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HILDEBRAND.

HILDEBRAND:

OR,

THE DAYS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE KING'S SON."

Frugal and wise, a Walsingham is thine;
A Drake, who made thee mistress of the sea,
And bore thy name in thunder round the world.
Then flamed thy spirit high; but who can speak

The numerous worthies of the maiden reign?
In Raleigh mark their every glory mix'd;
Raleigh, the scourge of Spain!
THOMSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HILDEBRAND.

[1]

CHAPTER I.

Life is subject to certain moral influences, arising from external impressions, which are no less mysterious than its elements and progress. Under the operation of these influences, we are prone to overlook them; and instead of watching their workings, and tracing them through all their wonderful and extensive ramifications, we yield unresisting to their pressure, and, without one interposition of our own will, become the passive agents of their effects.

Allowing the existence and constant presence of an overruling Providence, it is not too much to [2]
say, that there is no possible situation in which a man can be placed, in this sublunary world, that he will be wholly incompetent to sustain. There is not one influence, whether exciting or depressing, that the human mind cannot check, although it may be unable, in some instances, to reduce it to complete subjection. It is our prostration that gives the sharpest bitterness to sorrow; and prosperity has its greatest dangers (for prosperity is not without dangers, and great ones) from our unwary self-reliance. If we could meet success in a sober spirit, and, while we drink from the cup of fortune, curb its intoxicating inspirations with a recollection of the instability and mere temporariness of worldly possessions, prosperity would have no power to disturb the evenness of our mind, or to contract and freeze up the dignity of our nature. In the same way, if we would but bear in remembrance how unavoidable and transient are our troubles, how utterly pointless the scoffs and contempt and mockery of a selfish world, and, finally, how soon we shall [3]
"shuffle off this mortal coil," adversity would lose its chill, and even the anguish of the sorrowing heart would be materially and sensibly mitigated.

It is by ourselves that the auxiliary and sustaining qualities of our nature are created. It is from our voluntary will, that leading distinction between man and brute (which makes us rational and

accountable creatures) that these qualities mainly spring; and it is by the same will alone, humanly speaking, that we can look from the heights of fortune with composure, and meet tribulation without despair.

Nevertheless, the weakness of the human mind is such, on occasions of severe trial, that its will cannot be brought thus to act of its own self, or continue to act unaided. The rightful operation of nature cannot be maintained, or its functions be duly and efficiently discharged, but in perfect and unvarying conformity with her unalterable laws. As it is not the summer alone, but the other [4]
seasons also, in their regular rotation, that is necessary to bring forth the fruits of the earth, so the health of the human heart depends on the effective administration of the whole system. Not only our free will, but that sense of right and wrong by which our free will should be governed, and which can always be called up from the lucid depths of the bosom, is an essential support against every trial. Mighty of itself, it leads us, as an unfailing consequence, to rely principally for aid on a still mightier Auxiliary—the eternal and beneficent Dispenser of good and evil.

Even the savage, to whom the wild humanity of the desert offers no law but that of might, and the restraints of civilised life are unknown, is endowed by nature with a perfect consciousness of his free agency; and though, from his degraded position, he is no way subject to any artificial prompture, the attendant sense of a supreme and over-ruling genius is ever before him. Much more sensibly does this intuitive monitor press itself on the faculties of the cultivated mind. In [5]
reclaimed man, surrounded by the light of civilization, it inspires at once a confidence and a dread; and, if heedfully and properly regarded, renders him proof to every temptation, and dignified under every sorrow.

When, on the morning after her parting from Hildebrand, Evaline de Neville learned that her father had been removed from the gaol of Exeter to the metropolis, and the cup of pleasure which she had been about to drink was thus dashed unexpectedly from her lips, her grief was deep and bitter; but, excessive as it was, it did not reduce her to despair. She did not, it is true, hear the intelligence with composure, but she met it with fortitude. Her mind seemed suddenly to acquire additional nerve; and through all its varied faculties, and beautiful proportions, to be strengthened and braced up against the pressure of the occasion.

She was alone; and she naturally gave a thought to those estimable friends—for such she [6]
considered them—who had been with her on the previous night, and whose presence and assurances had filled her with hope and joy. The reflection served only to render her present loneliness and solitude more painfully apparent. Her bosom was pierced by a new anguish, apart from the grief she felt for her father, as she asked herself where were those friends now? Where was Hildebrand, whose arm, undeterred by the presence of danger, had before lent her such effectual succour? Her eyes filled with tears as she reflected that he was no longer within her call.

Yet, in the midst of all her troubles, she could not but look with tenderness on his welcome image. Even under the hand of affliction, she drew from it the comfort of cheering memories; and (which may appear surprising, if not anomalous) it revived in her heart the thrills of her native buoyancy. She called to mind the significant manner in which he had pressed her hand at [7]
parting; and the thought struck her, on the track of this reminiscence, that she might have made an impression on his affections. The first idea which woman conceives of a reciprocated love, under whatever circumstances it may arise, must always be productive of a deep sense of fruition; and, in this instance, it raised in the breast of Evaline a sweet tranquillity, that her passing sorrow could not overcome. After-thoughts might anticipate disappointments, or conjure up fears; but the first felicitous conjecture, springing unbidden to her eye, had none of the gloom of laborious reflection, and was one of unmingled joy and ecstasy.

But if the time had allowed Evaline to pause on Hildebrand’s image, mature meditation, perhaps, would have impressed her with a less favourable view of his disposition, and rendered her expectations less fixed and sanguine. The time, however, was not thus opportune. Her love was no more than a passing thought, though it was sufficient, notwithstanding, to unveil to her eye a [8]
new sphere, and make her fully sensible that she did love.

She regarded the situation of her father with the most lively anguish. She knew little of the world, but she was aware, from the little that she did know, that his cause would be tried before prejudiced judges, and a court that regarded every Roman Catholic with avowed distrust. The persecuted will naturally ever speak harshly and bitterly of their oppressors; and she had heard strange stories, at various periods, of outrages perpetrated on Roman Catholics without any provocation, and in violation of every principle of law and right. According to these tales, men were never wanting, at the bidding of the government, to support charges against them by the most barefaced perjury; and, on such corrupt testimony, judges would unscrupulously condemn them to the block or the gibbet. As she thought how easy it would be, by means such as these, [9]
and before a partial and bigoted judge, to make her father appear guilty, and so bring his declining life to a violent end, her heart turned cold with horror; and she began to perceive the full extent of the calamity that had so unexpectedly fallen upon her.

Nevertheless she did not despair—not for a moment. She saw, from the very first, that it was no time to hesitate, or to suffer the energies of her mind to be wasted in repining, or crushed by depression. Her heart was sad, and her spirit dejected; but, though she was so deeply and sensibly moved, she met the trying crisis with decision, and a reliance on the protection of Heaven, whatever might be the result, that could not fail to prove a source of cheer and hope.

Her heart was considerably lightened after she had laid its plea before God. On rising from her knees, her bosom became alive to a soothing calmness, which cannot be described; and her

brimming eyes were again raised to heaven, with tears of deep and heartfelt gratitude, as she felt that this was but the leading effect of her hardly-uttered prayers. [10]

Reflecting how she could be of service to her father, her first thought naturally inclined her, as a preliminary measure, to repair to London, and make her way to his presence. But she felt that, in consequence of his being a state-prisoner, there might be some difficulty in obtaining access to him; and, therefore, on further consideration, she determined to seek some means of aiding him before she visited his prison. She had a confident hope of succour from Sir Walter Raleigh, but, unfortunately for its realization, she knew not where to apply to that personage, or how to inform him of her father's situation. While she was pondering on these circumstances, she thought of the letter, or packet—for it evidently contained some enclosures—which had been given to her by Hildebrand; and, in this possession, a new and felicitous resource seemed to open to her. [11] Drawing it from beneath her vest, she proceeded to examine it, and to ascertain, from the evidence furnished by its exterior, what room it would afford her for any hope. But she could form no opinion from the cover; and if she had been disposed to seek further (which she was not), the search would have been equally fruitless. The packet, indeed, had been folded with the greatest care, and, moreover, was secured with two fair seals; and, consequently, she had no ground for conjecture but the direction. It was inscribed, in a bold and distinct hand, to "Master Bernard Gray, at the sign of the Angel alehouse, Lantwell;" and these words, which she deciphered at a glance, were all that its exterior revealed.

She raised the packet to her lips before she re-placed it in her vest. While her lips still rested on it, however, the kiss they were about to exhale was arrested; and a deep blush spread over her face and neck. It was a beautiful manifestation, and showed that, in the bosom of innocence, true [12] modesty is ever alert, and requires no overlooking eye to excite its sweet sensibilities.

After a moment's deliberation, she resolved to deliver the packet to its direction without delay. Pursuant to this design, she called for Martha Follett; and through that faithful adherent, gave orders to her other servants, who had charge of the carriage and horses, to prepare for their return to Neville Grange. While she was herself preparing to depart, Martha again entered her presence, and, with some appearance of agitation, informed her that her cousin, Don Felix, was without, and sought to speak with her.

"Bid him come in, good Martha," answered Evaline.

Martha, with a silent curtsy, withdrew; and, the next moment, Don Felix entered.

Evaline did not meet him with her usual friendliness. His conduct towards Hildebrand, with a knowledge of the service that the latter had rendered her and her father, had led her to look [13] upon him in a new light, and, though she was not disposed to judge him harshly, had shown a meanness of spirit that she could not but condemn. On glancing at his face, however, and perceiving that he looked dejected and anxious, her coldness began to relax, and, yielding to the generous impulses of her nature, she extended him her hand.

"'Tis well," said Don Felix, taking her hand. "I have come to bid thee adieu, Evaline."

"How meanest thou?" asked Evaline, with some alarm.

"There is a warrant out to arrest me," answered Don Felix. "It arrived at the Grange last night, with a power from the sheriff; but, by good fortune, I got out by the back way and escaped."

"Surely, it were better, Sir, to surrender," said Evaline. "Thou canst not long evade the law."

"I will evade it altogether," returned Don Felix. "There is a ship in Topsham harbour, which sails [14] this evening for France; and I will get me aboard her, and flee the country. I can make my way to Spain overland."

"Oh, no! prithee leave us not now, Felix," cried Evaline, forgetting all her dislike in her extreme distress, "Thou art innocent of any crime. Wherefore shouldst thou flee?"

"An' my stay could avail thee, Evaline, or good Sir Edgar, no hazard of mine own self should make me flee," answered the Spaniard; "but thou knowest that it would not."

"None, none!" said Evaline. "Yet to be alone—Oh! I have now no comforter on earth!"

There was a brief pause. Though Evaline knew that the stay of Don Felix would afford her no direct advantage, his desertion of her at this moment, when, for aught he knew, she stood alone, afflicted her severely. The world was new to her, and she was not yet aware, what she was so soon to experience, that, in the season of trouble and adversity, friends fall off, and avoid our [15] fallen and declining estate as they would a pestilent contagion. He is, indeed, a friend, above the ordinary meaning of the term, who will meet us in adversity with the same cordiality and welcome, not to say eagerness, that we called forth in the day of our prosperity.

If Evaline had imagined that Don Felix was really in danger, she would have been the first, at any risk to herself, to have urged him to flee. But she was firmly of opinion that the hazard he incurred would be but small; and, which was probably the case, that his fears, as he had expressed them, were more urgent and startling than the occasion would warrant. The conclusion she arrived at was decidedly to his disadvantage; and, comparing his conduct with that of Hildebrand, to whom she and her father were perfect strangers, but who, nevertheless, had befriended them at their need, and his own imminent peril, her unfavourable impression of his character was confirmed, and her previous regard for him entirely alienated.

She had paused in her reply to his last remark; but her hesitation, if such it might be called, was [16] only momentary, and, before Don Felix could make it available, she resumed her interrupted

speech.

“But thou mayst go, Sir,” she said, in an indignant tone. “I have no right to keep thee here, an’ it bring thee into danger.”

“How could my staying avail thee, Evaline?” replied Don Felix.

“I tell thee, Sir, thou canst go,” rejoined Evaline.

“Ay,” returned Don Felix, knitting his brows, “I hear that the nameless stranger has returned, and he, mayhap, will win from thee more gracious words.”

Evaline, without shrinking before his glance, coloured deeply at this insinuation.

“I would have thee be guarded in what thou sayest, Don Felix,” she said, angrily, “or thou mayst rue it.”

“Well, let it pass! let it pass!” answered Don Felix. “Tell me only, dost thou love him?” [17]

“This is not to be borne,” cried Evaline. “What warrant hast thou, Sir, to ask me such a question?”

“Thy father hath promised me thy hand,” said Don Felix. “But the time presses on me now. When we meet again, we shall be more at liberty. Adieu!”

Evaline, overpowered by her resentment, rendered no reply to his farewell. His announcement that her father designed to make him her husband, instead of conciliating her, furnished her with a new reason for holding him in dislike; and, under the pressure of that dislike, she suffered him to depart without a word.

Her horror at the prospect which would arise from a marriage with him was unbounded. To be wedded to a man whom she could never love, and be inforced by her conscience to thoughts and feelings that, cling to them as she might, would be negatived by her heart, was nothing less than utter ruin and destruction. That her own father, whom she loved so tenderly, and for whose [18] advantage she would gladly lay down her very life, would consign her to such a fate, she felt to be impossible. He might, it is true, have such a marriage in contemplation; but he would allow its settlement to rest with herself; and her resolution to oppose it, by the adoption of every means that equity would sanction, was fixed and unalterable.

She was still pondering on the subject, when she was informed that, conformably to her orders, the carriage was in waiting, and everything had been prepared for her departure. She had effected all her personal arrangements, and, having nothing further to detain her, she quitted her chamber, and proceeded to take her seat in the carriage. Martha, at her desire, seated herself by her side, and, after a brief interval, the carriage was put in motion, and they set out on their return to the Grange.

It was evening by the time they arrived at their destination. The melancholy light of the hour, [19] which was just beginning to be tinged with the gloom of night, and its solemn stillness, undisturbed by the least breeze, had a depressing effect on the spirits; and Evaline felt it severely. As she passed through the avenue-gate, and caught a glimpse of the dejected countenance of the old porter, who, with his gray locks floating on the air, stood uncovered to receive her, she could not but remember what different feelings had animated her when she last entered that avenue, and how the happiness of that time was greater than the misery of the present. The anguish and bitterness of the reflection, in the gloom of the surrounding scene, made her shudder; and, for a moment, unbraced her fortitude, and clouded her every hope.

The whole household had assembled to receive her at the hall-door. On entering the hall, she looked round upon them separately, intending, with her customary forgetfulness of herself, to give a kind word to each. But observing that anxiety for her was impressed on every face, and [20] sympathy in every eye, her words stuck in her throat; and she was obliged to turn away without speaking.

As she was passing to an inner room, she discerned two strangers, of whom she had no knowledge, and who appeared to be at variance with the household, standing in the rear. Their appearance somewhat surprised her, and, with a view of ascertaining who they were, she came to a pause, and looked round for an explanation. One of the servants, perceiving her object, hereupon stepped forward, and, in a hesitating voice, proceeded to give her the information she sought.

“These be two of the sheriff’s folk, lady,” he said. “Near a dozen of them are here, with a warrant to apprehend Don Felix.”

On thus learning that the house was in possession of the officers of the law, Evaline felt a thrill of fear shoot through her bosom, apparently arising from no defined source, that she could by no means repress. Anxious to conceal her discomposure, she resumed her steps, and passed straight [21] to her chamber.

The faithful Martha, with a heart no less dejected, attended her thither, and, without waiting her directions, assisted her to take off her walking-dress. Having effected her divesture, she left her to herself for a while, and proceeded to procure her some refreshments. In expectation of her arrival, a slight repast, such as she was thought most likely to favour, had been prepared for her; and this was shortly set out on the table of her chamber.

Evaline mechanically partook of the meal; but, eating without appetite, and merely to support nature, was no way invigorated thereby. By the time that her repast was finished, the evening

had sunk into night; and, aroused by the increasing darkness, she began to meditate how she could deliver Hildebrand's packet, on which she rested such great hopes, without further delay.

She did not like to trust its delivery to any third party. Although the walk to Lantwell was not a [22]
short one, she would not have hesitated, at another time, to have carried it thither herself; but to undertake such a mission at night, over a lonely and secluded route, was a task of danger. It is true, she might secure ample protection against any harm, in the shape of insult or violence, by taking with her one of the servants; but the presence of the sheriff's minions required that she should make her egress unobserved. Indeed, she doubted not that she was herself closely watched; and that her own movements, even when she was unattended by any servant, would be observed with suspicion, and followed with jealousy.

Considering all these circumstances, she ultimately resolved to venture out on the undertaking herself. At first, indeed, she thought of securing the companionship of Martha, but, on further consideration, she reflected that, if need were, that individual could not afford her any protection, and that two persons would not pass unseen so easily as one; and, on these grounds, [23]
the project appeared impolitic. She could not conceal from herself that the company of Martha would render her more confident, but she was aware, nevertheless, that this confidence would not bear a scrutiny, since the resolution of Martha was even less than her own. The trial, to a girl of her habits and disposition, was a great one; but the emergency also was a great one; and, as has been stated, she finally determined to set out on the mission herself.

Having come to this conclusion, the next object that engaged her attention, preparatory to carrying it into effect, was how to pass out unobserved. After a short pause, she resolved to don an old cloak of Martha's, with a long hood, that was lying on a contiguous chair; and, thus disguised, watch for a favourable moment to steal forth. No sooner did the idea occur to her, than, catching up the cloak, she proceeded to put it in execution.

Throwing the cloak over her fair shoulders, she drew the hood, which was round and full, close [24]
over her brow, and then sallied forth. She descended the stairs beyond without seeing any one, or, as far as she could tell, being seen herself. She had no light; but the night, though it was now growing late, was not dark; and, on reaching the hall, she was easily able to make her way to the rearward door.

The door, which was fortunately unfastened, led into a small porch, opening into the park. Evaline, gratified that she had so far escaped notice, entered the porch with tolerable composure; and, briefly commending herself to the protection of Heaven, she ventured to pass into the park.

There was no one about. Drawing her cloak closely round her, she directed her steps to that walk which, it may be remembered, has been before mentioned in this history, and which opened into the public footpath to Lantwell. She had just entered the walk, when, pausing to look round, she [25]
heard a voice calling to her to stop.

She resumed her progress at her utmost speed. Her heart beat audibly, and her fears, which the abruptness of the alarm had raised beyond endurance, almost arrested her breath, but she ran on still. She imagined every successive shrub to be an ambushed enemy, and, as she passed along, she was afraid to look about her, but kept her eyes straight on her path, lest she should discern on either hand some terror. At last, wearied and breathless, she arrived at the public footway, and there ventured to pause.

A full minute elapsed before she had completely recovered her breath. Meanwhile, her ears were on the alert, and her attention alive to the least noise. To her surprise, however, no sounds of pursuit were audible, and, after a brief interval, she set forwards again.

Once in the footpath, which lay across an open part of the park, her view was less interrupted; [26]
and consequently, though the night was somewhat cloudy, and prevented her seeing any great distance, she was able to satisfy herself that no person was about. She pursued her way, therefore, with more confidence, though still with a hasty step; and shortly arrived at the park-boundary.

As she was mounting the stile that divided the park from the high-road, at the foot of Lantwell-hill, she remembered that the "Angel" alehouse, where her mission was to end, was not situate within the village, but on its extreme limit, where the road fell into Lantwell-wood. Unless, therefore, she made a considerable *detour*, she would have to pass through the churchyard, over the path we have had occasion to mention before, in order to arrive at her destination; and, remembering this, she paused to consider which of the two routes she should pursue.

Though endued with uncommon good sense, she had some spice of the superstitious qualms and fears that mark her religion, and, to speak the truth, were rather allowed and encouraged by the [27]
age; and it was not without hesitation that she ultimately resolved on taking the route by the churchyard. Having thus made up her mind, she once more set forward, and proceeded at a quick pace up Lantwell-hill.

She paused a while on gaining the churchyard-gate. She almost felt inclined, indeed, at one moment, to turn into the road again, and pursue the route through the village. But her irresolution quickly subsided, and though her fears, with the terrible excitement they gave rise to, remained, she devoutly crossed herself, and passed into the churchyard.

She scarcely dared to breathe during her progress onward. Nevertheless, she reached the further angle of the old church, where the path took another direction, without seeing anything to alarm her. She was just turning the angle, when, looking on one side, towards an abutting portion of the church, she descried a tall figure, arrayed in white, rising slowly from behind a [28]

grave-post; and she was instantly rooted to the spot.

There are sources of terror which, though they may impend no peril to the person, will affect the spirit of the most resolute, and involve the liveliest faculties in fright and consternation. Yet, whether it is that we are sustained by despair, or that those superior and invisible intelligences, which some believe to attend upon us, like ministering angels, from the cradle to the grave, lend the soul a new influence, this extreme of dread generally finds the mind self-possessed, and the senses more than ever active.

Evaline, on observing the object described, lost all power over her limbs and person, but her senses were perfectly collected. She felt her hair rising on end, and a cold perspiration, which seemed to chill and freeze up every source of motion, spread itself over her whole frame; but, for all this, her mind was painfully alert. She distinguished every individual outline of the fearful and [29] ghostly figure. It rose gradually upright, and then, standing quite still, looked her straight in the face.

“The cross of Christ surround us!” exclaimed Evaline, in a hollow, solemn voice.

“Ho, there! have no fear!” cried the cause of her horror. “’Tis I—Bernard Gray!”

The weight of death was lifted off the heart of Evaline. With the velocity of thought, her hands clasped themselves together, and her eyes were raised gratefully to heaven.

Nevertheless, it was not without some fear that she found herself in the presence of the singular man whom she had come to seek, and who, ignorant of her mission, was now advancing towards her. Her fear increased as he drew nearer; and when she was able to survey him closely, which a lighted lanthorn that he carried well enabled her to do, it almost deprived her of speech.

His appearance, certainly, was far from being prepossessing. His face was deadly pale, and this, [30] perhaps, was the more remarkable, in the gloomy light that prevailed, from the unnatural lustre of his eyes, the rays of which could almost be seen. The upper part of his body, above his waist, appeared to have no covering but his shirt; but, from his having a large sheet turned over his head and shoulders, in the fashion of a penance-garment, which hid it from observation, his precise dress could not be ascertained. The arm that sustained the lanthorn, however, and which was pushed out of the folds of the sheet, displayed only his shirt-sleeve, and, all things considered, this gave the conjecture warranty. His feet were bare; and his murrey-coloured hose and hanse-lines, or trousers, which could be seen through the sheet, with his drapery, and his pale features, formed altogether a figure that, remembering the locality, could not be viewed without great discomposure.

Evaline waited his approach in the utmost trepidation.

“Who have we here?” he demanded, on coming up with her. [31]

He raised his lanthorn as he spoke, and, holding it out before him, glanced inquiringly in her face.

“Be not afeard! be not afeard!” he said, perceiving that she met his gaze with the greatest alarm. “Thou wilt have no hurt at my hands.”

These words, and the tone in which they were uttered, which was kind and gentle, somewhat reassured Evaline; and after a brief pause, she ventured to reply.

“If thou be Bernard Gray,” she said, in a tremulous tone, “I have a packet for thee, from Master Hildebrand Clifford.”

“Ah!” cried Bernard, eagerly, “where is he?”

“Alas, he is far away now!” answered Evaline. “Howbeit, before his departure, he bade me, if I [32] should need succour, to give this packet to thee, and thou wouldst thenceforward stand my friend.”

Bernard, without making a reply, took from her hand the proffered packet, and, at the same time, again gazed earnestly in her face. As he did so, his eyes gradually lit up with anger, and he seemed, from his altered manner, and the change that passed over his pale face, suddenly to regard her with a rooted enmity. Indeed, he was now sensible who she was, and, in her pallid but lovely features, he recognized the Popish heiress of Neville Grange.

“Well,” he said, on making this discovery, “thou shall hear how he commends thee to me.”

Thus speaking, he tore open the packet, and proceeded to give his promise effect. There were three enclosures; but the upmost one, though carefully folded, was unsealed, and engaged his attention first. Thrusting the others under his arm, he held the one specified up to the light; and in a tone which was originally bitter, but which gradually grew mild and agitated, read these words:—

[33]

> “To my right trusty and singular good friend, Master Bernard Gray, at the sign of the Angel, these:—
>
> “Worthy Bernard.—Herein thou wilt find my last will and testament, bequeathing to thee, in case I should hap to die, the whole of my effects, with my entire right and interest, in the entail of Clifford Place; and a letter of trust to my noble friend and patron, the renowned Sir Walter Raleigh. And now, good Bernard, I prefer to thee the bearer hereof, and I beseech thee, by the duty thou owest God, and thy love for my murdered mother, to give her the hand of faith and fellowship, and in all things, to the very death, to stand

her abettor, as thou wouldst do service to thy loving friend,

"Hildebrand Clifford."

The last few lines of the letter, which he read in a tremulous voice, awakened in Bernard's bosom the deepest emotion. It was evident, too, that his emotion was of a conflicting character, and did not leave him in full possession of his judgment. The passions were mingled in his face; and his [34] naturally kind impulses, which the sex and loveliness of Evaline, no less than his attachment to Hildebrand, and the pathetic appeal of the letter, had not failed to invoke, were restrained and pressed down by his prejudices, and his intentions lost by indecision.

It was a full minute before he spoke. By that time, however, he seemed to have made up his mind, and the hesitation described was no longer manifest.

"I cannot help thee," he said: "thou art a Papist."

Evaline, whom his altered manner had already greatly disturbed, heard these words with a thrill of despair.

"Then, I will bid thee farewell, Sir," she replied, in an agitated voice.

"Hold!" exclaimed Bernard. "He hath charged me close—close—by my love for his mother. And, [35] faith, thou art a most fair lady, even in the guise thou wearest now. I would thou wast aught but a Papist!"

"The blessed Virgin keep my faith whole!" ejaculated Evaline.

"Couldst thou hold it through the fire?" asked Bernard, earnestly.

"With God's help, Sir," answered Evaline.

"I fell short!" cried Bernard, in a tone of anguish. "They had me up; they fixed me to the stake; the fagots, steaming with pitch, were set about me; and, before a spark was kindled, my faith gave way! Like Peter, I denied my creed; I swore I knew not the man; and they let me go! Oh, that the trial might come again! Oh, that I might meet the fire, with its thousand torments, only once more!"

His voice sank into a murmur of supplication as he thus spoke, and his agitation, though it was still excessive, was of a kind more calculated to excite compassion. Evaline, as he ceased speaking, could not repress an exclamation of sympathy.

"Dost pity me?" said Bernard. "If thou knew'st how I have mourned it, thou wouldst think me [36] reclaimed. Summer and winter, every night, do I come to that grave barefoot, and pray God's pardon. Not the last fire that shall ever blaze, I heartily believe, could make me again deny my sweet Saviour."

"God keep thee in a good mind!" answered Evaline. "Farewell!"

"Hold!" cried Bernard, laying his hand on her arm. "Dost know I could save thy father?"

"Canst thou?" inquired Evaline, with great earnestness. "But if even thou canst," she added, mournfully, "thou wilt not."

"What of him that sent thee to me?" said Bernard. "Dost thou not know, from the opposition of your creeds, that there is between you a great bar, and that thou shalt never wed him?"

"Wed him?" echoed Evaline, tremulously.

"Thou lovest him!" answered Bernard.

Notwithstanding her excessive alarm, Evaline, whether because she was taken by surprise, or from some more secret cause, could not repress a slight blush, and her eyes sank before the [37] earnest gaze of her interlocutor.

"Thou lovest him!" repeated the latter. "And for thy sake, lady, I will even befriend a Papist. Thy father shall be set free."

"Alas, Sir!" answered Evaline, "he is now, I fear me, beyond thy help. He has been removed to London."

"Go thou also to London, then," returned Bernard. "I will follow thee; and again I promise thee, on my troth, he shall be given his liberty."

The confident tone in which he spoke, with the assurance she had received from Hildebrand, on his first naming him to her, that he would be able to render her the most eminent services, and which assurance now came to her recollection, did not pass Evaline unheeded. His altered manner, too, which had suddenly become kind and compassionate, had an effect upon her; and, being so different from what she had looked for, called up in her bosom the liveliest expectations. Nevertheless, her voice faltered in her reply.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" was all she said. [38]

"Didst thou come hither by thyself, lady?" resumed Bernard.

"Even so," answered Evaline. "The sheriff's men are at the Grange, waiting to apprehend my cousin, Don Felix di Corva; and I thought it best to steal out unnoticed."

"Thou didst well, and bravely," returned Bernard. "But 'tis a lonely road, and, if thou wilt give me leave, I will be thy conductor home."

"Thou wilt make my heart light, an' thou wilt," said Evaline, eagerly.

“No more!” answered Bernard. “Let us on!”

They set forward accordingly, and, without resuming their discourse, proceeded to the road. Thence they passed down the adjoining hill, at the extremity of the churchyard, into Neville Park, and so on to the vicinity of the mansion.

Bernard drew up when they came nigh the mansion.

“I will stay here, lady,” he said, “and watch thee in. When dost thou purpose to go to London?” [39]

“To-morrow,” answered Evaline. “I know not where I shall be lodged; but thou canst learn that, if thou wilt take the trouble to inquire, of Master Gilbert, the attorney, in the Inner Temple.”

“I will not fail thee,” returned Hildebrand. “God give thee a good night!”

“And thee also,” replied Evaline.

They parted with this benediction. Evaline, wrapping her cloak close round her, passed at a quick step towards the house; and Bernard watched her progress from the mouth of the walk. After a little time, he saw her arrive at the hall-door, and, without meeting any obstacle, effect an entrance.

Although she had thus obtained ingress, however, Evaline did not enter the hall unobserved. On opening the door, she encountered no less than three persons. One of these, who held a lighted lamp in his hand, was a domestic; but the other two were of the party of the sheriff. They did not, [40] however, as she had apprehended, offer her any interruption; and, having procured a light from the servant, and bade him go in quest of Martha, she passed unmolested to her chamber.

There, to her great satisfaction, she was shortly joined by Martha. She immediately discovered to that person, in a few words, the adventure that she had just been engaged in; and this preliminary being achieved, they discussed together its probable results.

CHAPTER II. [41]

Great and notable events, involving consequences of the highest importance, often arise from circumstances seemingly insignificant. If, in life’s decline, we look back on its first and earlier stages, it will not unfrequently appear that the incident which gave the deciding bend and direction to our fortunes, and, in the end, fixed our prospects and position in the world, was itself so excessively trifling that it passed unheeded. The reflection ought to afford us a high and invaluable lesson. As we believe that nothing has been created without a purpose, so we may suppose, on the same grounds, that every prompture of the human heart has its effects, and that [42] the very least of man’s acts accomplishes a certain object. In the onward progress of the mind, this may be too slight to incur notice, or it may, as has been remarked, give the leading tone and impulse to our life; but the issue is the same, and is alike infallible and decisive.

If Shedlock had paid Sir Walter Raleigh the sum he engaged to contribute towards his expedition to America, on the conditions stipulated between them, at the time their agreement was drawn up, Sir Walter would have had no occasion to visit Shedlock’s countinghouse, and thus, in all probability, would not have been brought in contact with Hildebrand Clifford. If this providential circumstance had not ultimately led him to Hildebrand’s prison, and, pursuing its train of consequences, subsequently caused him to regard Sir Edgar and Evaline de Neville as that person’s particular friends, and the victims of a vile persecution, he might have beheld Sir Edgar suffer without sympathy, and with a conviction that he was guilty of the heinous crime imputed to [43] him.

