, went up to advise her better.

"A warm blessing on you, Master Noble,—the blessing of one whom you have saved before, and are trying to save again."

Here Cuthbert stopped her, and observed to Sir Oliver aloud, that this mouse was but such a pet as a shepherd's boy might play with, and that the old woman, whose ways were odd, had once told him that when she was a child and her little brother died, she had taken to a field mouse which he had petted, and that she had ever since as one died procured another.

The worthy knight was now for discharging Margery; but Farmer Morton insisted that they should hear his carter's story. Accordingly Jock stepped forward, and smoothing down his hair said,—“Please your worship, I lost my best startups (high shoes) the day before last cattle fair, and precious mad I was; and Sukey Sly told me if I went to old Margery, and took her a wheaten loaf, and crossed her palm with a silver penny, she'd tell me where to find 'em. Well, I went, and the old woman said she didn't want to have aught to say to me. 'Look ye,' says I, 'Margery, here I be, here's the bread and here's the money: I ha' lost my startups, and you must tell me where to find them; and I wo'n't budge till you do.' So with that she puts her mouse down against the loaf, and finely he nibbled away, and she set of a brown stud for a bit, and then told me to wait for the first full moon, and then, exactly at midnight, to walk backwards from the yard gate to the dung mixen, with my eyes fixed on the moon, and that I should find them on the mixen; but if it were before or after twelve o'clock, and if I looked behind me, or took my eyes off the moon, the charm would be broke, and I should never see my startups again; and sure enough I never have seen 'em.”

There was a little titter among the women; and Sukey Sly, whose legs were set off in a pair of new red stockings, could not suppress a laugh at Jock's story: but the clowns called out for justice, and Sir Oliver had much ado to pacify them. He did so at last, by assuring the old woman, that, on condition she told what was the great charm by which she was said to cure diseases, she should be set free.

“Cure diseases! God bless you, Master! why I'm a poor helpless old body, that can't cure myself, and should starve but for pity,” said Margery. “However, may be, once or so in a quarter there comes some wilful body like Jock, with a tied-up face, and makes a witch of me, whether or no, and will have the charm. Then I take his loaf and his money, and I say,—

“My loaf in my lap,
My penny in my purse;
Thou art never the better;
I'm never the worse.”

This confession was followed by laughter, in which most joined; and, except the clerk of the parish and the balked witch-finder, all dispersed in such good humour, that the poor old crone was released from her hurdle and her troublesome attendants, and, with a basket of broken meat and a bottle of ale, was suffered to hobble back to her hovel in the sand pit, without let or hinderance. It is true that Margery was most justly liable to the charge of imposture in the matter of Jock; and certain that, but for the easy and kind temper of the knight, and the good humour which her own quaint and jocular confession suddenly struck out of the wayward crowd, she might have been committed by Sir Oliver, or half drowned by the brutal and superstitious rustics on her road back to her miserable hovel. But as she lived at a lone spot on the far side of the Avon, and was not often seen in the parish of Milverton, and as the good knight (though by no means free from the prevalent belief in witchcraft, and still doubting whether under the form of a mouse she was not attended by an imp, as the witch-finder had averred,) was a timid magistrate, hated trouble, and sincerely feared doing what was either wrong in law or severe in punishment, he rejoiced to be well quit of the troublesome appeal. Nevertheless, he was not a little secretly disturbed, when, late in the evening, old Philip—in a fear which had not even yielded to the comforting warmth of a cup of spiced ale—related to him his comical dream, with manifold exaggerations, and expressed his stout belief that he had been possessed during his sleep by the evil influence of old Margery.

Truth to say, at the period of which we write such was the fear and hatred of those forlorn and miserable old women, whose unsightly features, infirm gait, and cross tempers, excited among their neighbours any suspicion that they held intercourse with evil spirits, and exercised the powers of witchcraft, as drove forth the unhappy beings to lonely abodes in solitary places. Here again, in the vicinity of some village, remote from the scene of their persecution, their very loneliness, all compelled and oppressive as it was, did most naturally subject them anew to the suspicions of fresh oppressors. So bloody, too, were the laws which at that time disgraced the statute book, having for their end the punishment of witchcraft, so cruel were the modes of trial among the mean and malignant persons who drove a lucrative trade as witch-finders, and so credulous was the ignorant and easily abused multitude, that, upon evidence far less colourable with guilt than that adduced against Margery, unfortunate persons of both sexes were publicly executed without shame and without pity. In numberless instances false confessions were extorted from the hopeless sufferers by torture, and adduced upon the day of trial, or proclaimed at the place of execution. Thus a rooted persuasion of the existence of sorcery and the practices of witchcraft was fixed in the minds of the vulgar, and even infected those of the better and the educated classes. As a natural consequence of this terrible superstition, some of the poor creatures suspected of witchcraft, who found themselves thrust out of the pale of human sympathy—avoided and shunned by some, beaten and set upon by others—did madden, and mumble curses in their gloomy solitude, and at last began to suspect themselves as the servants of unseen spirits, and the partakers of a supernatural power.

In the breast of Cuthbert Noble the vulgar and cruel prejudice concerning witchcraft had no place. His humane and enlightened father had very early instilled into his mind clear notions of the love and care of the great Father of the human families; of the sacredness of human life, indeed of all life, and of the holiness of creation;—and he had, moreover, taught him to regard all particular cases of severe and inexplicable suffering as parts only of one vast and mysterious whole, and subserving, in the great end and issue, some wise, holy, wonderful purpose of divine and universal love. He had taught him, too, that ours was a marred and fallen nature; and how and by what means, and in whose divine person, it actually was restored; and how all the sons of Adam had become capable, through divine mercy, of partaking all the benefits of that restoration of man's nature—in some degree even in this troubled and probationary state—in full and satisfying perfection in that state which is future and eternal. Hence, to the eye of Cuthbert, every one of human form was an object, though not perhaps of personal interest and affection, yet of wonder and of reverence, as a creature of God, born for immortality—an imperishable, an indestructible being; and, when the crimes and errors of his fellow-creatures stirred up his angry passions to punish and withstand them, the sense of his own weakness and his own sinfulness was ever waiting for him in his heart's closet, to rebuke and humble him in the calmness of solitude. But Cuthbert as yet had been little tried; he knew not what spirit he was of. He thought that his placid and firm father was the model which he surely followed; but the settled and peaceful joy of that amiable and benevolent and subdued father was as yet unknown to him.

However, the character and the life of Parson Noble will be the better understood and conceived of by transporting our reader to the village in Somersetshire where he dwelt, and where, had it been her good fortune to have been a parishioner of his, old Margery, in spite of her wild and withered aspect, might have lived unmolested and in peace with her neighbours, and would not have lacked such acquaintance with the mercy of the great Redeemer, as it is in the power of a mere human instrument to impart.

CHAP. III.

A branch of May we have brought you,
And at your door it stands;
It is but a sprout,
But it's well budded out,
By the work of our Lord's hands.

The hedges and trees they are so green,
As green as any leek;
Our heavenly Father he watereth them,
With his heavenly dew so sweet.

From the Mayer's Song.

The morning star glittered brightly above the fine old tower of Cheddar church, and the low parsonage lay still and asleep amid the flowers and the dewy grass plots of its pleasant garden, as advancing, from beneath the ancient yew in the churchyard, to the wicket opposite the good vicar's porch, a party of hale young rustics with coloured ribands in their hats and on their loose white sleeves, planted, on either side the entrance, a fine branch of white thorn in full blossom, and struck up, with full and cheerful voices, the very ancient medley from which the stanzas at the head of our present chapter are taken. They had not sung two verses before the door of the parsonage was opened by a merry looking old serving man—two lasses' heads were thrust from a window over the kitchen—the mistress's good humoured eyes were seen over a white chamber blind,—and the parson himself, with a face as expressive of joy as a child's, though marked with the furrows of seven-and-sixty years, came forth to the wicket in a loose morning gown, with a black scull-cap on his silvery hairs, and listened, with a motion of the lips, that showed his voice, though not audible, and his kind heart were attuned to theirs, and to the coming holyday. When their song was done, he dismissed them with his blessing, with the customary gift of silver, and with a caution to keep their festival with gladness and innocence, and with the love of brothers; letting the poor and aged fare the better for it.

"And let us have no brawls on the ale bench," said the old parson,—“let our May-pole be the rod of peace; so that none may rail at our sports and dances, but rather take note of us as merry folk and honest neighbours.”

With loud thanks, and lively promises, and rude invocations of Heaven's best gifts on him, and his lady, and his absent sons, the party now faced about, and with the accompaniment of pipe and tabor, and a couple of fiddles, moved off at a dancing pace to pay the like honours at the door of the chief franklin, and to deck the village street as they passed along.

Parson Noble now passed round to his favourite terrace walk, that overlooked a rich and extensive level, and taking up his lute, which lay in a little alcove at one end of it, he breathed out his morning hymn of thanksgiving, as was his wont, and thus composed, went into his study, and secluded himself for an hour from all interruption. At the close he again came into his garden, where he commonly laboured both for pleasure and health, every day of his life, in company with the attached old servant, who, for his quaint words and ways, had been long known to the village by the name of plain Peter,—an epithet, which, as it gave him credit for blunt honesty, as well as for a cast in his eye, he readily pardoned,—nay, some said he was proud of it;—for what manner of man is it that hath not a pride in something?

"Master," said Peter, putting down his rake as the parson came up the walk, "I have won a silver groat on your words this day."

"How so? what dost thou mean, Peter?"

"Why, last market day, when I was in the kitchen at the old Pack Horse at Axbridge, that vinegar-faced old hypocrite, Master Pynche, the staymaker, comes in, and asks me to bring out Betsy Blount's new stays.

"Says I, 'That I'll do for Betsy's sake,—a lass that hasn't her better for a good heart, or a pretty face, in all Somersetshire.'

"'Verily, Master Peter, I think,' said he, 'thy speech might have more respect to me, and more decency to the damsel, but thou savourest not of the things that be from above:—thou art of the earth, earthy.'

"'Why, for the matter of things above,' said I, 'Master Pynche, I don't pretend to any skill in moonshine; and as to being of the earth, that I don't deny, and thirsty earth too; with that I put to my lips the cup of ale that I had in hand, and drank it down.'

"'Is it not written,' he replied in a snuffling tone, 'that favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain?—but thou art a servant of Beelzebub, and thou speakest the words of thy master, and his works wilt thou do.'

"'In the name of plain Peter,' I added, 'herewith I proclaim you Prince of Fools, and I will send you a coloured coat, and a hood and bells, and thou shalt have a bauble, and a bladder of pease, and a licence to preach next April.'

"With that he lifted up his eyes and hands, and muttering something about pearls and swine, glided off like a ghost at cock crow."

"Peter," interrupted Noble, "thou shouldst not have said such things."

"Marry, did he not call me a servant of Beelzebub? the peevish old puritan!—Well, but to go on with my story. The folk in Dame Wattle's kitchen fell a discoursing after Pynche was gone; and some spake up after a fashion that made my hair stand up. Says a sturdy pedlar in the corner,—'Ay, they'll soon be uppermost, and the sooner the better; rot 'em, I don't like 'em, the godly rogues; but they are better than parsons, any way.'

"So with that I felt my blood come up, and I was going to speak, when old Hardy, the cobbler, took up his words, and says he, 'That's true of some, and it's true of our old Tossopot; but there's Peter's master, of Cheddar,—you may search the country far and near before you will find his like. I remember when my niece Sally lay dying, night and day, fair weather and foul, he would trudge through mire or snow to give her medicine for body as well as soul, and that's what I call a good parson.'"

"'A good puritan,' said Dame Wattle. 'I have heard of his sayings and doings, and trust me, he'll go with your parliament men, your down-church men: you'll never have any more May-games and Christmas gambols at Cheddar.'

"'There you're out, Dame,' said I, 'and don't know any more about Master Noble than a child unborn.'

"'A silver crown to a silver groat he'll give a long preachment against the May-pole next May-morning.'

"'Done with you, Dame,' said I.

"'You may lay a golden angel to a penny there will be no May-poles at all, if you make it May twelvemonth,' said the pedlar, 'without, indeed, there be such as have pikes at the end of them;' and with that he pulled out a printed paper, that he brought from London, and read out a long matter about the king and the bishops, and about church organs, and tithes, and play actors, and ship money, and Master Hampden; and made out, as plain as a pike staff, that there would be many a good buff coat and iron head piece taken down from the wall before long. 'We shall have a civil war soon, and God defend the right,' said he, as he folded up the paper and took up his pack.

"'Civil,' thought I, "that's a queer word. I have heard talk of civil people and civil speeches, but a civil blow from a battle-axe is a new thing. I'll tell master all about it when I get home, and axe what it means;—but as I was on the path in Nine Acres, whom should I meet but Master Blount, the young one, and he made me promise not to say a word to you before May-day was come, for fear the old sports might be hindered; and he told me that civil war meant war at home; for which I didn't think him much of a conjuror, as my guess had reached that far: and now, Master, prithee tell me what civil means."

"Peter, thou art an honest fellow, and as good a citizen as if thou knewest what it was called in Latin, and that a civil war was a war of citizens, but of a truth this is no matter for smiles; however, 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' This is no morning for a cloudy face."

"Well, then, here comes one, and the worst that darkens our doors. For my part, I can't bide the sight of it, 't would turn all the milk in the dairy."

The vicar looked over his hedge, and saw the curate of a parish with whom he was but slightly acquainted, walking across the last close, which led by a footway into his orchard. The apple-trees concealed Noble from his approaching visiter, who, just as he reached the gate of the orchard, overtook a little boy, about nine years of age, carrying in his hand a cluster of cowslips half as big as himself, and having a thick crown of field flowers round his straw hat.

With a severe scowl, he snatched the cowslips from the frightened child, and threw them away, and then made a gripe at his little hat; but, the boy drawing back with a blubbing cry, the zealous and tall curate, who had a little over-reached himself, slipped and fell prone upon the grass. This, however, was the lightest part of his misfortune; for it so chanced that his face came in full contact with a new-made rain-puddle, and he arose with his eyes half blinded, and his face covered and besmeared with mud. With the tears yet rolling down his red cheeks, the little fellow, as he saw himself avenged in a measure so contenting, and a manner so ridiculous, ran out of his reach, literally shrieking with laughter; and a hearty roar from old Peter at once completed his mortification, and determined his retreat. This soon became a maddened flight: for a sleeping dog roused by the noise of the laughter pursued him with angry barkings, from which, as he had no staff, and the grassy close could furnish no stone, there was no escape till the wearied animal paused and turned.

The whole of this scene was so very swiftly enacted, that Noble had no opportunity to say or do any thing in the matter; and charity itself could not suppress a smile at a punishment so well suited to the morosity which had led to it. Neither was he at all sorry to be relieved upon this festal day from the intrusive visit of a

sour, ill-instructed fanatic, whose opinions he could not value, and for whose character he felt no respect. He looked, therefore, with unmixed satisfaction at the laughing urchin, as he gathered up his scattered wealth, and departed.

Now merrily rang out the lively bells of Cheddar Tower; and already was every street a green alley, freshened by thick boughs, and made fragrant by small branches of white thorn neatly interwoven.

The house of the chief franklin, Mr. Blount, was more especially honoured. Before his door was planted the largest and fairest branch of May that could be found in a circuit of five good miles, and his hospitable porch was made a rich bower of shrubs and flowers. Beneath the tall trees in front of it was a little crowd of youths and maidens, in holyday trim, wearing garlands, with green rushes and strewing herbs in their arms, or aprons: full they were of smiles and glee; and, out on the road, all the village was assembled, save the infirm old and the cradled young; though, of these last, not a few were borne in their mothers' arms, or lifted up with honest pride in those of their brown fathers, whose burning toils a field were, for this joyous day, forgotten.

From the words passing in these expectant groups, a stranger might soon have gathered that something more than the common sport of May-day was engaging the honest and buzzing mob of men, women, and children, that blocked the street opposite this goodly mansion, and what that something was. "Better day better luck."—"A bonny bride is soon dressed."—"Honest men marry soon," said a black-eyed, nut-brown wife, with a lively babe in her arms, and two curly-headed little ones holding her apron,—and "Wise men not at all," added a gruff old blacksmith, with a seamed visage.—"Ah, it's no good kicking in fetters, Roger," rejoined the laughing wife, at the same time giving her infant into the horny hands of a stout young woodman, with a green doublet and a clean white collar, who held it up, kicking and shrieking with delight, as though it would spring out of his arms, and chimed in with "Ah, Master Roger, it's an ill house where the hen crows loudest."—"Ah, thou'lt find that some day, Stephen;" for this he got a heavy slap on his shoulder from the young wife, whose coming words were checked by the sound of fiddles, as the bridal procession came forth. "Dear heart," said she, "how pretty Bessy does look in that lilac gown with brave red guardings and the golden cawl on her fair hair, and what a beautiful lace rochet she has."—"Ah, fine feathers make fine birds," said a spinster standing near.—"He's a proper man is young Hargood, and should have known better than choose a wife by the eye."—"She had rather kiss than spin, I'll warrant."—"Better be half hanged than ill wed."—"You may know a fool by her finery."—"A precious stone should be well set," said the young wife, sharply, "and Bessy's blue eyes and her blushing cheeks are small matters to her ways and words." But envy and ill will were low-voiced, and confined to few, for old Blount and all his house were well loved by the people; and with many a word of cheerful greeting they made way for the party, and the most of them followed it to the church.

The procession was led by a few youths and maidens, with whom were all the musicians of the village; while others, walking immediately before the bride and her two bride maidens, strewed the ground, as they went, with rushes and herbs. The bridegroom, in a suit of violet-coloured cloth, guarded with velvet of the deepest crimson, and with a falling collar of worked linen, followed, supported by his bridesmen, in fit bravery of apparel; next came a group of relations, male and female, led by the old franklin himself, with his grave and comely wife, and the men and maids of his household brought up the rear of the procession. It was met at the churchyard gate by Parson Noble and his wife,—she joining old Mrs. Blount, and the good vicar, in his snowy surplice, taking place at the head of it, immediately between the herb-strewers and the bridal party; and now a gravity and silence succeeded, and in decency and order all entered the church, and proceeded with quiet steps to the altar. There, the sweet and solemn service, which binds together for "better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do part," was reverently and impressively performed by Noble, his own deep and mellow tones being only interrupted by the manly voice of the bridegroom, and the faltering accents of the shy and trembling bride, as they gave utterance to their heart's true and hallowed responses. No sooner was the ceremony ended than the bells, which had, for a while, been silent, struck out with the wedding peal; and as the new married couple came forth into the churchyard the air was rent with the joyous acclamations of the crowd without; and the procession returned in nearly the same order as it had left the house of the worthy franklin, only, according to the good custom of the time, the parson made one of the wedding party, and partook of the marriage feast.

Such of the old as could not walk abroad, stood leaning on staves, or sat dim-eyed on the stones before their doors, to see or hear the bridal train pass down; for each of these Parson Noble and the franklin had a kind word as they went by, returned by the benison and good wishes for the bride, who had herself no voice for any one, and, supported on her husband's arm, scarce saw her path through eyes that were filling from a happy bosom's overflow.

We shall not detain our reader by describing the dinner at Master Blount's; right plentiful was the cheer. Parson Noble said a grace in rhyme, out of old Tom Tusser's book of Husbandry, to the great contentment of his hospitable host, that being the one book by which, after his Bible, Blount squared his honest life.

"God sendeth and giveth both mouth and the meat,
And blesseth us all with his benefits great;
Then serve we the God, who so richly doth give,
Show love to our neighbours, and lay for to live."

This being the franklin's rule,—while his guests were feasted in the old oak parlour, at the back of the house; in the pleasant orchard, all his labourers were regaled with a hearty meal of meat and plum-porridge; and huge jacks of ale were emptied and replenished, to the health of bride and bridegroom and good master.

After due carvings of veal and bacon, unlacing of fat capons, and untrussing of great pies of fruit and other dainties, in the parlour, and after some mantling cups of wine drunk to the happy pair, the old people yielded to the impatience of the young, and all adjourned to Robin's Meadow, not, however, before they had sung, as the grace after meat, a short psalm of praise.

The meadow, in which from generations before the May-pole was raised, had a fine level sward, which Blount kept smooth as a bowling-ground for the dancers, while a part of it rose in swelling banks, shaded by

trees. These, though, as yet, but in early leaf, were gaily green, and contrasted well with the many-coloured and blushing wreaths of field-flowers that wound about the May-pole, at the top of which glittered a small crown, newly gilded in honour of the wedding, and further adorned with a few of the rarest plants which the gardens of Cheddar could produce.

A pleasure it was, as they passed into the meadow, to see the happy children rolling and tumbling and racing down the steep bank, from which they now scrambled away, to make room for the franklin's party, and for the elders of the village, who, from this grassy knoll, were wont to preside over the pastimes of this holyday. We give not this scene in detail:—the dances of the young, as, with light and elastic steps, they bounded to lively measures round the May-pole, and the nodding heads of the musicians keeping time with the dancers, and the races and gambols of the ruddy children, each reader may figure forth to his own fancy. Neither tell we of the pretty ceremonies with which the milk maids brought their cows, with horns all garlanded, into the adjoining close, and prepared and offered the delicious syllabub: our aim is only to give an outline of a village May-day of the times of which we write, and to show the good parson of the best school of that period mingling in mirth among his people. Leaving, therefore, the happy villagers to continue their sports till set of sun, we shall confine ourselves to the steps of the pastor, and complete the journal of his day.

As the chimes struck six o'clock, he quietly withdrew, and passed from the scenes of pleasure and feasting to those of sickness and of mourning. If he had regarded the former with complacent joy, he was not the less willing, nor the less prepared, to cheer the latter with those high contemplations and those tender sympathies to which, by faith, as a Christian, he could point, and which, in charity, as a man, he truly felt. Of the old, who were confined to their own thresholds, he found two or three cross and short, but most of them garrulous, and in good humour. They had got pleasant portions from the franklin, and they could tell of old May-days, and heard, with thankful nods and ready "ayes," and strong fetchings of the breath, that were not sighs of grief, the grave good words with which he taught them how only they could die in peace.

Of his flock only one lay at the point of death, and her he visited last.

She was the miller's daughter, and had been the May-queen of the bygone year. Sacred be such visit, in its most solemn communings! but we may paint the scene of it, and the trifles which belong to those sympathies of our humanity, that often survive the resigned hope of life.

In a tall chair, against the back of which she leaned her head, sate a pale maiden, warmly wrapped in a robe of white woollen, close to the small window of an upper chamber, on which the evening sun shone warm: curling honey-suckles did make a frame to it; and one rose, with an opening bud, peeped from the trained bush beneath. Upon a little table near her stood a fragrant branch of May in a cup of water. There were faint flushes in her transparent cheeks, and there was an unearthly brightness in her eyes—not fitful—but a calm, steady, serene ray, that, as the declining sun poured over the damsel its yellow glories, presented her to the thoughtful gazer such as she might be when treading the celestial courts above.

"And have you any other wish, my child?" said Noble, as he rose to go.

"Yes, if it be not too foolish."

"Tell it, my dear."

"I would like some flowers from the May-pole strewn on my winding-sheet, and a bit of rosemary from your own garden put in my hands."

"And you shall have them," said Noble, pressing her wan hand in his, and turning quick away.

CHAP. IV.

And if physitians in their art did see
In each disease there was some sparke divine,
Much more let us the hand of God confesse
In all these sufferings of our guiltinesse.

A Treatie of Warres.

Night closed on Cheddar, without any other disturbance than a quarrel—loud and short as a thunder-storm—between the blacksmith and his old termagant wife, which, Roger being potent in liquor, terminated in a complete victory on his part; and thus silence, if not peace, was restored to the quarter in which he dwelt.

Moreover, at the door of the Jolly Woodcutter, the most decent ale-house in the townlet, an old soldier with one leg, who tramped the country as a ballad-singer, with a fiddle and a dancing dog, became so very uproarious that it was found absolutely necessary by the parish constable to secure his one sturdy limb in the village stocks, where, after venting a few loud and angry curses at this dignitary, and abusing the village fiddlers for not playing the grand march of the king's beef-eaters to the right tune, he addressed himself to making as easy a sleeping posture as his wooden fetter would allow; and, being apparently very familiar with such a resting-place, soon grumbled off into snoring forgetfulness: his little four-footed companion and guard did meanwhile drag up the cloak, which he had dropped some yards from the place of his confinement, and, arranging it in a soft heap, curled itself thereon with an evident sense of comfort.

But May-day festivals—though certainly in towns, and in those parishes in the rural districts where not conducted by discreet persons, they were often fruitful in scenes of riot and licentiousness—were not, in the present instance, chargeable with either of the noisy incidents which had for a half hour frightened the village from its propriety; seeing that the disputes of Roger and his rib were of every-day occurrence, and his

potations also; and as for the old soldier, his drinking bouts were regulated by the state of that narrow poke in which he deposited his uncertain gains; and his sobriety was never secure while one coin remained in it.

Our parson came forth at the first glimpse of day on the morrow, to inquire at the mill how the poor sufferer had passed the night. She was in a profound and calm sleep, and he returned thankfully home, taking the street which led by the market cross. Nobody was yet abroad; but, under the great tree in the market place, he saw the old soldier sitting up in the stocks, and looking about him very forlorn and penitential. No sooner did he perceive the good vicar approaching, than he began to plead for his freedom.

"May it please your good reverence, make them loose me. I am not a pig, that I should be thus pounded:—never said or did harm to man or Christian, save only in the way of duty, your reverence. I am but a poor old toss-pike, done up in the wars; and gain an honest livelihood with this old kit and scraper, and this dumb creature, that shall dance you jig or coranto with any city madam of them all."

"Why, I'll see what I can do; but you would not have been put here for nothing, friend."

"Nothing in life, your reverence, but drinking the health of King Charles in a brimmer, last evening, that was May-day, and a court holyday all the world over; and then the wound in my old head always aches, Parson, and I say more nor I mean, and, may be, louder than your gentles talk."

"Well, but this is a sorry way of life for an old soldier,—to go about like a vagabond. Have you no home?"

"Home, bless you! none but this old bit of a cloak."

"What parish were you born in?"

"Ah! there it is! I was born i' the camp, in the Low Countries. That same day that the most noble Sir Philip Sidney was killed, my mother had a fright from a shot striking the sutler's waggon, and I came into the world a month before time."

"And have you no friends living?"

"None in the wide world that care a split straw whether I am above ground or under, this blessed day, save, may be, this little dumb thing that's used to me."

"Where did you lose your leg?"

"In the lines before St. Martin, your reverence: it will be thirteen years ago, come next September; and the right-worshipful knight, Sir Joseph Burroughs, was killed by the same shot. We used to say in hospital (you know, your reverence, we were vexed, and it was some of the officers, in their cups, spoke it out of a play-book,)—

"'Off with his head!—So much for Buckingham.'

"Well, they had their wish, in a manner, a year after; and I always minded after, that Master Felton was one of them.—Poor fellow! He gave me four-pence in silver, when I hadn't a halfpenny to buy bread in London; and that same morning I saw his Grace of Buckingham in a sedan chair in Whitehall, and I would have tossed my staff before him, in hope of a largess; but his running footmen, with their fine silver badges, shouldered me into the gutter, crying, 'Room for his Grace! room for my Lord's Grace!' Well, it was little room he took or wanted that day was a month! I was very sorry for Master Felton,—and I went to see him hanged."

"You know he was a *murderer*."

"O yes, I know that; but he gave me four-pence when I was starving; and, though he was only a lieutenant, he was a better officer than Buckingham, who was all lace and velvet, satin and feathers:—a likely man to look upon, and did not want courage; but he knew no more about commanding an army than the court fool."

"Don't you know, friend, that you must one day die yourself; and that it is a terrible thing to die and go before God without preparation?"

The veteran gave his buff jerkin a twitch, and said, "Why, for the matter of that, Parson, you see, I am no scholar, and cannot tell a B from a bull's foot."

"You believe in God?"

"Why, Master, haven't I lain half my life abroad in the open fields, with the stars shining over my head? Ah, you don't know what grand things come into a poor fellow's mind when he wakes in the night and sees them bright things above him."

"Yes, but I do," said Noble with emotion; "and it is because I do, that I ask you these things. Do you ever pray to God?"

"Why, bless you, Master, I wouldn't trouble him about a poor chopstick like myself."

"You know the name of Christ, friend?"

"Yes," said the homeless wanderer, and bowed his grey head.

"And what are your thoughts of him?"

"Why that he'll be so good as to speak a word to God Almighty for me," was the man's strange yet pregnant answer. It is this mixture of recklessness, ignorance, and the mysterious worship of that inner spirit, which struggles upwards after something to which the heart may reach, and where it may finally rest, that makes every human being a subject of sad yet of sublime contemplation;—a fellow, a brother, an immortal spirit, passing here below his brief time of sojourning, but born for eternity.

Our good vicar was a true messenger of peace:—we need not say more than that this and all such opportunities were gladly improved by him. He sowed beside all waters. In the present instance the old soldier was speedily released, and taken up to the parsonage, and there, in the shady porch, he had a hearty breakfast; and when the little household assembled for prayer the wondering wayfarer was brought into the hall, and heard the more excellent way very plainly set before him,—and was then suffered to depart with bread in his wallet, and a parting word of solemn warning and brotherly kindness, as he set forward on his path, carrying with him the new thought and feeling, that, though he was a ballad singer and a sot, accustomed only to revilings, he had found a man of God, who had not passed him by, but had served him, and soothed him, and cared for his soul.

Such a man and such a minister was our parson of Cheddar: he had been now resident in the parish for fifteen years. Hither he had then brought a sensible wife,—of many rare accomplishments, and of a solid piety. Three fine children then played in their garden: of these, their girl had been taken from them in her twelfth year; and their two boys, who had both attained the age of manhood, had quitted the paternal roof, and taken their respective paths in life. Cuthbert, the eldest, had been educated at Winchester College, had afterwards passed through his university course at Cambridge, and was now domiciled, as has been already seen, in the house of Sir Oliver Heywood, as a tutor.

Martin, the youngest, had been five years at Westminster School as a day scholar, under the care, during that period, of one Mr. Philips, a worshipful and wealthy gentleman, of the most honourable company of Goldsmiths, and brother to the late Sir John Philips, knight, a very eminent merchant in the Levant trade, who, having made an unsuccessful speculation, and losing his whole venture, had taken the failure of his fortunes so much to heart, that he sickened and died soon after, leaving behind him one portionless daughter. This girl, while under the roof of her uncle, who was very considerably the junior of her father in age, was seen and admired by Noble, and had soon become his welcome prize.

With this maternal uncle, Martin, at his own request, was placed, as soon as he quitted school, that he might be brought up in the same thriving business. He quickly became remarkable for his taste and skill in the art of design, and as a fine judge of precious stones, so that his uncle predicted for him great eminence and wealth in the line which he had chosen; but Martin chancing one day to wait upon Vandyck with an ornamental piece of plate which a nobleman presented to that great genius, and being questioned about the design, confessed, with some hesitation, that it was his own. Hereupon the painter broke out into praise so warm, and took such notice of the youth, that, to Martin, a painter did soon seem the highest style of man;—to be of this bright company was now the highest object of his ambition. He had a strong will; for this he rose early, and late took rest: and the bent of his inclination became so decided, and his promise of excellence so great, that his uncle, at the recommendation of Vandyck, determined to afford him the opportunity and advantage of visiting Italy, and pursuing his studies in the city of Rome. There, surrounded by the great models of the divine art to which he was devoted, daily extending his knowledge, and increasing his delight, Martin lived at once to labour and to enjoy.

But the absence of these dear boys, though necessary, was severely felt by Noble and his wife; nor, in those days, were communications by letter of regular or frequent occurrence, even at home,—and of course, from abroad, very rare and most uncertain.

The good vicar, though anxious about Martin's residence at Rome, was not wanting in true sympathy for his pursuits; having himself a taste for the arts, which he had improved by a leisure tour through Italy (before his marriage) as tutor and guardian to a young gentleman of large possessions in Oxfordshire.

Nothing could be more retired than the life led by these childless parents at Cheddar.

It is a large village, or townlet, situate at the foot of the Mendip Hills, in Somersetshire, and lying pleasantly sheltered on the south-west side of that bleak and naked chain. The noble tower of its fine old church is richly adorned with double buttresses, pinnacles, and pierced parapets, and in the open space, which forms the centre of its few irregular streets, is an ancient hexagonal market cross, where the wayfarer may find a shelter from the hot suns of July, or from the heavy rains of winter. The neighbourhood of Cheddar is romantic: it commands a fine view, in one direction, over a rich and extensive level; and it is immediately surrounded by rich, well-watered pastures, always verdant. Within a mile of the market cross before mentioned, on the road to Wells, there is a narrow, but a stupendous pass, or chasm, by which the chain of the lofty hills of Mendip is cleft, as it were, in sunder. The road winds through the bottom of this strange defile; the cliffs rise on either side—ragged, scarped, and terrific in their aspect—presenting, in many places, a sheer fall of four hundred feet. Nothing can more sublimely impress the spirit of a lonely traveller than the passage of this wild ravine, on a day of cloud, and gloom, and rushing winds. In the sunny calm of summer, when the wild pink, springing from the crevices of the rocks, adorns the scene with something of gentleness, it is still of uncommon grandeur. Black yews project from the larger fissures: here is a narrow ledge covered with verdure; there a thick mantle of ivy clothes the summit: here the mountain ash slants forward in its fantastic growth; while yet, in many places, the craggy front is naked and dazzling as a wall of stone.

By this road, once a week, the quiet parson ambled on an old grey horse to the fair city of Wells to refresh and recreate his spirit at a private music meeting in the Close; nor did he ever omit on these occasions to pass one hour of joy and praise in its magnificent cathedral. Upon the breezy summits of the Mendip hills, which bordered this road, he spent many serene and healthful hours. His life was most even in its tenour; and the scenes around him, though daily before his eyes, were as dear to him, or more so, than when, first entering on residence, he had surveyed them with grateful rapture.

Villages, however, like kingdoms, have their revolutions; and the chronicles of them are preserved in chimney-corners with more or less of fidelity, according to the interest of the events and the worth of the characters who figured in them.

These rustic historians have a mode of reckoning very different from citizens. With prime ministers they have nought to do. Their government is nearer to them, and they have never wanted wit enough to know when that was good or evil. Over these rural communities the ruler has, from time immemorial, been the lord of the manor, or the chief franklin, or the parson of the parish. According as these personages were disposed to promote religion and happiness, or to look with indifference on vice and misery, the rustic population was contented and cheerful, (because industrious in their callings, and peaceable in their lives,) or they were sullen and profligate. Under the joint reign of Franklin Blount and Parson Noble the inhabitants of Cheddar had long dwelt together in comfort and harmony; but this is a world of change,—and many things in the aspect of public affairs, of which the villagers heard and heeded little, gave serious warning to the prescient mind of Noble, that trouble was near.

