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HILDEBRAND.

NEW WORK, BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Preparing for Publication, in 3 vols. 8vo.,

THE OLD TEMPLE:

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "HILDEBRAND,"
&c. &c.

"Within the Temple hall we were too loud,
The garden here is more convenient."

SHAKSPEARE.

LONDON:
JOHN MORTIMER, ADELAIDE STREET,
TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

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.

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CONTENTS

HILDEBRAND.

[1]

CHAPTER I.

It was on the same evening that closed the preceding chapter of this history, and while the dusk was hardly yet apparent, that the maiden Abigail passed up the principal staircase of the mansion of Master Shedlock, known as New Bethlehem, to a chamber on the upper floor.

Whatever might be her reason, she affected to step forward with excessive gentleness; but her shoes, being of the very strongest material, and hobnailed withal, were not the best adapted to [2] give her purpose effect, and, in her way upward, her foot made a heavy stamp at every step. But, judging from the expression of her face, she appeared to be insensible of this, and to consider that her progress was unattended by any intimation of her tread.

On reaching the summit of the stairs, she hastened along the passage beyond, on which the stairs opened, to a neighbouring door, leading to an inner chamber. She opened the door with great caution; and after a moment’s pause, as if for the purpose of listening, made a step forward, and passed into the chamber.

It was a bed-room, and, from various appearances around, was evidently occupied by an invalid. Indeed, such a person was, on a close survey, observed to be in possession of the bed; and her peculiar head-gear announced her to be a woman. It was Dame Shedlock.

That poor lady’s ardent powers of endurance had been overwhelmed, at last. And what powers, of [3] mere earthly constitution, could bear up unshaken against one uninterrupted tide of oppression and persecution? Since she last appeared on the stage of our history, her trials had, in point of

bitterness and violence, even increased, and she was now subject to even more galling mortifications. The temper and habits of the hypocritical Shedlock had become more tyrannical than ever, and, as his passive and uncomplaining victim, she was the only object on which his spleen could fall.

We are told, that “the wicked shall flourish,” not only in a great degree, but with such marked and decided vigour, that their progress shall be compared to the rapid growth and prosperity of “a green bay-tree.” We see this remarkable declaration so effectively and exactly fulfilled, on looking out on the open stage of the world, that, if borne well in mind, it must lend the troubled [4]
heart the most soothing assurance. If the wicked are so to flourish here, how inconceivably happier must be the portion of the good man, relying on perfect equity, and love beyond the apprehension of human sense, in the world to come! The future reward is promised as surely, as decidedly, and as distinctly, as the present advantage; and we have, even in a temporal respect, a more attractive incitement to virtue, than all the glory and riches of the world can insure to vice.

But, in our progress onward, we often see the man of crime, after a long course of prosperity and success, suddenly checked in his career, and overwhelmned with disaster even in the present life. His subtlety, his craft, his cunning, and his shrewd calculations, on which he had relied with such advantage hitherto, all at once fail of their end; one after the other, his schemes and pursuits bring him only disappointment; and events which fall with lightness on others, and the general [5]
effect of which is scarcely noticeable, act with surprising accuracy to work his utter ruin.

Shedlock’s course of uninterrupted prosperity had seemed to meet a sudden and sensible check. From the moment that, in the manner described heretofore, he had sought to effect the destruction of Sir Edgar de Neville, his fortunes had taken a new turn, and had brought him nothing but crosses. Instead of advancing in favour of the minister, which he conceived that his show of zeal would certainly prefer him to, and which, indeed, was the expectation that led to his interference, the part he had taken in the affair of Sir Edgar appeared to have given offence; and he had, moreover, the mortification to see the prosecution quashed, and Sir Edgar cleared from all imputation. His vexation at this result was increased, if possible, by other incidents. Sir Edgar had hardly returned to the Grange, when one of the new functionaries called *concealers*, [6]
appointed to investigate suspected tenures, challenged him to show by what right and authority he held possession of Clifford Place. Although, after considerable trouble, he appeared to satisfy the official of the integrity and validity of his possession, the fact of his tenure being even questioned, when no claimant to it seemed to have come forward, showed him to be a marked and doubted holder. Some serious losses in his commercial pursuits, from which he had expected to reap an enormous profit, happened about the same time; and, altogether, his affairs assumed a very gloomy and unpromising aspect.

Shedlock’s temper was not of the kind that would be subdued by these reverses. The adverse influence that they involved, instead of arousing in him the voice of remorse, only rendered him more stubbornly vile; and he became more morose, violent, and tyrannical at each visitation. His [7]
bitter temper was a torment to all who were any way connected with him; at home, it plagued his household; abroad, it haunted his tenants; but more than all, sleeping or waking, day or night, it dealt its fullest violence on his loving and patient wife.

Dame Shedlock sank under it fast. Long suffering, through years of unmitigated tribulation, had already introduced disease into her delicate frame; and increased persecution gave it strength and root. As it continued to press upon her, she gradually grew feebler and more feeble; and ultimately, yet without drawing from her one complaint, or any way impairing that abject love and submission which she invariably rendered its heartless minister, it reduced her to the melancholy and cheerless helplessness of a sick-bed.

At the moment that it has been deemed necessary to recall her to the stage of our history, she [8]
was lying awake, yet perfectly still, with her eyes turned towards heaven. Her general complexion was deadly pale; but on either cheek, crowning the surrounding whiteness, there was a bright spot of red, looking more like fever than genuine bloom. Her eyes, too, though wearing a serene expression, sparkled like fire, and, on a close inspection, seemed to ache with their own light.

She retained the rapt look described for a full minute, when, hearing a step approach, she turned her glance towards the door, and discerned Abigail. That eccentric domestic, having continued her progress, had by this time made good way, and come close to the bed. She caught the glance of her mistress on the instant; and in a manly voice, and with her accustomed brevity, but more kindness than her face promised, proceeded to explain what had brought her to her presence.

“The man’s come,” she said. [9]

“What man?” asked Dame Shedlock, anxiously. “Ah! I remember me! Thou meanest Bernard Gray?”

Abigail nodded her head, affirmatively. “And where is *he*?” faltered the dame.

“A-reading the Word,” answered Abigail.

“The Lord lend him light!” ejaculated the dame, in faint accents. “Be thou watchful, Abigail; and bring the man hither!”

Abigail, merely nodding her head in reply, hereupon turned away, and stepped slowly from the chamber. In a few minutes she returned, and, in the same cautious manner, ushered into the room the already announced visiter.

Bernard Gray—for it was no other—did not wear his usual aspect. There was, indeed, still a

degree of sadness on his brow; but his air of profound melancholy, which formerly he presented at all times, and which was far from becoming, had quite disappeared. Moreover, his eyes, if [10] regarded closely, revealed a softer expression, and, in their more natural and subdued light, looked kindlier and more gentle. An improvement was also visible in his attire. Though his habits, if examined attentively, were still very unpretending, they were arranged with more taste, and had evidently been put on with some regard to appearance. For all this, he still looked mournful; and as he entered fairly into the room, and observed the position of Dame Shedlock, the expression of his face became heavier, and seemed even more sad and gloomy.

He waved Abigail to retire after he had glanced at the bed; and that ancient maiden, though somewhat sulkily, accordingly passed out, and left him alone with her mistress.

Having carefully closed the door, Bernard turned round, and advanced silently to the bed.

Dame Shedlock, though still lying down (for, as there was no drapery to the bed, the view was [11] uninterrupted), had kept her eyes upon him from the first moment of his entry, and, to all appearance, without being the least disturbed. As he drew nigh, however, her serenity gave way, and she became visibly agitated.

“No! no!” she said, in faltering accents: “not now! I cannot tell thee now!”

“Well, well, mistress, be it anon, then,” answered Bernard, mildly. “Whatever it affect, give thyself no care, I prithee. How is it with thee?”

“Grievous! grievous!” rejoined Dame Shedlock. “I am dying!”

“Alack!” exclaimed Bernard.

“’Tis even so,” resumed the dame. “The Lord calls me; and must not I, his servant, give his voice good heed? So be it; for as grass we are green in the morning, and at night are cut down, and withered.”

Bernard’s eyes brightened. “Set thy lamp in order, then,” he said, “that, when the bridegroom [12] comes, thou be not like the foolish virgins, but have thine oil ready.”

“’Twas for that I bid thee hither,” replied the dame, faintly. “And, verily, I must despatch, while life yet serves me, or I shall be as the condemned of the parable.”

She paused here; and the short, strained breaths which she exhaled, with her increased paleness, showed that she had exerted herself beyond her powers. After a brief interval, however, during which Bernard regarded her anxiously, but made no oral observation, she appeared to recover herself, and resumed.

“The boy—the man, now,” she said—“Hildebrand Clifford; ’twas of him I would speak.”

“He is well,” answered Bernard, “and, as I am advised, in England—in Lantwell.”

Though she had hitherto seemed quite helpless, his auditor, on hearing this unexpected [13] intelligence, abruptly raised herself in the bed, and gazed doubtingly in his face.

“In Lantwell?” she said.

“Even so,” returned Bernard.

“Then, can I not ease my poor conscience,” observed the dame, feebly wringing her hands. “No! no! ’twere a greater sin to wrong *him*, old and lonely as I shall leave him.”

“Yet wrong not thyself, or thy precious soul,” suggested Bernard, with his wonted sternness.

The dame shuddered.

“Take comfort!” said Bernard, more kindly.

“I have it!” resumed the dame, eagerly, yet in subdued accents. “An’ I give thee that will establish young Clifford’s rights, wilt thou suffer *him*, who is now old, and near his time, to hold them till he depart?”

“By my soul, will I!” exclaimed Bernard. “But what canst thou give me will do this?” [14]

“I will tell thee,” answered the dame; “yet first swear the offence shall be held secret!”

“I swear it, by the Lord!” said Bernard, devoutly.

“Old Master Clifford, as thou knowest, held his dame in lawful wedlock,” replied the dame, “but there is no record thereof in the parish book. The page that did record it was torn out.”

“Ah!” cried Bernard.

“Forbear a while,” pursued the dame. “’Twas torn from the book by—by *him*. The Enemy urged him to ’t; and in an evil hour, when the Lord had forsaken him, he sought to destroy it.”

“Is it lost?” cried Bernard vehemently.

“’Twas in the blue chamber,” continued the dame, in a less distinct and more tremulous voice; [15] “and as he raised it to the lamp, the man Zedekiah, on some errand, called him to the door. The Lord put it into his heart to lay the folded paper on the table; and while he conferred with Zedekiah at the door, I caught it up, and placed in its stead one of no import. The change passed, and he burned the false paper.”

Bernard breathed more freely. “The Lord reward thee!” he said.

The dame, breathless and exhausted, paused a space, when, with a convulsive effort, but in a

very low and agitated tone, she resumed.

“I hold the right one still,” she said.

And, as she spoke, she raised her hand, and pointed tremulously over her shoulder. With this last effort, all her strength, if such it might be called, was exhausted, and she fell gasping to her pillow.

Bernard, who had been watching her intently, and was now greatly alarmed, sprang forward a pace, and sought to raise her head in his arms. But before he could accomplish his purpose, the chamber-door, which was right opposite to where he stood, was suddenly thrown open, and [16] Abigail rushed in.

“The master’s coming!” she said to Bernard.

“He comes at an ill time,” answered Bernard. “I fear me, the mistress hath swooned.”

“An’ he see thee, he will kill her,” cried Abigail, hastily stepping up to him.

Thus speaking, she glanced anxiously round the room; and her eye, after running over several objects, rested on the door of a closet, or wardrobe, behind the bed-head. Her sulky and ill-natured-looking features, which had just before appeared so anxious, contracted a broad grin as she discerned this covert; and she pointed it out to Bernard.

“Get thee in there,” she said. “I will look to her.”

Albeit, as the approaching step of Shedlock was now audible, there was no time to be lost, Bernard still paused to glance anxiously at the face of Dame Shedlock; and it was not till Abigail [17] again warned him of his peril, and the greater peril in which he involved the dame, that he turned to his retreat. Scarcely had he entered the wardrobe, and closed the door in his front, when Shedlock made his appearance.

Abigail, no longer apprehensive of a surprise, had just placed one of her arms under the dame’s neck, and was gently raising her head, when Shedlock entered. The dame, it now appeared, was not in a swoon, and, as Abigail raised her head, and thus facilitated her respiration, she looked up. There was, however, no sense in her gaze, or thought in her aspect.

“Art better?” asked Abigail.

“I have it safe!” cried the dame, hysterically. “I have it safe! He burned it not!”

Shedlock, who had paused at the chamber-door, here sprang forward, and rushed to the side of the bed.

“What says she?” he demanded. “Verily, her name is Legion, and she hath a devil.” [18]

He sought to push Abigail aside as he spoke, but that individual, to his great surprise, turned round on him, and maintained her position unmoved.

“What wouldst thou?” she inquired.

“Back, woman!” cried Shedlock; “and tempt me not!”

“Back thou, man!” answered Abigail. “Seest thou not she be distract?”

“Verily, an’ thou move not aside, the Lord shall make thee as chaff in my hands, and as beaten stubble,” said Shedlock, threateningly.

“Go to!” cried Abigail. “Thou art as the Levite in the parable, which left the wounded man on the way-side.”

“I will have thee burned for a witch,” cried Shedlock, furiously, and, at the same time, pushing violently against her.

Abigail, throwing all her strength into her hold, caught him by both his arms, and, apparently [19] with but little effort, thrust him bodily back.

“An’ thou be not gone, I will noise thy doings abroad,” she said. “She will be dead anon; and, verily, her ghost shall haunt thee, like thine own shadow, all the days of thy life.”

Shedlock’s pale visage quivered at these words. Though he was an atheist, and believed neither in God nor hereafter, but conceived that the beautiful world, and all its perfect and universal animation, with the thousands of occult worlds above, were the work and offspring of chance, his soul was bound in the grossest superstition. He fairly shuddered at the horrible image with which Abigail had threatened him; and though his rage, in the main, was no way abated, it was not equal to his base fear, and he shrank back appalled.

“Take off the curse, and I will be gone,” he said.

“Begone, then!” exclaimed Abigail; “and repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” [20]

The hypocrite, with his heart burning with malice, yet afraid to speak a word, turned slowly away, and passed in silence from the chamber.

Meantime, his helpless and suffering wife, left to herself, had remained in the same state of delirium, and continued to give utterance to her incoherent ravings. When he had passed out of sight, Abigail turned to her; but quickly discerned, from her haggard and unconscious aspect, and the burning fever of her eyes, that she could afford her no relief. She then turned to the neighbouring wardrobe, and, drawing open the door, called forth Bernard.

“Get thee hence, now,” she said; “and be wary, on thy way out, that he sees thee not. I must tarry

here with *her*."

"I would I could speak a word more with her," answered Bernard. "I covet some paper she told me of, of great import, that she hath hidden away." [21]

"Hear'st thou not how she raves?" returned Abigail. "Get thee gone!"

Bernard, whether because he saw that his staying would be of no avail, or feared to offend Abigail, said no more; but, though with evident reluctance, turned silently away. Softly crossing the chamber, he passed into the passage without; and thence, after a cautious *reconnoissance*, proceeded to the staircase, and descended to the porch without being observed.

Abigail remained in the chamber with Dame Shedlock. After a time, the dame, though she seemed to be still insensible, ceased to rave; and Abigail ventured to leave her for a while, and descend to the kitchen for a light. When she returned, she found the dame lying in the same position; but, to her mind, looking less unconscious, and more at ease. Seemingly much pleased at this, the eccentric servant, as a precaution against accidents, set the light down on the hearth, [22] and then threw herself into a contiguous chair. She had sat thus but a short time, when she fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER II. [23]

It was broad day when Abigail awoke. On arousing herself, she found that the dame, whom she had left so disordered, looked now less feverish, and was locked in repose. Apparently much gratified by a glance at her aspect, she rose to her feet; and proceeded, with the stealthy step which she had all along maintained, but which was not so noiseless as she supposed, to make her egress from the chamber.

On reaching the passage without, she softly closed the door of the chamber, and descended straight to the kitchen. There, preparatory to other household arrangements, she shortly kindled [24] a fire, and set everything in order for an early breakfast.

Various and arduous were the duties that she had to discharge. To scrub here, and sweep there—to rub this, and wash that, employed her continually; and a not very encouraging feature in her performance, on a close examination, was, that it appeared to have little effect, and that, after undergoing a very extensive process of cleansing, everything appeared to be quite as dirty as at first.

But she was clearly not aware that her industry was so unprofitable. A much more important idea, indeed—and even a more singular one—engaged her attention. She felt convinced that she was bewitched!

Several things, it must be owned, had gone wrong during the morning. In the first place, she had had some difficulty, beyond what she could reasonably have looked for, in kindling a fire; secondly, she had afterwards cut her hand; and thirdly, in washing the earthenware, she had [25] nearly broken a drinking-mug. Now, philosophers have discovered, among other great and mysterious truths, that there can be no effect without a cause; and though Abigail was not well read in philosophy, or in anything else (being unable to read at all), her shrewd mind acquired this information instinctively. She thus became sensible, on consideration, that her unlucky mishaps were not spontaneous, but were the effect and issue of some unseen cause.

What could it be? Some people would have thought, on a superficial review of the subject, that her difficulty in kindling the fire arose from the fact of its being carelessly laid; that she had cut her hand through having misguided the knife; and that she had nearly broken the drinking-mug, which was her crowning mishap, because she had had but a slight hold of it. But Abigail was not [26] so simple. She knew, from experience, a teacher not to be slighted, that the prevailing influence was of a higher origin; and she hastened to search around for some trace of its presence.

A brief investigation distinctly elicited its malignant source. It lay on the shelf of a neighbouring cupboard, in one corner; and presented to her doubting eyes, on their very first glance, the fragment of an onion!

Who has not heard what a tide of misfortune the retention of this esculent, in a broken state, will bring on a household? Abigail knew its evil effects but too well. But how to counteract them, without some way injuring herself (which she feared that her personal interposition would do), was a matter which she was not so promptly or easily resolved on.

At last, she determined to seek Zedekiah; and endeavour, by a little excusable cajolery, and the exercise of those arts which are the chief attribute of her sex, and of which Zedekiah was an [27] impassioned admirer, to prevail on him to remove the infectious vegetable. Although he had not yet appeared in the kitchen, she doubted not that he was up; and the stable, over which he slept, seemed to her to be the place where she was most likely to find him.

Zedekiah had, indeed, been up for some time, and, as she supposed, was really engaged in the stable. But far other thoughts than his horses engrossed his attention—more melancholy functions than a groom's, or even a clerk's, claimed his administration.

The great aim of his ambition had at length been attained, and, in a few days more, he was to officiate at a funeral, not as an humble follower, but in the honourable capacity of chief mourner.

How to qualify himself for this distinguished post was a matter which had pressed on his consideration the whole of the previous night. On rising in the morning, his first thought, in [28] pursuing the melancholy theme, prompted him to enact the contemplated obsequies at home, and thus prepare himself for his part by a rehearsal. Accordingly, he caught up a spade, and proceeded, with much jocularity of aspect, to dig a hole in the stable-yard, in the form of a grave. This preliminary measure achieved, his next step was to provide a coffin and pall; and an old broom, with a tattered horse-cloth, which lay in one corner of the stable, furnished him with both those auxiliaries. But here he was brought to a stand: he had provided the funeral furniture; his arrangements for interment, as far as referred to personal particulars, were complete; but there was no mournful bearer to carry the broom to its grave!

While Zedekiah was meditating on the deficiency, the grave but impassioned Abigail, marked with the grime of her avocations, made her appearance in the stable. Here was a bearer for him [29] every way suitable. Zedekiah, transported with joy, greeted her eagerly, and at once explained to her how he was situated. But it required all his rhetoric, supported by his entreaties, to remove her objection to undertake the office he proposed to her; and it was not till he consented, in requital, to aid her in the matter of the onion, which she considered far more weighty and important, that he was able to win her to his purpose.

Her compliance once gained, the broom and horse-cloth, arranged in due form, were raised to her shoulder, and she set out for the grave. Zedekiah followed, “with solemn step and slow,” and with a dirty napkin, as a substitute for a handkerchief, raised to his lugubrious visage.

A funereal pace being maintained, the mournful procession progressed but slowly; but as the grave, though on the extreme confines of the yard, was no great distance from the stable, it [30] shortly arrived thither. As it drew up at the brink of the grave, Zedekiah’s grief became excessive; and several minutes more elapsed, to the manifest irritation of Abigail, before he could finally resolve himself to consign the poor broom to its last home. Then, having stripped it of the horse-cloth, he lifted it carefully from Abigail’s shoulder, and lowered it into the grave.

The solemn moment of final separation had now arrived; and Zedekiah, to all appearance, felt it severely. But after one passionate outburst, his composure gradually returned; and he proceeded, in a whining tone, and with a stern expression of countenance, to utter his last farewell, in these words:—

“Ashes to ashes,
  And dust to dust!
If death don’t keep thee,
  The devil must!”

The funeral thus despatched, the afflicted chief mourner, pursuant to the arrangement already [31] set forth, was obliged to tear himself away from the grave, and enter on the design enforced on him by Abigail. Resolved to carry that design into execution, he forthwith accompanied Abigail, who was heartily weary of mourning, and glad to escape, to the kitchen, and prepared to order himself as she should direct.

But both he and Abigail were unexpectedly interrupted in their project. As the latter was deliberating, according to her custom on such occasions, how they could best proceed, they were confounded by the entrance of Shedlock.

His face was as pale as death; his eyes were almost starting from their sockets; and he appeared, at first sight, to be hardly able to stand. His two domestics gazed on him with a feeling of awe; and the communication that he was about to make to them, and which we shall have to record hereafter, was not calculated to compose them.

CHAPTER III. [32]

Providence always watches over its votaries. Asleep or awake, the heart that strives against evil, whether in its own erring nature, or the world around, may lean safely on its presence, and depend on its protection. And, if we view the matter truly, we shall find, on reflection, that we all continually recline on this influence, even when we seem to act under our own prompture. Pause on the unfathomable mystery of our nature! The muscular frame, glowing with health—the wonderful mechanism of the senses—the sight, that reflects on the hidden fabric of the mind, [33] which knows not its own seat, the form and pressure of outward images—the hearing, that conveys to the same untraceable centre the slightest sound—the memory, that records and recalls the past—the active, profound, and undying thought—all may be paralysed in a moment. At what time, then, and in what enterprise, can we rely confidently on our own resources? If never, we are as secure from harm in our sleep, when its approach cannot be seen, as in the wariest period of healthful action.

Don Rafaele, as we have seen, had found Evaline asleep, and, with a trembling but seemingly resolute hand, had raised his dagger against her life. But though asleep, Evaline was more secure under the shadow of that Power to which she had commended herself, on retiring to rest, than if she had been able to see his design, and to wrest the dagger from his hand.

And could Don Rafaele strike her? Oh, no! However headlong might be the passion that boiled in [34] his heart, it could not hurry him, at this last pass, over the bound between his thought and the

act. It had carried him to the verge of crime; but there, on the very point of its consummation, the tenderness of his nature came to the rescue, and he drew back appalled.

Withdrawing his dagger, he reeled to the door, and passed on to the outer landing. As he gained that place, a faintness came over him; and he was obliged, when he had acquired a firm footing, to come to a pause, and lean back against the wall for support. But the weakness was only momentary, though it evidently required an effort—and one of no common or limited vigour—to overcome it. On recovering himself, he caught up the light, which, previous to entering the chamber, he had left on the landing, and darted up the stairs to his own dormitory.

The powerful excitement under which he had been labouring, and which had nigh hurried him into such monstrous guilt, seemed rather to abate when he arrived in his chamber; but the abatement arose more from physical exhaustion, than moral alleviation. His passion, however, though not a whit less bitter, was not quite so overpowering. After a little time, indeed, it appeared to be somewhat subdued; and, as reason regained its empire, he burst into tears. [35]

He wept long and bitterly; but though his tears, in the end, made his head ache again, they materially relieved his overcharged heart, and did more to assuage his passion than his most soothing reflections. But whatever might be its nature, that passion was too deeply rooted, and, withal, too intimately associated with his heart's most cherished aspirations, to be quite overcome; and, though it breathed a less fervid and desperate spirit, it was still resistless, and occasionally shot promptures through his ardent nerves that made him shudder. [36]

Daylight found him still sitting by his toilet-table, brooding over his fortunes. He never thought of seeking repose; he was more wakeful, more animated, more truly and vitally active, except in the single respect of bodily motion, than he had ever been before.

As he observed the morning to grow later, he suddenly resolved to descend to the family sitting-room. Accordingly, he started up, and, turning round to the table, first despatched his ablutions, and achieved a brief toilet. He then turned slowly from the chamber, and descended to the lower floor.

On his arrival at the family sitting-room, the first object that met his view, on pushing open the door, was Evaline. She had clearly heard his step; and whether she had recognised it as his, or supposed it to be that of Hildebrand, a flush of pleasure had mounted to her face, and her eyes glistened with eagerness. But her agitation became less buoyant when her eye encountered his. Perhaps, she remembered, with the native delicacy of her character, that he had seen her accept the love and first caress of Hildebrand, or she might be moved by his wan and afflictive aspect; but, whatever might be the cause, her beaming cheeks were suffused with a deep blush, and the soft swell of her bosom increased to a heave. Don Rafaele, on first discerning her, was not unmoved himself. He even started as he entered the chamber; but when, on a second glance, he perceived the agitation of Evaline, he seemed to recover himself, and passed in with a firm step. [37]

Evaline rose as he approached, and, though still deeply moved, extended him her hand.

"I need not to ask of thy health, Senhor," she said; "for I see, by thy sad and heavy aspect, 't is no way mended." [38]

"But slightly," replied Don Rafaele, taking her hand, and attempting to smile. "Yet it was not me, I am right sure, that thou wast looking for but now."

Evaline blushed even deeper than before.

"In sooth, now, 't was not," pursued Don Rafaele. "And wherefore should it be, when, if I be not deluded, thou art so bound to *him*?"

"I looked not for Captain Clifford just now," faltered Evaline. "He hath gone into the park for a while."

"Thou lovest him well!" returned Don Rafaele. "Yet hadst thou seen him, as I have, in the heat of action, daring peril, displaying his prowess, and overcoming his foes, thou wouldst love him even yet more."

"Oh, no! I could not love him more!" cried Evaline, with overpowering eagerness.

Don Rafaele made no reply for a moment.