But the course of events was destined to operate otherwise. On discovering Hildebrand in the prison, he learned from that cavalier, in answer to his inquiries, how he had been engaged since he left his ship, and thus ascertained the facts of the affair which had led to Sir Edgar’s arrest. From that moment he became Sir Edgar’s fast friend. As has been shown, he accompanied Hildebrand in his visit to his prison; and there, preparatory to taking more effective measures in his behalf, revealed his friendly intentions by promising to procure his liberation.

The excitement arising from the departure of his favourite ship, which was described heretofore, did not banish from his mind his generous promise. On returning to Topsham Quay, after bidding farewell to Hildebrand, and seeing his gallant bark sail on her voyage, he began to consider how he could carry it out; and, as a first step towards this end, communicated it to the two friends [44] who accompanied him.

One of the individuals referred to appeared to be not incompetent to give him good counsel. His countenance, though not handsome, was strikingly intelligent; and only for a scornful curl of the nether lip, which frequently expanded into a haughty and decided sneer, and was always repulsive, would have been prepossessing. His gait, however, on which the appearance so greatly depends, was careless and clumsy, and was by no means set off by his attire, which was shabby in the extreme. His years, judging from his hair and complexion, could not have been more than thirty, if they were even so many; yet his forehead was crossed, immediately below his hair, with several distinct wrinkles, and his bushy brows were already overlaid with the weight and cares of age.

The other cavalier had just attained that interesting period of life which lies between youth and [45]

manhood. His proud and graceful step, and elegant dress, which was arranged with the most perfect accuracy, engaged attention at once; yet they were less remarkable than his personal beauty. He possessed this, indeed, in such an extraordinary degree, that Nature seemed to have endowed him with all her charms, and to have left nothing undone that could make him an object of admiration.

They both listened to Sir Walter's communication with earnest attention; but the younger cavalier, whether from natural warmth of heart, or personal attachment to the narrator, evidently was the more interested of the two.

"By my word," he cried, when Sir Walter had finished his narrative, "I pity the knight's fair daughter! Cannot his worship be set free at once?"

"Faith, my Lord of Essex," said the other cavalier, "thou wouldst make marvellous quick work [46]
on't, as a fair lady is concerned. An' the knight have no better evidence of his innocence than we have heard from Sir Walter, I doubt if he will be set free at all."

"Dost thou really think so, Sir Robert Cecil?" asked Sir Walter.

"Faith, Sir Walter, I think he will be hanged," answered Sir Robert Cecil, with a smile. "But it gives one no good odour, in these days of peril, to be mixed up with such folk; and I would have thee wash thy hands of them."

Sir Walter, whether from surprise, or sheer vexation, bit his lip on hearing this remark, but said nothing. His companion, however, with the unguarded impetuosity of youth, cast all considerations of policy aside, and gave his feelings utterance.

"Shame on thee, Sir Robert Cecil!" he exclaimed, angrily, "for giving such counsel. I hold Popery to be a damnable error; but, 'fore God, I would no more see a Papist wronged than I would do wrong to a true Christian."

"And dost thou know, my fair Lord of Essex, if wrong hath been done to this Papist?" demanded [47]
Sir Robert Cecil. "By my troth, one would think, from the discourse followed by thee, that justice held not an even course in the land. Thou shouldst measure thy words more prudently, or, in some evil hour, they may be reported to the Queen's Highness."

"What I have a mind to say," cried the young Earl, petulently, "I would say in her Highness's presence—ay, or in her father's either, were he living."

Sir Walter Raleigh, alarmed at the Earl's indiscreet expressions, here laid his hand gently on his arm, and, having thus induced him to pause, sought to give his words a harmless interpretation.

"So might any one, an' their thoughts were as loyal and dutiful as thine," he said. "But let us have [48]
no more hard words. I must help this knight; for, besides that I am inclined thereto by my will, he hath security for my aid in my plighted word. Thou art with me, I know, my Lord Essex; and if thou wilt make it a request to Sir Robert Cecil here, we will even have him also; for I dare swear, from the regard he hath for thee, that he can refuse thee nothing."

"That can I not," murmured Sir Robert Cecil.

Whether he intended it, or not, his words, though hardly distinguishable, reached the ears of the young Earl; and the haughty look that had just mounted to his face, as if to say it was out of the question for him to make any request, immediately vanished.

"Faith," he said, laying his hand familiarly on Sir Robert's shoulder, which, from his superior height, he could do easily,—"Faith, I verily believe thou lovest me. Give us thy hand in this matter, then, as thou wouldst do me a service."

"Have with thee, my hopeful Earl!" exclaimed Sir Robert. "But before we can further the design, we must to London."

"I fear me, it is even so," observed Sir Walter Raleigh. "I will but write a word of cheer to the [49]
imprisoned knight, and, with your good leave, we will then on to London."

His two friends agreed to his proposal, and their discourse, which they did not allow to stop, thereupon passed to other topics. They were still conversing, when they arrived in front of an hostel, at the extremity of the long, straggling town, where, on the previous night, they had baited their horses. After a short conference, they entered the hostel, and proceeded to a room in its rear. Here, by the direction of Sir Walter, they were speedily supplied with a substantial breakfast, which they discussed at their leisure, and with all that hilarity and enjoyment, springing from a pursuit of the passing moment, which attend on health and appetite.

On the conclusion of their meal, Sir Walter, according to his previously-expressed intention, wrote to Sir Edgar de Neville, repeating his promise to procure him his liberty, and informing him, in a few words, how he purposed to pursue it. He entrusted the delivery of the note to one of [50]
his servants, and, not knowing that Sir Edgar had been removed, charged him to leave it at the gaol of Exeter, and then ride after him to London.

He and his two friends did not tarry long after the servant's departure. Interchanging a few remarks on the subject of his mission, they rose from the breakfast-table, and proceeded to arrange the preliminaries of their journey to town. These were soon settled; and, after a short interval, they sallied forth from the hostel; and, mounting their horses, and attended by their several grooms, they set out for the metropolis.

Three days elapsed before they arrived at that place. On the third evening subsequent to their departure from Exeter, they came to Durham House, in the Strand, where Sir Walter Raleigh

resided. There, after partaking of a light supper, his two friends took leave of Sir Walter, and, with the understanding that they were to meet again on the morrow, departed to their respective lodgings. [51]

It was at the palace of Queen Elizabeth, at Westminster, that the friends had arranged to meet; and the following morning found Sir Walter on his way to the court at an early hour. Early as it was, however (and the clock of Westminster had not yet struck ten), the road to the palace was already a scene of bustle, and presented to view passengers of every order. From these persons Sir Walter received many a hearty cheer as he passed along, which he acknowledged with a graceful bow, and occasionally, when the cheering was accompanied by the waving of some fair one's handkerchief (which was several times the case), by doffing his plumed hat, and bowing to his saddle-pow. Thus he rode along for some distance, when, just as he came in sight of the palace, he was overtaken by another horseman, who appeared to be almost equally in favour with the passing people.

The stranger was a slender young man, seemingly about eighteen years of age. He might, indeed, be two or three years older; but the freshness of his complexion, and his exceedingly slight figure (though the mould of his figure was unexceptionable), would hardly support such a conjecture. He was dressed with great splendour; but it was not his costly habits, but the charms which he derived from nature, that made his appearance imposing; and he needed no meretricious attractions to prepossess every unenvious eye in his favour. [52]

"A fair morning to your worship!" he cried, on coming up with Sir Walter. "What fell and desperate design hast thou now in hand, that thus thou bearest down, equipped with all the art of a lover, on the court of our virgin Queen?"

"Now, fair befall thee!" replied Sir Walter, with a merry smile; "but thy love for worthy Will Shakspear, an' it go on at this length, will one day turn thy head, and thou shalt finally sink into an absolute player. But, what news? what news, I prithee?" [53]

"News?" cried his companion. "News that will make thy heart glad, renowned knight! Sweet Will Shakspear—"

"By my lady's hand," exclaimed Sir Walter, laughing, "I would have wagered my good steed against an old wife's thimble, which to me were as nothing, that the sum and burthen of thy news would be only Will Shakspear! But let us hear it—let us hear it, my trusty Southampton; for, after all, what concerns Will, concerns the whole world."

"Now, do I love thee for those words!" cried the young nobleman, his cheeks mantling with a flush of pleasure. "But, to tell thee my news, renowned knight! Thou must know, first, that Master Shakspear will this day bring out a new play, at his noble playhouse of the Globe; and, secondly, that the Queen's Highness, on my special petition, purposes to grace the performance with her royal presence."

"That is right welcome news, indeed," answered Sir Walter; "but tell me, I prithee, what is the theme and burthen of the play?" [54]

"An admirable good theme," replied the Earl of Southampton: "no other, indeed, than the most pathetic history of Imogen, which was first made known to the world by old Boccaccio, in his right famous Decameron."

"I mind the story well," observed Sir Walter, "and, in good sooth, 'tis a marvellous excellent one. But see! yonder is Master Harrington, an' I be not mistaken."

"Faith, is it!" answered the Earl. "Let us on."

Without more ado, they spurred forward, and soon came up with the individual who, at the distance of some hundred yards, had attracted their attention. When they first distinguished him, he was standing at the palace gate; but, hearing the clatter of their horses' hoofs, he turned round, and observed them approaching. As they drew nigh, he advanced a few paces to meet them; and with the air of a courtier, which his elegant apparel, and youthful and engaging features, well supported, exchanged with them a cordial and friendly greeting. Sir Walter and the Earl then alighted; and, resigning their steeds to the care of their grooms, who had ridden up to receive them, took Master Harrington by the arm, and thus passed together into the palace. [55]

As they entered the palace-hall, they encountered a large circle of courtiers, with most of whom, if one might form a conjecture from their polite greetings, they appeared to be on the footing of friends. With some, however, they exchanged only a formal bow, and evidently sought to avoid acquaintance. They were about to press forward to the great staircase, when the entrance of another cavalier, who seemed to be an object of general respect, led them to prolong their pause. He was an elderly man—indeed, an old one; and his habits, which were grave and homely, corresponded with his advanced years. There was, however, no trace of slovenliness in his appearance, and his deportment was still noble and dignified. A smile rose to his lips as he discovered Sir Walter Raleigh; and with more of the gait of a soldier, than the light air of a courtier, which ruled the movements of those around, he advanced to salute him. [56]

"Knight! knight, I have been discoursing of thee the whole morning!" he cried, shaking Sir Walter by the hand. "I promise thee, that staid Cecil, with whom my converse was carried on, hath given me such a report of thy brave expedition to America, as hath pleased me mightily. Ah, my Lord Southampton! the good time of the day to your Lordship! Master Harrington, give thee a fair morning! how go the sports at the Paris-garden?"

"Faith, my Lord Sussex, I have changed my bent," answered Harrington. "'Tis Shakspear now,

my Lord—Shakspear is your modern vogue."

"I had rather see a good bear-fight," said the Earl of Sussex. "Yet, for my Lord Southampton's sake, I will even go see this notable player to-day. But do you attend her Highness?" [57]

"We are with you, my Lord," replied Sir Walter Raleigh.

The Earl, availing himself of the precedence which his friends opened for him, hereupon stepped forward, and led the way to an upper saloon. There, in the course of a little time, as they waited for the appearance of the Queen, his party associated with several other courtiers, and were shortly afterwards joined by Essex and Robert Cecil. They had just received this accession, when another party, headed by an elderly, but still very elegant cavalier, entered the saloon, and proceeded to its further end. They passed by the friends of Sussex, who were standing in the centre of the saloon, without extending to them the slightest notice; and seemingly so intent on the discourse of their leader, which the light laugh that occasionally broke from them announced to be of a lively nature, that the personages around did not incur their observation. For all his fluent discourse, however, there was a settled melancholy on the handsome countenance of their [58] leader, and, whenever his eye could be viewed observantly, a tameness and restlessness in his gaze, that spoke his mirth to be hollow, and his ease and lightness of heart merely affected. As he passed along, no few eyes regarded him with scorn and contempt; and it was evident that, though he might yet enjoy the favour of the Queen, the wretch who had murdered one wife, and attempted the life of a second,—who had submitted to be abused by Arundel, and cuffed by Norfolk,—no longer swayed at will the destinies of the court.

"Methinks, my Lord of Leicester looks somewhat grim at thee, my fair Lord," whispered Sir Robert Cecil to Essex.

"I marked it not," replied Essex. "An' thou art sure he did, I will presently make him say wherefore."

"Hist, my dear Lord!" returned Cecil. "Her Highness approaches!"

While he was yet speaking, the doors at the end of the saloon, where Leicester and his party had [59] posted themselves, were thrown open, and the ladies of the Queen's household made their appearance at the aperture. Following them, a few paces in their wake, came the Queen herself, walking under a canopy, borne by the four ladies of her chambers, and attended, in the rearward, by four more ladies, who probably were maids of honour.

The ladies were all dressed, according to the practice of the royal household, with great simplicity; but this did not contract or reduce the effect of their beauty, but rather served, by its freedom from meretricious attractions, to exhibit their personal charms to advantage. Their simplicity of attire, however, had not been adopted by the Queen; and, whether that she wished to be singular, or had really a love for finery, she was dressed with extravagant splendour. Her ruff, or frill, of the most costly lace, was raised almost to the level of her mouth; but its excessive [60] height, it must be acknowledged, was not unsuited to her aspect, and it lent the commanding tone of her features a visible support. Her stomacher of white satin, sprinkled with diamonds, was enclosed by a robe of blue velvet, descending into a long train; and, as if the rich velvet were not itself costly enough, this robe, or gown, was loaded with pieces of gold, wrought into the shape of various animals.

Though she was now long past her fiftieth year, Elizabeth, on the whole, did not misbecome her magnificent apparel. Her form, though impaired, was still graceful, and, as much from her habits as from nature, full of dignity; and her face presented very many traces of its former charms.

A murmur of "God save your Highness!" not loud, but deep, ran through the assembly as she entered, but she rendered no acknowledgment of the salutation, if such it may be called, till she had passed to a high seat, raised a step or two from the floor, near the middle of the saloon. [61] Then, sitting down, she bowed gracefully round, and, as her eye fell on the Earl of Leicester, accompanied her bow with a kind smile.

There was a pause for a moment, when the Queen broke the silence.

"Is my Lord of Sussex in presence?" she asked.

"At your Highness's command," answered Sussex.

"We have a charge for thee, then," pursued the Queen. "The captain of our guard, after urgent importunity, obtained our licence to be absent for a week, which expired on the morn of yesterday. As he did not then return, we direct thee, in our name, to have him diligently sought for, and, when found, attached as a deserter."

"That will I do straightway, my liege," answered Sussex, smiling. And, turning round, he laid his hand on Sir Walter Raleigh, who was standing directly behind him, and added:—"Sir Walter [62] Raleigh, I attach thee, in the name of our Sovereign Lady, as a false knight, and a deserter."

"I appeal from thee to the clemency of her Highness!" cried Sir Walter Raleigh.

And pushing past the Earl, who seemed willingly to give way to him, he sprang towards the Queen's chair, and threw himself on one knee at her feet.

"A boon! a boon, dread Sovereign!" he exclaimed.

"By my father's hand, no!" answered Elizabeth. "No! no! Thou shalt be punished, deserter, to the very stretch of my prerogative. Henceforth thou shalt forfeit thy liberty altogether. To prove that I speak earnestly, I now charge thee, first, to attend me to the Globe playhouse; thence to

Greenwich; afterwards—”

“Oh, thanks! thanks, my gracious Queen!” cried Sir Walter.

“By my faith, the knave takes his sentence as a great boon!” exclaimed the Queen, with a look of gratification. “I would be sworn, now, instead of putting on him a heavy punishment, I have even dealt him a guerdon.” [63]

“Indeed, my liege,” cried one of the ladies, “I have heard him say, more times than one, that he could not live out of your Highness’s presence.”

“I have heard him swear to ’t,” cried another lady.

“And, what your Highness will regard more,” said the Earl of Sussex, “I believe he swore true.”

“A word from my Lord Sussex makes up the game,” observed the Earl of Leicester.

“My Lord Leicester,” began Sussex, haughtily—

“Hold!” cried the Queen. “Dare any to bandy words here? Soft answers, an’ you please, my Lords! As for thee, knight,” she added, in her former bantering tone, to Sir Walter, “thou mayst now rise, but thy sentence must have full force. Now for the playhouse, my lords! the playhouse!”

With a murmur of “Room for the Queen! room for her Highness!” the courtiers swept back on either side; and Elizabeth, leaning on the arm of the Earl of Leicester, and followed by her ladies, passed down the saloon between them. As she proceeded, her eye glanced wistfully round, and seemed, in the course of its survey, to take note of every face. Thus progressing to the door, she came opposite to the Earl of Essex, whom the crafty Cecil, not doubting that he would catch her eye, and divert her attention from Leicester, whom he hated, had pushed into the front. [64]

“Aha!” cried Elizabeth, suddenly pausing, “here is this fair youth grown into a man, and we have hardly marked him. By my troth, a proper man, too—a marvellous proper man!”

“What an exceeding sweet face!” whispered one of the ladies of the bedchamber, loud enough to be heard by all.

“The eye of Mars!” observed another, in the same tone.

“Hush, for shame!” resumed Elizabeth. “Do ye not see,” she added, as her eye fell on a light gold chain, of the most chaste and delicate workmanship, which was turned into the Earl’s vest, “he hath lost his heart, and hath his lady’s image guarding it? By my troth, I will know who this fair one is!” [65]

“Your pardon, my liege,” replied Essex, with some confusion.

“Nay, Sir Earl, I will know it,” returned Elizabeth, angrily. And, seeing that the Earl was not inclined to satisfy her, she rudely seized the chain herself, and drew it forth. The portrait of a female, set in diamonds, was appended to the end of the chain, and, as the Queen drew it forth, all pressed round to see who it represented. A deep blush mantled the face of the Queen, and her eyes, which had just before worn an angry expression, sparkled with pleasure: it was a portrait of herself.

“A true lover! a true lover!” she cried. “Now could I swear, by bell and candle, the fair youth would have died of his love ere he could have spoken it! Dost think us so cruel? Well, well, we must not leave thee hopeless. My Lord of Leicester, how awkwardly thou walkest of late! There, there, drop thine arm! Give me thine, my fair Lord Essex! give me thine!” [66]

“My heart fails me, my gracious liege,” replied Essex, at the same time drawing the Queen’s arm through his:—“yet what marvel, since I have lost it?”

“Faith, now, an’ thou speakest so soothly, I will think thee false,” answered the Queen. “But, no! no! I’ll believe thee! Now for the barge! the barge!”

Leaning fondly on the arm of Essex, she led the way, down the adjacent staircase, and through the hall below, to the shore of the river, where the royal barge, with a number of private barges, belonging to the several members of the court, waited her approach. In these conveyances the whole party embarked, and in a short time, being favoured by the tide, arrived at Milbank, and there landed. [67]

The Globe playhouse, where their excursion was to end, was now close at hand, and, by the Queen’s direction, they proceeded thither on foot. The house was already well filled; but two spacious boxes, opening on to the stage, one on either side, had been reserved for the court, and in one of these, to which she was conducted by the Earl of Southampton, the Queen bestowed herself. Her maids of honour stationed themselves on her left hand; and, at her command, the Earls of Southampton, Essex, Leicester, and Sussex, with Sir Walter Raleigh, and one or two others, took their places on her right. The rest of the court, including many ladies, and some few peeresses, were dispersed over the theatre.

The public acclamations excited by the Queen’s appearance had hardly subsided, when the curtain, which hitherto had kept the stage from view, was drawn up, and the performances commenced. The early passages of the play passed off tamely, till the entrance of Cymbeline, the father of the heroine, and king of Britain, and who gave the play its name, drew from all parts of the theatre one burst of applause. [68]

The actor thus welcomed showed a fair augury for his powers in his majestic person. Though not very tall, his figure, whatever quarter it was viewed from, was faultless, and sufficiently high to be commanding. But it was in his countenance that Nature had exhibited her greatest skill. Here

one could see, at a mere glance, that he had been cast in Heaven's most select mould, and was marked out for a wonder. Thought sat on every feature, and his brow, which was lofty and expansive, and chiselled with a singular accuracy, was almost luminous with expression. Corresponding with this appearance, his eyes, when their gaze was once fixed, almost spoke; and, withal, revealed in their beams such a kind and gentle spirit, that they won the heart of every beholder.

Such was the master-genius whose works are to endure through all time, and open to posterity, [69] through every successive age, the loftiest flights of speculation and philosophy. The "poor player," who looked "every inch a king," was the immortal, the incomparable Shakspear.

When the cheering called forth by his appearance had subsided, the play proceeded, and, in its progress, was watched by every spectator with the liveliest interest. Occasionally, as some passage of more striking excellence was delivered, even the Queen would relax her dignity to applaud, and the waving of the royal handkerchief would invariably be attended by the plaudits of the whole house.

During the interval between each act, the Earl of Southampton, with a discrimination which did as much honour to his intellect, as his attachment to the poet reflected credit on his heart, pointed out to the Queen more distinctly the various merits and beauties of the play, and, at the [70] same time, commended the bearing of the several actors. The Queen and her courtiers (for the latter had no opinion of their own) generally concurred in his observations; but during the interval between the fourth and fifth acts, he expressed one sentiment which Elizabeth disputed.

"Hath your Highness marked," he inquired, "how marvellously well Master Shakspear doth enact the king? I dare make a good wager, an' he were so placed by circumstances, he would play to the same purpose with real sovereigns."

"There we be at difference," answered Elizabeth. "Though he have an excellent good judgment, I will venture to maintain, on my part, that 'twould scarce match such a task. What say'st thou, Sir Walter Raleigh?"

"I'faith, my liege," replied Sir Walter, "an' anything could make me doubt Master Shakspear's [71] judgment, 'twould be the judgment of your Highness. Howbeit, in this instance, I must even hold against thee, and take part with my Lord Southampton."

"Fie on thee, traitor!" said the Queen, smiling. "But I will put the matter out of question. I will even test Master Shakspear's self-possession."

"How? how, your Highness?" asked several voices.

"Ye shall see!" answered the Queen, with the same quiet smile.

The courtiers, either from curiosity, or a desire to make the Queen believe that they took a great interest in the matter, would probably have pressed her further; but, at this moment, the curtain drew up, and the performance was resumed.

The play proceeded without seeming to dispose the Queen to pursue her design; and, as the last scene opened, Lord Southampton began to think, from the delay, that, in the interest excited by the performance, it had escaped her memory. Just as the play was about to close, however, the Queen leaned over on the front of the box, and it became evident that she was preparing to carry her intention into effect.

As she rested her arms on the barrier of the box, which divided it from the stage, her eye, [72] seeming intent on the performance, fixed itself on that of Shakspear. The poet at once discerned that she had in view some object, and when, as if by accident, she dropped her costly handkerchief on the stage, he caught her purpose and motive directly. He did not allow them, however, to interrupt his speech, which was that that Cymbeline delivers at the close of the play; and for some moments, the part he would take in the matter was left open to conjecture. At length he set it at rest, in the opinion of the Queen, by giving utterance to that decisive sentence —

"Set we forward!"

Proud of her triumph, Elizabeth was about to turn to Lord Southampton, and claim his submission, when the poet, after only a moment's pause, resumed—

"But,
Before we go, yet hold a little space,
Till we pick up our sister's handkerchief."

Thus speaking, he advanced, with a stately step, towards the royal box, and, bending on one [73] knee, presented the Queen with her handkerchief. Amidst loud and earnest plaudits, which were again and again renewed, he then turned to his former place, and concluded his speech. Thus was the play closed, and another bay, of unfading verdure, strung on the poet's brow.

The Queen, though never willing to allow that her judgment was at fault, was very well pleased with this adventure, and spoke of the poet's gallantry in terms of admiration. Before leaving the theatre, she directed Lord Southampton to bring him to court, and, at the same time, remarked, with considerable emphasis, that he might there teach manners to some of her courtiers. Still dwelling on the subject, she quitted the theatre, and repaired, under the escort of the court, to the water-side. There she took barge, and, with the turn of the tide, passed down the river to Greenwich.

Among those who accompanied the Queen to Greenwich palace was our friend Sir Walter Raleigh. As captain of her household guard, he was the most nearly associated with her; and his fine person, and agreeable and polished manners, in which he was excelled by few, with his many admirable endowments, were thus ever under her eye. A princess of such eminent discernment, and so observant of merit, naturally regarded the possessor of these advantages with great favour; but being ever open to the approaches of the talebearer, and the attacks of the secret slanderer, it was variable and precarious. Moreover, there was hardly one person of the court, with the exception of the Earls of Sussex and Southampton, and, perhaps, the Earl of Essex, but saw in Raleigh a stumbling-block to himself, and was desirous and anxious to promote his downfall. He was, therefore, after all, in no enviable position; and the least dereliction of duty, or deviation from propriety, would be sure to involve him in disgrace and ruin. [74]

These particulars being borne in mind, it will not excite surprise, on reflection, that he had allowed so much time to pass without making an effort to liberate Sir Edgar de Neville. Though he had originally thought it would be easy to effect this object, his conversation with Essex and Cecil, related heretofore, had led him to another conclusion; and he now began to think that it would be attended with difficulty. He was, however, not the less determined to pursue it; and, during his progress to Greenwich, he meditated how he could best interfere. [75]

He landed at Greenwich without coming to any decision. Nevertheless, the subject still engaged his consideration, and, though the court passed straight to the palace, he remained at the water-side, meditating how he should act. While he was thus deliberating, an individual who was standing by, and whose vicinity he had not observed, advanced to his side, and brought his meditation to a close.

“Art thou Sir Walter Raleigh?” he inquired, respectfully raising his hat. [76]

“No other,” answered Sir Walter.

“Then, have I a billet for thee, Sir,” said the other, presenting Sir Walter with a letter.

Sir Walter, whom the appearance of the stranger had somewhat interested, eagerly accepted the letter, and tore it open. It was written in a fair and legible hand, and ran as follows:—

> “To the worshipful and most famous knight, Sir Walter Raleigh, Captain of her Highness’s Guard, these.—
>
> “Right worthy Sir Walter.—Hereby thou wilt be advertised of my coming unto London, and of the sudden removal of my father, Sir Edgar de Neville, to the gaol of Newgate, by warrant of Secretary Walsingham. On thy promise of service, I make bold to solicit thy counsel, and, if need be, thine aid, towards effecting his release. The bearer hereof may be trusted.
>
> “Worthy knight, thou hast my hearty prayers for thy welfare.
>
> “Given under my hand and seal, this thirteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord God 1579, at the Three Compasses, near the Temple, London. [77]
>
> “Evaline de Neville.”

Sir Walter paused a moment after he had perused the letter. Then, thrusting it into his vest, he turned to the messenger, and proceeded to break his silence.

“This letter tells me thou art trustworthy,” he said. “What is thy name?”

“Bernard Gray, your worship,” answered the person addressed.

“I have heard the name afore somewhere,” observed Sir Walter, musing. “Ay, I remember; but it could not be thee.”

“It might be,” replied Bernard. “What doth your worship refer to?”

“The discoverer of the Popish plot in the North,” returned Sir Walter. “God’s mercy, ’twas a wondrous escape of the Queen and state!”

“It was so, blessed be God!” exclaimed Bernard. “Ah, I see thou doubtest me! Well, we will no more of this.” [78]

“I’faith, I did not mind me thou wast a Papist,” said Sir Walter, “or I would have mentioned no such matter. But God be with thee! Tell thy mistress, in answer to her right welcome letter, that I will meet her in Greenwich Park, under the third tree from the Blackheath-gate, at seven of the clock this even. I would even wait upon her at her lodgings, but in my present case I dare not. Dost understand?”

“Right well, Sir,” answered Bernard.

“Be wary, then,” rejoined Sir Walter; “and keep thy lips close locked. With this caution, I give thee a good day.”

“Good day to your worship,” returned Bernard.

They parted with this valediction. Bernard, turning on one side, pursued his way to the road, and Sir Walter passed straight to the palace.

CHAPTER III.

[79]

Sir Robert Cecil had paved the way for the downfall of the Earl of Leicester, and, at the same time, achieved one step towards the advancement of Essex; but these measures, though great and momentous of their own selves, were but preliminary to what he meditated. His next object, according to the plan he had laid out, was to create a dissension between Essex and Raleigh; and, while he pretended to be a friend to each of those personages, to act really as an enemy to them both. This duplicity was not motiveless, although, on a cursory view, its purpose may not be apparent. He foresaw that Raleigh and Essex would henceforward divide the favour of the Queen [80] between them; and if, by pursuing the policy specified, he could lead each to look upon the other as a rival, and yet regard him as a friend, he would himself be the real favourite, and they only his instruments.

The unsuspecting disposition of the impetuous Essex promised him an easy prey; but the sagacious Raleigh, whose knowledge of the world rendered him less unwary, would require more tangible evidence of friendship than mere professions. It became necessary, therefore, in order to secure his confidence, to entangle him in some more complicated snare, and then work out the issue as circumstances should dictate.

The man of policy had already laid his first toils, when Sir Walter Raleigh, unconscious of danger, and still thinking of the appointment that he had just made with Evaline de Neville, entered the outer hall of Greenwich palace. At the same moment that he entered on one side, an aged-looking man, of a grave and venerable appearance, made his ingress on the other. The old man was [81] dressed in a long blue robe, embroidered, on the left breast, about half-way down, with the royal arms; a high ruff, or frill; and a black velvet cap, fitted close to his head. He walked very lame, and leaned on a stout staff, headed with gold, which seemed to bow beneath the weight of his age and infirmities.

Though somewhat discomposed, Sir Walter's first impulse, on observing the old man's approach, would have led him to spring to his side, and proffer him the support of his arm. Before he could realize his intention, however, he caught the old man's eye, and it dealt him such a glance as forbade approach.

After his eye had thus rested on him for near a moment, the old man, seeming suddenly to recollect himself, dropped him a formal bow, and prepared to pass on. Sir Walter, however, though he saw that he bore him no good-will, was not disposed to suffer him to pass thus; and [82] before he had yet taken a step forward, he accosted him.

"Give thee good day, my Lord Burleigh," he said. "I grieve to see your Lordship walk so lame."

"I would ye could all walk straight!" answered Burleigh, with a sour and significant look. "Thy new friends, the Papists, be ever walking lame."

The gouty minister passed on with these words. His look and manner, being so unusually churlish, had not been unobserved by Sir Walter; and, taken in connexion with his words, they seemed to him to menace him with some serious mischief.

He did not doubt that the pointed expressions of the minister alluded to his friendly disposition towards Sir Edgar de Neville. But, allowing his supposition to be correct, how had he been made acquainted with this disposition, or how, in the present stage of the affair, could it excite his enmity? This was a mystery—a question which, with all his experience of courts and courtiers, Sir [83] Walter could not at the moment unravel.

Nothing transpired during the day to lend the uneasiness he began to feel any additional incitement. The evening came at last; and as the hour at which he had arranged to meet Evaline drew nigh, with seeming reluctance and tardiness, he sallied into the park, intending to proceed straight to the spot he had appointed.