He was so beloved and respected by his people, and so regarded and confided in by the worthy franklin, that he had hitherto been able to evade, counteract, or over-rule, for the good of his flock, those strange enactments which had been from time to time so inconsiderately imposed. That which enjoined him to *publish* the Book of Sports on the Sabbath-day he totally disregarded. On this point he would have consented to

deprivation rather than obey. Hence he became suspected, by some parsons of a very different stamp, for a puritan; and there were not wanting uncharitable surmises among these concerning the course which Master Noble would take in the hour of trial; not that those who really knew him well ever doubted of that course at all.

But while these surmises were, as regarded himself, utterly devoid of foundation, it was asserted by some of his friends at Wells, the correctness of whose judgments and the charity of whose sentiments well accorded with his own, that his son Cuthbert had imbibed, from his late associates at Cambridge, a spirit of a very dangerous nature. Cuthbert had a large philanthropy, and a resolute courage to sustain and act out those promptings of benevolence which his love of freedom was continually urging upon his mind. Virtuous in his character, sanguine in his hopes, present evils he saw, and for present remedies he panted—but he looked not far on to consequences. A notion of his state of mind may be found in the letter which follows:—

“Most dear Father,

“You tell me in your last letter, which I have read over many times with serious thought, that my mother wishes me to send her a more particular account of this place and family, that she may the better see my present courses with the eye of her mind.—I will make a trial of my pen to set these matters in some order before her—and, first, of this mansion: it is a goodly fabric of stone, built by the father of the present knight in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. He, as you know, exchanged some of his full money-bags for a fair estate in land, and closed all his great and prosperous ventures in commerce by a wise retirement to the noble pleasures of a country life. A situation more pleasant than this of Milverton you may not see in all the journey through these parts. The house standeth on a fine swelling slope of verdant ground, and is well sheltered by stately trees on three sides, but to the front the prospect is open, and maketh the heart dance with gladness, it is so full of delight. Looking to the south, you see the towers of that famous castle of Guy of Warwick. This castle is seated on a rock, very high, upon the river Avon, and hath a look of strength and of great majesty; as seen against the light of the distant sky—nothing can be more grand and commanding;—also, from the middle of the good city of Warwick, the fair pinnacles of the lofty tower of St. Mary’s Church do pierce the heaven, and she standeth like a crowned queen. I do fear for her diadem, for they say that the embattled keep of ancient Guy frowneth on our lady: but, turning the eyes from these stately objects, which the intervening woods may not conceal, directly below Milverton the river flows through a fair valley of green pastures; and there cannot be, in all England, a mill more pleasant to look upon and listen to than Guy’s mill: it standeth upon the farther bank of the Avon, over which there is a foot-bridge of wood, very narrow, and long enough to reach across a small meadow, which, when the waters are out, is always flooded. Not far from this mill, to the left, and upon the same bank, is an old decayed chapel, where I have seen a rude statue of the renowned Guy, more than eight feet in length; and near to this spot, close by the side of the water, there is a cave in the rock, where, as a hermit, he ended his days. But I will say no more of these places, of which report may have reached you through the discourse of others.

“Milverton House lacks nothing of furniture that money and good taste may command. There is a profusion of very fine carved oak in the hall and in the winter-parlour. In the latter, over the fire-place, is a curious representation of the meeting of Jacob and Esau; and inscribed above are the words, ‘With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.’ And in the private chamber of Sir Oliver is another piece, in three compartments, Jacob lying down alone in the Wilderness—the Vision of the Ladder of Angels—and Jacob setting up his Pillar of Remembrance.

“I name these things rather than the rich hangings and the handsome carpets which cover some of the tables, and the ebony cabinets, and the massy plate, because I know that they would give more contentment to my pious mother than all the costliness and bravery in the king’s palace.

“In the small room appointed for me, there is a posy worked upon a sampler, hung against the wall, that runneth thus:—

“What better bed than conscience good, to pass the night with sleep;
What better work than daily care, from sin thyself to keep.”

And there is an engraved portrait of Luther, with the words ‘In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra.’ I cannot look upon these things without being deeply reminded of those feeling lectures of piety which the lips of my dear mother have read to me from my very childhood; but, truth to say, my dear parents, I feel an angel plucking me by the sleeve, and whispering in my ear that my stay in this sweet abode will not be long. Sir Oliver and Mistress Alice and Mistress Katharine entreat me with that kind civility and favourable respect, which make my days happy, and I find Master Arthur so docile and of such lively parts that my office is never irksome.

“Nothing can be more orderly than the manner of life here; and although the good knight is most hospitable, yet, as he doth not use the exercise of hunting, and has no park, the visitors are not many. He rides daily in the forenoon, and will sometimes go to see the stag-hounds of Stoneleigh Abbey throw off, with which pack he hunted for twenty years; but his chief delight now is in the culture of his garden and orchards, and of a vineyard, which he has laid out, at a great cost, on a favourable site, one mile from the mansion. All the farms in the village of Milverton are his, and his tenants are the sons of those who held the land under his father; so that the hamlet is but one large family, of which Sir Oliver is the head.

“Mistress Katharine, his daughter, rides constantly with her father, except when she takes the diversion of hawking, or goes out after the beagles with her young cousin, Arthur, who is as high-spirited and active a youth in the field, as he is earnest and persevering in the study. To see Mistress Katharine fly a hawk is gladsome; and although I have, from boyhood, accounted that sport cruel and unfeminine, yet, when I look on that inspiring sight, I deem it so no longer; certain I

am that her mind did never once connect the thought of cruelty with a usage so common. She, too, seems as eager to learn what my poor scholarship can teach her as my own pupil; and if a tutor can be happy, I am, in the privilege of reading with this noble maiden, and seeing her fine countenance lighted up with the love of wisdom and of truth.

"But this state of things is far too bright to last. When a man dareth to think differently from those around him, he will soon become an object of suspicion and prejudice. I feel that my trial in this kind will assuredly come; for Sir Oliver, with all his kindness, has so rooted a dislike to all change in the established order of things, that a word against the undue stretch of the king's authority, against the tyranny of the starchamber, or those abuses in the state, which are manifest to her best friends, would be enough to make his countenance change towards me past recovery.

"Upon these subjects, you, my dear father, have written to me with more earnestness and fear than I should have looked for. You tell me that I see not the inevitable consequences which must follow from the acting out of those opinions and sentiments with which I am so captivated. I confess that I am an ardent friend to civil and religious liberty. I desire to see the laws administered without fear or favour; to see taxation imposed by the Commons alone, and to see purity and charity preaching from our pulpits and ministering at our altars. You must not blame me: these were the desires that you implanted, when you taught me the immutable and eternal principles of justice, and when, both by lip and in your life, you showed me how sacred was the character, and how hallowed were the duties, of an ambassador for Christ. I look for reformation in the state, and purification of the church. You, perhaps, despair of either; and therefore you dread an ill result to the patriotic and pure efforts which so many great and good men are now making. Some of the best and wisest of my college friends think with them. Of that number are my late tutor and my late chamber-fellow, with both of whom you expressed yourself so much delighted, when, during my last year of residence, you visited Cambridge. I confess, frankly, that I hold their sentiments, and entertain hopes of ultimate good to my country as sanguine as theirs. The cause of liberty must triumph.

"Your last letter gave but little hope of poor Fanny at the mill: what a fair, cheerful, good girl she was. Martin will be very sorry when he hears about her: if you remember, he was always for dancing with Fanny on May-day.

"I am glad to hear that Bessy Blount is going to be married. She will make Tom Hargood's farm as happy a home as any in England. However, I will not talk about weddings,—the very word makes me melancholy. I am just now preparing a short masque, which we are to perform next week, in honour of Sir Oliver's birth-day. I suppose Martin, as well as myself, has very different notions of female beauty now to any we gathered at Cheddar; though, I doubt, if we shall either of us become the happier for our knowledge. Rosy cheeks and laughing eyes are joyous and pleasant to look upon, but they seldom beget cureless heart-aches, or plant the long-lived sorrow:—all this is very idle. The love of country is the next best love to that of God, and, after that, the most rewarding.

"I suppose that you will soon have a letter from Rome: no doubt Martin is very happy among the galleries and studios of that ancient city. I often wish that I could be transported there for an hour, and see him, as he stands alone, before a master-piece of Raphael, and sighs for the very fulness of his admiration. Forget not to let me hear the earliest news of Martin. I shall think of you all on May-day at old Blount's; but, as the good old country customs are kept up here with great spirit, shall have no leisure to grieve over my absence from Cheddar, till night restores me to the solitude of my chamber, and to that sacred companionship with you in prayer, which I ever maintain.

"Your dutiful and loving son, "CUTHBERT NOBLE. "*Milverton, April 20, 1640.*"

CHAP. V.

Now winde they a recheat, the roused deer's knell,
And through the forrest all the beasts are aw'd;
Alarm'd by Eccho, Nature's sentinel,
Which shows that murd'rous man is come abroad.
Gondibert.

Early in the morning of the day after that on which the rehearsal at Milverton House was interrupted by the humiliating scene already recorded, Cuthbert sallied forth, while the first rays of the level sun were reflected back by glittering dewdrops; and brushing them with swift steps from his path, crossed the foot-bridge near Guy's mill, and was soon lost to view in the woods upon the far side of the Avon. The mill was already at work, but he lingered not to gaze upon the rushing waters. His eye glanced at the glad scene, and his ear drank in the living sound; but the prosy old miller was at his door, and his daughter stood on the stepping stones below, watching the white breasted ducks that played in the back current, therefore, with a short "good morrow," that waited for no reply, he passed onwards, for he was bound on an errand of mercy. Although the old body, Margery, had escaped the persecution of yesterday, there was good ground for fearing that it would be soon and more cruelly repeated, if she continued to dwell in her lonely and exposed hovel; and Cuthbert had found a poor bricklayer from Coventry, who was then employed in repairing the roof of an outhouse at Milverton, and who had witnessed the scene of the day before with a true Christian feeling, quite willing to

give the old woman a lodging in the small house in the mean alley in which he dwelt, for such consideration as Cuthbert was willing to pay. With this proposal of shelter and security he sought the wood, in the bosom of which, beneath a sand-stone rock, in a forsaken pit, was poor Margery's desolate abode. From the rude clay chimney, in the blackened thatch, curled a blue wreath of smoke: he leaned against the rock above, and called to Margery, but there was no reply. He went down and entered the hut. Upon a low stretcher on a coarsely plaited mat of straw, dressed in the same rags in which she walked abroad, she lay fast asleep, and her breathing sounded soft as that of a child,—a raven with a clipped wing and club-foot hopped upon the floor, and croaked at the intrusion; but the sound, though loud, did not awaken her. "I will not fright away a sleep so friendly," thought Cuthbert: he went forth again, and seated himself beneath a stately oak at no great distance. In an open grassy glade not far off, in front, a few deer were feeding,—the scene around was peace and beauty,—trees, herbs, beasts of the field and fowls of the air were declaring the glory and praising the goodness of a present God. In silent rapture Cuthbert mused his praise; but adoration was succeeded by a sense of pain,—another scene, another image, interposed between the sunny objects before him and his mental vision. The stony desolation of Mount Calvary, and the black sky above, and the pale and holy forehead with its crown of thorns, came up startling and apparent, and reminded him that he was the inhabitant of a fallen world. This solemn turn being given to his thoughts, his mind reverted, with serious consideration, to the views of that party in the state which was already designated by the name of Puritans, and which had been hitherto, and but for the questions of civil liberty now widely agitated would still have been, a by-word and a reproach among the people. "It is true," said he, "a Christian must be a mourner—he cannot be other than a mourner; but yet, are we not graciously commanded to serve the Lord with gladness? is the countenance always to be sad? is there to be no rejoicing in the light of the sun? Where is the middle ground between these two great parties in church and state? Why is not a great and overwhelming majority of moderate men found there to defend the best interests of all?" The thoughts to which he thus gave utterance would have found a response in the bosoms of thousands—indeed they were the very sentiments of his own father; only that good man knew, what Cuthbert was as yet ignorant of,—a knowledge which he was soon to purchase at the heavy price of a most bitter and heart-breaking experience. He had yet to learn that, in times of public commotion, there is no middle path, and that a party does too often take the colour of the very worst persons among those who compose it. The cant of the fanatic and the curses of the cavaliers alike disgusted him. But yet he was of an age when men will be sanguine about having the world mended according to their desired pattern; and his heart glowed with the hope that the best men of the parliament side would in the end triumph over the cold and severe intolerance of the high church party, would control the power of the crown, and would effect great and glorious things for the liberty and the happiness of England. With these sentiments he had a very difficult card to play at Milverton, for Sir Oliver was a decided enemy to the party which he secretly approved; and some of the neighbouring gentlemen, holding the same opinions with the knight, gave a much coarser expression to them. He had to hold his mouth as with a bridle in their presence. Among these persons by far the most obnoxious was Sir Charles Lambert, a gentleman of about five-and-thirty, related to Sir Oliver, and residing within a few miles, at Bolton Grange, upon a fine property, with two younger sisters left dependent on him.

He had been a great deal about the court formerly, and in his youth had been attached, for a few years, to the retinue of the late Duke of Buckingham. Not proving of a capacity for public affairs, he had been thrown back upon country life, without the true refinements of a courtier, but with all those vices and fopperies, which, in the train of Buckingham, it was not difficult to acquire. He covered with satin and musk a heart as brutal and savage as one of his own hounds,—resembling in nothing that generous and warm race of men the country gentlemen of England but in a fine person and in a passion for the chase. Nevertheless he did so conceal from Sir Oliver his true character, that he was always made welcome at Milverton. In such thoughts the mind of Cuthbert was tossed about as on a troubled sea; and from mere weariness he fell into a contemplation of the sweetness of nature, and the soft manner of her nursing, when we lie still and passive in her lap, and look upon her face. So long a time had he lingered in this green haunt, that the sun was three hours high; and the great clock of Warwick, striking seven, warned him to return home. Of the small herd in the open glade a few were still grazing,—others, and a noble hart among them, lay in perfect repose: but, suddenly, every neck was raised and turned—the ears stood erect—the nostrils distended and closed—the eyes dilated—and then, as by accord, they all stole slowly off to the rocky and difficult ground above them. He looked around, and could see nothing to alarm them; but, in the same instant, the blast of a distant hunting horn came up faint on the wind: the sound was again heard nearer; and the loud voice of dogs in concert, shrill yet deep, made the woods echo with notes that silenced every bird, and drove away all the panting creatures from their lairs. Yet was it a gallant sight—a sight to stir the blood—as within some twenty yards of the tree under which Cuthbert stood, the chase in full career swept by:—with antlers well thrown back, in its last staggering speed, came a blown stag, with a stanch hound so close upon its flank, you looked to see the fine creature torn down instantly; not far behind, two leash of dogs were hanging on its track, their mouths loud opening for prey:—with shouts of joy, and pace precipitate, the huntsmen followed,—a small but eager band on gallant steeds all foaming at the mouth, and stained with sweat. Swift as a vision of the night they passed, and from beyond a swell of ground in front a winding horn sent forth the well known mort. Cuthbert, naturally excited, ran to a knoll before him, which might command the country beyond. On the side of an open slope, at some considerable distance, he saw the last act of the death. The lifted knife, all red and reeking, was in the hand of a stranger of noble presence, by whose side stood Sir Charles Lambert. The lordly game lay stretched upon the ground, and near, with lolling tongues and panting sides, the hounds lay gasping as for life. The riders were all dismounted, and their horses, with drooping heads and their hind quarters sunk and contracted, stood stiff and motionless beside them. By the loud and exulting voices of the sportsmen you might know that the run had been severe; two or three lagging horsemen were seen coming up in their track; and by a cross path, just above the spot where the stag was killed, two foresters on foot burst down at the top of their speed, and joined the group that now more closely surrounded the noble game. The sound had brought out all the household at Milverton, from whence the slope was plainly to be seen. The boy Arthur, with some of the serving-men, ran down the pathway towards Guy's mill, while Cuthbert could discern Sir Oliver standing out on the terrace, and Mistress Katharine by his side, with a loose white kerchief thrown

over her head, to keep off the rays of the sun, which were already powerful.

The hunters now sounded the relief, and waved their caps towards Milverton; intimating, by that note and action, that they would claim the hospitality of the mansion; and then, leading their tired horses by the bridle, they proceeded thither by the mill. Cuthbert, unseen himself, watched all their motions; and when they had disappeared within the gates of Milverton, and all below and around him was again still, he turned, with a dead and jaded interest, towards the sand-pit. Upon the edge of it, near the rock, he saw the bent figure of Margery, as if in the act of listening; and as she raised her head, and observed him walking to the spot, she hastily disappeared below.

He stepped quickly after her; but the door was already barred; and when he knocked and called to her, the hoarse croak of the raven was the sole reply. He rapped more loudly,—still the same voice of ill omen replied; but as he persisted, and said words to re-assure her, the door was slowly opened, and the withered tenant of the pit appeared.

“Is it you, young master?” said Margery; “and are you alone, and is there no hunter with you?”

“There is no one with me,” he replied: “the hunters have gone over the river.”

“That’s well, that’s well, master: a hunting day, if the game takes this way, is ever an ill day with me. They that be cowards alone, are bold in merry company; and I have had a whip on my old shoulders, and the dogs hounded on me before now, if any thing crossed their sport. Three years ago, last fall, when his best hound, Bevis, was killed in the hollow yonder, nothing would serve the turn of Sir Charles but to float my poor old carcass across the river, and to weigh me against the church Bible! But he hath had many a sleepless night for that; and bold as he looks by day, the ticking of a death-watch will keep him shivering in his bed.”

“What do you mean, Margery? The folk may well think you a witch for words such as these.”

“Why, I mean,” said the old woman wilfully and spitefully, “that I never wished ill to any one, but ill came upon ‘em.”

“Had I thought this of you yesterday, I should have been slow to ask any one to give you house room; but you are God’s creature, and have been crossed with ill usage; and when you find yourself beneath the roof of a Christian, safe from all enemies, your heart will melt, and you will taste God’s peace yourself, and wish it to others. I have found a good man, that lives in Croft’s Alley in Coventry, and he will give you a chamber and a chimney corner, and kind words, and a stout arm to protect you; and when we get you safe there your thoughts will be quiet.”

“Hout-tout! what talk ye about Alley and a chimney corner? haven’t I my own ingle, and my own ways, and my own company? What voice more pleasant to me than those I heard when I was young, and hear still? What’ll take better care of me than that old bird? Few there be that don’t shun to pass close by this hut; and they that come to it step swiftly back again. I was told, with a curse, that I might not live any where else, many years ago; and here I shall stop till my old bones crumble.”

“Why, mother, why, you might starve here if you were taken ill, and none to help you.”

“Well, death is but death, let it come how it will.”

“But hunger is a bad death; and besides, are you not in constant danger of being taken up, and losing your life for a witch? Why, this bird that you keep, and your words and ways, will surely bring you to the stake one of these days.”

“Let the day come, if it is to come; and as to dying of hunger, where, think you, do the foxes die? and where do the birds of the air die? Why, they that escape the hounds die in their holes; and they that the bird-bolt misses find a dying place in some nest or corner. Go your way, young master! I am no tame rabbit, to be kept in a town hutch, and tormented by children. I don’t want to be led to church, and hear the parson’s jabber about my old soul.”

“Do not utter such wickedness, unhappy woman. It were charity to think you crazed, and take you into safe keeping against your will.”

At this the old woman gave a shriek of passion, fitful as that of a thwarted child, and then, suddenly overcome by fear, fell upon her aged knees, and lifted and joined her withered hands, and implored Cuthbert, with wild earnestness, never to have her moved.

“Look you, young master, winter and summer, here I have watched and waked these many years. It’s a small matter of meal that makes my porridge;—some give it for pity, and some give it for fear. There’s no lack of rotten sticks to keep me warm: yonder spring is never dry; and it’s free I am to go and to come, and nothing here to flout or to fret me: the deer and the kine take no count of me—the pretty creatures don’t fear me; and it’s not all the world calling me witch that will make them. That place is best we think best. Oh, for the love of God, master, let me alone—let me rot where I am.”

Cuthbert’s mind was in an agony of prayer; but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He would have said much; but he could speak nothing. He gave her alms; and telling her that he would do nothing against her will—nothing to make her unhappy, but that he would come and see her again—he raised her from her knees, and went upon his way homewards.

“My father would not thus have left her,” was his first thought. “He would have found some way to break into her heart. Strange world—strange thing this human life! This old solitary miserable has been wrapped in swaddling clothes, even as others—has been suckled at a human breast—has grasped, with tiny hand, a father’s finger—and been kissed, and muched; and now, she has survived all kindred—lost all defence of strength or money—hath none of wisdom, and because her back is crooked, and nose and chin have come well nigh together, she has been hunted from her kind, and dwells apart. As God is love,—and that he is I cannot doubt and live,—this is a mystery! It’s a skein so much entangled that my poor wit can not unwind it.”

Muttering to himself these wayward fancies, he hurried back to Milverton as to his heart’s home. There he could see sunlight upon the earth, and feel warm in the comfort of it. Nor in his then mood was he sorry that the guest chambers would be full: he wished a day of cheerful cups, and pleasant voices, and music. Thus absorbed, he reached the mill, and passed it as swiftly as in the morning.

“There he goes,” said the old miller, speaking to his daughter, who was spreading out some linen to

bleach—"There he goes, as shy as a hare, and as fast as if he were making for his form. I never gets a bit of chat with him. He's not much for company."

"Why, father," replied the girl, coming upon the pathway, "he's a scholar, you know, and that's the fashion of them, you know."

"Well, it's a bad fashion to go poking about the woods as lonesome as a stray mule; no good comes of those crazy fashions. I like an open face, and an open hand, and a free tongue."

"Eh! he can talk fast enough, I'll warrant me, if he had a sweetheart to talk to."

"He talk to a sweetheart! She must be a poor silly body that would listen. There are merry men and merry hearts enough in old England for the lasses to choose from, without giving ear to such as he."

"Well, they give him kind words at the Hall,—and they say he's always more for good than harm; and I find him pleasant spoken enough when he comes to angle in the mill-pool."

"There it is! I can never make him say a dozen words, black or white; now Parson Mullins will chat free for an hour on, and tosses you off a pot of ale with good words and good will. Why, he and I have smoked many a pipe together; and he's a clerk, and a rare scholar too. He doesn't give you ignorant stuff o' Sundays; but Latin, and Greek, and all the best that he has learned at college. That's the man for my money."

"Well, father, for the matter o' that, I like to know what folk are saying; and it might be gipsy language for all you or I are the wiser."

"I know where you got that lesson, Miss Pert; that's what the old Puritan pedlar said the other day,—rot him! he shall take seat on the old wive's ducking-stool if he comes this way again."

"I am sure he was a quiet civil man; and you have not had a better piece of linen, or a cheaper, than he sold us, this many a year."

"Hang his linen, and him too!" rejoined the sturdy old miller. "I didn't like the cut of his black head;" and with that he passed into the mill, and the girl went towards the dwelling.

While this dialogue was passing, Cuthbert Noble was rapidly ascending the path, which rose gently over a swelling field of luxuriant grass, to Milverton. Certainly there was much about Cuthbert to excuse the prejudice of the miller. He was of low stature, with a long visage and grave aspect; and there was a peculiar expression of his eye, which disturbed or repelled those who saw him for a first time, or who saw him not at his ease; but to those whom, upon a nearer acquaintance, he liked, his dark eye beamed with light; the expression about his mouth was humane and gentle; his voice was low, and rather tremulous before strangers; he never laughed, and seldom smiled, save with his eyes, which gave quick and lively response to whatever pleased him. Though, in his first manhood, he was not without a knowledge of life and of the human heart, for his reading had been extensive; and he had that felicity of apprehension, by which the lessons of books are most happily caught, and most easily applied to the heart's daily wants. Moreover, he had all those graces of persuasion by which a pupil is best won upon and encouraged to climb the steep hill of fame. More happily placed he could not have been than in the family of Sir Oliver Heywood, but for one circumstance—he was too happy. A fear lay beating in his bosom. He dared not confess to himself the strange, yet deep, sentiments of admiration with which he regarded the daughter of the worthy knight. He would fain persuade himself that it was nothing but an emotion of gratitude to Mistress Katharine for that generous courtesy which would not suffer a scholar of gentle birth to want such attention and respect as she might delicately pay to him. Here, however, his wisdom was at fault. In vain had books taught him the misery of misplaced affections. He was launching out upon an unknown sea that has no shore.

CHAP. VI.

Some snakes must hiss, because they're born with stings.

The table in Milverton Hall was already surrounded by the hungry guests; and a substantial old English breakfast, well suited to the appetites and the digestion of active and manly hunters, was spread before them. They were so busied over the cold joints and the venison pasties, or with the amber ale that foamed in silver tankards, as scarcely to notice the entrance of a latecomer, and therefore Cuthbert slipped into a vacant place at the bottom of the table, without other greeting than the good-humoured nod of a ruddy-looking young parson seated opposite, as he raised a tankard to his lips. There was little talk, save a few words about the sport, until having fairly finished their meal, the chairs were backed a little from the huge oaken table; the serving men lifted off the large dishes, still weighty with good fare, removed the trenchers, and having carried round the basin and ewer, large silver cups, filled with canary wine, prepared, after the fashion of the time, with sugar and with certain herbs, so as to make a delicious beverage in warm weather, were placed upon the table. The short grace "Benedicto benedicatur" having been uttered by George Juxon, the youthful rector alluded to, Sir Oliver took the massive cup which stood before himself, and intimating to Juxon to follow his example with the other, he rose, and giving for a toast, "His most gracious Majesty King Charles," took a small draught of it, and passed the cup to the noble looking gentleman who had been sitting on his right hand, and was then standing by his side. The toast passed round with an audible "God bless him!" from every guest, after the example of the loyal host.

"Ah, Sir Philip," observed the worthy knight to the noble stranger near him, "we have fallen upon evil times; and it is grievous to think that there should be one house in all England where the health of his most sacred Majesty may no longer be duly drunk, as is becoming in all good and true subjects."

"Yet, I fear," replied Sir Philip Arundel, "there are many in which the King's health is no longer a standing toast: unquestionably republican feelings and principles have made great progress among the burgher classes generally, and have infected not a few above them."

"It is those sour-faced, canting rogues, the prick-eared, psalm-singing Puritans, that are doing all the mischief," said Sir Charles Lambert: "we want their ears, after the Turkish fashion, cropped by sacksful."

"But it is not calling them names, or cutting off their ears," said George Juxon, "that will put them down; neither will all the water in your horse-ponds quench the fire in any of their bosoms."

"Very likely; but there is nothing like trying what will stop them; and as sure as ever I catch any of the hypocritical rogues praying and singing near our parish they shall have a bellyful of muddy water, and a back-load of smart blows with whip or cudgel."

There was an expression of most irrepressible disgust on the countenance of Cuthbert Noble as Sir Charles uttered this brutal speech; which Sir Charles observing, he turned quickly to Sir Oliver, and added, "These are times in which we should look well to all our housemates, for fear we should be fostering some of these godly knaves, who cover their false hearts with closed lips and demure faces, and may corrupt our children and our servants."

"You mean me," said Cuthbert, starting on his feet with an energy which startled every one at table, and took Sir Charles so totally by surprise that he turned pale and livid, and seemed at a loss for words.

"Sir Oliver," pursued the youthful tutor in a glow of indignation that overspread his cheeks, and made his eyes glance fire, "I have long and often endured the contemptuous and studied insults of your haughty kinsman on his visits here; and while they were only directed against me as a poor scholar and a dependant, it was well:—happy in your favour, and in the attachment and respect of the gentle young master, who is my pupil, I could afford to look down upon the dwarfish stature of so mean a mind; but when he would thus——"

Before it was possible to arrest him, Sir Charles, who sat upon the same side of the table, had run behind him, and, ere he could turn, inflicted a deep wound in his back with a large hunting-knife. The young student fell, bathed in his blood, upon the floor; and all the household, already brought near to the door by the loudness of the voices, rushed into the hall. Nothing was more affecting than to see the terrified agony and loud sobs of the noble boy Arthur, who stood over his fainting tutor with tears, and would neither be comforted nor removed.

George Juxon had instantly seized Sir Charles with an iron grasp. Sir Oliver was troubled, and scarce knew how to act; while Sir Philip Arundel, the most self-possessed of the party, desired the attendants to send swiftly to Warwick for a surgeon, and suggested to Sir Oliver that the aggressor should be committed to his charge, and that he would take him to his own home, and be responsible for his appearance to answer for the crime which he had just committed, when the charge should be preferred against him in due order. But George Juxon required that he should remain in custody at Milverton until it was ascertained whether the stab inflicted on Cuthbert might not prove fatal.

The ladies of Milverton, who were absent, walking in the grounds, were happily spared this painful scene. To the exclamations of wonder, regret, and even condolence, with which Sir Charles was addressed by some others of the party, he answered nothing, but stood with lips closely compressed in sullen scorn and in a dogged silence.

Juxon unhandled him, after Sir Philip promised that he should for the present be kept close guarded, and gave all his attention to Cuthbert, who was borne slowly and carefully up into his chamber, and his wound there bound up with a temporary dressing by Juxon himself, till proper assistance should arrive. This done, he left him for a while in the care of the servants, while he went down to aid in composing Sir Oliver and the ladies of the family.

This young clergyman, who was a distant connection of the good bishop of the same name, the treasurer at that time of the King, was a good specimen of a particular class of richly beneficed clergy, not uncommon in his day. He was a ripe scholar, a kind, orthodox churchman, and a manly country gentleman. His habits were those of his time: they grew out of the circumstances of that period and the state of society in all country places; and he had seen his own pious and dignified relative hunt his own pack of beagles, without a thought that he was doing any thing more than taking a vigorous exercise, beneficial alike to the health of his body and his mind.

Juxon was among, but above, sportsmen. He had a wealthy rectory, and lived hospitably with his equals, and charitably towards the poor. In the discharge of his parochial duties, he was sensible and serious: he valued books, and he had a due appreciation of genius.

He had been of the hunting party this morning, and was thus a guest at Milverton, where he had long occasionally visited, and where, upon a former day, he had chanced to have rather a long and free conversation with Cuthbert, and, albeit widely different in their habits, had found common ground of interest in the subjects on which they talked, and they had parted well pleased with each other. Had they touched on politics, indeed, they would have differed; for Juxon was a most stanch supporter of the court party: through evil report and good report he stuck close to the crown; he wrote for it, spoke for it, and was ready to lay down his life in the defence of it; but he was of too large a mind to wonder at the opinions of those opposed to the government of the King; nor was he blind either to those abuses of the prerogative which had first awakened a spirit of resistance in men of undoubted worth and patriotism, nor to the grievous folly of those deplorable counsels, whereby the King had been induced or encouraged to force upon the proud and resolute Scots the discipline of a church to which they disclaimed allegiance.

Again, he was of a generous spirit, detested persecution in any thing, especially in religion and matters of conscience, and had felt, with the Lord Falkland, in all the earlier stages of the present quarrel. Nevertheless, a decided and sincere attachment to the monarchy, an unshaken respect for the personal qualities of the King, and a devotion to the forms and to the spirit of that church in which he was baptized, suckled, and educated,—a devotion quite distinct from, and independent of, any feeling of self-interest, as an incumbent,—caused him to resolve upon his own course in the coming troubles with a cheerful firmness.

These sentiments, if the conversation in the hall had not been so suddenly put an end to, would there

have been elicited. He had not approved the outbreak and burst of indignation with which the sensitive and excited Cuthbert had so energetically appropriated the indirect, but mischievous, speech with which Sir Charles Lambert had sought to sow a suspicion of his tutor's integrity in the bosom of Sir Oliver; but he with his whole soul detested and abhorred the cowardly and bloody ferocity with which the haughty and maddened barbarian had resented the contemptuous expression of Cuthbert. There sprung up in his heart at that moment a warmth of interest for the youth, which never afterwards, in fortunes the most dark and divided, entirely died away. But to return to the actual present. He saw the ladies, who had but just returned from a walk to the vineyard, in company with Sir Oliver, in a remote corner of the garden, and immediately joined them.

They were, as might be expected, very greatly troubled at the cruel occurrence, and pale with natural anxiety. Indeed there was an expression of concern upon the countenance of Mistress Katharine, so very deep, so profoundly sad, that even amid the sorrowful perplexities of the moment it glanced across the mind of Juxon, that, in one or other of the parties in this business, her own heart was most closely interested, and he thought that he had never before seen human beauty with such a divine aspect. At the readily adopted suggestion of Katharine, her aunt Alice would have proceeded instantly to the chamber of the sufferer, to render him any service in her power; but Juxon requested of her not to do so, and recommended that the ladies should keep themselves quiet and apart until the surgeon arrived, and the gentlemen now in the mansion should have departed. Observing, too, the extreme perplexity of Sir Oliver, who had been and still was exceedingly agitated by this strange event, he entreated him to remain with them, and to keep himself calm and quiet for the present; assuring him that every thing which he could suppose him to wish in the present distress should be properly done, and that he would certainly not leave Milverton himself while he could hope to render the slightest service to Sir Oliver in this difficulty. There was an earnestness of manner about Juxon, and at the same time such a quiet tone of internal confidence in the resources of his own judgment, that they all submitted to his guidance; and Sir Oliver was greatly comforted and strengthened by the thought that so wise and judicious a friend was near him in his necessity.

The boy Arthur was watching and walking forwards on the Warwick road, as if his doing so could hasten the coming of assistance, and was in all that confusion of the troubled spirits which keeps the young heart throbbing with fear.

In the library Sir Charles Lambert sat with folded arms and a lowering brow, while Sir Philip Arundel stood, looking from the window with a countenance simply expressive of cold annoyance.

Of the half dozen gentlemen, who were still grouped in the hall, one, after observing, that "All's well that ends well,—and, perhaps, after all, the young man's hurt might not prove dangerous, and that he always hoped for the best,"—stole his hand across quietly to the wine cup, and took a very copious draught; another remarked, that he must say "the young man was very irritating;" a third wanted to know what was the use of their remaining there, and said he wanted to go home; while a fourth said, "One was a brute, and the other a fool: that he cared nothing for one, and knew nothing of the other."

But two gentlemen of a more thoughtful cast walked the hall in low and serious discourse, apprehensive by their words that the injury would prove fatal to Cuthbert; and resolving that so fierce an action as that of Sir Charles should not pass unpunished. These were friends and neighbours of George Juxon; and expressed themselves well pleased that, for the sake of Sir Oliver and his family, so useful and kind a person chanced to be at Milverton under the present circumstances.

At last the long expected surgeon arrived with the messenger who had been sent for him, both having used all diligent expedition. He was introduced into the chamber of the patient by Juxon, and immediately proceeded to examine the wound. At the first sight he shook his head, and said to himself, in a very quick, low tone of voice, "The wonder is, that he is yet alive;" but on questioning Cuthbert as to his feelings, and finding some of the expected symptoms absent, and on very carefully applying the probe, he cheerfully exclaimed, "There is good hope of you, young master: there is no man living could pass a sword where this blade has passed without injuring a vital part, if he were to try; but a good angel hath had the guiding of this one. If it please God to bless my skill, you shall do well; but it will be a slow case, and a tedious time before you will be fairly on your legs again."