"I have heard of maids," he then said, "whose love did so entirely sway them, that it hath led them into adventures surpassing belief. So exceeding hath been their devotion, that I have oft doubted, on pondering thereon, if it were indeed love, and thought it might be madness." [39]

While he thus spoke, his tone grew so sad and mournful, as if in sympathy for the infatuated beings he referred to, that Evaline was moved to the soul.

"These maids loved indeed," she said, with a deep sigh.

"Some of them followed their lovers unknown," pursued Don Rafaele; "and, for their sakes, did bear with great troubles, with fatigues, watchings, dangers, and divers singular hardships. An' it be true that I have heard, there are no such maids now."

Evaline sighed.

"But, to speak simple sooth, methinks I heard but fables," continued Don Rafaele; "and such maids have never been."

"Oh, say not that, Senhor!" answered Evaline, earnestly. "Be assured, though these maids certainly sustained marvellous trials, the love of woman, which urged them thereto, was well able [40]

to bear them up, and requite them for their misadventures."

"To give up country, kindred, and fortune," said Don Rafaele; "and, in strange lands, encounter notable perils:—i'faith, 'tis exceeding singular! Couldst thou do as much for *him*?"

Evaline made no reply.

"Thou couldst! thou couldst!" resumed Don Rafaele. "'Tis visible on thy face! But, an' I be not misled, I hear his step coming; and I will leave you alone."

"Nay, stay! stay, I beseech thee!" said Evaline, blushing, and, at the same time, laying her hand gently on his arm.

Don Rafaele acquiesced, and, with a half-suppressed sigh, turned to a contiguous chair, and sat down. The step which he had heard approaching was really Hildebrand's; and that cavalier, [41] though he had paused at the chamber-door, made his appearance the next moment, and entered the chamber.

His first greeting was addressed to Evaline; but when that was despatched, he saluted Don Rafaele also, and inquired anxiously after his health. Though the young Spaniard, in his reply, assured him that he ailed nothing, his looks lent no confirmation to his words, and Hildebrand could not but regard him with the liveliest solicitude. Before he could give expression to his concern, however, they were joined by Sir Edgar; and, after a few words more, the whole party sat down to breakfast.

Their meal was still in progress, when Adam Green, who was waiting in attendance without, entered the chamber with a letter, which he forthwith delivered to Hildebrand.

"A serving-man brought it hither, Sir," he said, "and is now waiting below." [42]

"Prithee, bid him tarry a while," answered Hildebrand, accepting the letter.

A glance at the superscription, which was written in a bold and legible hand, informed him that it was from Sir Walter Raleigh; and, impatient to know its purport, Hildebrand begged leave of his friends, and tore it open. It ran thus:—

> "To my right trusty and singular good friend, Hildebrand Clifford, Esquire, at the house of my worshipful friend and neighbour, Sir Edgar de Neville, Knt., Lantwell, Devon, these:—
>
> "Worthy Master Clifford.—Thou art hereby required, in the face of love, and the fickle dame, Fortune, of whom thou art so excellently favoured, to come hither to me with all despatch, and take to thine old courses at sea. And herein thou wilt bear the commission of our most gracious and dread sovereign, the high and mighty princess, Elizabeth, by whom I have it in command, on mine allegiance, to call thee hither straightway. [43]
>
> "I prithee commend me to fair Mistress de Neville, to my worshipful friend Sir Edgar, and, with no less heartiness, to the fair youth, Don Rafaele, whom it doth grievously afflict me to pronounce a Spaniard.
>
> "By the hand of my groom, Robert Wilmay, who hath it in charge to ride posthaste.
>
> "Given under my hand and seal, at my lodging of Durham House, in the Strand, this 16th day of February, in the year of our Lord God 1588.
>
> "Walter Raleigh."

Hildebrand smiled, though seemingly not with hilarity, as he ceased reading the letter, and appeared to deliberate a moment how he should disclose its contents to his friends. A brief consideration served to resolve him, and, when his resolution was once fixed, he entered on the delicate task without further delay.

Both Sir Edgar and Evaline, having fully reckoned on his company for the remainder of the [44] month, received his communication with great disappointment; and, though it was not remarked by any eye but his, Evaline's distress was particularly deep. Don Rafaele alone seemed to hear of their departure with pleasure, though he too, out of courtesy to their host, disguised his real feelings, and affected to look forward to it with regret.

Hildebrand's concern in the matter arose chiefly from an apprehension that, besides injuring his connexion with Evaline, his early departure would prevent his communicating with Bernard Gray. He was resolved, however, though he did not expect that he would succeed, to make another attempt to seek out and confer with that person, and, if he could find him, even inform him of his engagement with Evaline. But, before he could carry his purpose into effect, it was necessary [45] that he should first reply to the letter of Sir Walter. With the view of despatching this at once, he shortly desired leave of his friends; and retired to the library, on the floor above where they were sitting, to set it in progress. He had already determined to depart on the morrow; and therefore, on proceeding to give Sir Walter a reply, he had no question for consideration, but merely to state his purpose. In a short space, he accomplished that object; and, having folded and addressed his letter, hastened to give it to Sir Walter's messenger. That person, in spite of the urgent entreaties of Adam Green, who had exhausted all his rhetoric in imploring him to dismount and refresh himself, had remained mounted at the door, and was ready to set out on the instant. Accordingly, directly Hildebrand appeared, he took charge of the letter, and posted off.

Hildebrand watched him till he had gone out of sight, when, with a quick step, he turned abruptly round, and passed towards the walk that led to the Lantwell foot-path. Maintaining his quick pace, he soon reached that locality, and thence directed his steps to the lodging of Bernard Gray. [46]

The distance was considerable, but, urged by impatience, he never slackened his pace; and, in about half an hour, the “Angel” alehouse, at which his journey was to end, rose to the view. A slight knock on the door brought out the proprietress, and, to his great satisfaction, he learned from that individual that Bernard was at home.

Without further ado, he passed to Bernard’s chamber. As he opened the chamber-door, Bernard, who was sitting within, caught a glimpse of his figure, and sprang to meet him with unaffected eagerness.

“I was meditating how I should seek thee,” he said, after their first greetings had been despatched. “I have that to say will make thee glad.” [47]

“They be famous good tidings, then, Bernard,” answered Hildebrand. “But before thou discoverest them, I must tell thee wherefore I kept not my promise with thee, in the matter we debated at our last meeting; and, therewithal, thank thee for thy kindness to Mistress de Neville, whom I so commended to thy good favour.”

“Spare the thanks, and deliver the matter,” returned Bernard.

“Were it but to have bid thee farewell, then, I would have seen thee before I departed,” replied Hildebrand; “but the truth is, I was kidnapped again.”

“Ah?” cried Bernard. “But I interrupt thee.”

“After I had left thee in the park,” pursued Hildebrand, “somewhat held me abroad a space longer, and ’twas dark ere I took me homewards. While I walked carelessly on, some one in my rear, who had been dogging me unseen, struck me a blow with a bludgeon, and I fell stunned to the earth.” [48]

“’Twas Shedlock!” cried Bernard, starting up.

“Not himself, but two sturdy ruffians, whom he had hired,” said Hildebrand, in continuation. “They had bound me when I regained my senses; and were, I found, carrying me off. On clearing the park, they made for the highway; and there, after a little time, they came to an old farm-waggon; and in this they incontinently bestowed me. One of them, who seemed the bolder of the two, posted himself by me as a watch; and the other mounted the shaft, and straight drove off.”

“Whither drove he?” inquired Bernard.

“We kept on all night,” answered Hildebrand; “and, while it was yet dark in the morning, we came to Topsham. They drove direct to the gaol; and, on their instigation, the keeper thereof took me in charge. But I lay not long in a dungeon. After two or three days, my right worthy friend and patron, Sir Walter Raleigh, of whom I have heretofore rendered thee fair mention, came to take me for a runaway from his plantation, and straight set me free.” [49]

“This Shedlock is a foul villain,” said Bernard; “yet the Lord is a jealous God, and thou must not avenge.”

“I am right glad thou think’st so,” returned Hildebrand.

“Wilt thou forgive him, then?” cried Bernard. “Nay, more! An’ I give thee that will insure thee thy name, and restore thy sweet mother’s honour, wilt thou suffer him, during the brief while he has to live, to continue the holder of thy heritage, and thou be only his heir?”

Hildebrand bit his lips, and was silent.

“Thou hesitatest!” observed Bernard. “Oh, how holy are the ways of the Lord, who is able, of his own heavenly will, to make the heart know its malice, and sweeten its thoughts with charity! Blessed be the Lord, who hath had mercy on his servant!” [50]

As he thus spoke, the eyes of the penitent, no longer gleaming with enthusiasm, brimmed with tears, and turned gratefully towards heaven. Hildebrand was moved.

“I consent, good Bernard,” he said, “and will even try to forgive him. But how will my acquiescence herein prevail in the matter of my succession?”

“I will tell thee,” answered Bernard.

And, without further preface, he proceeded, in a low but distinct tone, to inform him of his recent interview with Dame Shedlock, and of all the particulars which the dame had then disclosed to him. Although, as his narrative progressed, Hildebrand was frequently visibly affected by his words, he interposed no remark, but heard him to an end without interruption. When he had brought his communication to a close, however, he broke into a passionate exclamation.

“I’faith, I owe thee a deep debt of thanks, good Bernard,” he added, “and not in this matter only, but in respect to thy service to Mistress de Neville. From all I have heard, I know it was thee, more than my right worthy friend Sir Walter, that finally set Sir Edgar at liberty. Prithee, how didst thou compass it?” [51]

“I had done some service to my Lord Treasurer,” replied Bernard, “and I revealed to him the whole business. He threatened me at first; but for my service sake, and because he had hushed all inquiry, he let me go free.”

“Yet is he esteemed marvellous strict in matters of law,” observed Hildebrand.

"And so is he," answered Bernard. "When he had extended me pardon, I told him the sad outlines of thy history; and, I promise thee, he straight set the *Concealers*, who have been very active of late, to inquire into Shedlock's title to Clifford Place." [52]

"How accountedst thou to him for Shedlock's possession?" inquired Hildebrand.

"With the true narration!" answered Bernard. "I told him that, in the days of Popish Mary, Shedlock was thy father's steward; and that thy father and his house were of the church of God. Then set I forth how Shedlock, like a second Judas, joined himself with the persecutors; how he bargained with them for thy father's life; and how his treachery was requited with thy father's land. Further, I discovered to him, what he knew already, how our sweet sovereign's revival of the faith had made Shedlock repent, and turned him into a Puritan."

"Oh, Bernard, how can I ever requite thee?" cried Hildebrand, seizing his hand, and grasping it earnestly. "Should we get the land, 'twill be my first joy to see thee lord of it; and my children, an' I ever have any, shall hold thee as their father."

"Wilt thou wed, then?" inquired Bernard, at the same time looking steadfastly in his face. [53]

"I fear to tell thee," answered Hildebrand.

"No, no!" cried Bernard, shaking his head mournfully, "I will avenge no more! The Lord hath visited his servant; and my heart, which used to burn so, as if the memories of martyrdoms were themselves fires, hath won the refreshing savour of peace. Thou shalt have her!"

"Who?" cried Hildebrand. "Evaline de Neville?"

"Even so," answered Bernard.

Hildebrand was silent for a brief space. His joy arrested his speech; for in Bernard's assent to his marriage with Evaline, he conceived that the greatest obstacle to their union, even at an early period, was now removed. Yet, at that very moment, events were in progress, in the hidden course of Providence, which were to render all his hopes a perfect mockery.

When he was sufficiently composed to speak, he failed not to reveal to Bernard, without disguise or reservation, all that was passing in his heart. Bernard entered into his every sympathy; and thus, though they were only speculating on the future, the time passed in the liveliest intercourse, till Hildebrand rose to depart. [54]

So much time had been occupied in replying to Sir Walter Raleigh's letter, and walking to Lantwell, that it was past noon when he had arrived at Bernard's lodging, and, the season being winter, it was now quite dark. He still hoped, however, to arrive at the Grange while the night was early; and having taken leave of Bernard, he set out with more than his average speed, and bent his steps straight homewards.

Though he had just heard so much to exhilarate him, he was not, on the whole, free from melancholy. As he began to calculate with more confidence on ultimately winning Evaline, his thoughts would, in spite of himself, turn to other images, and involuntarily remind him of Donna Inez. Had he nothing to reproach himself with in his acquaintance with that lady? On putting the question to his conscience, he sought, though almost without his own perception, to evade it, and to laugh at the compunctious qualms which it excited. What cavalier of the age would treat such a gallantry seriously but himself? Regarded in its very worst light, it was no more than a momentary peccadillo; and Inez, no doubt, had by this time quite forgotten it herself, and him also. [55]

Such was the conclusion he came to as he stepped hastily into Lantwell churchyard. The night was yet early; but all around, as far as the ear could reach, was still as death, and, though it was cold, the frosty air scarcely stirred. The moon, which was in its first quarter, and had been up for some time, was behind a cloud at the moment, but the darkness was not dense; and, as he passed along, he could plainly distinguish the white tops of the several grave-posts, scattered here and there over the area. A few rapid strides brought him abreast of the church vestry, in front of which, in the angle between it and the transept, was the grave of his parents. Full of filial feelings, he was about to turn a glance on that quarter, when a low, broken sound, like a half-suppressed sob, broke on his ear. The sound came from his parental grave, and, though not without some trepidation, he hastily turned his eyes thitherwards. [56]

The figure of a female was standing by the grave-post, with her back towards him, arrayed in deep black. As Hildebrand observed it, a feeling of awe, which the superstitions prevalent among mariners were well calculated to induce, rose in his bosom; and something whispered him, in a tone that thrilled through his soul, that the figure was the spirit of his mother.

Would his mother appear to him in enmity? Would she who had given him birth—who, during her life, had nursed and cherished and sustained him, and who could no longer be influenced by any earthly passion, burst the iron laws of nature to injure her only son? Surely, not! Yet his heart, which had been unmoved by the roar of hostile cannon, and had braved death in a hundred dreadful shapes, ran cold with horror; his hair rose on end; and his lips quivered so excessively that he could hardly bring them to pronounce, in an intelligible and distinct tone, that terrible and resistless name, which both the quick and the dead must obey. [57]

A cold perspiration broke through his skin, as he observed that his exclamation, though indistinctly uttered, had been heard by the mysterious figure, and caused her to turn round. At the same moment, the moon, bursting from the cloud which had obscured it, poured forth its full light, and disclosed to him, in the pale face of the woman, not the scarcely-remembered features of his mother—but those of Donna Inez! [58]

A dimness came over his eyes at this discovery; and the chill of horror that crted over his brain, like a rush of cold blood, fairly made him reel. But, by a desperate effort, he got the mastery of his weakness; and his eyes, again effective, turned on the grave once more. The figure had disappeared!

Was it an illusion? Had he, for all the testimony of his senses, been the sport of a mere imagination, and really seen nothing? With a beating heart, he turned his head hastily on either side, and glanced over his shoulders. No! The phantom—if such it were—had disappeared, and there was no trace of it to be seen.

A load was raised from his heart as he acquired this assurance. Nevertheless, it was with a heaving bosom, and an unsteady and hasty step, far different from his usual bearing, that he set [59] forward, and once more bent his way homeward.

He paused when he had passed out of the churchyard, and, with unabated awe, again turned a glance around. Nothing but the white grave-posts was visible; and he resumed his progress.

A flood of bitterness opened on his heart as he pursued his way. He felt that, though it had appeared so substantially and distinctly to his eye, what he had seen was no more than imaginary; and was the natural effect of that previous meditation on Inez, which, notwithstanding that he could have no expectation of ever seeing her again, he had been so simple as to indulge in. He felt angry with himself, too, that he should allow so slight a matter to root itself in his memory—that his feelings should be so childishly tender, and his conscience so egregiously scrupulous, in the full vigour and thoughtless era of youth, as to make him writhe under the [60] remembrance of a brief gallantry. Inez, no doubt, had by this time forgotten it herself. To dwell seriously on what he fancied he had seen would be absurd; and would, if it should ever be known, expose him to the constant ridicule and contempt of all his acquaintance.

And did these conclusions really compose him? Was he, in his heart, satisfied with the crafty and specious sophistry in which he had taken refuge? Oh, no! He roused himself into a temporary stubbornness of spirit; he lashed himself into a constrained levity; but every now and then, when his self-upbraidings seemed to be sinking into silence, the sting of conscience still pushed itself in, and made his heart start again.

But, for all this, when he arrived at the Grange, his excitement had driven from his aspect all trace of melancholy, and, far from looking depressed, he appeared to be in good spirits. Evaline and Sir Edgar received him joyfully. Don Rafaele, who would doubtless have viewed his return [61] with equal pleasure, was not in the sitting-room when he entered, and nearly an hour elapsed before he did make his appearance. Then, however, though he looked somewhat flurried, he seemed to be in good spirits, and joined in the pending conversation with unwonted promptitude.

But though that conversation was animated, and never once flagged, it was easy, on observing them closely, to see that two, at least, of the party were far from being at their ease. Though they affected to be the gayest of the gay, both Evaline and Hildebrand, in reality, were stirred more by excitement, than a healthy animation; and, in their eager participation of the passing discourse, they were not seeking to amuse others, but to run away from themselves. Neither Sir Edgar nor Don Rafaele, however, as far as could be seen, noticed their uneasiness; and the evening passed [62] off tranquilly.

The next morning found them all early at the breakfast-table. The horses, which were to convey Hildebrand and Don Rafaele to London, with a hired groom, whom Hildebrand had brought with him, were ready at the hall-door; and it remained only to despatch breakfast, and to part.

They ate their meal almost in silence. Even Don Rafaele, as the moment of departure drew nigh, quite lost his flow of spirits, and looked sad and dejected. Sir Edgar said hardly a word; and Evaline, who had passed the night in mourning, and in apprehending all manner of unhappiness, was almost heart-broken.

The moment of departure arrived, at last. Don Rafaele, with a mournful brow, shook hands with Sir Edgar and Evaline, and turned to the door. Hildebrand could linger no longer; and accordingly, with a forced smile, he caught up Sir Edgar’s hand, and bade him farewell. The [63] smile was still on his lips when he turned to Evaline. She, too, was smiling, though her eyes were filled with tears.

“God ever have thee in ward!” said Hildebrand, in a low voice, at the same time gently pressing her small hand.

Dropping her hand, he turned to the door, and passed into the passage beyond. Sir Edgar, determined to see the last of him, sprang after him, and followed him to the hall.

Evaline was alone. Her tears, which she had restrained hitherto, but which had already mounted to her eyes, would be checked no longer, and, as her father left her to herself, they burst forth in a torrent.

Her heart’s hope was gone; and it was as if her heart itself, by which she lived and moved, had also gone. She felt all that anguish which, in the overflow of an ardent temperament, has been so [64] pathetically described by Bishop Heber:—

> “How bitter, bitter is the smart
> Of them that bid ’farewell!’”

Nevertheless, as she heard Sir Edgar returning, she endeavoured, and not in vain, to assume an appearance of composure. But though she was able to conceal her emotion, she was still, in her

heart, far from being composed. Sir Edgar, on his entry, even noticed that she was greatly dejected, but he had no suspicion that her grief was so rooted; but rather thought, from the character of his own feelings, that it was but the temporary depression which the parting from an esteemed friend would naturally occasion, and which a few short hours would wear away.

But time only served to confirm the sadness of Evaline. Her accustomed fortitude, which had borne her up under visitations more trying, failed her now, and left her to struggle with her [65] thoughts unaided. It might be the effect of a restless night, or it might be solely the impression of her parting from Hildebrand, but, whencesoever it arose, a thrilling but undefined fear, like a presentiment of some coming ill, had fixed and rooted itself in her mind. As the night drew on, she became even more depressed; and Sir Edgar, who had latterly regarded her more closely, began to view her melancholy with seriousness. Before he could take any measures to soothe her, however, a hasty step without, approaching the door, induced him to pause. The next moment, the door opened, and both he and Evaline started up in surprise. The person who entered was Don Felix di Corva.

CHAPTER IV. [66]

After all, employment, next to a clear conscience, is the best antidote to a brown-study. Hildebrand, it is true, did not possess the one, but he was soon to forget his uneasiness in the bustle of the other. On his arrival in London, he proceeded straight to the residence of Sir Walter Raleigh, in the Strand; and there, to his great contentment, found a sphere opened to him, which promised to leave him little opportunity for melancholy.

Sir Walter received both him and Don Rafaele with the utmost warmth and eagerness. Their [67] greetings being despatched, he acquainted Hildebrand, in a few words, with the object and nature of the service in which he was to be employed. From what he said, Hildebrand learned that these particulars were yet secret, but that it was understood, among the few who were informed on such matters, that he would be directed to sail immediately for the coast of Spain, and collect information relative to the expected armada. He told him, further, that he would sail with the Queen’s commission, in his own ship, which had been taken up by the Government for the public service, and was now perfectly ready to put to sea.

“And now that I have told thee all,” he concluded, “let us straight to horse, and ride off to Deptford, to my Lord Admiral. I know he waits us with some impatience.”

“We will to him out of hand, then,” answered Hildebrand. “Don Rafaele will wait our return [68] here.”

The personage referred to, understanding what was said, at once agreed to the proposal, and the two friends thereupon prepared to set forth. Their horses were soon ready; and, taking leave of Don Rafaele, who followed them to the door, and waited to see them depart, they quickly mounted, and set forward for Deptford.

Hitherto Hildebrand had seen little preparation against the formidable armada of which he had brought the first intimation to England, and which threatened not only the independence, but the religion, and even the very existence of the empire. On his way through the city, however, nothing was to be seen but martial costumes, and warlike provisions. The staid citizens, who had never known any parade but Sir Thomas Gresham’s new “Bourse,” bore themselves like soldiers, and looked fresh from the drill-ground; and even the ’prentices walked erect, and aspired to look like Cæsars. Cutlers’ marts seemed to be the popular places of resort; and the lucky shop that, [69] among other weapons, could exhibit to public view one of the clumsy firelocks then in use, and which are to this day called after the reigning sovereign, by the name of “Brown Bess,” was more frequented than the Paris Garden. London-bridge and the Borough looked no less alive to the crisis; and beyond, in St. George’s-fields, and through the whole line of road to Deptford, were seen companies of recruits, arrayed in the most motley habits, undergoing the initiatory and vexatious process of drill.

But it was at Deptford, the principal depôt of the marine, that the greatest preparations against the expected invasion were in progress. Here were clearly at work the master-spirits of the age. Artificers, engineers, officers, mariners, and labourers were seen engaged in their various departments with the regularity of machines. The burring of furnaces, the ringing of anvils, the [70] rattling of hammers, and the hilloing of sailors, as cannon were cast, balls moulded, and ships laid down or re-rigged, created so loud and confused a din, that sounds could hardly be distinguished, and the voice could only be heard when raised to its highest pitch.

Pushing past various groups of officers and mariners, Sir Walter and Hildebrand proceeded straight to the office of the Lord Admiral, Lord Howard of Effingham, in the chief dock-yard. On sending that officer his name, Sir Walter was ordered to be admitted; and under the guidance of the porter, he repaired, together with Hildebrand, to the Admiral’s presence.

There were two personages in the room to which they were conducted. One of them, who was no other than the Lord Admiral, was an elderly man, of rather tall stature, and a grave, but commanding presence. The other was little beyond the middle age; and but for his laced jerkin, [71] which spoke him an officer, would hardly have been looked upon as a gentleman. Although, however, his stature was mean, and his manners far from graceful, there was a certain touch of daring in his face, especially in his eye, that quickly won him attention, and even gave him a look

of authority. His features, moreover, were so familiar to Englishmen, from the respect which was paid to them by the sign-boards of taverns, and other places of resort, that they required no beauty to recommend them to notice, but commanded admiration by their very plainness. He was Sir Francis Drake.

The two admirals rose as Sir Walter entered, and extended their hands to welcome him.

"My Lord Admiral, how is it with you?" cried Sir Walter, taking his proffered hand. "Sir Francis," he added, as he extended that personage his other hand, "give thee the fair time of day!" [72]

"Fair time enough, Sir Walter," replied Drake. "'Tis but little past six bells."

"Sir Walter wishes thee a fair day," said the Lord Admiral, in explanation of Sir Walter's greeting.

"Marry, come up, but methought he spoke to the clock!" cried Drake. "Howsomever, the day is a fair one, though it blows marvellous slack. I've seen windier days."

"Ay, ay, doubtless," observed Sir Walter, laughing. "But, my Lord Admiral," he continued, turning to that officer, "I have brought thee the captain of the 'Eliza,' who was so heartily preferred to thy favour by her Highness."

Here Hildebrand, who had hitherto remained at the door, stepped somewhat forward, and prepared to pay the Lord Admiral his respects. Before he could effect his purpose, however, he was arrested by Drake, who, springing forward, came between him and the Lord Admiral, and caught him by the hand.

"Harkye, in your ear, tip us thy grappling-iron!" he cried. "Blow me taught, but thou'rt a fair- [73] weather fellow, too, to overhaul the Don's shiners! Harkye, in your ear, we'll have a jorum of liquor anon, at the 'Three Jolly Mariners,' in the town yonder."

"I am marvellous grieved to stop good entertainment," cried the Lord Admiral, laughing; "but worthy Master Clifford (methinks, I have his name right) must even to sea straight."

"Though I would fain have spent an hour with good Sir Francis, my Lord, I am ready to set forth incontinently," smiled Hildebrand.

"Marry, and splice my timbers, well spoken!" exclaimed Drake. "Harkye, in your ear, I be moored at 'The Three Jolly Mariners;' and, sink me, but better liquor can be had nowhere!"

"I'faith, I will speak it fair," cried Sir Walter Raleigh, "by the same token that your worship once [74] nigh choked me with a cup on't, which did cause my Lady Nottingham, and divers other ladies of note, to laugh right heartily. But my Lord Admiral grows impatient."

"The matter is urgent," replied the Lord Admiral. "Captain Clifford," he added to Hildebrand, "canst thou away to-night?"

"I fear me, no, my Lord," answered Hildebrand; "for I have not yet been aboard."

"Oh, all is ready aboard," returned the Admiral. "Further, thy ship lies off the dock here, and can away at once."

"Some time to-night, then, my Lord, we will go!" answered Hildebrand.

"You will find your orders aboard, not to be opened till you are off the Start," said the Lord Admiral. "And now, not to detain thee longer, when thou hast so little time, give thee farewell, and God speed thee!"

He extended his hand as he spoke, and Hildebrand, with a profound bow, caught it up, and [75] clasped it earnestly. He next bade farewell to Sir Francis Drake, who, as he clasped his hand, implored him, "in his ear," but in a very loud voice, to remember the sign of "The Three Jolly Mariners," and to be sure to "bear up" thither on his return. Hildebrand promised compliance, as did Sir Walter Raleigh also; and he and Hildebrand, without more words, then departed.