Just as he entered the park, he observed the Queen, attended by a train of lords and ladies, pacing a neighbouring walk. Though the hour of his appointment was now fast approaching, this circumstance induced him to pause, and, while thus stationary, to reflect whether it would be advisable, when the Queen was so close at hand, to seek to pass unobserved. While he was pondering how he should proceed, the Queen, who had hitherto been walking away from the palace, suddenly turned round, and discerned him.

It was not without gratification that the great Princess observed herself to be watched by a man [84] whom every unenvious person admired. She did not doubt, from his mournful and hesitating posture, that he was watching her with the deepest interest, though awe of her rank induced him to do so by stealth. There was something touching, as well as pleasing, in this prostrate affection; and when it was revealed by an individual of such eminent merit, its appeal to the sympathies was irresistible. Elizabeth, supposing Sir Walter to be thus influenced, resolved to lighten his misery, and graciously beckoned him to approach.

As he drew nigh, her quick eye readily perceived that, though he strove to conceal it, his manner was embarrassed, and his countenance greatly dejected. These appearances, however, tended to confirm the impressions she had conceived, and her yet fair face became flushed with triumph.

"Why, knight! knight!" she cried, extending him her small hand; "what hath happed?—I prithee, [85] what hath happed?"

While she was yet speaking, she turned her head away, and dealt what (notwithstanding its exceeding brevity) appeared to be a significant look at one of the ladies in waiting. In a moment

afterwards, the crowd of courtiers who had been attending her passed into another walk, and she and Sir Walter stood alone.

“Thou hast not told me what hath befallen thee,” remarked the Queen, at this juncture.

“Methought your Highness looked coldly on me to-day,” answered Sir Walter, at a loss for an excuse.

“Thy thought was false, then, knight,” returned Elizabeth. “But even an’ it were true, could that make thee so melancholy?”

“Alas, your Highness, no evil could afflict me more!” said Sir Walter. “But your Highness looks wearied. Shall I escort you to the palace?”

“No!” answered the Queen. “I will rest me here a while.”

Here she turned towards an adjacent summer-house, on one side of the walk, and, still leaning on [86]
Sir Walter’s arm, passed to its interior. The summer-house, which was open in front, looked on to the walk; but, as its seat was at the back, which was covered in, they were perfectly private, and no one could approach without first incurring their observation.

When Elizabeth had seated herself in the summer-house, she beckoned Sir Walter, who had taken his station at the entrance, to come forward, and seat himself by her side. The knight, without further ceremony, obeyed the command, well knowing that she liked such manifestations of confidence to be as slightly dwelt upon as possible.

There was a moment’s pause after he had taken his seat. Sir Walter, however, though a fear that he would have to neglect his appointment with Evaline de Neville greatly disturbed him, was too polished and experienced a courtier, and, what was a greater advantage, too well acquainted with the character and temperament of the Queen, to suffer this pause to continue. Quickly [87]
collecting himself, he proceeded to thank her, in a somewhat hyperbolical strain, but which was not unsuited to her taste, for her marked and flattering condescension, and to pray that her royal favour might ever stand immoveable between him and his enemies.

“Enemies?” cried the Queen: “what enemies, my chosen knight?”

“Legion, legion, dread Sovereign!” answered Sir Walter. “And as I know, and do heartily confess, that my merits be most pitiful, and that ’tis only the gracious eyes of your Highness that view them favourably, so I do often fear, in my hours of solitude, that my enemies may sometime triumph with your Highness, and compass my disgrace.”

“Have a better heart,” said the Queen, kindly. “But come! come, I will secure thee! Take this ring”—here she drew a light ring from her finger, and placed it in his hand—“and, whenever thou [88]
shalt need my favour, let this be thy token to me, and thy suit shall not fail.”

Sir Walter, with real and unfeigned gratitude, here dropped on one knee at her feet, and, in this posture, respectfully caught up her hand, and raised it to his lips.

“An’ our dearest thoughts be at any time visible,” he said, “when I die, my liege, the pattern of this ring will be found graven on my heart.”

“Aroynt thee, flatterer!” replied Elizabeth, with a smile, at the same time turning away her head.

“Then, let me die, dread Sovereign,” pursued Sir Walter, in a plaintive tone, “an’ I am to be shut out from the light of those beauteous eyes! Take from me all thy favours; deprive me of my high and unmerited fortunes; but suffer me, I beseech thee, still to live in thy presence, for there only is life supportable.”

“Is it even so?” rejoined the Queen, turning back her head, and regarding him tenderly. “Well, [89]
well—but who is this approaches?”

While she was yet speaking, the expression of her features changed, and she darted an angry glance at the neighbouring walk. As she did so, Sir Walter sprang to his feet; and, hastily wheeling round, and turning his eyes in the same direction as the Queen’s, confronted the Earl of Essex and Sir Robert Cecil.

“Your pardon, my liege,” said Essex to Elizabeth; “for, by my sacred honour, I knew not you were here. Sir Robert and I, crossing the park from Blackheath, came here by absolute chance, and saw none about to intimate the vicinity of your Highness.”

“Enough, gentle Essex,” cried Elizabeth. “But we will homeward now. Give us thine arm! Now, knight!” she added to Raleigh, “where is thine?”

“At your Highness’s command,” answered Sir Walter, drawing the arm she had extended through one of his.

Thus escorted, Elizabeth passed into the walk, and thence, at a leisurely pace, into the walk [90]
adjoining. There she was joined by the lords and ladies in waiting, and, after a brief promenade, the whole party, following in the wake of the Queen, proceeded thence to the palace.

It was a part of the household policy of Elizabeth, at this period of her life, to extend her favour to several persons at once, so that only herself should be supreme. By such a policy, which seemed to open the way of preferment to every one, she retained in her court all the most distinguished cavaliers of the country, and, whenever she appeared in public, secured the attendance and service of a train of handsome admirers. She did not depart from her usual practice on the present occasion. Throughout her progress to the palace, she divided her favour between Essex and Raleigh so equally, that it was impossible to say, from her manner and bearing, which had

the higher place in her regard, and the courtiers were quite at a loss to know whom they were to pay their respects to. [91]

Nearly half an hour elapsed before Sir Walter Raleigh could leave the royal presence. Notwithstanding that the delay caused him some annoyance, he was still highly elated, on reflection, at the manner in which the time had been spent; and though he had no hope that Evaline would wait so long a period over the hour he had engaged to meet her, he resumed his design of proceeding to the locality of the appointment with considerable complacency.

He passed into the first walk of the park without meeting anything to repel this feeling. Before turning into the walk adjoining, which led straight to his destination, he happened to cast a glance around, and his quick eye detected the figure of a man stealing behind one of the rearward trees. Though he did not suppose that any one would make it a special business to follow and watch him, he was anxious, lest he should be made the subject of any scandalous reports, to pursue his present object unobserved; and, therefore, the presence of an overlooker disturbed him exceedingly. It did not, however, induce him to halt. Still passing on, he thought that, if the person in his rear were really watching him, his best course would be to turn out of the walk, and proceed to the scene of his appointment through the open park. Accordingly, after taking a few paces in the walk, he made a short turn into the adjoining area, and slanted off towards his destination. [92]

In a short time, he reached the summit of a neighbouring hill, from which he could view the lower park, except where it was screened by the trees, to the very door of the palace. There, looking round, he effected this survey, and satisfied himself that no person was in sight.

On one side of the hill, a broad walk, running between two rows of fine old trees, which almost met in the middle, led directly to the Blackheath-gate; and, on ascertaining that no one was in view, he turned hitherwards, and pursued his way towards the gate. [93]

As he approached the gate, he distinguished the figure of a female, with a long veil drawn over her face, standing under the tree he had named to the messenger of Evaline. He came up with her a few moments afterwards, and, to his great satisfaction, discovered that the fair loiterer was Evaline herself.

Their greeting was cordial and sincere. Their salutations interchanged, Sir Walter apologised to Evaline, in a few earnest words, for having kept her waiting, and assured her that his delay was not wilful, but had been owing to his unavoidable attendance on the Queen.

“Indeed,” he added, with a somewhat mournful smile, “after my duty to her Highness was fulfilled, I could not repair hither straight; for on my way, happening to glance behind, I descried some evil-minded dastard dogging me; and, to avoid him, I had to make a great round.” [94]

On hearing these words, Evaline, though she saw that Sir Walter no longer apprehended that he was watched, could not refrain from glancing wistfully down the walk, with the view of ascertaining if any one was in sight. She discerned no person in the walk; but, turning her gaze on the further side, she fancied that she distinguished some object, not unlike the figure of a man, leaning against one of the trees. Though she was not certain of this, it caused her some alarm; and she pointed it out to Sir Walter.

“Mayhap, thou art still followed, Sir,” she said. “Is not that a man’s head yonder?”

Sir Walter turned an earnest glance on the spot she pointed out.

“No, ’tis not a man,” he answered. Then, with recovered composure, he again confronted her, and pursued his speech.

“I have yet been unable, dear lady,” he said, “to compass thy father’s liberation; but I hope to bring it to pass anon. There be more difficulties in the way than I had looked for.” [95]

“Alas!” sighed Evaline, her dark eyes filling with tears.

“Nay, be of good cheer!” resumed Sir Walter, in a tone of deep sympathy. “A day or two, at furthest, will set him at liberty.”

“An’ I could see him,” answered the fair girl, in a voice broken with emotion—“an’ I could be with him in prison, and whisper him a few words of cheer, it would ease my heart of half its sorrow.”

“Thou rather needest comfort thyself,” observed Sir Walter, tenderly.

“No, I am young, and able to bear much—very much,” returned Evaline. “If he saw me hopeful, he would not mourn; for all his care is for me.”

“Hast thou sought access to him?” asked Sir Walter.

“Twice,” answered Evaline; “but fruitlessly.”

“’Tis a most cruel persecution,” said Sir Walter. “But fear not for the issue, dear lady. To-morrow, an’ events be not notably adverse, I will unfold the matter to the Queen, and secure you her protection.” [96]

“I cannot thank thee,” faltered Evaline, turning away her head.

Sir Walter, not without emotion, gently pressed her hand, and suffered her to weep a few moments in silence. After a brief interval, he again addressed her; and in a soft, soothing tone, which fell on her depressed spirit with the most assuasive effect, exhorted her to take comfort, and to look to the morrow with confidence and hope.

Whether from his words, or from some other cause, Evaline became more composed in a short

time, and, though she spoke in an agitated voice, was able to answer him.

“Thou art very, very kind,” she said. “We must bow to God’s will: and with His blessing, and thy help, we will even bear up. But I will not detain thee longer, brave Sir!”

“I will attend thee to thy horse, dear lady,” replied Sir Walter.

“Thou mayst then be observed,” returned Evaline, “and ’twere running a risk, under passing [97] circumstances, for which there is no need. The man who bore thee my letter waits without the gate; and my servants, with our horses, which I thought it best not to bring so far, wait us on the heath.”

“Thou hast in all things done well,” rejoined Sir Walter. “Be sure, I will bear thy business fairly in mind. Meantime, I bid thee farewell!”

“Farewell, worthy Sir Walter!” answered Evaline.

Sir Walter, doffing his plumed hat, raised her hand to his lips, and then suffered her to depart. He watched her till she had passed out of the gate, when, with a somewhat thoughtful step, he turned away, and proceeded slowly down the walk.

He had gone but a short way down the walk, when he broke off into the park, on the side where, after following the line of the outer heath for some distance, it takes a sweep round to the river. It was a beautiful evening, and the hour, which was approaching eight, was not so advanced but [98] that it was quite light. Everything looked gay, and buoyant, and cheerful; and, though the splendour of the day had passed off, the verdure of the grass and foliage, which had now attained its most perfect tint, had lost none of its freshness, or looked a whit less green in the mild light of the evening. The nimble fawns, too, which were scattered in groups over the prairie, evidently met the evening with a welcome, and sported and raced about with unwonted spirit. Now in groups, anon in pairs, or singly, they shot across the park, or, like trusty sentinels, watched the solitary passenger who had intruded on their domain, as though his vicinity and progress caused them alarm. But Sir Walter, absorbed in meditation, noted none of these things. He pursued his way over the area without looking round; and the sweet tranquillity of the scene, which, in its diversity of wood, and hill, and dale, all clothed with verdure, embraced a hundred beautiful [99] accidents, quite escaped his perception.

Thus progressing, he came to the top of a high hill, looking down on the river, and crowned, about the centre of its summit, with a solitary oak. This fair tree, which gives the hill its name, was then arrayed in foliage, and, in its upland situation, looked truly like the monarch of the realm below.

Pausing on the crown of the hill, he seemed, for the first time during his ramble, to understand his local position, and to look with interest and pleasure on the objects around. In its peculiar features, the landscape which those objects constituted had no peer in the world. In his rear lay the noble park, with its surface varied by fair valleys, and gentle eminences, topped with trees; and, here and there, traversed by broad avenues, to which unbroken lines of oak and elm, but principally oak, were appropriate landmarks. On his side, at the verge of the park, rose the stately palace, with a flag, on which was emblazoned the royal arms, floating from each of its two [100] dome-capped towers, and marking it as the residence of the Sovereign. Beyond could be seen a forest of tall masts, which a glance on his further side, down the river, would change for a view of Kent, extending as far as Shooter’s Hill. Opposite to him was spread the low coast of Essex, creeping back, from where its turfy limit was laved by the river, to inland heights, which tall woods seemed to mark as its natural boundary. Before him flowed the matchless Thames, coursing along, on either hand, as far as the eye could reach, in twenty graceful sweeps; and bearing on its calm bosom hundreds of barks, with their white sails swelling under the volume of the evening breeze.

No one could contemplate such a scene with indifference, and, though he had often viewed it before, Sir Walter Raleigh, on waking from his reverie, scanned its varied features with the liveliest enjoyment. He did not, however, tarry long on the hill. After a brief pause, he set forward [101] again, and—for the steepness of the descent obliged him to pick his steps—passed slowly, but not mournfully, towards the further park.

Whether it be true, or not, what some assert, that men sometimes have an instinctive foreboding of a coming ill, there certainly are moments when we are more inclined to look forward to calamity, than to anticipate success. And, perhaps, it may not be difficult, on a close survey, to make this dejection appear to be really the work of instinct. As the guiding influence of man is distinguished from that of brutes by its attribute of reason, so all its promptures, though without our perception, regard more than the passing time, and are tempered by a look at the future. When the judgment is healthy, this look, however closely pursued, will ever have some savour of hope; and if we cast hope aside, the judgment loses its distinguishing characteristic, and sinks to the level of an unrestrained instinct.

During his progress to the palace, the cheerfulness which Sir Walter had derived from external [102] nature, in contemplating the prospect from One-Tree Hill, subsided, and his melancholy returned. The depression seemed to weigh him down, and, despite his efforts to repel it, to take the shape of a presentiment. Though his strong mind wrestled with the feeling, he found himself, every now and then, anticipating some evil, and looking forward to misfortune as if it were actually in view.

His dejection increased as he approached the palace. As he was advancing to the palace-door, a pursuivant, who was standing by, came up to him, and delivered to him a sealed billet. Sir Walter, glancing at the superscription, perceived that it was from the Queen, and eagerly tore it open.

The billet ran thus:—

> “To Sir Walter Raleigh, knight, these:—
>
> “Sir Knight,—On the receipt hereof, we will that thou retire, with thy most convenient speed, to thy house in the Strand, and there hold thyself a prisoner during our pleasure. [103]
>
> “Given under our hand and seal, at our palace of Greenwich.
>
> “Eliza, R.”

CHAPTER IV. [104]

When the Spanish cavalier had entered the boat, Hildebrand seated him beside him, and then, in a low tone, directed the rowers to give way, and make for the ship.

Though a fresh breeze was abroad, the water, sheltered by the high land around, was calm and placid, and laved over the muffled oars in soothing silence. The boat glided over the quiet waves like an arrow, yet, in the stillness and darkness that prevailed, seemingly without propulsion, and as though it moved by its own unaided will through the rolling element.

After a brief interval, they came in sight of the ship, and shortly hove alongside of her. The look-out man, who was standing in the gangway of the ship, then threw them a rope, and, with cautious and noiseless steps, they severally mounted to the deck. [105]

On gaining the deck, Hildebrand’s first proceeding, in resuming the command of his ship, was to ascend to the forecastle, and, by a glance around, ascertain the ship’s exact position. He distinguished the low hull of the gun-boat, which Halyard had described to be lying alongside, somewhat ahead, at about a gun-shot distance. He could not discern any one on her deck, and he thought that, if the darkness continued, he might be able, with a little management, to pass her unobserved. If he succeeded so far, he had no fear but he would pass the puntals, or forts, which guarded the mouth of the harbour, with the same result. Once at sea, he might bid pursuit defiance.

He formed his plan in a moment. Descending to the quarter-deck, he called for Halyard, and explained to that person, for the guidance of himself and the crew, what he contemplated. [106]

“We must first slip our cable,” he said. “Let the men unbend the sails, and make the yards square; and when we once get headway, the breeze, I doubt not, will carry us on. Meantime, have the guns charged, and the deck cleared for action; for the gun-boat, if they observe our purpose, will give us some trouble.”

“Ay, ay, Sir,” answered Halyard.

“I will just see my young friend safe below,” pursued Hildebrand, “when I will rejoin you. Have everything done in silence.”

“Ay, ay, Sir,” repeated Halyard.

Hildebrand, leaving him to carry his injunctions into effect, here turned away, and passed forward to the young Spaniard. Taking that person by the arm, he led him aft, where a hatchway, opening on a close ladder, allowed them to descend to the cabin. A lighted lamp, which was fastened with a screw to a stout oak table, on one side of the cabin, enabled the Spaniard to survey this apartment, and its snug aspect seemed to take him by surprise. Though not more than ten feet square, it was arranged with so much compactness, and such excellent taste, that it looked quite roomy. There were no settles or stools, but a locker, or projecting box, ran round the sides; and the top of this, which abutted about a foot from the main wainscot, served for seats. Both the locker and wainscot, which lined the cabin throughout, were of fine-grained oak, polished very high, and capped by a moulding of the same material. The wainscot opened on either side, about halfway up, with a panelled slide, and exhibited, within, a small recess, or, to borrow a nautical phrase, berth, which a mattress and blankets intimated to be a sleeping-place. In the quarter that faced the door, or entrance, which opened towards the fore part of the ship, an attempt had been made, by a not untasteful hand, to lend the sombre hue of the wainscot some degree of decoration; and on a panel at either end, four pistols had been ranged in a circle, with their barrels turned towards each other, which had a very pleasing effect. On the opposite side of the cabin, shooting up from the hold, a part of the ship’s mainmast was visible; and in front of this, fitting to its abutting round, was the cabin-table, which, like the wainscot, was of oak, and exhibited a fine and brilliant polish. [107] [108]

While the young Spaniard was noting these several particulars, Hildebrand drew forth from his vest, with a somewhat tremulous hand, the note he had brought him from Inez. Inclining his head towards the light, he tore it open, and read therein these words:—

> “The bearer hereof, my fair cousin, Don Rafaele, being now here in peril of his life, must needs accompany thee to England. Thou canst not see me now; but as thou bearest thyself towards him, whom I give over to thy protection, so shalt thou hereafter be regarded by
>
> “Inez.”

Hastily raising his eyes, Hildebrand saw that, while he was reading the letter, Don Rafaele had [109]
been watching him, but that he had averted his gaze directly he raised his head. Concerned at his discomposure, he hastened to give him such a welcome as, in the hurry of the moment, he thought might re-assure him.

“Fair Sir, be of better heart;” he said, cordially clasping his hand. “Thine own good parts would make me glad to be thy friend; but for her sake who wrote this note, and whom we may never see more, I will hold thee dearer than mine own self.”

“I thank you,” faltered the cavalier, without raising his eyes.

“Thou art very, very young,” continued Hildebrand, as he observed his bosom swell with his emotion. “But fear not! The world is not so perilous as we are apt to suppose.”

“No more,” returned Don Rafaele, in a firmer tone. “I doubt thee not, and have no fear. But I am [110]
sad—very sad.”

“That gives me more grief that I must leave thee,” said Hildebrand. “We may have some fighting above, and I, of course, as captain, must brave it awhile. Do thou promise me thou wilt stay here.”

“I will,” answered Don Rafaele.

“Then, I will leave thee awhile,” rejoined Hildebrand.

So speaking, he dropped the cavalier’s hand, and turned away. The next moment he had mounted to the deck.

As he set his foot on the deck, the ship, which hitherto had been pretty steady, began to move, and he saw that his injunction to cut the cable had been fulfilled. Casting a glance around, he perceived that the sails, according to his instructions, had been all unbent and squared, and the men assembled at their several quarters. He was still looking round, when he was joined by Halyard.

“All’s ready, Sir!” said that person.

“Who is at the helm?” asked Hildebrand.

“Tom Tarpaulin.” [111]

“Then, I will post myself beside him,” resumed Hildebrand. “Do thou look out for’ard.”

Without further discourse, he ascended to the poop, or stern of the vessel, and stationed himself beside the helmsman. Tarpaulin—for the helmsman was no other—was steering straight before the wind’s eye, in a slanting direction, under the stern of the gun-boat, which was about two ships’ lengths ahead. From their superior elevation, they were able to view the deck of the gun-boat; but whether from the darkness, or that the deck was really unoccupied, they could not distinguish any of the crew. Gradually they drew closer and closer to the gun-boat’s stern. They scarcely ventured to breathe at this critical juncture; and the silence of so many men, all prompt for action, and within view of each other, augmented its terrible interest. The creaking of the tall masts, bowing before the breeze, and the hoarse murmur of the waves, as they turned aside before the ship’s bows, only made the silence more apparent, and the ear returned no echo to [112]
their inanimate noise.

A brief interval brought them right athwart the gun-boat’s stern. There was no alarm. They still passed on, as at first, without interruption, though now in a more direct course. The turn of the helm, by which their course had been changed, brought them abreast of their enemy, at about twenty feet distance. The death-like silence still prevailed: every ear still thrilled with excitement; when the full, deep voice of Hildebrand, raised to its highest pitch, rang through the vessel.

“Master Halyard!” he cried, “put out all our canvas, man the after guns, and prepare for boarders!”

The silence was now at an end. The naked feet of the sailors, obedient to the orders of Halyard, were heard rushing in various directions over the deck; the hauling of ropes, the flapping of canvas, the creaking of spars, bending under the weight of sail, rendered a response to the [113]
whistling breeze; and, above all, the voices of some half-dozen men, as they set the mainsail, were heard merrily singing—

> “Hoy, hoy, hoy!
> Mainsail, lads, hoy!
> Mainsail, mainsail, hoy!”

The crew of the gun-boat were equally alive. Men were seen scrambling over her deck fore and aft; several lights flamed on her forecastle; and it was evident that, though not yet in motion, she was actively preparing to give them chase.

They had scarcely begun to make good way through the water, when Hildebrand discerned the gun-boat following. Propelled by a score of oars, she gained upon them quickly, and it was clear, on regarding her progress, that a conflict would be unavoidable. Though the Englishman sailed gallantly on, she drew nearer and nearer every moment. At last, she fired a gun, and the charge, which the report seemed to indicate as a twenty-four-pounder, struck the fugitive’s stern, just above the water.

Still the latter vessel held on her course. The gun-boat, whether doubtful of the effect of her shot, [114]
or more desirous to push the pursuit, did not fire again for several minutes. By that time, having

thrown her whole force into the chase, she had come nearly abreast of the fugitive, at a distance of about a dozen yards.

The Englishman was well prepared to receive her. His lower-deck guns, embracing six long twenty-fours, were all manned, and, as he was much higher in the water than she was, sunk to her level. To avert observation, however, the lower deck was left without a light, and, consequently, his readiness for action was not discernible. Being unable to distinguish the open port-holes, the Spaniard, under the guidance of his rowers, approached without suspicion. While he was yet scarcely abreast of the fugitive, he fired two guns, of the same calibre as his first, right into her bulwarks. The lower deck of the fugitive was lighted up in a moment; before the [115] smoke, which issued like a fog from the two discharged guns, had cleared away, her gunners had raised their portfire, and she swept the Spaniard's deck with her whole broadside.

The report of the guns was still booming over the water, when a heartrending shriek, even more startling than the roar of the artillery, rose from the deck of the gun-boat. At the same moment, the smoke, which now rendered the darkness almost tangible, was broken with bright red flames, shooting up from her deck like waving rockets, and her hull was circled with volumes of fire.

The breeze that insured her destruction served to shoot the Englishman ahead. Though thus pushing forward, however, the crew of the latter vessel, now released from action, still heard the cries of her doomed company. They were audible for several minutes, when, all at once, they became perfectly hushed. The next moment, the gun-boat blew up, and shot into the air in a thousand fragments.

A buzz of horror arose from the crew of the "Eliza" at this consummation of the catastrophe. The [116] shock was so great, that, though now a good distance from its locality, their own ship was shaken by it, and bumped on the waves as if they were a rock. After the unanimous buzz specified, however, no one ventured to speak, and they pursued their course in solemn silence.

Hildebrand was the first to collect himself. Like his men, he had turned, almost mechanically, to view the explosion, and was wheeling round again to the binnacle, or box before the helm (which, it may be explained, contained the compass), when a small and trembling hand was laid on his arm. Labouring under intense excitement, this slight incident made him start; but his face, though it remained pale, betrayed no anger as his glance fell on Don Rafaele.

"In the name of God, what hath happened?" asked that person, with terrible calmness.

"We are safe yet, Senhor," answered Hildebrand. "Be of good heart, and go below again." [117]

"I had rather die here," rejoined Don Rafaele.

"An' thou wilt not go below, sit thee down on the deck," said Hildebrand. "A short space more will discover our fate."

The Spaniard, without a word more—for he saw that Hildebrand was not inclined for further discourse—disposed himself in the manner recommended, on the further side of the binnacle. As he did so, the ship entered the narrow channel of the harbour, and the crisis which Hildebrand had mentioned approached.

On one side of the channel stood the principal puntal, or fort, called St. Lorenzo, which guarded the harbour's mouth, and the garrison of which had evidently been alarmed by the explosion of the gun-boat, and were now on the alert. The other side was the mainland, and presented a lee shore, lined with breakers, which the sea, in its progress to the strand, covered with boiling surf, [118] whiter than snow. In order to avoid the cannon of the fort, Hildebrand was obliged to steer straight for the breakers, and (to use a nautical phrase) "hug" a shore that threatened destruction. After a hasty survey of his position, he resolved on this course without a moment's hesitation. The breeze, though fresh, was not violent, and he thought that, if the ship were tacked on the instant he directed, they might weather the breakers successfully. In this belief, he ordered every man to his post, and directed that all things should be arranged, as they progressed onward, to tack with promptitude.

All eyes were turned towards the fort as the ship entered the narrow channel. The moon was now up, and the tall masts of the cruizer, with every stitch of canvas expanded, and puffed out with the wind, seemed to offer a good mark to the puntal's guns. The crew were not left long to conjecture whether those guns would be brought to bear upon them. Directly they got fairly into [119] the channel, a bright flash, like a tongue of fire, shot out from the nearest battery, and the ear shook under the boom of cannon. The shot fell short of the ship, on its larboard bow; but on the starboard, the lee shore, at less than a gun-shot distance, seemed to menace her with instant destruction. Though cannon after cannon was now discharged from the fort, every eye turned involuntarily to the opposite shore, where the roar of the breakers, and the thundering din of the surf, which shot into the air in a thousand fountains, almost silenced the report of the artillery. The stoutest heart quailed as the milky foam drew nearer and nearer: lips that had never uttered the name of God, from their childhood upward, except to profane it, convulsively gasped to Him in prayer: eyes that had often looked down steadily from the trembling topmast, through the rage and conflict of a tempest, turned giddy before the prospect; and the most stubborn bosoms were [120] sensible of a thrill of dismay. They approached closer and closer to the shore: it seemed impossible, when one ventured to glance to leeward, that they could ever weather it, even if they did not strike immediately. The stillness of death was over the crew, when, just as destruction appeared inevitable, the voice of Hildebrand rang through the ship.

"All hands, jibe ship!" he cried.

The wind thundered through the canvas; the "hoy, hoy" of the sailors, pulling the halyards,

pierced the ear like a fife; the tall masts groaned again; and the rush of feet over the deck, the hauling of ropes, the shrill whistle of the pulleys, the boom of the cannon, and the hoarse roar of the breakers, all mingled together, constituted a din too terrible to dwell upon.

For a brief space the fate of the anxious crew was uncertain. It was an awful interval, though so brief, and the most resolute hearts felt a thousand fears. The sails, right through the ship, fore [121] and aft, had been veered instantaneously; but for a moment they backed to the wind. In this fearful juncture, all eyes were turned towards the ship's stern. The tall figure of Hildebrand, towering over that of Tarpaulin, who was standing before him, was there distinguished at the helm, and the hopes of the crew revived as they saw their destiny in the hands of their commander.

The gallant ship answered her helm. After a short pause, the canvas caught the breeze, and gradually bellied out. The ship bore away from the breakers, and, in less than a quarter of an hour, gained the clear water.

The change in her position brought her in front of the mainland puntal, called Metagorda, which opened fire upon her directly. Having passed the narrow channel, however, she was far out of its range, and the shot fell harmlessly into the water. In a short time she reached the mouth of the harbour, and a loud "hurrah" from the crew, rising unbidden from every lip, announced all danger to be past.

CHAPTER V. [122]

On clearing the harbour of Cadiz, Hildebrand put his ship on a southward course, intending, while he was yet favoured by the wind, to run for the Azores. He had previously learned from Halyard, on discussing the policy of such a step, that the Mexican fleet was still at sea, and he was in hopes that he would come up with it about that quarter, if he should not meet it on the way. In this expectation, he set everything in order to carry the design which led him to seek it practicably out.

Meantime, Don Rafaele, on coming on the open water, was attacked with sea-sickness, and was obliged to be carried to the cabin. Having seen the watch set, and directed a good look-out to be [123] posted for'ard, Hildebrand followed him thither, purposing to attend to his requirements himself. He found him bestowed in bed, in one of the two sleeping-berths, but, as may be imagined, far from being disposed for sleep. He was, however, equally indisposed for conversation, and, when Hildebrand approached to greet him, he waved him back, and buried his head under the bedclothes.

For three successive days, he remained in the same state, without taking any food, or uttering a single word. In the mean time, the wind, which had originally been no more than what is called "fresh," gradually grew boisterous, and, on the second day, increased to a gale. Owing to this circumstance, Hildebrand was obliged to be constantly on deck, superintending the changes which, conformably to the cautious navigation then followed, were continually being made in the disposition of the ship. Nevertheless, he made it a point, every now and then, when he could be [124] spared for a moment from his duties, to visit the cabin, and inquire if his friend's sickness had abated. With all his unfailing attention, however, he could draw from the sick Spaniard only a monosyllable answer, and his recommendations of refreshment were always wholly unheeded.

Towards the evening of the third day, the wind abated, and, as a consequence of this change, the rocking of the ship, which had hitherto been excessive, became less violent. The subdued motion had a decidedly beneficial effect on the health of Don Rafaele. He answered Hildebrand's inquiries more fully, and though, with that distaste for food which is a peculiar feature of sea-sickness, he still declined to eat anything, Hildebrand succeeded in prevailing on him to take a cup of wine. The wine acted as a soporific, and, after a short interval, he sank into a profound sleep.