"God's will be done," said Cuthbert, "for life or for death."

"If that is your mind," rejoined the surgeon, "my care will be well helped, and your cure the easier."

After cleaning and dressing the wound, and giving particular directions as to diet broths, and writing a prescription for the necessary medicines to produce composure and sleep, he took his departure, promising an early visit on the morrow.

The favourable opinion thus given of Cuthbert's wound was quickly made known throughout the mansion, and received as welcome by all; operating upon each according to their personal characters, and to the interest which they had felt in the issue of the violent deed which had stained the hospitable hall of Milverton. Sir Charles Lambert, indeed, but for the inconvenience and danger to himself, would have preferred the more tragical event. As it was, when Sir Philip Arundel returned from the gallery to the library, to announce to him that Cuthbert was considered in no present danger, he uttered no word beyond his wish instantly to return home.

"You are surely thankful," said Sir Philip, "that this unpleasant affair has ended so much better than was feared. If you will not go and say so to the bleeding youth, which perhaps might just now too much disturb him, you will at least offer some words of atonement to your elderly relative, Sir Oliver, for the outrage done under his roof, and to a youth under his protection; a deed to be only excused by pleading that your anger transported you into a paroxysm of madness."

"I shall go home," said Sir Charles: "are you ready?"

"I will never, sir, again cross your threshold: you are no English knight—you are not even a man. I shall send orders to my grooms to follow me on my road home."

These words were swallowed by the same man who would have taken a life that same morning for a look of contempt; and with a white cheek, on which passion literally trembled, Sir Charles hurried to the court-

yard, called for his horse, mounted, and dashing spurs into his sides, rode violently away—hatred in his own heart, and contempt pursuing him. In succession all the guests took their departure, except George Juxon, whom Sir Oliver requested to continue with him till the morrow; and who, more for the sake of the patient than of the family, assented. He was not sorry that Sir Charles had departed in the manner and in the temper described, nor did he care now to have his person secured; for his offence, though grave as it yet stood, was not of a nature that in those days subjected to imprisonment any one who could find bail for his future appearance: and in the present case it was clear that Cuthbert would never prosecute a relation (albeit base and unworthy), yet a relation of Sir Oliver Heywood.

The good knight, though a kind man, a fond father, and an easy master, having walked through life upon a path of velvet as smooth as his own lawn, was sadly discomposed by this visitation of care; and the very trouble and irregularity that was caused by it was felt by the old gentleman in many ways that he dared not confess to others, and was ashamed to acknowledge to himself. A great weight, indeed, was taken from his mind by the assurance of Cuthbert's safety; for he was humane, and he liked the youth: but he had private reasons for a deep regret at the conduct of Sir Charles Lambert, and the interruption to their intercourse which would of necessity ensue, and almost wished that he had parted with his young tutor immediately after that discovery of his political leanings which he had himself not many days ago so frankly made.

However, what had now befallen Cuthbert beneath Sir Oliver's own roof, and by the hand of his own relative, gave him new and increased claims upon the knight's protection and kindness, and there could be no further thought of their separating now till a distant period. The day wore rapidly away, and by the hour of supper some appearance of order was again restored to a mansion, in which every thing usually proceeded with the regularity of clockwork.

An intermitted dinner was an occurrence of which there was no previous memory or record in the recollection of the oldest servant on the establishment. Among the minor circumstances, and not the least affecting to the manly mind of Juxon, was a little dialogue which he overheard between the little girl Lily and the boy Arthur, the child being unable to comprehend the fact of one man cutting another man with a knife on purpose to hurt him. The true nature of the atrocious action of course no one cared to explain to the little innocent: but she had learned from the servants that Master Cuthbert was run through with a knife by Sir Charles Lambert; and she had come to cousin Arthur, in a grave and pretty wonder, to know what they could mean.

The next day, being the birthday of Sir Oliver, was that on which the masque in preparation was to have been represented before a party of the neighbouring gentry, who had been specially invited to celebrate that annual feast in the good old hall of Milverton. Of so pleasant a holyday there could now be no further thought; and the May-day festival which was to follow the day after, though of course the villagers would have their dance according to the immemorial custom, would lose half its gaiety and spirit by the absence of the family from the manor house, and especially of the gentle and sweet Mistress Katharine, whose words and ways had won for her all the hearts in Milverton, and for miles round.

It was an evening memorable in the life of Juxon, that in which he first sat down at table with the small family circle of the Heywoods;—in which he looked upon the majestic forehead of Katharine,—marked the gentle fire of her dark eyes, and the expression of all that is sweet and engaging in humanity about a mouth where her noble qualities were most fairly written.

After the grave and laudable custom of those good old times, the evening service from the Book of Common Prayer was invariably read to the assembled households of the country gentlemen. The office of reading prayers was usually in the absence of a clergyman performed by Sir Oliver himself as the priest of his own family, or at times he deputed Cuthbert to supply his place. The duty this evening was performed by Juxon in a solemn, feeling, impressive manner; and when it was concluded, and the family retired, he hastened to the chamber of Cuthbert, and finding that the composing draught had taken kind effect, and that he was dropping off into a comforting sleep, withdrew again with as soft a step as he had entered, and, exhausted with the fatigues and the painful excitements of the day's adventures, he repaired to his own room, and thankfully lay down to rest. As he was extinguishing the lamp, his eye read the posy on the wall; and he could not but feel a sweet pleasure to be reposing in such a mansion, and with such a family:—

“Would'st have a friend, would'st know what friend is best?
Have God thy friend, who passeth all the rest.”

CHAP. VII.

Love is a kind of superstition,
Which fears the idol which itself hath framed.

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

Cuthbert was awakened at midnight by pain:—the glimmer of the night lamp in the little room adjoining cast a dim light into the chamber where he lay; and the breathing of the aged female servant, who sat there in watch, told him that she had been overcome by sleep. He cared not to disturb her, and made an effort to reach the cup of water on the little table by his side, but he found that he was no longer equal to the slightest exertion—he could not even change his posture. He endured his thirst, and tried to collect his thoughts, and gather up all that had passed in the hall, but he could not: he was dizzy with the sense of having been pushed

to the very brink of eternity, and snatched back again. A gleam shone upon the portrait of Luther which hung opposite. "Though he slay me yet will I trust him," was now his own whispered act of confidence in God, and he lay passive, silent, and hopeful. Not only was he heavily oppressed with bodily anguish, but his mind, after undue excitement, and proportionate depression and exhaustion, had sunk into a state of torpor. At the moment when Sir Charles Lambert made the insidious speech to Sir Oliver, which Cuthbert truly discerned to be aimed at his suspected principles, and still more basely at a supposed line of conduct which he had far too high a sense of integrity to pursue.

At that moment it seemed to him as if it was but fair and honourable to make open avowal of his true sentiments; but in the same quick glance of the mind he saw the first bitter and inevitable consequence. He must quit Milverton immediately, and for ever. Sir Oliver could no longer have retained in his family a man openly admiring the cause and the course of that party in the kingdom which opposed the crown.

The collision in his mind of this fear of separation from so much that he loved, and of the honest impulse to do what was right, begat a momentary desperation; and thus it was, that he rose upon that occasion with so unbecoming a want of calmness, and that he was about to preface his statement by exhibiting his unmeasured scorn for the base assailant of his character, but the too sure destroyer of his present happiness.

By the strange and bloody interruption of his purpose, the avowal of his political opinions was checked: his expression of contempt for Sir Charles had found utterance, and had been followed by a consequence, carrying with it, indeed, a severe rod of rebuke to himself for his rashness, but punishment in a tenfold degree more insupportable to his proud and brutal enemy; and, as a crowning consolation to Cuthbert, his sojourn beneath the blessed roof of Milverton was at least, for very many weeks to come, perfectly secure. He had felt no sorrow when he heard the surgeon pronounce his case as one that would be tedious—and that it must be long before he could be safely moved.

He would have had a stronger reason for joy and thankfulness, could he have known that he had been the cause of producing such a development of the fierce and cruel temper of Sir Charles Lambert as saved Katharine Heywood, if not from actually accepting him as a husband, to which she would never have consented, at least from all the present persecution of his attentions, as well as from all expression of the blind but yet obstinate wishes of her otherwise indulgent father.

As Katharine lay wakeful on her pillow, believing and hoping that the life of Cuthbert would be spared, and no permanent injury would affect his future health or usefulness, she could not regret the occurrence of the morning.

Certainly she would have died rather than have gone to the altar with Sir Charles, but she would have remained continually exposed to his selfish addresses; and this match having been the favourite plan of her father from her earliest girlhood would have been perpetually urged upon her by him in those many indirect and distressing ways in which affectionate and obedient children are sometimes long and ungenerously tormented by covetous or ambitious parents.

One thing, when she first heard of the catastrophe, found a brief admission into her mind, and till she was made fully acquainted both by her father and by Juxon of all that had passed, and of the words which had been uttered at the time, was not entirely dismissed. This was no less than a fear, faint, indeed, and most reluctantly viewed as possible, that the quarrel might have arisen out of some feelings on both sides connected with herself. Nothing was farther removed from the true dignity of her noble character than the desire of making an impression upon any one; and it would have very seriously pained her, if those kind attentions, by which she had sought to make Cuthbert at home in the family, should have given birth in his breast to any warmer sentiment than that of respectful friendship.

Her humility and her modesty were so genuine that she was quite unconscious of her own personal attractions, and, though alive to the beauty of many of her female friends, she regarded it as a quality so inferior, and secondary in its power of interesting the heart, or winning the homage of the mind, as to give little advantage to its possessor in the daily intercourse of society. This opinion being in her sincere and rooted, her charms were worn with a grace and ease so natural, that her influence over all who came within their sweet and magic circle was irresistible.

This being her character, it was a great relief to her to be persuaded that there was not the slightest ground for the apprehensions, which she had slowly admitted. She was now surprised at herself for having entertained them even for a moment. She saw in the conduct of Cuthbert nothing more than a burst of human pride irritated into violence by the haughty insults of a worthless superior. Thus all her suspicions of the truth were lulled to sleep; and to alleviate the sufferings of Cuthbert during his confinement, and to cheer his convalescence when the hour of it should arrive, was to her plain judgment a simple and a pleasing duty.

Sir Oliver himself passed a weary and feverish night,—all things seemed out of joint: one of his most favourite schemes was broken,—and his prospects of a peaceful and indolent old age, under the shadow of his own trees, were somewhat shaken. The trumpet of war had not, indeed, as yet sounded in the heart of England, though English blood had been already spilled freely on the borders. The few tall yeomen, with their goodly steeds, sent by himself to join the King's forces in the north, had marched fast and far only to meet an early end, and to swell the loss and the discredit of the ridiculous expedition against the Scots. With Sir Charles Lambert for a son-in-law, he would have felt better able to meet and take share in the coming troubles; and he reflected on the difficulties before him with dismay. Of battle or of death he had no fear,—though at his time of life, and with his habits, it was small service beyond that of a ready example of devotion which he could render in a camp; but when he thought of Katharine, and of Arthur in his boyhood, and of his aged sister, his household presented but a defenceless aspect. However, after the scene of yesterday, he could not ever directly encourage any future addresses of Sir Charles to his daughter; and it could not but suggest itself plainly to his own mind, as a gentlemen of a true English spirit, as far as personal bravery was concerned, that little dependence could be placed upon the courage or firmness of a man capable of the cruel and dastardly assault which he had yesterday witnessed. He had yet to learn the moral energies and the latent heroism of his noble daughter, and to discover the strength and the wisdom of a woman's mind, when the love of father and of country guide it in the path of duty and of honour. Some time was to elapse before the days of trial; and, indulging that love of ease which was habitual to him, he strove to stifle or put away

from him the unwelcome conviction that come they must, and could not be averted. Therefore it was with no common sense of comfort, that, when he came forth into the gallery the next morning, he found Katharine, and his sister, and Arthur, already there, waiting to receive him with the kisses of fond congratulation, and saw his own portrait and that of his departed wife, who had been to him as an angel gently leading him for good, and ever watchful to guard him from error, framed, as it were, with choice and dewy flowers. He gazed at the portrait of his wife and then at Katharine, alternately, and was melted into a gush of grateful tenderness. All fears, difficulties, and troubles seemed to vanish in a present feeling of thankfulness and delight. He went instantly on to the chamber of Cuthbert: Juxon had been there from an early hour, and the surgeon was engaged at the moment in dressing his wound.

The sight of the amiable young man, lying pale and helpless, bandaged and in pain, greatly moved Sir Oliver. He took Cuthbert by the hand, and spoke to him in that warm and feeling language of condolence which is balm to a sufferer's mind. The benevolent surgeon took a lively interest in his patient, and spoke most confidently of effecting a complete cure,—although he repeated, that the case would prove very tedious, and many weeks must elapse before he could be permitted, or indeed be able, to quit the recumbent posture. He gave directions that he should be kept particularly quiet in his actual state, and not be spoken with or disturbed throughout the day, except to give him necessary refreshment or medicine.

At the earnest invitation of Sir Oliver, Juxon consented to remain at Milverton till the evening. The day passed pleasantly away. The worthy knight recovered his usual spirits; Mistress Alice her composure; and Katharine Heywood, having much secret content and thankfulness at heart, looked like some gracious angel of peace and goodness.

It was a day of bliss to Juxon:—one never forgotten, but marked white for ever. He was one of those men who felt a reverence and tenderness for woman; and, whenever he addressed them, his eyes, his voice, his whole manner plainly manifested respect. He expected in the female character gentleness, purity, and charity; and yet, by some strange inconsistency, he shunned the society of women, was seldom to be seen in those gay and glittering circles where they shone, and where he might have been soon disenchanted of his cherished illusions.

His residence in a sequestered parish in the country afforded him few opportunities of visiting where ladies were to be met; and being fond of all sports and manly exercises, and so ripe a scholar as to find study and the chase a pleasant relief to each other, he had not as yet been careful to seek opportunities of increasing his female acquaintance.

Whatever there was of silent and maidenly reserve in sweet Katharine herself towards common strangers, and upon ordinary occasions, vanished at a time like this, in the presence of so manly, so modest, and so frank a man as George Juxon. As the family sat that day at table, not a shade of embarrassment was visible in any of the party:—Sir Oliver was in high good humour; the boy Arthur looked at their guest with those honest eyes which, in boyhood, fear not to show either like or dislike; and the little girl Lily, permitted that day to dine in the hall, sat without shyness opposite to Juxon, and shunned not his smile or his word of notice.

The day wore on:—he walked with the ladies upon the verdant and velvet paths in the flower garden,—he paced the terrace with Sir Oliver,—and his presence was felt by them all as a strength and a comfort.

The shade upon the dial had stole silently, but swiftly, forwards, and touched upon seven in the evening, when he ran up to the chamber of Cuthbert to press his hand at parting; and having afterwards said his farewell to the ladies on the lawn, he descended to the court-yard, accompanied by Sir Oliver and the boy Arthur, mounted the gallant roan gelding upon which he had hunted his way down on the morning of yesterday, and again shaking the hand of his host, and accepting a warm invitation to repeat his visit soon and often, George Juxon rode out of the gates at Milverton with a very new and strange feeling.

The free animal, on which he rode, was impatiently checked as often as it broke from the measured walk at which it was now the pleasure of his master to travel homewards; and, whatever might be the cause, he was not allowed to perform in less than two hours a distance to be very easily accomplished within one. The reverie of Juxon was unbroken during the whole ride. The evening was mild, and the hedgerows were green, and the air was perfumed here with the scent of violets, there with the fragrance of cottage gardens or blushing orchards, and upon the woody or open parts of the road with the rich incense of the fresh-blown May.

The news of Sir Charles Lambert's violence had reached his parsonage before him; and in the stone porch his old housekeeper met him as soon as he had dismounted, with as much anxiety as if he had narrowly escaped murder himself. The good old body, with that genuine philanthropy of feeling which is as natural as their breathing to kindly natures, learned the safety of Cuthbert, whom she had never seen or heard of before, with a lively expression of motherly joy; and Juxon was roused to remember how very narrowly the youth had missed an early and melancholy fate. Truth to say, so much of pleasure had grown up within these two days from the very circumstances arising out of the assault on Cuthbert, for her young master now to dwell on, and there seemed to open before him so pleasant a prospect in future intercourse with the family at Milverton, that, perhaps, he hardly felt enough for the present sufferings of the unfortunate patient.

His thoughts, however, were soon diverted from Milverton, and from himself, by the entrance of his old gardener, to say the May-crown, which was kept in the summer-house, had been taken away, and that he had found a written paper on the shelf where it stood. This the old man handed to his master, saying he could not read it, but guessed it boded no good for the coming holyday, and that he had been gathering flowers to dress out the old May-pole to little purpose. George Juxon took the paper, upon which, in a stiff, quaint hand, were written these lines:—

“This head in a crown, and that without ears,
Is the pleasure of prelates, of courtiers, and peers.
Dance, revel, and sing, ye butterflies gay;
The time is at hand you shall weep, fast, and pray.
One holdeth the war-dogs, all ready to slip;
Pleasure's cup shall be spilled, and dashed from the lip.

To me is committed this message of woe:
The tears of the proud ones unpitied shall flow."

He no sooner read it, than, quitting his supper, he went out into the village to ascertain if any copy of it had been left at any other place; and found, to his vexation, that one had been fastened to the May-pole, and had been taken down and read to half the people. Determined, however, that the customary sports should be neither hindered nor damped, he took home with him the village carpenter, set fairly to work, and in two hours, by the aid of lath, and pasteboard, and Dutch gilding, they finished off a crown far more splendid than the one stolen; and he wrote underneath it, with prompt good humour,—

"The preacher hath said it—For all things a time—
For fasting, for feasting, for dancing, for rhyme:—
No rhymes without reason shall hinder our pleasure;
We'll crown the old May-pole, and tread the old measure."

This done, he again thought of Cuthbert's bed of suffering, and remembered him in his prayers. This little cross occurrence in his parish neither drove away his own sleep for a second nor delayed on the morrow the sports of his parishioners. Here, as in many other places, the popular and wise course of the minister preserved a good and happy understanding among the people. There is no social state more truly desirable than that of a well-ordered village population, where the miseries of the lane and the alley cannot reach; labour is performed in the open air; festivals are days of thanksgiving, danced through upon a green sward, to the nodding heads of merry musicians; and they see no crowns but such as are woven with roses for their May-queen, and know no sceptre but a white wand wreathed about with fragrant flowers.

CHAP. VIII.

Though their voices lower be,
Streams have, too, their melody;
Night and day they warbling run,
Never pause, but still sing on.

GEORGE HICKES.

For three summer months Cuthbert Noble was confined to a couch; and though latterly he was led forth into the garden, and suffered to lie down on a bench in the shade, yet his confinement had been lonely as well as tedious. No kindness on the part of any of the family was wanting: whatever could be thought of for his convenience and comfort was provided. While he was obliged to keep his own chamber, he was visited daily by Sir Oliver; Mistress Alice and Katharine looked in upon him together, and inquired gently concerning his pain; the boy Arthur would often forego his play in the garden, or his practice in archery, to sit and read to him; and not a week passed without a friendly and cheerful visit from George Juxon. Nevertheless, he was evidently dejected; and while he was grateful for all these attentions, nothing, it was observed, could effectually rouse his spirits to cheerfulness, although he repaid, by anxious words and quiet smiles, the least service which was done him. About the trouble which he unavoidably gave the servants, who, for their parts, were ever ready to oblige him, he was scrupulous even to anxiety. He seemed to pine after liberty—and would sit, for hours together, lost in deep thought, or in vacant sadness. It so happened that the clergyman of Milverton, whose manners were coarse, and whose morals were low, did not visit at the Hall. Although originally appointed by Sir Oliver, at the request of a friend, who, acquainted with his family, had taken little care to inquire more particularly into his character, he had early quarrelled with his patron, and preferred the freedom of an ale bench to the restraints of good society. This was unfortunate for Cuthbert; as a learned and religious clergyman, residing in the village, and intimate at the hall, might have kept him straight in the plain path of the true churchman. Now, though Juxon, had he been aware of all that was passing in the mind of Cuthbert, might have been truly serviceable in disabusing him of some strong prejudices, yet, as he presumed him to be a true son of the church, the subject was seldom named.

He came to cheer and amuse him if he could; and the very atmosphere of Milverton Hall was that of purity and delight to George Juxon. His summer months presented a strange contrast to those of Cuthbert. He gave up his buck-hunting in the afternoons: he could not abide the rude and noisy companions of that sport of which he had been always so fond; and now he might be seen, day after day, in the guise of an angler, on the grassy margin of a silver stream, or, not unfrequently, stretched at his length beneath a shady tree near the bank, or sitting under a high honeysuckle hedge; and if he were not chewing his own sweet fancies, some book in his hand, of good old-fashioned poetry, to aid his pleasant meditations. George Juxon was now a lover—without melancholy, I do not say,—but only with so much of it as is ever welcome to a lover's mood, and gives a dignity to his passion. Nevertheless, his hope was unavowed; nor was he in haste: a long courtship was the fashion of those days; and a mistress seemed raised in the fancy of her admirer, by the thought that she must be slowly approached, and would be slowly won.

His family, his private fortune, his present provision in the church, and his future prospects from the favour of the bishop, were such, that Sir Oliver could not object to him as a suitor for his daughter, though he might give the preference to another; and certainly, with her father, the title of a baronet would have outweighed that of a dean. However, these circumstances could only encourage him in his more sanguine

moments, for Juxon was a modest man; and when he called up the image of Katharine in his walks, and thought upon a certain majesty in her countenance, and how serene and unmoved she was, how unsuspecting of the admiration which she excited, he could not but fear that she might prove indifferent to the suit of one so plain and unvarnished as himself, and that she would never entertain his addresses. Therefore it was that he nursed his love in secret, and patiently restrained all expression of particular regard for Mistress Katharine in his present visits to Milverton. How pleasant, in the mean time, were all those visits; how swiftly he rode through lane and wood, across field or common, as he went from home on those permitted errands of friendship; and at what a slow and lingering pace would he return from the gracious presence of this lady of his love!

He had often heard it rumoured that Sir Charles Lambert was thought to be the accepted son-in-law of Sir Oliver; but this he had always doubted from the very first moment of his introduction at Milverton; and he felt that Katharine could never have endured his attentions. By these, however, she could now be troubled no farther; for Sir Charles, being deeply mortified and ashamed of the frantic violence which he had committed at his last visit, had left his home suddenly for London, and was solacing himself, for the contemptuous affront which he had received from Sir Philip Arundel, in the congenial atmosphere of bear gardens and cock pits. Nor had he forgotten how roughly he was handled by George Juxon, whom he at once feared for his courage, and hated for his virtues.

However, he was no longer a visiter at Milverton; his sisters, indeed, still rode over from the Grange occasionally to pass a day with Katharine, and twice Juxon was of the party at table.

To most eyes he would have appeared the admirer rather of these ladies than of Mistress Katharine; for Old Beech rectory was only four miles from Bolton Grange: and though he seldom accepted the invitations of Sir Charles, yet he met them often in hunting or hawking parties, and was apparently a very great favourite with them both. Sophy and Jane Lambert were both pretty: the one, with the rosy cheeks of health and laughing blue eyes; the other, brown and freckled, with an arch look that seemed to detect those secrets which men, and women too, most anxiously conceal, with a provoking and unerring sagacity.

These good-tempered and warm-hearted girls had been at first sadly afflicted about their brother's conduct; but this last care concerning him was now six weeks old, and had been dismissed from their minds. He was, to their great contentment, now absent, and their tongues were again loosened to playfulness.

As the party sat at dinner in Milverton Hall one day, about the middle of June, and as Juxon was carving a capon, that he might help Mistress Alice to a delicate wing,—

"Prithee, Master Juxon," said Jane Lambert with a very roguish expression of the eye, "did you not hear our merry voices on Wednesday evening as we killed a buck under Walton coppice? and did you not see us lift our velvet caps to you? and did you shut your ears to the pleasant horn? or were you charmed to sleep by the fairies under that broad beech tree in the Bird Meadow? or were you saying your prayers? or were you reading Master Ford's Lover's Melancholy? or were you thinking of our Lady St. Katharine here at Milverton?"

Juxon was so confused at this last question that he put the wing of the capon into the sauce boat instead of on the trencher of Mistress Alice, and said, with a stammer and a blush,—

"Really, Mistress Jane, you are too bad; but I know that you dearly love a joke upon anglers: you are always jeering poor Moxon."

"O do not mind her," said Katharine Heywood, coming to his relief: "she is privileged to say what she pleases, without meaning what she says; and my poor name always serves to point a fancy, if she wants one: if she were not so young and so pretty, she might be taken up for a false fortune-teller, and a dealer in witchcraft."

"Cousin Kate, if I am a fortune-teller, I am a true one; and if a witch, you know I am a white one, and work marvellous cures. Shall I tell your fortune? and shall I name the name of a true knight in a far country?"

A glance from the noble eyes of Katharine, which no one perceived but Jane Lambert, rebuked her into silence; and trying, though awkwardly, to laugh off the liberty which she had evidently taken with the feelings of Katharine, she sent her trencher for some venison, and said no more.

Sir Oliver, too, fastening upon the simple fact of Juxon having turned a fisherman, began rallying him for having made so bad an exchange, as to leave the merry and social sport of hunting for the dull and solitary exercise of angling.

"It is true," said the knight, "I have myself been forced to give up the jolly buck hunt; but, life of me, I could never take up with a rod and line in the place of it. I do wonder, when I see a man mope about the meadows, and stand, it may be, for hours, under the same willow, by the broken bank of a sluggish river, that it doth not end in his hanging himself for very weariness of the flat world."

"And yet," quoth Juxon, "fishing hath its pleasures, ay, and its sport too; but if the angler catch nothing, still he hath a wholesome walk in the pure air; and if he go abroad early, and listeneth to the matins of the heaven-loving lark, he shall not want sweeter music than the cry of hounds, and the blasts of hunting horns."

"By my faith, Master Juxon, you are bewitched; but whether by old Margery or by the sparkling eyes of Jane I say not; by Margery, methinks; for the faint heart of an angler will never win such a sprightly lady of the woods as our Jane."

"Nay, nay, Sir Oliver, when a man is bewitched, and by love, too, as Mistress Jane will have it, his thoughts must be too roving and unquiet to sit still upon a mossy bank watching for the trembling of a quill."

"Ay, ay; but he may sit quiet enough, and not watch any thing but his own fancies. I do verily think that thou must be touched with some strange care, to let thy brave gelding race it round his pasture for the madness of his desire to follow the chase, at sound of which he neigheth for his rider, and thou sitting the while like some poor scholar alone upon a tree stump."

"At the least I find one blessing rests on anglers—where they walk, the grace of humility doth grow, lowly as the daisy, and plentiful as the meadow sweet."

"I think," said Katharine, "that Master Juxon has good right to walk the valley with his rod, without being

thus rated for his pleasure; and if he useth to find good thoughts in all he meeteth by the river side in summer evenings it is more than hunters do in the forest."

"Marry, Kate, it is to get rid of thought that men go a-hunting. I tell thee that cares and sorrows, and wrongs and vexations, cannot keep pace with a bold hunter; self is forgotten; all is life, and joy, and wild delight. Troth I have lost mind and heart since the merry days when I hunted."

"I am of thy mind, Sir Oliver," said Juxon, "and the falling leaf of October, and the chill gloom of November skies, can never cloud the heart of a hunter; but when woods are green, and sunbeams warm, and birds are singing, methinks the yelp of a hound is unseasonable music."

"Well," said Jane, "all I know is, that you seldom missed an afternoon last summer; and if it was an early hunting day and a stag turned out in the morning, in spite of the green trees and the warbling larks, Master Juxon was never last in the field; but I will rate you no more: for, may-be, you are afraid of the Puritans, and do study *Master Stubbes's Anatomie of Abuses*, and will give up the wicked ways of Esau, and turn shepherd—gentle shepherd, shall it be, or good?"

"Lady," said Juxon, gravely, "there are good men among the Puritans;" and seeing her colour a little at his tone, he added, with a smile, "and good anglers too; but, in truth, you have hit me hard: for there are good men, who are no Puritans, who think that the sport of hunting is not seemly in a parson, especially in times like these."

"Puritans or no Puritans," said Sir Oliver, "I hope you don't mind the muddy race that croak these black lessons of duty. I do not know whether they be fools or knaves; but they would preach us into walking tombstones, each showing its *memento mori*."

"Beyond all question," replied Juxon, "they are wrong in many things; and push their severity against things innocent and pernicious with little or no distinction, with a strained application of Scripture prohibitions, and with a profound ignorance of human nature; and they seem only to discern God in clouds, and to hear him in the thunder. But there are men of great and stern virtues among them; and, it may be, of gentler hearts and gentler views than we give them credit for."

"I don't believe a word of it. They are fanatics in religion, and knavish traitors in their politics: you think of them with more charity than I do, and it is a false charity, Master Juxon. There was one of my own name and kin among them: he turned republican, forsooth; old England, forsooth, had no liberty; our good church was a harlot, and all the rest of it; and he would seek true freedom in the forests and swamps of New England; and away he went with wife and daughters, and a son, whom he had made as great a fool as himself. A youth, sir, that bearded me with his treason at my own table. I sent him packing at midnight, sir, and would not let him sleep the night under my roof; and, in good truth, he was as ready to go as I to bid him; and now he and his father are felling trees in America for aught I know, or care, indeed."

Katharine Heywood proposed to her aunt and the Lamberts that they should go into the Lime Walk, and Juxon would have turned the conversation; but Sir Oliver, with the images of his absent cousins before him, went on venting his feelings, as if in soliloquy. "The son of a clergyman, too, sir, a younger brother of mine, long dead, and he himself having been the faithful servant of a king, well accounted of for valour and discretion in the camp of the great Gustavus, where he commanded a regiment of musketeers. He to turn against kings and good order! He that punished a fault against discipline like a sin against Heaven, and taught his son that obedience was the first duty of a soldier, to come home, with his brave boy to his own country, and teach him to flout at the majesty of the crown! Troth, sir, the king was quit of bad subjects, and I of troublesome relations, when they took ship for the Plantations. I wish all that are as fantastic in their notions would follow them." At the close of this burst, the old gentleman took a cup of wine with an eagerness that sought relief, and a trembling hand, that betrayed how deeply he was agitated by angry feelings.

Juxon, very unwilling to hear him further on so painful a subject, asked permission of the knight to go and visit Cuthbert Noble for half an hour, and promised to join him afterwards in the bowling green for their customary rubber. As he passed out of the hall, a serving man was coming in with Sir Oliver's pipe and tobacco-box; and leaving the strange weed to perform its calming office, Juxon, happy to escape, ran up stairs to the chamber of Cuthbert.

The surgeon was seated by his side; and from the conversation, which, although they concealed not the subject or the tenour of it at the entrance of Juxon, they soon dropped, it was evident to him that they had a mutual understanding in matters of religion and politics, and were both of them friendly to the cause of the parliament. It had so chanced that, during the whole of his confinement, Cuthbert had, in the person of the surgeon who attended him, been daily in contact with a mind very deeply imbued with serious and severe principles. By this man Cuthbert's heart had been probed to the quick; and, under his influence, combining with a strong predisposition in itself, was made sad and heavy.

CHAP. IX.

Passions are likened best to floods and streames;
The shallow murmur, but the deepe are dumb.

RALEIGH.

When, at the proposal of Mistress Katharine, the ladies left the hall, they proceeded to the Lime Walk: here they separated, Aunt Alice taking Sophia Lambert aside to show her a late addition to her aviary, and

Katharine leading forward Jane towards the fish-pond, where, upon a low bench, placed under the broad arm of a noble cedar, they sat down quietly in the shade.

Under all the disadvantages of a most neglected education, and a rusticity of manner very near to rudeness, Jane Lambert had some rare and valuable qualities, which greatly endeared her to those who took the pains to discover them. This Katharine had done. As for the last three years she had been thrown much into the society of the Lamberts, owing to their residence at Bolton Grange, and the frequent, but yet unavoidable, visits of Sir Charles, she had studied all their characters thoroughly; and the result of her observation satisfied her, that in Jane there was at the bottom a fund of sterling worth, high courage, and genuine affection. Her attainments were few and very imperfect; but she had a vigorous and a healthy intellect, which digested well the best and most generous sentiments of the few books which she was careful to read. Not a tenant or cotter upon the estate of her brother but had a look of honest love for Mistress Jane; and the falconers and foresters were proud of a bright lady who knew their craft so well, and had so true an eye for the spot of a deer or for the dim-seen quarry. If any poor man had a favour to ask of Sir Charles, it was through her, as the ready advocate of all who needed help or implored mercy, that the petition was preferred. Her admiration and love for Katharine Heywood were unbounded: she looked up to her as a model of exalted excellence, and with that affection which partakes of reverence; not that this was of a nature to check or chill the natural display of fondness in their ordinary intercourse; but at times the power of the loftier sentiment over her was so great, that her exuberant and unguarded levity would be in a moment abashed and driven away by one look from Katharine. Thus it had been to-day at table; and now, as they sat, she pressed her hand upon the shoulder of Katharine, and leaned her cheek upon it, and said feelingly,—

“Dearest cousin Kate, why did you look so very sad and so very grave to-day? I was only joking; do not be angry with me, my sweet coz: I shall fret if I think you have been really angry.” Katherine bent her face and kissed the presented cheek.

“Was I ever angry with you, Jane?” she asked. “You know that I never was; but it is true that you often make me very anxious for you, and sometimes quite sad, by your ill-timed and thoughtless gaiety. Consider a little more the consequences of idle words, and their effect on strangers.”

“Well, my dear, I will: but there is no harm done, for I do not look upon Juxon as a stranger; and he is so sensible, and so good-tempered, that he will never take any speech by the wrong handle, and so honest and straightforward, that he will never look under it for a hidden meaning.”

“But yet, Jane, even Juxon will think it odd, that while the victim of your brother’s passionate frenzy still lies on a couch helpless with his wound, and while your brother, who has narrowly escaped committing the heaviest of crimes, has absented himself for very shame, his sister should sport, as if nothing had happened, and be as playful in her words as a girl without care.”

“Do you think so? I should be sorry for that: but you know that I do not love my brother; and Cuthbert is safe from all danger, and out of all pain; and you are well, cousin, and not the sadder for this accident, if I know your heart as well as I love your happiness; and why then should I not appear cheerful, when, in truth, I am so. I should be vexed, indeed, if Juxon thought the worse of me; for he is one whose good opinion is worth having; but as for that of the world, I care not a jot about it.”