Although Hildebrand had expressed his readiness to leave England immediately, he was not so fully prepared, in regard to his personal affairs, as he at first conceived. However he might manage respecting himself, he could not so easily resolve how to dispose of Don Rafaele. It would be impossible, he felt, to take that person with him, as the enterprise he was about to embark in would doubtless be attended with great peril; and to leave him in England, where he was unknown, and where his youth and inexperience would have no protector, was almost equally [76] repugnant to him. Unable to determine how he should act in the matter, he disclosed his embarrassing position to Sir Walter; and asked that cavalier, to whose opinion he invariably deferred, for his counsel thereon.

"Prithee, let it give thee no concern, good Clifford," answered Sir Walter. "He shall take up his abode with me; and, I promise thee, in case thou incur any mishap, he shall find in me a warm and hearty friend."

"That I am right sure of," rejoined Hildebrand, "and heartily thank thee withal. But let us to the ship."

"Nay, we will send thither my groom," said Sir Walter, "to notify to Master Halyard, whom the Lord Admiral has retained as thy lieutenant, that thou wilt be aboard at eventide. We will straight to town."

Hildebrand acquiesced in this arrangement; and it was, accordingly, on their arrival at the dock-yard gate, carried into execution. When the groom had been despatched to Master Halyard, Sir [77] Walter and Hildebrand, without further delay, mounted their horses, and set out for town.

On reaching Durham House, they were hailed with eagerness by Don Rafaele, who inquired as curiously after the news, especially in the matter which had taken them forth, as though he were an Englishman.

“The news is, that I am straightway to take to the seas again, my fair Rafaele,” answered Hildebrand. “But be not thou discomposed thereat. Our right noble friend, Sir Walter here, will stand to thee in my stead, and provide thee a homestead ashore.”

Don Rafaele changed colour.

“I’faith, he likes not me for a host so well as thou,” cried Sir Walter, laughing. “I entreat thee, fair Senhor, look not on me with disfavour. By my lady’s hand, thou shalt find me a right faithful friend.”

Don Rafaele, whether he credited Sir Walter’s protestation, or not, turned his head aside, and made no reply. That he was moved, however, and even deeply, was apparent; for his broad chest heaved again, and his face retained no trace of colour. [78]

“Nay, nay, be not downcast, Rafaele!” cried Hildebrand, yet in a voice far from cheering. “By my soul, the only grief that I know in this matter is, that I shall leave thee behind.”

“Then, wherefore not take me with thee?” asked Don Rafaele, in a tone of reproach.

“That were not reasonable,” answered Hildebrand. “I go on a mission of singular and exceeding peril.”

“Peril?” echoed Don Rafaele, raising his eyes, which, to his surprise, Hildebrand now perceived were dashed with tears:—“Peril, saidst thou? We had peril, methinks, on our way hither—ay, and singular and exceeding peril, too. Did I make any plaint thereat? Did I—did I shrink?” [79]

“By my faith, no!” exclaimed Hildebrand.

“I would be surety for thee, that thy valour is above question,” cried Sir Walter.

“Thanks, thanks, noble Sir!” said Don Rafaele. “I hold thy hearty assurances right welcome; yet is thy face, for all that, not familiar to me as Master Clifford’s. I beseech thee, forget not I am in a strange land, where I have no kindred. Remember thee, furthermore, how notably young I am; and I was reared right tenderly, I dare affirm. Prithee, then, let me with thee!”

“I’faith, I can refuse thee no further, my Rafaele,” cried Hildebrand; “and only for the hazard to thyself, I were right content to have thy fair company. We will even fix it so.”

Don Rafaele was overjoyed at this answer. At Hildebrand’s suggestion, he immediately proceeded, with more cheerfulness than one might have looked for, to prepare himself for their meditated voyage. His preparations were soon completed; but those of Hildebrand, which were of a more varied character, and not so much at command, occupied a longer time. They, too, however, were quite accomplished before the evening, and everything was arranged for their instant departure. [80]

It was with evident discomposure that they achieved the final step of taking leave of Sir Walter. That cavalier, indeed, would have accompanied them to the ship; but as he would have to come back alone, and the night promised to be a dirty one, they would by no means suffer him to do so. Having, after manifold hesitating pauses, ultimately resolved to depart, they took leave of him at the door, and set forward for Deptford by themselves.

It was growing late by the time they arrived at the tavern where they were to leave their horses. Thence they walked to Deptford Creek, where Hildebrand’s message to Halyard, conveyed by the groom in the morning, had directed him to provide them a boat. Their luggage, which, as the greater part of their personal effects had never been removed from the ship, consisted of only two boxes, was, by the alertness of their groom, brought down with them by two porters, and thus they had no care but to transport themselves to the ship. [81]

As they expected, they found a boat, manned by a picked crew, waiting at the creek for their reception. Amidst a loud hurrah, which made their hearts spring again, they took their seats in the stern; their luggage was safely bestowed in the midships; and they shoved off for the cruizer.

She was lying but a little way out, with just water enough at low tide, which was now turning, to keep her afloat. Everything was arranged for her captain’s reception; and Master Halyard himself, with Tom Tarpaulin, now towering in the elevated quality of mate, were seen in the gangway, keeping a look-out. As the anxiously expected boat began to be distinguished, the merry whistle of the boatswain, which the prevailing stillness rendered audible at a good distance, was heard piping to quarters; the seamen were seen scrambling up the rigging, manning the yards; and a picked squad, under the orders of Master Halyard, fell in file at the gangway, ready to receive their captain on his arrival. Loud and renewed cheers broke from the crew, as, with his head uncovered, in compliment to the national flag, which was flying aloft, Hildebrand stepped on to the deck. As he did so, Master Halyard, who also was uncovered, presented him with a sealed packet, stamped with the royal arms. Advancing to a contiguous light, Hildebrand tore the packet open; and found within, in two separate envelopes, his sealed orders, and the Queen’s commission. He immediately ordered the crew to be piped to the quarter-deck, and there, in their presence, read his commission aloud. This done, he proceeded to set his ship on her way. [82] [83]

The wind, though somewhat light, was favourable; and as the tide turned, and the ship was cast off from her buoy, the sails soon spread out, and carried her on gallantly. It was morning, however, before she cleared the river, and three days had elapsed when she came off the Start.

There, agreeably to the Lord Admiral's injunction, Hildebrand opened the packet which contained his orders. By these he was directed, in the first place, to sail for the Mediterranean, and endeavour to ascertain the precise force and organization of the Spanish Armada. Should he be unable to ascertain this information in that quarter, he was to exercise his own judgment, though circumspectly, as to where else he should seek it; but, at any hazard, he was to leave nothing undone that could lead to its acquisition.

He sailed for the Mediterranean direct. The wind, however, occasionally varied, and, after he had [84] cleared the channel, was not decidedly in his favour the whole voyage. Upwards of three weeks elapsed, therefore, before he arrived at the Straits. There the wind took a turn, and carried him on, with occasional lulls, till he came in sight of Cape de Gatte. What wind ever doubled that point? As the good ship "Eliza," with her crew full of hope, expecting to sustain no impediment, made it her landmark, the wind suddenly lulled, and left them off the eternal Cape becalmed. There they lay for three whole weeks, broiling in the sun, and rolling in sickening agitation on the long, swollen sea.

But the wind came, at last—a scorching sirocco. Away scudded the ship, like a water-witch, and, in a fortnight's time, arrived off the Bay of Naples. Mounting the Danish flag, Hildebrand ventured, though against the advice of Master Halyard, to enter the bay, and there come to an [85] anchor. But though it was one of the chief ports of the Spanish empire, he saw nothing in the bay, as far as his observation could push itself, in the shape of warlike preparation. After several days' interval, finding that he was not noticed by the authorities, and, furthermore, that he could gain no information without some greater risk, he determined to hazard a visit to the shore, and seek for information among the disaffected natives. Accordingly, one night, when it came on very dark, he manned his boat with a picked crew, and set out for a neighbouring fishing village. He found the inhabitants more favourable to his design than he had even expected. Without incurring much risk, he learned, in answer to his inquiries, that the Neapolitan division of the armada had sailed for Lisbon, and that the Tagus was to be the rendezvous of the whole force. Satisfied that he could learn nothing further, he instantly returned to his ship; and resolved, if possible, to slip [86] out of the harbour, and take a cruize off the Tagus. The night was dark; the wind was as fair as could be wished; and the proverbial indolence of the Spanish authorities, which no emergency could induce them to discard, made him hopeful that he would be able to get away unmolested. His expectations were realised, and he cleared the harbour without difficulty.

When he had gained the open sea, the wind carried him on very steadily, and at more than an average speed, till he came off the everlasting Cape, when, of course, it dropped. After the usual interval of three weeks, however, it returned, and bore him on to the Straits. Thence he had a fair passage to the north of Portugal.

The Bay of Biscay is by no means a pleasant district for a cruizer; and after pitching about there for two whole days, in the hope of picking up some venturous fisherman, and finally despairing of [87] such a result, Hildebrand made the bold resolution of entering the Tagus. With the knowledge that there was collected there an armada pronounced invincible, which had been equipped for the purpose of subjugating his country, and effacing its name from the map of nations—with a perfect conviction that, if detected, escape, through hosts of foes, and in the face of a hundred batteries, would be an utter impossibility—sensible that a mere suspicion of his being an Englishman would lead to his immediate execution as a spy—this intrepid and fearless man, without one qualm of hesitation, without one apprehension of the result, turned his ship about, and steered straight for the Tagus.

CHAPTER V. [88]

It was near midnight when the English cruizer, with the wind in her stern, approached the mouth of the noble Tagus. A bar of sand, which renders the navigation dangerous at low water, runs across the mouth; and the island-fort of Belem, which divides the stream into two channels, stands in its centre. It was on the eastern side of the fort that Hildebrand steered his ship; and he hoped, though it was not very dark, that she would pass unobserved. Whether she was observed by any of the sentries, or not, or whether, being observed, she was supposed to be a ship of the [89] king's, and so not looked after, it is impossible to say; but such was the remissness of the sluggish Spaniards that she was allowed to pass unquestioned. Having cleared the fort, she kept her way straight on to Lisbon, which was about ten miles farther. Hildebrand remained on deck the whole time, as did Master Halyard also; but Don Rafaele, at their suggestion, betook himself to the cabin, and there retired to rest. When he arose in the morning, the ship had come to an anchor. On mounting to the deck, he saw the old city, which stood on the opposite shore to the present one, stretched out before him, about a quarter of a mile distant. The fair bay in its front, which had hardly opened where he stood, was crowded with tall ships, of dimensions greater than any he had ever seen, and so closely packed withal, that he no longer feared that the solitary English ship would attract notice. It was as animated a scene as one could wish to behold. There was the old city, with its black monasteries, its prison-like convents, its towering [90] churches, and its close-packed streets, all sloping up from the water, as distinctly displayed as in a map. Then came the forest of men-of-war, each a floating castle, and populous as a city. The wide, bright river, as far as the eye could penetrate, was ploughed by vessels of every order—ships, gun-boats, and galleys, all bearing down towards the city, and destined to join the tremendous armada. On the opposite shore, where stands the present city, rose a chain of

verdant hills, stretching far beyond the site of the modern palace of Necessidades, which now crowns one of them. The hills were green to the water's edge, and, here and there, were topped with smiling white windmills, or, rather, wine-presses, which, sparkling in the sun, made the verdure of the hills even more apparent. Over all, and high above all, was spread the soft, blue sky, free from the least speck, and making the river look azure from mere reflection. [91]

Don Rafaele was still surveying the scene, when he felt a hand, the touch of which he seemed to recognise directly, laid gently on his shoulder. With a glad smile, he turned round, and perceived Hildebrand.

"'Tis a fair scene," remarked that person, gaily, "yet thou wouldst hardly think, from our placid appearance, that we stand on the very threshold of almost certain destruction. By my faith, 'tis nearer even than I looked for. Ho, there! aft! Hoist the Danish flag half-mast high!"

His order was obeyed on the instant; and the crew now, for the first time, observed that the flag of each ship of the armada hung in the same way. Who was dead they could not conjecture; but that it was an officer of the highest rank, if not a member of the royal family, they did not doubt, as the national flag would not be thus degraded but for some great public personage.

Notwithstanding that a general apprehension prevailed among the crew that they would shortly [92] be overhauled by the Spanish officials, they now thought of nothing, in their conversation with each other, but the new topic for conjecture, and exhausted speculation as to which of the Dons had become defunct. Their interest in the matter was increased towards evening, when Hildebrand, who had been below all day, making up his log, appeared again on the deck, and displayed on his slouched hat the mournful memorial of a black band. As he stepped on to the quarter-deck, he was joined by Don Rafaele, who, previous to his appearance, had been pacing the poop, but had no sooner discerned him in the hatchway, than he hurried to his side.

"Urge me no further, fair Rafaele," said Hildebrand, before Don Rafaele could speak to him. [93] "'Twere running thee into a needless peril, and would impede me grievously."

"'Tis because, by my aspect and port, I would be a great aid to thee, making thee pass more reasonably for a Spaniard, that I seek to attend thee," said Don Rafaele.

"I'faith, that might be," answered Hildebrand; "yet not even to make mine own risk less, will I bring hazard on thee."

"I see, thou art resolved to gainsay me, Senhor," returned Don Rafaele. "I fear me, thou beginn'st to regard me troublesome."

"Art in earnest, Rafaele?" asked Hildebrand, taking up his hand. "Know'st thou not that certain death, without an instant's respite, will follow our detection? Thou art resolved! Then, will I refuse thee no further. Get thee a black band, and, when the night falls, we will off."

It was now evening, but, though cloudy, it was yet quite light. The brightness of the scene, however, had passed away, and the night threatened to be a rough one. The wind increased every [94] moment, and the noble river, which had lately looked so placid, was lashed into high waves, topped with foam, and raging like breakers. After a little time, it began to rain, first like sleet, and then in torrents. Moreover, the night, though it was the summer season, set in early, and it was quite dark by nine o'clock. Shortly after that hour, a small boat, scarcely larger than a punt, was manned by two seamen, and lowered from the stern of the English ship. Some doubt existed whether, to use a nautical term, it would "live" on the agitated water; but so adroitly did its two navigators bestow themselves, in anticipation of a mishap, that it maintained its equilibrium, and rode the waves gallantly. Still it was not without some difficulty that it was skulled round to the gangway. Hildebrand and Don Rafaele, muffled in long cloaks, which both the weather and their expedition required, and with their heads well protected by their slouched hats, there waited its [95] approach. When it came alongside, Hildebrand, seizing a firm hold of the side-rope, lowered himself cautiously into its centre, and then helped Don Rafaele to descend. After that person had reached the boat, they both took their places in the stern, and the boat shoved off.

The storm now raged furiously, and it was only by the greatest efforts, aided by long experience, and unshaken intrepidity, that the navigators of the boat could shoot clear of the ship. When they did clear her, their danger was even augmented, and the wind, being no longer intercepted by the ship, threatened to capsize their frail bark every moment. The water roared again; and, withal, shot up in such high waves, boiling with spray, that they were almost blinded. To add to the terrors of their situation, the rain still descended in torrents; and the darkness, which had all along been excessive, seemed even to increase, and, like that of Egypt, could almost be felt. [96] Nothing could be seen on the water as far as the eye could extend, but streaks of white foam; and on the shore, only a few lights were visible, now and then, like twinkling stars. Occasionally the boat almost whirled round. It required all Hildebrand's strength, which was no little, to maintain his hold of the rudder, and even then the boat scarcely answered it. The waves beat under her as if they would knock in her bottom; and its inmates frequently bounced up in their seats, in spite of their utmost resistance, with the violence of the shock. Moreover, the wind blew right in their teeth, and, as they struggled forward, they shipped water every moment. Though the city, judging from the aforementioned lights, was little more than a quarter of a mile distant, it seemed impossible that they could ever reach it, and absolute madness to pursue the attempt. Indeed, they expected, almost with certainty, that they would be swamped by each wave. Still the [97] bold man who held the helm retained his firmness; his iron nerves, as if they were strung for the occasion, never once flinched; and he seemed to dare peril, and defy the storm.

The boat pushed on; now shooting up the curl of a long, whistling wave; then, with reckless

violence, dashing into the gaping trough below, which appeared to yawn even more under its bottom, and to let it sink yet deeper and deeper. Then the rain, and the wind, and the dashing spray, all blended together, beat down in it from above, and the little boat groaned again. How human beings could move through such horrors, where death was in every object, and retain their presence of mind, was truly amazing. Yet Hildebrand maintained his place at the rudder; and the two hardy seamen, though keenly alive to their situation, and fully expecting that every successive wave would swamp or overturn the boat, held on at their oars. Still they made but [98] little progress; for, owing to the excessive agitation of the water, their oars, though so skilfully and adroitly worked, did not always dip, and, even when they did, the violence of the storm half counteracted the impulse. Nor was it by the tempest alone that all their terror was inspired. As they progressed, their ears were saluted by heart-rending shrieks; and thundering noises, like the clashing together of some immense bodies, and which they rightly conjectured to be collisions among the closely-packed shipping, silenced even the roar of the elements. Then a sharp, rushing sound broke on the ear; and the black hulls of two gigantic vessels, looking like the spirits of the storm, flew past together, amidst a terrible chorus of mortal shrieks.

The terrors of death hung around the cruizer's little boat; but its fearless captain, however he might be moved inwardly, appeared to be still undaunted.

"Now, cheerily, my lads! cheerily!" he cried, to the two rowers, at this appalling juncture. "The [99] lights are close at hand: three strokes more, and ye have the beach."

But, strive as the rowers might, the oars would not dip: the long, curling waters troughed under the boat more deeply than ever: then a roaring wave, curling higher and higher as it came on, caught it under the stern, and shot it high on the shore.

The boat capsized as the wave receded; but fortunately, having foreseen what would be its effect, the two seamen had leaped out as she grounded, and so were able to prevent her being swamped. As they held on to the boat, Hildebrand also was about to leap out, when, turning to help up Don Rafaele, he perceived that that person had fallen into a swoon. There was no time to hesitate, and, quick as thought, he caught him up in his arms, and stepped with him on to the shore.

While the men were hauling the boat up on the beach, so as to place it beyond the influence of [100] the waves, Hildebrand sought, by chafing his cold temples, to revive Don Rafaele. Whether from this cause, or because he had been insensible for some time, and the paroxysm was exhausted, Don Rafaele recovered almost directly, and, with a low, deep sigh, opened his eyes.

"Where are we?" he cried: "*still?* not whirling round? Oh! my heart will burst!"

"We are safe now, my fair Rafaele," answered Hildebrand. "Here"—he added, drawing from under his cloak a small flask, and holding it to his lips,—"take thee a taste of this."

Don Rafaele tasted of the contents of the flask; but the spirit, in its raw state, was too powerful for him, and he could not take above a mouthful. Even that, however, had a reviving effect upon him, and, as he withdrew his lips from the flask, he smiled, and looked quite composed again.

Hildebrand took a good draught from the flask. By the time that he had thus refreshed himself, [101] the two seamen, having secured the boat, came up with him.

"My lads," said Hildebrand, handing them the flask, "here is that will keep this pelting rain out of your jackets. Now, hold ye a good watch on the boat! Pray God the wind lull, or we shall never find the ship!"

"We shall never find the ship to-night, your honour," said one of the sailors, hitching up his trousers.

"How know'st that, Ben Hatchway?" demanded the other sailor, who had just taken a good pull from the brandy-flask, and now thought that he could find any object. "His honour knows what we can do better than an old log-boat like thee, I should ween."

"For the matter o' that," remarked Ben.—But here he paused, and, previous to explaining further, took a deep draught from the flask, which his comrade had just handed to him. Having thus [102] recruited himself, he resumed:—"For the matter o' that, Will Bowsprit, here's his honour to the fore, and, as I was a-saying—beshrew my topsail!—I've been in the Portingales afore to-day; and, sink me! as I was a-say"—

"Why, look-ye!" interrupted Will Bowsprit; "an' I leaves my old hull in that there Portugee fish-pond, look-ye! blow me to shivers, that's all! Here's your honour's health! I'll drink to young Master Don's anon."

"My lads, we must back to-night, at all hazards," said Hildebrand. "Stand you to the boat; and when you hear 'Boat ahoy!' cried, give a holloa. Yonder light is the last towards the ship, and is almost in a line with the boat. That shall be my mark!"

As he ceased speaking, a vivid flash of lightning, of the kind called "forked," struck through the darkness; and all "the artillery of heaven" burst forth overhead. The din among the black masses [103] of shipping, in the river before them, which here opened into a noble bay (for it was too large to be called a basin), seemed to increase, yet the whistling of the wind and rain was heard above it. Hildebrand paused a moment: then, wrapping his cloak around him, he turned about, and led Don Rafaele towards the city.

A flight of steps brought them to a quay, whence they passed into a long, dirty street. Not a living creature was to be seen: nothing was to be seen, indeed, but the black houses, which gave forth

no sign of being inhabited. After going along some distance, they came to another street, turning out of the main thoroughfare, in which they espied a light. Whispering Don Rafaele to be of good heart, and (for he had become very faint) helping him along with one hand, Hildebrand immediately made for the light, and shortly came up with it. As he had expected, it issued from the lower casement of a tavern, the outermost door of which, opening into a close passage, was [104] fastened back, and thus invited whoever might be passing to enter.

On coming before the open door, Hildebrand paused, and turned to speak to his companion.

“Be of good cheer, Rafaele!” he said. “The storm favours us, and, methinks, we have no great cause for fear.”

“How can I be afeard when with thee?” answered Don Rafaele. “I fear nought, but I am grievously faint.”

“That we will amend within here,” rejoined Hildebrand. “Let us enter.”

He led the way as he spoke, and, followed by Don Rafaele, passed to the end of the passage, where a door admitted them into the inn. On their entry, they found themselves in a large room, which served the purpose of a modern bar. A cheerful light hung from the roof; and a long table, on which were displayed several dishes of cold viands, and divers goodly flasks, stood in its [105] centre. Behind the table, in one corner of the room, was a fire of logs, at which stood mine host and hostess. At the moment that our friends entered, those two worthies seemed, by their looks, to be in a state of great tribulation; but mine host was revived by the appearance of two guests, and quickly proceeded to bid them welcome.

“Senhors, welcome, i’ God’s name!” he cried. Here a tremendous peal of thunder threw him on his knees. “*Sancta Johannes Baptista, ora pro nobis, peccatoribus!*” he added.

“*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!*” exclaimed his wife, also falling on her knees.

The thunder was, indeed, awful, and shook the very house. As it roared over his head, Don Rafaele, whether from terror, or the higher impulse of devotion, was almost inclined to follow the example of mine host and hostess, and fall on his knees in prayer. While he yet hesitated, [106] however, Hildebrand caught him by the arm, and led him forward to the fire.

The thunder ceased as they came up to the fire; and mine host and hostess, somewhat assured by their seeming composure, and more by the cessation of the thunder, began to collect themselves. Slowly rising to his feet, mine host turned to his guests once more.

“A right dread peal that, Senhors,” he remarked, in tremulous accents. “Good St. Jago defend us! What would you, now, to keep up your hearts withal?”

“A good bowl of warm Oporto, Senhor host,” answered Hildebrand. “Prithee, let it be hot, now, and stint not the lemon and spice; for, by my troth, they give it a most heartening savour. Despatch, despatch, good host! and thou mayst then set cups for thyself and spouse.”

“Will I?” rejoined mine host. “’Tis done!” [107]

And though, literally speaking, it was not yet done, the bowl of mulled port did appear speedily, steaming hot. While Hildebrand discussed a cup of it, he meditated how he should discover, by oblique and indirect inquiries, that information respecting the armada which he had come to seek. Before he could resolve what course to pursue in the matter, however, mine host, rendered loquacious by the wine, proceeded to satisfy his curiosity spontaneously.

“Right good Oporto, that, Senhor Captain?” he remarked. “’Twill cheer thy noble heart, I promise thee, under the mishap you mariners have incurred. Truly, my Lord Marquis, the Admiral, died at an ill time.”

Hildebrand’s heart beat quick as, without risking an inquiry, he thus learned that the renowned Admiral of the armada was no more.

“I question much,” he said, in reply to mine host, “an’ his successor will be his equal.” [108]

“’Tis the common report,” returned mine host, “for though my Lord Duke, to be sure, hath served in the wars”—

“What duke, I prithee?” asked Hildebrand, somewhat off his guard.

Mine host looked surprised. “What! art thou in Lisbon,” he cried, “and know’st not who hath been commissioned Lord Admiral?”

“By my troth,” cried Hildebrand, laughing, “an’ I knew it, good Senhor host, I would not require to ask news of thee. But, to speak sooth, I am but just come to Lisbon, designing, with my fair brother here, to offer for the armada as volunteers.”

“Truly, then, thou art but in the nick of time,” rejoined mine host; “for the armada weighs for England to-morrow.”

“To-morrow?” cried Hildebrand. “Surely, no!”

“’Twas notified to-day by proclamation,” said mine host.

“Well, well, take another cup of Oporto,” replied Hildebrand, replenishing his cup, and [109] presenting it to him. “Who, saidst thou, is appointed Lord Admiral?”

“The Duke de Medina Sidonia,” answered mine host, smacking his lips after his draught. “Good Oporto, that!”

“Right excellent!” said Hildebrand. “But hark! ye have more guests coming!”

The tread of several feet, indeed, was heard close at hand; and Hildebrand, and Don Rafaele, who, in all things followed his example, had hardly turned round to the fire, with their backs to the door, when the door was pushed open, and five cavaliers rushed in. Like Hildebrand and Don Rafaele, they were dripping with wet; and, without heeding mine host, they straight made for the fire. On coming thither, one of them, in striving to get nearer the fire, pushed against Don Rafaele, and that cavalier turned to make room for him. As he did so, he glanced in the intruder’s [110] face, and both he and that person, as by a simultaneous impulse, uttered an exclamation of surprise. Ever on the alert, Hildebrand now turned round, and pushed himself foremost. Glancing in his face, he recognised, to his great confusion, the features of Don Gonzalez, the uncle and guardian of Donna Inez.

Don Gonzalez was collected in a moment.

“Ho, spies!” he exclaimed: “English spies!”

Hildebrand aimed a blow at him as he spoke, and, striking him in the face, felled him to the floor. At the same moment he threw his left arm round Don Rafaele; and with a quick step, yet facing the enemy, made for the door. The four cavaliers who accompanied Don Gonzalez sprang up directly; but the adventure had opened so unexpectedly, and was of such a singular and surprising nature, that they were off their guard, and Hildebrand arrived unmolested at the door. [111] As he drew the door open, however, one of the Spaniards, more collected than his comrades, levelled a pistol at him, and fired.