It was broad day when he awoke, and, raising himself up in his berth, he found the sickening [125] qualms which he had lately felt less oppressive, and the whirling sensation in his head, which had been even more afflictive, sensibly mitigated. Owing to the subsidence of the wind, the motion of the ship was now comparatively gentle, and, as he found himself able to sit up, he seemed to acquire more confidence, and ventured to look out on the cabin.

There was no one in the cabin, and the sleeping-berth opposite, which he knew to be appropriated to Hildebrand, was also untenanted. The cabin was quite light; for though there were no windows, a large skylight rose through the ship's deck, about the centre of the cabin, which enabled him to distinguish every object. Under the skylight was the table, and, happening to glance thitherwards, he perceived, to his great satisfaction, that it was set out for a meal. The sight of the eatables, arranged in tempting order, on a clean white table-cloth, excited his appetite; and for the first time since he came on board, he felt inclined to eat. He seemed to [126] hesitate a moment; and then, extending his arm, he reached his clothes, which were lying at the foot of his bed, and proceeded to dress himself.

When he had donned his clothes, he stepped over the locker, which was just below his berth, on to the deck, and looked round the cabin more narrowly. In the furthermost corner, adjoining the doorway, or entrance, and fitting in a small recess, there was a wash-hand stand, furnished with a pewter bason; and above this, a pewter water-vessel, which hung from a nail in the wainscot by

a string of oakum, tied securely round its long and broad-rimmed neck. A looking-glass, and a towel, apparently fresh from the laundry, hung on contiguous nails, and, remembering the locality, formed altogether a toilet not to be despised.

The eyes of the young cavalier brightened as these several articles incurred his observation. With a step which, considering the motion of the ship, and his debilitated condition, was far from being [127] unsteady, he hastened to bring them into use. Before he did so, however, he carefully closed the door; and, with the aid of a bolt which he found under the lock, and which he shot into the socket, secured himself against intrusion. This done, he raised his hand to his lips, and—for they now proved to be only an assumed feature—drew off his moustachios. His face displayed quite another expression on the removal of the false moustachios. His eyes, which were large and full, seemed to look softer, and to assume a more melting and feminine beauty. His other features also gained by the change, and their exquisite and faultless outlines, running into each other in imperceptible gradation, presented in every turn a new charm, and a more fascinating sweetness. Even his complexion appeared less masculine and vigorous; and its pure alabaster ground, rounded with deep red, which a pensive but stirring animation almost illuminated, would [128] have more become the face of a mellow girl, than that of an approaching man.

He soon despatched his ablutions, and, with the aid of the napkin, and the looking-glass (but more especially the latter), shortly fulfilled his toilet. This refreshing process completed, he turned to the contiguous table, and regarded the various eatables which there rose to view, in the order before described, with augmented satisfaction and appetite.

Nevertheless, when he came to sit down, a very thin slice of ham, with a fragment of biscuit, and a small cup of wine, served to appease his hunger. Though he ate so sparingly, however, his meal greatly refreshed him, and, on rising from the table, he felt himself possessed of increased vigour, and animated by a new spirit.

After pausing a moment at the table, he stepped towards the door, and proceeded to ascend to the deck. The motion of the ship, which otherwise might have retarded his progress, was now [129] very gentle, and, with the help of an accommodating side-rope, he passed up the ladder with ease. As he stepped through the hatchway to the deck, he observed Hildebrand, with his lieutenant, Halyard, standing right before him, and, steadying his foot against the combing, he stretched out his hand, and seized him familiarly by the arm.

Hildebrand—whose face had been turned the other way—started round directly.

“Well done, my brave Senhor!” he exclaimed, with an earnest smile, at the same time clasping the cavalier’s extended hand, “I am right merry to see thee up again.”

Before Don Rafaele could make any reply, Master Halyard, hearing the salutation of his captain, also turned round, and caught up his other hand.

“Shiver my topsail!” cried the honest tar, in an odd mixture of Spanish and English phrases, “but [130] I be heartily glad to see thee afloat again, Master Don. ’Tis sheer idling to lay long on one’s beam-ends. Life is but short; let us live well on the road, says the gentle Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.”

“I thank you both, fair gentlemen,” answered Don Rafaele. “I now feel quite strong again, though, having the heart of a landsman, I still long for the shore. But have we the breeze with us?” he added, with that curiosity about the wind, which, whatever may be our situation, one always feels at sea, and is never inclined to check.

“Right heartily,” replied Hildebrand. “Mark how gallantly we buffet the waves!”

Don Rafaele, with a smile, raised his eyes, and swept them eagerly around.

When we behold ourselves out of sight of land for the first time, with no horizon, as far as the eye can any way pierce, but the unbroken sky, rising from the water’s edge in gradual and inseparable lines, and covering the vast circle we move in with its eternal dome—which, shoot forward as we may, still presents the same circuit, and seems to hold us ever in its centre;—when [131] we view such a prospect for the first time, the heart feels, in the surrounding immensity, a keener sense of its own littleness, and of its insignificance in the scale of the creation, than in any other situation that life affords. The black waves, mounting in a hundred heads, and then falling under one crowning swell, which, rolling forward, is itself overtopped, and lost in its successor:—the black waves, thus rushing by, remind one of the onward course of life, of the mutability of human fortunes, and the briefness of mortality.

Such was the reflection that rose in the mind of the young Spaniard. But it passed away directly, and the more cheerful features of the scene—for it was not without cheerful features—engaged his whole attention.

The sun was high in the heavens, and a long line of dazzling sunshine, looking more like light than reflection, was spread out in the wake of the ship, making the white surf that marked her course fairly sparkle. The sky, though so high over head, was almost transparent, and the few [132] clouds that broke its vast arch were light and buoyant, and served rather to relieve its sameness, than to contract its beauty. Nor were there wanting objects of interest on the water. Looking over the ship’s side, Don Rafaele beheld, at a little distance, squadrons of gulls, not unvaried in their plumage, sailing gaily by, or occasionally mounting into the air, and wheeling round and round towards the sky. Alongside was the active porpoise, rolling over and over on the waves, and seeming, by the regularity of his progress, to measure his speed to that of the ship. Every now and then, too, a lively bonito, either from mere sportiveness, or to avoid some approaching and voracious enemy, would leap bodily into the air, and, after performing a perfect summerset, drop

into the deep again, and be seen no more. If the eye pushed its survey further, the ship herself, viewed from the quarter-deck, presented much to arrest its attention. The white sails, spread out [133] before the wind, which filled them to the brim, were not its most interesting feature. Sailors were perched in various parts of the rigging, on the yards, and in the shrouds, gazing intently for'ard, whose seemingly perilous situation was a more engrossing object. Don Rafaele, unused to the economy of a ship, turned pale as he observed them, and, wheeling round to Hildebrand, he inquired if there was any reason for their being thus disposed.

"They are there of their own choice, Senhor," answered Hildebrand, with a smile.

"Surely, no!" returned the incredulous Spaniard.

"Indeed, it is even so," said Hildebrand. "Those birds thou seest yonder, and the scraps of trees and seaweed floating by, tell them we are near land, and they are striving who shall hail it first."

"A merry conceit, truly," observed Don Rafaele. "See!" he added, pointing to the top-gallant mast, [134] to which the stout frame of Tarpaulin was clinging, "how yon frail stick, every now and anon, bends with the weight of that sturdy man! Couldst thou thus sustain thyself, Sir Lieutenant?"

"I am no ways particular, Master Don," answered Halyard.

"No, in sooth?" replied Don Rafaele. "Well, I believe thee; and yet, my life! 'tis a right perilous elevation. I'faith, a hair's turn would there take life away."

His remark offered a tempting opportunity to Halyard to speak with effect; and though, as Don Rafaele paused, he saw that Hildebrand was about to reply, he interposed immediately, and gave his sentiments utterance.

"Well," he said, very quickly, in order that he might come in before Hildebrand, "life is but short; let us live well on the road, says the gentle Shepherd of Salisbury Plain."

"Land, on the larboard bow!" cried Tom Tarpaulin, from the head of the top-gallant mast.

"Land, on the larboard bow!" cried a dozen voices, from various parts of the ship. [135]

All was bustle and excitement in a moment. Even Don Rafaele, who had scarcely been able to steady himself hitherto, comprehending what the cry signified, sprang nimbly to the side of the ship, and looked anxiously round the horizon. Trusting entirely to instinct, however, he made a slight mistake in the direction, and, instead of going to the larboard bow, posted straight to the starboard. He was gazing earnestly round, when Hildebrand, who had observed his error, came up with him, and led him to the proper quarter.

Leaving the quarter-deck, they passed to the forecastle, where they were able, from their greater elevation, to view the horizon more fully. Some little time elapsed, however, before Hildebrand, with all his quick sight, could fix the object which he wished to point out to Don Rafaele. At last, he achieved his purpose, and succeeded in bringing it under that person's observation.

It was like a mist, rising out of the water, on the extreme verge of the horizon; and appeared to [136] be no larger than a man's hand. Gradually—but by very slow degrees—it grew more apparent, and, after the eye had rested on it for a short space longer, presented a bold and distinct outline.

On this simple object the inmates of the good ship "Eliza" gazed earnestly for several successive minutes. The most protracted gaze elicited no more than was seen by a first and cursory glance; but, though they were not ignorant of this, every one still looked upon it, after they had viewed it over and over again, with unabated interest. It was a landmark, and, though it was land that they were never to tread, it connected them, by association, and by the train of images that it involuntarily forced into their minds, with the world that they had left, and showed that the wide waste of waters around was not their only home.

For a little time, Hildebrand and Don Rafaele surveyed the dim landmark in silence. After he had [137] satisfied his curiosity respecting its aspect, however, the latter person, in his usual musical voice, proceeded to inquire its name.

"And what land may that be, Senhor?" he inquired of Hildebrand.

"'Tis the island of St. George, one of the Azores," answered Hildebrand.

"Be the Azores on the way to England?" asked Don Rafaele, with some surprise.

Hildebrand, from whatever motive, made no reply at the moment; but, turning round, first led him back to the quarter-deck. When they had come to their former position, by the after-hatchway, he rendered an explanation.

"Of a surety, they are not in the direct way to England, Senhor," he said, "for our purpose does not take us thither straight. 'Twas for this, and not that I liked not thy fair company, that I hesitated to bring thee with us from Cadiz."

"Oh, I care not! I care not!" answered Don Rafaele, with a smile. "I'faith, I am quite a mariner [138] now."

"Ah, Senhor!" returned Hildebrand, "we may, perchance, never tread the merry land again. And in this apprehension, I account not the perils of the sea, but the more fatal perils of war."

Don Rafaele looked downcast.

"To one bred up to war, these give no concern," continued Hildebrand; "but thou art of another mould, and, moreover, too young to be exposed to them."

"To speak fair sooth," answered Don Rafaele, in a tremulous tone, "I never cared to turn soldier.

’Tis a merry life, certes; but commend me to a more peaceful one.”

So spiritless a sentiment was not calculated to excite a response in the martial bosom of Hildebrand. Although, however, on its first utterance, he originally deemed it mean and unmanly, a moment’s reflection served to set the young Spaniard’s character before him in more pleasing and favourable colours. His noble heroism in the prison, in throwing himself between him and the [139] alguazil, when such interposition appeared to entail upon him inevitable death, had not escaped his memory; and, though it was but a momentary impulse, he considered that this act alone answered for his courage, and denoted him to be the possessor of many admirable qualities. He had, moreover, from the nature of the events that had brought them together, and which had marked their acquaintance up to the present moment, insensibly begun to look upon him with regard, and so was further inclined to slight anything that might arise to his disparagement. Thus influenced, he replied to the cavalier in a soothing tone, and without taking any exception, either by his words or manner, to his somewhat irregular sentiment.

“In the passing instance, Senhor,” he said, “thou canst not even have the excuse of a soldier for [140] seeking to display thy courage. The enemy we shall encounter will be thine own countrymen.”

“Alas!” sighed Don Rafaele.

“Wert thou not with us, I should look for the issue less impatiently,” pursued Hildebrand; “but, as it is, I cannot conceal from thee, in anticipation of the worst, that their force will greatly surpass ours.”

“But we may miss them,” said Don Rafaele.

“But an’ we do not,” answered Hildebrand, more cheerfully, and with some approach to a smile, “thou must promise me, if we go into action, that thou wilt hold thyself below the while, and not engage in a contest wherein thou hast no concern.”

“That do I promise heartily,” replied Don Rafaele, with much earnestness.

“’Tis a wise resolve, and a brave,” said Hildebrand; “for ’twould become thee ill to take part against thy country. It grieves me sorely to see thee in peril at all.”

“Nay, let it not deject thee,” rejoined Don Rafaele. “When thou art at hand, I have no fear.”

The confidence breathed in his remark made Hildebrand smile.

“Thou leanest on me thus,” he observed, in a grave tone, “because thou art young. Youth is [141] trusting; but wert thou older, thou wouldst look on me, who am known to thee for so brief a space, with more wariness, and less reliance.”

“In sooth, no, never!” said Don Rafaele, earnestly. “Hardly could thine own self make me ever doubt thee.”

He paused, and, as though he had just become sensible of the eagerness with which he had spoken, and the warmth and earnestness of his manner, and, for some reason or other, considered such a manifestation unbecoming, looked confused. Turning to avoid observation, his eye fell on the ship’s shrouds, and he there discerned something that, seized on the instant, furnished him with an excellent opening for retreat.

“Madonna! see your lieutenant, Senhor!” he said, pointing to the shrouds, which Master Halyard, in order to show that what he had asserted to him was a fact, and that he was really “no ways [142] particular,” had mounted barefooted, and was now ascending on his way aloft. “In faith, he treads the rope to measure, as though there were music playing.”

His astonishment was increased when, on approaching the summit of the shrouds, Master Halyard, instead of pushing through the lubbers’-hole, took the more venturous route upward, and drew himself on to the topmast-landing over the outside. When he had gained the landing, he came to a halt; and previous to pursuing his progress, in which he had yet made but little way, swept his eye round the horizon.

“A sail to leeward, Sir!” he cried to Hildebrand.

Hildebrand, thus addressed, turned his eye in the direction specified; but, though he surveyed the horizon earnestly, could discern no trace of the reported ship.

“Three more sail to leeward, Sir!” cried Halyard.

Again Hildebrand turned his eye on the horizon.

“Three more sail to leeward, Sir!” cried Halyard. [143]

Hildebrand’s countenance became more grave.

“Ho there! at the helm!” he shouted: “Bear off a point to windward!”

“Ay, ay, Sir!” was the ready answer of the helmsman.

“Now, Senhor, seize thee a grasp of that pin,” said Hildebrand to Don Rafaele, at the same time pointing to a belaying-pin, or hold for a rope, that stood out of the ship’s bulwark.

Don Rafaele, without inquiring the object of such a procedure, grasped at the pin on the instant, and then looked to Hildebrand for further instruction. While his eye yet rested on his face, the helmsman, conformably to his recent orders, suddenly turned the helm, and the ship gave a violent pitch on the water.

Don Rafaele turned pale as he felt the deck tremble under him; but, having a firm hold of the

belaying-pin, he maintained his footing with ease.

"Two more sail to leeward, Sir!" cried Halyard. [144]

Hildebrand, after another glance at the horizon, which revealed no more than his former ones, raised himself on the ship's bulwark, and mounted into the shrouds. Thence he passed to the topmast-landing, and there, coming to a halt, joined Halyard.

In this elevated position, he quickly discerned the topmasts of the nine ships, like so many separate specks, scattered over the verge of the horizon. His survey, however, did not satisfy him, and, after a moment's pause, he parted from Master Halyard, and pushed up higher aloft.

It was curious, if any one had marked it, to see what an effect his ascent from the deck produced on Don Rafaele. That cavalier had watched the ascent of Master Halyard, described heretofore, with evident interest, but without any show of anxiety; but no sooner did Hildebrand mount the shrouds, than, all at once, he became violently agitated. As he viewed his progress upward, his [145] face became pale and red by turns, as though his blood, according as fear or hope predominated, advanced and receded with the mariner's every step. When Hildebrand had gained the topmast landing, he seemed, by the deep breath he exhaled, to have quite a burthen taken from his heart, and to become more composed. But his composure lasted only while Hildebrand was stationary. Directly that person mounted the upper shrouds, on his way to the top-gallant mast, his emotion revived, and became even more and more lively. He scarcely breathed till he saw him gain the foot of the top-gallant mast. But when, with no help but the adjacent tackle, which appeared to be hardly strong enough to hold up its pulleys, Hildebrand hoisted himself to the yards above, he seemed to lose himself in his excessive agitation. His face fairly quivered; his lips parted, as it seemed, in speechless terror; and, every now and then, he turned away his eyes, as though their [146] continued contemplation of Hildebrand's giddy height could not be endured.

At length he beheld Hildebrand clinging round the crowning spar of the ship. As the ship rose and fell over the waves, the slender mast, if it might be called a mast, rocked him to and fro, and appeared on the point of snapping asunder every moment. Don Rafaele would have been concerned for a bird in such a dizzying situation. He could look up no longer: if he raised his eyes, he felt giddy himself, and his head swam again. Apprehensive that his agitation might excite remark, which, whatever was his motive, he evidently desired earnestly to avoid, he was about to turn away, when he heard Hildebrand call out.

"Ho, Master Halyard!"

"Ay, ay, Sir!"

"Four more sail to leeward, Sir!"

Don Rafaele, overcome with terror, covered his eyes with his hand. He felt as though the fate of Hildebrand depended on him, and that, if he looked up, the giddiness he would feel would seize [147] on Hildebrand, and cast him down headlong. With this feeling, he remained perfectly still for several successive minutes. The brief interval seemed an age; and the uninterrupted rise and fall of his noble chest, which his declining attitude only revealed more fully, showed that it stirred within him the deepest emotion. While he was yet thus agitated, he felt some one's hand laid gently on his arm, and, starting round, he found Hildebrand at his side.

His soft black eyes sparkled again as he beheld him in safety.

"In sooth, now," he said, with a bright smile, "I never thought to see thee here again. Madonna! but thy dexterity is exceeding marvellous!"

"Thou thinkest so," answered Hildebrand, "but mariners, who go aloft for mere sport, hold it lightly. But I grieve to say, we shall even need to have marvellous dexterity afore to-morrow."

"Is danger so nigh?" asked Don Rafaele.

"Within sight, Senhor," returned Hildebrand. "But I care not for it myself: my only care is for [148] thee."

"In faith, I thank thee," said Don Rafaele, in an earnest tone. "But let thy heart be light. I am right content to be with thee; and, 'fore God, could I be safe back again at Cadiz, I would prefer me to be in peril at thy side. Be of good heart, then. I am no way afeard."

"Beshrew me, but thou makest me love thee," said Hildebrand.

"Would God I did!" murmured the cavalier. But, seeing that Hildebrand was about to reiterate his declaration of attachment, he added quickly, with some embarrassment,—"Well, well, I believe it. But I must below. This change of motion makes me reel."

"Thou wilt be more at ease below, then," observed Hildebrand. "Moreover, my pantler, by his presence at the hatchway here, invites us down to dinner."

The pantler, or steward, whose appearance on the deck was thus considered introductory to [149] dinner, was standing in the contiguous hatchway; but on the instant that he was sensible of having incurred Hildebrand's attention, he receded from the aperture, and retired to the cabin. Thither he was quickly followed by Hildebrand and Don Rafaele, and, in a short time afterwards, by Master Halyard, who also was in the secret of his noonday visit to the after-hatchway.

Their meal was soon despatched. When they had brought it to a close, Master Halyard, rising from the table, announced it to be his intention to "turn-in," as he conjectured that they would that night have little opportunity of taking their usual rest.

"I'faith, no!" answered Hildebrand. "And with thy good leave, Senhor," he added, to Don Rafaele,

“I will even commend me to an hour’s sleep myself.”

“Prithee do,” said Don Rafaele, with an appearance of solicitude. “Thou wilt be the better for ’t.” [150]

“’Twould not be amiss for thee,” replied Hildebrand. “Afore midnight, we may, if this breeze continue, be all confusion.”

“Well, well, I will lay me down,” returned the young cavalier; “for though I be in no mind for sleep, my giddiness doth ill qualify me to sit up.”

With these words, he rose from the table, and turned round to his berth. Planting his feet on the locker, and holding on by the panel above, he easily raised himself to his berth, and scrambled on to the bed within. Hildebrand disposed himself in the berth opposite, and Master Halyard, to use his own phrase, “hove-to” in a hammock, in the steerage, without the cabin-door.

Although Don Rafaele had not retired to his berth with the intention of seeking repose, but had thrown himself down without undressing, he had not been long in a recumbent posture, reflecting on the various circumstances of his situation, before he was overtaken by sleep. It was, however, a restless slumber, broken by repeated starts, and was not calculated to refresh or [151] invigorate him. Still he slept on; and an increased violence in the ship’s motion, and a variety of noises that prevailed on the deck above, with other adverse incidents, alike failed to awake him.

It was quite dark when he did awake. The ship was pitching a little; and this, with the darkness that prevailed, and the solemn silence, broken only by a solitary footfall overhead, pacing the quarter-deck, or an occasional creaking of the mainmast, depressed him severely. He was soon to have more serious cause for dejection. While he was musing what course he should pursue, and whether it would be better, as the night had now set in, to remain in his berth, or to take a turn on the deck, the silence that prevailed was suddenly interrupted by the clamour of several voices. Footsteps were then heard passing over the deck, and, after a brief pause, the rolling of a drum broke on his ear.

The stirring call to arms rolled through the ship like thunder. Scarcely had its echoing voice been [152] awakened, when sounds of stir and bustle, including all manner of noises, rose from every part of the ship. In a few minutes, however, both the rolling of the drum, and the din that it created, and which was even more spirit-stirring, died away; and except for the passage of an occasional footstep over the deck, or the sound of a voice, raised somewhat above the ordinary pitch, all was quiet.

It might reasonably be expected, from his youth, and his gallant appearance, which one could hardly separate from ideas of manliness, that Don Rafaele could not hear the martial rolling of the drum without feeling some of those animating impulses which it was so eminently calculated to excite. But, however reasonable such an expectation might be, the issue no way bore it out. Far from inspiring him with courage, the stirring alarum, with the various and conflicting noises that ensued, struck him with a panic; and he felt more inclined to cover himself with the [153] bedclothes, than eager for action. His excitement was so intense, that it pervaded his whole frame; and, as the din on deck continued, he trembled in every limb. He grew more composed after a while; but whether from fear, or that the excitement he sustained had affected his nerves, and so was beyond his control, he was still excessively agitated. Nevertheless, he no longer seemed disposed to remain in his berth. As the restored silence was prolonged, he planted his two hands firmly on his bed, and made an effort to rise. Just as he had raised himself up, the roar of artillery burst on his ear; and the ship, which had been sailing pretty steadily a moment previous, reeled under the shock of a dozen cannon.

CHAPTER VI. [154]

How uncertain is our tenure of any one possession! We stand in the midst of accidents, their top and vane. Constantly looking forward, we yet hardly enjoy what is actually passing, and the substantial advantages which we see in perspective, and conceive ourselves almost certain to attain, often present to the grasp only unmeaning shadows.

What prospect can be so distinctly apparent that we may calculate on its fulfilment with unmingled confidence? However certain it may appear at the passing moment, a few brief hours, stealing silently and unheeded by, may render it one of the most unlikely things imaginable. In that short interval, the auxiliaries on which we rely, and from which our expectations mainly [155] spring, may be subjected to influences that will entirely change their relations, or, should they themselves remain unchanged, they may fail in their resources, or the onward progress of Providence may have operated in a hundred other ways to bring us disappointment.

On the morning after Evaline de Neville had met Sir Walter Raleigh in Greenwich Park, she arose from her bed with a confident expectation that, by bringing her case under the notice of the Queen, Sir Walter would speedily release her from her present distress, and effect the liberation of her father. From what Sir Walter had said the previous night, this expectation, on the whole, was far from being unreasonable, and, though depending on various provisos, offered itself to view with the assurance of certainty. Nevertheless, one short hour had hardly elapsed ere it fell utterly to the ground.

She had just seated herself at the breakfast-table, with Martha, who was now her only and [156] constant companion, seated at its lower end, when old Adam Green, her father’s valet, entered

the chamber with a letter.

“There is a serving-man below, my lady,” he said, presenting the letter to Evaline, “who charged me to bring thee this; but he holds the name of the writer a secret. Master Gray is also below.”

“Bid Master Gray come to me, Adam,” answered Evaline, at the same time accepting the letter.

Her countenance fell as she tore the letter open. It was from Sir Walter Raleigh; and informed her, in a few cautious words, of that person’s loss of the Queen’s favour, and forced retirement from the court. Thus, in one brief moment, were all her hopes blighted,—all her expectations overthrown.

After she had once learned the tenor of the letter, she hardly retained sufficient perception to carry her to its close. As her eye arrived at the concluding signature, she felt her head whirl [157] again; and, dropping the letter, she fell back in her chair in a swoon.

Martha, who had been anxiously watching for the effect which the letter would produce on her features, and, seeing her become dejected, was preparing to console her, sprang to her assistance in a moment. But, unused to see her so deeply moved, the fair girl was herself so agitated, and, withal, so ignorant of what would be serviceable in such a case, that she could do no more than catch her in her arms, and call for more efficient succour.

Aid was nearer than she supposed. While she was yet calling out, the door of the chamber, which was right opposite to where she stood, was pushed open, and Bernard Gray rushed in.

“What hath happened?” he cried, with a look of concern, at the same time springing to her side.

He needed no explanation when he had once glanced at the face of Evaline. Without saying a word, he caught up a jug of water from the table, and proceeded, with all the tenderness of a [158] nurse, to lave it gently over her temples. He watched the effect of his application with the most intense anxiety. No one, indeed, could have gazed on that fair face, now void of bloom and expression, without feeling an almost equal degree of interest and sympathy. Its surpassing beauty looked all the purer and more refined for its lack of animation. Her black hair, falling loosely back, in a dozen fairy ringlets, seemed almost to sparkle in its contrast with her alabaster forehead. The long, raven fringe of her eyelids, which, from their exquisite sphericity, were themselves invested with a charm, was equally striking, and nearly as fascinating as her veiled eyes. Her every feature, indeed, from her brow downwards, still held out some attraction, which would not have been apparent in the animation of the whole, and would have lost its softness under the touch of expression.

Earnestly as Bernard surveyed these several particulars, his contemplation of Evaline did not [159] engage him so entirely, above every other object, as to make him quite overlook the less striking beauty of Martha. In the present disposition of that person, this was, indeed, exhibited to the highest advantage. Beaming with solicitude for her mistress, her pure and dazzling complexion, rounded with the brightest red, seemed to reflect and illustrate the amiability of her heart. Though her light-brown locks did not offer the same contrast to the forehead that was afforded by those of her mistress, they were still lovely, and in perfect keeping with her complexion. The same might be said of her eyes, which were of a deep blue, and though, from her ardent anxiety for Evaline, now dimmed with tears, endued with a depth and lustre beyond expression. Being so young, her figure, though tall, was not yet matured, but its outlines were full of promise, and revealed the most chaste and exact proportions. This was particularly apparent in the mould of her shoulders, which, in her agitation, had just pushed themselves above her frock, and were [160] thus partly visible. As they incurred Bernard’s notice, he could not but mark, by a hasty but searching glance, their faultless symmetry, and the grace and accuracy with which they were turned. But his sympathies, though deep and ardent, and now peculiarly alert, were too exclusively engaged by Evaline to allow him to pause on Martha’s charms, and, after he had cast a rapid glance over her person, his attention became wholly engrossed by her mistress.

The application of the cold water to Evaline’s forehead, in the manner described, quickly had a beneficial result. In a brief space, she opened her eyes; and the delicate lines of colour, which were previously quite dormant, again mounted to her cheeks. She was still very dejected; but as her eye, on looking up, encountered the anxious gaze of Bernard, her face became more animated.

“All is over, my friend,” she said. And again drooping her head, she burst into tears. [161]

“Lady, hold thee up,” said Bernard, in a gentle tone, “and look before thee hopefully! Was not Lazarus dead yet four days, and locked in his grave, ere our sweet Lord came to help him?”

“Alack! alack!” sobbed Evaline.

“Sweet mistress, be of good cheer!” cried Martha, in a broken voice.

“Sir Walter Raleigh, who, under Heaven, was my tower of hope, is disgraced,” said Evaline. “What can we look for now?”

There was a pause.

“I’faith, I grieve as much for good Sir Walter, as for ourselves,” observed Bernard, at length. “But stand to ’t bravely, lady. Thy cause is not yet hopeless.”

“No!” answered Evaline, raising her brimming eyes to heaven: “we have still a Friend above!”

As she pronounced these words, the tone of her voice, always musical, was so soft, that it seemed [162] to embody the soothing influence of the sentiment, and in its full, deep cadences, to hold out an

assurance of support to the speaker's self. Nor was it without a very decided effect on the feelings of Bernard. His emotion was apparent on his face, which, besides turning very pale, looked more than usually melancholy. His eyes, in particular, reflected this expression very distinctly, and, by their quick but subdued light, afforded a clue to the fierce struggle that was passing within.

"Art advised o' that?" he said, respectfully taking up Evaline's hand. "Go to, then; I tell thee, thy father shall be set free!"

"Oh! that I could see him!" cried Evaline, in broken accents. "Could I once more hear his voice, which hath so oft bade God bless me, methinks I could even die happy."

"Sweet lady, talk not of dying, I prithee," said Martha, in a faltering voice.

"Go to! she shall see him!" exclaimed Bernard. "I will about it straight."

He turned away while he spoke, as though he would pass to the door. Ere he had taken a step [163] forward, however, Evaline sprang after him, and, laying her hand on his arm, induced him to pause.

"Whither goest thou, Master Gray?" she asked, with deep earnestness.

Her trembling hand rested on his arm as tenderly as it might have clung to a brother's. Her pale face, lit up with a sudden animation, was pushed round before his; and her eyes ran over his features with the most intense anxiety. A deep flush spread over his countenance, and, with a slight but abrupt effort, he threw off her grasp, and broke away.

"Anon, anon," he said, in a thick voice.

Without looking round, or uttering a word more, he stepped hastily to the door, and passed out of the chamber.

After he had closed the door behind him, he resumed his progress, and proceeded down the stairs to the hall. Thence he pursued his way to the street.

On reaching the street, he pushed forward again, and did not abate his pace, which was [164] remarkably quick and vigorous, till he had passed through Temple-bar. Here, though the road was more open, and the passers-by offered much less opposition to his progress, his pace gradually slackened; and he seemed to be lost in a maze of thought.

Remorse had come upon him at last. The true goodness of his nature, which a pursuit of retaliation had so long pressed under foot, was no more to be dormant; and a voice rang in his ear—"Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord!"

Evaline's pale face still confronted him. He had gazed on it often before; and the inward sorrow that it had revealed, more touching in its calm look of endurance, had invoked his deepest sympathy. Now, however, its influence had sunk deeper; it had led him to look at himself; and, on the unveiled tablet of his own conscience, he found the deed recorded that had covered Evaline with affliction.