“There you are wrong, dear Jane: the opinion of the world may, and must be, in some things, despised, but the rule of its established proprieties and gentle observances can never be transgressed, without bringing some heavy penalty on the offender.”

“I do not love the world so well, dear Katharine, as to care for either its frowns or its favours; and I looked not for an advocate of its cold maxims and its deceitful forms in you—let it see me as I am.”

“There is your error, Jane: it cannot, it will not, it cares not to take the trouble to see you as you are; it looks only at your *seeming*; and though to be is better than to seem, and many seem fine gold that are but base metal, yet no one can despise the judgment of the world without rashness and without danger. They who place themselves above the opinion of the world, and the best rules of society, cast off a useful and an appointed restraint in the discipline of life.”

“Sweet coz, I love to hear you lecture, but you will never make me wise: I was born under a common star, and reared with foresters:—look as I like, and speak as I think.”

“Ah, dear Jane, you will some day learn to govern your bright looks, and to keep your sweetest thoughts locked closely in your heart. Wisdom herself, and, perhaps, though God forbid, sorrow will be your teacher.”

The serene eyes of the majestic Katharine were clouded, for a passing moment, with such a sadness as a compassionate angel might have worn; and she pressed Jane tenderly to her breast.

“Promise me,” she said, “dearest cousin, promise me faithfully that you never again hint even to any human being, the idle fancy that hung this morning on your lips, or the name you would have connected with it.”

“The promise has been already made in my own mind: your look was enough to make me wish the light word unspoken, and the tongue that uttered it blistered for a month to come. You are the only one at table who could have understood my allusion. I am certain that the most distant thought of my meaning could not enter the mind of your father or your aunt.”

“This, I believe, and it is well it should not: the bare suspicion, harboured in his mind, would make him miserable for life, and embitter his last moments with unworthy fears. I know his nature well: much as he loves me, and confides in me, to pacify his anger, and quiet his jealous apprehensions, would be, even for me, an impossible achievement; and yet he knows, or should know, that I am an English daughter.”

“How is it, Katharine, that you command all hearts? that not a man approaches you but he is at once, as by some sweet force, compelled to love you? and yet it is no wonder: there cannot be on earth another Katharine.”

“Cousin, this is idle and wicked talk; you must not use such vain and sinful words: would you could see me as I see myself, when, prostrate in weakness, I implore and find strength where alone it is to be obtained; but you cannot understand me yet.”

“Nay, Katharine, do not rebuke me so sharply for simple truths: why Charles himself is so tamed and

altered for the day whenever he returns from Milverton, that I have sometimes been selfish enough to wish to see you his, in the hope that I might find a brother changed in nature; but no, dear Kate, I love you too well ever seriously to dwell on such a desire."

"Jane, do not, prithee, do not pursue this foolish fancy further."

"It is not fancy: can I not see? have I not eyes, and the perceptions and sympathies of woman? I tell you, the poor woe-begone scholar, that lies lonely on his couch above there, did look upon you as good men look up to the blue heavens."

"Cousin, I will not stay another moment with you if your discourse is not changed to some better tone than these weak and unwomanly delusions of your idle brain do give it."

"As you will, blessed coz, I say no more; but one need not be very deeply read in love-craft to prophesy that one of these fine days the worthy young rector of Old Beech will tell you that himself which I may not tell you for him."

"Jane," said Katharine, as she slowly rose, and they moved back towards the Lime Walk, "you are not, my dear girl, serious, I hope, in this last surmise: you are not in earnest: it would greatly perplex and trouble me if I thought you were, and had good reason: about Cuthbert I am sure that you are altogether mistaken."

"No, Katharine; I am a poor unfashioned creature, with little knowledge of the world, and little skill in books, or fair accomplishments: but this one gift I have,—I can read the human countenance, and see written thereon the thoughts of the heart, the play of the secret passions, the inclinations of the inner will, in characters plain to my faithful eye, and plainly I repeat my conviction that both these men do love you. The one will give you no trouble: his flame will burn within his melancholy heart, like a lamp glimmering in a tomb; but the other will make open avowal of what he is proud to feel, and will surely be courageous enough to confess: now do not look so pale and grave, but thank me for the timely caution. Kiss me, sweet coz; my sister is calling for me, and we must go." The tall and queen-like Katharine folded her young cousin to her heart; and Jane felt a tear fall heavy on her cheek as they embraced and parted.

Katharine had one of those fine and stately forms which the sculptor of ancient times would have chosen to copy with his happiest skill, as the incarnation of wisdom. Her features were Roman; her dark hazel eyes were long and even, and there shone in them a soft, chaste fire; her mouth was pensive; but though the expression of her countenance was ever serious, yet was it human, gentle, and she would more fitly have represented the melancholy vestal, than the calm, passionless Minerva. She returned leisurely to her favourite cedar, and seated herself in that sad repose of the mind into which even the strongest and most virtuous will sometimes allow themselves to sink, as a short relief from the internal conflict. It was clear to her that Jane had penetrated that one secret, which she would hardly confess to herself, and which she could have wished had been altogether confined to her own bosom, and that one other, from which she felt resolutely and for ever divided. It was strange that the open-hearted girl had never mentioned it before; it was well that she had only now hinted it so vaguely as to leave it impenetrably veiled to others; it was well, too, that she had thus early arrested the danger of all further discovery, and obtained from the fond and faithful Jane that promise of secrecy, on which she could safely rely. Still it was disturbing to her pure and noble spirit, that even this sweet girl should be privy to her heart's great trial. However, Jane would understand her future silence on the subject, and well knew that those confidences, which the weaker order of women are ever ready to pour into the ear of the female friend, would never pass her lips. She held them too sacred, and she had that dignity of soul which in a sorrow of that peculiar nature is all-sufficient to itself. Could Cuthbert from his couch of patient suffering, or George Juxon from his solitary rides and walks, have looked in upon the heart of Katharine, and seen the image, which often rose before her mind's eye, and as often as it did so was felt to be a cherished one, the former would have striven against his weak idolatry yet more resolutely than he already did, and the manly Juxon would have given to the wind his vain hopes, and would have forborne to distress her with the language of a suitor.

Katharine did not return to the mansion till long after all the guests had departed.

It was the hour of supper; but she pleaded headache, retired to her chamber, and seated herself at the window to watch the dying day. There was a universal calm in nature; every leaf was still: there was a holy hush around; colours of a blessed hue streaked the far western sky; they grew faint, they faded, and the grey gloom of a summer's night rested upon all things. She was roused from a long reverie of sweet though solemn fancies by the entrance of her maid with a lamp, and in a few minutes afterwards she was joined by her aunt Alice.

There was never in any nature more of the milk of human kindness than in Mistress Alice:—her own disappointments had subdued her vivacity, without souring her temper, or freezing her manners. Forgetful of herself, she lived for and in the happiness of others, and her niece Katharine was to her as a daughter;—not that she exercised any thing like a mother's control; Katharine had so ripe an understanding, and so mature a judgment, that Mistress Alice leaned upon her mind as though it were that of a sister or a bosom friend, to whose opinion she was pleased to defer her own.

She loved Sir Oliver with a true affection, but she was not blind to the faults of his character. She knew him to be impatient of contradiction, full of strong prejudices, easy and indolent—the being of habit and of custom—but violent when thwarted, and selfish when opposed. Nevertheless a kind brother, a fond father, a liberal master, and a most loyal subject. It always deeply grieved her when she heard him speak harshly of her nephew Edward Heywood, and his son Francis, for they were the offspring of an unfortunate brother, to whom she had been very closely attached from her childhood.

"This has been a trying day to me as well as to you, Katharine," she said when they were left together. "I think my poor brother allows himself to be more troubled about public matters than is good for him; and I wish that he would avoid the mention of your unhappy cousins in connection with those subjects—however wrong they may be, they have cares and troubles enough for pity, rather than hard words and ill wishes."

Katharine looked steadily at her aunt when she began to speak, and was rather startled at her opening words; but as she proceeded, discerning clearly it was only a sympathy in common with her own that she invited, replied, quietly, that "it was indeed very painful to see the good temper of her dear father giving way

so early in times like these, which were only the beginning of troubles; but consider, dearest aunt, he has passed all his life in pleasure and ease—my blessed mother made his peace her study; and, though she could never win him to her own happiest views of the only bliss, her whole life was a transcript of those gentle and charitable sentiments which were the secret springs of all her actions. He reposed upon her character, and found a tranquillity, of which he shared the comfort, but which lived not within his own breast.”

“Well, Katharine, I am sure you follow in your mother’s path, and as far as daughter may, you supply her vacant place in his esteem and reverence. He loves you not as parent loves a child. You are his daughter, but you are also, in all seemly matters, his cherished adviser:—I have often noted it, my dear, with joy.”

“Do not humble me so sadly—my mother’s path!—alas! I am far from it—far out of the way, when I think of her exalted hopes, her self-denying life, and her settled peace; and when I look within, I am ashamed, and may well tremble at the comparison:—but yet I cherish the memory of her bright example; and the words you have just spoken shall rouse me to do all by my father, which if her sainted spirit could look down upon us she would herself approve. I know the duty of a daughter, and I know how much the happiness and the honour of a father may be promoted by her due performance of it. You have well shown me the better way. For my father, and to my father, I will devote my life, and cast self and all softer wishes behind me. When the first rough steps of difficulty are passed, the noble qualities of my father will all be seen:—bless you, Aunt Alice, for your sweet counsel.”

“My dear Katharine, you are not wont to be thus excited: your calmness and your even dignity have ever been beyond your age: I meant simply what I said, and designed not, by any hint, to stimulate you to any course of conduct beyond that which I have always observed you to pursue:—you are not well—you think too much of what may happen—troubles are fast travellers, and need not be met half way—you are not well.”

“I believe you are right—I cannot be well—the day has been oppressively hot—and my temples throb with pain.”

Mistress Alice taking from the dressing table a curious shaped bottle of eastern porcelain, which contained elder-flower water, sat down tenderly by Katharine, and bathed her temples with gentle care. The noble girl leaned back upon her chair, silent, passive, grateful:—no sob escaped her; no nervous tears were allowed to fall; but to a keener eye than that of her benevolent aunt a slight quiver on the lip, and a heaving of the folds above her bosom, quicker than the wont, might have told that very deep and painful emotions were struggling in her full heart.

Mistress Alice would not leave her till she saw her quietly put to bed, when, giving her the kiss of peace and good night as her pale cheek lay upon the pillow, she took her lamp, and went softly out of the chamber.

Restored to solitude and silence, Katharine sent her sweet thoughts and prayerful wishes to that distant land, where, upon the narrow clearing of some tall and ancient forest, in their canvass booth or rude hut, after a day of new and unaccustomed toils, her self-exiled but heroic cousins reposed: the picture of their labours was to her mind primitive and sacred—and all the images presented to her fancy were peaceful.

CHAP. X.

Can warres, and jarres, and fierce contention,
Swoln hatred, and consuming envie, spring
From piety?

HENRY MORE.

The good parson of Cheddar was never informed of the severe misfortune of his son till all danger was long past, and his convalescence was advanced to such a point that he could assure his parents he should soon be perfectly restored to health and to his wonted activity and strength.

Noble and his wife were both deeply affected at the thought of all which Cuthbert must have suffered, and at the considerate care which he had manifested for their feelings. His letter was brief, and his relation of the conduct of Sir Charles Lambert was given in such a calm and quiet tone that it was plain he had learned the hard lesson to forgive an enemy. Yet it contained some expressions which troubled his father with the too sure presage of that course which Cuthbert was about to follow.

He intended, it said, to leave Milverton at Michaelmas, and should recommend that Arthur, who was sufficiently forward in his studies, should be then entered at the University. “I shall not,” it added, “accompany the dear boy to Oxford; indeed, with my sentiments, it would be alike unjust to Sir Oliver and to the youth himself to retain my present office in this family. Where a tutor is called upon to conceal his opinions and suppress his feelings (on the most important and the most sublime subjects which affect the present interests of society and the everlasting happiness of man), in his daily intercourse with his pupil, both parties are very seriously injured.”

It was particularly remarked by his mother that, in this letter, while Cuthbert acknowledged, in general terms of warmth, the kindness with which he had been treated throughout his illness by the whole family at Milverton, and while he mentioned the friendliness of Juxon, of whom they had never previously heard, and dwelt still more on his deep obligations to Master Randal, the surgeon, he never even named Mistress Katharine, of whom he had spoken with such a romantic warmth in his former correspondence.

“My dear,” said Noble, “Cuthbert has been on the brink of the grave, and his mind is full of all that has been solemn and awakening in that awful experience; but it is not a good sign that he has avoided all detail of

that experience to us. I doubt not that his piety has been deepened, but I am not without a fear that his head is taken up with new notions, both of doctrine and of duty, and that he was unwilling to open them out to us. However, if by any path he has advanced to a nearer and more affecting view of his Redeemer than that to which he has hitherto attained, let us rejoice and thank God. He has all along been deficient in that simplicity of view which begets humility, peace, and joy:—he refines too much on every subject which is presented to his mind; muses when he should act; speculates when he should pray; and is lost in the cold and unsubstantial clouds which veil the mountain, when he might stand upon the serene summit in the warm light of the Sun of righteousness.

“It was ever thus with him. In childhood we neglected to subdue his will, and we shall suffer, and he himself will suffer for our fond but mistaken indulgence.”

“I am sure, dear, that he was always affectionate and dutiful, and always will be.”

“Nay, Constance, that does not follow. He will always love us, I am well persuaded; but whether he will remain obedient to our wishes in those trying scenes which may sooner or later be presented to our eyes is very doubtful.”

“Well, Noble, it will be time enough to think of that when the trial comes:—happen what may, I feel certain that all will be safe and happy where you are. God ever takes good care of his own; and I always feel that there is a blessing and a guard round about our dwelling, for your dear sake.”

“Wife, how can you talk so weakly. What is there in two worms of the earth, like you and me, that should procure for us an exemption from calamity?—but this is unprofitable talking—sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof—to enjoy is to obey—and the voice of thanksgiving is melody. Let us bless God for past mercies, and bless him by trust for all future goodness.”

Their conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Peter, to say that Master Daws, the sour precisian, who, it may be remembered, would have before prevented the customary sports and pleasures on the festival of the Mayday, was at the gate, and wanted to see Parson Noble, for a few minutes, on very urgent business.

To rise and go out and ask him into his study with all courtesy was, of course, the duty of Noble, both as a brother minister and a Christian gentleman; but it was with no doubt as to the nature and object of his visit that he did so, and with a desire to bring their interview to as early a close as might consist with common civility.

The contrast of the two parsons as they entered the study, and as Master Daws seated himself in the tall chair which Noble drew forward for him with a quick and rather, indeed, an impatient motion, was comic in the extreme, and would have greatly diverted any of Noble’s old college cronies, as it would, of a truth, the good vicar himself, could he have looked on, and been spared the vexation of playing as a principal in the dull performance.

Master Daws was a tall, gaunt, bony personage, of a stature exceeding six feet by nearly two inches: he presented a rigid outline of sharp angles from his cheek bones to his pointed and protuberant ankles. His features were coarse; his complexion muddy; his eyes round and dull; his forehead low; and there was an expression of bad temper about the corners of his mouth. His black hair was cut close, and he had thin weak eye-brows.

He seated himself with a slow solemnity of manner; placed his tall greasy cane erect between his knees, and folded his clumsy hands upon the top of it; turned up the whites of his eyes in a pretended ejaculation; and in a drawling tone delivered himself of his hypocritical errand as follows:—

“My dear brother in the Lord—thou art esteemed a master in Israel—thou hast a name to live. I would fain hope that thou art not a willing partaker of the sins of thy people; but verily they stink in the nostrils of all true Christians, who are thy neighbours. We have conferred together—we are sore grieved—we are ashamed for thy sake—and I am come to reason with thee alone concerning the abominations which are daily committed in thy parish, lest thou perish and thy people with thee.”

The good parson listened to this strange address without anger, without wonder, and without reply. The graceful ease of his composed attitude of attention,—the clear light of his kind intelligent eyes,—his high pale intellectual forehead,—his frame slender, and a little bent with the weight of advancing years, and the thin white hairs scattered on his temples,—would have made the sincere but deluded fanatic hesitate to proceed, or would have melted his remonstrance into all that was gentle and affectionate in expression. On the conscious, the interested, and the incensed hypocrite, however, his calmness had the opposite effect; and Master Daws, with a most stern tyranny of tongue, in language clumsily misquoted from the sacred books of the prophets, and grossly misapplied, went forward to denounce the wrath of Heaven against the poor rustics of Cheddar and their aged pastor. This speech we would rather leave to the imagination of such readers as may be familiar with the incongruous and disgusting jargon in which the sour zealots and the gloomy sectarians, who were then daily extending their severe notions, uttered their iron anathemas against the innocent gaieties of life. At the close of his very offensive harangue, he drew forth from his pocket a small volume in black letter, and presented it to the good vicar with these words:—

“Brother, I have been perhaps too warm; but the fire burned within me, and it is accounted the first duty of a servant to be faithful. It is my zeal for the Lord;—and herewith, in love and compassion to thy poor blinded people, and in pity to thy soul, I do present to thee for thy private reading, and for the instruction of thy benighted mind, this book, which is *The Anatomie of Abuses: containing a Discoverie or briefe Summarie of such notable Vices and Corruptions as now raigne in many Christian Countreyes of the Worlde: but especially in the Countrey of Ailgna: together with most fearfull Examples of God’s Judgements executed upon the Wicked for the same, as well in Ailgna of late, as in other Places elsewhere. Very godly, to be read of all true Christians every where; but most chiefly to be regarded in England. Made Dialogue-wise by Phillip Stubbes*. This wordy title-page, placing his spectacles upon his nose, he read slowly with a nasal whine, which the compression of the ill constructed spectacles he wore not a little assisted.”

“Neighbour Daws,” said Noble patiently, “I do not need thy service in this matter, seeing I have on my own shelves the book of Master Phillip Stubbes; and I deny not that it contains some godly maxims and sound

precepts, and it may have done some good by its ridicule of many vanities, and its condemnation of many sins and abuses: but I think he distinguishes not between things innocent and hurtful, and tears up many pleasant flowers of God's giving, under the dark fancy that they are poisonous weeds;—for the rest that thou hast spoken thyself concerning the little flock and fold over which the providence of God hath made me the humble and willing shepherd, I will not call thee unmannerly and uncharitable. I have heard thee with pain, though with patience; and, while I give thee full credit for sincerity in thy opinions, desire not to hear them further, now or ever again."

As thus he spoke, he rose, and indicated by that action his wish that the interview should not be prolonged. Daws also, with a horrible smile upon his hideous face, in which was to be discerned all the mad irritation of a mean person, who felt himself despised, and for the moment baffled in producing alarm, raised himself slowly from his seat, and answered,—“Satan, the prince of hell, is lord over thy village and thy people—and he has blinded thy aged eyes, and sealed thy dumb mouth:—verily the Lord shall visit for these things, and that speedily;”—so saying, he stalked out with uplifted eyes, and as he passed the threshold stamped the dust from his feet with a vindictive action, and departed. “I wish that Cuthbert could have witnessed this scene,” said Noble, as he saw the ruthless and envious bigot pass forth out of the wicket, and stride angrily across the church-yard; “but the wish is vain.”

Upon inquiring of Peter, he learned that, on the preceding evening, this morose personage had found a dozen children playing round a small bonfire, in a glen about half a mile from the village, and celebrating, as a game of play, the festival of St. John's eve,—the observance of which had in the present reign been discontinued. The joyous urchins, alike innocent of pagan or popish idolatry, were dancing about the flames, and tossing flowers into the rivulet, which flowed past the spot where they had kindled them, when Daws, who had his secret designs in many a walk which he took to the neighbourhood of Cheddar, came suddenly upon them, and driving them off with execrations and blows, kicked the half burned sticks into the water:—the little fearless sinners, however, making a swift and active retreat up a rock, where they felt secure from pursuit, revenged themselves by shouts and laughter; and in this the little fellow who had witnessed the ludicrous fall and flight of this same Daws on May morning, and who had been again recognised by him this evening, led the merry chorus of impudent little rebels with conspicuous glee.

Although Noble listened to this news with a smile, the severe and mischievous spirit evinced during his interview with Daws, both in language, tone, and manner, gave him more uneasiness than he chose to impart to his wife, to whom he related much of what had passed between them in a light and jocular vein. But, alone, he could not but be impressed with the conviction, that a curate of this harsh and malevolent character was a very uncomfortable and unsafe neighbour, and might hereafter prove dangerous.

However, he had now plainly paid his last visit in the quality of brother clergyman; and, if he was ever to come in that of enemy and accuser, he could only do so under the restraining guidance of that mighty, merciful, and mysterious Providence, which ordereth all things wisely and well.

The good pastor was ill qualified to counteract the intrigues, or to contend with the violence, of parties. He was a quietist, an optimist, a dweller at home, enjoying to-day, and taking little anxious thought for the morrow. His hours were divided between his parish, his study, and his garden.

Old Blount, the most honest and hospitable of English franklins, was the only neighbour with whom he could associate upon a footing of mutual intercourse: but there was not a threshold in the village which he did not often cross with some friendly inquiry or cheerful words upon his lip; not a child, that would not rather run to than from him; and the cottage curs were too familiar with his step and voice to do more than raise and turn their heads as they lay watching at the doors, when Noble passed by.

His chief recreation was the weekly visit to Wells. As regularly as the appointed day came round, the worthy parson mounted his old white mare, with her well stuffed saddle, rejoicing, in a seat covered with cloth of a pale sky blue, much faded, and he was carried at a meditative jogtrot to the fair and ancient city.

Here, at the house of his friend, he would refresh his spirits by listening to (and sometimes joining in the rich performance of) the best madrigals of the never surpassed composers of that day, and taking his part in most pleasant and tuneful exercises on the viol and the lute.

The troublous aspect of the times had of late somewhat altered the character of these meetings; and the two holyday hours were now for the most part, if not entirely, consumed in grave and anxious consultations on public affairs. The severe spirit of the church reformers of that period frowned upon every semblance of pleasure: to them the song of harvest, the dance of the village green, and the merry catch round the winter hearth, were things sinful and forbidden, and the peal of the solemn organ in the house of prayer and praise was hated as an abomination.

Yet they might have read in Scripture, in the very words of holy men of God, that “the ear of the Lord listeneth to the song of the reaper, and the joy of harvest; and that he delights not to turn the dance of the vintage into mourning, nor to make the young cease from their music:” but because the good provisions of God are daily abused by the many, who consider not the gracious Giver of them, therefore they would have the bread of all steeped in tears, and eaten with the bitter herbs of mourning. Of a truth, in some degree every Christian man, and minister more especially, must be a mourner, and is: but the spirit would fail and faint if it might not also taste the rich consolations of a hallowed joy; and if, amid the labours, the toils, and the mean cares of the daily pilgrimage, man might not stoop to gather the flower at his feet, or pause to listen to the feathered choristers of God's own temple, it would be to refuse and put away, with a sullen unthankfulness, the comforts which the Father of mercies has provided.

Of such enjoyments Noble was most fearlessly fond. To him the world of nature was a vast and richly illuminated volume; on the various pictures of which he could pore for ever, with all the wonder, and with all the rapture, of childhood:—“his Father made them all”—that was his feeling. The arrows of trouble and disappointment fell blunted from a bosom, the shield of which was a God seen, acknowledged, and felt, in all things visible, as the very essence of love.

CHAP. XI.

He makes the infirmity of his temper pass for revelations.

BUTLER.

The summer months at Milverton rolled swiftly on, Cuthbert slowly, but perfectly, regained his strength; and, early in August, he was once more able to walk abroad and to take exercise on horseback; but his vivacity and animation did not return with his health: he was no longer the cheerful and entertaining companion at table, or in the intervals of leisure. Sir Oliver found him a dull restraint, and wearied of his presence: even his pupil, who was truly attached to him, and was still, in the hours of study, delighted with his preceptor, felt the sad and depressing change; and if it had not been for the frequent visits of George Juxon, would have been disappointed of many of those joyous and manly exercises which Juxon delighted to encourage, and in which he excelled. The only diversions by which Cuthbert could now be attracted were fencing, and the use of the broad sword: but he practised them without a smile; and there was an earnestness of attention and a seriousness of effort about him, whenever he took a lesson from Juxon, which drove away smiles and jokes. His stamp was angry; the glance of his eye rapid and piercing; and after six weeks of occasional practice, when Juxon told him he would soon be a strong and complete swordsman, the grave scholar, so quiet and gentle in all his ways and words on common occasions, hastily and vehemently exclaimed, "Thank God."

"For what?" asked his good-tempered instructor, "for what do you thank God so warmly?"

"It matters not, it matters not," replied Cuthbert, hastily; "time will show."

Juxon put down his sword, and, looking him earnestly in the face, asked him if he was well?

"What a strange question! quite well."

"No, Master Cuthbert, it is not always that a man is well who calls himself so, or even who thinks himself to be so. We are alone; we are friends; tell me what has thus moved you; tell me what it is that has so changed and saddened you; what are the dark purposes which lie hid in your bosom?"

"Methinks this question is yet more strange. I have no purposes that be not honest; none that will not bear the light of open day; but, yet, I may not care to trouble others or myself by babbling of them."

"Does the blow still rankle in your bosom, Cuthbert? Have you retracted the pardon uttered on your bed? And do you mean to seek out Sir Charles, and make him do battle for your revenge?"

"Master Juxon, that is not well asked: such purpose would be dark, indeed: was not my pardon spoken before God, and at the grave's mouth? No; I forgave him as I hope to be forgiven; nay, in that it was a stab which sought my life I forgave it more readily than I could have done a blow; that, indeed, such slaves we are of pride, that might have rankled still."

"True—I had forgotten—and my words have wronged you; but, Cuthbert, whatever are your purposes, they do not make you happy. I met you the other day riding much faster than is your wont, and your countenance was clouded, and your teeth were set, as if in hottest anger, and you would not stop, but only muttered a good morrow as you passed swiftly by. What do all these things mean?"

"They mean that I am sick at heart for England; sick for the meek man's wrongs. I had just then met an aged countryman, his furrowed cheek newly branded, for a churchyard brawl: I questioned him closely, and found him a sufferer for conscience' sake, falsely accused and persecuted by a godless parson of his parish."

"Cuthbert, did the countryman tell truth? Did he name the parish and the parson?"

"He did; I know them well: in Oxfordshire was this outrage done, and the crime is not three months old."

"Well, here is a case of wrong to be made known and to be redressed. Scandals there must be, even in the most sacred offices, when they are held by mere men. Some are cruel, and some are wanton by nature, and to punish these we have our judges and our bishops."

"Yes we have—and the same who ruled the decisions of the Star-chamber. The wrong redressed! it would be smiled at; and if it were punished, what then? There's nothing but the grave-worm can take away the brand from the old man's cheek: his grandchildren will put their little fingers on the mark and ask the story of it, and he will tell them what he told me, and more. It is a hard world, Juxon."

"And always was, and always will be. Legislation is a coarse thing: some innocent will always suffer with the guilty."

"The guilty! is liberty of conscience guilt? Look you, Master Juxon, there are good men and true ready to stand up for that liberty."

"And for a little more, perhaps: your secret is out; so, instead of our sword-play being mere exercise for pastime, after college fashion, I have been teaching the noble science of defence to a stout Parliamentary, to an enemy of mother church."

"Nay; no enemy to any persons or any institutions, but to the oppressor every where, and to oppression every where, by whatever titles or names they may be disguised."

"You confess, then, that you wish an appeal to the sword."

"I say not so; but if it come, as it may, and as in my present judgment it surely will, I shall be well pleased that my fingers have been taught to fight; for I would not be wanting in the day of battle."

"I have heard you, Cuthbert, speak words of Christ's religion since your late illness, which I have thought of so sweet and heavenly a temper, as might well engage all men to follow the truth in love. Surely the weapons of a Christian's warfare are not carnal."

"I tell you, the fat heart of the oppressor is proof against all other, and they that govern with the headsmen's axe must look to be wounded by the patriot's sword."

"Stop, Cuthbert, we'll say no more on this subject—you are standing upon a precipice—the gulf beneath is

treason."

"Not against Heaven, Juxon; and it is a poor thing to me to be judged by my fellow man."

"Yes, Cuthbert, against Heaven. Your father will say so."

"Never; though it is true that my father is old and timid, and he would bear the errors of the crown in charity and in hope, rather than see them openly opposed by arms."

"And you would punish them in the field of battle?"

"And gain a victory over the crown for the greater honour and more golden purity of the crown itself!"

"Are you so weak, Cuthbert, as to think that a crown, beaten from a king's head by the sword, and lying soiled by the dust of a fall, can ever be replaced on the same brows with honour?—No! but among the successful rebels, some stern spirit would be found to wipe it and put it on; whose sceptre would have no peaceful globe surmounted by a dove; but would rather be a naked sword crimsoned to the hilt with blood."

"Never, never:—you, like many good and generous persons, are the creature of prejudice and of circumstance; you do not see, and you will not believe, that the temple of true freedom needs only to be opened, and all the virtuous and the holy will flock there to worship in peace, and they will guard it alike from the rude tyrant and from the slavish rabble."

"Cuthbert, you dream, and will awake some day in bitterness of soul. But if these be your sentiments—if thoughts like these fill your mind and colour your gloomy fancies—no wonder that your looks are sad."

"My fancies are not gloomy. They are solemn. I am not sad, but I am serious. In visions of the night, I have seen this earth regenerate—its people walking in peace—holiness on the bells of the horses. I have heard the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise. I have listened for sighs, and looked for tears, but there were none. I have asked about their happiness, and they have told me, 'In this region there is no one to hurt or to destroy:—we do not teach every man his neighbour, for from the least to the greatest we all know God.' Such have been my revelations; and I have been called, and chosen by name, to join that sacred band, which is to awaken a slumbering and captive people, and lead them forward to prepare the way for that monarchy of truth and universal love which is even now about to descend and bless mankind. The spear shall be broken, the sword turned into a ploughshare, and the sovereign Lord of all shall stand a second time upon the earth, and proclaim his promised reign of holiness and peace."

Juxon listened to this rhapsody with awe and pain; and not without an effort to shake the strong delusion, which was evidently taking a fast hold upon the mind of Cuthbert.

"My dear friend," he said, laying his hand gently upon his arm, "I confess that you greatly alarm me. Consider that, for the first two months after your wound, you were very weak in body; you were often obliged to have recourse to opiates to procure rest; and you was not in a state to examine the impressions made on your mind, and to separate illusion from reality. There is nothing wonderful in these phantasma having floated past your mind's eye: it is with sounds as with sights; the music of a dream is often clear and ravishing to the mind's ear; and our name may be thus, to our sleeping fancy, very distinctly called and connected with some message or charge of solemn import spoken as by a voice from Heaven. Or, it may be, Cuthbert, that the enemy of your soul, knowing that you can only be led aside from the path of duty and peace by the fair semblance of true religion and freedom, hath assumed these angel shapes to lure you to your ruin.

"I can understand the plain and manly language of a Hampden, but this I cannot. It is unhealthy; it is the false fire of the fanatic. Rouse your intellect, and turn away from these notions, or you will be entangled and overcome: strangle the serpent while you have strength to do so."

Cuthbert replied only by the grave smile of one so firmly persuaded of the truth of his own convictions as rather to pity than resent the very unwelcome effort to disturb them. However, he now communicated to Juxon that, in another month (it being then the end of September), he should accompany his pupil to enter at Oxford, and should there leave him, and proceed himself to join a friend in London. This arrangement, he observed, would enable him to reach the capital about the time when the new parliament was to assemble; for it had been just resolved by the King, in his great council of peers held at York, that a parliament should be called to sit on the third of November following.

George Juxon was truly concerned to find that Cuthbert was so far gone in his views, that to reclaim him seemed hopeless; but there were so many amiable and engaging points in his character, that he could not allow any one chance of recovering him from a course which he truly thought would distress his father and destroy his own peace of mind, altogether neglected.

He was aware that Cuthbert maintained a scrupulous silence on the subjects on which he had just spoken in his intercourse with the family; but he had often observed that, whatever was the matter of discourse at table, or elsewhere, the opinion of Mistress Katharine had great weight with him. He determined, therefore, to make a full disclosure to her of the state of Cuthbert's mind, and to engage her good offices to dissipate, if possible, the cloud of illusions which obscured or dazzled his present judgment. He was, however, obliged to defer this step by the sudden arrival of Sophia and Jane Lambert; the latter of whom instantly joined Sir Oliver and the ladies in the gallery, to communicate the arrival of their brother at the Grange, and his intention of again presenting himself at Milverton that evening, to express his sorrow to Sir Oliver for what had passed in the spring, and to acknowledge duly the frank and Christian forgiveness of Cuthbert Noble.

Juxon learned from Sophia Lambert that Sir Charles having met with Sir Philip Arundel at some place of public amusement, had demanded satisfaction of him for the insulting words which Sir Philip had addressed to him on the evening when they last parted at Milverton; that they had retired to an adjoining tavern with their friends; and Sir Philip having been wounded, the quarrel was amicably adjusted, and the parties shook hands.

By this duel, Sir Charles at once succeeded in stopping the mouth of one who would have reported the occurrence at Milverton more to his disadvantage and shame than it was yet considered among his London acquaintance, and knew that he should in some degree recover his lost ground with Sir Oliver and his neighbours in Warwickshire. For the credit of their family the sisters were naturally desirous of this; and, therefore, they had preceded their brother with cheerfulness, and with an earnest anxiety to secure him a

good reception. Jane, indeed, well knew the feelings of Katharine Heywood, and loved her happiness far before that of Sir Charles; but still he was a brother, and the head of their house; and though she secretly determined to divert his attentions and his hopes from Katharine, she wished that the two families should resume their old footing of neighbourhood and frequent intercourse.

The various projects devised by the kind heart of Jane Lambert were always most readily aided by an acute and contriving mind.

She had already rendered Katharine a most important service in the matter of George Juxon's suit, which she had put an end to before any declaration of it distressing to the fair and noble object of it had been made.

The modesty, the good sense, and the manliness of Juxon, enabled him, with very little assistance from the delicate though playful management of Jane Lambert, to discern the painful truth. He plainly saw that Katharine Heywood was not at all disposed to favour, or even entertain, his pretensions as a lover; and he made a worthy and successful effort to stifle in his breast the sentiment, which she had inspired, that he might still enjoy the privilege of visiting at Milverton as an intimate, and might attain to the happy and soothing distinction of being her true and faithful friend:—this consolation was already granted to his manly heart. Katharine saw and valued his sterling qualities; and to no one in the whole circle of her acquaintance were her manners more open, cordial, and confiding than to George Juxon.

It was a curious thing, that evening, to see with what a shy, embarrassed air the noble Cuthbert, noble even in his errors, received the silken, though forced and momentary, submission of the man, whose savage anger had well nigh deprived him of life. No looker on, ignorant of their peculiar relation to each other, at the first interview, could have remotely guessed it from the manner or bearing of either.