CHAPTER VI. [112]

The ball struck Don Rafaele, who, being held in Hildebrand’s left arm, above his shoulder, offered the Spaniard the best mark. With a low moan, he fell back on Hildebrand’s shoulder; but that person, though thus rendered sensible that he had been wounded, did not suffer this incident to arrest his flight, but still pushed on for the street.

Although he had some paces headway, he had no time to spare. He had hardly gained the outer passage, when the Spaniards, now fully collected, were joined by Don Gonzalez, and they set [113] after him amain. Before they arrived at the doorway, however, he had gained the street.

The storm was still raging; and the darkness promised, by its excessive density, to screen his steps from observation. As he turned into the street, he seemed to acquire new vigour, yet his long, heavy cloak, though it shielded him from the weather, was a great incumbrance to him, and embarrassed him exceedingly. Feeling this, he slipped it off as he gained the street, and suffered it to fall behind him. The voices and steps of his pursuers were now close at his heels. Undaunted, yet alive to every incident, he ran swiftly on, and, as he progressed, looked about for some projection, behind which he might conceal himself. The darkness was so dense, that he could not, by the utmost stretch of his vision, distinguish any such covert; but, keeping close against the side of the street, he came to an aperture in one of the houses, opening to a retired [114] door. Without a moment’s hesitation, he drew back into the recess, and there ventured to take breath.

As Hildebrand thus came to a halt, his pursuers, who, having been joined by Don Gonzalez, were now five in number, made their appearance in the street. For one brief moment, Hildebrand was in hopes that, having no trace of him to guide them, they would take the opposite direction, and so leave open the only route by which he could retreat. But whether they supposed that he would flee towards the river, or acted from mere impulse, they took the right path, and followed close in his steps. Hildebrand repressed his breath as their tread announced them to be approaching the small recess. Don Rafaele was as still as death; but Hildebrand felt his heart, which was pressed against his, fairly quivering. His hand, too, dripped with his blood.

The steps of the Spaniards came close up to the recess. The four stranger cavaliers, being young [115] men, had outrun Don Gonzalez, and were nearly a dozen paces in his advance. Hildebrand fully expected to be discovered when they came abreast of the recess. It seemed next to impossible, indeed, that he could elude observation, or that they could pass without seeing him. But in their haste, the pursuers did not look about them; but, supposing him to be ahead, pushed straight forward. Hildebrand was congratulating himself on his good fortune, when another step, less hasty than its forerunners, struck on his ear, and Don Gonzalez came in sight. As he came abreast of the recess, the darkness was dispelled, for one brief moment, by a prolonged flash of lightning. The flash was so fearfully vivid, that it quite made him stagger, and, in seeking to avoid it, his eyes mechanically turned on the recess, where the lightning now distinctly revealed the two fugitives.

“Ho, Senhors! we have them here!” he cried to his companions. [116]

While he was yet speaking, Hildebrand drew forth a pistol; and with a steady hand, and an aim that never erred, levelled it at his breast. As his companions turned to his succour, he uttered a low groan, and fell back lifeless.

Still bearing Don Rafaele with his left arm, which was almost numbed with the weight, Hildebrand sprang into the street the instant he had fired. The Spaniards, hearing the report of a pistol, were running back for Don Gonzalez, and were coming towards him with all speed. But,

besides that he was greatly favoured by the darkness, the rain, which had all along fallen in heavy showers, was now succeeded by a torrent of hail, which beat right in their faces; and he was thus able to steal across the street unobserved. There, keeping close to the wall, he allowed them to pass him, and then set off boldly for the river.

Saturated with rain, breathless with running, and with the arm which supported Don Rafaele [117]
sweating with pain, he shortly arrived at the beach. To attempt to look for his two boatmen, or any other object, however close it might be, while the hail was pouring down so furiously, would have been the height of folly, and was a project that did not once occur to him. When he recovered his breath, however, he called out, according to the preconcerted arrangement, at the top of his voice; and then listened anxiously for an answer.

“Holloa, ho!” was the prompt reply.

Catching the direction of the voice, which was close at hand, he sprang forward amain, and shortly came up with the two boatmen.

“Hurrah, Captain! what cheer?” cried the two sailors, discerning him.

“No good, lads!” answered Hildebrand. And, bending a little, he spoke in a lower tone to Don Rafaele. “Where art thou hurt, my Rafaele?” he said.

“I’ the arm,” replied Don Rafaele, faintly. “Moreover, the wound bleeds apace.” [118]

“Here, my lads, hold him up!” cried Hildebrand. “We cannot go off while this hail lasts, and, meantime, I must tie up his wound.”

The two rough mariners caught Don Rafaele in their arms directly, and held him up, with more tenderness than one would have looked for, while Hildebrand bandaged his wound. This he did with a scarf, which he took out of his hat; and though, being afraid to expose him any way to the cold, he was obliged to tie it over his coat, the stay which it afforded the arm lent Don Rafaele immediate ease.

The violent shower of hail had ceased by the time that the sufferer’s arm was tied up. The darkness, however, remained impenetrable; and as Hildebrand glanced anxiously down the river, he began to entertain the same fear as Ben Hatchway, expressed heretofore, that they would be [119]
unable to make out the ship. The thought shook him somewhat; but the thrill which it started had hardly entered his breast, when a flash of light, which looked like electric fluid in the darkness, crossed his vision, and the report of a cannon boomed over the water. At the same moment, three lights were hauled into the air, and offered the eye a mark, now that the hail had ceased, sufficiently commanding to be seen at some distance.

“Well done, ho!” exclaimed Hildebrand, rightly divining that the lights were a provision of Master Halyard’s, and were intended to guide him to the ship. “Now, lads, place Don Rafaele in the stern, and shove off! May God be merciful to our souls!”

The two sailors, without the slightest hesitation, hastened to obey him; and, having bestowed Don Rafaele carefully in the stern of the boat, proceeded to set her afloat. Hildebrand assisted them [120]
to shove the boat into the water, and then, not without getting well soaked by the waves, leaped with them aboard of her, and took his place at the rudder.

The boat nearly capsized as they got fairly afloat. But the dexterity of the two seamen, and the prompt manner in which Hildebrand, on taking his seat, regulated her balance, counteracted the influence of the waves, and enabled her to recover herself. All now depended on the perfect preservation of the boat’s equilibrium. Their route to the ship was not near so dangerous, in other respects, as their progress to the shore had been; for the wind had been then right in their teeth, and, consequently, was now in their favour. Since the fall of hail, too, it had lulled somewhat, and, though the waves ran as high as ever, the boat rose to the water with less strain, and made good way. In a short time, indeed, they brought the cruizer’s lights close before their [121]
head, and were able to distinguish her long black hull. As they did so, the two mariners uttered a loud hurrah, and thus drew the attention of Master Halyard, who happened to be on the look-out, in the gangway, to their perilous situation.

A rope was thrown to them instantly; and in a few moments more, the boat was hauled alongside; and Hildebrand, bearing Don Rafaele in his arms, ascended to the deck.

The anxious group who had crowded to the gangway fell back at the approach of their commander. Hildebrand, however, took no notice of their silent welcome; he even overlooked Master Halyard, and, thinking only of his wounded friend, who now seemed to cling to him more than ever, he shot across the deck, and descended straight to the cabin.

No one was in the cabin but the pantler, who, though of such a taciturn disposition, fairly broke into an exclamation as he entered.

“Hie thee for some hot water, sirrah,” cried Hildebrand; “and be hither with it straightway.” [122]

The pantler disappeared; and Hildebrand, preparatory to any further measures, relieved Don Rafaele of his cloak and hat, and laid him on his bed. Having thus bestowed him, he was turning to look for the steward, when Don Rafaele, with a slight effort, threw his free arm round his neck, and held him back.

“Leave me not to a stranger,” he said, in broken accents: “I—I—am Inez.” [123]

CHAPTER VII.

Abigail had not quitted her bed-chamber long, on the morning heretofore specified, when Dame Shedlock, whom she had left in a deep sleep, awoke. Judging from the expression of her eyes, she awoke in the perfect possession of her senses; but, on being closely surveyed, her face still displayed certain traces of fever, which showed that her sleep had not been refreshing. The bright red spot, too, which has been described as capping her cheek, burned with unabated lustre; and in its contrast with her white forehead, and her parched and colourless lips, made the [124] beauty of her complexion look truly terrible.

For some little time, she lay perfectly still, with her eyes, which seemed brighter than usual, turned towards heaven, and apparently rapt in prayer. As her eyes finally turned another way, the expression of her face changed, and became so radiant with patience, that it actually affected her complexion; and its traces of physical suffering, which have been pointed out above, were lost in the loveliness of its moral revelation.

After lying thus for some brief space longer, she suddenly altered her position; and by planting her two hands firmly on the bed, in the manner of props, raised herself up. The achievement cost her all her strength; and when she had gained a sitting posture, she was obliged to pause a while, and catch for breath as if she were stifling.

Several minutes elapsed before she recovered her breath. Even then, indeed, her respiration was [125] not free, and was evidently effected with an effort. But her difficulty of breathing did not induce her to continue still. Once able to draw her breath, she slowly turned her feet over the side of the bed, and alighted on the floor. Then, supporting herself against the bed, and clinging with one hand to the contiguous post of the bedstead, she raised herself upright.

Her body felt very light, yet her knees and ankles were so weak and feeble, that, notwithstanding her personal buoyancy, she could hardly bring them to bear her up. A bright smile stole over her face as she noted their inefficiency; and while the smile was yet traceable, she raised her head, and once more turned her eyes towards heaven. Quickly dropping her glance again, she planted her left hand, which she had at liberty, steadily on the bed, and, relaxing her hold of the bed-post, stepped slowly forward, and thus moved along towards the chamber-door.

She was obliged to halt several times on her way; but, pausing only to recover her breath, she [126] persevered in her purpose, and finally gained the door.

She appeared to hesitate somewhat as she drew the door open. But her indecision, if such it were, endured but a brief period; and, drawing a deep breath, she once more set forward, and passed into the passage without.

On the same side of the passage, a little way in her front, there was another door, opening into an adjoining bed-chamber. On her entry into the passage, her eye, without looking for any other object, turned straight here; and, leaning against the contiguous wall, she bent her steps thitherwards on the instant.

Passing slowly along, she ultimately arrived at the door. She then hesitated a moment; but, quickly recovering herself, raised her small hand, and threw the door open.

Right before the doorway, at a few paces distance, was a bedstead, which, like her own, had no [127] drapery, and was every way open. It was occupied by a man, who, at the moment that Dame Shedlock made her appearance, had his face towards the door, and was lying perfectly awake. It was her husband.

Shedlock started up at this unexpected visit from his wife. The scowl, however, that mounted to his face, had hardly collected itself, when the ghost-like dame drew back, and disappeared.

Now more surprised than before, and more enraged, the furious Puritan sprang to the floor, determined to call her to an account for her intrusion. Assured of being able to avenge himself, however, his precipitation subsided when he gained his feet; and, previous to starting in pursuit of her, he tarried to put on his clothes. His toilet achieved, he set out for his wife’s chamber.

There was no one in the intermediate passage, and, passing quickly forward, he shortly gained [128] the chamber-door. Trembling with rage, and muttering an indistinct execration, he threw the door violently open, and rushed into the room.

The heavy tread of his feet, in his progress towards the bed, for which he made directly, no way effected the disposition of his wife, although, strange to say, she was lying on her side in the bed, with her eyes fixed on his. As he came up to the bedside, he thought that her appearance of composure, though it was really and clearly unfeigned, had been put on to defy him; and, exasperated by this suspicion, he shook his clenched fist in her face. Still the dame was no way disturbed, and her glassy eyes, far from appealing for mercy, did not even flinch. The ruffian now grew furious, and, relaxing his fist, he seized her by the arm, and dragged her forcibly up. *She was dead!*

A thrill of horror shot through the bosom of Shedlock as he made this discovery. A sudden [129] thought struck him, that she was dead when, a few moments previous, she had visited him in his chamber, and that what he had then seen in her form was not her mortal self, but her immortal and disembodied spirit.

The appalling surmise struck him to the soul. His face, always pale, became quite ghastly; his hair rose on end; and his frame was so agitated, that he could hardly bring his unnerved and trembling step to lend him obedience.

But his awe of his wife's corpse quickly lent him sufficient vigour to flee. Still keeping his eye on the corpse, lest, in the course of his retreat, it should rise upon him unawares, he sprang to the chamber-door, and darted out into the adjoining passage. Thence, with unabated speed, he passed to the neighbouring stairs, and pursued his flight to the hall below.

The hall opened into a porch, leading into the park; but, at its lower end, there were two more [130] doors, one of which, noticed in a former chapter, led to the chamber called the blue room; and the other, to the kitchen. It was to the latter door that Shedlock directed his steps; and, maintaining his original pace, he arrived thither speedily. Still overwhelmed with fear, he drew it open; and, with even increased impatience, passed through the aperture, and closed and bolted the door in his rear.

At the same moment that he thus disappeared, the door at the upper end of the hall, leading into the porch, was cautiously pushed open, and another man presented himself. On coming into the doorway, he halted a while, and looked eagerly round. Seemingly assured by his survey, he ventured to pass in; and with a stealthy step, yet hasty withal, proceeded towards the doorway by which Shedlock had just made his egress. It was Bernard Gray.

He shortly arrived at the lower door, and, raising his hand to the latch, sought to draw it open. To [131] his surprise, however, it resisted his efforts, and he found that it was secured on the other side.

"'Tis fast!" he muttered, at length. "Yet the paper must be secured. I will even venture to her chamber."

With these words, he turned to the contiguous stairs; and after listening a moment, and again looking round, passed quickly up to the floor above. Breathless with his haste, he halted before the chamber which, from having been conducted there on the preceding day, he conceived to be occupied by Dame Shedlock.

Though so anxious to avoid observation, he was afraid to enter the chamber unannounced, or without some previous warning, lest his sudden appearance should cause the dame alarm; and, to prevent any ill effect, he knocked two or three times on the panel of the door. But no answer [132] was rendered; and, after a short interval, he cautiously opened the door, and stepped into the chamber.

Having once crossed the threshold, Bernard paused only to close the door, and then, with a light but hasty step, made straight for the bed. His first glance at its inmate told him she was a corpse.

He gazed in her face for a full minute; and when, at the last, he withdrew his glance, his eyes were filled with tears.

"Who shall question thy ways, O, thou most Highest?" he said, clasping his wrinkled hands. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

When he ceased speaking, a thought struck him that, as he had found her alone, the dame might have died unattended, and might be supposed to be yet living by the inattentive household. Impressed with this belief, he determined to give the alarm, and took a step towards the door, [133] which was only a few paces distant, with that view. But he quickly changed his resolution, and, retracing his step, turned to the bedside again. Here he looked once more at the corpse, and then, with a tenderness which his rugged appearance would hardly have prepared one to expect, placed his fingers on the dead matron's eyelids, and fulfilled the last sad office of closing them.

He seemed now to recollect, for the first time since he had entered the chamber, what was the business that had brought him thither, and the recollection was certainly not calculated to soothe or console him. He had come in search of the paper which was to establish the legitimacy of Hildebrand Clifford; but the demise of Dame Shedlock, who alone could furnish him with that paper, and who had promised to place it in his hands, rendered the prospect of his achieving [134] such an acquisition quite hopeless. What clue had he to the place in which it had been deposited? With his forefinger pressed against his forehead, he proceeded to recall, word by word, all that had passed at their last meeting, between him and the dame; and pondered deliberately on each syllable. At length, he recollected that, as she concluded her disclosures, she had seemed to point at something over her shoulders. Hastily glancing over the head of the bed, his eye fell on the wardrobe, with which, it may be borne in mind, the course of our history has shown him to have been connected heretofore. With a beating heart, he sprang a pace or two forward, and drew the wardrobe-door open. It revealed a small recess, having no shelves, but a row of pegs, some four or five in number, just below the ceiling, from which dangled several articles of female apparel. Bernard examined these separately, but, on the most searching investigation, they afforded him [135] no clue, in any one particular, to the document he so earnestly sought.

Though he had scarcely expected a more favourable result, the conviction that further search would be fruitless, however closely he might pursue it, depressed him severely. Yet he felt thoroughly assured that the document was somewhere in the wardrobe. He was speculating where it could be concealed, when, happening to look downwards, he perceived that the floor of the wardrobe, from the door to the wall, was covered with a rush matting; and it suddenly occurred to him that the paper might be hidden beneath. On surveying it closer, he found that the matting was nailed down; but this circumstance, as may be supposed, offered him but a trifling obstacle. Once possessed of the idea that the paper was hidden under the matting, he stooped down; and, with the aid of a small clasp-knife (which, as he wore it at his girdle, was probably used generally for eating purposes), cut away the matting round the nails, and raised it [136] up. There, indeed, was the paper, covered with dust, yet more precious to him than tissue of gold.

It was a leaf of the parish register; and was written over, in characters not very distinct, on both

sides. Several marriages were recorded on it, but that which principally interested Bernard, and most concerned our history, was the first of all, and testified to the marriage of “Hildebrand Clifford, Esquire, and Mistress Philippa Gray.” But even the testimony to the other marriages was not unimportant, as many of the parties it referred to, Bernard well knew, were yet living, and their evidence to the fact of their having been married at the times set forth, while no record of the marriages could be found in the parish register (though they would be able to swear that it *was* so recorded), would establish the truth and authenticity of the whole document.

Bernard was overjoyed at its acquisition. Having glanced over it, he folded it carefully up, and [137] placed it, with a circumspection commensurate with its value, within his vest, buttoning his jerkin above. He then replaced the matting, and turned to retire.

He lingered a moment at the side of the bed; but he was too anxious to get clear off, now that he held such an invaluable possession, to protract his pause. After one farewell glance at his deceased friend, he hastened on to the door, and thence passed to the outer passage.

No one was about; and, with a light and hasty step, he proceeded to the hall below, and onward to the porch. Thus he made his egress unobserved.

CHAPTER VIII. [138]

Although the sudden and unannounced arrival of Don Felix di Corva, described in a former chapter, had overwhelmed Sir Edgar de Neville with surprise, that cavalier quickly recovered himself, and hastened to bid his relative welcome. Evaline, however, continued discomposed, and met the greeting of Don Felix with undisguised coldness. The Spaniard affected to be insensible of her resentment; but it did, notwithstanding, mortify him exceedingly, and he determined to avenge himself on her at the very earliest opportunity.

Such an opportunity was not to be afforded him that evening. Evaline, distracted with her [139] anxieties, which the return of Don Felix had greatly augmented, shortly announced herself to be too indisposed to remain up longer, and retired to her chamber. Don Felix was himself much fatigued, and, when Evaline had retired, he professed to have no inducement to stay up further, and also betook himself to his dormitory. But, fatigued as he was, it was more to pursue reflection, than to seek repose, which he had pretended to be his aim, that he thus withdrew. When he laid his head on his pillow, he sought rather to conjure up the past, with all the remembrances that a malignant disposition could draw from it, than to recruit himself for the morrow. He could not say, in his heart, that Evaline had at any time loved him; but there was a time when she had not held him in dislike. Who had induced her to alter her sentiments? There, indeed, was the touch-stone, which searched and proved his nature! [140]

The Spaniard was not, under ordinary circumstances, what would be called a bad man; and if no strong influences had been at work upon him, he might have passed through life, in its even and untroubled channels, without developing a single evil quality. Still he was, in reality, possessed of a quality fruitful in evil, from which springs a host of bad and furious passions, and which is generally called by the name of “self-conceit.” He thought he was a *nonpareil*; and so long as, by the run of circumstances, he could appear in that character, he was perfectly inoffensive, and rather disposed to serve a friend, than to crush a foe. But the man that, even involuntarily, dared to appear in his sphere to greater advantage than himself, did him an injury that he would never forgive. Then, on being closely viewed, the quality that had appeared more deserving of contempt, than worthy of fear, displayed its genuine and native hideousness. It was bared to the [141] root, and, in its naked colours, showed itself to be fraught with “envy, malice, and all uncharitableness.”

Up to the time that Sir Edgar and Evaline formed the acquaintance of Hildebrand Clifford, Don Felix had lived with those persons, in the seclusion of the Grange, in the style and position he desired. But Hildebrand’s appearance on the stage was to open to him a new and less auspicious era. A few days served to show him, by the altered bearing of the household, that he had now a rival, and that he could not enjoy the chief place in his sphere without a struggle. His self-esteem quailed before the many superior attractions of Hildebrand; but the superiority that, by throwing him into the back-ground, quite obscured his moderate resources, excited his envy. He soon began to regard Hildebrand as an enemy; and, as has been already set forth, seized the first [142] opportunity that arose, in the absence of Sir Edgar and Evaline, to provoke him to a quarrel. The fact of Hildebrand having spared his life on that occasion, instead of invoking his gratitude, only made him hate him the more; and the noble generosity that was above his understanding, he ascribed to indecision and fear.

He now saw, what he had suspected before, that he had quite lost the affections of Evaline, who had long been promised to him in marriage, and firmly believed that they had been surrendered to Hildebrand. This allowed, he had to consider how, in the eleventh hour, he could withdraw her love from Hildebrand, and transfer it to himself. The scheme by which he proposed to effect such a change, stupendous as it might seem, was already devised.

The morning following his return to the Grange found him astir early. Nevertheless, he was shortly joined by Sir Edgar, who was, like himself, of matutinal habits, and wont to be early up. [143] They greeted each other cordially; and Sir Edgar then, though unconsciously, opened the way for that communication concerning Hildebrand, which Don Felix was so anxious to deliver.

“There is a proclamation out,” he said, “that all Spaniards in this realm, of whatever degree, are either to quit it straightway, or to give good and sufficient surety for their behaviours. But thou need’st not to be troubled hereat; for I will write off to London to-day, to my worshipful friend Sir Walter Raleigh, and beseech him to act in this matter in my behalf, and be thy surety.”

“’Tis a good thought, and should be despatched with all convenience,” replied Don Felix.

“Yet there will be some delay in it, I dare affirm,” returned Sir Edgar. “’Twould be executed out of hand, an’ my good friend Captain Clifford were here.” [144]

“Now, God forefend, Sir, I should ever take a service at his hand!” exclaimed Don Felix, with a show of excessive indignation.

“And wherefore not, I prithee?” rejoined Sir Edgar. “But I remember me, on second thought, you were at discord one time. Beseech thee, let me make you friends.”

“Never!” cried Don Felix, vehemently.

“That is a hard word, Felix,” answered Sir Edgar, in a tone of remonstrance. “Let me not fall in thy regard, an’ I hold him dearly still; for the evil he hath done thee—if he have done thee any evil—cannot mete with the good he hath done me.”

“He hath done no evil to mine own self,” replied Don Felix, “yet hath he wronged a friend of mine, whom I hold next to thee, beyond the utmost limit of forgiveness. But to make thee understand his guilt, I should have to unfold to thee, at more length than thou mightst choose, its sum and particulars.”

“’Fore God, thou makest me fairly marvel!” exclaimed Sir Edgar. “’Twere wronging him to hear thy tale; for, believe me, thy friend, be he who he will, hath but practised on thee, and told thee what is without truth.” [145]

“Then have mine own eyes deluded me!” cried Don Felix. “What I believe, they saw!”

“I’faith, thou grievest me, Felix,” said Sir Edgar. “Yet can I hardly look ill on my friend, or do him even a thought’s wrong. But the matter! Leaven thy tale with kindness, and be brief.”

“When I was lately in Cadiz,” said Don Felix, “I saw there one day, prowling about the streets, a man whose favour I knew. There was with me the dear friend I spoke of—by name, Gonzalez; and seeing the man aforesaid walked about curiously, like a spy, we dogged him a while. He was no other than Captain Clifford.” [146]

“He was in Cadiz, I know,” observed Sir Edgar.

“We followed him to the chapel of the cathedral,” resumed Don Felix, “where, to our singular admiration, we observed him to be in correspondence with a certain fair lady, my worthy friend’s ward.”

“This is no great harm,” smiled Sir Edgar.

“Anon!” answered Don Felix. “Jealous of my friend’s reputation, I kept a close watch on the young Donna; and, to be brief, on the night following, while parading round the house, I nearly ran against Captain Clifford and her duenna, and tracked them fairly to the Donna’s lodging.”

“An’ this be the sum of his error, ’tis only matter for a little raillery,” remarked Sir Edgar.

“Mark me!” pursued Don Felix. “Stung with passion, I alarmed my friend; and after a rigid search, within and without, we found the Donna and her seducer together. My tale must now be unfolded in few. Don Gonzalez, reasonably enraged, committed Captain Clifford to prison. Howbeit, he had not been there long, when, as we have been advised since, on the confession of the duenna, he was visited by his poor victim, disguised as a cavalier. In that guise, she enabled him to escape; and, under the name of Don Rafaele”— [147]

Sir Edgar started. “By God’s suffering,” he cried, “she was with him in this house! An’ I live to see him, I will call him to account for ’t.”

“Thou must mistake,” answered Don Felix, with affected horror, yet really transported with joy. “He would never so affront thee, his friend, and my fair Evaline, as to bring his betrayed belamour hither.”

Sir Edgar was so overcome with indignation, that for several minutes, though he strove to repress his feelings, he could not sufficiently calm himself to reply. Then, however, he spoke at length, and with all the bitterness which, viewing Hildebrand’s error in the light now laid down, might be expected from a man of honour, and a parent. Though he had yet something to say, Don Felix, with characteristic cunning, suffered Sir Edgar to talk himself out, when he opened to him what he deemed a more exciting subject. [148]

“I fear me, he hath even done harm here,” he said. “An’ it be so, my peace, which he hath already disturbed, is utterly lost, and ’twill scarcely go less grievous with Evaline.”

Sir Edgar’s cheeks burned again. “He hath never dared to trifle with her,” he said, in tremulous accents.

“I am much afeard he hath,” answered Don Felix.

“Go to! I will see her on the matter,” returned Sir Edgar. “I have promised her to thee of old, and, if she tender my honour, thou shalt have her. I will write off to Sir Walter to be thy surety to the Government; and directly his answer comes, allowing of thy sojourn here, you shall be wedded. Let us despatch the letter at once.” [149]

Writing materials were ready at hand, and, as he ceased speaking, Sir Edgar turned to them, and proceeded to write the proposed letter. When it was finished, old Adam Green, whom he employed before any in matters of trust, was summoned from without, and directed to convey it to the next post-town. Adam entered on the errand without delay; but his retirement from the chamber, preparatory to setting out, afforded Sir Edgar and Don Felix no opportunity of resuming their conversation; for just as he left them to themselves, they were joined by Evaline.