In vain did he seek to justify himself, by recalling to mind, in all their hideous and infernal [165] frightfulness, the appalling abominations of the Popish reign of terror. Still a voice within denounced his pursuit of retaliation; the Divine commandment, to "return good for evil," which he had previously hardly ever thought of, still thrust itself before him; and he writhed under the whispers of his accusing conscience.

His strong frame was convulsed with the violence of his inward commotion. For years he had had but one object; almost his whole life, since he had been able to exercise his judgment, had been devoted to one all-engrossing pursuit; and he had had no thought, no hope, no wish, but for vengeance—vengeance which should know no scruple, and spare neither age nor sex. If he had ever paused—if the tenderness of his earlier disposition ever revived, and sought to interpose—
the image of her he had loved, and whose beauty, excellence, and piety, unmoved by a thousand [166] distresses, had only seemed to excite more fully the enmity of her Popish persecutors, rose up before him; and he cast all pity aside, and called for vengeance still. But in the last sad, patient look of Evaline, his long-departed mistress, far from urging him to avenge her, had seemed to appeal to him in Evaline's behalf. It was the self-same look that he had so often adored on the lovely face of Dame Clifford. It showed that, though a Papist, Evaline was equally loveable; that she was endued with the same noble endurance, the same deep sensibility, and the same ardent affections. His heart, which had so long disdained the restraining scruples of pity, turned cold at the reflection, and all its native tenderness revived.

When he averted his head from Evaline's appealing look, a project had occurred to him, without premeditation or forethought, by which he might bring her troubles to a happy issue. Though it threatened danger to himself, he resolved on it without hesitation, and forthwith hastened to [167] carry it into effect.

After he had passed through Temple-bar, his pace, as has been observed, gradually slackened, but he did not come to a halt. Still moving on, he came to Somerset House, and thence pushed forward to the Strand.

A short distance past the entrance to the Savoy, or western sanctuary, he broke off from the Strand, and turned down towards the river. The road lay between two walls, in one of which, on his right hand, and about half-way down the road, there was a gateway, opening into an adjoining garden. On coming before the gateway, he seized the handle of a contiguous bell, which protruded from an indenture in the gate-post; and proceeded, with a steady hand, to draw it

forth.

Just within the gate, on one side of the avenue on which it opened, was a small lodge, from which his summons quickly drew forth the vigilant porter.

"So, soh!" cried that functionary, in a pompous voice, as he cast a contemptuous glance at [168] Bernard's somewhat worn habiliments: "who have we here?"

"Is my Lord Burleigh abroad yet, master?" asked Bernard, without deigning any answer to his inquiry.

"Oh!" said the porter, opening his hands and rubbing them together: "Ah! truly!"

"Thou wilt have no fee from me," pursued Bernard. "See here!" And thrusting his hand within his vest, he drew forth a slip of paper, and held it under the porter's eye. Glancing at the unfolded paper, that person, to his great dismay, read thereon these words:

"The bearer is in my employ.

"W. BURLEIGH."

His whole manner altered in a moment.

"Fair Sir," he said, in a fawning tone, "my Lord is up, but not abroad yet. Wilt please thee to enter, Sir? I will have thee conducted to his presence incontinently."

Bernard, without a word of reply, pushed through the gateway, and passed up the avenue [169] towards the house. The porter followed him, but, on their arrival before the house, passed to the front, and led the way into a spacious hall. There, as he expected, he encountered one of the household servants, whom he charged to lead Bernard to their master.

"Tell my Lord that one Master Gray would speak with him," said Bernard.

The servant, warned of Bernard's influence by the recommendation of the porter, and awed by his authoritative bearing, promised compliance, and passed to his master's presence with that view. In a few minutes he returned, and informed Bernard, in the same respectful manner, that his master would see him, and waited his approach in an upper chamber. Bernard, with a taciturnity not unusual to him, and which he maintained on the most inopportune occasions, signed to him to lead the way; and thus instructed, the servant marshalled him up the stairs to the minister's closet. There, stepping back to the gallery without, he left him and the minister to [170] themselves.

That sagacious personage, from whatever cause, took no notice of Bernard's respectful salute, although, from his very first entry, he fixed his eyes on his face with apparent interest. His gaze, however, though it was prolonged beyond his wont, had no effect on the pale features of Bernard, and he met it perfectly unmoved. Whether his insensibility, or, to speak more accurately, his unconcern, satisfied the wily premier, or because he had gazed his fill, he dropped his glance after a while; and signed to Bernard to possess himself of a neighbouring chair.

Lord Burleigh was never disposed to say more than was absolutely necessary. On the present occasion, he was not disposed to say anything; but intended, in the first place, to allow Bernard to deliver all he had to say, and, when he was master of his business, regulate his demeanour as circumstances might dictate. Bernard, however, knew him too well to be thus entrapped; and, [171] remaining silent, the minister was ultimately compelled to speak first.

"Well," he said.

"I am glad on't, my Lord," answered Bernard.

There was a pause.

"Hem!" said Lord Burleigh.

Bernard looked up, but continued silent.

"There is a rumour of a new plot toward," said Lord Burleigh. "Hast thou heard aught concerning it?"

"Thou knowest I have not been an idler, my Lord," answered Bernard, "and have well earned the small allowance thou makest me, and which thou hast thyself oft wanted to double. Moreover—"

"Good!" exclaimed Lord Burleigh, testily. "But the matter!"

"Thou wilt doubtless recollect, my Lord," pursued Bernard, "that 'twas I first informed thee of the [172] great conspiracy in the North, which cost my Lord Westmoreland his head. Afterwards, I told thee of the plot to wed the Duke of Norfolk to the Queen of Scots."

"Well, well," muttered Burleigh.

"Did not I refuse the rich guerdons thou wouldst have dealt me, my Lord, and give all my pains for nought?" asked Bernard.

"Thou didst so, and thereby approved thyself a right loyal subject," said the minister.

"I say nothing, my Lord, of the early tidings I gave thee of my Lord Leicester's marriage with my Lady Sheffield," continued Bernard, "because I sought therein to gratify your Lordship, rather than serve the state."

"What doth all this preface portend?" demanded the minister, in an abrupt tone.

“Thou hast thyself said, my Lord, that I have approved myself a right loyal subject,” answered Bernard. “Thou knowest, too, that I have served the state, not for gain’s sake, but oft at mine own proper cost, out of pure love. Will it be ever thought, then, that I, having these merits, would seek your Lordship’s ear for one of the state’s enemies?” [173]

“’Twould never be so thought by me,” replied Burleigh, less impatiently.

“There is now in Newgate, my Lord, on a state warrant, one whom I know to have done no crime,” said Bernard. “I would humbly sue to your Lordship, on the strength of my good services, that he may be set free.”

“Innocent, is he?” returned Burleigh. “Well, I would not deny thee a small thing. How doth he name himself?”

“Sir Edgar de Neville,” answered Bernard.

The minister’s brow darkened. “Ah!” he cried.

Bernard, looking up, met his scowl with an unruffled brow, but ventured no reply.

“Innocent, is he?” reiterated Burleigh. “These are bold speeches, Master Gray. Why, the man hath murderously slain one of thy fellows, is bound up with the Spaniard, and, to crown all, is a pestilent Papist. I have this on the word of—”

“A rank knave, my Lord,” said Bernard, seeing him hesitate to name his authority: “even of Master Shedlock, his inveterate enemy.” [174]

The enlarged observation displayed by his answer, showing that, wherever he might be placed, his eyes were always on the alert, was far from drawing upon him the minister’s displeasure. Indeed, it reminded him how serviceable he had been to the state, and to himself personally, in time past, and determined him to retain him in his service at whatever cost. Unfortunately, however, the charge against Sir Edgar de Neville was of so serious a cast, and had been urged with such an appearance of truth, that it could not be dismissed without a full investigation; and though policy and state-craft inclined him to comply with his emissary’s request, his sense of justice, which he rarely disregarded, forbad him to interpose, and suggested that he should allow the law to take its course. But on one point he was resolved, and that was, that, come what might, he would in no case offend his emissary.

In this frame of mind, he shortly replied to that person’s remark.

“I knew not Master Shedlock was a knave,” he said, “but rather thought otherwise, seeing that, from whatever cause, he hath acted with much zeal in this matter, professing it to evidence a new plot. But even an’ he be what thou call’st him, how doth that, which concerns only him, certify the innocence of the prisoner?” [175]

“The prisoner, my Lord, says that he was journeying peaceably on the highway, when he was wantonly assailed by two armed men,” answered Bernard. “While he was beating these men back, there came that way a certain traveller, who, seeing him hard pressed, straight rode up to his succour. By this cavalier was the man deceased put to the sword; and the other, without waiting a further issue, thereupon made off.”

“Wherefore, then, hath this cavalier, whoever he be, not been brought forward?” asked Lord Burleigh. “Hath no one any knowledge of him?”

“He is well known to Sir Walter Raleigh, my Lord,” replied Bernard.

“Ah!” said Burleigh, knitting his brows. [176]

Bernard was silent.

“’Tis a most strange story,” resumed Burleigh, after a pause. “Could not this doughty cavalier, who slew one ruffian, arrest the other?”

“An’ that ruffian were produced, would the knight be set free, my Lord?” asked Bernard.

“Of a surety he would,” answered Burleigh.

“Then, my Lord, I am he,” said Bernard.

Lord Burleigh drew back. If he were displeased at Bernard’s audacity, his displeasure, in the first instance, was lost in his surprise; and, for once in his life, he was unprepared to express his sentiments. Nevertheless, he was too accustomed to restrain and repress his feelings, on occasions more trying than the present, to be thrown off his guard; and as he desired to meditate before he spoke with Bernard further, he determined to dismiss him till the following day.

“Come to me at this hour to-morrow,” he said. “We will then talk further of the matter.” [177]

“I commend me to your Lordship’s kind thoughts,” said Bernard. “Meantime, as I take all the blame of the outrage to myself, I would pray your Lordship to do me a grace therein so far, as to suffer the innocent prisoner to be visited by his daughter.”

The minister hesitated a moment. Then, with more composure, he caught up a slip of paper from the table, and, laying it down before him, proceeded to write thereon. After he had crossed it with a few lines, he folded it in the form of a letter, and (for he had wax and a lighted taper ready at hand), sealing it up, superscribed it to the Governor of Newgate. This done, he presented it to Bernard.

“Here is a pass for her,” he said. “And remember thee,” he added, in a significant tone, “thou art in great peril thyself. No more! we will talk on’t to-morrow.”

Bernard, thus admonished, made no reply, but accepted the letter in silence. Thrusting it into his vest, he dropped a humble bow to the premier, and turned from the chamber.

Having passed out of the chamber, he did not linger without, but pushed forward, under the [178] guidance of the servant, who was in waiting there, to the hall, and thence to the street.

The bitter passion which he had felt on entering the mansion of the minister, as described heretofore, had passed away, and his heart was weighed down no longer. Indeed, he felt more cheerful and composed than he had been for many years. He was still melancholy, but his melancholy was more rational, and less despondent, and nearer to that which arises from ordinary causes, than was its wont. The world seemed to open to him a new and more material sphere. The cloud that had so long pressed on his spirit, overshadowing and distorting every perception, was now dispelled, and, in the light which it unveiled, he discerned every individual object in its own proper colours.

Nevertheless, he was not altogether free from anxiety. It is true, he felt comparatively easy concerning Sir Edgar de Neville, as he conceived, however prematurely, that he had quite [179] cleared that personage from the crime and purposes imputed to him. But in achieving this vindication, on which he raised such a promising and felicitous perspective, he had brought great danger on himself. Though he had rendered Burleigh such important services, he was not so sure that, in a case like the present, they would receive that consideration which was necessary to his safety, as to feel perfectly confident respecting the issue. But if, in this respect, his solicitude was painful, the consciousness that it was the effect of an act of reparation was soothing, and, in the "exceeding great reward" of an appeased conscience, he was strengthened against the evil of the impendent consequence.

Returning by the same route that had led him to the mansion, he walked at a quick pace till he came to Fleet-street, when, with whatever view, he suddenly adopted a slower step. But he did not pause; and in a short time, passing steadily along, he arrived at Evaline's lodging.

This tenement, which was distinguished by the sign of "The Three Compasses," was a cutler's [180] shop; but, besides the entrance to the shop, there was a private door, which was appropriated exclusively to the fair lodger. It was before the latter door that Bernard came to a halt; and a cumbrous clicket, or knocker, just above its lower panels, enabled him to inflict thereon a summons to the inmates.

The door was shortly opened, and Adam Green, the old valet, presented himself at the aperture.

It will be remembered that Adam was the servant who, as was set forth heretofore, had assisted Sir Edgar de Neville in his contest with the robbers, and had afterwards named Bernard as his adversary on that occasion. Although a great alteration in Bernard's appearance, and the friendly relations which were maintained with him by Evaline, with the earnest zeal which he invariably manifested in that lady's service, had since led him to refrain from reiterating this assertion, he did not feel assured that it was wholly unfounded. His suspicion, indeed, though he was silent, [181] occurred to him often, and time rather lent it confirmation, than wore it away. On the present occasion, Bernard's disordered manner, which his haste and agitation had led him to overlook, reminded Adam so forcibly of the bearing of his adversary in the affair of the robbers, that his suspicion burst all restraint, and he quite started under its resistless pressure.

Bernard, though he had observed him closely, took no notice of his embarrassment at the moment; but first passed into the hall, and closed the street-door.

"What ails thee?" he then demanded of Adam.

"Art thou he?" inquired Adam, in reply.

"No other," answered Bernard, calmly.

"What brings thee here, then?" asked Adam, passionately. "Hast thou not harmed us enow?"

"Hold thee there!" answered Bernard. "I have repented me. As thou keepest peace in this matter, [182] so shall it be measured to thy master. Will that content thee?"

The eyes of the aged domestic filled with tears, and a look of anxious indecision, which was even more distressing than his tears, crossed his pale face. Bernard was moved.

"'Fore God," he said, catching up Adam's hand, "I am true, old man! Mark thou how it will end!"

Adam looked up, and, raising his hand, devoutly crossed himself.

"So God deal between me and thee, as thou art true or false!" he said, in an agitated voice. "But no more now, Sir! My mistress hath been asking for thee earnestly."

"Lead the way!" answered Bernard. "I have that for her will make her glad."

With a quick step, the old man, now quite composed again, led the way up the stairs, and shortly brought him to Evaline's presence.

She was sitting exactly as he had left her, with Martha, still seeking to cheer her, at her side. They both rose, however, when he entered, and Evaline gazed inquiringly in his face. [183]

"God be with thee, lady!" he said, with a smile. "What wouldst thou have?"

His smile, and the tone in which he spoke, which was more cheerful than his wont, brought a flush of animation to Evaline's face, and the look of inquiry that she had fixed upon him became more intense.

"Thou hast heard somewhat, Master Gray," she said. "Is Sir Walter Raleigh at large again?"

“I fear me, no!” answered Bernard. “But be of good cheer, fair mistress. I have brought thee a pass to visit thy father.”

And, with another cheering smile, he drew forth the letter which he had received from Lord Burleigh, and placed it in her hands.

As Evaline accepted the letter, her small white hands, though they clasped closely over it, quivered like aspens. Drawing the letter to her heaving bosom, she raised her eyes towards heaven, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER VII.

[184]

The darkness is often greatest just before morning. At the moment that all hope seems to be lost, the course of events, rolling providently on, takes a new turn, and opens a brighter and more cheering prospect. The worst, with all its tissue of terrors, is frequently followed close by the better; and the wave which we expect to engulf and overwhelm us, leaves us high and dry on the shore.

The most trying crisis is not without some assurance of amelioration or relief. If all else fail, the nobleness of man’s own heart, bearing him up against the tide, is a resource and comforter. In that he is provided against all evils, and armed against every calamity. If he properly exercise his [185] own innate resources, affliction can never subdue him, but will rather serve, by its searching and varied influences, to enlarge his intellect, and unveil the treasures of his heart.

Sir Edgar de Neville had now been a whole week a close prisoner in Newgate. The man who had inherited from his ancestors thousands of broad acres, teeming with produce, had no other habitation than a small room, some dozen feet square. The bare stone walls, black with age, were broken only by the door and window, the latter of which was far above his reach, and, as if that precaution were not sufficient, was defended by several iron bars. A pallet-bed, with a table, and two settles, or chairs, embraced the whole furniture of the room, and served but to render its nakedness more apparent.

He was a prisoner! As he paced the narrow limits of his cell, and found himself, after a few brief strides, brought abruptly to a halt, he felt as though he could tear down the stone walls with his [186] hands, and thus sally forth. The window aforenamed, though small, admitted a free current of air; yet, whenever he thought of his situation, he felt as if he were stifling, and could not draw his breath. If he sat down, he became eager for action; if he sought relief in exercise, his humour changed; and while he had yet, in obedience to one prompture, taken but a turn or two round the chamber, his restlessness forced him to his seat again.

Thus did he pass the first day of his incarceration in Newgate. Night brought him no relief; and though, as the hour advanced, he stretched his limbs on his humble pallet, he never thought of disposing himself for sleep.

If he turned from the more immediate details of his situation, his extended reflections, though more varied, were not less distracting. His fair child was alone in the world. There was no one to prompt her inexperience; no one to defend her from aggression; no one, in her own sphere of life, with whom she could “take sweet counsel,” and maintain the relations of a friend. [187]

In his sympathy for his daughter, his own situation presented its most pressing hardship. He could have borne it alone: for conscience sake, he could have sustained persecution, have submitted to oppression, and have uttered no complaint. But to be torn from his darling—his dear, loving child—was more than nature could endure.

The promised support of Sir Walter Raleigh did not inspire him with much expectation. It is true, he hoped, but doubtfully; and the varying humour of his reflections, rolling back into the past, and calling to mind all the grievances which the followers of the Romish persuasion were subject to, represented succour from a pillar of the Protestant church to be extremely uncertain. Sir Walter, too, was involved in the intrigues of the court; was an aspirant to royal favour; a partizan of particular interests; and, more than all, an avowed and approved enemy to the very existence of Popery.

Hildebrand was gone. On him, indeed, if the past could be relied on, he might have placed [188] dependence; but he was beyond recall. It might have been so ordered wilfully. Hildebrand, with all his seeming honesty, might be a malignant impostor, suborned to betray him to the Government; and, at this momentous juncture, possibly absented himself with a perfect foreknowledge of the evil his absence would occasion. But, no! the thought wronged him! it could not be!

He thought of his daughter seeking to effect his deliverance. He fancied her, under the prompture of affection, throwing off the reserve and timidity of her nature, and pushing to his aid through all the shuffling influences of the world. He saw her submit to the frown of scornful authority; he observed her suing the interference of the powerful courtier; and he traced her, at the last, to her own chamber, supplicating the protection of her patron saint, or the countenance and support of the blessed Virgin. As he pursued the imagined picture, he marked her pale [189] countenance, her pensive eyes, and her still bosom; and though the surface was all placid, though her sweet disposition revealed no shade of impatience, he knew how deeply she was stirred, and that her heart was bursting.

The following day, he learned that, in conformity with his expectations, Evaline had sought access to him, but had been denied. He would have written to her; but the gaoler, in a surly tone, informed him that this would not be permitted. He remonstrated; but, wrapped in the arrogance of authority, the gaoler made him no reply, but passed in silence from the cell, and secured the door behind him.

Sir Edgar now contemplated his situation in its worst terrors. He was like one in his grave, shut out from the world, and cut off, in every individual relation, from his suffering child! What might not happen to her during their separation, and he, walled in that chamber, not even hear of it! How might she not pine, how might she not be oppressed, or how insulted; and no one be nigh to [190] bid her be comforted!

His own troubles, for which he had furnished no provocation, had made him violent; but in contemplating the affliction of his daughter, exposed to all the contumely of the unfeeling world, he was subdued. In *her* loneliness, he saw no resource; and as he fancied her struggling with her fate, alone and unfriended, and without one certain auxiliary, his eyes filled with tears.

Day followed day without bringing him relief. Each successive morning, as its first light visited his cell, found him still in expectancy; and each night left him still despondent. The tedious hours were only one round of racking conjectures, which, as they seized his attention, occasional sparks of hope, dying as they rose, served but to confirm in despair.

Of all the ills of our brief but troublous pilgrimage, there is none like this—the terrible agony of suspense! As its fearful ramifications develop themselves, the horror of one thought, which has [191] made our blood curdle, is lost under the sting of its successor, and each consecutive reflection inflicts a more excruciating pang. A host of melancholy images are embraced by one thought. Hopes and fears and anxieties, the very antagonists of each other, seem to be banded together, and to unite in an inroad on the prostrate heart. Each particular idea involves a crowd of apprehensions; and the troubled spirit, endued with an unnatural sensibility, which catches at the veriest shadow, is overwhelmed with bewilderment and distraction.

Sir Edgar had endured this appalling mental conflict for nearly a week. The seventh day found him quite prostrate, and almost reckless. All hope had gone; and he looked forward to night, not as to a season of rest, but as to another stage, which should bring him nearer his end. When night should arrive, he would lie down, nervous and wretched, with the same prospect as on the previous night—a morrow of apprehension, solicitude, and hopelessness.

While he was thus pondering on his situation, he heard his cell-door pushed open; and [192] mechanically—for he really acted without motive—he looked up. As his eye fell on one of the two persons who appeared at the aperture, its sight grew dim, and he felt his head whirl again. But, though he was stirred so deeply, he did not give way to his emotion, and he recovered himself in an instant. Starting up, he caught the person referred to in his arms.

It was Evaline!—sweet, noble, excellent Evaline! After all her affliction—after all her terrible fears, which had wrung her heart to the quick, and pursued her like her shadow—she was in his embrace at last! Again she hung round his neck; again she leaned on his bosom; and, thus embraced, was fatherless no more.

Neither of them spoke. Their hearts were too full, and, in the overflow of joy, feeling only could reveal itself. And what tongue, however eloquent, could have told their emotion so forcibly as [193] their silence? what could manifest their affection so distinctly and clearly as its own voiceless self?

Sir Edgar was the first to speak. After a time, seeing that the gaoler had left them to themselves, his reserve vanished, and he gave his feelings utterance.

“My own darling Eve!” he said, passionately: “I knew thou wouldst not desert me!”

Evaline looked up; and though her eyes, as they met his, brimmed with tears, a smile played upon her lips, that rendered him a sufficient answer.

“I know—I know,” said her father, in an agitated voice, yet smiling, “thou wouldst give thy life first.”

Evaline could not speak, but she raised herself up in his arms, and kissed him.

“Bless thee, my sweet!” said Sir Edgar, in a tremulous tone: “all the saints bless thee!”

“And thee! and thee!” faltered Evaline, in broken, but earnest accents.

Sir Edgar was silent for a moment; but, meantime, his eyes, though dimmed with tears, ran [194] proudly over his daughter’s face. As he marked its exceeding loveliness, his discontent and apathy vanished, and he resolved, if only to assure *her*, he would bear up still, and assume the fortitude that he did not feel.

“And thou hast come at last!” he said. “Well, now I have thee again, I care not what befalls.”

“Be of good heart!” answered Evaline, with more composure. “We have a friend now, who will carry us through.”

“Sir Walter hath not failed thee, then,” returned Sir Edgar. “I thought him noble; and right glad I am, in this eleventh hour, to be assured on’t.”

“Alas, he is undone!” replied Evaline. “He hath lost the Queen’s favour, and been banished the court.”

“Poor gentleman!” exclaimed Sir Edgar. “But where is Don Felix, dear?”

“Fled to Spain,” answered Evaline. “A warrant was out to attach him; and, fearing the issue, he took flight directly.” [195]

“’Twas not well done to forsake thee, Eve,” remarked Sir Edgar, mournfully. He paused a moment, and then resumed. “But, certes, being under fear of imprisonment, his staying would not have availed thee.”

“I needed him not,” said Evaline. “Captain Clifford, on parting with me, gave me a billet to a friend of his, one Bernard Gray; and he it is that got me a pass here.”

“I’faith, Captain Clifford hath befriended us well,” rejoined Sir Edgar. “Who is this cavalier?”

“I know not,” replied Evaline, “nor what is his influence, but he hath stood by me right nobly. He got me the pass yesterday; but he urged me, for some reason of his own, not to use it till to-day.”

“Well, Heaven bless him, any way, for letting me see thee,” answered Sir Edgar. “I grieve sorely for poor Sir Walter.”

“A right noble gentleman!” remarked Evaline. “He hath well proved the saying of the wise man, —‘Put not your trust in princes!’ But sit thee down, Sir. I will even be thy keeper myself to-day, and abide here till night.” [196]

Sir Edgar smiled, though mournfully; and suffered her, as she ceased speaking, to lead him to a contiguous seat. Drawing the other chair near, she seated herself, without more ado, by his side; and, with her hand clasped in his, resumed their conversation.

“Now am I happier here with thee,” she said, smiling, “than I could be in a court without thee.”

Sir Edgar pressed her hand. “Such love as thine, dear,” he said, “more oft visits the prison than the palace; and, faith, it makes this cold cell, with its walls of stone, brighter than a court.”

“And we may see fairer days yet,” rejoined Evaline. “Master Gilbert tells me they must put thee on thy trial shortly.”

“I would I could see Gilbert!” remarked Sir Edgar. “Think’st thou, thy new friend, Master Gray, can compass such a thing?” [197]

“I will speak to him on’t,” answered Evaline. “An’ his means equal his good will, he will do it.”

Sir Edgar was about to reply, when, while the words were yet on his lips, he heard the fastenings of the cell-door drawn back, and he paused. As he did so, the door was thrown open; and two persons, one of whom he recognised as the Governor of the gaol, entered the cell.

“Thou hast given us but a short time, Sir,” said Sir Edgar, supposing he had come to part him from Evaline. “Howbeit, my daughter will speedily be ready.”

“When she is ready, Sir,” answered the Governor, with a smile, “thou mayst bear her company.”

“How mean’st thou?” asked Sir Edgar, in amaze.

The Governor, without saying a word, but still smiling, stepped a pace or two nearer, and presented him with a folded paper. He seized it eagerly, and, with a trembling hand, drew it open:—it was an order from Sir Francis Walsingham, the Secretary of State, directing him to be set at liberty. [198]

CHAPTER VIII. [199]

Soon after Queen Elizabeth had entered Greenwich Palace, on the occasion before described, she parted from her two favourites, Raleigh and Essex, and retired to her boudoir. In a short time, however, she again appeared in the private hall, and there looked for those personages among the assembled courtiers. Essex, observing her glance, and conjecturing its object, was by her side in a moment; but Raleigh was nowhere to be seen. Elizabeth looked displeased at his absence; and, as Essex came up, she inquired if he had seen him.

“Indeed, no, your Highness,” replied Essex. “But he will be here anon, no doubt.” [200]

“I’faith, I fear, not,” said a voice behind him, loud enough to be heard by the Queen.

The Queen turned round; and her eye, now marked with displeasure, fell on the face of Sir Robert Cecil.

“An’ it prove so, and thou art a friend of his, thou mayst fear in right earnest, Sir Knight,” she said. “By God! an’ he be not back shortly, it shall be the worse for him.”

“Consider me not his friend, then, my gracious liege, an’ he forfeit thy good will,” replied Cecil. “Still,” he added, in a hesitating tone, which seemed to belie what he said, “I scarce can think he intends your Highness a wilful disrespect.”

The Queen coloured.

“I will give my word,” said the Earl of Essex, with much warmth, “he hath no such thought.”

Unfortunately, however, the circle immediately round the Queen, to which the conversation was confined, included none of Sir Walter’s friends, and whispers and looks were interchanged, which far from confirmed the manly and straightforward declaration of Essex. The Queen, whom the bare appearance of a slight exasperated, was easily led into the general impression, and it [201]

became evident that Sir Walter was no longer to be looked upon as one of her chief favourites.

“Thou must know where he is,” she said to Cecil, somewhat sharply, “or how couldst thou fear, as thou didst but lately profess, he would not attend us shortly?”

“Good sooth, my liege, I spoke on mere conjecture,” said Cecil. “When he betook him hence, I marked that he looked marvellously impatient; and as his step was hasty withal, I doubted not, in my own mind, that he was taken away by some grave business, which could be despatched only at leisure.”

“By my troth, thou art right prompt at conjecture,” remarked the Queen, sneeringly. “A good [202]
fellow, I warrant you, to back out a friend. But go and seek out Sir Walter Raleigh, and let us hear what this grave business is.”

Cecil, though taken somewhat aback, replied with a bow, and instantly proceeded to give the Queen’s injunctions effect. Shambling along at his quickest pace, he came to the central hall; and though, having failed to watch his route, he knew not what direction had been pursued by Sir Walter, passed straight to the park.

As he stepped into the nearest walk, he observed Sir Walter, with his hat pulled over his brow, some distance ahead, striking off towards Blackheath. Wondering what he could possibly have in view, he determined, instead of calling him back, to steal secretly after him, and, if possible, ascertain his purpose.

He pursued his intention for several minutes, when Sir Walter, suddenly turning round, became sensible that he was followed, and struck off in another direction. Still, however, Cecil kept him in view, and at length, after a diligent and arduous pursuit, fairly traced him to the avenue to Blackheath.

A few brief minutes served to discover the object of his excursion. A lady—no other, indeed, than [203]
Evaline de Neville—was standing near the end of the avenue; and on reaching that locality, Sir Walter accosted her, and made it apparent that she was waiting there for him. Sir Robert Cecil watched them for a short space, when, with a glavering smile, he turned away, and passed back to the palace.

On entering the royal presence, he found the courtiers dispersed over the hall, and the circle round the Queen, which he had left pretty full, greatly diminished. Elizabeth, though still somewhat discomposed, was talking apart with Essex; and the four or five ladies around her had fallen a few paces back, and with many smiles, and tossings of the head, and other significant gestures, discussed the scandal of the day together. Silently noting these particulars, Sir Robert Cecil, fearful of being thought an intruder, approached with great circumspection, and, while he [204]
was yet some paces distant, *hemmed* several times to attract the Queen’s notice. It was not till he was close at hand, however, that that personage thought fit to observe him.

“Well, Sir!” she then cried, in an abrupt tone, “where is thy marauding friend?”

“Most gracious liege, an’ thou mean’st Sir Walter Raleigh,” replied Cecil, fawningly, “I give thee my word, that, were he mine own brother, he should not hold my regard when he had lost thine. God forefend I should ever lack in duty to your Highness, who hath loaded me and mine, of thine own free and unsolicited will, with thy most precious bounty.”

“Nay, nay, I question not thee, gentle Cecil,” rejoined the Queen, with more kindness. “There be few I deem so loyal, or hold in equal respect.”

“Oh, thanks! thanks, most dread sovereign!” answered Cecil, with well-feigned emotion. “An’ I [205]
could tell how thou hast moved me, I would make thy most piteous and compassionate heart to run distract. But no tongue, unless it were thine own, whose eloquence passes man’s, and ravishes while it commands, could give utterance to my most hearty sentiments. Indeed, my Lord Essex, that was a right apt conceit of thine, which likened her Grace’s voice to the song of Philomel.”

“By my word, now, ’twas beggarly,” said the Earl of Essex, earnestly. “’Twas likening the meridian sun to a mere star.”

“Go to, thou flatterer!” exclaimed the Queen, laughing. “The conceit was a right good one. But what keeps this recreant knight, gentle Cecil?”

Cecil hesitated.