The cheek of Sir Charles was indeed coloured by a deep, though transient, stain of crimson, as he made his obeisance to Mistress Katharine, and took her slowly extended hand,—but with Sir Oliver he was quite at his ease immediately; not so, however, with Juxon, whose presence a little disconcerted him throughout the evening.

As the weather was, for the season, very open and mild, and as there was a fine moon, it was soon arranged by Sir Oliver, that the party from the Grange should sup at Milverton, and ride home by moonlight. To Sir Oliver the reconciliation was most satisfactory; and as he saw Cuthbert sitting at the table, as strong and healthy as before the misfortune, and as he considered the name of Sir Charles completely white-washed in society, by his duel with Sir Philip Arundel, he dismissed all further thought about the ferocious crime which he committed. It was now passed without the sad consequences which might have followed—it was forgiven—it was already dwindling into very insignificant proportions—and was soon to be altogether forgotten.

After the pleasant customs of that time, when supper was ended, the music books were introduced—the viol and lute were brought;—and an hour, or more, was delightfully spent to the health and refreshment of mind and body, in that familiar concert, where each person was expected to sing the appointed part at first sight. Among the permitted pleasures of our existence, those derived from the gift of sweet sounds, and from the divine art of musical composition, may be classed among the purest and most refined.

They sung a few of the best madrigals of Orlando Gibbons, and Bird's rich harmony—"My Mind to me a Kingdom is;"—and they closed with a flowing glee for five voices, from Gibbons, entitled "The Silver Swan." The summer parlour in which they sung had been found so warm that the casements were half open, and the moonlight streamed in, scarcely overpowered by the lamp, which stood upon the table, and but dimly illuminated the oaken wainscot and ceiling. Except a whispered word, to the one sitting next, on the richness of Bird's harmonies, or on the delicate and sweet style of Orlando Gibbons, a long and silent pause followed the evening's performance, and they seemed to be enjoying again in memory what they had just made vocal. Suddenly there stole upon them from among the trees, at a short distance, a simple and soft melody of a most tender expression. It was the music of a pipe or reed, but such as none of the party had ever heard before. The tones were various,—now full and clear; now faint and exquisite; now died away into a charmed stillness; now, again, they were heard slow, chaste, and solemn, as if the burden of the air were some sacred hymn. At last, after ravishing the ears of the astonished party, who stood at the window, or leaned upon their chairs with mute attention, by breathing forth airs of strange harmony, which none could distinctly recognise, the invisible minstrel closed the magical prelude, in heavenly and melancholy notes of surpassing sweetness, with the favourite air of "Now, O now," by the famous Dowland, the well known friend of the immortal William Shakspeare. Not one of the party observed the sudden paleness and deep agitation of Katharine, while the sweet notes of this beautiful air were sounding in their ravished ears. All were silent, and most of them absorbed in still attention; and Katharine sat back in the shadow of the apartment, so that her countenance was hid.

"Methinks it is a spirit," said Jane Lambert, with a smile.

"Nay, if it be," observed Mistress Alice, "it is a good one, and has been gently bred.—I am sure I felt quite sorry when the last air ceased; and as for poor Master Cuthbert, I never saw any man so affected by music before.—Do you not observe it, Katharine?"

"I cannot wonder, because I know that Dowland is a great favourite with him; and that air, played as it was, might affect a person less easily moved than Master Cuthbert."

"Well, Kate," said Sir Oliver, "after all, it is but some piping stroller, perhaps, that is trudging it to Coventry fair; but, what with moonshine and fancy, you are making an Orpheus of the vagabond,—and I dare to say he would be well pleased to pipe a good fat hen out of the fowl house."

"Really, Sir Oliver," said Jane Lambert, "you old gentlemen are very provoking;—you have a way of knocking down all castles in the air with a crab-stick; and if we do now and then get lifted off plain ground, you bring us down again with a vengeance. Now, even I, who am not very romantic, was painting to myself some disconsolate bard of noble presence, wandering about in sad banishment from the lady of his love, and solacing his despair with the melody of this pipe, given him, I am sure, by a magician."

"Whoever he is," said Juxon, who with young Arthur had leaped from the window and ran to the wood, coming to the open casement a few minutes after, "he has certainly got the ring of Gyges; for there is not

man or animal in that open beechery; and if any one had run forth we must have seen them in the close behind."

"It may be, Juxon, he is perched in a tree, like your true nightingale," said Sir Oliver.

"Nay, we looked up into the branches carefully, but could discern nothing: the birds at roost, though, had raised their heads from beneath their wings, to listen to the strange chorister. In faith, he is no common shepherd in clouted shoon, but a rare minstrel, such as poets feign Apollo. Hush! listen again."

Again, after a playful prelude, the invisible musician performed the sweet air to which the song of Ariel in the Tempest was always sung.

"Marry, Master Juxon," said Jane, "the precious songster mocks your pains, and gives you fair challenge to renew your hunt; but I think you might gather the night dew till cock-crow before you would find him."

Every one seemed spell-bound till the air was done, and Jane Lambert spoke; but Juxon and Arthur now ran again to the beechery, and in a few minutes returned without better success than before.

"Well," said Jane Lambert, "we shall soon find out who it is that this dainty spirit is come to honour; for if it be Sophy or me, we shall have him flying with us on a bat's back all the way to the Grange; and if it be you, dear Kate, you will have more music than sleep to-night."

Katharine was spared all reply by Sir Oliver gravely saying, "that he remembered when he was a boy that beechery was said to be haunted, and that whenever the white lady appeared it boded evil to the family at Milverton." This old Philip had already mentioned to the servants, who stood grouped at the gate of the courtyard on the right, but none of whom had dared to venture down to the spot whence the music came, though they had seen all which passed.

Master Cuthbert ventured to observe, that the music was not like the wailing of a ghost, which came as a forerunner of grief; nor was it of such solemnity, that a spirit from heaven could take delight in it: and he doubted not that the minstrel was plain flesh and blood; that he had, probably, been arrested by the sounds of their little concert, had amused himself by responding to them with his own pleasant instrument, and had practised cleverly upon their curiosity by the nimbleness with which he had evaded their search. But Sir Oliver shook his head at this natural explanation of the mystery; and the Lamberts and Juxon, after putting their lips to a stirrup cup of spiced wine, took leave of their host, and the trampling of their horses soon died away in the distance.

CHAP. XII.

Why, alas! and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies changed?

SIDNEY.

To Katharine there had been no mystery: she could not doubt that the invisible minstrel was her cousin Francis, and that he was again too near for her peace or his own.

Yet such is the sweet treachery of a loving heart, that she could not be sad to know, that one so dearly, though so hopelessly, attached to her, was perhaps within sight of the very window of her apartment, and standing upon some spot where they had formerly walked together in joy. Though resolved not to grant him more than one interview, and to dissuade him from seeking any future opportunities of intercourse, she could not but admit a natural feeling of delight, that she should once more, though but for a few brief moments, look upon him, and listen to his well remembered voice. In the solitude of her chamber she found that relief and freedom of thought which her spirit needed: her wakeful night was passed in reviewing former, and in shaping out future scenes; but of this last exercise of the mind she soon grew weary, for doubt hung over all her future prospects. It was about two hours after midnight, and the house was quite still, when Katharine, in a frame of mind that ill agreed with sleep and peace, arose, and wrapped in her night robe leaned from the casement of her chamber, and gazed out upon the fields and woods, and caught the sheen of the river as it glided beneath the holy moon. The scene was calm, the air serene, and her anxious spirit was soothed by contemplation. She remained long at the window; and as she was retiring turned her eyes to the left, where, beyond the Lime Walk, she could see the black shade of her favourite cedar near the fish-pond. In the moonlight near it she discerned the figure of a man walking slowly upon the grass. Her heart beat quick in her bosom; she leaned her brow against the wall: that surely was Francis. A projection of the building threw such a shadow over her window, that her figure could not be seen, and therefore she again looked forth and cast her eyes towards the cedar. The figure near paced slowly backwards and forwards, occasionally pausing for a minute or more, as if gazing at the house. Certainly it was Francis. Forbidden all access to the mansion by the angry prejudices of Sir Oliver, he had recourse to music to tell her of his return. They had often watched the moonbeams together from the terrace below; they had often been sheltered together beneath the broad arms of that very cedar in the heats of noon, till, suddenly, as by surprise, they loved and after shunned each other, from the sad knowledge that the barriers to their union were many, were cold, and were impassable. As all these after-thoughts crossed her noble mind, she suffered herself to look upon her cousin where he kept his lonely vigil, with that deep interest which must ever be inseparable from that being in whose heart we know that our image is enshrined and cherished.

When the morning star shone brightly out the figure of Francis suddenly disappeared. Katharine now withdrew from the casement; and, exhausted by the various emotions, which had filled and troubled her

anxious bosom with apprehension and with delight, she threw herself on her bed without taking off her robe, and slept so very long and profoundly, that when she awoke she found Mistress Alice seated by her side, with a look of affectionate alarm upon her kind face, and her maid frightened and in tears. It was already high noon. Katharine, however, knew nothing of the lapse of time; and imagining she might be an hour later than usual, was raising herself up with some expression about her strange fit of sleepiness, when her aunt put her hand gently upon her, and bade her lie down again. "When Master Randal has seen you, my dear," she said, "you shall be undressed, and have your bed made, and be put to rest properly and with comfort. He is below, and has been here this half hour, but he wished that your slumber should not be broken."

But the effort to rise had already shown Katharine the unwelcome truth—she was in a high fever:—her head ached, her lips were parched, her mouth was dry, her skin was burning.

The good doctor was instantly summoned; and having examined her case with very careful attention, directed that she should be confined to her bed, and that her chamber should be kept dark and still.

"It was a violent fever," he said, "which would probably, in another stage, take an intermittent form;" but evidently, from the doctor's manner, it was a case of danger, demanding great watchfulness and skilful treatment.

Promising Mistress Alice that his visits should be as frequent as possible, he returned to Warwick at speed, accompanied by a servant, who was to bring back the medicines prescribed.

The trouble of Sir Oliver almost amounted to terror. His mind was by no means superior to those fears which vulgar errors impose; and as, in addition to the strange music of the evening before, he had that very morning seen a hare cross the high road just before his horse's feet, he augured no less a calamity than a fatal end to the sudden illness of his beloved daughter.

Cuthbert Noble, however, rose to the occasion; and though it is certain that no individual in the family felt a more tender affection and concern for Katharine Heywood than he did, yet he was enabled, by a wise sympathy, to compose the fears and animate the hopes of Sir Oliver, and indeed of an entire household; for a despondency fell upon all, which the most comfortable arguments of plain reason and sound religion did but imperfectly remove.

For three days the life of Katharine Heywood was, in truth, in very imminent danger, and the fever was of that malignant nature which defied all ordinary treatment: but as the doctor was a man of great decision and boldness in his practice, and, at the same time, one who committed all events with humility and simplicity to the will of God, he fought bravely with the disease; and after the third night of patient watching and vigorous experiments, he subdued it so far that he could announce to Sir Oliver the safety of his daughter. The crisis was passed; but her weakness was great, and her recovery very gradual. For the first three days of her attack she was almost without consciousness; but though her head became light, and her mind was confused, she uttered nothing in her wanderings which attracted the particular notice of Mistress Alice, or any of her attendants, or in the least betrayed the secret of her heart.

Meanwhile Francis Heywood, in ignorance of the sad condition of his cousin Katharine, endured all the agony of a suspicion that he was at once neglected and scorned by her who had been the vision of his lonely hours of labour in a remote plantation, and who, as the very star of his destiny, had led him back again to the land in which she dwelt, as a land of promise. Liberty was his watchword; and it is true that when letters spoke so confidently of a civil war as inevitable, he obtained his father's permission to return to England, that he might join his patriotic countrymen in their contention for the rights of civil and religious liberty. Nor was this a mere pretext for escape from the tame drudgery of colonial life,—the cause of freedom was sacred in his sight, and was precious to his heart. He came to draw the sword, and bare his bosom in the battle. He had a life to offer on the altar of duty, and he joyously brought the willing sacrifice; but yet there lay at the bottom of his heart one bright, one good hope. He might be lifted, by the fortunes of this war, to renown, to rank, to fortune; he might survive all its chances; he might see peace and happiness restored:—the present relations between himself and his wealthy uncle might be greatly altered; the old prejudices against him might at last give way, and the crowning reward of all his honours and his fortunes might be the hand of Katharine. This was his dream by day—this was his dream by night:—like some chaste and solemn star, seen brightly shining in solitary and calm glory at the extremity of a narrow and gloomy valley, darkened by the shadows of lofty mountains, so the majestic loveliness of his cousin Katharine, irradiated by all her virtues, shone out beyond the cloudy path of blood and peril, as the blissful end and rest of all his labours.

He had not passed a night of such rapture since he last parted from his cousin as that on which he reached Milverton, and the whole of which he mused away within sight of the mansion that contained the noble object of his attachment.

Although he was fully persuaded that he should be recognised by Katharine as the wandering musician, yet he was in doubt whether she would afford him an immediate opportunity of meeting her alone; therefore he prepared an earnest appeal to her, in characters which, though enigmatical to others, would, he well knew, be readily understood by herself. The moon shone that night with so clear a brightness, that he had no sort of difficulty in executing his design. He made a slight fancy sketch, on a small piece of paper, of a setting sun; he introduced the cedar in the fore-ground, and in one corner he wrote, in a small hand, the Italian word "implora:" on the back of this paper he faintly sketched a dial-plate, the shadow touching the figure of seven in the evening. He placed this between the leaves of a copy of Spenser's "Fairy Queen," which he found upon the seat, and which he remembered to have been the garden companion of his fair cousin in former days. When, on the following evening, the sun had set, and the silver light of the moon touched all objects with the hues of peace, Francis repaired to the appointed spot with eager steps, and in confident hope that he should once more behold her for whom he had all that tender reverence which angelic purity could alone inspire. He seated himself beneath the well-known tree, and saw with pleasure that the book had been taken away. Katharine, then, had received his "implora," and she would not—she could not—disappoint him, and deny his prayer. The long delay of her coming perplexed him; and, after an hour of anxious waiting, every succeeding minute was insupportably slow, and weighty with sadness. He left and resumed his seat with restless discomposure; he paced the neighbouring bank; he went into the Lime Walk, to watch for the first glimpse of her distant form; at last, as he was approaching the cedar tree, with his eyes bent on the ground, he for the

first time observed a fragment of paper lying near the trunk:—he took it up—it was a part of his note; it had been torn in halves, and trodden in the dust; it was divided at the very word “implora.” The change of his feeling was, for the moment, terrible. All that he had read or heard of the pride, the caprice, and inconstancy of woman, rushed upon his memory to strengthen his black suspicions, and inflame his sudden indignation. But this rage was very soon exhausted, and was succeeded by a sorrow weak as that of infants. He did not weep,—but a few hot tears slowly gathered at long intervals, and fell heavily on the earth. And then he railed upon himself, and defended her neglect of him.

“It was that accursed music: she ever scorned such fanciful and romantic folly:—how dared I to expect that she, whose words and ways are open as the clear sunshine of noon, should come in the shadows of evening, with silent footsteps, to a secret meeting with such an outcast as me—one who may not ring the bell of his kinsman’s gate with better hope than that of rude dismissal? It is all well, Katharine, and yet I loved you loyally, and still will love you: of that privilege none can rob me. Like yon planet above me, you are a common blessing, for which the comforted pilgrim in this thorny wilderness glances his eye upward to the bounteous heavens, and thanks his God.”

Another, but a gloomier, vigil in the grounds of Milverton was thus passed by Francis; and again, when the dawn approached, he withdrew, and retired to a small hostelry in the suburbs of Warwick, where for his better concealment he had taken up his lodging. Here, however, some relief, if such it could be called, was awaiting him; for as he lay reposing on his bed, tired, yet unable to sleep, he overheard the following dialogue between his hostess and a passer by:—

“Hast thou heard the bad news from Milverton, dame?” said the latter.

“No; I have not seen my girl a week come to-morrow.”

“Eh, dear, don’t you be frightened for your Ruth, but they’ve got the fever there quite bad. Master Randal, the ‘pothecary, was over there three times yesterday, and all last night.”

“Lord, goody, what shall I do? I must go: my poor dear child is so delicate for taking of fever, she will be sure to catch it. Who is it that ha got it? is it the old gentleman, or Mistress Alice?”

“No, God be merciful to her, ’t is that dear, kind, blessed young lady, Mistress Katharine; and they are all in a great take on about her; for they say that the very night before she was took bad, her poor dear mother’s ghost was seen on the terrace by moonlight, and sung beautiful, and for all every body was so frightened, yet they say it was like as if an angel had come down out of heaven; and they say, it is a sure sign that Mistress Katharine will die, and go happy.”

There is nothing more strange than the peculiar character of the selfishness of love—but it is ever the same. Francis felt a deep, a true, an anxious concern for the illness of Katharine: he was keenly afflicted with self-reproach at the thought that she might perhaps have been so disturbed by his sudden and strange announcement of his return as to have been made nervous and unwell. But this sorrow, ay, and the very apprehension of her death, (which feeling, however, he did not share,) would have been more endurable than the thought that he was forgotten, neglected, and scorned by one whom his soul held dear. However, he was, in his own judgment, persuaded that her illness, and all the circumstances attending it, were much exaggerated by those superstitious fears of the household, for which he could himself so very easily account. Descending, therefore, from his chamber, while the old gossips were continuing their talk, he took occasion, as soon as her neighbour had passed on, to urge his hostess to lose no time in going to inquire after her daughter; observing that he had often heard of the family at Milverton, and could not but feel a hope that the lady of whom they spoke would soon recover.

“Precious angel,” said the old woman: “I don’t know why we should wish it, I am sure, except it be for the sake of others; for there was never a body fitter for heaven than that dear young lady.”

It was with keen anguish that, upon the return of his poor hostess in the afternoon, he learned that the life of Katharine was really in danger. At sunset he took his cloak, and passed the night in a position near the wood, from whence he could command the curtained window of the sufferer, and watch the dim light within, and those gloomy shadows which, as nurse or attendant slowly crossed the chamber, occasionally obscured it.

His was a mind in which hope was ever anticipating enjoyment, or fear meeting and realising the dreaded misfortune. Now, therefore, with the lamp of a sick room burning faint before him, and with scenery around all silvery and spiritual, lying hushed and calm in a silence solemn as the grave, and yet sweet and peaceful as that of heaven, he resigned himself to the belief that Katharine was dying, or, rather, was departing to the abode of blessed spirits. He grew reconciled to the thought. No clouds of terror darkened it; and, as her pale image arose distinctly before his mind’s eye, he became elevated with the sentiment of her sure and celestial happiness; and there was a feeling of ecstasy in the idea that he might cherish his love for her, as a sacred thing, for ever.

Again, on the following night, he lay enfolded in his cloak, or leaned against a distant tree, or paced like a sentinel his lonely round, with his eyes fixed on the light in Katharine’s chamber, and his meditations were sweet. But how tenderly he had been rocked in the cradle of sorrow, and how willingly he had allowed the true state of his own heart to be hidden from himself by fancied consolations, was evident, when, on returning from his watch upon the third morning, he learned from his hostess that the doctor had come home very early, and said, that the dear lady was out of danger. He had just command enough over his feelings not to betray to her that he took a private and deep interest in her intelligence; but, rushing up to his room, his hopes, his fears, his grief, his joy, his gratitude, gushed forth from his pent-up bosom in a flood of silent tears. He wept upon his knees.

CHAP. XIII.

What man was he talked with you?

Much Ado about Nothing.

It was not till the crisis of danger was already past that the illness of Katharine became known at Bolton Grange, or at Old Beech.

Jane Lambert was no sooner apprised of it than she hastened to her friend, and insisted, with all the devotion and tenderness of a sister, on being permitted to divide with Mistress Alice the duties of her present charge.

Katharine loved Jane, and was comforted to have her seated near her, and was soothed by her affection: it was evident, however, to the latter, that something weighed heavily upon the spirits of her friend, and that the feelings of hope and the clear promise of recovery, did not impart to her all the gratitude and cheerfulness which might be naturally expected in the pleasant dawn of convalescence.

She had not been many days at Milverton when an incident occurred which discovered the cause of her anxiety.

As Jane was looking from the window in the afternoon, and remarking to Katharine on the beautiful effect of the low autumn lights, she observed the figure of a man with folded arms leaning near a tree in the beechery, and she playfully exclaimed, "That must certainly be the musical ghost, which played so sweetly, and brought us all such bad luck, and frightened every body in Milverton House but your dear self, and the grave Master Cuthbert:—how I should like to have the treacherous creature caught."

"Dear lady," said Katharine's maid, "how can you talk so boldly?—why nobody can catch a spirit. It is only air."

"I have a notion, good lass," replied Jane, "that it is very proper flesh and blood, and if I were a man, and not a maid, would try my speed with it, and bring it to parley. I should like to hear the voice of it, or see its face, and tell it of all the mischief it has done."

"Well-a-day! what a heart you have, lady! There is not one in the kitchen but stout Richard would venture that; and though he could not find any thing the other day when he followed it, he's obstinate as a mule, and says it's no ghost, but a young gallant that's under hiding at my mother's, in Warwick Liberties; but there is nobody thinks with him at Milverton."

"Well, then, I am of Richard's way of thinking, in part:—it is a tall man; but whether young, and whether under hiding, I know not."

"Why, there is a gentleman under hiding at my mother's, sure enough, and one that knows my lady, as she says, and was quite glad when he heard that she first began to mend."

"Ruth," said Katharine, raising her head from the pillow, "if you will go and make me some fresh barley water, I think I shall like it better than this fever drink." The wish was no sooner expressed than her maid vanished to do her bidding, and Katharine and her friend Jane were left by themselves.

"Jane," said the invalid, "come and sit by me: I have something to tell you, and I have to ask of you a very strange favour. I desired to relieve my heart of its burden, but have hitherto delayed it. You know, Jane, that I love you, and that I have confidence in your attachment to me; but if it were not for my present helplessness, which compels me to engage your service as a true friend, whose good sense and firm principles I can safely trust, the subject which I am about to speak of would never have passed my lips even to you. The gentleman of whom they speak is my cousin Francis. He it was who so perplexed and alarmed the family with his mysterious music, and who still, I fear, haunts the same spot in silence and anxiety."

"Your cousin Francis!—why, dear Kate, I thought he was in America!"

"And I myself thought so until the night when he made his return known to me in tones which I could not mistake, and the meaning of which I but too well understood."

"I have been long aware, Katharine, that he loved you."

"You have, I believe, already discerned it. Alas! it is true—fatally for his own happiness and for mine;—but, Jane, have you courage for the task which I would impose upon you?"

"Yes, Kate: you can ask me nothing too hard for me, if I can only feel that I do what may comfort you."

"Well, Jane, you must contrive to see my cousin Francis; to deliver to him a note from me with your own hands, and to urge his immediate departure from this neighbourhood. Now, love, bring me those small tablets and paper, and support me while I write the few words which I would say."

It was a sight for pity to see that noble damsel, her back propped by pillows, and the arm of her young friend tenderly supporting her, trace in silence and with a nervous hand the few lines which were to banish from the neighbourhood of Milverton her worthy and devoted lover.

The task was soon done; and with the care as of a mother Jane Lambert again arranged the pillows for the aching head of Katharine; and the pale sufferer sunk back exhausted into the recumbent posture, and heaved a sigh so sad, that the eyes of Jane filled with thick tears. She averted her head to wipe them away, that they might not distress her friend, and putting the unsealed billet in her bosom, left the chamber with a thoughtful step, to do her very delicate and difficult office. She went to her own room, and taking a dark mantle with a hood, such as was the common church-going and street costume of women of the respectable middle classes of that period, she threw it across her arm, and walked through the Lime Walk, and by the fish ponds, to a small gate at the farther end of the grounds, by which she could gain a footpath that led across the fields to Warwick. She had no sooner passed the gate than she put on her cloak, and passing the hood over her head, that she might muffle and conceal her features, if she met any one, she proceeded towards the city. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the sky was lowering and cloudy. She was anxious about her strange mission, and settling in her mind what she should do when she reached the hostelry, whither she was now bending her steps, and how she should contrive the interview with Francis, when the sound of steps very closely following suddenly startled her: the very object of her search had overtaken her, and was already

at her side. At first, however, she was not aware of this, although the circumstance of this passenger being muffled, as closely as herself, awakened her suspicions of the truth, and forbade the alarm she would otherwise have felt at finding herself in a very lonely part of the pathway in such company. He did not stop when he overtook her, but went a few steps onward, as if to re-assure her before he ventured to speak. He crossed a stile and walked some paces without turning his head, till she had also crossed it; when loitering a little, till she was close to him, he stepped aside from the path, and gently put a question that very directly introduced them to each other, and gave Jane the ready opportunity of delivering her note, and fulfilling the further wishes of her dear Katharine.

"You are from Milverton House, as I think, damsel?"

"Even so, master," replied Jane.

"Is the noble young mistress better to-day?"

"I thank God she is; but it will be long ere she be quite well again."

"She is out of all pain, I hope?"

"Yes, she hath no bodily pain, save that which arises from weakness; and for such pain of mind as disquiets her it may be, in great part, removed by yourself, Master Francis."

Thus saying, she threw back her hood, and Francis, who had before discovered his own features, recognised those of Jane Lambert. "I bear you a note from your cousin Katharine," she added, as he started at her utterance of his name. She drew it forth from her bosom, and placed it in his hand. He turned from her that he might read it without observation; but Jane could see by his action that he kissed it, and pressed it to his heart. With a glance it was perused, and then again and again; and with a bent head and staggering step he moved a few paces from Jane, and spoke in tones of anguish to himself words which she could not distinguish. At last, collecting himself, he returned towards the fair messenger of his Katharine, with a manly composure, and said, "Tell my beloved cousin that I will obey; that her wish is as a law to me: how could she dream that I would suffer the words of any one to outweigh her own?—but, she tells me that you are her devoted and faithful friend, and that to you I may safely intrust the object of my return, and the news of my father. There is, indeed, one subject on which she forbids me to speak even to herself; therefore my answer may be brief enough. My father is well:—all her kinsfolk in the Plantations are well, and free, and happy. For the object of my sudden return—it is the love of my country—a love that will not accept a divided heart; and yet the other love that lay enshrined beside it, was pure, was noble, was worthy such alliance, has filled my thoughts by day, has blessed the visions of my lonely nights. Tell Katharine she hath used me hardly—no, no, do not tell her that—not hardly—say that she bids me do something I cannot do—I am not of her order—forget her I never can—she is with me wherever I go—in all things that I do I think of her—and still must, if I would have fair and noble thoughts to bear me company."

"Such things, Master Francis, I may not carry to her ear. There is about her a reserve so maidenly and grave, she would chide her own messenger for proving so unfaithful;—but I may tell her that your father is well; that loyalty hath brought you home; and that you will quit these parts instantly—for that it is, methinks, she most earnestly requests of you."

"Even so: on that she is most urgent—cruel Katharine."

"Say, rather, wise, dutiful, loyal Katharine."

"Loyal, loyal!—that is a word of many imports. I, too, am loyal, and will learn to love the word:—mind you tell her that I am loyal."

"Can I truly tell her so?"

"Yes, truly:—but enough of this, fair girl,—go back to her who sent thee—wait, you are her friend—you nurse her—come, let me look into thine eyes—give me thy hand—on my knees I kiss it—her cheek is pale—I know it is—it must be—go touch it with thy hand, and offer there the chaste cold homage of my sorrow. You see that I am sad, lady—go—bless you—you are weeping:—how is this, girl?—be not so childish—a friend of Katharine's should not be weak—I, you see, am calm and strong—my hand does not tremble—and these eyes are dry—methinks my heart is frozen—tell her so."

Jane Lambert stood fixed as a statue while he thus spoke; and as she watched him walking fast away, she felt, for the first time in her life, what it must be to have a lover, and to be the supreme object of such a man's affection. Her cheek was stained with tears—her face flushed with agitation—her whole air disordered and absent. She followed with her eyes the tall figure of Francis, till a turn in the pathway hid him from her view, and then walked slowly back to Milverton.

In the very first field she met George Juxon, and it was evident to her, from his manner, as he stopped and spoke to her, that he must have witnessed, at least, the close of her interview with Francis. There was a surprise in his look, and something of embarrassment, as he shook her by the hand, and asked if she was well; but he did not seem to expect any particular reply, nor indeed did he offer to return with her to the house, though she was but too conscious that her faintness and discomposure might have naturally invited such an attention. Observing, coldly, that he had some business at a builder's yard in Warwick, but that he should return to sup and sleep at Milverton, he leisurely pursued his path to the city.

Jane's heart gave way to the multitude of troublous and perplexing thoughts which now beset her; and leaning near a friendly tree, she found a momentary relief in a passionate flood of warm tears.

Her trial was strange. The feelings which had been excited were altogether new to her; and the effect of the interview with Katharine's devoted cousin, combined with the cross and perplexing incident of her meeting with Juxon so immediately after, as to make it certain that he had seen her part from Francis Heywood, had very naturally overcome the ordinary courage and the cheerful composure of her character.

She had witnessed, in the agitated Francis, the emotions of love. The sentiment, which thus shook him, she had never yet inspired—she had never felt for any one. Such love had been to her the poet's fable; but it would never again be so deemed of by her;—and something that made her heart throb and ache within her told truly the want of that heart, and unsealed a fountain of affection ready to overflow upon any being in whom she might be fortunate enough to find the noble qualities of a manly heart, and the gentle ways and genuine fervours of an ardent lover.

It was a cruel thought that she must now be subject to suspicions, if not of lightness, yet of a secret attachment and stolen interviews with the object of it. Nor was the oppression of this thought at all weakened by the reflection that George Juxon, the very man whose good opinion she most valued, had seen her in a situation, and under circumstances, which he could not by any possibility interpret truly, and which her duty to Katharine forbade her to explain, however deeply her own character or happiness might suffer. In one short hour she had gathered an experience that filled her with wonder, and had incurred a suspicion that subjected her to censure and threatened her with misery. The consciousness of innocence could not restore to her the respect of Juxon, nor exempt her from the severe penalties with which the levity and imprudence of the thoughtless of her own sex are ever silently visited by the other, when some painful discovery of a woman's guile chills and revolts them.

However in her case, the judgment of Juxon had not been harsh; but, of course, when he saw a man upon his knees before her—when he considered the loneliness of their place of interview—the cloaks evidently worn for disguise—and the agitated and discomposed appearance of Jane Lambert—he, at once, decided that she was betrothed to a lover, whom for fear or for shame she dared not openly avow.

He had truly liked Jane, for her spirit, her sense, and, above all, for her devotion to Katharine Heywood; and his liking might soon have grown to a manly love,—but the flow of his admiration was now suddenly checked and frozen, and he whistled "Woman's a Riddle" all the way to Warwick and back again.

CHAP. XIV.

O how full of briars is this working-day world!
As you Like it.

As soon as the affectionate Jane had entirely recovered her self-possession, she left her chamber, and repaired to Katharine. It was the dark evening hour of autumn, and there was no light in the room of the invalid but that emitted from the glowing embers on the hearth. Jane seated herself by the bedside, and, taking the hand of Katharine, gently pressed it, and said,—

"My dear Kate, I have done all that you wished; and I have sped well."

"You have, then, seen Francis?"

"Yes; I put your note into his own hands. He was much affected; but he promised obedience to your wishes at once."

Katharine gave a sigh, and turned her face to the wall. There was a short pause of silence before Jane proceeded:—

"He bade me tell you that his father and your kinsfolk in America are well; and that the immediate object of his return is the love of his country."

"Ah, Jane! I know what that means. I remember too well all the warm and bitter words that passed between my father and his on that subject. Would he had stayed in the peaceful Plantations! The ocean between us was not a wider separation than the gulf that divides party from party at home; besides, Jane, he is deluded: they will play upon his generous nature,—they will make a traitor of him. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Would he had stayed abroad!"

"I must not forget, Katharine, to tell you that he strictly charged me to say that he was loyal. 'It is a word,' said he, 'of many imports:—mind you tell her that I am loyal.'—No, dear Katharine, his is no traitor's heart: he may be on the wrong side of the quarrel, but he is the King's true subject at the bottom."

"Hush! Jane; whisper not these dangerous words,—there is deceit in them. The soul's enemy finds each of us treacherous enough in will, and crooked enough in judgment, without the weak and indulgent folly of our friends. Be true to me,—be English, Jane:—I love you passing well."

Jane kissed her pale cheek; and there was another pause. At last Katharine said, in a very low voice,—

"How was Cousin Francis looking? Is he in health?"

"His complexion is more brown, and he has less colour than formerly; his countenance, too, is very grave—almost sad; yet there is a steady fire in his eyes; and he is as graceful and as strong as ever. But for his late care and watching, I should say he was better in health than when he left Milverton for America."

"He was not hurt at my note, I hope,—was he, Jane? Speak truly."

"Not hurt; but disappointed, certainly. However, he is noble and sensible, and saw that it was right."

"You think so."

"I am sure of it, by his manner."

"Do you think he will go away directly?"

"Yes; perhaps he is already gone. I could see in the firm and resolute step with which he walked away from me that his decision was taken."

"Then it was not at the hostelry that you saw him? Where did you meet him?"

Jane now detailed, in part, the circumstances of their interview, as already related; suppressing all mention of the passionate words and gestures of Francis, and any notice of her having been seen in his company by Juxon. It had been the first intention of Jane to proceed to the house of Ruth's mother, on whose protection she could depend, and to wait there till Francis, who she doubted not was the lodger spoken of,

should return thither; for, before Jane left Milverton House, Francis had already disappeared from the Beechery. It would be easy to invent some plausible excuse to Ruth's mother for her visit to Warwick; and, having contrived her interview with Francis as if by accident, to return to Milverton, if belated till dusk, under the old woman's escort. But this plan was rendered unnecessary by the circumstance of Francis overtaking Jane upon her way to the city.

"My dear affectionate girl," said Katharine to her sweet friend, "how much, how very much, I thank you:—kiss me, dear, and leave me to compose myself, if I can, to sleep."

But sleep was impossible in her frame of mind at that moment:—it was solitude she needed, that she might meditate and weep alone. However, there was a high sound principle ever at work in her bosom; so that a little solitary and prayerful reflection never failed to restore the calmness of her mind, and the strength of her resolutions.

The spirit of Jane Lambert was of another sort; and, restored to the privacy of her own chamber, she gave a free vent to the sorrow and anxiety which she had so courageously suppressed before Katharine.

When she descended to the hall to supper, and all the party were assembled, she remarked or fancied that George Juxon expressly avoided seating himself near her; and, after asking her one or two questions about the progress of Katharine's recovery, he addressed her no more.