The fair girl, to judge from her appearance, had passed a restless night; but, seeing her father look sad, she smiled on her entry, and greeted him with constrained cheerfulness. To please him, [150] too, she even relaxed her bearing towards Don Felix, and saluted that cavalier with the utmost complaisance. Nevertheless, her assumed composure was but short-lived, and she sat down to their morning meal, which had been waiting for her appearance, in thoughtful silence.

As none of them was disposed to converse, much less to extend the appetite, their breakfast sustained no interruption, and was speedily despatched. This done, Don Felix arose; and, stating that he had some business at Exeter, which required his instant attention, quitted the chamber, and left Sir Edgar and Evaline to themselves.

They sat full of thought for several minutes, when Sir Edgar, in a low voice, and agitated withal, broke the silence.

“Evaline, I have some ill tidings for thee,” he said.

Evaline started. “What may they import, Sir?” she asked, in a faltering tone.

“’Twill grieve thee to hear, yet must I tell thee, notwithstanding,” answered Sir Edgar. “God give [151] thee grace to bear them meetly!”

“Amen!” ejaculated Evaline, crossing herself.

Without saying a word more, she waited till Sir Edgar should unfold, at his own prompture, whatever he might have to communicate. Though Sir Edgar had before determined what he would say, her patient bearing so moved him, that he now faltered, and several minutes elapsed before he could proceed. At length, however, he opened his communication; and, acquiring more firmness as he progressed, disclosed to her all that he had just learned from Don Felix.

Evaline heard him to an end without interruption. Occasionally, indeed, as the more remarkable features of his tale were unfolded, she raised her dim eyes, and fixed a momentary glance on his face; but she never spoke a word. She knew that it was all true; she would have given her life— [152] ay, her very life—if she could even have doubted it; but it carried conviction and reality in every single particular.

She sat in her chair like a statue—as still, as composed, and almost as unconscious. One would have thought, from her unruffled look, that she was indifferent to her father’s tidings—that she was quite calm and composed; but the calmness and composure were despair!

Her father paused when he had finished his communication, expecting, from the hint he had received from Don Felix, that she would swoon with grief, or, at the least, burst into tears. Deceived by her seeming composure, however, he supposed that it affected her only as far as, being so contrary to what she had looked for, it shook her opinion of a lately esteemed friend; and, under this impression, he pursued his discourse less tenderly.

“Didst thou love this man, Evaline?” he said. [153]

“Love him?” exclaimed Evaline, wringing her clasped hands. “O! God! how dearly!”

Sir Edgar turned pale with surprise.

“Thou shouldst have told me this afore,” he said, reproachingly.

“He besought me to conceal it for a time,” answered Evaline, “as he had that in view, he said, which would make his fortune equal mine, and insure him your favour.”

Sir Edgar bit his lips, and mused a moment. He then stepped up to Evaline’s chair, and, there pausing, took her hand in his.

“Thou know’st I have thy welfare at heart, my child!” he said.

“Right well,” replied Evaline, calmly, yet without looking up.

“And if I ask thee to do a thing I have dreamed of for years, and which will make my last days [154] pass lightly, wilt thou cry me nay?” asked Sir Edgar.

“God forbid, father?” returned Evaline.

“See, then!” resumed Sir Edgar. “I have long thought to wed thee to thy brave friend and coz, Don Felix.”—Evaline started.—“Thou wilt not, now I am old and lonely, deny me the joy of seeing thee happy?”

Evaline looked up; and Sir Edgar, though he had observed that his proposal moved her, was taken by surprise at the despair revealed in her gaze, and shrank back apace.

“My heart is breaking, father,” she said. “Do not—oh! do not thou pain it more! Beseech thee, as thou lovest me, name not this match again!”

“Never!” exclaimed Sir Edgar, in a broken voice. “’Tis a thing I had set my heart on. But never care, my darling! We will speak of it no more!”

“Thank you! thank you!” cried Evaline.

She rose as she spoke, and, withdrawing her small hand from his clasp, threw her arm round his neck, and kissed his cheek. Then, with a deep sigh, she broke away from him, and passed out of the chamber. [155]

Sir Edgar watched her till the door, closing after her, hid her from his view, when he turned mournfully away, and threw himself into the chair which she had just vacated. His expectations, no less than hers, were blighted; his peace also was gone; his and his child's sympathies were no longer concordant.

It is a bitter thing for a parent to find an obstacle to his heart's desire in his own child, even when, as in Sir Edgar's case, he feels that his child's opposition is perfectly and strictly legitimate. It is as if his hand, acting on a judgment of its own, refused to answer the call of his mouth—as if his body disdained to be swayed by his mind. Though he may distinctly perceive and understand, that his child sees in his command an object of abhorrence, and may mentally bleed at her every pang, he yet feels, in his heart, that she ought to be persuaded that it is really a path to happiness, and embrace it cheerfully. He may know how the idea appals her; he may commiserate and writhe under her deep sufferings; but for all this, he still thinks, in his moments of retirement, that her terrors are foolish, that her sufferings are the offspring of her own imagination, and that obedience to him would insure her happiness and fruition. [156]

Though he had promised never again to request Evaline to accept the hand of Don Felix, Sir Edgar found, on reflection, that he could not tear that project from his heart, or forego its realization, without a bitter pang. He had conceived it when they were yet children; it had, as it were, grown on his affections, as his affections had grown with them; and he now saw a weak and unhappy passion, which could never be pursued, and the mere entertainment of which was degrading, step in to oppose it. He was to see his child wither under the breath of a villain, when, as he thought, a career of happiness was open to her, and the height of earthly bliss was within her reach. [157]

The last of his house would never wed: when he should be laid in the cold grave, he would leave in the world, in which all men seek a memorial, not a vestige of his race. The inheritance of a score of ancestors, improved by his care, and extended by his economy, would pass to strangers, and he would die unmourned, and lie in his sepulchre unremembered.

Such were the bitter reflections that passed through his mind. And yet, in the face of these reflections, at the very moment that his disappointment pressed upon him most severely—even while he was thinking, every now and then, that the opposition to his wishes was unkind and unreasonable, his paternal heart bled for his child. He imagined her looking on the wreck of her bright dreams of promise—on lofty hopes overthrown, and deep aspirations stifled; and he saw her, as the ruin still confronted her, become paralysed at the view, and overwhelmed with the terrors of despair. [158]

All his own energy was depressed and lost. In his inability to sway his child, he felt as though, in reality, he was no longer master of himself. His disposition had suddenly undergone an entire and radical change, and he now seemed, instead of being a man of thought and action, to be a mere creature of circumstance, and quite at the command of any influence that might approach him.

He was still meditating on his disappointment, when he was joined by Don Felix. That person, finding him alone, inquired the result of his conversation with Evaline, which he knew had concerned himself, with affected eagerness, although, if the truth must be told, he very well understood that there was no chance of its being favourable. Sir Edgar's reply, informing him of Evaline's determination not to wed him, appeared to overwhelm him with affliction, and, though no more than he had expected, did really fill him with the most bitter rage. Still, however, he did not despair of one day achieving revenge. In deference to Sir Edgar, he forbore to press the subject at that moment, but he looked forward, in his heart, to a time when he might successfully recur to it, and pursue it to a triumphant issue. Even at the passing time, indeed, he did not virtually neglect it; but by frequent piteous sighs, and his melancholy and dejected aspect, which beamed with pious resignation, urged his suit on Sir Edgar with unremitted assiduity. [159]

Meantime, Evaline had shut herself up in her own chamber. On first entering it, she threw herself on her knees, at her bedside; and there, leaning forward, buried her face in her hands. And what did she pray for? Could she suppose, on looking out on the stupendous creation, which is too vast for human thought to review, that so insignificant an atom as she could appeal against and arrest the course of events, and draw from Heaven miraculous succour? What, though even the hairs of her head were all numbered—what, though the supreme Disposer, who planted and moved every source and spring of action, had called himself her Father—what, though he had himself said, "Come unto ME, ye heavy-laden,"—was it to be thought, by any sane and reasonable being, that He would recall the past, and obliterate realized events, on her petition? [160]

No such thought aroused the prayer of Evaline. She prayed, not against what could not be averted, but for power to bear what God should dispense—not for the reduction of her burden, but for grace and strength to sustain it.

She was somewhat soothed when she arose from her knees. But the holy assurance which she derived from her prayer, though it nerved her for the moment, was not lasting, and quickly sank under her associations with the world. In time, she might be resigned—*that* was her hope; but now—O God! who could bear it now? [161]

If she did for a moment conjure up an assuasive reflection, the bitterness of blighted passion—as if, like a stranded sea, it had receded only to recruit its vigour—quickly rushed over her again, and bore down all opposition. What an afflictive and appalling spectacle did it present to her!

Every hope washed away—every bright thought overthrown—every dream and prospect of happiness utterly obliterated!

And did she bear no animosity to the man who, whether directly or otherwise, she supposed to have brought her to this dreadful pass? Not so much as would weigh in the scale with a hair! She [162] loved him, indeed, as dearly as ever—loved him beyond the grasp of expression—loved him with all the ardour, depth, and devotion of her nature.

If she could only weep—if she could only soothe her overcharged heart, in its bitter ecstacy, with a few tears—then, she thought, her misery would be assuaged. But her distress was so exquisite, that even this relief, wretched as it was, would not rise at her wish, and she had not so much as a tear to console her.

She thought herself perfectly resigned, but, paradoxical as it may sound, she was, in reality, nerved by despair. Beyond the pallor of her complexion, and the fixed stare of her eyes, she showed no outward sign of emotion; but within, where no eye could observe her, she was wrung to the soul. And what a glorious thing it was, now all was gone, to be able to brood over her sorrow unobserved! How grateful was it to her to be alone!—to sit and think, hour by hour, over [163] her heart-rooted affliction, her crushed affections, and her indomitable but fatal attachment!

Several hours elapsed before she ventured to return to the family sitting-room. Ultimately, however, she did repair thither, and there joined Sir Edgar and Don Felix.

Sorrow had breathed a blight over the once happy circle; and the sweet harmonies of family intercourse, if looked for in outward evidences, were visible no more. When they spoke at all, the father and daughter spoke in monosyllables; and Don Felix, though really no way disturbed, did little else but sigh. But what most distressed Evaline was, not the silence, but the seeming prostration of her father. Nor was it in his face, dejected as it was, or in the tones of his voice, that she conceived this to be apparent. It was in his excessive tenderness to her that she saw his affliction. He seemed to be afraid to speak, or even to move, without first looking at her, as if he [164] imagined it possible that his words or motion might give her uneasiness. In short, he appeared to be so subdued, that he had resigned all care for himself, and had no thought that was not entirely hers.

She hoped this would wear off, and that a day or two, at furthest, would bring him more fortitude. But the habit rather grew upon him; and day followed day, in tedious succession, and with the same melancholy monotony, without altering his manner in the least.

His evident wretchedness materially aggravated the depression of Evaline. Though her own cause of sorrow, contrary to her expectations, was none the less bitter or poignant from being familiar, it did become less absorbing, and gradually left her open to other and more tender impressions. In the severance of one tie, she felt those that remained, and which embraced her earlier affections, drawn yet closer, and her surviving attachments become more enlarged and [165] endearing. To her father, in particular, her heart opened new and more devoted sympathies. He was now to be her sole care—in him was rooted her only remaining hope; and to soothe the downhill of his life, which her sorrows had rendered rugged, was to be her one solitary aim.

In what way was her holy object to be accomplished? Her heart, already so prostrate, fairly ran cold at the inquiry. But if she recoiled from it at first, she soon began to think of it, in her solitary moments, with more calmness. Occasionally, when she thought no eye was observing her, she would steal a glance at her father's face, and, as she there saw what he was suffering within, she would accuse herself of disobedience, and even of selfishness. Then she would reflect, with something like pleasure, that she could not live long; and, if she soothed the last days of her [166] father, what could it matter how she sacrificed herself? Don Felix, it was true, could never possess her love; but his present devotion to her father had restored him to her esteem; and if it would give happiness to the latter, whom she had made unhappy, why should she hesitate to wed him? It would be all the same to her; she could not be more wretched than she was; and when the hour should come which would lead her to another sphere, where the very fulness of peace would be opened to her, she would be haunted by no remembrance of disobedience, or shadow of reproach.

But though her heart could pause on such a reflection, it was too weak and human, and attached too closely to the memories and associations of the past, to approach it with resolution. She pondered on it, indeed, very frequently; but never long, and always with some degree of horror. One afternoon, however, it occurred to her so forcibly, that, strive as she might, she positively [167] could not repel it. She was seated in the common room, and its only other inmate, it so happened, was her father. He sat with his side towards her; but his head, contrary to his wont, was resting on his open hand, and, though she repeatedly turned her glance upon him, she could not see his face. After a time, she began to think he was asleep; and something prompted her, now she could not be observed, to approach him, and take a close survey of his features.

Light as her step was, Sir Edgar heard her approaching, and looked up. For the first time since the morning following the return of Don Felix, her eyes met his, and she observed, at her first glance, that they were filled with tears.

She had paused when he raised his eyes; but now, banishing her hesitation, she sprang hastily forward, and threw herself at his feet.

"Father!" she said, in a deep voice; and, as she spoke, she planted her arms on his knees, and [168] caught his right hand in both hers:—"Thou think'st I love thee not!"

Sir Edgar's eyes overflowed. "My child! my darling! not love me!" he cried. "Oh, I know thou

dost! I know thou dost!”

“I have been self-willed, dear,” answered Evaline. “Wilt thou forgive me?”

Sir Edgar, bending a little forward, threw his arm round her neck, and pressed his lips to her cheek.

“Shall I forgive thee for being my comforter?” he said. “Thou hast ever been my true darling, and most loving child! What can I forgive thee more?”

“I have denied thee to wed Don Felix,” pursued Evaline. “In good sooth, my heart was then distract, but I will deny it thee no longer. Thou shalt give me to him, father.”

“Our Lady forbid, my poor child!” faltered Sir Edgar.

“Thou shalt! thou shalt!” cried Evaline, trying to smile. “What, wouldst turn on me with mine own waywardness, and cross me for being undutiful?” [169]

Perhaps, Sir Edgar saw, in spite of her smile, which was really more distressing than tears, how biting a sorrow was wringing her tortured heart, and so determined to yield to whatever she should propose. Whatever might be the motive that influenced him, however, he caught her round the waist as she ceased speaking, and, thus holding her, drew her up to his bosom.

“Be it as thou wilt!” he said, in a broken voice.

“First, I will write to Captain Clifford,” resumed Evaline, “and advise him, with what brevity I can, what he is charged withal. This were no more than common justice.”

“No more,” said Sir Edgar. “But where wilt thou write to him, dear?”

“To the lodging of Sir Walter Raleigh,” answered Evaline.

“I had a missive from Sir Walter this morning,” said Sir Edgar, “enclosing a pass for Felix, but he makes no mention, in the few words he hath writ, of Captain Clifford.” [170]

“No doubt, they be both much occupied with the new levies, preparing against the armada,” observed Evaline. “I will advertise him, if he do not clear himself of the charges in ten days’ time, he shall never see me more. When that space has passed, I will hold myself free from him, and be ready to wed Felix.”

“’Tis resolved like thyself, and let it be so,” replied Sir Edgar. “The letter should be despatched to him with all speed.”

“I will write it incontinently,” returned Evaline.

Accordingly, she repaired to the contiguous table, and there, sitting down, entered on the task forthwith. Her despair, instead of distracting her, marshalled her thoughts into order; her hand was as steady as marble; and, writing straight on, she shortly brought her letter to a close. When she had thus finished it, she carefully read it over; and then, though without speaking, offered it for the perusal of Sir Edgar. [171]

“I cannot read it,” cried Sir Edgar. “Seal it up!”

She felt inclined to read it over again as she drew it back; but fearful that, as he had observed her read it over once, Sir Edgar might deem her irresolute, she forbore, and hastily sealed it up. Then, with a hand much less steady, she superscribed it, and gave it over to Sir Edgar.

“Art resolved on this, Evaline?” asked that person, as he accepted the letter.

She could not trust herself to speak; for the effort she had made to appear composed, and by which she had been sustained so long, was now spent, and her heart was bursting. By a desperate struggle, however, she forced her lips into a smile, and nodded affirmatively. [172]

“I will despatch the missive at once, then,” said Sir Edgar.

Thus speaking, he strode out of the chamber, and proceeded in quest of Adam Green. He soon found that individual, and, calling him aside, presented him the letter, and directed him to convey it to the Devon postman. He then turned to rejoin Evaline.

The forlorn girl had quitted the chamber before he arrived thither. He was not sorry, on reflection, that it had so happened, as he thought that she would be the better for retiring a while. He was himself quite elevated; for he supposed that, on a dispassionate review of what had transpired, she had mastered her unhappy passion for Hildebrand, and was really desirous to wed Don Felix. As he was pondering on this gratifying conclusion, Don Felix joined him.

Sir Edgar grasped his hand on his entry, and at once unfolded to him, word for word, all that had passed between him and Evaline. The subtle Spaniard appeared to be overjoyed at the communication. On pursuing the subject further, however, he expressed a doubt whether, in case no other obstacle should intervene, they could find a priest to solemnize the contemplated marriage. [173]

“There are licensed priests enow, did we know where to look for them,” answered Sir Edgar.

“That I am well advised of,” resumed Don Felix; “and, now I bethink me, one came over with me from France, and is still somewhere in Exeter.”

“He may be a seminary priest,” suggested Sir Edgar.

“That is he not, but duly licensed,” returned Don Felix. “I will inquire him out anon.”

While he was thus discussing the last preliminary of the proposed marriage, Evaline, who was to [174]

be its victim, was brooding over it in her chamber. Strange as it may seem, the evidence of Hildebrand's inconstancy, whether from familiarity, or from being reviewed with a too partial eye, now appeared to her to be defective, and she began to hope that he would be able to prove it false. It is true, her hope, if viewed closely, was associated with a thousand fears, but still it was a hope. She knew that he had introduced to her acquaintance, under the name of Don Rafaele, a person of exceeding beauty, and whom only the most skilful disguise could make to pass for a male, and she recollected many particulars in the conduct of that person that quite confirmed the statement advanced by Don Felix. But would Hildebrand have brought his wretched victim into the presence of one whose ruin he only meditated? She thought not; and though harassed, every now and then, with the most bitter and excruciating apprehensions, and occasionally horrified at [175] the thought of the sacrifice she had proposed to her father, she still hoped for a satisfactory and happy issue.

The hope, limited as it was, inspired her with new spirits, and, compared with her previous bearing, she was quite animated when she rejoined her father. Sir Edgar was overjoyed, and, to all appearance, Don Felix was no less so; and they both strove their utmost, by engaging her constantly in conversation, to maintain her in the equanimity she seemed to enjoy. For a week, or so, while her hope retained its ascendency, their efforts were successful; but as the time drew nigh at which, according to the period she had fixed, she might expect a reply to her letter to Hildebrand, her spirits drooped, and she again sank into listlessness and apathy.

The mental fever that she now endured was beyond expression excruciating. It would have been far better for her to be without hope, than to hang, hour by hour, and minute by minute, by such [176] a pitiful thread, and look down on all the horrors of despair. What poignant thoughts struck her every minute! Now she would be comparatively composed, and then, quick as lightning, a fear would spring from her heart, that would make her brow sweat again. What fearful agony was that! Yet it was nothing, in force and horror, compared with what she endured at night. Then, when every other eye was sealed in sleep, she lay on her troubled pillow in a raging fever—restless, racked, and burning. Even when exhausted nature sank her into a brief sleep, she writhed under horrible dreams, and was soon, in spite of her exhaustion, startled into action by a monstrous nightmare.

Yet all this time, under all this suffering, she bent her knee daily, in humble adoration, before the inscrutable providence of her Maker; she never once questioned the equity of His dispensations; [177] she only asked for mercy, patience, and fortitude to bear them meetly.

Never a breath of complaint once escaped her. She even tried to look cheerful; to exhilarate her father, she would even smile, when, God knows, her noble heart was bursting.

At length the day arrived which was to decide her fortune. What a day! Every approaching step, if she did not recognise it directly, made her start. Once, looking out of the casement, on the side of the mansion nearest the lodge, she espied a horseman coming up the avenue. What a host of hopes and fears rose in her bosom, during the few minutes that, from the time she first saw him, the horseman was occupied in riding to the house! Both Sir Edgar and Don Felix were in the room; but though she felt assured, from the very outset, that the horseman was a messenger from Hildebrand, she was afraid to call their attention to his appearance, lest they should [178] perceive her agitation. She was still looking out of the casement, when, with a beating heart, she heard old Adam enter the chamber, and approach Don Felix. The next moment, the voice of Don Felix, whispering her father, brought all her bright and inspiriting speculations to the ground.

"It is the priest," he said.

Sir Edgar started up at this announcement; and, together with Don Felix, and Adam, who was waiting their commands in the matter, passed out of the chamber. As she heard them make their egress, Evaline, now perfectly hopeless, drew back from the casement, and ventured to turn round. She stood still a moment, as if her despair had deprived her of motion; and then, with frantic energy, rushed through the open doorway, and repaired to her own chamber.

There she remained for several hours, alone and undisturbed. At last, when it had become quite [179] dark, she was joined by Martha, who came to assist her to bed. Just as she had effected that object, a slight knock, yet evidently proceeding from an unsteady hand, was inflicted on the chamber-door.

"'Tis my father," cried Evaline. "Prithee advertise him, good Martha, I am marvellous weary now, and would be alone; but I will be well prepared to-morrow."

Martha hastened to the door, and, drawing it open, perceived that their visiter, as Evaline had foretold, was indeed Sir Edgar. Holding the door in her hand, she informed him, in a low tone, what Evaline had said, and desired to know his commands.

"'Tis well," answered Sir Edgar. "Inquire at what hour to-morrow she will be prepared."

"At nine of the clock, father!" replied Evaline, distinguishing what he said. "Till then, God and our Lady have thee in ward!"

"And thee! and thee!" cried Sir Edgar. "We will attend thee in the morning." [180]

And on the following morning, precisely at nine o'clock, the appointed hour, he and Don Felix were in attendance at her chamber-door. They were not kept waiting long. Shortly after they had taken their station, the door was opened, and Evaline, supported by Martha, appeared in the doorway. She was attired in her most costly habits; but their splendour, on being surveyed closely, sorted ill with her pallid complexion, and her inflamed and swollen eyes. Still she had constrained herself to look somewhat animated. She even smiled as she greeted her father, and

readily accepted the support which, on her coming fairly into the passage, was proffered to her by Don Felix.

Leaning on the arm of that person, and followed by Sir Edgar and Martha, she passed on to the chapel, which was on the floor beneath. But her resolution began to waver as she entered the chapel. Don Felix, though she still held his arm, paused at the chapel-door, and suffered Sir [181] Edgar and Martha to pass on before them. He then secured the door.

Wretched and horrified as she had been all along, Evaline now felt, in the severance of the last association with hope, a new and more terrible anguish, and the full wretchedness of her situation seemed to reveal itself only at this moment. But she had no time for reflection. The priest, who had entered the chapel before them, was waiting her at the altar; her father began to look pale and anxious; and Don Felix, though with more gentleness than his wont, led her trembling forward.

She stood at the altar quite unconscious of the awful rite that was in progress: she did not hear a word—she did not see a thing that was passing: her whole sense and energy—her very principle of life, were bound in the torpor of despair.

The priest took up her hand. The fearful horror and utter hopelessness of her situation, to which [182] she had for a moment appeared insensible, now burst upon her again. Her heart seemed to leap to her mouth, and to force her, in spite of herself, to say aloud—“O, God! hast thou forsaken me?”

The words had hardly escaped her, when a loud and prolonged knocking, that made the building ring, was inflicted on the chapel-door.

“’Tis he! ’tis he!” screamed Evaline.

So speaking, she broke away from the priest, and darted towards the chapel-door. Before she could reach it, however, Sir Edgar, who was scarcely less agitated than she was, sprang after her, and arrived at the door first.

“Who knocks?” he demanded.

“In the name of our sovereign lady the Queen, open the door,” was the reply.

The voice was Bernard Gray’s.

CHAPTER IX. [183]

Master Shedlock, on fastening the lower door of the hall behind him, in the manner set forth heretofore, resumed his progress, and passed on to the kitchen. There, as was already made manifest, he found Abigail and Zedekiah, whom his appearance quite diverted from their design of ejecting the cut onion.

Abigail was the first to recover herself.

“What ails thee, master?” she cried.

“She’s dead!” answered Shedlock. “I have seen her spirit.”

“Mean’st thou mistress?” demanded Abigail, earnestly.

“She’s dead!” repeated Shedlock. [184]

“Go to! she was a good mistress!” cried Abigail, bursting into tears. “I will go see her.”

Shedlock seized her by the arm. “Woman, she’s dead, I tell thee!” he cried. “Go get some neighbours to lay her out.”

Abigail made no reply, but, as he dropped his hold of her arm, stepped towards the rearward door, and proceeded on the errand he had charged her with. He remained stationary himself, with his eyes fixed on the open door, in evident abstraction and bewilderment, for upwards of half an hour. After that interval, Abigail returned, accompanied by two other women, tenants of a neighbouring cottage, whom she had brought to assist her in laying out her mistress.

“Shall we go see her now?” she asked of Shedlock.

“Ay,” replied the Puritan. “And let some one stay with her till her burying.” [185]

Zedekiah, who had hitherto stood perfectly still, as if he had not understood what was passing, here gave a slight start.

“Look you this be minded,” continued Shedlock: “so shall my heart be at rest.”

Rest? his heart was never to be at rest again! The fearful visitation which he believed himself to have been subject to, in the last farewell of his deceased wife, was impressed too vividly on his mind, and had given too violent a shock to his long-sealed conscience, to suffer him to rest a moment. What a terrible retribution had one brief instant brought upon him! In the midst of his pride, in the height of health, with every pleasure and enjoyment that riches could purchase within his reach, and with all the pomp and allurements of the seductive world open to him, the man who believed himself to be only a creature of the time, and entirely free from all responsibility, was a prey to the liveliest pangs and terrors of remorse.

The tremendous mystery of nature was unveiled in his bosom, at last. In vain did he strive to turn [186]

from it; in vain did he strive to stifle, with the specious sophistries of atheism, that ever-living and irradicable conviction of responsibility, which it stamped in the very life-blood of his heart. He might persuade himself that he believed it to be false; he might say, as he had often said before, that it was the mere effect of early impressions; but the awful inspiration rose up still, and, in spite of all he could think, say, or do, would win and fasten on his attention.