“Soh!” said the Queen, with revived displeasure. And rising from her seat, she stepped a pace or two forward (so that, if they spoke in a low tone, their conversation could not be heard by those around), and whispered Cecil apart.

“What holds him away?” she said.

“Only the great duty I owe your Highness could ever make me say,” replied Cecil, falteringly. “In [206]
obedience to your Grace’s orders, I followed him to the Park; and there, in a retired spot, I beheld him in earnest converse with a lady.”

“Aha!” muttered Elizabeth. “By my father’s hand, he shall answer for ’t! Wait thee here a space!”

With this injunction, she turned away, and fell back to the Earl of Essex.

“Essex, give thee a good night!” she said, extending him her hand.

The young Earl, with the eagerness of a lover, caught up her proffered hand, and, dropping on one knee, raised it respectfully to his lips. As he did so, his graceful bearing, and manly and

handsome countenance, beaming with expression, appeared to new advantage, and presented additional charms. While she glanced hastily over him, Elizabeth, though in no tender mood, deigned to smile; but, whatever were her feelings, she broke away directly.

"Ho, there!" she cried to her ladies; "we will away!" [207]

The bevy of beauties gathered round her in a moment; the hall-door, leading to the private apartments of the palace, was thrown open; and, attended by her train, the Queen passed to her chamber.

Her retirement was the signal for the whole court to take their departure. Essex and Cecil, however, though with no common object, remained behind, and manifested no intention of immediately retiring.

Though the Queen had passed out of sight, and the door by which she had made her egress, in the manner and order described, was now closed, the eyes of Essex were still turned in the direction she had taken, and seemed to look for or behold her in the unbroken vacuity. But he did not gaze thus for any protracted period. After a short interval, he dropped his gaze, and turned to retire. He was stepping forward with this view, when, raising his eyes again, he encountered those of Sir Robert Cecil. That person, with whatever motive, had been watching him from the [208] first, and now looked him straight in the face. But the familiarity which he seemed to assume, and which was marked very strikingly in his penetrating gaze, drew from the proud Earl no apparent response; for, instead of pausing, he dropped his glance on the instant, and passed straight on.

Cecil bit his lips; but his self-possession, if disturbed, was not seriously affected, and he recovered himself immediately.

"My Lord Essex, I would speak with thee a space," he said, in an obsequious tone.

"Be brief, then," answered Essex, still passing forward, though more slowly; "for I would be gone."

"Nay, 'tis no great matter, my fair Lord," observed Cecil, with affected indifference. "'Twas but to give thee a warning."

Essex paused. "And what may it be?" he asked.

"I will tell thee more anon," he said. "Now, my Lord, I would simply counsel thee to beware of Sir [209] Walter Raleigh."

"And wherefore of him?" demanded Essex. "I know not that I have in aught offended him."

"Oh, dost thou not?" returned the crafty courtier. "Art not his rival, then? Has he not in thee, and thy good parts, which men do so worthily admire, an obstacle to her Grace's favour? Trust me, he hates thee, my good Lord!"

"I can well believe he bears me no good will," answered the Earl. "Howbeit, I care not for him, or any other, though, to speak sooth, I want the enmity of no man. Let that, with more right and justice, fall to time-servers and knaves."

So speaking, the haughty young nobleman, without raising his cap, dropped him a proud nod, and passed on his way. Before he reached the lower outlet from the hall, the door at the upper end, leading to the apartments of the Queen, was thrown open, and a lady appeared on the threshold.

"Hither, Sir Robert Cecil!" she said. [210]

Cecil, though somewhat disconcerted at the altered demeanour of Essex, quickly composed himself, and answered her call with the liveliest promptitude. On his coming up with her, the lady, with some appearance of agitation, presented him with a sealed billet, addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh; and the alert eyes of Cecil readily observed that it was in the handwriting of the Queen.

"Her Highness," said the lady, "charged me to bring thee this billet, which thou art to convey to Sir Walter Raleigh, through a pursuivant, without loss of time. I fear me," she added, in a tone of sympathy, "it bodes the noble gentleman no good."

Sir Robert gave a mournful shake of his head.

"Dost know how he hath displeased her, Sir Robert?" pursued the lady.

"Faith, no, my Lady Nottingham!" answered Cecil. "It grieves me sorely. But, whatever come of [211] it, I must even do her Grace's errand; and so, I heartily wish your Ladyship god-den."

"God-den to you, Sir!" replied the Countess of Nottingham.

Thus returning his valediction, she passed to the inner chamber again; and Sir Robert, without further delay, bent his steps to the lower hall. There, after a little time, which it required all his discretion to endure patiently, he procured a pursuivant; and, in obedience to the injunctions he had received, charged him with the delivery of the Queen's letter. Having informed him that he would probably meet with Sir Walter in the park, he directed him, when he had delivered the letter, to come back to him, in the apartment called "the Hall of Virgins," and privately let him know where Sir Walter was to be found. With these instructions, he parted from the pursuivant, and repaired to the apartment wherein, according to their arrangement, he was to await his return.

Some time elapsed before the pursuivant re-appeared. But, though the interval was a long one,

he returned at last, and briefly furnished Cecil with the information he required.

"I have presented Sir Walter with the letter, your worship," he said. "I would have returned straight; but he bade me, as a favour, to order his barge, and I could not cry him nay. He hath since gone off to London." [212]

Cecil, being desirous of an early interview with Sir Walter, was somewhat disappointed by this intelligence; but he did not suffer his chagrin to reveal itself. Dismissing the pursuivant, he determined, as he could not see him that night, to visit Sir Walter early in the morning; and thus resolved, he quietly took his departure.

The following morning found him an early visiter at the door of Durham House. The noble proprietor of that mansion, however, had been astir for several hours, and was now busily engaged in the various employments of his study. He sat at a long table, in the middle of the room, with his face, which rested on one of his hands, turned towards the window, and his back towards the door. On the table, within reach of his hand, were divers papers and books, and one [213] volume lying open, which, on a close view, proved to be a collection of the plays of Shakspear. The open page presented, on one side, the faint trace of a pencil, marking some reader's admiration of the following passage:—

"Oh, how wretched
Is that poor man, that hangs on princes' favours!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars and women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again."

The pencil-mark might have been made by Sir Walter himself; but, whether it had been, or not, that personage was not now meditating, under the prompture of his own experience, on its high and incontrovertible philosophy. Before him was spread a large chart, representing, in rude but accurate outlines, the continent of North America; and on this he seemed to bend his undivided attention.

Ever and anon, as his eye fixed itself on some more striking point of the broken shore, indicating [214] a safe bay, or favourable commercial situation, he raised his pen, and, by a slight tick, marked it as the site of a future settlement. Gradually, breaking away from the shore, he moved his pen inland, and, after a deliberate pause, traced on the centre of the chart, in bold characters, these magic words:—

El Dorado.

As he thus fixed the site of his imagined Canaan, a smile rose to the lips of the philosopher, and seemed, on a cursory glance, to shed a sort of light over his every feature. There was, however, whether from intense thought, or secret anxiety, still a touch of melancholy on his brow; and it shortly spread itself further, and became, what it was in the first instance, the dominant expression of his countenance. Nevertheless, he continued to bend over the chart, and would, perhaps, ultimately have resumed the employment he had been engaged in; but, while he yet paused, a slight knock on the chamber-door brought his meditation to a close.

"Enter!" he cried, turning towards the door. [215]

He had hardly turned round, when the door was pushed open, and a servant, attired in a plain but tasteful livery, the colours of his household, entered the chamber.

"Sir Robert Cecil would speak a while with your worship," said the lackey.

It is often imagined, that, in the hour of adversity, a visit from one whom we consider a friend, unsolicited by ourselves, is among the most welcome things that we would aspire to. But let the cold hand of misfortune only seize us; and, in this conceived relief, the proud heart, which sorrow could not subdue, will be most effectually humbled. It has to own its fair prospects blighted; it has to acknowledge, in its own degradation, the superiority of its consoler; it has to smart under his inquiries, and writhe under his expressions of pity. What torture!—what excruciating torment! To be recommended, in our low estate, to take another path, to confess that we have failed—that our best efforts, our mightiest energies, our long suffering, our glorious and surpassing [216] struggles, which embraced our every thought, hope, and wish, and the bare memory of which makes us even to commiserate our own selves—to confess that all these have been thrown away, that we have been poor, lost, thoughtless dreamers—oh! this is the very bound and extreme of human anguish!

Yet Sir Walter could endure the trial. He knew that, in his course upward, the man who seeks an uncommon fortune, must meet and surmount uncommon difficulties; and though acutely sensible to the bitter influences referred to, he was manned for the ordeal. Keenly as he felt every mortification, how utterly pointless and contemptible, on reflection, did the disdainful slights and opinions of the world appear to him! The galling sneer of envy, the cutting look of pride, or the thoughtless inquisitiveness of pity, itself an affront, might affect him at the moment; but how soon did his heart recover its dignity, and his mind its evenness! He felt the pang, but he did not [217] shrink from its minister; and in the nobleness of his own feelings, and the purity of his motives, he found a most soothing consolation.

On the present occasion, he paused a space before he replied to the servant's announcement. His hesitation, however, was but momentary, and he then directed him to bring Sir Robert Cecil to

his presence.

The servant, with a dutiful bow, proceeded to obey him, and shortly introduced Sir Robert to the study. He thereupon retired, and left the two courtiers, whose characters were so widely different, and so opposed to each other, to themselves.

There was a thoughtful melancholy on Cecil's brow, whether real or assumed, that at once informed Sir Walter that his fall in the royal favour was known to that person. This was a relief; and though Sir Robert, on the whole, had no great hold of his esteem, he was rather cheered than otherwise by the sympathy expressed in his countenance. A mere glance served him to survey Sir [218] Robert's aspect; and by the time that the servant, on his way out, had closed the door behind him, and left them to themselves, he was prepared to accost him.

"Give thee a fair morning, Sir Robert!" he cried. "Thou art with me betimes; and yet, by my lady's hand, I scarce looked for any visiters to-day!"

"An' that were thy thought, thou didst wrong to me, at the least, Sir Walter Raleigh," answered Cecil, with much earnestness. "'Tis not in thy reverses that I would forsake thee."

"Kind! kind! more than I looked for, worthy Sir Robert," answered Raleigh; "for, I see, by thy sad face, thou art advertised of my downfall!"

"Nay, call it not that!" rejoined Cecil. "Albeit thou art accused of a grave excess, I heartily hope, when the Queen's anger abates, she will overlook it."

"Grave excess!" exclaimed Sir Walter. "Dost know what I am charged withal, then?" [219]

"I'faith, I have heard, though I vouch not how truly, thou art accused of leaving thy duties at the palace, as captain of her Highness's guard, to loiter with some dame in the park," answered Cecil. "Nay, I know not an' it be so, but I am thus advised."

"'Tis most like," returned Sir Walter; "for, of a surety, I did visit the park last even, after her Highness had retired, purposely to meet a fair lady."

Cecil bit his lips, and meditated a moment.

"Wilt thou own this to her Highness?" he said, at length.

"Will I?" cried Sir Walter: "without question, I will!"

"Then is thy case hopeless!" said Cecil, turning away.

"Hold!" exclaimed Sir Walter. "Hast thou a mind to serve me in the matter?"

"By my faith, I have!" answered Cecil, solemnly.

"Then, at thy speediest convenience, get me leave from her Highness to see her privily," returned [220] Sir Walter. "An' she refuse thine urgent entreaty, do thou"—here he thrust his hand into his vest, and drew forth a sealed letter—"then give her this billet, and say, with my humble prayers, and reverend love, I lay it at her feet."

"That will I," answered Sir Robert, accepting the letter. "Her Highness, if I be advised truly, hath by this time returned to Westminster, and I will seek her ear straightway. I would have had more heart for the business, though, an' thou hadst not given such offence to my Lord Essex."

"I offended him?" cried Raleigh. "What mean'st thou?"

"Hast thou, in plain verity, done him no wrong, then?" inquired Cecil. "This is most strange! But I have thy word for secrecy?"

"Without question!" answered Sir Walter.

"Then, believe me, worthy Sir Walter," pursued Cecil, "Essex is thine enemy." [221]

Sir Walter turned pale. "Now, afore God!" he exclaimed, "I have never given his Lordship a shade of cause! I have ever held him in good report, and thought him, above most men, noble, honest, and true."

"Well, he hates thee!" resumed Cecil. "But look cheerful on't, nevertheless. I will seek her Highness out of hand."

Sir Walter expressed his acknowledgments of his kindness, and, at the same time, revealed his love for the Queen, to whom his mission was addressed, in many flattering and dutiful expressions. Cecil readily caught at these, though seemingly inattentive, as calculated to win him the Queen's favour, and after a while, having heard Sir Walter out, took his leave, and set forth for the palace.

He was really earnest in the interest he professed in Sir Walter's behalf. He saw now, after a trial, that he would be unable to play upon Essex as he had imagined; and that, in fact, Essex was more likely to play upon *him*. Under these circumstances, he conceived that it would be advisable [222] to attract the Queen's favour to Raleigh again; and if he could any way compass this, he would be able, in building his own fortune, to counteract the overbearing pride of the one, in the friendly aid of the other. The seeds of dissension which he had sown between them, by reporting them to each other as enemies, would prevent their ever coming to an explanation; and in the division of their interests, he would find means and opportunity to advance himself.

Full of these speculations, the crafty double-dealer reached the palace. The Queen, he found, had already arrived thither, and was now in one of the private chambers of the palace. Having sent to her to desire an interview, she ordered him to be admitted, and he was thereupon conducted to

her presence.

The Queen was alone; and, to judge from the expression of her countenance, in a humour not unfavourable to the design he had in hand. She even smiled as he bent his knee before her, and, [223] in a gentle tone, ordered him to rise.

“Still must I kneel, most gracious liege,” answered Cecil; “for I come as a suppliant from one who, could he but see thee, would kneel here for ever, unless thou wouldst grant him thy royal pardon.”

“Ah!” cried the Queen. “What offence hath thy client committed?”

“He hath sworn by thy hand, which he holds an inviolable oath, that he hath done none wilfully, my liege,” replied Cecil. “In good sooth, he swore to ’t so movingly, ’twas quite piteous to hear him.”

“Prithee, who may he be?” inquired the Queen.

“Sir Walter Raleigh, your Highness,” said Cecil, hesitatingly.

“How now, sirrah?” cried the Queen, rising, with her eyes flashing with anger. “What assurance hast thou of my forbearance, that thus thou darest to plead for him?”

“The frown of your Highness bows me to the earth,” answered Cecil, dropping his gaze to the [224] floor, and really feeling very great terror. “Indeed, indeed, my liege, I had determined to cast him utterly from me, but when I heard his right eloquent tongue, which certainly hath few peers, discourse of your Highness’s captivating charms—of your admirable learning, politics, piety, and matchless goodness, my heart warmed to him in despite of me, and, from being his enemy, I became his friend.”

“Well, well, I pardon thee for once,” said the Queen; “but speak of him no more. Certes, he hath as winning a discourse as I have ever heard.”

“To hear him,” observed Cecil, with more confidence, “likening your Highness in authority to Semiramis, in resolution to Zenobia, in piety to Helena, and in beauty to Cleopatra. In good faith, ’twas moving!”

“Did he do this?” asked the Queen, in a low voice.

“With more earnestness than I can speak of, my liege,” replied Cecil. “But when he did enlarge [225] on your Highness’s bountiful disposition, and, with piteous sighs, set forth how many great things your Highness had done for his poor self—saying, ’twas she gained me this, or ’twas her raised me to that, and ’twas her royal hand (and thereat he would look so grievously sorrowful) that presented me with such a thing; and, withal, delivering himself with such admirable tenderness—i’faith, mine eyes were almost moved to tears.”

The Queen made no reply for a brief space. “By my troth,” she said, at length, “I can well believe thee. But I will not pardon him. No—not a jot! Still, an’ thou likest, on thine own conjecture, to tell him not to be of desperate mind, thou mayst.”

“Knowing the royal nature of your Highness, I will even advise him so,” answered Cecil. “But if [226] thou wouldst suffer me, as ’twere without thy privity, to place him behind some screen, where, unseen by thee, he might behold thee pass by, and so once more view thy face, ’twould be more comfortable to his poor heart than aught that can be said by me.”

“By my troth, thou movest me!” returned the Queen. “But I will not pardon him! He knoweth a mode may persuade me, though. Counsel him to think on’t.”

“I will, my liege,” replied Cecil; “but before I go, I would humbly sue your Highness, in your great goodness, to accept this poor billet, which he charged me, with many protestations of love, to lay at your Highness’s feet.”

The Queen, though evidently no way displeased, hesitated a moment, and then accepted the proffered letter. Her eyes brightened, as, with a careful hand, she drew it open, and found within a small gold ring.

“What request did he bid thee make of me?” she asked, looking up.

“That thou wouldst be pleased to see him privily, my liege,” answered Cecil.

“Let him attend me out of hand,” returned the Queen. “No more now; but hie to him at once!” [227]

Sir Robert, pleased beyond measure, did not linger on his errand, but took a hasty leave of the Queen, and departed. Walking at a quick pace, he soon arrived at Durham House, and, on gaining admittance, was immediately conducted to the presence of Raleigh.

That personage received him with an unaffected welcome. His account of his interview with the Queen, and its result, which was so much more favourable than he had anticipated, afforded Sir Walter the highest gratification; and he prepared to embrace the advantage it held out without delay.

Nevertheless, nearly half an hour elapsed before he was fully equipped for his meditated visit to the court. When he had once fulfilled his toilet, however, he made no pause; but, accompanied by Cecil, set out for the palace.

On their arrival at that structure, they found that the Queen was on the point of attending a council; but, though the moment seemed unfavourable, Sir Walter determined, for all this, to [228] seek an audience on the instant. His pursuit of that object was successful; and, leaving Cecil in

the hall, he was shortly ushered to the royal presence.

The Queen was still alone; but her brow, under the shadow of a light gold crown, which she had donned to attend the council, no longer looked kindly, but rather cold and severe. Sir Walter approached her in silence, and, on drawing nigh her chair, threw himself at her feet.

Nearly a minute elapsed before the Queen spoke; but, in the mean time, her eyes, which were remarkably penetrating, ran over the cavalier with a glance of displeasure. Sir Walter, however, kept his eyes on the floor, and never looked up once.

"By my father's head," cried the Queen, at length, "I have a right good mind to drive thee hence [229] again! What can palliate thy gross perjury? Knowest thou aught, in the conception of mortal wit, that can afford thee a reasonable excuse?"

Sir Walter was silent.

"Ay, think it over and over," resumed the Queen, angrily; "and mark if thy subtlety frame a sufficient plea! Yet do I not blame thee, after all, so much as the hussey by whom thou wast decoyed. By the Lord, 'twere better for her, in this instance, that she had never seen a man. Which of my women was it?"

"My gracious liege," said Raleigh, in a soft voice, "I were a traitor to profess, as I might, that I know not whereof I am charged withal; for Sir Robert Cecil hath advised me on't at full. Nevertheless, I do solemnly protest, by thy fair hand, and mine own honour, 'tis utterly without ground."

"How?" cried the Queen, starting up. "Wilt thou dare to tell me a lie?"

"Now, God forefend, dread sovereign!" said Sir Walter, his cheeks mantling with a deep flush. [230] "'Tis true, I met a lady in the park last even; but, by all I regard sacred, she was no mistress of mine, nor any lady of the court. She was simply a poor friend—a poor, defenceless maid, who sought me with a suit to your Highness."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Queen.

"'Twas even so, your Highness," answered Raleigh: "a maid (let me speak in pure sooth) whom I would perish rather than wrong."

"Rise, Sir!" said the Queen; "we pardon thee! Let us hear this maiden's suit."

Sir Walter, re-assured by the Queen's tone, entered on the task enjoined him with hearty good will; and, without concealing one particular, set forth how he had first become acquainted with Evaline de Neville, how her father had been arrested on a charge of murder, how Hildebrand Clifford, the captain of his expedition to America, had convinced him of Sir Edgar's innocence, and how that person was now confined in Newgate. As he proceeded with his narrative, he expatiated at length, and in terms of the highest commendation, on the beauty, virtue, and [231] modesty of Evaline, and showed how her affection for her father had induced her to share his prison at Exeter, and had since brought her to London. In conclusion, he implored the Queen, in consideration of her rare merits, to interfere personally in her behalf, and take her under her special protection.

"We will see to 't," answered the Queen, in a gracious tone. "The council will be sitting anon; and I will then, if occasion serve, have the matter diligently investigated. Now, see who waits without!"

Sir Walter, with a dutiful bow, turned quickly to the chamber-door, and drew it open. An officer was waiting without, with two ushers; and, supposing the Queen would speak with them, Sir Walter beckoned them forward.

"Sir Ferdinand Georges is here, your Highness," he said, turning to the Queen.

Sir Ferdinand, who was the officer referred to, entered at this moment.

"The council awaits your Highness," he said. [232]

"We will attend it," replied the Queen. "Ho, Sir Knight!" she added to Raleigh, "give me thine arm!"

Thus speaking, she placed her arm on that of Raleigh; and, followed by Sir Ferdinand and the two ushers, passed to the council-chamber.

On arriving at the door of that apartment, she paused, and withdrew her arm from that of Raleigh.

"Wait thou here a while," she said. "Thou mayst be called for anon."

Raleigh, catching her hand as it fell, dropped on one knee, and, bowing his head, raised her hand to his lips. The Queen smiled, and, without more ado, passed into the council-chamber.

Like Raleigh, Sir Ferdinand Georges and the two ushers, by whom she had been escorted thither, remained without, waiting her return. On her entry into the chamber, however, the two ushers [233] fell back a few paces, and only Sir Walter and Sir Ferdinand stood near the door. Thus left to themselves, those two cavaliers, who evidently were no way ill-disposed to each other, were able to enter into discourse, and they availed themselves of the opportunity forthwith.

Nearly an hour elapsed before their conversation sustained any interruption. At the end of that time, however, the door behind them was pushed open, and Raleigh was summoned to appear before the council.

It was a bar that might have daunted even a more resolute mind; but Raleigh presented himself before it, in obedience to its summons, with a countenance and heart perfectly undisturbed. There were, notwithstanding, several sitting round, on the right of the Queen, whom he knew to be his enemies, and several whom he believed to bear him no great good will. Among the first, the Earl of Leicester, sitting on the Queen's right hand, was the principal; and in the latter class he included Burleigh and Walsingham. To counterbalance the enmity or ill will of these, however, [234] the venerable faces of Knollys, Egerton, Sussex, and the Lord Justice Popham, with the not unkindly brow of Secretary Herbert, assured him of favour and support. Moreover, the Queen herself, as if to inspire him with confidence, smiled on him as he entered; and, in that one smile, he had a tower of strength and hope.

A slight pause followed his entry, when the Earl of Leicester, turning towards the Queen, broke the silence.

"Your Highness," he said, "hath been pleased to order Sir Walter Raleigh hither, in order that he may himself deliver, in his own words, what he hath already reported to you. I do profess, as the matter hath been said to involve a new Popish plot, that I hold it should be inquired into with the utmost diligence."

"I am so minded myself," answered the Queen. "Advise us what thou know'st of the business, Sir [235] Walter."

Thus addressed, Raleigh proceeded, in a low but distinct tone, to narrate the several particulars exculpatory of Sir Edgar de Neville, in reference to the charge he had been arrested on, which he had already made known to the Queen. As his narrative progressed, he remarked that Lord Burleigh paid especial attention, above that awarded by the other councillors, to its various details; and he was at a loss to conjecture what his marked notice might lead to. Nevertheless, he was no way embarrassed, and he brought his account to a close without once hesitating.

"A passing strange tale, by my faith!" said Lord Leicester, sneeringly, when his narrative was finished. "I marvel, Sir Walter Raleigh, 'twould ever win an advocate in thee."

"'Tis anent all reason," said Sir Francis Walsingham.

"Methinks, fair gentlemen, these argue more for its thorough investigation," remarked the Earl of Sussex. "I will even avow, on my part, that, if it win credit from Sir Walter Raleigh, it will be [236] credited by me."

"Certes, the word of so loyal a gentleman deserves a fair inquiry," observed the Queen, with a frown. "What sayst thou to it, my Lord Burleigh?"

"That the statement of Sir Walter Raleigh is true, my liege," answered Burleigh.

The Queen looked surprised, and the councillors, on either side of the table, and Sir Walter Raleigh, also, turned a glance of inquiry on his venerable face.

"It is even so, my liege," resumed Burleigh, after a pause. "A similar account, wherein fair mention was made of Sir Walter, was rendered me yesterday, by a person of high trust; and I had purposed to have reported it to your Highness to-day. Howbeit, when Sir Walter was summoned hither, methought I would first hear his testimony, and then leave it for the judgment of your Highness."

"Enough, my Lord," answered the Queen. "Let the prisoner be released incontinently. And my [237] Lord Leicester," she added, with a frown, "I may ask thee, in the words of Master Shakspear, 'where be your gibes now?' Go to! Thy counsel grows dull."

With these cutting words, the Queen arose, and, bowing to the council, extended her arm to Sir Walter Raleigh. That personage, ever on the alert, attended her promptly, and, with her arm drawn through his, conducted her from the chamber.

Leicester sat still for a while, as if he were perfectly stupified. Then, resuming all his natural haughtiness, he abruptly rose, and passed out of the chamber. He never entered it again!

The council seemed to be taken by surprise at the final fall of the once powerful favourite. Their surprise, however, was but momentary; and when he was no longer in view, all thought of him or his fate appeared to have subsided.

"Hast thou made out the warrant, Sir Francis, for Sir Edgar de Neville's release?" asked Burleigh [238] of Walsingham, at this juncture.

"I have, my Lord," answered Walsingham.

"Trust its delivery to me, then, worthy Sir Francis," returned Burleigh. "I will see to it myself."

Sir Francis, facetiously bidding him to make good speed, handed him the warrant; and the gouty premier then arose. His rising was the signal for the council to break up.

CHAPTER IX. [239]

Hildebrand Clifford had not (to borrow the nautical phrase of his lieutenant) "hove-to" above three hours, on the occasion described in a former chapter, before he was called to the deck again. On repairing thither, he found his lieutenant, Halyard, had been up for some time, and was

waiting his approach at the after-hatchway.

“A strange sail seen from the masthead, Sir,” he said, as Hildebrand made his appearance.

“What like is she?” asked Hildebrand.

“A large vessel, Sir,” answered Halyard. “One of the Dons, no doubt!”

“She must be a marvellous heavy sailer, then,” rejoined Hildebrand, “to be so far leeward of the [240]
fleet, which I see is now out of sight. Are we bearing towards her?”

“Right ahead, captain,” replied Halyard.

“I will go have a look for her,” said Hildebrand.

Accordingly, he broke away from Master Halyard, and, with a quick but steady step, passed towards the forecastle. A crowd of seamen, some score in number, were gathered in the bows, looking ahead; but they fell back directly he appeared, and thus opened to him a view of the remote horizon.

“Can ye see her from here, my lads?” he asked.

“Ay, Sir!” answered a half-dozen of voices:—“right ahead, Sir!”

Hildebrand, thus instructed, raised his hand over his eyes, and gazed in the direction specified with all his might. After a brief survey, he discerned a small slim object, like the trunk of a tree, on the edge of the horizon, which he readily recognised as the masts of a ship. On bringing it into [241]
view, he turned away from the forecastle, and stepped back to the quarter-deck.

“Thou mayst see her from the deck, now,” he said to Master Halyard, on coming up with that person. “Howbeit, I will even overhaul her from the mast-head.”

Without more words, he mounted into the shrouds, and proceeded, as on a previous occasion, to pass up aloft. He did not pause on his way, but ascended right up, over the topmast, and the top-gallant mast; and only stopped when he had gained the mast-head.

He remained in his elevated position for several minutes, and, as it seemed from the deck, gazed intently for’ard the whole time. At last, his curiosity appeared to be satisfied; and, step by step (yet not over-carefully), he descended to the deck again.

Master Halyard waited his return with some impatience.

“What cheer, Sir?” he inquired, as Hildebrand set his foot on the deck.

“A large galleon, Sir, big enough to eat us,” answered Hildebrand. “By my troth, she will have a [242]
store of doubloons aboard!”

Master Halyard involuntarily thrust his hands into his pockets; and, quite forgetful of his situation, began to hum a song.

“An’ she be well in the wake of the fleet,” observed Hildebrand, after a moment’s reflection, “methinks we might even venture it.”

“Let me perish else,” answered Halyard, whom the result of his search in his pockets, now that an attack on the galleon appeared uncertain, rendered desperate. “Hang me up, an’ I would not venture it in an old hen-coop.”

“We will see to ’t, then,” rejoined Hildebrand. “Let all the spare hands turn in, and take an hour’s rest. We will be up with her by ten o’clock!”

Reassured by a prospect so promising, Master Halyard thrust his hands into his pockets again; and hastened, in compliance with Hildebrand’s instructions, to order all the men that were not [243]
required for the navigation of the ship to take an hour’s rest. Having seen his order obeyed, he returned to the quarter-deck; and there, with becoming gravity, but not with any dread or apprehension of the result, arranged with Hildebrand how they could best realize their project of attacking the supposed galleon.

Meantime, the ship, favoured by the wind, made good way ahead, and bid fair to fulfil her commander’s expectations. As the time slipped by, the galleon became more distinct, and her hull, which hitherto had been invisible, or only distinguishable from the mast-head, was apparent from the forecastle by the evening. It was, however, far from being viewed by our friends with satisfaction; for the hull of the galleon could not be visible to them, unless their ship, and its hostile bearings, which were indicated by its course, were visible to her. On discovering these particulars, she might alter her course; and so, under cover of the night, escape them altogether. [244]
But though Hildebrand thought such a result was not unlikely, he determined, after deliberate reflection, to bear down on her still, and pursue the course he had entered on without deviation.

The issue justified his mode of proceeding. About three hours after nightfall, which (for it was now winter) was near the time that he had predicted, the look-out man in the weather-bow gave the anxiously-expected alarm.

“A large ship ahead, Sir!” he cried to Hildebrand, who, together with Halyard, was still pacing the quarter-deck.

The announcement drew a low buzz from the crew, who, though many of them were yet at liberty to remain below, had all assembled on the deck of their own accord; and a general rush, sounding like the roar of a cataract, was made to the forecastle. Loud as the noise was, however, the voice of Hildebrand, raised to its highest tone, was heard above it.

“Silence there! fore and aft!” he cried. [245]

All was still in a moment—so entirely and distinctly still, that one would have thought it impossible, on observing their profound silence, that the crowd of men around could be living creatures, much less that they were on the eve of a fierce and deadly struggle.

Hildebrand paused till his order was obeyed, when he resumed.—

“Pass the word for the drummer!” he cried.

While his command was being fulfilled, he quitted the quarter-deck, and ascended to the forecastle. Then, looking right ahead, he distinguished the galleon, scarcely a gun-shot in his front, and on the point of veering to windward. From the purposed change in her course, he was satisfied that, like him, she had suddenly become aware of the proximity of an enemy, and was seeking to avoid him. All prospect of surprise, therefore, was at an end, and he returned to the quarter-deck with the determination of steering straight alongside of her.

On the quarter-deck, by the side of the capstan, he found Halyard and the drummer. [246]

“Beat to quarters!” he said, to the latter.