Her pride was a little wounded to observe that he was in high and careless spirits, and became quite the life of the table. Cuthbert, too, was, for him, unusually cheerful. Sir Oliver seemed in great good humour; and the boy Arthur was radiant with delightful and joyous anticipations of the new world, which an entrance at Oxford would open before him. Literary and characteristic anecdotes of distinguished and eccentric scholars of both universities, in times past as well as present, enlivened the social meal; and though but a very thin partition separated the subjects of university discipline from those of church polity and state government, neither were introduced that evening.

Jane thought that she had never before discerned so clearly the fine qualities of Juxon;—his sound but charitable judgment, his accurate memory, the kindness of his nature, and the playfulness of his stories, at once charmed and depressed her. She wished to leave the table; yet still she lingered on, listening and irresolute; and the proposal to retire was first made by Mistress Alice.

An avowed contempt for the opinion of the many is not inconsistent with a very earnest and anxious regard for the judgment of the few whom we chance to admire and esteem. The dear, high-spirited girl, who thought herself above the censure of the world, and indifferent to its voice, was now, though clear from the slightest reproach of conscience, agonised with apprehensions lest she should have forfeited the respect of George Juxon. When, at a later hour, the household was assembled for the evening service, and the prayers were reverently read by Juxon, her heart beat in her bosom so quick and loud as to be audible to Cuthbert Noble, who kneeled near her. As soon as they rose, he regarded her with a look of such compassionate inquiry, that Jane, fearing he was about to question her concerning her health, and not daring to trust herself with a reply, abruptly left the apartment.

Juxon had himself observed her flushed cheek and her disturbed manners, and began to entertain very serious alarm for her. How far his duty as a friend, and, above all, as a Christian minister, authorised him to seek acquaintance with the nature and extent of those secret engagements of Jane Lambert, which he could not but fear, from her evident agitation, were at variance with plain principle and prudence, it was not easy for him to resolve. He truly liked her frank, generous, and inartificial character. He knew full well that in her brother she had neither a kind, a careful, or a wise guardian. It was surely wrong to stand upon the brink of a whirlpool, and see any one drawn down to ruin, whom it was in our power, if not to save, at least to admonish of the danger. His mind instantly reverted to the noble Katharine as the proper channel through which his manly and benevolent warnings might be safely conveyed with delicacy and effect. But many days might yet elapse ere the opportunity of a conversation with Katharine might occur; for she was confined not only to her chamber, but to her bed. Should he venture to hint his fears to herself? Yes: if she was the character he yet hoped to find her, it would be taken well; if not, it would matter very little in what light she viewed his disinterested service.

On the following morning, soon after breakfast, he saw Jane Lambert by herself in the Lime Walk, and he joined her.

She looked surprised and embarrassed; and he was not without a fear that his presence at that moment was inconvenient and irksome, and very possibly prevented her going forth to an interview with her lover in the very same fields where he had met her the evening before.

However, from the very fear he took courage; and, after the common salutations and usual words about the garden and the weather had passed, he broke the subject thus:—

"Mistress Jane, you are too little acquainted with the world for your own happiness, or rather, for your security,—may a friend say this without offending you?"

"A friend may say any thing to me, Master Juxon, that a damsel may not blush to hear."

"I understand you—I must say no more—and yet I meant you well."

"But good intentions do often tread upon the foot just where it is most tender."

"Well, lady, enough: I will spare your maiden blushes; only remember, of our sex, that he doth always act most openly who is most loyal."

"Loyal! Master Juxon, what mean you? Did you then so far forget yourself as to follow and trace out the gentleman whom you last evening stood watching as he parted from me?—I do not understand you."

"Mistress Jane, you should have known me better;—so far from watching your interview with the strange gentleman with whom I saw you, it was to avoid intrusion that I waited in the adjoining close till you parted from him, and would have gone back again altogether, but for the great circuit and the business which I had in Warwick."

"You saw us part, then?"

"Yes, to my wonder, and to my sorrow that my eyes had caught an action meant only for your own. Lady,

forgive the word; but at lovers' oaths forget not that Cupid laughs:—may Jane Lambert never be won by any suitor who does not openly woo her!"

"Amen to your kind wish, Master Juxon—so be it:—I know what you think, and am sorry, but I cannot help it;—however, you are not my father confessor, nor do I ever wish to have one."

"True, lady; but though not your confessor, I am your friend, your true and bold friend, or I should never have dared to utter what I have done. I can have no object in these hints but your best and highest interest: that which I have noticed to yourself I shall never mention to any other, except, perhaps, to Katharine Heywood, from whose lips whatever falls is wise and noble."

"O! not to her—name not this idle matter to her. Promise me, Juxon, that you will not breathe a syllable about it to her. I shall be more unhappy if you do than I am already."

"Alas! you are then unhappy, and would shun the best help and consolation which friendship would provide for you. No, this I cannot promise; on the contrary, I am only confirmed in the propriety of my intention."

"Well, I implore you again, and earnestly, not to speak upon this subject to Katharine. As you value my peace of mind, be silent upon it to all: there is a mystery about it I may not unfold. I know that appearances are against me: I am sorry for your hard thoughts, but I must bear them. I could wish to explain these cross circumstances to you, but am not free to do so without violating a sacred duty. Promise me that you will meet my wish." Thus saying, she put her hand upon his arm, and looked into his face with wet and beseeching eyes. "Juxon, you have always been plain and true, and friendly to me; and though I and my perplexities ill deserve your interest or care, promise me that you will not name them to dear Katharine."

For a moment Juxon was affected by the wild earnestness of her manner; and he thought he had never seen more heart or feeling in the expression of a human countenance than in the flushed face of Jane Lambert.

"Well, Mistress Jane, you are so urgent, that I must promise to obey your will; but it grieves me to see you thus sadly troubled. May God help you, and guide you, and guard you, and keep you from evil, that it may not grieve you! Your secret is safe with me."

"And shall I lose your friendship?"

"No, lady, never: would only that it may have worth sufficient in your eyes to be used aright!"

"Believe me, I shall never forget it, and I will never do aught to forfeit such a treasure;"—so saying, she hurried away, with tears in her eyes, and left him absorbed in a state of feeling which cannot be described.

The more he thought of what he had witnessed the evening before, and the more he considered the conversation which had just passed, the more satisfied he was that Jane Lambert was secretly betrothed to some one whom she dared not openly acknowledge as her lover. It was also plain, that, for some powerful reason, she had not confided the secret of this attachment even to Katharine, who was her bosom friend. He had comfort in remembering that nothing could be more respectful than the action of the stranger, when he kissed her hand at parting; and combining this with her own honest looks and proud though mysterious expressions, he was satisfied that, up to the present moment, she had taken no irrevocable step. There was, moreover, a warm strength in her last words, that assured him his friendly cautions were not thrown away, and that his motives were not misinterpreted. Upon the whole, he was justified, to his own mind, in what he had done; and his thoughts rested upon the character of Jane with greater interest than it had ever before excited in him.

"How very generous and devoted would be the love of such a girl," said he to himself: "what a proud spirit, what an affectionate heart, she has; what a fire there is in her fine eyes—I never before saw her look half so beautiful:—it is clear that they have been lighted up by love:—well, God grant that the man of her choice may be worthy of it!"

He now sauntered slowly back to the house; and entering the library, found Cuthbert Noble sitting alone, and making extracts from an old folio volume.

"You see," said the young tutor, "I am making preparations for my departure from Milverton; but thus I may innocently suck honey from the hives of Sir Oliver, without robbing him, or those who come after him, of the smallest portion of such sweets as they contain."

"And what may be your study?" said Juxon, as he came up to the table, and looked over him.

"A curious work," replied Cuthbert, "containing the most remarkable pieces of John Huss, together with his life—imprinted in the last century at Augsburg."

"Friend Cuthbert, you are too constant in these serious and solemn studies and speculations."

"Master Juxon," answered the pale youth, "they are every thing or they are nothing."

"Verily, for my part I think divine truth is as clear and glorious as the sun in the firmament; and to warm ourselves, and to walk in the light of it, is better wisdom than to read so many commentaries and discourses upon it."

"May we not sometimes lie indolently warming ourselves by a fire of our own, and fancy it as comfortable as basking in the sun? Walking in the light is no such easy matter; and in my case I find that the words, and, above all, the examples, of those who have earnestly contended for the truth, as so many outstretched and helping hands to assist me in climbing the hill."

"What hill?"

"The high hill, Master Juxon, where the reformers and martyrs of past times have left the print of their blessed footsteps."

"Cuthbert, I see that you are in earnest, that you are sincere; but you are on a road beset by enemies, to the full as dangerous as those on any other. Pride may be waiting to assail you,—spiritual pride, the worst of all enemies: you want to do something; you would unlock heaven's gates by some great performance:—remember its arches are so low that none can enter them who crawl not on their knees:—the little child's is the appointed stature for all believers."

"That, indeed, is true—it is a solemn truth; but there are beasts to be fought with, Juxon, and the stern

combat is at hand. It is upon this I think by day, on this I dream by night."

"So much the worse: you are commanded, in many senses, to 'take no thought for the morrow;' and in none is it more your duty to obey the precept than in waiting the events of the coming day in quietness and in confidence: you conjure up shadows that you may fight with them."

"Nay, but you wrong my judgment:—to you they may so seem; but my eye can see the black and dismal realities beyond, which reflect these shadows."

"Well, Cuthbert, it is vain to talk with you on these subjects:—on all others you are so clear and reasonable, that I shall always remember our intercourse with pleasure. I hear that there is a new arrangement, and that you do not wait to accompany Arthur to Oxford; but that you leave Milverton next week, therefore, very probably, I shall not see you again till your departure. Farewell, friend: my best and warmest wishes for your happiness will always accompany you. I shall ever be happy to hear of or from you, and be delighted to meet you again."

With these words he put out his hand to Cuthbert, who grasped it eagerly, and struggled for a reply in vain.

The parting had taken him totally by surprise:—the thought of all Juxon's friendly and kind services, of all his frank and endearing qualities, came up, with a rush before his fancy, and choked his utterance. The strong pressure of Cuthbert's hand, and the slowness with which he released that of Juxon, told the latter all that he would have said; and, as the door closed behind his departing friend, Cuthbert sank back into his seat, and, resting his head with hidden face upon the table, remained for several minutes silent and motionless.

CHAP. XV.

Religious contention is the devil's harvest.

Old Proverb.

To every member of the family at Milverton House Cuthbert had said farewell, when he retired to his chamber on the night before the morning fixed for his departure. He had taken leave of Mistress Katharine, in the presence of her aunt Alice and Jane Lambert, with a grave self-command which had surprised himself; and, as he left her room, he lifted his heart to Heaven in thanksgiving for the help of that strength which he had so earnestly implored in the privacy of his closet.

But when he was alone for the last wakeful vigil in the apartment in which he had passed so many a sleepless night the image of Katharine looked in upon his solitude, and, for a time, re-asserted all its power over his heart.

He had just parted, and, probably for ever, with her who had been to him, for many months, the angel of the scene. These months, though now short as hours to look back upon, had gathered into their brief and silvery revolutions much of that soft and essential happiness of his affections which he knew could never return again. Nevertheless, it was not in the power of separation or of hopelessness to destroy the memory of that sweet season of his youth; and he was content to accept that as all the bliss of its kind which the fortunes of his life and the new aims of his being, would permit him to enjoy.

"Here, and for ever," said Cuthbert, speaking to himself aloud, "I forswear the weaknesses of love: life has rugged paths that are better trod by single men;—such a path is now shaping for me and for many. In the labour of establishing a people's rights I shall find a sense of peace; and when the call of duty is obeyed, contentment is the golden fruit with which conscience herself presents us."

There is no process of the mind more common than that by which a man, while sore at heart by the thought of some desirable but unattainable good, turns away from the painful consideration of his own sorrows, and erects himself into the zealous friend of suffering humanity, and the ardent reformer of social evils.

What curious springs in the world's clockwork are sorrow and disappointment! How many wheels are set in motion by their secret action, and what different results from those at which men aim are produced by their conduct! Here they strike for freedom, and elevate a despot—there they trample for the oppressor, and, lo! a seed of armed patriots is sown beneath their horse's feet.

The idea of seeking the society of those among his friends whose minds were full of the stirring themes now daily suggested by political events was hailed as a relief and a consolation.

Absorbed in musings, Cuthbert watched away the night, and obtained only a short and broken slumber towards the morning.

It has been before observed, that to the language of love from the lips of Cuthbert Mistress Katharine never would have listened, and could not have responded.

Katharine Heywood had only done what thousands have done before her, and are continually doing in the intercourse of life. She had manifested her own sweet nature in a ready and gentle appreciation of those qualities in the shy and humble student, which, wherever they are found, are worthy of regard.

Indeed, during the residence of Cuthbert at Milverton, as the tutor to her cousin, she had largely shared the benefit of his instructions. He had imparted new pleasures to her mind, had purified her taste, enlarged her conceptions, and elevated her thoughts.

These services she had repaid, in the character of mistress of her father's mansion, by studiously throwing the grace of her protection over the retiring scholar; but the smile of a queenly woman is a perilous shelter, and does oftentimes blight the happiness of those whom it was most innocently designed to cheer and to defend.

It had been arranged that Cuthbert should depart before eight in the morning. By that hour his horse was already saddled in the stable, and the boy Arthur was in the stable-yard watching minutely all the preparations for the journey. The strapping on of the vallise, and of the holsters especially moved him on the present occasion, although he had seen the very same thing done a hundred times for others without curiosity or disquiet. What from the liveliness of his fancy, and the affectionateness of his disposition, the images of lonely ways and evil robbers made him fetch his breath quicker than usual. The good tempered groom, perceiving this by the youth's questions, began to allay his fears by saying, that "nobody would ever let or hinder a poor scholar like Master Cuthbert, and, besides that, God took care of all good persons; so there was no ill chance for such an one, but that he would go and come as safe as the King's own majesty;" which was the simple groom's notion of the most perfect security on earth.

Meanwhile Cuthbert himself was taking a last melancholy gaze at the gallery, the hall, the summer and winter parlour, and the various objects of interest which they contained. The pictures, the books, the organ, the virginals, the lute, were all most intimately associated in his mind with her, whom to have seen and known was of itself a blessing.

In vain the grey-haired butler, Philip, pressed him to partake of breakfast, and cautioned him against a weary way and an empty stomach. He pecked like a sick bird at the substantial venison pasty, and sipped at the warm tankard with a word the while now to the old domestic, and now to young Arthur, who had come in, and sat opposite him, in that vacant and natural sorrow which belongs to the broken moments of such a parting.

At last Cuthbert descended the hall steps, which were full of the warm-hearted servants; and, pressing the hand of his affectionate pupil, mounted his horse and rode away.

The day was cold and wet: nothing could be more gloomy or comfortless than his long and lonely ride. He met only one train of pack-horses, and a few single travellers on horseback, throughout the day. He baited his animal at a wayside alehouse, where he found nobody but a cross old woman and a deaf hostler; and it was not till the dusk of evening that he reached the town of Aylesbury, where he proposed sleeping.

Within five miles of this place he was overtaken by a gentleman on horseback, who fell into conversation with him; and who, being like himself on a journey to town, offered to join company with him that night at the inn.

Although it would have been far more agreeable to Cuthbert to have proceeded alone, yet the appearance of the stranger was so prepossessing, and his manners were so frank and courteous, that it was not possible to shake off his company without rudeness. Moreover, his speech had already shown him to be a man of gentle breeding, and that Cambridge had once reckoned him among her students,—so they rode forward together.

At the entrance of the town, hard by one of the first houses in the street, sat a cobbler working and singing in his hutch. The companion of Cuthbert here pulled his bridle; and, turning his beast's nose almost into it, called out, in a loud jolly tone, "Ho, Crispin! canst tell me the way to the church?"

"No," said the cobbler, throwing up an indifferent glance, and then stooping again over his last.

"Art deaf, or hast lost thy wits, old surly?" said the traveller: "you know what a church is, don't you?"

"I know what it is not," replied the old cobbler bluntly, without looking off his work.

"What is it not, sirrah?"

"It is not a great stone building standing alone in the middle of a town," said the cobbler raising his head, and looking his interrogator full in the face.

"Thou hast more wit than good humour, knave," said our Cavalier.

"And thou words than good breeding," retorted the sturdy artisan.

"I see the stocks of this place are little used, or you should try how they fitted. You have not much fear, methinks, of the wooden collar. Didst ever see a pillory?"

"I have, and a godly man in it; and I shall not soon forget the sight. Are you answered, my court bird?"

"You are a prick-eared knave; and, if I were not tired and hungry, you should smart for your saucy answers."

By this time a neighbour or two stood forth from the adjoining houses; and the horseman, turning to the nearest, said, "Prithee, friend, canst thou tell me the way to the Boar's Head, which is next to the church, as I think?"

"It is so, true enough," answered the man, "and well placed, to my thought; for thou wilt be sure to find the parson on the bench of it, or it may be in the skittle yard wrangling with cheating Bob, and staggering at his own cast:—ride straight on—you can't miss it."

"A pretty nest of godly rogues I have got into," said the traveller: "there will be an iron gag for your foul mouths soon." With this he struck spurs into his steed: the beast broke into a smart canter,—that of Cuthbert started in like manner; and they were instantly carried beyond the jeers and the loud laughter of the humorous old cobbler and his neighbours. Of this little scene Cuthbert had been the silent spectator; indeed the dialogue was so short, and so rapidly spoken, that there was no room for any question or remark of his;—and his companion having observed a silver crest upon the holsters of Cuthbert, did not doubt that he was a church and king man,—especially as there had not dropped from him a single expression which savoured of the Puritan.

Mine host of the Boar's Head, a big and portly personage with bloated cheeks, received our weary guests with a cheerful welcome; and led the way to a large travellers' parlour, where, in an ample fire-place, huge logs were blazing on the hearth. The seats on either side were already occupied by guests, before whom, on small three-legged tables, their repasts were smoking.

At one of these sat two persons, whose appearance was that of military men:—the younger of the two was very handsome, and of a commanding figure. No sooner did the gentleman in Cuthbert's company approach the fire than this martial youth rose, and addressing him by the name of Fleming, shook him cordially by the hand. The ear of Cuthbert did not catch the name by which, promptly responding to the recognition, Fleming replied, nor did he learn it throughout the evening. However, another small table was immediately drawn near, and covered. Eggs, sausages, and broiled bones were served up hastily; and, after Cuthbert and his companion had satisfied the keen appetites which they had gotten by a long journey in cold rain and on miry roads, a large jug of burnt claret was placed before them; and the following conversation between the two acquaintances was listened to by Cuthbert in silent astonishment:—

"Well, Frank, you have not forgotten old times, I hope. I trust that we shall teach the volunteer gentry how to handle a sword after the fashion of the old Swedish troopers before long:—they made sorry work of it in the north last year; and for my part I was half ashamed to ride among such a rabble!"

"What made you go at all then?" said the youthful soldier.

"Why, to say truth, Frank, I found my life in the country very dull, and my old father's hunting companions as heavy as lead; and I heartily wished myself back in Germany, where I might hear a trumpet once more:—so when I heard that the King was going against the Scots away I posted to court, and waited upon his Majesty, and got a commission."

"I hope, Fleming, you made yourself master of the quarrel before you offered your services."

"Look you, Frank, I remember you was always as grave as a judge about war, and examined sides, and would know the rights of all that was done. That was never my way. I left Cambridge at nineteen, and went to the camp of Gustavus, as eager and as blind as a young colt; and so again now:—wherever the King's standard flies all must be right; besides, I hate these pricked-eared Puritans, and yon Scotch psalm singers that wo'n't use the Prayer Book."

"It seems, however, that they can use the broad sword, and with good effect, if accounts speak true."

"There you have me," rejoined the cheerful and light-hearted campaigner,—“there you have me. I never felt shame as a soldier till this Scotch campaign. Our tall fellows always turned their backs first, and retreated true runaway fashion:—you could never make them fire their pistols, and wheel off orderly; and it was well for them that they had raw Scots troopers at their tails instead of Pappenheim's cuirassiers."

"It is clear enough that you must have run too," said the young soldier, laughing, "or you would not be here to tell the story."

"To be sure I did,—but not without leaving the mark of my sword in the cheek of a stout Scotsman that pressed me a little too close and unmannerly. However, live and learn is a wise saying. When the King fairly raises a proper army, instead of a set of footmen and servants, commanded by courtiers and parsons, there will be warmer sport than we had in the north."

"It will be sorry and grave sport, methinks, comrade, when Englishmen stand up against Englishmen, and little pleasure to see an old fellow-soldier in the ranks opposite."

"Odd's life, I shall never see you enact rebel."

"Rebel is a rough word:—suppose we change the subject."

The conversation was now continued on various indifferent matters till the hour for rest. Cuthbert himself made but few observations, and was strangely exercised in his mind by contemplating the characters before him. In addition to those already named, there was one other traveller at a table by himself, who had partaken of no better fare than a bowl of oatmeal porridge, and who sat intent over a small closely printed book, without once opening his lips, and seldom even raising his eyes. The companion of Cuthbert often looked contemptuously askance at him, and indulged in many a fling against the Puritans; but the silent stranger either did not or would not hear these rude jests, and, as they met with no encouragement from any one present, they fell flat and powerless. At length the time of going to bed came; and the host appeared to conduct his guests to their chambers. Our host, having a quick eye to the quality of the parties, placed the Cavalier captain in his best chamber; the two military-looking men in the next; and the pale stranger in a small cold garret with Cuthbert.

As soon as the door was closed behind them, and the foot of the landlord was heard descending the stairs, the stranger approached Cuthbert and invited him to join in prayer.

"To me," said the stranger, with a face of the most earnest gravity, "to me is committed that rare and precious gift, the discerning of spirits: I see thou art a God-fearing youth:—as soon as thou didst enter the parlour I smelled the perfume of the angelic nature; even as also the sulphur and the brimstone of Tophet in the three sons of Belial, who are gone to lie down under the power of Beelzebub, and to sleep with evil spirits for company."

"Friend," said Cuthbert, "I do not understand you: it is not my custom to join in prayer with an unknown stranger; there is thy bed, and here is mine:—let us lie down upon them in peace, and commune with our own hearts and be still."

"Verily," rejoined the stranger, "thou art afraid:—it is no wonder:—thou art but a mere babe of grace, and thine eyes do see but dimly the glories of my high calling;—but I tell thee thou art a chosen vessel of the Lord, —and even now I feel my bowels moved towards thee, and the spirit of prayer is upon me, and I must wrestle with the powers of darkness to deliver thy poor soul from the snare of the fowler. This is my command,—and even now I am appointed unto thee for an angel of defence, and the fight is begun."

The stranger now threw himself upon his knees, and poured forth a long, rambling and blasphemous petition,—the words of which made Cuthbert shudder.

However, as he had been already told that there was no other chamber or bed vacant, and as he was greatly fatigued, he lay down to sleep, silently commending himself to the care of God, and endeavouring to substitute a feeling of pity for the deep disgust with which this crazy chamber-fellow inspired him.

The last sounds of which he was conscious before his heavy eyes became sealed in forgetfulness were groanings from the adjoining bed—nor did he awake in the morning till it was broad daylight. He looked

around—the chamber was empty;—at this he felt thankful: and, supposing that his last odd companion had travelled forward at an earlier hour, he arose, and proceeded to dress himself; but he instantly discovered that his purse was gone. He went forth on the stairs, and called loudly for the landlord. It was some time before he made his appearance; and when he did so, he listened to the tale with hard indifference, and coarse incredulity.

“Ah! that’s an old story, my devil’s scholar, but it wo’n’t go down with me:—you shan’t budge from the Boar’s Head till you pay your shot, I can tell you; and your nag shall go to the market cross before I let you ride off without paying for provender.”

Cuthbert’s fury was roused to the uttermost; but his hot words were only laughed at by the rosy Boniface, who soon left him. He slipped on his clothes with all haste, and came down into the guest parlour, where the Cavalier and the two military men were already seated at breakfast by a cheerful fire. He stated his case before them all with the warm earnestness of truth. The Cavalier picked his teeth and whistled; but the younger of the other two seemed very much to sympathise in the embarrassment of Cuthbert, which in fact was more serious than he himself apprehended; for mine host came presently into the parlour to say, that his horse and his vallise were taken away by his chamber-fellow before dawn.

“It was all a made up thing,” said the landlord in a storm of passion. “I saw they were a couple of hypocritical rogues, and packed ’em together for safety’s sake—’twould only be thief rob thief, I knew:—but it’s my belief they take the horse turn by turn, and steal in company; for yon old one has left half a bottle of strong waters and the leg of a cold goose at his bed-foot:—come, young knave,” he added, attempting to take Francis by the collar, “come with me afore the justice. He’ll find thee a lodging in our cage.”

With a force to which indignation gave strength, Cuthbert threw back the fat bully against the wall, and turning to the Cavalier, who had rode with him part of his yesterday’s journey,—

“You may remember, sir,” he said, “that when you joined me, I told you that I came from the neighbourhood of Warwick, and was on my journey to London. I told you, moreover, that I was a member of the University of Cambridge:—the silver crest on my holsters was the crest of Sir Oliver Heywood of Milverton, in whose house I have resided for this year past, as tutor to his nephew’s son. The animal, in fact, is Sir Oliver’s property, and was kindly lent me for the journey:—if you will answer for me to this landlord, and give me a crown piece to travel on with, I will faithfully repay you when I reach town. My name, sir, is Cuthbert Noble, son of Mr. Noble, rector of Cheddar, in Somerset.”

“A pack of stuff, good master,” said the angry landlord to the Cavalier,—“don’t you be made a fool of; don’t be bamboozled by a smooth trumped up cock and a bull story like this: if the horse is Sir Oliver Heywood’s, they have stolen it, and change riders on the road to Smithfield, where they will turn it into a purse of nobles before night. Marry, I’ll go for constables, and, as you are honest gentlemen and true, hold the knave fast in your keeping till I come back again.” Before, however, he could leave the room, as much to his astonishment and shame as to the surprise and relief of Cuthbert, the younger of the two travellers, whom his companion the Cavalier had last night claimed acquaintance with, came forward in a very open and cordial manner, and assured Cuthbert of his readiness to assist him.

“I am connected,” said the noble looking youth, “with the family at Milverton, nor is the name of Master Cuthbert Noble unknown to me. My purse is at your service; and I shall be glad of your company on the road. Though I have no horse to offer you, post-horses can be easily procured at every stage.”

Thus was Cuthbert at once released from a perplexity, and introduced to the friendship of Francis Heywood.

CHAP. XVI.

The great vicissitude of things amongst men is the vicissitude of sects and religions; for those orbs rule in men’s minds most.

BACON.

On the third of November, 1640, the fatal Long Parliament began. On the 12th, the Earl of Strafford was impeached of treason, and committed to the Black Rod. The Lords denied him bail and council; and he was, in a few days more, commanded into close imprisonment in the Tower. One hundred thousand pounds were now voted to the Scots, and borrowed of the city of London. Ship money was soon questioned by the Parliament, and voted an illegal tax; and, in fine, all grievances and abuses were loudly proclaimed, and resolutely brought forward, by intrepid and patriotic men; of whom the best and noblest did certainly never contemplate, at that time, the sad and humiliating close of the labours and the authority of that memorable and august assembly. August, of a truth, that assembly may be called, in which a Hampden and a Falkland stood, at after moments, opposed in debate; and in which, in the following year, the grand remonstrance of the Commons was the subject of grave deliberation for thirty hours, and was only carried, at last, by a majority of nine voices.

But to return to our story. It may be supposed that Cuthbert Noble was no indifferent or unmoved spectator of the great public events which every day brought forth in the winter of 1640. With his serious and peculiar notions, the questions that affected liberty of conscience and church reform were those which most deeply interested him; and when, upon the morning of the 23d of November, Prynne and Burton entered triumphantly into Westminster, followed by many thousands of the people, Cuthbert was foremost in the

crowd; and not a zealot among them was more wildly excited than himself.

Laughter and tears succeeded to each other, as those around expressed their rude sympathy;—now in remarks quaint and comical—now in pious commiseration, or in the stern tones of indignant and just anger.

“Which is old Prynne?” said one.—“That’s he,” said his neighbour, “with his black head clipped close, looking, for all the world, like a skull-cap.”—“See how the old boy grins.”—“He’s no beauty.”—“Hurrah! hurrah!”—“Can you hear, old boy?”—“I wonder if a man can hear without his ears.”—“To be sure a’ can, all the better.”—“Well, he can’t have the ear-ache no more.”—“Don’t talk so unfeeling.”—“Look, poor dear good man, he is as white as a sheet.”—“That is prison and hunger.”—“This is your bishops’ work—od rot ’em—their turn shall come.”

With such vulgarities were mixed the solemn tones and pious expressions of many a sincere Christian, giving utterance to praise and thanksgiving for the deliverance of these persecuted men; while, here and there, a strong voice would be heard, above the crowd, denouncing the tyranny of the church and the crown in coarse language, in which the Establishment was likened to the whore of Babylon,—and the Archbishop of Canterbury was pointed out to the vengeance of the rabble.

Such language would, in a moment of calm reflection, have been utterly revolting to the feelings of Cuthbert. He would have shut his ears to the base and bloody cry, and hurried away from the wretches who gave it utterance, as from the company of sinners, whose feet were already planted in the paths of wickedness, and were swift to shed blood. But now, though such fierce cries gave a jar to his better dispositions and nobler nature, they were regarded as the natural ebullitions of an irritated mob; and he stood among them as a partaker of their guilt by the sanction of his presence.

Nothing is so blind—nothing is so deaf—nothing can stoop so low—as party spirit;—and at no period of English history was this more fully exemplified than at that of which we are now speaking. The Cavaliers, on their side, were not without the support of a rabble of their own; and by these, the slang of the tavern, the bear garden, and the brothel, was exhausted to furnish epithets of scorn, contempt, and ridicule, by which they might insult their fanatical opponents.

To the mental eye of Cuthbert the two victims of a severe and intolerant hierarchy stood out in large and disproportionate grandeur,—filling all the foreground of the picture upon which he now gazed to the exclusion of all other objects.

He saw them bearing the evident marks of torture and degradation on their mutilated forms. They had been thus treated, according to his notion, for a mere error in judgment—they were sufferers for conscience-sake:—his heart grew hot within him,—and he would have called down fire from heaven on the heads of their oppressors.

He accompanied the crowd all through Westminster; and, in the eagerness of his excited mood, pressed in once close to the horse of Prynne, that he might utter a “God save you, master!” to the stern Puritan, face to face.

There was a keen twinkle of triumph in the little eyes of the sour precisian, which showed that he felt his day of revenge would soon come, and that it would be his turn to play inquisitor towards his late haughty oppressor.

However, he would have been more than human had he been superior to such an infirmity, after sustaining injuries so great.

It happened on the day of this public entry of Prynne and Burton that Cuthbert was alone in the quarter of Westminster; and having remained a long time gazing on the show, he went into a tavern in a narrow street behind the Abbey to refresh.

After satisfying his hunger over a fine joint of roast beef in company with a grave looking lawyer, who sat opposite him at the same table, with a roll of parchments and papers by his side, the man of law proposed a cup of canary to the health of Masters Prynne and Burton, in which he was readily seconded by Cuthbert.

“Ah,” said the stranger bitterly, “this is a different kind of procession to the fool’s mummery which they made us play seven years ago, before the wanton queen and her dancing French gentlemen.”

“What! you mean the mask of the inns of court, on Candlemas-day, seven years ago?” asked Cuthbert.

“Just so: that was got up to tickle the court party, and trample down Prynne and his book; but tables are turning.”

“Well, though I think they were very tyrannical about Prynne, I did not like his book; and never saw any harm in a mask or an interlude.”

“Why, to judge by your looks, you could only have been a boy when that mask was given, and perhaps you did not see it.”

“That is true; but I read the account of it that was printed, and surely it was a brave and glorious show; and, methinks, there were some witty hints given his Majesty in the anti-masks, which he might be the wiser for.”

“The man Charles Stuart,” said the stranger, “will never be the better for hints.”

It was the first time that Cuthbert had ever heard from any lips so irreverent a mention of the King, and he coloured and was silent.

“I say he will never be the better for hints,—though it is true that some of them were broad enough, and too humorous for offence; but you have forgotten that there was one anti-mask got up by the serviles to insult the poor. If it may not have a sneer of ridicule for poverty and misfortune, the pleasure of the proud wanteth its best relish.”

“I do not understand you,” said Cuthbert; “of what speak you, master?”

“Of that which has been played in joke, and shall come to pass in earnest. Little they thought, with their gibes and their mockery, that they were but foreshowing events, which the turn of the wheel is even now bringing to pass. I do remember all their gilded chariots and rich apparel, and gay liveries; and in the midst of that costly show, there rode an anti-mask of cripples and beggars, clothed in rags, and mounted on sorry lean jades, gotten out of dust carts, with dirty urchins snapping tongs and shovels before them for music,—

and thus was the noble music, and thus were the gallant horses, and the velvets and silks and spangled habits, made more pleasing to the painted court Jezebels by the pitiful contrast. Shall not the Lord visit for these things?" he added, raising his voice, and changing the tone of it to a solemn sternness: "Yea, verily, he shall visit:—in his hand there is a cup,—and the dregs thereof shall be drunk out by the oppressors,—and the sword shall go through the land, and it shall be drunk with blood."

The severe inference thus forced by the speaker from a trifling circumstance, of which the joyous projectors of the interlude thought perhaps very differently, and which might have been so turned by a playful mind, as a caricature against the foreign musicians, then so much about court; or, again, by a thoughtful mind, as a memento of those dark realities of human misery which invite and demand compassion. This inference was at once received by Cuthbert as just. It touched a chord in his heart that immediately responded, and he was played upon as a lute by his companion; till, at last, the latter opening a roll of parchment requested him to put down his name as a subscriber to the necessities of a few godly and persecuted men now suffering imprisonment for the great cause of liberty of conscience, and whose families were quite destitute.

From his slender purse Cuthbert instantly took the few crowns it contained, and only reserving sufficient money to pay for his dinner, shook his new acquaintance heartily by the hand, and set forth on his way to the city, where he lodged, with a heart glowing with the love of God, of his country, and of mankind. His evil angel had only to appear clothed like an angel of light, and Cuthbert would follow, nothing doubting, whithersoever he was led. The false fire, which glimmered over the dangerous quagmire of gloomy fanaticism, was mistaken by Cuthbert for light from Heaven; and by the frequent perusal of controversies on religion, and a constant attendance on the private ministries of those fierce zealots, who were urging forward the overthrow of the Established Church, he became at length totally bewildered. It was in vain that Francis Heywood exposed to him the hypocrisy and inconsistency of some of those wolves in sheep's clothing by whom he was now continually surrounded, to the neglect of Heywood's own society and that of the higher and better order of the Parliamentary supporters. He listened with pity to remonstrances which he considered as proceeding from a man of the world, and a deceived soul wandering in darkness; nevertheless his affectionate disposition survived the strength of his reason. He looked up to and loved Francis Heywood as a model of what the natural man might attain to; and as in their political views they were altogether agreed, they very often met. The ardent Francis might indeed have well doubted of the soundness of a political creed which numbered among its supporters such diversified and crazy characters as those whom he saw daily embrace it: but although he was not able to endure their sanctimonious professions, and morose manners, he viewed them as instruments necessary to the present warfare of principles; and, having returned from America on purpose to stand up for the popular rights, he remained steadfastly at his post, watching with intense interest the proceedings of parliament, and eager for the moment when those services, which he came to offer, might be required in the field.