Whoever has looked close into his own heart, in the silence of midnight, when its admirable machinery may be best observed, will have noted how hard it is to fix it on any one thought, and what a variety of ideas assail us at once. Can he see in this distraction no trace of supernatural influences? When, in spite of his very utmost exertion, the thought that he would pursue is [187] suddenly invaded by another—when the good intention he would dwell upon becomes associated with corruption—when his virtuous resolution is overtaken by an allurement to vice, his best and most generous sympathies, as they are on the very eve of ripening into effect, stifled by an egregious vanity—does he not, in this situation, feel that he is of himself like a mariner without a compass, and that his heart needs a higher and greater Power at its helm? If he be a reasonable being, such must, beyond all dispute, be his natural conclusion; and he will feel no less assured, that that Power is at his hand, and only awaits his invocation to lend him effectual succour.

Even Shedlock was not abandoned. Nature, bursting the trammels he had imposed upon her, unfolded herself to his eye in her native perfectness; conscience sought to arouse him to the truth; but now, when a last hope was extended to him, he wished to believe it false; and what [188] should have prostrated him in adoration, overwhelmed him with horror.

The awful adventure of the morning had unnerved him, and, in the superstitious spirit already ascribed to him, he thought that the apparition of his wife, which he believed it to have revealed, was a warning that his own end was approaching. How could he die?—he, whose whole life, as far as his memory could carry him back, had been one course of guilt? Yet why could he not die, if to die, as he persuaded himself he believed, were to end—to dissolve into the elements, and be no more? There was a doubt—a craven doubt,—and that withheld him.

When Abigail and her two helpmates proceeded to his deceased wife’s chamber, and he was thus, as he believed, protected from a repetition of his recent ghostly adventure, he ventured to return to his dormitory. A bible was lying on his toilet-table, and, on his entry, was the first object that, [189] in his survey of the chamber, seemed to interest him. It was open, and, after musing a moment, something whispered him, in pursuance of the thoughts he had been following, that it was a book of lies, and he determined to shut it up. He approached it with that view; but, as he caught up the cover, his eye involuntarily turned on the open page, and there read these words—“Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee!”

Shedlock drew back appalled. In the mood he was in, the passage appeared to him like “the handwriting on the wall;” and yet, by a singular and unaccountable infatuation, he rejected the authority of the volume by which it was furnished. He tried to ponder on other things, but, the more he sought to divert his thoughts, the more did the one terrible fear of death, which had taken possession of his heart, grow and twine round them, and taint each individual reflection [190] with its harrowing horror.

He became even more unnerved on the approach of night. Afraid to remain alone, he directed Zedekiah, in a tone that admitted of no question, to make up another bed in his chamber, and there watch him during the night. His injunction was fulfilled, but the precaution suggested by his fears, and from which he had hoped to have derived a degree of assurance, had no effect on his mind, and, however he might strive to compose it, it still would offer no thought but the one racking anticipation of approaching death.

He was quite without hope: even life itself, if it should be extended to him, had lost its charm—it could no more present to him the image of reality. As this reflection occurred to him, his heart burned again, and he asked himself why, if it were to bear on him like a burden, he should continue to endure life. Only the fear of what might succeed it could make it any way tolerable. [191] Did he believe, then, that it was but the prelude to another existence? No! certainly not! For what reason, then, should he cling to it?

Such were the speculations that, almost in spite of his own will, shot through his fevered mind, over and over again, as he tossed restlessly on his pillow. He tried to shake them off, but they held to him, notwithstanding, with the grasp of giants. Thus, sweating with horror, he continued till near midnight: the burden then surpassed all endurance; and, muttering a blasphemous execration, he sprang from the bed, and staggered out on the floor.

As he came to a stand, he fell back against the toilet-table. He was about to raise himself, when his hand, in moving round the table, knocked against some extraneous substance, and he caught it up. It was a razor.

“’Twere a good thing, now, to end all,” he said.

Thus speaking, he drew the razor open, and raised it to his throat. He paused a moment, and [192] then, with a perfectly steady hand, dashed the deadly blade into his flesh, and cut his throat right across. A loud yell rang in his ear, and he fell back a corpse.

CHAPTER X. [193]

On the evening following the suicide of Shedlock, shortly after dusk, the mild and benevolent Master Craftall, the partner of that ill-fated man, was sitting at the desk of his countinghouse, evidently in expectation of some visiter. He had not been sitting thus long, when a door behind him, leading into the street, was suddenly pushed open, and the visiter he had been expecting rushed in.

The stranger paused on his entry, and, previous to advancing into the chamber, closed and bolted the door. He then turned round, and confronted Craftall.

In the situation which he now took up, the light on the neighbouring desk, at which Craftall had [194]
just before been sitting, poured full upon him, and thus discovered his proportions. He was a tall man; and his figure (for, as he was habited in a long cloak, the precise fact could not be ascertained) appeared to be stout, and to correspond with his height. His features were sharp, and harsh; and his eyes, which were remarkably small, emitted a bright and unnatural lustre, such as might indicate a disposition to insanity. His years, judging from his appearance, might be about fifty, but, as he was now breathless, and, withal, seemed to be greatly agitated, he might look older than he was, and be really some five years younger.

Craftall had started up on his entry, and, observing him to be discomposed, began to look somewhat agitated himself.

“What hath happed, holy father?” he asked.

“I have been dogged since I went forth,” answered the priest—for, as will have been inferred, [195]
such he was; “and have had but a near escape.”

“Wast thou followed hard by?” asked Craftall, alarmed.

“Almost to the door,” replied the priest. “And only that my hour had not yet come, I had been well content, in my heart, to have rendered me up, and found on the gibbet a crown of glory.”

“*Ave Maria!*” ejaculated Craftall, crossing himself.

“*Eripe me, Domine!*” cried the priest, also crossing himself. “Shall we heed this corrupt body in the service of Holy Church? Would the gibbet were now”——

Here a loud knock was inflicted on the door.

“Hush!” whispered Craftall, in a trembling voice.

The priest, whose countenance had just before beamed with the loftiest resolution, crouched with [196]
terror.

“’Tis the persecutor!” he faltered.

“Hie thee within, then, holy father!” stammered Craftall, beseechingly.

Whether it was that his hour had not yet come, or that the persecutor, however contemptible in the distance, appeared formidable at close quarters, the priest readily embraced this advice, and passed through the inner door to another chamber. When he had thus disappeared, Craftall, with more composure of manner, proceeded to the outer door, and there demanded who was without.

“The servants of the Lord,” answered a harsh voice.

This answer, though so indefinite, greatly disturbed Craftall, and confirmed him in the impression he had conceived, that the persons calling themselves the servants of the Lord were what he considered the Lord’s enemies, and, in short, were no other than the persecutors. But, whatever [197]
they might be, one thing he was assured of, and that was, that it would be highly injudicious to give them any offence; and, consequently, he determined to admit them on the instant.

“I am not worthy that ye should come under my roof,” he cried; “yet a good man, one worthy Master Chatter, cometh hither oft, and telleth me glad tidings of Israel.”

With these conciliatory words, he drew open the door, when, to his amazement, the servants of the Lord who entered were, not the persons whom he had expected, but the servants of his partner Shedlock.

Abigail and Zedekiah, without pausing at the door, pushed past him to the light, and there turned to salute him. Before they could carry their purpose into effect, however, Craftall, recovering from his surprise, ventured to inquire their business.

“What seek ye here?” he demanded.

“They be both departed,” answered Abigail. “The crowner’s quest sat this morning, and, by their [198]
law, *he’s a fellow at sea*.”

“The burying, forsooth, will be at night,” observed Zedekiah, turning up the whites of his eyes. “Verily, a goodly sight!”

“Whom speak ye of, ye fools?” cried Craftall, enraged.

There lay the mystery. They were, indeed, willing to disclose the items thereof, but who those items referred to was not to be elicited so easily. Craftall, however, seeing that something singular had happened, persevered in his inquiries; and, in the end, learned from Abigail, who was the more communicative of the two, that both Dame Shedlock and her husband had ceased to exist.

The tidings were melancholy, and, by his own account, grieved him exceedingly, but they were not without consolatory points. If, by the death of Shedlock, he had been bereaved of a dear

friend, his mental loss might still turn to his personal profit, and he might augment his fortune with that friend's possessions. Shedlock, he knew, had left no heir; and, by a little management, which no one would ever inquire into, he might seize on his property, and appear to succeed to it by a lawful right and title. [199]

"I must back with thee out of hand," he said to Abigail. "We must look after the good man's chattels."

"The man's there, and he suffers no lookers," replied Abigail.

"What man?" demanded Craftall.

"Master Bernard Gray," answered Abigail.

Craftall changed colour. After a brief pause, however, he seemed to recover himself, and resumed his conversation with Abigail. He then learned, to his surprise, that Bernard had claimed all the property of his late partner for some unknown heir, and, in pursuance of that claim, had sealed up the papers of the deceased, and taken possession of his house. His chagrin was unbounded at this unexpected intelligence. Yet what could he do? Bernard, it was to be feared, acted on authority; and even if he did not, how could he, whom Bernard could impeach as a recusant, dare to molest him? [200]

While he was pondering how he should proceed, it suddenly occurred to him, that, though he could not possess himself of Shedlock's estate, he might secure his share in their mercantile investments, and so increase his wealth even yet more. But would Bernard be blind to such a glaring fraud? As the inquiry struck him, he conceived a scheme of aggrandizement also. He remembered, with a smile, that a ship was about to be despatched from Topsham to the plantations, and in her he could bestow all that he could scrape together, and proceed to a shore beyond Bernard's reach.

On conceiving this scheme, he briefly dismissed Abigail and Zedekiah, and determined to put it on foot without delay. Several days elapsed, however, before he could make any progress, although, in the mean time, he spared no effort to carry it fully out. He arranged with the captain of the vessel, a man after his own heart, respecting his passage, and secured his aid in removing his chattels. But, though the captain afforded him his cordial support, his project still went on slowly, as it was expedient, he thought, that it should be executed by night, so as not to excite the suspicions of the townspeople. Moreover, the assets of the firm, being invested in various ways, could not be quickly converted into cash, and hence accrued to him another source of delay. For a week, however, all went on smoothly enough, when, one night, as he was sitting in his countinghouse, speculating how he could best dispose of what assets remained, he was startled by a knock at the door. [201]

He hesitated a moment before he answered the summons, but then, whatever had caused his hesitation, he became reassured, and, without inquiring who was without, he drew the door open. A cavalier, little taller than himself, and muffled in a long cloak, appeared in the doorway, and demanded to know if that were the residence of Master Craftall. [202]

"It is," answered Craftall: "I am he."

"I would speak with thee apart, then," replied the cavalier.

And though Craftall proffered him no invitation to enter, he pushed rudely by him, and passed into the chamber.

"Be not afeard," he said; "but close the door. I am a friend."

There was something in the stranger's manner that, in spite of himself, overawed Craftall, and he obeyed his injunction without hesitation.

"Now, prithee lead me to holy father Paul," pursued the stranger, when Craftall had closed the door. [203]

The recusant merchant started.

"I tell thee, I am a friend," continued the stranger. "Were I aught else, would I come to thee by night, and alone? I am a foreigner, a true son of the church, by name Felix di Corva."

Craftall pointed to the inner door of the room. "Thou wilt find him in the chamber beyond," he said.

Don Felix—for the stranger was indeed he—made no reply, but hastened towards the door pointed at. He did not pause to knock, but, on arriving at the door, opened it at once, and passed in. As he crossed the threshold, he drew the door close behind him.

Craftall remained perfectly still till the door was closed, when, with a stealthy step, he also proceeded thitherwards. On reaching it, however, he did not draw it open, but, bending on one knee, knelt down before it, and applied his ear to the keyhole. He continued in this posture till, after an interval of about half an hour, a noise within induced him to rise, and retreat to the contiguous desk. Just as he arrived at the desk, the door was opened from within, and Don Felix reappeared. [204]

Craftall pretended to be startled on his entry; but the Spaniard, full of other thoughts, took no heed of him, but passed across the chamber in silence. On reaching the outer door, he turned round, and bade the wondering merchant a good-night.

"God-den, Sir!" replied Craftall. "May our Lady and St. Bridget"—

He paused; for Don Felix, not looking for a response, had passed out, and closed the door in his rear.

On being thus left to himself, Craftall mused a few moments, when, though it was contrary to his habit, he began to deliver his thoughts aloud.

"A week hence," he said; "and the holy father is to go the night afore. 'Twill just serve me. We [205]
shall sail the same night."

Whatever he might refer to, he dismissed the subject with these words, and directed his attention to a contiguous heap of accounts. He was engaged at the accounts till the night was far advanced; and the next morning, after having taken only a few hours' rest, he turned to them again. Thus he laboured, night and day, with unceasing vigilance, till he found that his scheme was almost accomplished, and that he had now only to remove his last treasures to the ship.

It was on the sixth morning after the visit of Don Felix that this issue came fairly before him. While he was pondering thereon, he was joined by father Paul, the priest, booted and cloaked for a journey.

"Whither goest thou, holy father?" cried Craftall, with affected surprise—for he well knew the priest's destination.

"To a fold of the faithful," answered Paul. "But I cannot tarry to speak further; for, by my [206]
appointment, a man awaits me now, with a horse, at the city-gate. *Benedicite!*"

"Good morrow!" rejoined Craftall.

The priest had passed out of hearing; and Craftall, now quit of all impediment, rubbed his hands with glee.

He had the day before him, and he failed not to turn it to account. In the first place, he arranged with the captain, whom he had completely bought over to his interests, to have some sailors at hand that night, at an early hour, to carry off his last luggage; and, in the mean time, he spared no effort to get the luggage ready. He laboured so earnestly, that shortly after nightfall, at which time he had appointed the captain to be prepared, his object was achieved, and he only waited the arrival of the sailors to take his departure. It seemed that fortune favoured him, for hardly [207]
had he finished packing, when, to his great satisfaction, a knock on the outer door, in his rear, led him to believe that the sailors were at hand.

"Enter!" he cried.

The door opened, and there entered—not the sailors, but Bernard Gray.

Craftall drew back as, after throwing-to the door, Bernard approached him. They had not met since the occasion described in a former chapter; and though, contrary to his expectations, Bernard had never denounced him to the Government, he had lived in constant apprehension of such a result ever since. Bernard's appearance at this moment, just as he was on the point of absconding, completely took him aback, and he saw him draw nigh without the power of accosting him.

"Be under no fear!" cried Bernard, perceiving his discomposure. "I have kept thy secret, and will never betray thee!"

Craftall was reassured by these words, albeit, judging of Bernard by himself, he had no notion [208]
that they sprang from any sentiment of compassion, but supposed that, though it did not appear on the instant, Bernard was making him an overture, under which he sought to advance some interest of his own. At another time he would gladly have associated with Bernard, while it should serve his purpose, on terms so favourable; but his object now was, at any hazard, to get him out of the way, and so have the stage clear for his departure. There was only one way, he thought, in which such an object could be accomplished; and that was, by betraying his ghostly friend, the priest. He would have shrunk from this alternative, indeed, under ordinary circumstances—not from any feeling of honour, but, what weighed more with him, from the scruples of superstition; but his dread of ulterior retribution, if it occurred to him at all, now sank under his apprehension of present detection.

"I thank thee, good Master Gray," he said. "'Tis what I looked for at thy hands; for a certain [209]
friend of mine, one Master Pry, hath commended thee to me in this wise very oft. Truly, I have repented me of the evil, and will sin no more. I see thou doubtest me! But"——

"Peace! peace!" cried Bernard. "I sought thee on another matter, concerning the affairs of thy sometime partner."

"Anon; we will discourse of them anon," replied Craftall. "Now, to give thee assurance of my amendment, let me tell thee where, to my knowledge, a seminary-priest is in hiding."

"Let him be!" returned Bernard. "He hath a licence, no doubt; and even if he have not, 'twould be a hard matter, I dare affirm, to seize him in the discharge of his functions."

"I tell thee, he hath no licence," said Craftall, impatiently—for he expected to be visited by the sailors every moment. "Moreover, an' thou wilt be guided by me, thou shalt seize him in the [210]
exercise of his office. To-morrow morning, he marries a cavalier of Spain, one Felix di Corva, to Mistress Evaline de Neville."

Bernard started.

"Art advised of this?" he cried.

“An’ it be not true, denounce me!” exclaimed Craftall, solemnly.

“I must to horse straight, then!” said Bernard. “Here is some devilry at work!”

He turned away with these words, and, without further speech, made for the door, and darted into the street.

“Ha! ha!” cried Craftall. “’Tis a good deed! ’Tis well done!”

That night he sailed for America.

CHAPTER XI.

[211]

It was the eighth hour of the morning before Bernard arrived at Lantwell. Though his horse was jaded, he did not draw up before his own house, but proceeded, at a pretty brisk canter, to the upper end of the village. There, a short distance from the church, he came to a small cottage, similar to his own, before which he reined up, and alighted.

“So ho, there!” he cried, knocking at the door. “Gaffer Peters! So ho!”

“Anon! anon!” cried a voice within.

[212]

Several minutes intervened, however, before the door was opened. A short, stout man, about the middle age, then made his appearance, and, discerning Bernard, hastily stepped out to the road.

“Give thee good morrow, fair master!” he cried. “What hath gone wrong?”

“Never thou heed what, Master Headborough!” replied Bernard; “but don thy cap, and mount thee up behind me.”

“But the law, Master Gray—the law of the matter?” inquired the constable. “Look you, an’ it be a simple matter of robbery, thou must needs have a warrant, as I take it, ere thou mayst take the thief.”

“Wilt thou come?” demanded Bernard.

“Prithee, be advised as to the law,” urged the constable. “We have adjudged in the instance of robbery. Now, look you, if it be a matter of battery by assault”—

[213]

“’Tis neither robbery nor assault,” cried Bernard. “’Tis an offence against the state; and if thou don not thy cap incontinently, I must even take thee without it.”

“Go to!” remonstrated the constable. “An’ it were but robbery and battery, the law, as thou sayest, were easy enough; but”—

He was still speaking, when, overcome with impatience, Bernard caught him up in his arms, and threw him, perforce, across the shoulders of his horse.

“Go to, thou!” he cried. “Settle thee afore the saddle, or, while thou pratest here, the offender will escape. Thou hadst better be hanged than that should be!”

The tone of his voice, and the dread which, in common with all his neighbours, he entertained of Bernard’s character, reduced the loquacious constable to immediate obedience, and, without further parley, he disposed himself in the manner directed. Bernard sprang up behind him, and then, seizing the bridle, clapped spurs to his horse, and set forward for Neville Grange.

[214]

By the carriage-road, which was circuitous, the distance was considerable, and occupied him nearly an hour. Ultimately, however, he got over it, and, spurring through the gateway, and up the adjoining avenue, reined up before the hall-door.

The tramp of the horse’s feet, which the hard, dry road carried some distance, quickly brought out several of the servants, and, among them, old Adam Green. That person, to the surprise of the others, recognised Bernard as an acquaintance, and hastened to salute him.

“Are they wedded yet, Master Adam?” asked Bernard, on his approach.

“’Tis now in course,” answered Adam.

Bernard alighted at a bound.

“Down with thee, thou loon!” he cried to the astonished constable, seizing him by the arm: —“down, I say!”

[215]

There was no use in resisting, and the constable, maugre the dignity and state of his office, was obliged to give way, and descend to the ground.

“Now, Master Adam, lead us to them!” said Bernard.

“For her sake, I will!” answered Adam. “Follow!”

He turned towards the hall-door; and Bernard, and the constable, grasped by Bernard’s hand, followed in his wake. Entering the hall, he passed up the contiguous stairs, and led the way to the chapel.

On arriving at the chapel-door, Bernard, who now came first, tried to open it, but found that it was secured within. He then inflicted on it that summons which, as was set forth in a preceding chapter, called Sir Edgar to a parley, and so opportunely interrupted the progressing marriage.

His demand to be admitted in the name of the Queen, couched in the terms already recorded, raised in the breasts of the several inmates the wildest and most conflicting feelings. Sir Edgar, [216] however, being unconscious of having transgressed the law, would have opened the door without hesitation; but, as he placed his hand on the bolt, the priest called to him to forbear.

“Let me first don my cloak and peruke,” the priest said, drawing those articles of disguise from behind the altar. “My hour is not yet come.”

Though he appeared to be palsied with fear, he lost no time, after he had caught the cloak and wig up, in donning his disguise, and quickly set it in order.

“Now,” he said to Sir Edgar, as he quitted the suspicious vicinity of the altar, and sprang into the middle of the chapel, “thou mayst admit them.”

Sir Edgar withdrew the bolt, and, stepping back a pace, the door was pushed open. The next moment, Bernard, and Master Peters, the constable, with Adam Green, passed into the chapel.

Bernard’s eye swept round the chapel at a glance. But on the face of Evaline, who was standing [217] right before him, a pace or two removed from the door, it came to a pause, and seemed to dive to her very heart. It needed little penetration, when thus viewing her features, to see how her heart was moved, and how completely it had given itself over to despair. Even shame could not shake that despair; and though, it is true, she could not endure to meet and answer his glance, and had turned her eyes on the floor, her complexion displayed no shade of confusion, but continued locked in impenetrable pallor.

Bernard’s bosom swelled as he gazed upon her, and his manly features, which had just before been flushed with rage, assumed a softer expression, and beamed with tenderness and sympathy.

“Which of ye hath done this?” he cried, pointing at Evaline.

Don Felix, who had hitherto been perfectly passive, here stepped forward a pace, and interposed. [218]

“By what right, Sir, dost thou ask?” he demanded. “Nay, by what right art thou here at all?”

“Hold thee quiet, Sir Spaniard!” answered Bernard. “I could approve my right, an’ it so contented me, out of hand, and on no other person than thine own.”

Don Felix started.

“Whoever thou mayst be,” cried Sir Edgar, stepping in to his kinsman’s rescue, “it is but meet”—

“Give me leave a while,” interrupted Bernard. “’Tis with thee I would speak, Mistress de Neville. I ask thee here, afore God and man, is this marriage to proceed?”

He paused for a reply; but Evaline, whether she was sensible of what he said, or not, was silent as marble.

“Is the marriage to proceed, mistress?” repeated Bernard.

Evaline, without lifting her eyes from the floor, sank on her knees before him, and raised her [219] clasped hands in the air.

“I am a poor, lost maid!” she said, in a hollow voice.

“Enough!” exclaimed Bernard.

Without a word more, he pushed past her, and turned towards the priest. On coming up with him, he first glanced earnestly in his face; and then, as if assured that he was not mistaken, extended his hand, and slapped him lustily on his shoulder.

“John Paul,” he said, “I attach thee, as a seminary priest, of high treason! Master Headborough do thine office!”

A dead silence followed the utterance of these words, and the awful fate with which they threatened the priest, and which was no less than an ignominious death, seemed to strike each of the auditors with dejection and terror. But the silence was of brief duration. The priest then, as if all resolution had failed him, fell on his knees, and raised his hands in supplication. [220]

“Oh, spare me!” he cried, with chattering teeth. “I did it from no harm, but for the love of God. The spirit which moved me thereto is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

“Thou shouldst have thought of that afore,” said Bernard. “Thou hast come hither, at thine own peril, to war against our anointed Queen, and thou must abide by the issue.”

As he thus delivered himself, a cry of agony, which made his heart thrill again, broke on his ear. Turning round, he perceived (what his fears had led him to anticipate) that it had proceeded from Evaline, who was now stretched senseless on the floor.

Sir Edgar and Don Felix, who were only a pace or two distant, quickly sprang to the assistance of the forlorn girl, as did Martha also. Lifting her up, they discovered that she had swooned.

“Let us bear her to her chamber,” said Sir Edgar. “If she recover here, the scene may shock her [221] again.”

Accordingly, they caught her in their arms, and, without further speech, raised her up between them, and bore her from the chapel. Adam Green, who had assisted them to raise her, was about to follow them, when Bernard called him back.

“Master Adam,” said Bernard, with a significant look, “hast thou never a cup of liquor, in this noble mansion, for Master Headborough here. Prithee, an’ thou lovest me, take him to thy larder, and let him refresh awhile.”

“A right excellent instance,” remarked the constable. “The law stands, sirs”—

“Come thou with me,” interposed Adam.

The constable, seeing in the “instance” the promise of a cup of liquor, to which even law might be considered a secondary matter, readily agreed, and suffered Adam to lead him forth. When they [222] had passed out, Bernard appeared to muse a moment, and then, arousing himself, glanced anxiously round the chapel.

His eye, after it had once swept round, rested on a large window, immediately behind the altar. As he regarded it closely, he discerned that, in the centre, on the main bar of the frame, there was a small asp, or brace, by withdrawing which the window could be opened. When he perceived this, he stepped up to the window, and surveyed it more accurately. The result, to his great satisfaction, confirmed his expectations; and on raising his hand to the asp, he was able to throw the window open, and look out. His *reconnoissance*, though it was brief, evidently afforded him considerable pleasure, and he turned away from the window with a bright smile.

Meantime, the priest, thinking that his fate was decided, lay trembling on the floor, quite [223] speechless with despair. Bernard’s eye fell upon him as he turned round; but he had no opportunity, if he had been even inclined, to contemplate him long; for just as his glance dropped upon him, a slight knock called him to the chapel-door.

Hastily drawing the door open, he found, as he had expected, that the person without was Adam Green.

“I have bestowed away the constable,” whispered Adam. “What wouldst thou further?”

“Hast thou ever a horse for the priest here?” answered Bernard.

“His own is i’ the stable,” replied Adam.

“Saddle it quick, then,” said Bernard; “and leave it under the chapel-window.”

“Our Lady reward thee!” returned Adam. “I will do ’t.”

He entered on the task thereupon. In about a quarter of an hour, he returned, and informed Bernard, who had waited for him in the passage, that the horse was bestowed according to his [224] directions.

“Then go thou now, and bring me word how it fares with thy mistress,” said Bernard. “Meantime, I will start the priest.”

Without a word more, he broke away, and passed into the chapel. The priest, though still prostrate, looked up as he entered, and Bernard beckoned him to rise.

“Come to the window a space,” he said, “and I will show thee somewhat.”

The priest, trembling with fear, raised himself up, and followed him to the window. It was still open, and, through the aperture, he descried, at a little distance, on a contiguous lawn, his own horse, saddled for service.

“Is that thy horse?” asked Bernard.

“It is,” faltered the priest.