The drummer obeyed; and while his spirit-stirring summons rolled through the ship, Hildebrand laid his hand on Halyard’s arm, and drew him aside.

“Man the three boats,” he said. “I will run straight for the galleon, and, as we come alongside, drop you all astern. When I think ye are fairly on your way, I will give the enemy a broadside, and, in the confusion, do you board her, all with one mind, on her nearer quarter. I will thereafter lend thee what succour I can.”

“A right noble project!” observed Halyard, feeling his pockets with both his hands. “How many men shall I muster, Sir?”

“Forty!” answered Hildebrand, “which, as thou knowest, is half the crew. Now,” he added, in a deeper tone, as he grasped Halyard by the hand, “give thee farewell!”

Halyard did not reply on the instant. His pause, however—only that the crisis rendered the briefest pause perceptible—was hardly apparent, albeit, when he did speak, his voice was somewhat shaken. [247]

“Farewell, noble captain!” he said. “Life is but short; let us live well on the road, says the gentle Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.”

During the short interval that the commander and his lieutenant thus conversed, the drummer had beaten his summons, which was to lead so many to a bloody end, with unabated assiduity. Short as the interval was—and it embraced but a few minutes—it sufficed to assemble on the deck the whole of the crew, and to cover every arrangement for entering into action. Each man’s bed, tied up taught in his hammock like a sack, was placed in the hammock-nettings, along the top of the ship’s bulwarks; the decks were cleared of all lumber; the guns were all manned; and the powder, with the portfires, sponges, and other implements for charging them, handed up the hatchways. Every man was armed; the flag of Old England was hoisted in the mizen; and nothing [248] remained, for the furtherance and completion of the design they had in hand, but to come up with the enemy.

In this state of things, Hildebrand struck off the men who, according to his previous arrangement, were to accompany Halyard, and ordered them to the boats. There, by his directions, they were all supplied with boarding-pikes, in addition to their cutlasses and pistols; and, though it was not quite likely that it would be required, an extra allowance of ammunition. The other men were ordered to their respective quarters of the ship.

So promptly had all these arrangements been conceived, determined on, and executed, that, from the first alarm of the galleon being in sight, as given by the look-out man for’ard, up to the moment at which every preparation was completed, scarcely five brief minutes had elapsed. In the interim, the ship, with the wind still aft, advanced steadily towards the galleon, a little to [249] leeward of her bows, and drew close upon her. Hildebrand, standing at the helm, whence he could command a view ahead, observed that she had prepared to receive him, and would probably meet him with a broadside. Expecting no less, he ordered the sails to be hauled up; and passed the word to the gunners, who were all posted at their several guns, to count ten before they answered the salute, which would cover the auxiliary attack of Halyard and the boarders. His orders had scarcely been delivered, when the ship, floating on the waves, came alongside of the enemy.

Scarcely a breath was exhaled on board the “Eliza” as she thus breasted the galleon. The terrible pause, however, was but momentary. As she came fairly alongside, looking like a little pleasure-boat in comparison with her huge adversary, the latter, conformably to Hildebrand’s expectations, poured into her her whole broadside. But the shot did little damage, and that, as it turned out, only to the ship’s hull—the crew having sheltered themselves behind the bulwarks. [250] Hildebrand alone had maintained his exposed position, and now, free from injury, looked anxiously round. The ship was enveloped in smoke; but sternwards, whither his glance first turned, the prospect was clearer; and he perceived that the boats had departed. He could distinguish nothing for’ard; but, with the aid of a speaking-trumpet, he could reach the crew with his voice, and he delivered his orders without hesitation.

“For’ard there!” he cried. “Grapple on to the enemy’s stern; and prepare to board!”

As the order fell from his lips, the deck below him, conformably to his previous order, opened its

fire, and poured a broadside into the enemy. The report was yet booming over the water, when a loud “hurrah” broke on the ear, and afforded a cheering assurance that the boats under Halyard had arrived at their destination.

Covered by the smoke of the galleon’s fire, Halyard had advanced towards her near quarter, [251] according to his instructions, without being observed; and, protected by the fire of his own ship, gained it unscathed. The broadside of the “Eliza” had caused a momentary confusion among the enemy, and, at this auspicious juncture, he pulled alongside, and led the way up her bulwarks. The crew on the lower-decks, at the several port-holes, observed him instantly, but, taken by surprise, their opposition did not impede him; and the disorder on the upper deck, where he was not yet visible, prevented it from spreading further. Before the alarm became general, he and his men had gained the hammock-nettings; and there, with a loud hurrah, prepared to make their way on the deck.

It was a terrible moment. Amidst the volumes of smoke which still rolled about, the stout little band, glancing quickly round, discerned hosts of grim adversaries, all armed to the teeth, and crowding towards them with the most fixed determination. But after the one rapid glance [252] mentioned, they hardly paused to draw a breath. Led on by Halyard, they sprang on the deck, and pressed forward in a mass. The charge was resistless; and the long boarding-pikes, propelled at double quick time, and with the whole force of each individual, swept over the quarter-deck like an avalanche. Nevertheless, the success, though so decided, lasted only a moment. As their small force became apparent, the Spaniards took courage; and joining together, under the guidance of one of their officers, pressed upon them bodily, front and rear. The English were forced together again in an instant. Falling into two ranks, they backed to each other, and thus, by a ready evolution, fronted the enemy either way. But the force opposed to them was overpowering. No sooner had each file, pressing resolutely forward, cleared the deck in their front, than the Spaniards rushed in between them, and renewed the struggle. The two files were now divided, and when, in obedience to a shout from Halyard, they sought to join again, the [253] Spaniards pressed down behind them, and attacked them both in front and rear. It soon became evident that they could not hold out much longer. Their ranks began to be thinned, and there was hardly one of them, not excepting Halyard, but had received some hurt. They still bore up, but, compared with their first assault, their efforts were feeble, and were rather the result of desperation, or a wild and reckless animosity, than genuine courage. They fought singly, too—back to back; and seemed more desirous to die hard, and, in their fall, to destroy as many of the enemy as they could, than to look for conquest. While all their energies were thus required for their defence, the Spanish commander had mustered a strong force, composed of the flower of his crew, to rush upon them simultaneously, and so overwhelm them at a blow. The overpowering reinforcement was already in motion, and the fate of the heroic Englishmen, after all their efforts, and their noble and glorious resistance, appeared to be now decided, when a loud hurrah [254] broke from the stern of the ship.

“Hurrah!” responded Master Halyard; and each of his comrades caught up the cheer.

The help that was approaching might well tend to reanimate them. As the English ship approached the galleon’s poop, the helmsman, under Hildebrand’s direction, ran her bowsprit against that vessel’s stern, and, pursuant to the orders they had received, the sailors instantly fastened on to her with the grappling-irons. Hildebrand joined them the next moment, and, led on by him, they sprang on to her poop. The resistance they encountered was terrible, but, though they scarcely numbered thirty, they swept onward undaunted, driving all before them. As they became masters of the poop, a panic fell on the Spaniards, and they fled for’ard, past the little band of Halyard, without a struggle. When they pushed by that weakened body, they forced on with them, in one confused mass, those of the enemy with whom they were contending, and so [255] left Halyard at liberty. He had hardly time to recover his breath, however, when he was joined by Hildebrand.

“Now, then, my lads!” cried that person: “on them all at once! Now! Hurrah!”

“Hurrah!” answered his men.

But the Spaniards, now utterly disheartened, did not tarry for the charge. As the tall form of Hildebrand was seen to spring forward, they pressed back, and made a rush for the fore-hatchway. Hildebrand loitered as he discerned their object, and, checking the impetuosity of his men, only gave the Spaniards an impulse forward, without inflicting on them any hurt. Assured by his forbearance, some of the rearmost Spaniards, after a brief interval, turned round to him, and offered him their arms. Hildebrand ordered them to throw them down, and, when they had obeyed his injunctions, passed them behind him, and there placed them under guard. He had [256] scarcely seen them secured, when, following their example, the remainder of the galleon’s crew surrendered, and he was now the undisputed master of the ship.

The Spaniards having thrown down their arms, the only care of the conqueror, in securing his victory, was to provide them a prison. The ready mind of Hildebrand quickly decided where they could be best placed under restraint. After a moment’s pause, he ordered them to be passed down the main-hatchway; and the hatch, which was of stout oak, and, consequently, could not be easily forced up, to be well secured above them. When his directions were fulfilled, he posted a sentry over the hatchway, and felt that his conquest was now secure.

CHAPTER X.

We left Don Rafaele in a state of great excitement. After hesitating a moment, he stepped out on the locker, outside his berth, and so to the deck. All was confusion above, and even on the same deck, in the steerage; and feet were heard rushing to and fro, as if the whole crew had gone distracted. Stretching out one of his hands, he steadied himself against the table, and paused to consider what he should do. As he did so, the ship, without the least forewarning, returned the broadside of the galleon; and, by the rebound she made in the water, threw him fairly off his feet.

Though his head fell with some violence against the locker, the excitement he laboured under, [258] and the hurry and distraction of his thoughts, with the hundred terrors around, did not admit of his feeling any pain, or, if he were sensible of a slight aching, did not suffer him to give it heed. He sprang to his feet in an instant, and, stretching his hands out before him, so that he should not run against the table, made for the cabin-door.

After a little time, he found the door, and succeeded in drawing it open. The steerage was full of smoke, here black, and there white, according as it was near to or removed from several prospective portfires; and, through the gloom, he distinguished the figures of a dozen men, darting towards the main-hatchway, about thirty feet for'ard. The stench of gunpowder, emitted by the discharged guns, with the dense smoke, was almost suffocating; but, as the hatchways were open, the fresh air rushed in from above, and soon made the atmosphere more supportable. Before the smoke was dispelled, however, the gunners, who were the men that had figured in it, [259] had passed up the main hatchway; and Don Rafaele stood on the lower deck alone.

A lighted lanthorn was standing on the deck, a few feet in his front; and, when he found himself alone, he sprang forward a pace, and caught it up. The din that now prevailed was quite stunning; and the report of fire-arms, the clashing of weapons, and the tramp of feet, mingled with loud hurrahs, shouts, and deep groans, made his heart quake, and seemed to rivet him to the spot. Nevertheless, he did not remain stationary. As the din grew more confounding, he sprang back to the cabin, and, with a trembling step, passed inward. Securing the lanthorn on the table, he sat down on the locker, and there resolved to await whatever was to betide.

But he did not keep his resolution. It would, indeed, have been a stout heart, or an inordinately insensible one, that could have met such an ordeal so passively. The din that prevailed was [260] absolutely appalling, and, unless actively engaged, with danger to animate, and action to support him, no man even, much less a stripling, could have sustained it with unshaken nerves. Yet overhead all was quiet, and the noise seemed, as was actually the case, to come from one side, rather than to prevail in the ship. Don Rafaele was perfectly bewildered for a while: at length, burying his face in his hands, he burst into tears.

He remained thus for several minutes, when, still weeping, he threw himself on his knees, and raised his hands and eyes towards heaven. Long and fervent was his prayer, as was evident, not by his words (for he uttered none), but by his deep emotion, and the stirring and varied expressions of his face. At last, he rose from his knees, and, sitting down on the locker, near his former position, again buried his face in his hands.

He had been disposed in this manner but a short time, when the sounds of strife and turmoil [261] ceased, and all became perfectly quiet. He was amazed. What could have happened? How had Hildebrand, whose voice he had distinguished so often in the recent din, or fancied he had distinguished, come off. He might be slain!

The heart of the young Spaniard turned cold as the bare possibility of such a catastrophe occurred to him. Shuddering with horror, he again turned his beautiful face upward, and his full eyes, brimmed with tears, seconded his prayer for his friend's safety. But some time elapsed before he was to be assured of that happy circumstance. Though the tramp of feet overhead was now once more audible, no one approached the cabin; and he was too much agitated, not only with his fears, but by sorrow, to seek for information on the deck. Near an hour intervened before any one drew nigh. Then, however, with a beating heart, he heard a step descending through the contiguous hatchway. It paused at the cabin-door; the latch, which he had fixed in its socket, was [262] then quickly raised; and Hildebrand burst into the cabin.

Don Rafaele sprang to meet him with the ardour of a mistress, and, as he came up with him, caught him affectionately by the hand.

"Thou art safe, then?" he cried, at the same time gazing earnestly in his face.

Hildebrand had removed from his face and apparel all trace of his participation in the recent conflict; but, notwithstanding this, his look, on his entry into the cabin, was pale and sad. As he met the warm welcome of his youthful friend, however, his countenance brightened; and if his eyes did not actually sparkle, they looked cheerful, and even lively. It was so inspiriting to receive such an earnest welcome, and, after encountering a strife so deadly, to find himself the object of such a devoted attachment, that the deepest affections of his heart were aroused, and, through their soothing influence, the strong excitement he had been labouring under was assuaged. A bright smile suffused his lip as he replied to Don Rafaele.

"Ay, and unhurt, Senhor," he said. "'Twill please thee less, mayhap (since the enemy were thy [263] countrymen), to be told that we have conquered."

"Now, by Madonna, I am right glad on't!" answered Don Rafaele, with sparkling eyes. "I would the foe had been any other than Spaniards, but, since it was not so ordered, I am heartily pleased that thou hast beaten them off."

“I have even captured them,” observed Hildebrand.

“Alack!” sighed Don Rafaele.

“Nay, be of good heart, fair Senhor!” returned Hildebrand. “Because thy country war with mine, it follows not, in my conceit, that we two be adversaries. I’faith, no! Ere thou shouldst suffer wrong, I would perish in defending thee!”

Don Rafaele pressed his hand.

“Be of good cheer, then!” pursued Hildebrand. “I will straight minister thee a potion”—here he smiled again—“will give thee a new heart.” [264]

“An’ ’twill do that,” smiled Don Rafaele, “prithee let us have it with all convenience; for, by my sooth, my heart is now so marvellously low, I have a mind to think I have even lost it. In such case, a new one will be right welcome.”

“Have at thee, then,” said Hildebrand. And, raising his voice, he added—“Without, there!”

His summons was answered by the silent steward, whose connexion with the cabin, in all matters of eating and drinking, has already been noticed. On his appearance, Hildebrand directed him, in English, to bring in some goblets, sugar, and hot water, which, though he made no answer, he did promptly. When these were supplied, he turned to the adjacent locker, and extracted therefrom a small *boutique*, or leather flask, filled with spirit. Mingling its contents with some hot water and sugar, he shortly compounded a sufficient quantity of the potion he had so eulogised, in recommending it to Don Rafaele, to fill two goblets. On thus completing its preparation, he [265] handed one of the goblets to Don Rafaele.

“Men boast of wine,” he said, as he placed the sparkling goblet in his hand; “and, to speak the simple sooth, wine hath much excellent virtue; but, when the heart is low, commend me to old Cognac. It hath a sweeter perfume than the rose, and excels honey in its savour. As a medicament, no drug may be held in its comparison, and ’twill remedy more ills than the cunningest apothecary. Beseech thee, take it to thy heart, fair Senhor!”

Don Rafaele, with a light smile, accepted the proffered goblet, and raised it to his lips.

“By my sooth, ’tis an admirable good liquor!” he exclaimed. “Yet do I marvel, Senhor Captain, [266] when thou holdest it in such hearty estimation, thou drinkest of it so sparingly; for, if I be of true remembrance, this is the first time I have ever seen thee partake of it.”

“Thou art right!” answered Hildebrand; “for, if it be drunk for mere sport, its notable good properties become of no account. But when the heart is faint after battle, the body weary with action, or the spirit oppressed with heaviness, or when, in an hour of joyfulness, we would ‘kill the fatted calf,’ it lendeth our inward man a ministering cheerfulness, which it is right pleasant to behold.”

“In sooth, it hath made me merry,” replied Don Rafaele, “yet will I, at the present pass, take no more on’t.”

“Thou wilt pledge me to thy mistress?” said Hildebrand.

Don Rafaele made no answer.

“Ah! thou art fearful of thy head,” resumed Hildebrand. “Well, well, ’tis a wise fear, and becomes [267] thee happily. It minds me of the saying of a notable poet, a countryman of mine, whom thou mayst one day see—‘O, that men should put an enemy in their mouths, to steal away their brains!’”

Don Rafaele still sat silent, with his eyes, which had before been raised to those of Hildebrand, turned towards the floor, and his brow looking sad and mournful. After a brief space, however, he spoke, though in a low voice, and with his eyes still downcast.

“Didst not say thou wouldst pledge me to thy mistress?” he asked.

“An’ thou art minded to take my pledge, I will,” answered Hildebrand, smiling, though mournfully.

“Prithee advise me first what like are her eyes?” replied Don Rafaele.

“Black—black as death,” said Hildebrand, “yet sparkling as day.”

Don Rafaele looked up. “What like are her cheeks?” he asked.

“Of a dark complexion,” answered Hildebrand. “I cannot tell how lovely.”

A smile stole over the face of Don Rafaele, and, though he still spoke low, the tone of his voice [268] was more cheerful, as he added—“What like is her hair?”

“In hue, ’twould shame the raven,” returned Hildebrand. “Moreover, it hath such an excellent fair curl, and is so admirably dressed withal—”

“Hold thee there,” cried Don Rafaele, with a merry laugh, “or thou wilt presently make her an angel. I will even take thy pledge without further description.”

“To her health, then!” exclaimed Hildebrand.

Don Rafaele, still smiling, caught up his goblet, and raised it to his lips. After just sipping of it contents, he laid it down again, and once more turned to Hildebrand.

“Thou art assured of her love: art thou not?” he said.

“I rather hold it in doubt,” answered Hildebrand.

“Thou art grievously in the wrong, trust me,” returned Don Rafaele. “Look on’t more cheerfully. [269] The maiden lives not would refuse thee!”

“Speak on’t no more, I prithee,” said Hildebrand; “for it makes me sorrowful.”

“Let it not do that,” replied Don Rafaele. “Give me thine ear a while, and, if thou think’st ’twill disperse thy melancholy, I will straight sing thee a song.”

“An’ thou lovest me, let us have it,” returned Hildebrand. “An’ it be a love-song, ’twill soothe me right speedily.”

Don Rafaele, without making a reply, leaned back against the wainscot, and, after a moment’s consideration, sang a song which may be thus translated:—

SONG.

O! love is like a summer flower,
  As fragrant and as fair;
And thus it flourishes an hour,
  And braves the hostile air:
But, like a flower, its bloom will fade,
  Its life is but a span;
And soon it shows the hapless maid
  There is no faith in man. [270]

O! ’tis a mournful thing to see
  The flowers of summer fade!
How more than mournful must it be
  To view the blighted maid!
Then, let no thought of present joy
  A future sorrow sow—
That bliss must surely have alloy
  That is another’s woe.

Though the images and sentiments of the song were not very striking, Hildebrand listened to it with the deepest attention, and, as it progressed, with no little emotion. Yet it was not the song—although, in its Spanish dress, it was well calculated to win and arrest the ear—but the singer, that moved him. His voice was so soft, its range so comprehensive, and its full and varied cadences so exquisitely delivered, that it sank to his very heart, and rapt him in wonder and admiration. He could hardly believe that the human voice was capable of such surpassing delicacy of expression. Even when Don Rafaele had ceased singing, his delicious tones still rang in his ear, and his ample chest, as if unable to command itself, still heaved with emotion. [271] Gradually he became more composed, but he did not speak, and he seemed, by his silence, and the deep lines of thought that marked his brow, to be no way disposed to speak. Whatever it might be that he meditated on, his reverie, far from dispersing, became deeper and more deep, and appeared to increase in gloom as it advanced. His complexion grew pale and sad; his eyes, heavy; and, in the expression of his whole countenance, he revealed distinct and unquestionable traces of an uneasy mind.

After thus meditating for nearly half an hour, he seemed to arouse himself, and suddenly turned round to his companion.

Don Rafaele had fallen asleep.

“Fair, sweet youth!” said Hildebrand, in a low voice, as he looked on his lovely countenance, “this [272] is a hard life for thee—and on me lies the blame. But I will be tender of thee. Albeit, in my thoughtless folly, I have unwittingly done wrong to *her*, she shall leave no charge on me concerning thee.”

So speaking, he caught the sleeping Spaniard in his arms, and, without loosening his clothes, raised him up, and carried him to his berth. There, with a deep sigh, he laid him gently on the bed, and left him to his repose.

He now proposed to take an hour’s rest himself. His duties did not debar him from this indulgence, as he had already, previous to leaving the galleon, made every arrangement that his ship and prize required. The command of the latter he had intrusted to Halyard, with a crew of forty men; and the watch of his own ship, during his stay below, was consigned to the able governance of Tom Tarpaulin. Both ships were bound straight for England, and, though the “Eliza” was a far better sailer than the heavy galleon, were so navigated, with the help of fair [273] weather, as to keep constantly in company. Thus associated, they arrived, in about three weeks’ time, safe in the river Thames.

CHAPTER XI. [274]

It was a fair morning in the January of the year Wonderful, or Admirable year, as it had been forenamed by Doctor Dee, and other knowing astrologers, that two cavaliers, mounted on gallant

steeds, rode up to the Strand entrance to Durham House, and there alighted. The taller of the two, and, it may be said, the senior also, then stepped up to the door, and inflicted thereon a loud rap. His summons was promptly answered, and a servant, who appeared uncapped at the door, inquired his business.

“I would see Sir Walter Raleigh, an’ he be within,” replied the taller cavalier.

“Will it please your worship to advertise me of your name,” answered the servant. [275]

“Master Hildebrand Clifford, of his worship’s cruizer, the ‘Eliza,’” rejoined the cavalier.

“His worship will be heartily glad to see thee, Sir,” said the servant. “An’ it please thee, prithee follow me to his presence.”

Hildebrand and his companion, who was no other than Don Rafaele, immediately entered the house, and were led by the servant to the library. There, agreeably to a premonition of the servant, they found Sir Walter Raleigh.

As they presented themselves in the doorway, and Sir Walter’s eyes, glancing thitherwards, caught a glimpse of their features, he sprang to meet them, and caught Hildebrand by both his hands.

“My right trusty Clifford,” he cried, “give thee a hearty welcome home! I need not inquire of thy [276] health; for ’tis manifest in thy face.”

“An’ the face offer such credible testimony, I have a fair assurance of thine, Sir Walter,” said Hildebrand. “But,” he added, with a smile, “wert thou ever so ailing, I have news for thee would make thee right merry.”

“The matter! the matter!” cried Sir Walter, eagerly.

“We have brought home with us a fair galleon,” answered Hildebrand, “and, among other choice freights, she hath aboard of her, under a goodly guard, five hundred bars of gold, of the esteemed worth of thirty thousand doubloons.”

As Hildebrand thus briefly made known the successful result of his voyage, Sir Walter’s face became brighter and more bright at each word. So great was his joy, and, as it appeared afterwards, his surprise, that for a brief space he could not speak, and it was only by the sparkle of his eyes that Hildebrand became sensible of his gratification. In a moment or two, however, he recovered himself, and gave his sentiments utterance.

“Fair befall thee, my noble Clifford, for thy news,” he said; “and, to requite it, mayst thou never [277] hear ill tidings thyself! Albeit I had a brave hope of thee, I looked not that thy report should bear such an excellent complexion. Sooth to speak, indeed, I had begun to fear thee lost.”

“I fear me, the chartered bark, which was designed to be mine abettor, is lost of a verity,” observed Hildebrand.

“Not so,” answered Sir Walter, smiling. “She hath returned safe, but hath been seized by the creditors. On reaching Roanoke, she was advised of thy visit and departure; and thereupon, having no hope of rejoining thee, came straight back. But who is this brave friend of thine, Master Clifford?”

“I’faith, Sir,” returned Hildebrand, “I may say, with a friend of thine, in one of his right famous [278] plays, ‘thereby hangs a tale.’ He hath come with me from Cadiz, his native city; and I beseech thee, if my poor commendations can win him thy favour, to look upon him graciously; for I hold him even as myself.”

“No more,” said Sir Walter. “I would be friends with him.”

And, so speaking, he caught up Don Rafaele’s hand, and clasped it cordially.

“Fair Senhor, I give thee welcome to England!” he said, in Spanish. “While thou art here, beseech thee, as thou wouldst do me a courtesy, to make thy stay in my house.”

“I thank you, Senhor,” answered Don Rafaele, in a low voice.

Sir Walter was about to address him further, when Hildebrand, with more abruptness than his wont, interposed.

“I have another matter to tell thee of, Sir Walter,” he said, “which requires to be considered with all despatch.”

“What may it be?” inquired Sir Walter.

“There is a great expedition on foot at Cadiz,” answered Hildebrand, “and, as I am advised, in all [279] the other ports of Spain; and men report (I know not how truly) ’tis designed against England. Moreover, the ambassador at Madrid has been placed in durance.”

“This is strange news, indeed,” observed Sir Walter. “How wast thou advertised of it?”

Hildebrand, in a few comprehensive words, informed him, by way of reply, how he had been arrested in Cadiz, and, without going into particulars, of his dialogue on that occasion with Don Felix di Corva. Sir Walter heard him to an end with the deepest interest, when, without a moment’s pause, he announced his intention of repairing instantly to the palace, and communicating his intelligence to the Queen.

“Thou must with me,” he added to Hildebrand. “Thy friend, who must be mine also henceforth, can tarry our return here.”

Don Rafaele, on being made acquainted with the proposition, and the fact that they were about to [280]
wait on the Queen, readily agreed to tarry there till they should return; and, at the same time, suggested that, if their business required despatch, Sir Walter could make use of his horse, which, as it was still saddled at the door, would prevent any delay. Sir Walter embraced his offer, and, together with Hildebrand, thereupon took leave of Don Rafaele, and departed. On reaching the exterior of the house, they paused only to commend Don Rafaele to the care of the servant, and then, with a prompt spring, mounted their horses, and set out for the palace.

Putting their horses to a brisk pace, they shortly arrived at that structure. They found, however, on inquiry, that the Queen was then in council, and, consequently, was not likely to grant them an audience. But Sir Walter, notwithstanding this, insisted that his message should be conveyed to her; and Sir Ferdinand Georges, to whom his communication was made, and who was the officer [281]
attending on the council, ultimately undertook to be its bearer.

Sir Walter waited the Queen's answer with some impatience. At last (and, to say the truth, before very long), Sir Ferdinand returned, and informed him that the Queen would not see him till she rose from the council.

"I must even ask thee to seek her Highness once more, then, worthy Sir Ferdinand," answered Sir Walter; "and advise her, that what I have to deliver withal is of exceeding moment, and involves the honour, safety, and welfare of her crown."

"On such a message, Sir Walter, I dare not pause," answered Sir Ferdinand. "Though it should bring me to the block, I will even advise her thereof."

So answering, he turned away, and repaired once more to the Queen. While our two friends were [282]
speculating on the result of his mission, he reappeared, and, in a low voice, summoned Sir Walter to appear before the council.

Sir Walter entered the council-chamber with a firm step, and, making a low bow, advanced to the Queen's chair, when he dropped gracefully on one knee, at her feet.

"Rise, Sir Walter Raleigh," said the Queen, graciously. "We have received thy most alarming message; and as it comes from thee, whom we know to be wise above most men, and, withal, a right loyal gentleman, we may say truly, it is alarming."

"Not less so than your Highness conceives," answered Raleigh. "I am informed, from a sure quarter, that the Spaniard is preparing to invade us."

An exclamation of surprise broke from several of the council.

"This news finds us unprepared," observed the Queen. "Let a messenger be despatched for my [283]
Lord Burleigh."

While Secretary Herbert, who sat nearest to the door, sprang to obey her injunction, the Queen resumed.—

"Whence derivedst thou these tidings, Sir Walter?" she asked.

"From the captain of my expedition to America, my liege," answered Sir Walter. "He hath just returned, after capturing, with only one poor ship, a rich galleon, laden to the brim with Spanish gold."

"By my troth, I give thee joy!" exclaimed the Queen, with sparkling eyes. "Let this brave adventurer, whoever he be, attend us at his convenience, and"——

While she was yet speaking, the chamber-door was thrown open, and Lord Burleigh, leaning on a crutch, and bearing in one hand a capacious green bag, appeared in the doorway.

All eyes were turned on the aged nobleman as he entered the chamber, and, with a slow and [284]
tottering step, advanced to his seat. His countenance, always grave, was now unusually dark and heavy, and seemed to intimate that he also was the bearer of important tidings. The Queen only replied to his bow with a smile, and all waited his first words in silent but eager expectation.

He did not keep them waiting long. On gaining his seat, he paused only to turn an inquiring glance on Sir Walter Raleigh, and then, in a grave tone of voice, proceeded to deliver himself.

"I met your Grace's messenger on the stair," he said, addressing the Queen. "I should have attended the council afore; but I was stayed, as I was mounting to my litter, by a courier from Madrid."

"The news?" cried the Queen, anxiously.

"A scandal to Christendom!" exclaimed Burleigh. "Your Grace's ambassador, Master Mason, had [285]
been placed under restraint, and was only just released. Further, a large armada, numbering one hundred and thirty ships of war, was preparing to invade your Highness's realm. The ordering and force of the armada hath been boastingly set down in a book, as if it were above resistance; and certes, an' we rely only on our earthly means, we are as Ichabod, and our glory hath departed. The courier"—here he put his hand into his large green bag, and drew forth a small book—"hath brought over one of these books, and I here offer it for your Grace's inspection."

The Queen, as he ceased speaking, eagerly caught up the book, and, drawing it open, glanced anxiously at its contents. As she turned hastily from page to page, the council watched the changing expressions of her countenance with the deepest earnestness; and for nearly half an hour, during which she never once looked up, or removed her eyes from the book, maintained the most profound silence. At length, the Queen laid the book down, and, in a somewhat agitated [286]
voice, broke the protracted pause.

“As the Lord liveth, we must to arms straight!” she cried. “Antichrist is up; and our fair realm, which hath been his greatest eyesore, is to be his first victim. The force is a hundred and thirty ships, commanded by the Marquis of Santa Cruz, who, we all know, is reputed both brave and skilful. Admiral Paliano, Don Amadius of Savoy, Don John of Medicis, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Duke of Sabionetta, with many others, the most renowned lords and princes of Spain and Italy, have a part in the expedition. Twenty thousand men, under that bloody man, the Duke of Parma, join it from Flanders. And—which shows its devilish origin—the Pope lays on its standard his most solemn benediction.”

As she ceased speaking, the several members of the council broke into various exclamations, [287] which revealed, in distinct and forcible colours, both their surprise and their concern; but not one of them displayed the least indecision. Glancing hastily at their respective faces, the Queen seemed, by a sudden change in her demeanour, to derive from them a new confidence, which made her naturally stout heart even more determined, and put all her fears and apprehensions to flight.

“We must discuss this matter anon,” she said, after a pause. “Meantime, let each of you, in your several departments, ascertain our means and capabilities of defence, and be prepared promptly to settle what order and provision can be made in that regard. My Lord Burleigh, be it your business to summon together the Parliament. To-night, at nine of the clock, I will meet you all here again.”

“Before we take our leaves, my liege,” said Lord Burleigh, “it were advisable, methinks, that a [288] measure should be resolved on for delivering these heavy tidings to your loyal people. Shall it be done by proclamation?”