In one particular the lives of Francis Heywood and of Cuthbert Noble during the two following years corresponded well. Never were those hard duties which self-denial enjoins, practised with a more resolute and cheerful virtue. The means of both were slender; and they supported themselves by the exercise of their respective talents with credit and success.

Cuthbert attended daily in the families of two or three merchants of the Puritan party as classical tutor to their boys; while Francis Heywood, reserving with great care the sum necessary to purchase a good charger, and military equipments, whenever he might need them, maintained his current expenses by the drawing of maps, plans, and views illustrative of the late campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus, and of the actual warfare in Germany which was then carrying on. These drawings found a sufficient sale, among the curious in such matters, to remunerate the light labour of producing them; and though the printseller, who purchased them from Francis, told him that gentlemen, very capable of advancing his interests, had made inquiries after him, yet he was forbidden by Francis to disclose his residence, or to answer any questions about him. His leisure from this easy occupation was employed in useful studies or in manly exercises. He daily frequented a school of arms, not for instruction, indeed, for he was a master of all weapons, but for health and diversion; and for the same end he went often to the grand manège in the quarter of the court; where he was so great a favourite with the chevalier, who taught the graces of horsemanship, that he was asked as a kindness to exercise the most spirited and beautiful animals of his stud in the open country:—an offer which, from the delight he took in the amusement of schooling a young and high bred horse, he very often accepted.

Francis Heywood was not unknown to many families with whom his father had been intimate; and by some of them, notwithstanding his fortunes and his politics, and by others on account of them, he was invited to several houses, where he might have enjoyed all the pleasures and the refinements of social life; but he very rarely accepted their invitations, not merely from mistaken pride, but from a disrelish of scenes which would always so strongly and painfully suggest to him the happy intercourse he had once enjoyed in that domestic circle, of which his adored Katharine was at once the charm and the idol.

Upon this sweet memory, in lonely hours of leisure, his mind would feed, and he would discourse of it, not indeed in words, but in the soft breathings of his lute; till, suddenly, by the strong effort of a manly will, he would tear himself from the dangerous indulgence, and sit closely down to his writing desk, that he might complete the minute journal of public events which he kept for his father, and despatched, as opportunities offered, to New England.

To the review of these grave subjects he brought a generous spirit; and it was not without an occasional pang that he related the progress and triumph of the cause to which he was sincerely attached.

He could not but exult to see the principles of government openly examined, and the just rights and liberties of the people clearly defined.

He looked with veneration upon the labours of the Commons; and he watched with jealousy the advisers of the crown, and the sycophants about the court. He saw many abuses rectified, many grievances redressed. He saw the iniquitous Star Chamber and the High Commission Court abolished,—and a noble security against a return of misgovernment and tyranny in the famous bill for a triennial parliament.

This last measure, the main pillar of the new constitution, was received by the whole nation with

rejoicings; and when it passed solemn thanks were presented to his Majesty by both houses of parliament. But the sincerity of the court party and the moderation of the reformers were alike suspicious. The passions, the prejudices, and the interests of conflicting parties had been too rudely aroused by discussion to subside without an explosive collision; and it was evident to Francis that the struggle between the prerogatives of the crown and the privileges of parliament would never terminate without an appeal to arms.

He shuddered to see the scaffold stained with the blood of Strafford; and though he was among those who clamoured against the minister, he profoundly commiserated the man, as the abandoned victim of his party,—and in his heart he despised Charles for signing the death-warrant of his favourite.

CHAP. XVII.

There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

MILTON.

The affliction of the good parson of Cheddar at the strange and painful conduct of his son Cuthbert was heavy to bear. However, from a sense of duty to his weaker partner, he made great efforts to preserve his wonted serenity and composure in her presence; but when alone he was bowed down in the dust.

Nothing could possibly present a greater contrast to the tone of religious profession which was, at this period, obtaining a wide reception among men than that in which old Noble lay prostrate in his closet before his God.

He had ever been a meek and cheerful Christian; but there were depths of humiliation which he had not as yet fathomed; and he would have fainted at the waves of trouble, which his prescient eye saw rolling onward, if he had not felt the hand, which led him down into the deep, was that of a heavenly Father, if he had not heard a voice that whispered in his ear, "*It is I, be not afraid.*"

In vain did he exhaust his heart in sound, pious, and affectionate remonstrances, meditated and penned in the spirit of prayer, that he might recall his dear and wandering child to the bosom of the church, or, at all events, so far recover him from gross delusions as to see him join that upright and devout portion of the community, which, though differing from the discipline of the church, maintained a pure and practical doctrine.

In vain did he press the return of Cuthbert to Cheddar, by every argument which parental love could suggest.

The letters of Noble and his wife were replied to in the words of love; but the fruit of his new persuasion was an obstinate self-will; and while he implored them, at great length, to consider his views, and urged the danger of despising them, he evinced to others, what was not perhaps suspected by himself, a degree of spiritual pride only to be exceeded by the strength of his delusion.

He had adopted the notions of those fanatics who were styled Fifth-monarchy Men, and who ranged themselves where, indeed, any sect, however extravagant, might have found a place, under the banner of the Independents.

It was some consolation to these troubled parents to hear from the Philips's, their relations, and also from other friends, that the life and the conduct of Cuthbert were, as regarded all moral and social duties, a credit to any theory, and such as became the pure precepts of the Gospel.

His intellect was clear upon every other subject, except on that which, if it be rashly touched, seems to be guarded by invisible angels, who put forth their hands and smite the daring intruder with madness. "Oppression," saith the preacher, "will make a wise man mad;"—a truth abundantly proved by the events, which, leading first to a secret and salutary reform, ended at last in a bloody revolution and an iron rule.

It may be added, that he who seeketh to meddle with the hidden mysteries of unfulfilled prophecy is often smitten with blindness and confusion for his presumption. Thus it was with Cuthbert:—sensible, amiable, and affectionate in all the relations of life, he was now the subject of a monomania, and turned a deaf ear to the voice of truth and wisdom, though it spoke with all the authority and all the earnestness of a father.

These were not times in which a minister could leave his parish for a distant journey, nor, indeed, was it at all likely that the presence of his parents would have effected that change in the sentiments or the course of Cuthbert, which their admirable and Christian letters had failed to produce.

Time wore on gloomily enough, even in the peaceful parsonage at Cheddar. Many a time as old Noble paced his garden amid sunbeams and flowers, praising that "mercy which endureth for ever," his thanksgivings ended in tears and lamentations, not for his domestic troubles, but for the great evils which he feared and expected would befall the church and the nation.

Laud was already paying the penalty of his mistaken, but certainly conscientious, severity, in a prison, from whence it might be plainly foretold he would at length be conducted to the block. The bishops' votes in parliament were taken away, and the deans and chapters were already voted against in the Commons, although their spoliation had not yet taken place, neither were the cathedral services as yet discontinued. As

regularly, therefore, as the Thursday came round, Noble, if not prevented by a special call of duty at home, made his weekly visit to the fair city of Wells; where he in the first instance always bent his steps to the cathedral, and joined the congregation assembled for morning service.

It was on a saint's day, in the summer of 1641, that, as usual, he proceeded to that venerable and glorious temple, and took his seat in the vacant stall which it was his wont to occupy. Directly opposite he observed a tall uncouth man of harsh features and a sour countenance, sitting very upright, and glancing a severe and restless eye at the organ, the first tones of which were pealing through the long aisles, as the dean, the prebends, and other officers of the choir, preceded by the vergers with their maces, slowly entered, and reverently took their seats.

The service began, and was conducted with that solemn decency, and with those clear fine chants, which dispose most hearts to a subdued feeling of intense devotion.

There is a something in sacred music which does wonderfully compose the mind, and cleanse it of all earthly-rooted cares. Upon the stranger above mentioned, however, it produced no such effect. He sat erect, cold, and contemptuous: he put aside the Book of Common Prayer with a rude thrust; and taking a small volume from his pocket opened it with ostentatious gravity, and, not joining in the worship that he witnessed, either by response, gesture, or any conformity of posture with those around him, sat, now casting his eyes on the page of his book, now severely around, and now raising them to Heaven after a manner that left nothing but the jaundiced whites visible.

This strange conduct disturbed, irritated, or amused the observers, according to the impression that was made upon them. Some of the prebends and vicars choral looked red and angry. The dean was greatly distressed, and knew not what to do. At first he called the verger, with a design to remove the intruder; but, upon second thoughts, he feared that a yet greater interruption and indecency might take place if such a course was attempted, he therefore commanded his feelings with as much dignity as he could. But his grave frowns were totally without power upon the youthful choristers, whose laughter would have been loud and audible, but for the thick folds of the surplice with which they stuffed their rebellious and aching jaws.

Noble himself was mournfully agitated, and prayed in the spirit with that deep and melancholy fervour which hath no outward expression but the abased eyes.

By degrees, the congregation recovered their composure, and never was an anthem performed with more earnest solemnity, or a sweetness more touching to the inmost soul, than the "*Ne Irascaris*," the "*Be not Wroth*," or "*Bow thine Ear*" of the famous composer Bird. At the words "*Sion, thy Sion is wasted and brought low*," which are set to a tender and solemn passage, and are sung very soft and slow, the effect was sublime. Moved by the deep pathos of the expression, the cheeks of Noble, as of a few others present, were bathed in tears.

But the stranger remained in his seat without rising, and perused his book with a kind of resolved and insulting inattention to it all.

The service was not permitted to close without this mysterious personage marking his contempt of it yet farther, by rising suddenly, while all the congregation were on their knees, and stalking slowly down the middle of the aisle with a loud and measured stamp of his great thick boots.

He wore by his side a long heavy-looking sword, and had certainly the air of a man who could use it, if he chose, with little fear and no favour.

Noble joined the clergy in the chapter-room directly after the morning prayers were ended, and there learned that there had been a riot the night before in the streets, excited by some mischievous emissary from London; and that some of the rabble had burned a bishop in effigy, in the close just under the windows of the dean. It seemed, however, that this outrage had been committed by a band of low persons, who had come up from Bristol to attend a fair, and had brought with them sundry printed papers and ribald songs to distribute in the lanes and alleys of the city: the object of which was to bring the church and clergy into public contempt.

However, it so happens that, for the most part, the inhabitants of a cathedral town take a great pride in the edifice itself, whatever may be their indifference to religion. Those magnificent structures are the first wonders upon which the eyes of the human beings, born and suckled beneath their shadow, are taught to gaze. They are noble and solemn features in the scene of early life; and are printed so indelibly on the mind, that, let the native of a cathedral city wander where he will, the recollection of the venerable temple goes with him, associated, in his memory, with his birthplace, his holydays, his truant hours, with the merry music of festival bells, with the pride of having often seen strangers and travellers, both of high and low degree, walk about its walls, and linger in its spacious aisles, with pleasure and admiration.

Therefore a party among the common people was easily roused to take up sticks and stones against the insulting mischief-makers, who were thus at last driven away from the city with great tumult.

It was the very day following this riot that the offensive adventure in the cathedral, which we have just related, occurred. As no doubt existed in the minds of the clergy assembled in the chapter-room that the extraordinary person, who had just committed so gross and indecent an outrage in a place of public worship, was, in some measure, connected with the disturbance of the preceding day, they resolved to make an immediate complaint to the Mayor of Wells, that the obnoxious individual might be taken up, and committed to prison, or otherwise punished for his offence.

Some little time had been lost in their consultations; and they came forth from the cathedral in a body, with the intention of despatching two of the prebends, already deputed for that purpose, to wait upon the mayor, when, to their surprise and mortification, they saw the object of their anger approaching them on horseback. As he drew near, it was evident that the opportunity of arresting him was already lost. He rode a very powerful young horse of generous breed and fine action—and he sat upon him as on a throne.

"Look ye," said he, as he drew up close to the astonished group,—"*Look ye, Scribes and Pharisees! hypocrites!—ye love greetings in the market-place—take mine:—the time is come to set your houses in order—even now the decree is gone forth—the sword is now sharpening that shall pass through the land:—it glitters, look ye.*" So saying, with a grim smile he drew the blade of his own half out of the scabbard, and let it

fall again with a forcible rattle.

The dean, who was a bold and athletic man, disregarding this fierce action, made an active effort to seize the bridle of the Puritan's steed; but the wary rider with a jerk of the reins threw up the animal's head, and at the same moment touching his flank with the spur made him give a plunge forward that scattered the frightened priests a few yards on either side. Nevertheless, the dean remonstrated in very angry terms against his insulting abuse; as did others, who were, like himself, courageous. They did not, however, succeed either in stopping the fanatic or in driving him away:—a small mob was gathering in the cathedral yard, and the fiery zealot continued his address.

“What mean ye, ye priests of Baal, by your silks, and your satins, and your hoods, and your scarfs, and your square caps, and your surplices, and all your fooleries? what mean your boy choristers that bleat like young kids, and your men choristers that bellow like oxen? what means your grunting organ? Is it thus you worship God, as though he were an idol and an abomination, and his temple like that of the heathen? It should be a house of prayer, and ye have made it a den of thieves, and all its services vain and lewd mummeries. I cry, Fie upon you!—Wo, wo, wo!—Ye shall see me again when the blast of the trumpet soundeth, and mine eye shall not pity. I will smite, I will not spare you. Have ye not preached blasphemies? have ye not broken and polluted the holy Sabbath with your sports and your harlotries? have ye not shed the blood of God-fearing men? yea, verily. Now hear my warning:—come out of her, come out of her, my people. There are among you, even among your priests, some whom the Lord hath chosen:—yet again I call to you, Come out of her, come out of Babylon, that ye perish not with her. To me is appointed this cry:—every where I must lift up my voice thus, till the day of vengeance come. Wo shall be the portion of those who hear me not!”

An insane delight gleamed in his dark eyes, a convulsive energy distorted his features, and seemed to affect and agitate his whole form. The crowd drew closer to him: the resolute dean beckoning them forward, again advanced with the intention of seizing him, when he suddenly gave his horse the head; and touching the high spirited beast with both spurs, he was borne out of their sight at a few rapid bounds, and was very soon beyond all danger of pursuit.

Several of the mob ran round the corner after him jeering and cheering; but the clergy went their ways, by twos and threes, and talked over the uncomfortable though diseased words of the fanatic with much gravity and discomposure.

Many painful extravagancies of a fanatic character had been already committed in various parts of the country; and in London many scandalous scenes had been enacted, expressive of a contempt for the Established Church and her ministers.

The prelates and dignitaries were the especial marks of popular hatred; but, hitherto, nothing approaching to the indecency and outrage above recorded had occurred in the neighbourhood and under the eye of Noble.

Again he could have wished Cuthbert to have been present, as he had formerly wished that he could have witnessed the unmannerly and unchristian bearing of Master Daws, the morose and designing curate, whose interview with Noble we have in a former part of this story related.

“Surely,” thought the mild man of peace,—“Surely such things would open his eyes to the spirit that is abroad, and to the aim and end of these violent men, who would purify our venerable church as with fire, and wash away her few stains with the blood and the tears of her faithful children.”

After partaking of a dinner, with little appetite, in the house of his friend, where the party assembled formed but a sad society, and where the time passed in the discussion of more grave and anxious matters than those upon which they were commonly engaged in these innocent weekly meetings, the worthy parson mounted his old mare, and rode back slowly to Cheddar. His thoughts were so profoundly and mournfully absorbed by reflections on the very startling occurrences of the morning, that he saw not the clouds which were gathering overhead, until he was awakened to observe them by a sudden and loud clap of thunder. The sunshine was suddenly obscured by a deep gloom. A few heavy rain drops fell upon him, and were soon followed by a thick and rushing deluge of such rain as falls in summer tempests. The sky was covered with a mass of clouds black as a funeral pall. Every moment flashes of angry lightning passed across it in vivid and arrowy forms; while thunder followed, peal after peal rolling in quick and troubled succession. Noble had just entered the defile or pass by which Cheddar is approached; and as the narrow road lies in the bottom of a chasm, on either side of which the rocks rise many hundred feet with a terrific grandeur, the horrid gloom—the lurid and ghastly lights—and the prolonged echoes with which the roar of the thunder was borne from crag to crag—gave a tenfold awfulness to the storm, and sublimely shadowed forth the power of Jehovah.

Amid this war of elements the meek parson felt almost happy:—his frightened beast had stopped beneath a rock that inclined somewhat over the road, though not sufficiently to afford any shelter from the rain. He was drenched to the skin himself, and as he could not urge his animal forward he dismounted; but the wet and the delay were forgotten, were disregarded. There are moments of communion with the Deity, which, when they are accorded to his feeble children, cause their spirits to be rapt in seraphic love. The adoration that is born of a faith trembling yet holding fast is the sublimest human worship:—“the firmest thing in this inferior world is a believing soul.” And he that can lift up his voice with the Psalmist, and, amid the horrors of a tempest, can say, “Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me praise his holy name,” hath, as it were, a sublime foretaste of that great and terrible day of the Lord, when the Christian shall witness the final and everlasting triumph of his Redeemer over sin and death,—and shall behold his salvation draw nigh.

CHAP. XVIII.

With that the mighty thunder dropt away
From God's unwary arm, now milder grown,
And melted into tears.

GILES FLETCHER.

In such a spirit Noble endured the pelting of the storm, and listened to the rolling of the thunder, and gazed upon the dread illumination which flashed at intervals on the desolate and dreary rocks around him. The fury of this summer tempest was soon exhausted:—the exceeding blackness of the clouds gave place to a lighter, though a sunless, sky; the claps of thunder were few and distant, and the lightning became a faint and harmless coruscation. The rain was thin and transparent; and Noble continued his way on foot, followed by his old mare, whose docility was that of an aged dog. They had not proceeded above two hundred yards when the mare gave a sudden start, and ran up a heap of loose stones on the right of the road. On the left of it, at the foot of a tremendous precipice, Noble descried the object which had alarmed her, and which, but for her fright, he should have passed without notice. A man lay upon the ground bleeding. Noble immediately crossed to the spot, and stooping down, he recognised the person of the stern fanatic, whose conduct at Wells has been related in the foregoing chapter. He was insensible, but did not, upon examination, appear to have sustained any injury more serious than a severe and stunning bruise; as well as a cut on the forehead from a sharp flint. From the prints of his horse's feet, it seemed evident, at first, that he had been thrown where he then lay, and had fainted; but on looking again, Noble observed that his pockets were turned inside out, and that his sword and cartridge belt were gone; for he remembered in the morning to have remarked his arms very particularly, and to have been struck by the circumstance of a man of his rigid ungraceful figure sitting so admirably on horseback, and managing the young animal which he rode with such a light and easy hand. Moreover, he now saw that the impressions of the horse's hoofs had been made before the rain had fallen. His first care was to endeavour to restore the sufferer from his swoon. This he soon effected by chafing the body to restore circulation, and by applying to the nostrils a pungent preparation, which he always carried about with him, as a preservative from infection, when his duties called him to visit the sick beds of those who were afflicted with any disease considered pestilential. When Noble had satisfied himself that the unfortunate man was a little recovered by the returning consciousness in his eyes, and the regularity of his breathing, he went after his mare. She had not strayed far, and he soon brought her back, and after a while he had the satisfaction to observe that the wounded traveller was able to move and sit up. He now persuaded and assisted him to get upon the patient beast, and supporting him in the saddle with his hand, moved off slowly towards Cheddar. Half a mile on they met plain Peter, who had come out to look for his master, and was wondering and uncomfortable at the unusual lateness of his return.

The sight explained itself; and the honest domestic expressing some sorrow for the sufferer, but more for his master, took his place on the other side of the mare, and aided Noble in the task of supporting the stranger, who was so weak and exhausted that he could hardly be held upon the saddle by their joint exertions for the rest of the road.

Although not a syllable had been uttered by the object of their care, that was intelligible to either, and although Noble had not mentioned a word about having seen him at Wells, still Peter had an instinctive dislike to the man's features and his dress—from both of which he pronounced him a Puritan. He went so far as to provoke an angry rebuke from his master for opposing the benevolent resolution of the latter to take him to his own house.

"Surely," said Peter, "a pallet at the Jolly Woodman will serve his turn:—he'll be well enough taken care of by Dame Crowther: why bring him home to trouble and frighten my good mistress, and to make a fuss, and a dirt, and a sick house of the parsonage?"

"Peter," said Noble, "how would you like to be dealt by if you had fallen among thieves, and lay bruised and bleeding, and without a friend or a penny?"

"Why, I should think an inn good enough for me; and so it is writ in the Bible."

"Peter you are hard—and know not what spirit you are of—and speak foolishly."

"Ah! well I mind what you said once about that parable, and how you told us that had the good Samaritan's house been over against the inn he would have taken him in at his own gate;—but somehow I don't like this fancy of yours—it will be a bad job:—when his saintship is warmed by your fire, mayhap he will turn out a serpent."

"Never use that word lightly, Peter. I have often forbade you to trifle with it—duties are ours, events are God's. I shall certainly take this man in." Having thus decided, they went forward to the parsonage in silence. Mistress Noble came out eagerly as soon as they appeared. Her mind was soon quieted on the surprise which the sight of the wounded stranger caused her, and her kind and hospitable heart acquiesced instantly to the proposal of her good husband.

The sufferer was at once carefully put to bed; and Noble, as by his own bright fire he put on the warm dry vestments which he found ready for him in his study, revolved the singular incidents of the eventful day with wonder, gratitude, and a calm confiding faith.

He could not but reflect thankfully on his own escape from the misfortune which had befallen the temporary inmate of his dwelling. For want of a better booty, doubtless he would have been assaulted himself by the robbers who had fallen upon the Puritan; and, had he not been preceded by this traveller on the road, or had he left Wells at an earlier hour, he might have suffered in his room, or shared his fate.

Again, how strange that a daring enthusiast, who had that very morning violated the sanctity of the cathedral, and had insulted the ministers of the church in their decent performance of public and solemn worship, should, before the setting of the sun which had witnessed his impiety, be laid in the dust, and left dependent upon one who had been revolted by his fierce conduct for the mercies of help and protection.

"To-morrow," said Noble to his wife, as he related to her all the circumstances which had taken place at

Wells, "when our guest is in a reasonable and repenting mood, I may, perhaps, speak a word in season that shall serve to deliver him from the chains of that cruel and bigoted spirit of persecution by which he is held. God preserve our Cuthbert from the hateful errors of men like these! It has been well observed, that though the fanatic cannot be seduced by the love of any sinful pleasures, yet that he can be readily persuaded to walk in blood by the lust of a power which he deceives himself in thinking he should assuredly use to the glory of the King of heaven, and the benefit of the faithful people of God. When will Christians learn that the kingdom of the Messiah is not of this world?"

They had not retired for the night, when their worthy neighbour Blount, the franklin, who had but just returned from Glastonbury, came in to learn the particulars of what had occurred at Wells, and to tell the bad news which he had heard at Glastonbury that morning.

"The devil is busy enough, Master Noble," said the old man as he entered: "there is a little party of vinegar-faced rogues coming to the Bald Raven at Axbridge to-morrow, who call themselves 'a Corresponding Committee for informing and aiding the Grand Committee of Religion and that for scandalous Ministers;' and they tell me that that sour hypocrite Daws is as busy as a bee among them already. But what is this I hear about one of these godly rogues having been half murdered under the cliff and lying in your house?"

Noble told him all the circumstances; and Peter, who had lingered a little at the parlour door, said, "Ay, I can see by Master Blount's eyebrows he don't think it were a wise job to take this round-headed madman in here. Why he's talking a pack of wild stuff enough to frighten the maidens out of their wits."

On hearing this, Noble, accompanied by Blount, went up stairs to the chamber of their inmate, and found him sitting upright in his bed, and parleying with some visionary appearance, after a wild but most earnest manner.

As soon as they entered the room, he turned towards them and sniffed repeatedly, then gravely said, "Two good spirits and one bad—verily I am not forsaken—two to one against thee, Beelzebub—look gentle spirits—look upon the wall—there goes a coach drawn by lions and tigers—there goes Everard the conjurer in boots and spurs—here is the great fiery dragon—who hath taken away my trusty sword?—where is my horse?—a horse is a vain thing to save a man—see how it grows—the dragon—the great red dragon—taller—taller—it fills the room—save Lord, or I perish."

To these wild, incoherent expressions, produced by the strange images which flitted before his troubled fancy, succeeded a profuse perspiration, and they persuaded him to lie down under the blankets, that he might obtain the full benefit of such a relief.

He did so, and they could now only hear whispered murmurs, and humble tones, as of a person praying with tears. Noble himself was not unaffected by this scene; and even Blount admitted, that, if it were not for the mischief they did, some of these enthusiasts were rather to be pitied than punished. "Now here," said he, "is a case, where they should shave the head and lock up the poor creature in an hospital; but the worst matter is, they go about like mad dogs, biting all the folk they meet—and so they must e'en be dealt with in like manner."

"You are not far wrong, neighbour, in judging many of them crazy; but there are cunning men behind to urge them on: and there certainly are many excellent and pious persons, who, as they stand on the same side in this sad quarrel, give a credit to the cause of these levellers in church and state which they otherwise would want; and, notwithstanding the actions and utterances of the unknown individual before us, I cannot look upon him without interest and pity."

An umph from old Peter, with a request that his master would go to bed himself, and leave him to take care of the stranger, ended the conversation: Blount went away,—and Noble to his own chamber.

At an early hour on the following morning two odd-looking servants, in sad-coloured suits, mounted and armed, presented themselves at the gate of the vicarage, and inquired "if their master was not there, as from what they had heard at the blacksmith's shed they thought that the gentleman, who had been robbed and wounded beneath the rocks, and was now lying sick in that house, could be no other."

"I don't think you are far wrong," said Peter, as he cocked his eye askew at their long lean faces and their plain liveries of a colour like the cinders in the ash heap. "Like master like man, they say; though it's little I thought that the poor crazy body up stairs had a serving-man to truss up his points for him.—What do ye call your master?"

"The right worshipful and godly Sir Roger Zouch, an approved voice, a faithful witness, a preacher of the truth, a trier of spirits, a man of war—bold as a lion for his God."

"Why, then, by my troth," said Peter, "thy master is here for a certainty, and lieth with a cracked skull in our blue room; and is now telling my good master how he fought last night with beasts from Ephesus, who is listening to him, poor simple kind soul as he is, with as much patience as if it was all sense and gospel."

"Out upon thee, thou vile churl! talkest thou so of one of Zion's champions? None of thy gibes and jeers, or it may be thine own crown will feel the weight of my cudgel." So saying, the elder of the two domestics alighted, and not waiting to be conducted, strode past Peter with a rude thrust, and entered the house.

"A plague o' thee!" grumbled Peter: "two can play at quarter staff, as I'll show thee;" and following him into the passage, he slammed the door behind him, and left the other servant alone with the two horses before the wicket. This last, however, tarrying for no invitation, proceeded deliberately to the stable, and finding it open, introduced his tired beasts to the astonished old mare; took off bridles and saddles; and, plentifully supplying the rack and manger with hay and oats, entered the parson's kitchen, and taking a seat by the dresser demanded of the frightened maids the creature comforts of breakfast.

Old Peter, who had just been witnessing the meeting of master and man above stairs, and whose cross temper had given way to a humour that had been tickled by the quaint scene and the ludicrous speeches, came shaking with laughter into the kitchen; but the tired and hungry groom was in no laughing mood, and soon upset this grinning philosophy by a smart stroke of his whip across his shoulders.

In a moment the old man caught up a broomstick to return the blow; and, though very unequal, either in strength or youth, was standing up manfully against the assault, when the cook, whose spirit was roused by Peter's danger, dipped her mop in a pail of foul water, and thrusting it into the groom's face, drove him into

the yard with dirty cheeks and blinded eyes. The cry of "murder" having been in the mean time screamed forth at the top of her voice by the other maiden, the kitchen was instantly filled with every person in the house; for even Sir Roger Zouch himself, albeit in no seemly garb for appearing in public, descended close after Noble, and stood up in the midst of them rather like a ghost newly risen from the grave than true flesh and blood,—though the stain of the last was indeed sufficiently visible beneath the folds of the bandage about his head.

"How now!" said Sir Roger, in a voice rather more stentorian than might have been expected from the plight in which he had been put to bed the night before, and in a tone of authority as if he had been in his own mansion and with only his own household—"How now! brawlings and fightings: who is the striker, Gabriel Goldworthy?" but before this slow elder had screwed his mouth up to reply, Peter answered in his own blunt fashion, and the cook, in a shrill voice, chanted an echo to his complaint. Meantime the culprit groom, with a foul face, stood at the yard door as white as a stone with passion, while Sir Roger thus rejoined:—

"Verily, thou art a trouble to me, Abel, and makest me a reproach among the people wheresoever I go: it was only last week, at the hostel of the Pied Bull in Tewksbury, thou didst raise a brawl about thy victuals at the buttery hatch: thou makest a god of thy belly. Remember that man liveth not by bread alone:—a good soldier must endure hardness, and never strike but in battle, and then home. I fear that thou art sensual, and it were not for thy godly grand-mother, and this, thy God-fearing uncle Gabriel, the man of my right hand, I would send thee back to thy ditching and delving."

Abel muttered out that the children of Belial were making a mock of his master, and that he struck Peter in pure zeal for Sir Roger's honour; this Gabriel affirmed of his own knowledge to be true, and Sir Roger was pacified: but an opportunity of preaching, so favourable as it seemed to his weak judgment, was not to be neglected; he therefore proceeded to deliver a long rambling discourse on prophecy; and directed his looks and words with all the persuasive expression that he could possibly command towards the distressed parson and his good wife. He flattered himself that he had brought salvation to that house, and that all which had befallen him was in the order of Providence to that end. He had taken for his text, "Come out of her, my people;" and these words were repeated at the close of every passage, with all the varieties of intonation that his voice admitted. All efforts to induce him to stop or return up stairs till he had finished this wearisome preachment were vain. He stood half an hour with naked feet upon the kitchen stones, and was listened to even by Peter with a wonder so great, and with so painful a sense of his craziness, as forbade even a smile. He closed by so earnestly invoking peace on that house, and enjoining the exhibition of a quiet and an orderly spirit so forcibly upon the offending Abel, that during the rest of the day nothing disturbed the household.

The hardy old Puritan nothing the worse for this exercise of his lungs, and very little so for the bruise and cut in his encounter with the robbers the evening before, took his seat at Noble's dinner table at noon, and seemed very sensible of the truly Christian hospitality of his host.

As arguments or any appeals to reason would so evidently be thrown away upon a man under the prejudices and delusions of Sir Roger Zouch, Noble dexterously avoided inflaming the mind of his guest with a discussion on grave matters, and led him to speak on other topics. He found that he had travelled a great deal, and had in his youth served in the Low Countries. Upon these subjects he conversed rationally and pleasantly enough; and, as they walked after their meal into the garden, he showed an acquaintance with plants and flowers, and a knowledge of the various methods of laying out a garden, which in so stern a fanatic would seem strange; but what is there so variable, so inconstant, as man?—he is "some twenty several men in every hour;" not that either the dinner or the walk in the garden passed over without sundry efforts to spiritualise and improve the subjects which those occasions offered. In the garden especially, after talking a while like any other rational and well informed gentleman, he suddenly broke out in a rhapsody about the approaching millennium, and the personal reign of the Messiah upon this earth. His politics were violent; but in this they differed not from many able and patriotic men of the time. Against the church, however, his wrath evidently burned, and he affected to disbelieve the possibility of so pious a minister, as Noble plainly was, being sincerely resolved to remain in her communion. Upon this point, however, Noble was too bold and too honest to conceal his resolutions.

It so happened that the next morning, before Sir Roger Zouch left the parsonage of Cheddar, there came to Noble a summons to attend the Committee of Inquiry into Church Matters, of which old Blount had warned the worthy parson on the evening of his return from Wells. Of this Noble informed his guest, and asked him if, as he saw the name of Zouch among the commissioners, it was any relation of his? The knight replied in the affirmative, and told Noble not to trouble himself to attend; for that as he was himself going to Axbridge he would make known to the committee his wish that no molestation might be given him. To this Noble would by no means consent, till he had received a solemn promise from Sir Roger that he would not represent him as less opposed to their proceedings against the church than he truly was, or less attached to that sacred institution which they sought to destroy.

Thus was the trial of Noble for another brief season deferred, and the malicious designs and interested hopes of the meddling and hypocritical Daws were for the present disappointed. However, the gold was yet to be put into the fire at the appointed time.

All these circumstances were related by Noble in a letter to his son Cuthbert, exactly as they occurred, with very little comment, and thus, as he rightly judged, they would make a forcible impression on his mind. They did so: a due consideration of them delivered him from some of his own delusions, and opened his eyes to those of a few of his companions; and though he was not at all more separated from the Non-conformists, yet he attached himself to the most sober among them.

CHAP. XIX.

In thee, faire mansion, let it rest,
Yet know, with what thou art possest;
Thou entertaining in thy brest
But such a mind, mak'st God thy guest.

BEN JONSON.

What time the primroses were beginning to spread palely over the green and sunny banks in the neighbourhood of Milverton House, in the spring of 1642, the grimed armourers of England were busy in their smoky workshops; and there was no hall in the land, whether private or civic, in which the arms were not taken down from the walls and put in order. Every where notes of preparation were heard, and eyes of settled resolve might be seen.

The House of Commons had petitioned the King for the militia, and they were already active in raising men. Sir Oliver Heywood, refusing to act in this matter, resigned his office of magistrate and justice of the peace, and took a decided part for the King. But although he had good will to the royal cause, and spoke his sentiments loudly and bitterly, although he was ready to make some personal exertions and some pecuniary sacrifices for his party, he was, as has been observed before, an indolent, self-indulgent old gentleman, a lover of ease and of his own way; methodical in all his habits, and obstinate in all his prejudices. The frequent visits of those hard and active men of business, who were employed to forward the royal cause by negotiating with all the Cavalier gentry for supplies of men and money, before the commission of array was actually issued, disturbed him sadly, and his temper became very irritable. Sir Charles Lambert had been long re-established in his good graces, and to the deep sorrow of Katharine had become once more a constant guest at Milverton. It is true that a great improvement had apparently taken place in his outward conduct, but Katharine disliked, mistrusted, feared him. She saw that he again entertained hopes of accomplishing his purposes upon her weak father, and of thus obtaining possession of her hand in marriage. It was an inconceivable mystery to her that any human being should desire to be united to another, when aware that his very touch was evaded with a shudder, and that from his gaze the face was averted with loathing.