“I’faith, thou couldst almost mount him from here,” said Bernard. “In a matter of life and death, a [225] man could leap twenty feet, methinks, any day.”

“Would I might do it!” cried the priest.

He raised his eyes as he spoke, and glanced imploringly in Bernard’s face.

“Thou shouldst understand the Word,” said Bernard; “and ’tis now afore thee:—‘And Michal told David, saying, “If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain.” So Michal let David down through a window; and he went and fled and escaped.’”

A light flashed across the mind of the priest, and, as Bernard turned towards the door, his despair subsided.

Whatever might be Bernard’s meaning, he passed straight out, and closed the chapel-door behind him. He found Adam Green in the passage.

“How is it with Mistress Evaline?” he asked.

“She hath recovered,” answered Adam.

“Then, prithee, go tell her suitor, Don Felix, I would speak with him awhile,” said Bernard. “But, [226] hold! here comes Master Headborough.”

The constable, having regaled himself to his heart’s content, was indeed in view, and shortly came up with them.

“Soh, Master Headborough!” Bernard then cried, “thou hast been refreshing with a witness! Is ’t thus thou requitest my care of thee? But no more words! Let us now look to our charge!”

Here he pushed back the door, and, followed by the constable and Adam, passed into the chapel.

“Soh! what’s here?” he cried.

The window was open, and the priest, whom they were about to remove to prison, had escaped.

CHAPTER XII.

[227]

As the time drew nigh at which the great armada, boastingly denominated “invincible” might be looked for in the English seas, Europe stood on the tiptoe of expectation, impatient for the result. That it would effect the subjugation of England was never once doubted. But though such was the general expectation, the world was seized with surprise, no less than admiration, at the indomitable resolution by which the doomed English were inspired. They were a nation in arms! The noble and the peasant, the old man and the boy, the Protestant and the Catholic, forgetting [228] all differences of rank, age, and religion, had alike risen against the emergency, and were all alike prepared to stand and die in defence of their country.

Yet it was on their great Queen, and her able minister, Burleigh, that admiration was especially fixed. To them, no exertion seemed too arduous—no amount of effort wearisome. While Burleigh, in his closet, struck out the resources of the country, or negotiated for aid with the Prince of Orange and the King of Scotland, Elizabeth’s perseverance and activity brought those resources into play. The effect of her example might be traced in the very meanest of the preparations for the national defence. She would be seen in the drill-grounds as early as six in the morning; in the dockyards, where the din of workmen, the smoke of forges, and a hundred pestilent vapours, seemed to forbid her approach, she would attend continually, encouraging the artificers by the most gracious and animating words, and where fortifications were in progress, she would go [229] among the engineers unattended, and cheer them to renewed exertion by her words and presence.

The good effect of her activity was soon apparent; and in less than four months from the time that the invasion was first threatened, when the country was almost defenceless, she was prepared to sustain its onset. A fleet of thirty sail, commanded by Lord Effingham, with Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher for his rear-admirals, was ready for sea at Portsmouth; and about twenty ships more, under Lord Henry Seymour, were stationed off Yarmouth, for the purpose of intercepting the Duke of Parma. A regular army, fifty thousand strong, was encamped in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth; and one of the same force, including the flower of the nobility and gentry, serving without pay, was encamped on the banks of the Thames, near Tilbury. Added to [230] this, every district had raised a regiment of volunteers; and the King of Scotland, if his aid should be required, was ready to cross the border with an army of Scots, and co-operate with the Queen in her defence of the Protestant faith.

Affairs were thus situated, when it became whispered abroad, from some unknown source, that, if the expected enemy should effect a landing, the Queen intended to take the field in person. The rumour soon acquired confirmation; for a day was fixed, to the delight of the whole nation, on which the Queen would review the metropolitan army at Tilbury, and take order in the purpose ascribed to her.

The extensive level adjoining Tilbury Fort, on the banks of the Thames, and on the London side of the fort, was appointed for the scene of the review. There, on the day fixed, the army assembled, under the command of its general, Lord Hunsdon, at an early hour. It was a fair morning in June, [231] and the fineness of the weather, no less than the spectacle itself, and the expected presence of the idolized sovereign, drew to the spot, not only all the denizens of the surrounding country, but almost all the population of the metropolis. Great as the area was, it hardly sufficed, after the army had taken up its position, to accommodate the multitude of spectators. The crowd was so excessive, indeed, that thousands who had come to view the sight, despairing of obtaining so much as standing-room, would not venture to land, but sought to obtain a glimpse of the review from the opposite shore. The little hamlet of Gravesend, which was right opposite, was crowded with such adventurers, and even Windmill Hill, a mile to the rearward, was not overlooked, but was capped by masses of eager spectators.

It was a scene such as the eye had rarely beheld. On one side appeared the shore of Kent, backed [232] by the height of Windmill Hill, and falling down towards Gravesend, when it swept round a graceful curve of the river, in a long, verdant level, towards the point since called Milton. Then came the river, bright as a mirror, with its broad bosom, here seeming to expand into a noble bay, covered with every description of craft, all filled with passengers, and decked with a thousand streamers. The grim fortress, bristling with cannon, yet scarcely rising from the low ground on which it was situated, then prepared one for the warlike scene beyond. There the spirit thrilled before the interest and singularity of the expansive prospect. The verdant heights in the background, running from the village of Tilbury towards London, sparkled with white tents, and streamer-capped marquees, forming the army’s camp. On the extensive level in their front stood the army, fifty thousand strong, and embracing, as was before stated, the strength and flower of England’s chivalry. To conclude, the vast area was enclosed, beyond a picket of [233] volunteer cavalry, by one impenetrable mass of spectators, men, women, and children, all dressed in their gayest apparel, and animated by one common feeling of nationality and patriotism.

Such was the aspect of the locality at the time that, amidst deafening and renewed acclamations, the royal barges, on board of which were the Queen and her court, approached the landing-place of the fortress. A guard of honour was waiting to receive them; and the commander-in-chief, Lord Hunsdon, with his staff, were also in attendance. A troop of sumpter-horses, too, under the charge of the royal equerries, waited close by, and everything was prepared to convey the Queen to the field.

A salute of one hundred guns was opened as Elizabeth stepped on the shore. She bowed her head

to the guard, who had presented arms; and then, with a bright smile, extended her hand to the general, Lord Hunsdon. [234]

“A fair day to you, my Lord General,” she cried. “Are we for the field to-day?”

“An’ it shall please your Highness to be our leader,” replied the old warrior.

“That will it, heartily!” returned the Queen. “Ho, for a horse!”

A noble steed, white as snow, and brilliantly caparisoned, was brought forward immediately, and drawn up before her. She paused to survey him a moment, and, seemingly pleased with his appearance, then caught up the rein, and suffered herself to be raised to the saddle. When she had settled herself on the saddle, she turned to Lord Hunsdon, and, with a smile, directed him, as her lieutenant, to mount a horse at her side. The ladies and cavaliers of her train mounted in her rear, and, the whole party being horsed, the Queen led the way, in company with Lord Hunsdon, towards the neighbouring field.

The gate of the fort on the London side, leading to Tilbury Level, had been thrown wide open, in order that the cavalcade might sustain no delay; and a strong force of archers, selected from the Queen’s guard, walled the avenue on either side, so as to keep it clear of the crowd. But the appearance of the Queen in the gateway quickly altered this state of things. The guard of archers was broken through in a moment; the people covered the lately open avenue like dust; and the roar of the artillery itself, though proceeding from the adjacent batteries, was lost in a tremendous shout of “God save the Queen!” [235]

Never before or since were subjects so intoxicated at the presence of their sovereign. Men threw themselves down before her, in the dust, to be trampled on by her horse; young gallants threw up their plumed caps, when, from the density of the crowd, they could never hope to recover them, merely to show how they held everything to be hers; and afar off, above a thousand heads, were seen young children, waving their tiny arms, and invoking Heaven’s benison on their matchless monarch. [236]

Again and again did the Queen acknowledge, by bowing her head, and waving her fair hand, the gratification she felt at the popular greeting; but her courteous responses only prolonged the enthusiasm of the multitude. To attempt to penetrate the dense mass seemed to be a project that no one would ever think of: the poor archers, after one vain effort, relinquished all hope of opening the Queen a passage, and were content to be jammed up helpless: only the Queen herself, whose resolution nothing could subdue, knew how to clear the broken avenue.

Availing herself of a moment when all eyes were fixed on her, she raised her hand in the air, and the loud acclamations of the multitude, which had just before made the welkin shake, subsided into a dead silence.

“Good people, my loving children,” the Queen then cried, “you must needs let me pass!” [237]

Her words fell on the crowd like magic; a road was opened for her on the instant; and amidst renewed acclamations, and the thunder of the contiguous batteries, the monarch and her train passed forward, and entered the area of the level.

The trumpets and drums sounded a stirring flourish as the cavalcade appeared before the army. The royal party, after riding forward a little distance, stationed themselves on the bound of the area, about half way to Tilbury Hills. There, bowing to the pommel of his saddle, Lord Hunsdon took a temporary leave of the Queen, and, together with his staff, spurred to the front, and advanced to the immediate vicinity of the troops.

The army was drawn up in a line, in order of battle. On the approach of the general, however, the trumpets sounded for a new evolution, and the whole body immediately wheeled into companies. The trumpets and drums then broke into a march, and the gallant army, still ordered in companies, simultaneously moved forward, and marched round the area before the Queen. [238]

It was a brilliant spectacle, and there was not one person present, among the countless thousands of spectators, that it did not inspire with the noblest determination. The martial music was itself inspiriting; but the glittering arms of the soldiers, their varied costumes, and their gallant and fearless bearing, made the heart bound again, and one derived ardour and courage from the mere exhibition of war.

Having marched round the area, the army was, by another flourish of trumpets, wheeled once more into line. It formed close at first, but quickly took open order. As it did so, the Queen and her train, attended by Lord Hunsdon, galloped to the front, and rode along before the first rank. Thus passing forward, she came to the end of the line, and then, wheeling about, turned between the open files, and proceeded to inspect the rear rank. This, though not so select, appeared to satisfy her no less than the foremost one, and she spurred to the front again with a bright smile. [239]

A loud flourish was sounded as she once more appeared in the front. A dead pause ensued, when the Queen, raising her voice to its highest pitch, broke the silence.

“Soldiers!” she cried—“You have heard that the enemy you are to meet, from his surpassing numbers, and long acquaintance with war, is deemed invincible; but let not that give you discouragement. I, a woman, here throw by my sex, and all care for my own person, to be your leader. Yes, I myself, your Queen, will be your general, your judge, and the rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. Your alacrity has already deserved its rewards, and, on the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid to you. Persevere, then, in your obedience to command; and we shall soon have a victory over those enemies of my God, my kingdom, and my people.” [240]

Her words fell on the ears of the soldiers like an electric shock; there was a pause for an instant; then rose one tremendous shout, from the whole fifty thousand voices, of—“We will! we will.” The shout was caught up by the surrounding spectators; it was reverberated from the opposite shore; and from the summit of Windmill Hill, above two miles distant, thousands of voices were heard in chorus, saluting their sovereign with hearty hurrahs.

But the popular enthusiasm suddenly sustained an unexpected check. As the Queen, after receiving the greeting of the army, turned her horse to retire, the acclamations of the people startled the horse, and caused him to rear furiously in the air. Dropping his feet again, he was [241] about to throw the Queen off, when two cavaliers, quick as lightning, sprang from the rearward, and secured his rein. The Queen recovered herself instantly; but, being seated sideways, she saw but one of the cavaliers who had rescued her, and supposed that he had done it alone.

“Now, fair befall thee, Raleigh!” she cried, smiling. “Since thou hast been so prompt, be my equerry as far as the fort, and thou shalt afterwards, in requital, be my master of the horse.”

“Let me say but a word, my gracious liege,” said Sir Walter Raleigh. “My Lord Essex”—

“Psha!” cried the Queen, laughing. “Lead on my horse, Sir Groom!”

Sir Walter, with seeming discomposure, led on the horse, which was now quite pacified, towards the gate of the fort; and the cavalier who had helped him to rescue the Queen, and who had [242] unfortunately been overlooked, followed in silence. It was the Earl of Essex.

CHAPTER XIII. [243]

The discovery that the reputed Don Rafaele, whom he had supposed to be a gay young bachelor, was no other than his whilome mistress, Donna Inez, struck Hildebrand Clifford with consternation. For a moment, indeed, he was perfectly paralysed, and lost all power of motion. His whole soul and faculties were bowed before the devoted passion for him which the discovery revealed. His every spring of thought, as if turned for one only aim, started under the shock, and, as they thrilled through his bosom, overwhelmed him with the terrors of remorse.

But though he had been weak enough to err, though the passing consequence of his error [244] pressed severely on his mind, he was of that temperament which, however trying the occasion, will rebound from a shock, and suffer no visitation to shackle its promptitude. His energies were depressed, but they were not crushed; and, after the first blow had passed, they revived, and impelled him to make the only reparation for his trespass, by his present proceedings, that circumstances allowed of.

“And is it thou, indeed, my sweet lady?” he said, in a thick voice. “Oh! I have wronged thee most cruelly!”

“Not a whit! not a whit!” faltered Inez. “’Tis rather I that have wronged thee.”

“Would to God it had been so!” exclaimed Hildebrand. “But let us not forget thy wound! How fares it with thee?”

While Donna Inez, in a low voice, was giving him a reply, the silent pantler entered, with a bason [245] of warm water, and a napkin. Hildebrand then raised her a little; and, keeping his back to the pantler, succeeded, after some difficulty, in relieving her of her jacket, and baring her wound to view. He turned paler as he beheld it:

“Bring hither the water,” he cried to the pantler, “and hold it up to the berth. Now for thy sponge.”

The pantler, without making any oral answer, presented him with the sponge, and held the bason of water in the manner directed. Thus assisted, Hildebrand proceeded, with a tender hand, to wipe away the blood from the Donna’s wound, and cleanse it thoroughly. Having effected that object, he drew some lint and salve, such as was then greatly in use, from the locker below, and therewith supplied it with a soothing dressing. Over this, to keep off any irritation, he laid a piece of dry lint, and bound all up with a bandage.

“Now, will I not let thee speak more till to-morrow,” he said, when he had thus attended her. “But [246] our good pantler, whom thou mayst trust in all things, will watch thee through the night, and get thee whatsoever thou listest. For me, I must hie to the deck.”

Inez was about to reply, but Hildebrand, putting on a serious look, raised his finger to his lips, and she forbore. Leaving the pantler to watch her, Hildebrand turned on one side, and caught up some dry clothes, which, during his absence from the ship, the careful pantler had laid out against his return. As he had been exposed to the storm without a cloak, he was wet to the skin; and even the strong excitement he had been labouring under, and the robustness and vigour of his frame, though equal to a trying ordeal, did not render him insensible to the chilling influence of his saturated garments. The greater need of Inez attended to, he proceeded to throw them off, [247] and to don those which, he now discovered, had been set out for his use by the pantler.

He turned away when he had thus changed his attire, and, with a quick step, passed to the contiguous hatchway, and ascended to the deck.

The storm had subsided, and the excessive darkness, which had been its leading and most terrible feature, had materially diminished. The gale, it is true, continued high, but, as it swept

away the exhausted thunder-clouds, this served rather to clear the atmosphere, than otherwise. One could now distinguish the outlines of the shore, and, here and there, the broken sky, with the clouds flying over it like wind. The water, too, though not a whit calmer, could be viewed to a greater distance, and looked a degree less boisterous under the increased light.

While Hildebrand noted these particulars, his eye, in looking down the river, was attracted to two [248] distinct flashes of light, which were quickly followed by the report of cannon. Turning to inquire what this could mean, his glance fell on Master Halyard.

“Save thee, Halyard!” he said. “Didst note yonder signals?”

“Ay, Sir!” answered Halyard. “Two of the enemy, who broke from their moorings a while ago, have run ashore, and are firing guns of distress.”

The firing was here repeated.

“It may be our lot soon,” rejoined Hildebrand; “for we must not be found here at daylight. Think’st thou we can reach the bay?”

“The wind is right aft,” returned Halyard; “and we may, peradventure, ride down safely. One [249] thing is certain—that we cannot hold our ground; for our cable, though no chamber-cord, is dragging apace, and will speedily snap.”

“Slip it, then!” said Hildebrand. “Have up all the hands, and do thou look out for’ard thyself. I will take the helm.”

“Ay, ay, Sir!” replied Halyard.

And so promptly did he bestir himself, that, in less than ten minutes afterwards, Hildebrand’s injunctions were carried into effect; Hildebrand had posted himself at the helm; and the ship was riding down the river, as near the centre as he could keep her, under bare poles.

It was a fearful position, but, as the river gradually widened, the danger decreased every moment. The scene, however, was still terrific, and sufficient to appal the stoutest heart. The gloomy light, the black shore, the two stranded ships, which the eye could now plainly distinguish, and the boom of the guns of distress, with the furious bellowing of the wind, and the raging waves, made one feel like a mite in the creation, and perfectly at the mercy of the elements. Moreover, the wind being right aft, and the waves, though not high, running in what [250] would technically be called a cross-sea, caused the ship to pitch so violently, that the crew, notwithstanding they were inured to such situations, could hardly maintain their places on the deck, and were obliged to hold on for support to contiguous belaying-pins, and well-secured halyards.

Still the indomitable captain, with one foot planted firmly against a prostrate grating, which was pushed up to the ship’s bulwark, maintained his place at the helm. It required his utmost vigour to make the helm obey him, but so iron-bound was his frame, and so unbending his promptitude, that, with the help of the wind, he mastered all opposition, and kept the ship in the mid-channel.

The gallant bark flew along like an arrow. She soon passed the two wrecks, and, after an interval of about two hours, came in sight of the fortress, described in a former chapter, which guards the [251] river’s mouth. The crew hardly ventured to breathe as she arrived abreast of the all-commanding castle. But, to their great relief, she encountered no molestation, but shot over the bar unscathed.

The inspirited mariners burst into a hearty hurrah at this happy deliverance; and Master Halyard, relieved from his look-out, hastened to join Hildebrand, and congratulate him on their almost miraculous escape.

To a landsman, by whom their position could not be understood, there would have seemed but small ground for congratulation. They were in the Bay of Biscay, and the wind, now unbroken by any heights, which had bordered either side of the river, blew a perfect gale. The ship, though running under bare poles, was up in the air on one side, and almost touched the water on the other; and the sea rose up beyond like a great wall. High as it was reared, one could hear it curling at the top, with a long, shrill roar; and what withheld it from at once dashing on the ship, [252] and overwhelming it in destruction, appeared to be a singular and unfathomable mystery.

But, to the eyes of the mariners, these particulars, in reality, presented little danger. They had a good ship, a fair offing, and plenty of room; and though, of course, brighter weather would have been more welcome, their present situation was not so perilous, and gave them little serious concern.

Hildebrand resigned the helm to his mate, Tom Tarpaulin, as Halyard came up. He received that person cordially, but, after a few words’ greeting, tarried only to enjoin him to set a careful watch, and then retired to his cabin.

Worn out as he was, and with every fibre aching with fatigue, the first thought that assailed him, on fairly entering the cabin, was solicitude for Inez. Moved by this feeling, he pushed past the pantler, who sat watching on the locker, and, with a stealthy step, approached the fair sufferer’s [253] resting-place.

She was awake, and her eyes, looking up at his approach, met his. He saw, at a glance, that she was burning with fever.

She did not offer to speak, and, after one hasty glance at her face, Hildebrand turned away, and stepped back to the pantler.

“Be vigilant!” he said to that person. “She will want a drink anon, and thou must give her something cool. I must to bed, or sink.”

With these words, he turned to the adjacent berth; and without taking off his clothes, which were perfectly dry and warm, threw himself on the bed. Thus bestowed, he tried to meditate, and to call up to his eye, in melancholy array, the several causes for sorrow and dejection which his situation embraced. But, however earnestly he sought to arouse himself, his energies were so utterly prostrated, and his frame so wearied, that his endeavours at meditation were [254] unsuccessful, and he had hardly laid fairly down, when he was overtaken by sleep.

It was daylight before he awoke. Springing to the floor, he found that, after having been awake the whole night, Inez had at last fallen into a slumber.

As he proceeded to achieve his toilet, he called to mind, with a thrill of remorse, all that Inez had disclosed to him, and how far he was responsible for the wretchedness of her position. What a bitter retribution had one slight deviation from rectitude brought upon him! After his escapes in the field, his dangers on the seas, and his extraordinary vicissitudes as an adventurer, his life was to be crossed by an error, just as it was opening on a land of promise. Nor was it solely on this personal ground that he looked on that error with remorse. His heart, though it had committed a momentary excess, was stored with manly and noble feelings, and, while it reproached him for [255] his own conduct, inspired him with the liveliest commiseration for Inez. He thought of her beauty, her innocence, and her lofty spirit; but above all, as referring more nearly to himself, he thought of the deep and devoted love, which she had so unequivocally manifested for him.

The heart, in matters concerning the affections, but especially in a matter of love, is a dangerous thing to trifle with, and should always be sounded with the nicest care. When our sympathies are astir, we are liable to contract impressions, under a sort of surprise, that will deceive our own selves, and, though they are only superficial influences, sway us with the force of passions. If we searched our hearts deeply, we would find, on a closer view, that those impressions are not created so much by external agents, as by innate feelings; and, further, that we understand their nature very imperfectly, and entirely mistake their tendency. What we conceive, for instance, to [256] be love, may really be no more than an elevated sympathy, though our inclination to mistake it may give it the colouring and force of love, and the strength of passion. If, in the outset, indeed, we apply to it the tests which love should sustain—if we propose to it the sacrifices that love would offer, or the mortifications that love would brave—the delusion will vanish; but, in the ecstacy of the moment, this course rarely occurs to us, and we cling to the delusion till it appears real, and renders us as giddy as absolute intoxication.

Hildebrand was a man of arms; but his heart, as has been said, was full of strong feelings, and lofty affections. He was no weakling, who would allow those affections and feelings to be his master; but, at the same time, he allowed them their due and legitimate influence. He thought of Inez, and, while he did think of her, the deep and ardent sympathies of his nature, which she had [257] never touched before, insensibly associated with his thoughts, and made the thread that ran through them assume the appearance of love.

What a miserable infatuation! When he first discovered that he loved Evaline, did the obstacles to a successful issue, though their name was Legion, give his heart the slightest concern? Was it not light, and springing, and buoyant as morning? And now, without giving a thought to Evaline, he found that he loved another; and his heart was heavy as death.

No! it was not love! It was pity, sympathy, and an utter abandonment of his own self. It was the remorse of a noble spirit, which prostrated itself, and all that it valued in the world, at the feet of one whom it felt that it had wronged.

Nearly an hour elapsed before Inez awoke. Then, looking up, her eyes met those of Hildebrand, who was watching over her.

“How farest thou, sweet lady?” Hildebrand asked, in a tremulous tone. [258]

“I’faith, marvellous thirsty,” answered Inez.

Hildebrand presented her with a draught, which, according to his directions, the silent pantler, who had now retired to rest, had laid ready on the table.

“I burn still,” pursued Inez, “and my wound is like fire.”

“We must look to it,” said Hildebrand.

He went in quest of some warm water, and shortly returned, bearing a bason and napkin. Thus provided, he proceeded to relieve her arm of the exhausted dressing, and bare its wound to the view.

The wound was, as he had feared, greatly inflamed, and looked angry in the extreme. He thought to subdue the inflammation, in some measure, if not materially, by fomenting it with warm water; but, whether because the ball was still lodged in her arm, and irritated the wound, or that, owing [259] to the high fever she was in, the emollient was too gentle, his efforts with this view were without effect. He was obliged, therefore, to content himself with applying another soothing dressing, and recommending her to keep perfectly still and quiet.

The weather had greatly moderated, and, therefore, he was able, without neglecting his professional duties, to hold himself continually at her call. For four or five days he hardly quitted her side. His fine, animated features became pale with watching; and the look of health and buoyancy, arising from a well-ordered life, and a guarded temper, which had once illuminated his cheeks, quite disappeared.

Meantime, the ship, favoured by the wind, made good progress, and finally arrived in the English Channel. On the eighth morning after her departure from Lisbon she reached the Downs. Skirting that roadstead, she steered round the Foreland, and made straight for the Thames. [260]

It was just as they passed the Downs, about nine o'clock in the morning, that Hildebrand made his customary inspection of the wound of Donna Inez. It was fearfully inflamed; and on the verge of the wound, contrasting strongly with its angry centre, there was a small white speck; it was the seal of death!

The eyes of the young mariner filled with tears as he beheld this trace of mortification. He tried to speak; but the words, overwhelmed by his feelings, stuck in his throat, and his volition and self-command were completely lost.

His emotion, though more inward than external, was not unobserved by Inez.

"What aileth thee?" she said, tenderly. "Mournest thou for me?"

"I must not delude thee, sweet Inez," answered Hildebrand, with a convulsive effort. "Thou canst [261] not live long."

"That know I well," replied Inez. "Yet weep not! Give me thy hand awhile!"

Hildebrand, stepping a pace nearer the berth, put forth his hand, and placed it in hers. As he did so, she raised it to her parched lips.

"I have loved thee dearly," she said.

Hildebrand made no answer; but the tears, which had already mounted to his eyes, poured down his cheeks, and gave her a response from his heart.

"And, look you!" she continued: "'tis more joy to me to die thus, with thy love, than 't were to have lived to fourscore, and not have known thee."

"Would thou couldst live to be mine!" exclaimed Hildebrand—and, at the moment, he spoke from his heart.

"I know thee well!" resumed Inez. "Thy nature is wondrous pitiful, and full of gentleness; and [262] when I am agone, thou wilt accuse thyself, mayhap, that I died through thee."

"'Twill be my one thought," cried Hildebrand; "but to show how I repent me, I will be true to thy memory, and hold myself single till death."

"An' thou wouldst have me die happy, say not that, sweet Hildebrand!" returned Inez. "Nay, promise me, on thine honour, that thou wilt wed—and no other than Evaline!"

Something whispered Hildebrand, that, even if he could overcome his own scruples to such a course, a marriage with Evaline was now out of the question. But, as this occurred to him, his eyes happened to meet those of Inez, and they looked on him so imploringly, and with such deep and pathetic solicitude, that he resolved not to disturb her last moments by any selfish apprehension, but to resign himself wholly to her wishes.

"I will be ordered by thy will," he said.

"'Tis well, and I love thee the more for 't," pursued Inez—"yet not more, for that were not [263] possible."

"No, i'faith," said Hildebrand. "How else couldst thou relinquish thy country, and the comforts of thy heritage, for a poor stranger?"