There was a brief pause, when the Queen, in a happy spirit of invention, directed that the intelligence should be dispersed abroad through the medium of a public journal, to be published periodically; and which, at a merely nominal charge, should put the people in possession of every particular. The council unanimously approved of the project; and thus, at the dictation of the great princess, arose the first idea of an English newspaper.

As this grave and important point was settled, the Queen, happening to look on one side, let her glance fall on Sir Walter Raleigh, and she thereupon called that personage forward.

“We owe thee some thanks,” she said, “yet will we not pay thee now. We will see thee anon, when [289] thou shalt deliver to us, as largely as thou canst, the several particulars of thy late expedition. Meantime, give thee farewell!”

Sir Walter caught up her proffered hand, and, with a lowly and graceful bow, raised it to his lips. He then bowed to the council, and retired.

He found Hildebrand without, looking anxiously for his return. Nevertheless, before he informed him how his intelligence respecting the Spanish armada had been confirmed, and what measures were meditated in consequence, he led him down the contiguous stairs, and brought him forth from the palace. There, being no way pledged to secrecy, he briefly acquainted him with all that had taken place at the council-board.

Hildebrand heard him to an end without interruption, when he suggested that, as he had yet a great deal to learn from him, and much to tell him, they had better ride off to the ships, at Deptford; and they would then be able to converse freely on their way. Sir Walter agreed to his [290] proposal, and, accordingly, without further discussion, they mounted their horses, and set off in the direction of Deptford.

As they rode along, Hildebrand inquired anxiously after his friends the Nevilles, and how they had fared, subsequent to his departure for America, in their suit with the Government. Sir Walter’s reply called up in his bosom the most discordant and conflicting feelings. If the picture it presented of the sufferings of Sir Edgar, under the mortifications and indignities that he had been subject to, excited his indignation, he was moved to a softer sympathy by its detail of the patience, fortitude, and filial devotion of the incomparable Evaline. Nor was he indifferent to the favourable mention that was made of Bernard Gray, though, as Sir Walter’s knowledge of that person was limited, and derived only from the grateful remarks of Evaline, he was spoken of but [291] briefly. He was silent for a short time after Sir Walter had put him in possession of the several particulars of the transaction, when he delivered himself at large.

“I do heartily admire Mistress Evaline’s dutiful bearing,” he said. “Of a verity, she hath a store of notable good qualities, and very excellent virtues. More have I never noted in any one maiden, in England or elsewhere. But, to hear thy tale out, Sir Walter, hast thou had no advice of her since her worshipful father was set at large?”

“I’faith, have I!” answered Sir Walter. “Sir Edgar and she came to me together, on the same day [292] that he was enlarged; and discoursed with me concerning his liberation right familiarly. In especial did they dwell on their obligations to thee, and, as I failed not to confess, not without reason. Further, Sir Edgar did importune me, with many hearty fair words, to speed thee to him on thy return; and, albeit sweet Mistress Neville said not a word, methought she did second his invitation with her sweet looks, whereunto I tendered my whole allegiance.”

Hildebrand sighed. “I will even hold me to the good knight’s invitation with all despatch,” he said.

“Well,” smiled Sir Walter, “I would have thee do no less. But, now that I have made thy heart light (nay, look not at me so grievously amazed), prithee unfold to me at large the particulars of thy late voyage.”

Glad to escape from a subject which he began to think could not be pursued, at the passing moment, without subjecting him to Sir Walter's raillery, though he could not remember that he had ever laid himself open to such a consequence, Hildebrand readily complied with this request, and proceeded to deliver a succinct history of his voyage. He touched as lightly as possible, [293] however, on his personal adventures, and, in relating what had passed at Cadiz, entirely skipped over the romantic incident of his connexion with Donna Inez, which was, in reality, the liveliest reminiscence that the voyage presented to him. By the time that he had finished his narrative, they arrived at Deptford, and they then made straight for the ships.

They found that Master Halyard, impatient to have a turn ashore, had already begun to unload the galleon. The precious cargo of that vessel was now being raised up, and carted, under a guard of armed seamen, to the Queen's warehouse. In the course of the day, the whole of the boxes of metal, the most valuable portion of the cargo, were thus secured, and every arrangement made for effecting a perfect clearance. When they had seen matters brought to this satisfactory stage, Sir Walter and Hildebrand, taking a hearty leave of Master Halyard, quitted [294] the ship, and, mounting their horses, returned straight to town.

CHAPTER XII. [295]

It was in the same month of January, and on a morning equally fair with that which opened our preceding chapter, that Evaline de Neville, and her father, Sir Edgar, having just finished their morning meal, were seated together in a commodious chamber, on the upper floor of Neville Grange. A light frost was in progress; but a fire blazed in the andirons, under the large chimney, that communicated a comfortable degree of warmth to every part of the room. Surrounded by this influence, the two inmates of the chamber, though seated some distance from the fire, were [296] perfectly at their ease, and seemed to be no way sensible of the cold without.

Sir Edgar was reading, and, from the smile that, every now and then, suffused his lips, the work he was perusing appeared to be a light one. Evaline, like an assiduous housewife, was engaged in working some embroidery, and her ardent mind was labouring as earnestly with varied threads of thought.

Her appearance had undergone a great alteration during the last few months. The outlines of her exquisite person, as she sat erect in her chair, looked more matured, and revealed the most bewitching traces of female loveliness. Viewed separately, the mould of each limb, in its turn round, presented some unexpected attraction, and, while it lay perfectly still and motionless, was yet more charming from its look of life and elasticity, than from its numberless graces. Not the least of these lay in the uninterrupted accuracy which was followed by the outline of her whole [297] figure. In pursuing this, the eye expected, as an ascertained consequence, each successive and varied turn, and followed the *contour* spontaneously through every line. But no eye could glance at her fair shoulders and neck, falling imperceptibly into the upper region of her bosom, which was just visible above the frilled edging of her bodice, without making an admiring pause. Here the very *beau ideal* of proportion, marked with a hundred beautiful shades, was displayed in full, and, withal, was so bright and lively, that one could almost see the animation that it protected and veiled over. The delicate rounding of her chin wooed the gaze on further; and in her fresh and dazzling complexion, yet only relieved, not overcast, by various touches of thought, and teeming with health and buoyancy, opened to view a still more captivating object. Her large, deep eyes, beaming with tenderness, yet pregnant with reflection, seemed to shed over it actual [298] and distinct rays, and to crown its bloom with an atmosphere of light. The soft, mellow tint, that, like "the red morning," surmounted her cheeks, looked deeper than the skin, and, in its fulness of thought and feeling, led one to dive to the heart, to which, in pure truth, it was a mere tributary. Nor did the arch of her brows, or the long, glossy fringe of her eyelids, though of the deepest black, impair this effect; but rather served, by their varied colouring, to heighten and confirm it. Her luxuriant black hair was yet hardly dressed, and was pushed behind her small ears, on to her neck and shoulders, in numberless light curls, that one could not regard without the liveliest admiration.

Though she sat silent, her face, as has been remarked, was full of thought, and intimated that the mind was busy within. Yet there was nothing of melancholy in her aspect, or of gloom in her reflections. The theme of her meditation, indeed, to a girl of her age and temper, was rather [299] enlivening:—it was love!

How often, since her return to the Grange, free from all care and embarrassment, had she sought to ascertain whether she really did love! How often had the fact of her pondering on such an inquiry assured her, on a moment's consideration, that her love was beyond all dispute! Love!—she had no thought, no hope, no feeling, apart from the tender relations of her position, that was not inseparably associated and bound up with the one ardent and absorbing passion!

And to whom had she thus surrendered the deepest and most precious sympathies of her nature? How earnest must have been that suit, how persuasively eloquent that plea, that could win, in so short a time, such a priceless treasure!

No plea had been urged; no suit had been proffered; and all was placed on the die, on which [300] depended the tenor and interests of a life, on mere hazard! She loved; she surrounded her love with all the sweet sensibilities of her nature; she clung to it as to life; and yet, in plain reality, it had sprung up unsolicited, and might wither unmourned.

She never thought of this—not once! Her passion had risen insensibly, and, when it incurred notice, it was too hopeful—it was too headlong, to be arrested. She rather discerned it with pleasure; and with all the confidence and tenderness of innocence, which judges the motives of others by its own, and has no notion of the frauds and deceits of the world, nursed and buoyed it up.

She never doubted that Hildebrand—for it was that person she loved—reciprocated her attachment. The tones of his voice, his looks, and even his sentiments, viewed together, and with a close and searching eye, evinced his love distinctly. It is true, she had not thought so at the time; but that, she imagined, in the innocence of her confiding nature, was because she was not [301] on her guard, and consequently, had not given them particular heed. She did not know, or, if she knew, she did not bear in mind, that a partial eye might attach to this evidence too much importance; that she might recall Hildebrand's voice in other tones than it had adopted; and give his looks, on which she dwelt so fondly, more force and meaning than they would warrant. If she did fall into such an error, she never once gave it a thought; but, with all the earnestness of her passionate and ardent nature, clung only to the bright hopes it raised, and the flattering prospects of which it was the fount.

Poor thing! she had no conception of the hypocrisy and knavery of the treacherous world. And, to say the truth, her ignorance of its usages, in purely moral matters, might well be excused. What possible motive could any one have, when no way offended with her, in stealing her affections, [302] and then casting them to the winds? Surely, no one could find enjoyment—no one could feel any pleasure—in inflicting on an unoffending fellow-creature so foul a wrong! It was an outrage on the divine sensibilities of nature to suppose such a thing. For one of her own kind to seduce her every thought, to take possession of her every hope, to impress himself on the deep springs of her immortal soul, and then, in return, to cast on her an eternal blight, which should make solitude a torture, society a desert, and life a burden, was quite beyond the utmost verge and limit of apprehension. Hildebrand was, to all appearance, noble, frank, and humane: how could she suppose that he was capable of such enormous and motiveless turpitude?

The only fear that her love ever dwelt upon, when reviewing its various expectations, referred to Don Felix di Corva. It is true, that person was not at present in England; but her father, being [303] now under no apprehension for his safety, had written for him, and he was expected at the Grange every day. It cannot be denied that she looked forward to his return with no feelings of pleasure. On consideration, however, she did not apprehend that her father would insist, beyond a certain limit, in carrying out his project of uniting her to him in marriage. Her fear, therefore, after all, was but a slight one, and no way arrested the ripening fulness of her love.

The anxious moments that the timid tenderness of her disposition founded on Hildebrand's absence, though not few, were but short-lived, and sank and dispersed under the influence of her expectations. Her sanguine mind dwelt more on the hope of fruition, than the possibility of disaster; and though, in her solitary moments, she often pondered on the dangers which she imagined Hildebrand to be exposed to, and the hazardous character of his profession, it was [304] always with a hopeful eye, and a confident belief that he was equal to any emergency that he might have to encounter.

She was pondering on his position at the period which opened this chapter, and, as she thought over the several causes of anxiety which she supposed it to embrace, a low sigh, that broke from her—perhaps, unconsciously—showed that he carried with him her fullest sympathy. The sigh reached the ears of Sir Edgar, and, dropping his book, he looked up, and gazed inquiringly on her face. Before he could make any remark, however, his attention was drawn to the chamber-door, at which his valet, old Adam Green, at this moment presented himself.

There was a smile on the old man's lip, and a flush on his face, enforcing and supporting his smile, that announced him to be the bearer of more than ordinary tidings.

"What news, Adam?" cried Sir Edgar.

"Captain Clifford, and another cavalier, named Don Rafaele, are in the hall, your worship," [305] answered Adam.

Both Sir Edgar and Evaline sprang to their feet directly. Evaline, however, was so much agitated, though purely with her excessive joy, that she was obliged to sit down again, and endeavour to compose herself. Fortunately, neither Sir Edgar nor Adam noticed her discomposure. Having communicated his intelligence, Adam disappeared immediately, and Sir Edgar, without looking round, passed on after him, and hastened to meet his visiter in the hall.

Several minutes elapsed before Evaline could any way quell the deep and exquisite emotion into which she had been so unexpectedly betrayed. Even when her feelings were somewhat subdued, her fair bosom, for all her efforts to restrain it, still heaved slightly, and her face retained its glow of unmingled joy. Before she could quite recover herself, she heard the tread of feet approaching, [306] and, as she hastened to gain her feet, the chamber-door was opened, and Sir Edgar and his two visiters passed in.

Evaline saw no one but Hildebrand. It would have been vain, if she had striven ever so, to seek to keep her feelings under perfect restraint when Hildebrand had once appeared. But, to record the plain fact, she did not seek such an object—indeed, she did not even give it a thought.

Hildebrand stepped hastily up to her directly he had opened the door, and, as his purpose became apparent, she advanced to meet him. In a moment, they had clasped hands, and greeted each other with undisguised cordiality.

Scarcely had the two young friends (for in that relation we must still view them) thus interchanged their greetings, when Sir Edgar stepped forward with Don Rafaele.

"I'faith, Eve," he cried, in Spanish, "thou hast so overlooked me in the instance of Captain Clifford, that I am half minded to play the chamberlain no further. Howbeit, out of regard for thy maiden estate, I will even pursue mine office, and here commend to thee Captain Clifford's friend, and henceforth ours—Don Rafaele." [307]

"I give you welcome to England, fair Senhor," said Evaline, to Don Rafaele.

The young Spaniard, who now seemed to have discarded his light and graceful bearing, and to have assumed all the rigid stateliness of a Castilian grandee, returned a formal answer, and showed no desire to speak further. But, well aware of the reserved manners that prevailed in his native country, Evaline was not surprised at his demeanour, but supposed it to be no other than he maintained usually. His apparent coldness, therefore, no way embarrassed her, and, in the excitement of the moment, it was unnoticed by Hildebrand and Sir Edgar. The latter person, indeed, soon drew Don Rafaele a little on one side, and engaged him in conversation with himself. Hildebrand and Evaline were thus left to discourse apart. [308]

They had much to tell each other; at least, Evaline, in the fulness of her confidence, had much to tell Hildebrand, and much to ask of him in return. And, in telling him all that she had suffered during his absence, she sought not to talk of herself, but to show, by her fervid and delicate expressions, her gratitude to him, and how his services were fixed and rooted in her memory.

The account which Hildebrand gave her of his recent voyage, though it omitted several important incidents, and forbore all reference to her cousin, Don Felix di Corva, inspired her with the deepest interest. As it described his perils, hardships, and sufferings, and ended, at last, with his capture of the costly galleon, it stirred within her the most conflicting feelings, though they all, in the main, flowed from one source—love and admiration of him. [309]

Meantime, Sir Edgar and Don Rafaele, though they spoke in the Spanish language, seemed to converse together quite as earnestly, and on subjects equally interesting. Don Rafaele's dignity had evidently relaxed under the attentive courtesy of the Englishman. Although, however, he conversed freely, he was still far from being at his ease; and he occasionally darted glances at Evaline, unobserved by Sir Edgar, that indicated anything but composure. But, whatever might be his real feelings, his demeanour had no effect on the company, and, to say the truth, was not even remarked. The morning, consequently, passed lightly over, and left the general harmony undisturbed.

In the afternoon, soon after the meal of dinner had been despatched, Hildebrand broke away from Evaline, and, sallying forth, proceeded in quest of Bernard Gray. On arriving at that person's retreat, however, he found that he was abroad, and, from what he had said on setting out, was not expected to return for several weeks. As Hildebrand had already, on the invitation of Sir Edgar, arranged to remain at the Grange for a month, this news did not give him much concern, and, having determined to see Bernard before he should repair to town, he walked back to the Grange in undisturbed hilarity. [310]

The little circle at the mansion hailed his return with unaffected pleasure. Their sprightly conversation, which his absence had somewhat interrupted, was resumed on his reappearance; their spirits acquired a new buoyancy; and, as the hours sped fleetly on, their fellowship seemed to become more and more confirmed.

Not the least singular feature in their intercourse was the intimacy which appeared to subsist between Sir Edgar and Don Rafaele. The extreme youth and extraordinary personal attractions of Don Rafaele, though somewhat overcast by his reserved manners, had preferred him to Sir Edgar's regard at the very outset; but his interest in the young Spaniard deepened on acquaintance, and, after a very brief intercourse, increased to attachment. Associated with his country, in respect to his deceased wife, by a tie that he could never overlook, he was predisposed to this feeling, and the winning appearance of Don Rafaele insensibly led him to give it free rein. The warmth and kindness of his manner was not without a due effect on the young Spaniard. As his desire to please him became more apparent, he cast off his formal dignity, and became less reserved. Still, however, he was not at his ease, and his eyes betrayed a restlessness and discomposure, which his utmost efforts could hardly enable him to disguise. [311]

No restraint of this sort existed in the bosoms of Hildebrand and Evaline. Their intercourse, if not founded on the same sympathies, was free and open, and full of ardent and generous feelings. In a correspondence so happy, the day sped lightly by, and left them anxious only for the promise of the morrow. [312]

A fortnight passed over in the same uninterrupted harmony. Yet, at its expiration, Evaline, it must be owned, was not so uniformly composed, if she were even so happy, as at the commencement of that period. It is true, while she was actually in correspondence with Hildebrand, interchanging those social relations which constitute one of the brightest features of life, she was supremely happy, but her solitary moments were not unattended by a certain degree of solicitude. She noticed that, at times, Hildebrand's brow was sad and overcast, and, if come upon unexpectedly, or without some previous intimation, that he was often taken by surprise; and, from these evidences of mental uneasiness, she inferred that he was too seriously occupied to think of love, even if he could ever be inspired with love for *her*. It was not improbable, indeed, in her opinion, that he loved another. Her fair bosom thrilled with anguish when she pondered on such a possibility. And how often, in the dead of the night, when every other eye was fastened in sleep, did she ponder on it! How often and often did she ask herself, with all the bitterness of [313]

disappointed passion, whether she had really built her affections, and the peace and tenor of her precious life, on the crazy foundations of a shadow!

But, as has been observed, these reflections never occurred to her when she was in communication with Hildebrand. Then, indeed, she had no apprehension—no anxiety: she had not even a thought beyond the felicity of the moment.

So deep—so inconceivably ardent, was her passion, that, when its object was really and [314] personally present, her delight almost made her giddy. Every look that he assumed, every sentiment that he uttered, called up in her, on the instant, and, as it were, by an instinctive sympathy, a silent but visible response. The very springs and depths of her soul answered to his touch. She might be silent, yet—so closely was she knit to him—she was speaking in his voice, and even thinking in his breast. Every moment threw over her a new fascination; protracted intercourse, which so often robs society of its charm, only enhanced her delight; and, as time hurried on, her heart fixed its whole hope and aim on her all-absorbing attachment.

Yet she and Hildebrand were rarely together alone. Whether walking, or riding, or within doors, they were generally (and, to be precise in our remark, most frequently) attended by both Sir Edgar and Don Rafaele, and almost always by one or the other. One afternoon, however, it so [315] happened, that those two persons sallied out by themselves, and left Hildebrand and Evaline alone.

They were sitting in the library, and, at the moment that Sir Edgar and Don Rafaele passed out, Hildebrand was engaged with a book, and Evaline, more lightly inclined, was inspecting the illuminations of a roll of manuscript. As she turned smilingly from one illumination to another, she seemed, for a moment, to enter into the full spirit of her pursuit, and to glance at the antique figures with interest and curiosity. All at once, however, she came to an abrupt pause, and looked up. A deep sigh had broken on her ear, and, forgetting everything else, she turned her eyes on Hildebrand, and glanced inquiringly in his face.

Hildebrand’s glance met hers: a slight flush mounted to his face; and a smile, though a mournful one, rose to his lips.

“What wouldst thou, fair mistress?” he asked, supposing, from the look of eager inquiry that sat [316] on her face, that the manuscript she was inspecting presented some difficulty, which she sought his assistance to unravel. “What wouldst thou?” he repeated, and, as he spoke, he rose to his feet, and advanced to her side.

“I’faith,” answered Evaline, with affected displeasure, yet slightly smiling the while, “now I bethink me, I will not tell thee; for I hold thee to be scarce worthy.”

“As how?” cried Hildebrand, with some earnestness. “But,” he added, in a low voice, “’tis true! ’tis true!”

“Now, were I a man, and of degree and condition suitable, I would hold some question with thee on its truth,” answered Evaline. “But, as it is, I will even impeach thee on the items of thy [317] demerit, and bring thee to a full confession.”

“Then, deal with me tenderly, fair mistress, I prithee,” cried Hildebrand.

“That will I not, but with horrible anger,” replied Evaline, with a smile. “Yet, not to enter into items, which I first purposed, I will only accuse thee of doing wrong to two trusty friends.”

“Then, will I not confess the charge,” answered Hildebrand.

“Are not my father and my poor self thy friends, then?” asked Evaline.

“There be few I tender so lovingly,” returned Hildebrand. “But what meanest thou?”

“We cannot help thee, thou thinkest?” said Evaline.

“In what matter, fair mistress?”

“In the matter that moved thee to that sorrowful sigh,” returned Evaline, in a low but earnest tone, and, at the same time, looking anxiously in his face.

Hildebrand changed colour. “No! no!” he said:—“that is past help. But did I sigh? Trust me, ’twas [318] unknowingly.”

“In good sooth, it makes me sad that we can lend thee no help,” observed Evaline.

“I pitched my every thought on a shadow,” said Hildebrand, in a low voice. “Henceforth, the world, with its fair train of accidents, will be no more than a desert in my regard, and life but a dream. I am lost in it!”

“Alas!” sighed Evaline, deeply moved.

“Thou art too pitiful,” pursued Hildebrand. “Yet are those sweet tears, which my dejection hath brought to thine eyes, most soothing balsam to me, and more inspiring than new hope. By my troth, they make my heart swell again!”

“That do I not credit,” faltered Evaline.

“Wilt thou credit that thou art my heart’s hope and keeper?” asked Hildebrand, taking up her [319] hand, and pressing it in his. “Nay, turn not away, sweet mistress! Remind thee, thou holdest in thy hands a human life—thy lips are to pass judgment on a soul! But wherefore do I discourse thus? It does thee wrong, sweet Evaline! I will”——

“Oh, hold! hold!” said Evaline, in broken accents.

“Dost thou—canst thou love me, then?” cried Hildebrand.

“Oh, yes! yes!” faltered Evaline, hiding her burning face on his shoulder.

Hildebrand, trembling with passion, turned his arm round her waist, and pressed her to his bosom. All his fears had now vanished, and, in the fervid kiss that he imprinted on her cheek, he had a foretaste of the felicity that he was yet to look forward to.

How brief are our moments of unmingled happiness! As Hildebrand, with the ardour and eagerness of a welcomed lover, pressed his lips to the glowing cheek of his mistress, he thought [320] he heard some one open the chamber-door; and, turning quickly round, his eye met that of Don Rafaele.

CHAPTER XIII. [321]

There was something in the look of Don Rafaele that made Hildebrand’s very heart quake again. Yet it was but momentary; for no sooner did the Spaniard, in the manner already set forth, meet his glance, than he withdrew his observation, and turned abruptly away. Stepping back through the doorway, he drew the door, which he still held in his hand, close after him, and left the lovers to themselves.

Scarcely had he thus passed into the outer passage, however, when he heard Hildebrand’s step, which he seemed instantly to recognise, approaching within. Thereupon, with anxious eagerness, [322] he looked round for an eligible opening for retreat, and, after a brief pause, passed hesitatingly up the adjoining stairs, in the direction of his chamber.

He had taken but a few steps, when, as he had expected, the library-door was hastily opened, and Hildebrand presented himself in the passage. He caught sight of Don Rafaele on the instant, and, staying only to close the door in his rear, passed on after him. Stepping out quickly, a few paces brought him to the stairs; and there, though Don Rafaele had made no pause, he shortly overtook him.

On thus effecting his purpose, he laid his hand gently on his arm, and turned an anxious glance on his pale face.

“Thou ailest somewhat, my fair Rafaele?” he said. “Prithee what hath moved thee to this most grievous and disconsolate look?”

Don Rafaele, without saying a word, mournfully shook his head, and turned his eyes on the floor. [323]

“The matter?” pursued Hildebrand, anxiously. “Come, now, an’ thou lovest me, tell me the matter.”

“’Tis melancholy!—nought but melancholy!” answered Don Rafaele, with perfect calmness. “The mood visits me oft, and, to speak sooth, hath been mine infirmity, every now and anon, from my early boyhood. Give me leave awhile, and, if I be left to mine own self, I will be better anon.”

“God be with thee!” exclaimed Hildebrand. “Methinks, an’ thou wouldst bear with it, good fellowship were better for thee than solitude. But be it as thou wilt.”

Don Rafaele, with whatever motive, still desired to be left to himself, and Hildebrand pressed his suggestion no further. Dropping his hold of Don Rafaele’s arm, he turned back to the passage, and suffered him to pursue his way to his chamber alone.

Don Rafaele did not linger on his route. Proceeding at a quick pace, he shortly gained his [324] chamber; and with a hasty step, but agitated withal, passed to the interior, and closed and fastened the door behind him.

Whatever might be his ailment, it would seem that his energy, which hitherto had appeared even more than ordinary, was only to last till he had secured himself against intrusion. Scarcely had he turned the key in the door, when a dimness came over his eyes, and a searching and nipping chill, like a rush of cold blood, swept over his brain. As he threw himself into a contiguous chair, he was overtaken by a swoon.

There he sat, helpless and insensible, with no ministering hand to attend on him, for a considerable period. His beauty, his virtue, his tenderness of heart, and his many noble and estimable qualities, which had but to be revealed to be applauded, had raised for him no barrier against the very extreme of loneliness and necessity.

His senses returned, at last. Nevertheless, the mental anguish that had produced his swoon (if its [325] cause really were mental) was clearly still alert; for, when he opened his eyes, a violent shudder shook his whole frame. His cheeks, too, were pale and thought-sick; his lips, colourless; and his large eyes, when they were not turned on the floor (which was most frequently the case), looked wild and desperate.

The sorrow that he laboured under must have been most acute, yet, amidst all the traits of dejection that have been noticed, he wore a look of dogged and stern resolution, which, in one so youthful and prepossessing, it was harrowing to behold. Moreover, he occasionally knitted his arched brows, and once, as the paroxysm worked him deeper, he bit his lips till the blood came.

It was dusk before he was able any way to subdue his bitter passion. Even then, though the [326] amelioration was decided, he manifested some traces of discomposure; and his feelings appeared

to be under a forced constraint, rather than actual and certain control. His energies, however, were perfectly restored, and, on rising from his chair, he turned to the chamber-door with a firm step, and so passed out.

He did not pause at the door of the library; but pursued his way, with the same decided step, to the family sitting-room. There, as he had expected, he found Hildebrand and Evaline, together with Sir Edgar, each of whom inquired after his health with unfeigned solicitude. As the evening progressed, they strove their utmost to arouse and inspirit him; and Evaline, in particular, though somewhat confused on his entrance, exerted all her powers to inspire him with hilarity. But though he sought to appear cheerful, his mind was evidently too seriously unhinged, if one may use such a term, to be so easily and promptly soothed; and his present affectation of complacency [327] was even more distressing than his former melancholy. Moreover, he was frequently lost in thought, and there was an apparent excitement in all he did and said, and even in his very aspect, that was quite incompatible with cheerfulness, and subversive of equanimity.

Thus he remained till the hour arrived for retiring to rest. Then, having procured a light from one of the servants, he bade his friends a hasty good-night, and passed back to his chamber.

His discomposure was greatly augmented when he reached that apartment. Having set the light down on his toilet-table, he proceeded to pace the floor, from one end of the chamber to the other, with a hurried step, and with his hands clasped tightly over his brow. His thoughts seemed to rise so rapidly, and in such disorderly array, that he could not bend himself to consider them, but became lost in perplexity and distraction. After a time—but not before a good hour had [328] elapsed—he came to a pause, and, if one might form a conclusion from his altered manner, made an effort to collect himself. As he did so, he suddenly looked up; and a contiguous toilet-glass, which was standing right before him, and which the light on the table served to illuminate, presented to his eye the melancholy reflection of his aspect.

A spasm passed over his face as he viewed this spectacle; and certainly, compared with his usual appearance, or even that which he wore but recently, it was touching in the extreme. There was not a line of colour in any one feature, and the unnatural lustre of his large full eyes, staring with horror, imparted to the pallor and despairing look of his complexion a terrible and appalling distinctness.

He cast but one glance at the glass, when he turned away; and again, though with a slower step, [329] and a look which, if no less wild, was not so bewildered as his recent one, proceeded to pace the chamber.

After he had thus perambulated the apartment for some time, he stepped once more, at a slow and deliberate pace, towards the toilet-table, and drew from a sheath at his side a small stiletto. On drawing it fully forth, he held its point to one of his fingers, as though he would ascertain, by this searching and personal experiment, whether it were any way defective. His inspection appeared to satisfy him of its perfectness; and, with a trembling hand, he replaced it in its sheath.

A quiver suffused his lips as he was turning away from the table, and he paused once more. But his hesitation, if such it were, was but momentary, and, almost as he came to a stand, he caught up the light from the table, and turned resolutely towards the chamber-door.

Still bearing the light, he cautiously opened the door, and looked out. No one was in sight; and [330] from the stillness which prevailed, and which was unbroken by the least sound, he rightly conjectured that all the inmates of the mansion were now locked in sleep. On arriving at this conclusion, he stepped out into the passage, and proceeded, with a quick but noiseless tread, down a contiguous flight of stairs, where a broad landing opened to another flight. He halted on the landing, and, holding up the light, turned his eye on a neighbouring door, which led from the landing to an inner chamber. The chamber was Evaline’s.

The cavalier gazed on the door for a full minute, when, with a tremulous hand, he set down the light, and softly stepped close up to the door. Raising his hand, he cautiously lifted the latch; and the door, which he had expected to find locked, yielded to his pressure, and admitted him to the chamber.

Right opposite to the door was a casement, through which, though it was partly veiled by a [331] curtain, the moon could be distinguished, and thus sufficient light prevailed to reveal every object in the room. On discerning this, Don Rafaele, though he had left his light on the landing, turned quickly round, and, previous to taking any further step, softly closed the door. He was now in comparative darkness, but the objects of the room were still visible, and, when he turned round from the door, he glanced over them all separately, and then stepped lightly towards the bed.

The deep breathing of its occupant assured him that she was asleep before he drew back the drapery. As he did draw the drapery back, the moonlight—for it was on the same side of the chamber with the casement—spread itself out before him, and revealed to him the sleeper’s face.

He cast but one hasty look at her scarcely distinguishable features. Then, with breathless [332] eagerness, he silently drew down the bedclothes, and raised his dagger over her bosom.

END OF VOL. II.

London: Henry Richards, Brydges-street, Covent-garden.

Transcriber's Notes:

Created Table of Contents to facilitate eBook navigation.

Obvious punctuation errors corrected.

Period spelling retained, but apparent printing errors corrected.

Changed "crid" to "cried" on page 62. (cried Sir Walter Raleigh)

Changed "returnd" to "returned" on page 78. (returned Bernard)

Added missing "h" to "hope" on page 96. (with confidence and hope)

Changed "progess" changed to "progress" on page 102. (During his progress to the palace)

Changed "scarely" to "scarcely" on page on 113. (They had scarcely begun to make good way)

Changed "happnd" to "happened" on page 116. (In the name of God, what hath happened?)

Changed "succesive" to "successive" on page 123. (For three successive days)

Added missing "n" to "begun" on page 277. (had begun to fear thee lost)

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