Some changes had taken place at the Hall within the last year, which had glided away with the swiftness of a shadow. In the January immediately preceding the season of which we are now writing, Mistress Alice had been summoned by that call, which, sooner or later, all must obey, and laid in a peaceful grave:—the snows that fell upon it were not more pure and spotless than had been her kind and innocent life, and her dissolution had been as gentle and as soft as their quick and silent melting.

The family and household were still in their mourning for her; and had any stranger gazed upon Katharine Heywood, as in her sad robes of black she paced the terrace alone with slow and thoughtful steps, he would have wept for sympathy, and deemed her one of those silent mourners for the dead who refuse to be comforted, and cherish the sweet memory of a vanished image; but it was far otherwise,—her griefs were those of doubt and apprehension about the living. If ever a glance of the mind looked after the departed Alice, it did so with affection and complacency; with a calm joy that she was taken from the evil to come, and with an envy of her quiet tomb. But such movements of impatience at the difficulties of her path and the dreariness of that waste which lay before her in her appointed pilgrimage were never of any long continuance. She knew them to be wicked, and she knew them to be vain: she wore divine and secret armour, and she neither fled nor fainted in her hours of trial. The occasional, though less frequent, visits of George Juxon were a great relief to her,—and Jane Lambert continued to be her constant friend and beloved companion. Over the character of Jane there had come a change, which, though at times it was viewed with serious anxiety by Katharine, did upon the whole suit far better with those habits of her own soul which care had begotten.

Jane Lambert's eyes, which were used to be lighted up with bright and joyous expression, and a certain lively and winning archness, did now often fill with unbidden tears, or were fixed gravely upon vacancy.

One day, as the friends were walking together in a silent mood, the hand of Katharine resting gently upon the shoulder of Jane, and their steps slow as those of vestals in their groves, Juxon came suddenly upon them in their path; and so deep was the abstraction of both, that he was not seen of either till they met closely.

"I am sorry," he observed, "to break the spell by which you are both bound, but I could not turn back, for I have business with Sir Oliver; however, it was to all seeming a spell so black and melancholy that perhaps it is better broken."

"It is a good omen for us that it is broken by you, Master Juxon, for you are always a prophet of good, and misfortune never makes choice of such a messenger," said Katharine, with an effort at cheerfulness. Jane, too, suddenly recollecting herself, endeavoured to put on a careless smile, of welcome, but the effort failed her, and she burst into a flood of tears.

Juxon, distressed and affected by the sight, made no reply to Katharine, but stood rivetted to the spot, hesitating whether he should proceed towards the house, and leave Jane to recover herself under the care of her friend, or whether he should remain to render what service he could, by diverting and calming a sorrow, the secret cause of which he fancied that he knew.

Meanwhile, Katharine pressed Jane to her heart, and, covering her from observation, as though she were a child, said, "This is the natural effect of a night without sleep, and a nervous headache: it will do her good; you need not stay with us; we shall do very well, and Jane will be all the brighter for it at supper. You will find my father in the vineyard."

Jane, however, in part relieved by these tears, quickly raised her head, and, with one of her most natural smiles dimpling her wet cheeks, said, "Pray do not let me drive you away: this is just nothing at all but what my old nurse used to call the mopes and the megrims: there, it is all over; that's one advantage we women have over you lords of the creation; that is, such of us as are not heroines, which I shall never be for one: we may now and then have a good cry; and, take my word for it, it is a fine cure for all nonsenses,—another favourite noun plural of my dear old nurse when I was little and naughty." This flash of affected gaiety did

only light up her features, however, for a passing moment, and ere her few words were uttered an air of extreme depression returned upon her.

"Nay, Mistress Jane," said Juxon, "these are no child's tears, neither are they fantastical like the melancholy of your fine lady: the fountain of them is deeper than any of these; you are unhappy. Here, before your noble friend, I must say that I have seen this for a long time: for more than a year I have witnessed with deep pain your altered manners and your failing health. Tell her the sad cause of your trouble; pour out your heart to her; she will safely advise and surely comfort you."

"Really, Master Juxon," replied Jane, "you are a very strange person; and when you take a fancy into your head you are like good Sir Oliver, and truth would not drive it out again, though spoken by an angel, therefore a poor silly girl like me may not make the attempt."

"For that matter, lady, you can look and speak persuasively as ever angel did: where do you hide your wings?"

"Wings!—well, really now, if I were a court lady instead of a rustic, and had that magic mirror that hides all freckles, and gives every body that looks into it the face of a beauty, that fine compliment would win my heart; but as it is, I must e'en be content to walk the earth on two serviceable feet; on which I shall very soon run from your words and looks, if you do not speak about a more entertaining subject than me and my megrims."

The gravity of her eyes contradicted the gaiety of her lips, as she thus spoke; and the unuttered wish in the deep recesses of her heart was, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away, and be at rest!"

Juxon looked upon her, for a moment, with a tender manly expression of countenance, in which were blended respectful pity and warm admiration; then turning to Katharine, he changed the subject, and diverted all further attention from Jane by telling the former upon what matter he was seeking Sir Oliver.

"I have just received a letter," said he, "from Oxford, from that fine youth Arthur: it is both conceived and expressed in a spirit worthy the days of chivalry and of a man of mature age. He desires me to urge upon Sir Oliver his brave request, which is, that he may be permitted to come down instantly and take the field with whatever men Sir Oliver can raise for the King's service. He says that it is useless to compel him to remain at the University and pursue his studies in the present distracted state of public affairs, and that his age is not younger than that at which many a person renowned in history has appeared in arms for his country. The reason, it seems, of his preferring this request through me is, that he has been sharply reprimanded by Sir Oliver for even thinking of it; for he has already decided to place all the horsemen which he can raise under Sir Charles Lambert. Arthur truly observes, that as the infirmities of Sir Oliver now forbid his going to camp himself, it is right that a representative of his name should ride at the head of his tenants and yeomen; and that, although too young for a responsible charge, he can at least share their danger, and set a good example of devotion to the King's service. That he is quite willing to be under the command of Sir Charles Lambert; but that, if his present wish is refused, he will, at the risk of the worthy knight's displeasure, join the banner of the lords Falkland or Carnarvon as a simple volunteer."

To this statement Katharine listened with a generous admiration of the gallant boy, and a hearty approval of his conduct; moreover, she felt that, by this arrangement, she should have a young protector, not only for the family, but whom she could depend upon as a shield from the dreaded importunities of Sir Charles, and whose presence would take away one of her father's excuses for urging upon her an abhorred connection. Of Arthur's conduct and character she felt sure: he looked up to her with the reverence of a son and the affection of a brother; and though her heart beat with a regretted fondness for another Heywood, a cousin separated from her by fate and fortune, towards this youth Arthur she entertained the composed and quiet affection of a young mother or an elder sister; therefore she rejoiced at the prospect of his return to Milverton, and promised to say every thing to her father which could move him to consent to this proposal.

Juxon now left the ladies, and walked on at a faster pace towards the house.

As soon as he was out of hearing, Katharine took Jane by the hand, and looking steadfastly into her face, said,—

"My dear, dear friend, it is the privilege of friendship, and it is the enjoined duty of Christians, to weep with those that weep:—Juxon is right—you are unhappy—some secret sorrow is devouring your inward peace—reveal it to me."

"Nay, Katharine, urge me not:—every heart knoweth its own bitterness—to every one is appointed some inward cross, which is better borne in silence."

"Yet the sympathy of a friend is as a balm to the wounded spirit—a balm, Jane, which you have often poured gently and sweetly into mine, to the refreshment of my soul and the comfort of my aching heart;—besides, Jane, we must not let our private and inward griefs prey upon and consume our vital strength at a period like the present:—great trials are coming upon us, and severe duties will soon demand all our energies."

"I know it, beloved Katharine,—and by your side I can meet them all. You are to me, all things: I have nothing on earth but you to whom I can cling: the stream of my heart would run to waste if it might not flow forth on you."

"Hush! beloved,—hush!—these words are vain,"—and pointing to the blue sky and the fleecy clouds above them, Katharine silently conveyed to Jane her soft reproof and gentle admonition.

"I know all that you would say to me," answered the mournful girl; "but, when all is said, how much of our present being must ever remain a mystery—sunbeams shine upon our heads, and violets spring beneath our feet—and yet, Kate, the world which this God of love hath created is a scene of misery—you know it is. What have you ever done that your brow should be clouded with sorrow, and your cheek blanched by care—"

"Stop, Jane; for your life, not another word like this:—'they build too low who build below the sky:'—a curse is on this earth—a recorded curse—we may not, must not, cannot make a heaven of it:—it is our school, our place of discipline—the infancy of our existence:—what have any of us done, or what can any of us do, that so many countless blessings should be poured upon us? that we should be invited and taught to acquaint

ourselves with that Holy One, by whom came truth, pardon, and peace—through whom we may win an entrance to that heavenly city, where ‘all tears shall be wiped from all faces?’”

A light of hope beamed in her serious eyes as thus she spoke, and Jane beheld it with reverence. The friends walked slowly back towards the house—there was a long pause in their discourse. It was broken by Jane asking, “You surely admit, dear cousin, that there is a vast difference in the fortunes and the trials of mankind?”

“The seeming difference is vast, but not perhaps the real:—we see only the outward aspect of suffering and of prosperity—but the cup of life is mixed.”

“Surely to many, who are prosperous and happy, few trials are appointed:—they are pleasant in their lives, and honoured in their deaths; they appear even upon earth to be the favourites of Heaven.”

“If truly such, my love, their portion in this life will be little thought of; for they will know that in the bosom of Abraham the Lazarus of this world has his high place of honour as of comfort, and that the fashion of this world passeth away; nay, before the great change comes, one turn of the wheel may bring the loftiest fortunes to the dust, and crush them beneath it; even now, do we not see and hear the preparations of war?”

“There, again, Katharine,—how can we reconcile with the power of a God of love the existence of so dark and terrible a curse as war?”

“It is but one of many forms of death.”

“But the miseries in its violent and bloody path—”

“Are not so great as those of pestilence, or famine, or the hurricane.”

“Well, Katharine, why pestilence, or famine, or hurricane?—*why death?*—and *whence sin?*”

“Jane, we know not now—we shall know hereafter; let us not perplex ourselves with doubts and inquiries which none can solve; the origin of evil lies hidden from our eyes; it is a deep thing—enough for us that the Divine champion hath triumphed over sin—hath plucked the sting from death—and victory from the grave:—in and through him we may all be conquerors.”

“And can they so conquer if they be not followers of the Lamb?—and may the followers of the Lamb fight and shed each other’s blood in battle?”

“It is sad, very sad,” rejoined Katharine, with a shudder of her whole frame: “it seems a stern necessity in the condition of all the kingdoms of this world that they should be defended by the sword. Good men, great men, the holiest servants of Heaven have wielded earthly arms, and the weapons of death:—with his sword and with his bow the father of the faithful led his own household to the combat,—and the virtues of the warrior are the chosen illustrations of those required in the secret conflicts of the Christian.”

“I know it, Katharine—and that to the spirit of Christian children there must be joined the courage of sacred warriors. Alas! for me—my heart faints within me—my mind is confused:—I wish I were a man, for then, in the excitement of these struggles, I could escape those of the closet.”

“To suffer, Jane, requires a more enduring courage than to act; and in patient suffering the high constancy of woman’s mind hath ever shone most purely:—for the wives of England bitter trials are coming—ours will be light to theirs; and yours, dear girl, as you well know, less heavy than even mine.”

“Katharine, you do not know my trial, or you would not speak thus:—not a faithful and suffering wife in all England but I shall envy her the sweetness of her sufferings: it is in storms that we cling most closely to what we love.”

“True, fond girl, but remember that they may also divide us from what we love. Still there is a sweet truth in your melancholy words: I think you would be happy united to such a man as Juxon. He is evidently much attached to you; and I think you are not indifferent to him.”

“Cousin, he is worthy of a better fortune. He never can be mine.”

“What is the meaning of that strong emphasis? Is, then, the secret of your sorrow a concealed attachment to another?”

“Katharine, you see not clearly in this matter; I am pitied by Juxon, not loved.”

“I know not, dear Jane, for what he should pity you; but pity is akin to love.”

“And also to contempt:—Juxon despises me: yes, the pity of one so generous and noble hearted is heavy to bear.”

“Impossible! he knows your sterling worth; he knows that you could not do what was wrong: you utter many things that are idle; but I have heard him warmly express his regard for your frank character; his faith in your high principles, and his fear that you judged others by yourself, and might in the trials of life prove too confiding towards others.”

“Have you, indeed, Kate? what, lately?”

“Yes; not many days ago.”

“Well, this is comfort; for I love him passing well:—keep my secret, Katharine; you know not how faithfully I have kept yours.” As Jane Lambert thus spoke, she took the hand of her fair cousin and pressed it against her beating heart. Katharine drew it away with a sudden agitation, and placing it on her pale forehead seemed to muse awhile: her eyes wore the expression of one that was wildly busy over the mysterious tablets of her memory; at last, fixing them on Jane with a troubled gaze, “I have it,” she said: “a light flashes on me; the interview with Francis: it was observed by some one; it was known to Juxon, and you have borne—”

“Nothing that I would not bear again for the love of Katharine, and for her peace of mind.”

“Noblest of beings, alas! how am I punished for having thus employed you! why did you not tell me all? May God forgive me! I never can forgive myself.”

“Talk not thus,” said Jane, rushing into her arms. “This moment richly repays whatever I have suffered: that which I may now safely relate to you you could not have borne at the time, nor should I tell it even now, if it were not that I know you will be seeking some explanations from Juxon.”

The generous girl now gave a minute narration of all that had passed between herself and Francis at their

interview. She told how very deeply she had been affected by the devotion with which he spoke of Katharine, and by those looks and gestures which revealed the constancy and the ardour of his love: the action so passionate towards her, upon whom his mind's eye was inwardly resting, with which Francis had parted from herself, was not forgotten. The circumstance of her immediately after meeting with Juxon, and the scene which passed between them, were described with the like fidelity.

A paleness as of marble overspread the face of Katharine; her eyes assumed a vacant regard; her hand became cold, and from her moving lips no sound was audible. She stood a while like one suddenly turned to stone; and Jane, expecting her every instant to swoon away, supported her in trembling terror. It seemed an age of agony to Jane, though the trance did not last more than three awful minutes. The eyelids of Katharine closed; tears glittered on the long dark lashes; warmth and consciousness returned. She slowly opened her eyes; and, fixing them on Jane with an affection no words could convey, suffered herself to be led back in unbroken silence to the mansion.

CHAP. XX.

'Tis *jest* to tell a people that they're free:
Who or how many shall their *masters* be
Is the sole doubt.

COWLEY.

Before the walls of Hull, in Yorkshire, King Charles was first made sensible that the powers and the prerogatives of the crown were already usurped by the Parliament. Sir John Hotham shut the gates of the city, and refused to admit the small force by which the King was attended.

The governor stood upon the wall, and the King, who had appointed him to that office of trust, sat upon his horse beneath, and heard a sickening protestation of loyalty to his person, while the guards, to whom he intrusted its defence, were treated as the enemies of his throne and kingdom. Here began that artful distinction, whereby the Parliamentarians professed to keep garrisons and raise soldiers in the name of the King, while they opposed his wishes and resisted his authority.

They had already taken from the King the power of the militia; and having compelled him to throw himself on the support of the private gentry, the flame of civil war was soon kindled.

At the time when his Majesty was thus repulsed by Sir John Hotham, he was surrounded by a small company of gallant gentlemen, who had formed themselves into a body guard; and he found himself, in a province remote from his capital, without a regiment, without money to raise one, and without a single garrison or company of soldiers in all England receiving his pay or acknowledging the royal orders: the navy, the ordnance, stores, magazines, and the revenue, were in the keeping of the Parliament. His sole dependence was on the loyalty, the courage, and the resources of the country gentlemen of England.

The midland counties were for the most part subjected to the influence of the Parliament, and lay too near the city of London to resist or even dispute the commands of that powerful assembly.

This body was no sooner apprised of the conduct of Hotham, and informed that he had been proclaimed a traitor by the King, than they openly justified the conduct of that governor, and soon after publicly voted "that the King intended to levy war against the Parliament." This declaration was followed by active preparations for war on both sides; but the advantages for commencing it were greatly on the side of the Parliament; and the gentry in the west, and more especially in the northern counties, were, at first, disheartened by the evident distraction of the King's counsel, and the gloomy aspect of his affairs.

Therefore, in Yorkshire, though many promises were given, few troops were raised; and if Shropshire and Wales had not been animated by a more lively hope, and a warmer zeal, no royal army could ever have appeared in the field.

Meanwhile the levies for the Parliament were very successful, and men came in as fast as they could be received and armed. In addition to these volunteers, the rustics drawn for the militia were compelled to join their corps, and were put under the training of such officers as could be found.

In July, the Parliament voted the Earl of Essex their general of foot, and appointed the Earl of Bedford the commander of their horse; and early in August declared themselves necessitated to take arms and to commence hostilities.

These vigorous measures inspired their partisans throughout the kingdom with a resolute spirit, and in London not a voice was openly lifted up for the King.

As early as the month of May, Francis Heywood had procured his services to be accepted as captain of a troop of horse under Sir John Balfour, and was by him immediately appointed an instructor or sergeant-major^[A] of cavalry.

[A] The titles of Sergeant-Major, and Sergeant-Major-General, at that period, correspond with Adjutant-Major and Adjutant-General of our times.

At such a moment, the zeal of Cuthbert Noble would not suffer him to remain behind, while so many were taking arms for the great, and, as he thought, holy cause, of liberty. He did not find it difficult, through the favour of a friend, to obtain the grade of lieutenant in a company of foot; and he set forth on a fine morning in June to join a regiment then assembled in quarters at the town of St. Albans, in Hertfordshire, for training.

His finances did not admit of more than a very humble equipment,—accordingly he was mounted on a low shambling pony, across which he had also placed the saddle bags containing his better gear, his Bible, and two or three violent pamphlets of the day against prelacy and the divine right of kings.

Notwithstanding the heat of his opinions, and his hearty concurrence in the measures of the Parliament, Cuthbert, in his lonely hours, was of that serious and solemn temper of mind, that he could not but reflect on the step he was now taking with more than his wonted gravity.

That his present course would be distressing to his father he well knew; but he silenced this whisper of his better angel with the consideration that his father was old, timid, and averse to change, rather from early prejudices and associations than from the light of conscience and the use of right reason.

Again, with that obliquity of mind with which men who are in fact taking their own way wish to think it that appointed by Providence, he ran over all the texts of Scripture then in the mouths of the Roundheads, as justifying their appeal to arms, and silenced all the lingering remonstrances that yet struggled in his bosom with those inapplicable words of Holy Writ, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Having thus, by forcibly wresting a quotation from Scripture, served his immediate purpose, and given freedom and tranquillity to his spirit, he suffered his imagination to dress out the duties of military life in all their most sacred glory. The language of the Old Testament, and that of the profane authors with which he was familiar, were called up in a strange confusion to gild the prospect before him,—and now a song of triumph from his Bible, now a quotation from Homer, was sounding on his lips, and ere he was aware was kindling a vain and unholy ambition:—a secret and impious persuasion of the favour and approval of Heaven filled him with a swelling anticipation of coming victories and high rewards. He resolved that the virtues of the Spartan or the Roman soldier should in his person be combined with the ardour and the holiness of the most chosen warriors of Israel.

He saw not the lean and sorry nag beneath him; he thought not of those weary marches which he should have to make afoot, when the miserable jade on which he was now sitting astride his saddle bags should be stumbling along stony or miry ways in a train of baggage horses; but he pictured out a future in which he should ride among the princes of the people, and in marches of triumph.

From this dream of his fancy he was suddenly and very effectually awakened by feeling the animal, which he was riding, sink under him with an uneasy motion; and, before he could possibly prevent it, he found the water of a considerable stream, which he was then fording, above his knees, and his saddle bags thoroughly soaked through. The beast had his own notions of enjoyment as well as his dreamy rider; and, as the day was hot, the road was dusty, and his burden sufficiently oppressive, had taken this very seasonable refreshment.

Nature suddenly asserted her power over the precise young Puritan; and, to the scandal of all his late professions, he gave vent to his wrath in certain violent and unseemly phrases which would not have disgraced the most accomplished swearer among the wild Cavaliers of that time. These oaths were but the accompaniments of sundry hard blows with a cudgel, kickings with the heel, and jerks of the rein, by dint of which the nag, unable to rebuke him for his injustice, was compelled to rise and go forward. The accident was in itself sufficiently provoking; and the irritation of Cuthbert was increased by encountering on the bank an old beggar with a wooden leg, who, tossing his staff pike fashion, loudly asked his alms for an old crippled soldier done up in the wars; and, thrusting his tongue in his cheek, eyed his foolish plight with a merry satisfaction, which he could not conceal.

"Out upon thee!" said Cuthbert, "for an old drunken impostor:—such fellows as you tippling bawlers of ballads are the curse of the land;—go scrape your cracked fiddle for sots on the ale bench, and don't trouble honest men on their road."

"The lie in thy throat, thou prick-eared canting Roundhead!" replied the old soldier:—"thou foul-mouthed hypocrite! is it for thou to rate sinners after rattling out oaths like a shameless brawler in a bear garden? I am a cleaner spoken man than thou, blessings on him who taught me, and more honest than to play traitor to my king:—God bless his gracious Majesty! I wish him no better luck than that all the Roundheads, militia, and train-bands, horse and foot, were just such a set of raw awkward spoonies as yourself."

While he was yet speaking, Cuthbert's jade, as if moved by the very spirit of mischief, shook her ears and was down in the middle of the loose dusty road, without better warning than before; for the attention of Cuthbert being quite taken up by his anger with the old soldier, he was again too late to prevent it. The dust plentifully adhered to his legs, thighs, and saddle bags. He instantly dismounted in a rage, kicked the beast up again, drove it forward, and, turning short round upon the old man, in a fury, said,—

"If it were not for your age and grey hairs, you insolent old vagabond, I would rap your pate smartly with my cudgel."

"That were easier spoken than done," rejoined the old man, holding his quarter staff lightly in a defensive posture.

A little dog, which accompanied the old man, perceiving by these actions, and by the loudness of their speech, that the stranger was quarrelling with his master, flew at Cuthbert with a sharp and angry bark, than which perhaps nothing does more inflame the rising choler; he, therefore, struck at the little animal furiously, and the end of his cudgel inflicted on it a sharp stroke, which sent it howling and yelping behind its master.

The old soldier, without a moment's loss of time, resented this injury by so heavy and well placed a blow on the head of Cuthbert, that his steeple-crowned hat was knocked off; and had it not been defended within by the strong bars of iron with which it had been recently fitted for the wars, he would have gotten a severe bruise.

"He that touches my dog touches me," said the old man: "I am sorry that I did not make thee feel it." The quarter staff of the beggar had, by his stumbling and over-reaching himself, flown out of his hand, and his old rabbit-skin cap had fallen upon the ground:—a fine polished head thinly strewn with grey hairs lay bare and exposed.—"There, you may crack it if you will now," he added, raising the ineffectual defence of his arm.

"I am a man," said Cuthbert, "and not a brute: I would not strike thee for all my hot words; but I have been beside myself with passion. May God forgive me for my great offence against him—and do you forgive

me for the hard things I said to you, and the stroke I gave your dog."

So speaking, he picked up the old man's quarter staff and his cap, and gave them into his hands; at the same time taking a piece of silver out of his pocket, he tendered it with a look of good will—but the soldier would not take it.

"It would do me no good," said he: "I should have no luck with it, and could never relish the bread or beer it bought me."

"Then lay it out in dog's meat, friend: thy poor cur will have forgotten my rude blow before thou hast forgiven my uncomfortable words:—you wo'n't go to sleep in ill will with me, I hope."

"No, I shan't do that," rejoined the aged beggar,—“the good old parson of Cheddar taught me better than that,—and I minds what he said as if it were yesterday—God bless him!—church and king for ever, say I.—I wo'n't have your money."

Surprized and startled by this strange and unexpected mention of his father, Cuthbert drew from the old man the whole story of his adventure at Cheddar, and his interview with Noble.

He listened with deep emotion to the narrative, and recognised in all the circumstances the internal evidence of its truth, from its exact correspondence with the character of his father's mind and heart, and those large and tolerant notions which he had always taught and carried out into practice.

"I know that good parson well," said Cuthbert, "and love him like a father."

"Do you indeed?—then I'll take your money, and give you hearty thanks for it.—But I say, young master, if you knows the parson of Cheddar so well, it's my belief your taking the wrong road:—a man can't serve two masters—without you do call God and the king two; and he that serves God first, and king the next after, must always be right, as I have heard say from the time I was the height of this quarter staff."

Cuthbert gave him two pieces, and walked on in a humbled and in no satisfied frame of mind.

His poor beast, like a patient packhorse, was quietly browsing by the road-side at no great distance, and Cuthbert drove it before him, not caring to mount again till the sun and air had dried his wet breeches and hose.

The pettiness of the mortification which had moved him to such ungovernable anger was now lost in the most gloomy reflections on the sin of having so greatly dishonoured the commandments of God by cursing and swearing. Though naturally of a warm temper, he had never been at all addicted to the odious use of vulgar oaths, and for awhile he began to doubt the sincerity of his faith, and to imagine that the whole work of religion must be entered upon as a new thing.

Again, the very strange circumstance of his father's image being brought before him in a manner so unexpected, by a way-side beggar, and the lesson of charity, and the solemn monition to turn back from the party which he had chosen, conveyed by so lowly an instrument, perplexed his reason and staggered his resolution.

But the die was cast, the step was taken, and it was impossible for him, even if willing, to recede without disgrace. He ran over in his mind all the wrongs and the oppressions which had been committed in the name and with the sanction of the King. He recalled the sufferings of Prynne and his companions. He remembered the tyrannical imposition of ship money; the noble resistance to that measure by Hampden, now himself in arms; the violence towards the Scots; the articles exhibited against the five members; and, more than all, he considered that, if the King should conquer in the impending struggle, the despotic rule of the crown would be established more firmly than ever; the hateful tribunal of the Star Chamber would be again erected; prelacy, armed with new powers, would rear its mitre on the ruins of religious liberty; and all those abuses in church and state, which had called forth the famous Remonstrance of the Commons, and the Petition of Rights founded on it, would most certainly be restored.

As these considerations passed through the mind of Cuthbert, he felt shame that he could for a moment have doubted the righteousness of the cause in which he had embarked. What was the little incident, which had so discomposed and ruffled him, when it was stripped naked? His nag had lain down in the water, and he had got a wetting. He should have laughed it off, and so he would have done but for wounded pride. He was conscious of the poverty of his equipment, and yet more so of his unmilitary appearance;—that the witness of his accident should mock him, and be an old soldier to boot, was more than he could bear. He finally resolved all that had passed into a hellish temptation of the evil one to divert him from the path of Christian duty; and thus comforting himself, and speaking peace to his heart, with a very slight repentance for his plain transgression of God's law, he recovered his serenity. He now mounted his nag, and cheerfully pursued his way till the fine massive tower of St. Alban's Abbey reminded him that he was near the place of his destination. He stopped under a shady tree a little off the road; brushed off the marks of his foolish misadventure; adjusted his dress; buckled the belt of his rapier more tightly, and rode into the town with a wish that he might escape present observation, and get soon housed. But it so chanced that in the narrow entrance of the very first street in St. Alban's Cuthbert met the whole garrison marching forth to exercise. The leading rank of musketeers, forming the advanced guard, filled the width of the street from house to house on either side of the way; therefore he was forced to stop, and placing his pony close to the wall that he might prove as small an obstacle as possible, saw the whole force pass him, and attracted the attention of them all. At any other time, and under other circumstances, he would have gazed upon the military show with a natural pleasure, and as it was, he looked upon them with much curiosity; but his position was very uncomfortable; and he felt small as they filed by with a strong and measured tread, keeping time to a few loud drums and piercing fifes.

Several divisions of foot, composed of musketeers and pikemen in equal proportions, and each led by a mounted officer, and with their appointed number of captains, lieutenants, and sergeants, followed each other in succession; but there was a great difference in their equipment and bearing.

The three leading divisions, amounting to nearly nine hundred effective men, were a fine sample of the very best infantry which had as yet been formed under the orders of the Parliament. Their clothing was of a coarse red cloth: the belts and bandaliers of those who were armed with muskets were of buff leather; and a girdle of double buff, eight inches broad, was worn under the skirts of the doublet. The musketeers also wore

black steeple-crowned hats, with small but strong bars of iron fastened under the felt. In addition to their muskets and rests, they were all provided with a good stiff tuck, not very long, so fixed in the belt as not to swing or incommode them.

The pikemen were furnished with good pikes, eighteen feet in length, with small steel heads, and good stiff tucks like those of the musketeers. They had also for defensive armour iron head pieces, with back and breast pieces of the same quality, pistol-proof, and each man was provided with a good long buff glove for the left hand; they also wore the broad buff girdle; the musketeers had bands about their hats of a considerable width, finished in front with a rose of orange cloth, but they had no feathers or plumes; and there was a steadiness and severity in their whole aspect which commanded admiration. It was one of the first regiments embodied, composed principally of a better order of volunteers, and commanded by a very strict and experienced officer. From these men Cuthbert had nothing to suffer: they were silent in their ranks; and merely glanced at him as they passed with looks of gloomy or proud indifference; but the regiment that followed was a raw levy of militiamen just raised: they had arms, indeed, and were divided already into musketeers and pikemen, like those who preceded them; but their clothing and equipment was very incomplete, and few of the pikemen had either back or breast pieces. Of these, numbers had been drawn, reluctantly, from the neighbouring villages, to supply the quota of men required by the militia act, and were enrolled with the mockery of an oath, by which they were sworn in, to fight "*for the King against the King*,"—a distinction which of course the greater part of them could not understand. They only wanted to be left alone, and suffered to follow their ploughs in peace. Most of them had some excuse to offer in the Shire Hall, and some story to tell why they should not go for soldiers. This man had aged parents to support; another had a family of children; and that man had just married a wife. Others, who were not provided with such good excuses, feigned deafness, bad eyes, lame shoulders, weak ankle bones, fits, rheumatic pains, or some other disqualification, to escape the irksome duties of praying and fighting under Puritan commanders. Many kissed their own thumbs instead of the Bible when they took their oaths of service, meaning to desert the first opportunity that offered; still there were numbers of idle rustics who came when they were called out, and did as they were bid, without further question; and these, in spite of their officers and sergeants, and Puritan comrades, contrived their own amusements, and laughed at the grave preachments which forbade them.

As a file of these young swains passed Cuthbert, one struck the end of a lighted match under his pony's tail; and to the astonishment of Cuthbert, and the disturbance of the whole division following, the poor animal, hitherto as lazy and patient as a laden donkey, began kicking with such sudden activity and vigour, that the rider had some difficulty in keeping his seat. However, though inwardly vexed, Cuthbert stuck close to the saddle, and putting a good face on the vexatious incident disarmed the laughter which was at first generally excited by joining in it himself, till a humane sergeant plucked away the burning cause of the animal's pain and terror,—and the frightened beast stood still, trembling and in a bath of sweat. Until this moment Cuthbert was at a loss to know what had so alarmed his pony; but he now alighted and made a complaint about what had been done to an officer that was passing.

The grave personage whom he addressed said, with a sly smile,—“Verily, friend, thy little garron was in the way, and I counsel thee to patience in this matter:—there is no harm done, and verily thou didst stick to thy saddle like a sergeant-major of cavalry.”

Without waiting for any rejoinder, the officer marched on; and no sooner had the infantry defiled, than the shrill tones of a few trumpets announced the advance of four troops of horse. As these fine men walked their powerful animals along the street, they cast down looks of contempt upon poor Cuthbert and his little hack; and he could not but feel that he had never as yet rightly conceived what were the naked realities of soldiership. There were far more unpleasant and painful experiences to come than the petty mortifications of this his first contact with troops. However, he had a wise, generous, and noble friend to instruct and arm his mind in the path on which he had entered; and his spirit was now in its first moment of weakness and need sustained and comforted by his appearance.

Immediately in the rear of this body of horse rode an officer admirably mounted and equipped, and beneath his polished helmet Cuthbert instantly recognised Francis Heywood. By this old campaigner his position was seen and understood at a glance. He stopped, shook hands with him heartily, and desiring him to find out his quarter at the house of a brewer in the next street, bade him give his baggage pony in charge to his batman, and occupy his apartment till the exercise should be over.

This was so great a lift and recovery to the sinking spirits of Cuthbert that he had no sooner put up his pony than he turned back and followed the troops to the plain where they were drawn out.

It was a fine sight to the unaccustomed eye to watch the evolutions of the musketeers and the pikemen, as the former advanced to skirmish and cover the movements of the more solid body, and again as they rapidly retired, and, kneeling down in front of the close array of pikemen, awaited under the protection of their long pikes to receive the charge of cavalry, and repulse it with a close and steady fire.

The sunbeams glittered on the steel heads of the tall pikes, and were reflected in a blaze from the breast and back pieces and the iron head pieces of the dragoons and the pikemen. The rolling of the drums, and the blasts of trumpets, gave animation to the movements of the various divisions; and as the dragoons and musketeers were furnished with a few rounds of blank or practice cartridge in their bandaliers, the mimic show of battle or the rehearsal of a scene of death was with the more select divisions very complete.

The words of command were given and repeated in loud firm tones; and there was no lack with some of these stout Puritan commanders of oaths, peculiar, indeed, to themselves, but as earnest and as blasphemous as those of any profane swearer in the royal army. For instance, to the dismay of Cuthbert, he heard a voice of thunder directed against a dull but godly lieutenant of the very regiment which he was come to join with such a mild rebuke as, “The Lord deliver thee to Satan, Master Whitefoot, for a blockhead: dost thou not know thy right hand from thy left?”—“Face to the left, man,” was the concluding roar, “and slope thy partisan.”

However, though our young Puritan lieutenant was a little astounded at the chance of being soon subject to such rude addresses, he had good sense enough to feel that men ought to know their right hands from their left, and that it must be very provoking to a commanding officer, and very perplexing and dangerous for

others as well as themselves, if they did not; but he was, nevertheless, a little startled and shocked at so violent and sinful a misapplication of Scripture.

However, he considered that the repulsive infirmities of the few ought not to outweigh the solid piety and the devoted patriotism of the great leaders of the Parliamentary levies; and wisely resolving always to remember his right hand from his left, he joined Francis after the exercise of the day was over, and passed an evening in his society with a more deep and rational delight in it than he had ever before experienced during their previous intercourse.

Francis gave him so much sensible advice in trifles, as well as in matters of moment, at his entrance on this new and strange course of life, that when Cuthbert lay down to rest all his difficulties seemed to have vanished. He had been introduced by Francis to the commander of the regiment he was to join, and to several other officers of horse as well as foot; and he soon discerned that there was as great a variety of character and of manners in this host of the Lord as in armies assuming a less presumptuous title.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

**LONDON:
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.**

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BROKEN FONT: A STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR, VOL. 1
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