"I did it not unknowingly," answered Inez. "One Felix di Corva, who had known thee in England, told me thou wast a cavalier of fortune, and, further, that thou wast betrothed to a lady of England. Methought, I would follow thee; and if his advertisement proved false (which I believed it would), discover myself to thee, and give thee my hand."

"Would it had so turned out!" exclaimed Hildebrand.

"On our route to England," continued Inez, "thou didst pledge me to thy mistress's health; and, in [264] thy description of her, didst laud her in such sort as, in my vain conceit, I fancied applied to me. Hereupon, my love was more hopeful, and I looked for a better issue."

"I remember the time well," observed Hildebrand.

"I held my hope good," resumed Inez, "till I saw the fair Evaline, and even then gave it not up directly. Yet thou mayst remember, on consideration, that, one fair afternoon, I came on you by surprise, and beheld what convinced me that thou lovedst her."

"Then knew I not how I was loved by thee," said Hildebrand.

"'T is true," said Inez; "and think not I blamed thee, but, in my utter despair, I blamed and hated her. That night, I sought to take her life."

Hildebrand started.

"But better thoughts withheld me," resumed Inez, "and, from holding her in hate, I began to [265] regard her in a more friendly sort. Methought, if I could but bring myself before thee, in my own proper person, my charms were as goodly as hers, and might win thee to me again. One day, thou wast abroad till after nightfall. I had followed thee in the morning, and, unobserved by thee, noted the route thou hadst taken. It led me to a churchyard, and there, to my singular admiration, I found thy name inscribed on a grave-post."

"'Twas the grave of my father," said Hildebrand.

“So I divined,” continued Inez. “At night, as thou hadst not returned, methought I would go forth to meet thee, in my own proper attire. Thou wilt remember, thou didst see me that night, at thy father’s grave.”

“I took thee for a spirit,” said Hildebrand; “and, on after-thought, considered thee a mere imagination.”

“I saw that that was thy thought,” pursued Inez, “and, in the darkness, availed myself thereof, [266] before thou couldst recover, to get clear away. I reached my chamber unperceived; but, at thy father’s grave, other fancies had come upon me, and I chose rather to dwell on them, than to go straight into thy presence. Those fancies led me, on closer reflection, to make peace with mine own bosom, and so be at peace with God.”

She had all along spoken with difficulty, and in a low tone; but her last words, which had conveyed to her lover such a gratifying intimation, seemed to have expended her last effort, and she now sank panting on her pillow. She lay thus for some time; but gradually, though by very slow degrees, she became less ruffled, and respired freely. But she continued perfectly still; and, whether because she was uncollected, or had nothing further to say, made no attempt to speak again.

Hildebrand, no way impatient, remained standing by her side, gazing anxiously in her face. Hour by hour did he thus watch her, with his heart, and soul, and all his hopes of fruition, now devoted entirely to her, locked and centred in his gaze.

It was the afternoon, and the sun, arrayed in the pride and glory of summer, poured a stream of [267] rays through the skylight, right on to the sufferer’s face. Thinking that the light might annoy her, Hildebrand was about to draw the curtain over the berth; but before he could accomplish his purpose, she caught at his hand, and clasped it in hers.

Her hand, which was so white and lovely to the eye, was cold as ice, and felt like the touch of death. Hildebrand was unmanned.

“My love! my Hildebrand, prithee do not weep!” said Inez, in faltering accents, and fixing her lustrous eyes on his. “I would bid thee farewell!”

Hildebrand, with a bursting heart, leaned over her pillow, and pressed his lips to hers.

“May God have mercy upon us!” he cried, with great devoutness, “and, for his sweet Son’s sake, take thee to his everlasting joy!”

As he spoke, Inez, by a great effort, raised her hand, and held up before her an ebony crucifix. [268] Seeing that she could not hold it herself, Hildebrand flew to her succour; and, clasping her round the wrist, just below the crucifix, kept it up before her. Her eyes grew less lustrous as it was thus fixed in their view.

“I am the Resurrection and the Life!” she murmured, in broken words: “whosoever believeth on Me”—

She was yet speaking, when, all at once, her lips broke into a bright smile, and Hildebrand felt her arm dropping down. Seeing that she was nigh her last breath, he stooped to kiss her: *she was dead!*

CHAPTER XIV. [269]

On the day previous to the events described in the last chapter, and the morning subsequent to the review at Tilbury, there sat together, in Essex House, and in an upper chamber, looking out on the river, two individuals, who conversed with each other with great earnestness. One of these was the Earl of Essex himself; and the other, though of a mean and slovenly appearance, which (for he was yet scarcely thirty) assorted ill with his years, was a person no less distinguished: it was the immortal but despicable Francis Bacon.

They had been conversing for some time, and, at the moment at which it is deemed advisable to [270] take cognizance of their conversation, the young Earl, irritated at something Bacon had said, was speaking with some vehemence.

“Think’st thou, then, thy kinsman Burleigh shall thwart me, Francis?” he said. “Be of good heart! An’ my voice can speed thee, no other than thou shall be Attorney-General.”

“I thank your Lordship,” answered Bacon. “Yet do I know right well, from what I have heard, that both my uncle Burleigh, and my gentle cousin, Sir Robert, will plead hard for another.”

“Give them no heed,” returned Essex. “Thou shalt have the office; but, meanwhile, as I do nought without requital, thou must render me a small service.”

“That will I gladly, my dear Lord,” said Bacon.

“Thou must even let me present thee with my little manor at Twickenham, then,” cried Essex. [271] “Psha, now! no words! ’T is not worth a word!”

He caught up the philosopher’s hand while he spoke, and, as a princely smile suffused his lip, seconded his munificent proposal with his looks.

“Oh, my Lord! ’t is worth full three thousand pounds!” said Bacon.

“Tut, a pin!” laughed the Earl. “’T is thine, an’ thou lovest me! But some one comes. No more words, now!”

Master Bacon, though he was evidently greatly moved, would probably have spoken further, notwithstanding the young Earl’s request; but before he could give utterance to his sentiments, a servant opened the chamber-door, and two cavaliers, about the middle age, and of graceful and prepossessing appearance, thereupon pushed in.

“See, see, my Lord Rutland,” cried the foremost cavalier to the other; “if we have not caught him [272]
with philosophy, let me die! Thou hast lost thy wager!”

“And prithee what doth the wager affect, my Lord Bedford?” cried Essex, with a smile.

“Rutland here, in his exquisite conceit, wagered me thou hadst departed for Portsmouth,” answered the Earl of Bedford. “The wager is no less than ten angels.”

“Give thee joy of it!” said the Earl of Rutland. “I had rather lose the angels, than lose my gossip’s company to Portsmouth.”

“I’faith, now,” cried Essex, “thou makest me sorry that thou hast lost. I am simply waiting for Hal Tracey, and then I am off.”

“We will with thee, then,” cried the other two Earls together.

“Thanks, thanks!” returned Essex. “I volunteer with Drake. Who serve you with?” [273]

“Oh, Drake!” answered Rutland. “And if we fight bravely, he hath promised us, by way of guerdon, a jorum of liquor anon, at the sign of the ’Three Jolly Mariners.’”

This announcement drew from his auditors a loud laugh, but the speaker himself, with a happy craft, looked quite grave, as though he considered the promised guerdon a matter of moment. While the laughter was yet in progress, the chamber-door, which was right behind Rutland, was again opened, and another cavalier entered.

“All hail, lag-behind!” cried Rutland, glancing at the new comer.

“Lag-behind in thy teeth, slanderous peer!” answered the person addressed. “I should have been here an hour agone, only that that gossiping wight, Squire Harrington, met me on the way; and who could ever break from him?”

“None, none, I’ll warrant thee, good Cromwell!” said the Earl of Bedford. “But, prithee, tell us [274]
Master Harrington’s news. How many fair ladies hath he given over for lost?”

“As thou art courteous, I will even tell thee,” answered Lord Cromwell. “He hath advised me, first, that fair Mistress Throckmorton hath a mortal passion for Sir Walter Raleigh”——

“Oh! oh!” cried Rutland.

“Peace, brawler!” resumed Cromwell. “Second, that my Lady Nottingham, for some hidden reason, is affronted with my Lord Essex. Third, that my Lady Warwick hath given her lord”——

“What?” cried Rutland.

Lord Cromwell was silent.

“An heir, mayhap?” said the Earl of Essex.

“A *hare?* fie!” answered Cromwell. “A deer would mark nearer.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared Bedford and Rutland.

“Now, fie on thee, talebearer!” cried Essex, yet smiling. “We must be on our guard against thee. [275]
But who comes now?”

The door opened as he spoke, and loud cries of “Sweet Hal Tracey! good Hal!” in which he himself joined, greeted the person who entered.

Sir Henry Tracey—for such was the real designation of the new comer—answered this welcome in the same spirit, and saluted each of the company separately. That done, he turned to Essex, and, with a familiarity that, of its single self, denoted them to be on the most intimate relations, drew him aside.

“Art ready to depart?” he inquired.

“I wait only for thee, Hal,” answered Essex.

“Then, in good sooth, we will even go round by Durham House, and call for Sir Walter Raleigh,” said Tracey.

The Earl changed colour. “What mean’st thou?” he demanded. “Have not I told thee, over and [276]
over again, that Sir Walter likes me not?”

“And have not I told thee, with the same perseverance, that thou wast misled?” returned Tracey. “Let me tell thee what he did last even. He was bidding farewell to her Highness, and she, with many loving words, was thanking him that he had that morning done her a good service, by helping her with her horse, when, to the admiration of the court, Sir Walter denied the service was his, and affirmed it was rendered by my Lord Essex. Nay, hear me out! Her Highness, on the outset, would not have it so; but, by and by, Sir Walter did make his words apparent, and righted thee at his own cost. Was this like an enemy?”

“By my hand, no!” exclaimed the impetuous Earl. “Say no more on’t. We will even call for him, and be friends.”

While he was engaged in preparing to carry his purpose into effect, the distinguished personage whom he proposed to visit, like himself, was meditating a journey to Portsmouth. He had just equipped himself for his expedition, when, after a preliminary knock on the door, a servant entered the library, where he was sitting, and solicited access for Sir Robert Cecil. [277]

“Bring him hither quickly,” answered Sir Walter.

Sir Robert Cecil, who had followed the servant unperceived up the stairs, and was listening at the door, overheard what was said, and thereupon entered unbidden.

“Worthy Sir Walter, give thee good morrow!” he cried, with a smile. “I had feared thou hadst set forth for the fleet, and I have that to tell thee, on the part of my Lady Nottingham, which must hold thee here a space longer.”

“It must be a matter of moment, then, gentle Sir Robert,” said Raleigh. “Prithee, what doth it import?” [278]

“Briefly, then, last even,” replied Cecil, “young Henry Tracey, being at court, advised her Ladyship he would this morning bring hither the Earl of Essex, and make you friends again.”

Sir Walter Raleigh coloured. “I’faith, I thank good Tracey for his friendly intents,” he said; “but be thou assured, gentle Sir Robert, they will fail him. The Earl will not come.”

“Well, an’ he do, do thou make up with him,” answered Cecil; “and I beseech thee, as I have lost favour with him in thy service, commend me also to his Lordship. By my troth, his ill-report hath done me grievous detriment.”

“An’ he come here, I will have you friends,” returned Raleigh. “But he will not come.”

At this moment, the door opened, and a servant appeared in the aperture.

“My Lord Essex would speak a word with your worship,” he said to Raleigh.

Raleigh and Cecil exchanged glances. “Wait thou here, gentle Sir Robert,” said Raleigh. “I will go meet his Lordship.” [279]

Waving the servant on, he passed out of the chamber, and pushed on for the adjacent stairs. As he was about to descend the stairs, he perceived the Earl of Essex, marshalled by one of the servants, coming up. He extended him his hand directly.

“Your Lordship’s fair presence makes me proud,” he said. “I hope all is well with your Lordship.”

“Now that I hold thy hand, Sir Walter, all is well indeed,” answered Essex. “I have come to thank thee for the good report of me, which, in my absence, thou didst render her Highness yesterday.”

“Tut! name it not, my Lord!” said Raleigh.

“I name it, and will remember it, good Sir Walter,” returned Essex. “But here are a troop of gallants without, bound for the fleet: may we have your worship’s company?” [280]

“’Tis what I would heartily desire,” smiled Sir Walter. “Howbeit, before we go, I must even present your Lordship to another friend—gentle Sir Robert Cecil.”

“Name him not!” said Essex. “Whatever he may be to me, he is no friend of thine.”

“Ah, my good Lord, I have approved him a right trusty one,” answered Raleigh. “Beseech thee, let me make him friends with thee.”

“Well, well, an’ thou art content, be it so!” smiled the young nobleman.

Sir Walter said no more; but, with a bow, and a gay smile, led the way up the stairs, and on to the library. There, in accordance with the injunction of Sir Walter, Cecil awaited them, but, to Sir Walter’s surprise, was taken quite aback at the appearance of the Earl of Essex. Although, however, he seemed to be so overwhelmed with astonishment to find the Earl of Essex an inmate of Durham House, he was no way slow to avail himself of Sir Walter’s offer, on their entry, to make him friends with that personage; and, accordingly, such a reconciliation was thereupon effected. [281]

These matters being settled, both Essex and Raleigh prepared to set out forthwith for Portsmouth. The appearance of a troop of mounted gallants at Sir Walter’s door, equipped for a journey, had caused a rumour to spread abroad, through all that part of the town, that such was their intention; and an immense crowd had collected to bid them farewell. Loud acclamations saluted them as the two popular favourites appeared at the door. Again and again, after the manner of the time, they bowed to their horses’ necks in acknowledgment, but the popular applause no way diminished; and they rode off, at last, amidst hearty and renewed cries of [282] “Hurrah for Raleigh! Long life to noble Essex! God speed you, England’s glory!” [283]

CHAPTER XV.

The night was just falling, about three hours after the death of Inez, as the bark “Eliza” entered the Thames. Master Halyard, who commanded the watch, was about to go in quest of Hildebrand, in order to inform him of the ship’s position, when Hildebrand appeared on the deck.

Halyard fairly started as he glanced in his face. Its complexion was quite ghastly, and, though not inanimate, the expression that it wore, like that which the cunning sculptor gives to marble, was

still and fixed, and wanted the spirit of motion. Moreover, his eyes, which were naturally light and penetrating, were heavy and swollen, and red with weeping. [284]

“We must come to anchor at Leigh, Master Halyard!” he said. “Don Rafaele is dead.”

“Dead, Sir?” echoed Halyard.

Hildebrand’s eyes filled with tears.

“By my life, I could have better spared an older friend!” said Halyard, blowing his nose with great violence. “Dead!”—He was silent a moment, when he added, in a loud voice—“Ho, there! aft! hang the flag half-mast high!”

“We shall be at Leigh in an hour, Master Halyard,” resumed Hildebrand. “I will then go ashore, and settle concerning our friend’s funeral. That done, I must take to horse, and proceed, with what haste I can, to my Lord Admiral. Thou must tarry at Leigh till further orders.”

“Ay, ay, Sir!” said Halyard.

Hildebrand turned away, and, with a quick step, again descended to the cabin. Halyard, who was himself deeply affected at his friend’s demise, looked after him for a moment, with an eye brimming with tears; and then proceeded to pace the deck. [285]

“Dead!” he muttered. “Well, life is but short; let us live well on the road, says the gentle Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.”

Meantime, the ship, favoured by a fresh breeze, progressed towards the haven in which she was to anchor. This was but a few miles from the river’s mouth, where a narrow islet, called Canvey Island, forms a breakwater to what, at high tide, may be called a small bay. A line of hills, or cliffs, covered with verdure, run round one side of the mainland; and, at the bottom of the bay, open on a vast extent of marsh, reaching almost to Tilbury. Just before the marsh presents itself, a little village, embracing some hundred houses, rises from the edge of the water, and slopes upward on the rearward heights; and, crowning one of these heights, beyond the verge of the village, a fine old church attracts the eye, and forms a conspicuous landmark at some distance. [286]

The night had quite set in by the time that the cruizer reached the haven. On passing a little way inward, the water became very shallow, and Master Halyard began to doubt, for a brief space, whether she would be able to proceed. But a group of fishing-boats, some little distance in his advance, pointed out a route by which he could approach the shore safely, and, pursuing their track, he shortly effected that object.

It was right in front of the village, about a quarter of a mile from the shore, that he determined to come to an anchor. While he was superintending the unshipment of the anchor, he was joined by Hildebrand, dressed for a visit to the shore.

“Halyard,” said Hildebrand, “an’ I can find a funeral-man here, I shall send him aboard, and I have charged the pantler, who will wait upon him, how he is to be attended. Let me have a boat straightway.” [287]

Accordingly, a boat, with two men at the oars, was quickly lowered, and skulled round to the ship’s side. Thereupon, Hildebrand took a brief leave of Halyard, and, without further ado, descended to the boat, and set out for the shore.

The boat landed on a patch of gravel, stretching out into the water, and falling back, in a long and gradual rise, on a row of cottages, opening into the village. As he stepped to the shore, Hildebrand ordered the boatmen, who were the same two that had accompanied him on a former occasion, to wait his return, and then set forward for the cottages. On approaching these, he was not sorry to observe, by the help of the moonlight, that long fishing-nets were hanging up on their exteriors, as that fact informed him that they were inhabited by a class of people who were associated with his profession, and with whom, consequently, he could converse freely. His expectations were so far realized, that he soon met with a fisherman, among the inmates of the nearest cottage, who engaged to bring him an undertaker—what he most needed; and immediately set off in quest of one. The undertaker quickly made his appearance; and Hildebrand, taking him aside, informed him what he required him for, and at once engaged him to perform it. [288]

“The person deceased,” he concluded, “is a woman; but only my pantler, whom I have charged to attend thee, is advised hereof. Thou wilt be secret?”

“As death!” answered the man of funerals.

“Here is gold for thee,” returned Hildebrand, thrusting a piece of gold in his hand. “Get some dressers, and go aboard out of hand.” [289]

The fisherman’s wife, at the instance of the undertaker, agreed to attend in the capacity specified, and, all being thus settled, Hildebrand induced both her and the undertaker to accompany him straight to the boat, and enter on their melancholy duties at once. Having seen them bestowed in the boat, and the boat pushed off for the ship, he turned away, and repaired to the village again.

Through the medium of the friendly fisherman, he soon procured a couple of horses (which were his next want), and a guide, to convey him to London. These acquired, he made no further delay, but set out for the metropolis on the instant.

Bitter and excruciating were the reflections that pressed upon him during his journey. The death of Inez, though it had not taken him by surprise, seemed both to have deprived his body of its

vigour, and his spirit of its powers of endurance. The poet says,— [290]

> “High minds, of native pride and force,
> Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse!”—

but, after a time, it was not only the upbraidings of an accusing conscience, but the bitter reflection that he had utterly ruined his fortunes, that he had to contend with. When the shock arising from the death of Inez had somewhat subsided, he could see in his connexion with that lady, on mature consideration, many particulars calculated to soothe him, and to assuage that remorse which he had sustained originally. But as this feeling became less acute, the tender passion he entertained for Evaline, and which it had for a time overwhelmed, gradually revived, and tormented him with a flood of other reproaches. It never once occurred to him that he should conceal his connexion with Inez from Evaline. On the contrary, he felt a sort of melancholy pleasure, if the term may be used, in resolving to disclose it to her. But that it would utterly ruin [291] his reputation with Evaline, and be fatal to their attachment, he felt assured. Life appeared like a dream to him as he thought so. His peace was gone; all his prospects of happiness were blasted; and, in his course onward, he would move through the world, and its busy and ever varying accidents, like a mere machine—without choice, enjoyment, or animation.

It was morning before he arrived in the metropolis. He stayed at the inn at which he first arrived, in Aldgate, merely to take some slight refreshment, and recruit his toilet; and then repaired to the office of the Lord Admiral. That personage, to whom he readily acquired access, received him cordially, and heard his report of his recent expedition with the greatest satisfaction. After complimenting him on his gallantry, he directed him to remain in London, at the lodging he had engaged, for a few days more, when he would send him orders for further service. Hildebrand [292] briefly assented, and then, with many thanks for his favourable opinion, took leave of the Admiral, and returned to his inn.

Reflecting how he should proceed, he determined to communicate with Evaline, in reference to his acquaintance with Inez, through the medium of Bernard Gray. He accordingly wrote to the latter, informing him, at large, and without concealing one particular, of the adventure which had first connected him with the ill-fated Donna, and how she had become associated with him subsequently. But while he took the whole blame of her imprudence on himself, he failed not to set forth, fully and distinctly, that he was not aware that she followed him in disguise, and that it was only in her dying hour that he discovered she was not the person he had represented her to be. He desired Bernard personally to explain these particulars to Evaline, and, at the same time, to release her, in his name, from the engagement she had contracted with him, and urge her to [293] seek one more deserving of her inestimable worth.

His depression was no way alleviated when the important letter was written and despatched. Having himself conveyed it to the postmaster, he proceeded in quest of Sir Walter Raleigh; but he found that that personage, as was recorded in a preceding chapter, had left home, and gone to join the fleet. He had, therefore, no means of dissipating his depression, but in looking forward to a time of action, and he waited his orders for service with the utmost impatience.

Three days elapsed before the orders of the Admiral were conveyed to him. They simply directed him, on their receipt, to sail immediately for Portsmouth, and there muster his ship with the fleet. Having read them over, he made no stay in London, but forthwith proceeded to carry them into force.

It was evening when he arrived at Leigh, but it had scarcely opened, and, therefore (for the [294] season was summer), it was quite light. He found that, during his absence, everything had been arranged for the funeral of Inez, and he determined to have it performed without delay. His influence as captain of a man-of-war, and the fact that he was to sail that night, at the turn of the tide, to join the royal fleet, easily secured him the services of the parochial authorities; and in less than two hours after his arrival at Leigh, all things were prepared, both aboard and ashore, for the accomplishment of his wishes.

It was yet quite light, when, responding to the boatswain’s whistle, the topmen of the “Eliza,” attired in their white frocks, mounted the rigging, and, preparatory to the appearance of the corpse, proceeded to man the ship’s yards. Two boats lay alongside, manned with picked crews; and the deck-men, also clad in their white frocks, were drawn up on the deck, from the after-hatch to the gangway. Just as these arrangements were effected, the coffin, supported by four [295] petty-officers, and covered with a black pall, was brought on the deck, and carried past the deck-men, to the gangway. Hildebrand and Halyard, muffled in long cloaks, and having their hats bound with mourning-bands, followed mournfully in its wake.

A salute of minute-guns was opened on the lower-deck as the coffin was lowered into the first boat. This announced its departure to the shore-people, and the solemn bell of the church, riding, like the spirit of Melancholy, on the evening breeze, was heard to invite its approach.

A large concourse had gathered on the shore, on the patch of gravel before noticed, to view its debarkation, and watch its progress to the grave. When the boats stranded, however, they fell back; and suffered the coffin, and the mournful procession that attended it, and which comprehended Hildebrand and the two boats’ crews, to pass through the midst of them. Then, as [296] by common consent, they formed in irregular order in its rear, and followed it up the hill to the churchyard.

The minister, robed in his gown and surplice, met the coffin at the churchyard-gate, and preceded it to the grave. There, as he read the sublime service of the church, a feeling of pious

resignation came over Hildebrand, and the terrors of earthly frailty were lost in his loftier aspirations. He turned from the grave, it is true, with a heavy heart, but not with despair; and, as he passed out of the churchyard, his nature assumed its wonted vigour, and he exclaimed to himself—"O! death! where is thy sting? O! grave! where is thy victory?" [297]

CHAPTER XVI.

Although the bark "Eliza," in obedience to the orders of the Lord Admiral, quitted Leigh a few hours after the interment of Inez, several days intervened before she made Portsmouth. An account of her daring exploit at Lisbon reached that place before her; and, on her arrival at Spithead, she was hailed from the several ships of the fleet, as she passed by them to her anchorage, with the most stirring and hearty cheers.

Hildebrand's instructions directed him, after he should arrive at Portsmouth, to put himself under the orders of Admiral Hawkins; and accordingly, when he had come to an anchor, he proceeded [298] to render them obedience. Having waited on the Admiral, he became for a while his own master, and he then sought the presence of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Sir Walter received him with his usual cordiality; but he had no opportunity of conferring with him, as he had intended, on the aspect of his private affairs, or taking his advice on his recent troubles. He learned from him, however, the exact force and position of the fleet, and what it would probably effect. Hence he became aware, in the end, that it was quite ready for sea, and, indeed, had been about to weigh the day previous; but the intelligence that the enemy had sustained great damage from a storm, of which he was himself the author, had induced the Admiral to recall his order for sailing, and continue in port. He learned, also, that a letter (which was, indeed, no other than the one written by Evaline, informing him of the revelations of Don [299] Felix) was lying for him at Sir Walter's house, in the Strand; but, never thinking who had been its writer, he felt no anxiety respecting it, but was content that it should remain there till, whatever might be its issue to himself, the coming engagement with the invading armada should be some way decided.

He had been at Portsmouth a full week before the signal was given for the fleet to put to sea. It was a lovely summer's morning, but a fine, fresh breeze, that made one's heart bound again, blew from the shore, and carried the brave squadron past the Needles, and on to the Channel. The several ships, by order of the Admiral, here kept pretty close together, but still two or three shot ahead, and the fairy-like "Eliza", though under slack sail, took the lead. She was thus sailing on, when, to the surprise of the whole fleet, she suddenly tacked about, and fired a gun.

As the report boomed over the water, a gun from the ship of the Admiral, Lord Effingham, [300] rendered it a response, and a signal was hoisted for the fleet to close. Before the order could be well obeyed, a mass of tall masts, extending over an area of seven miles, and looking like a forest in the distance, appeared on the horizon, and announced the approach of the long-expected enemy.

The tremendous armament looked none the less formidable as it drew more near. One hundred and thirty ships, larger than any yet seen, bristling with cannon, and manned with armies, might have struck terror into an assembled nation; and how could one poor squadron array itself against them. The British navy looked like a bevy of cock-boats in their proximity. Still, however, it retreated orderly, and the Spaniards did not attempt to give it chase. As night fell, the two armaments were scarcely five miles apart. The night came on dark, and, covered by the darkness, [301] the English Admiral, by a dexterous manœuvre, suffered the Spanish fleet to pass him, and slipped to the rearward. Sir Francis Drake, to quote his own words, there "*fell foul*" of the heavier sailers of the armada, and caused them great damage. The wind had been pretty fresh hitherto, but towards daylight, which broke at an early hour, it dropped, and the forward ships of the armada were thus unable to return to the succour and relief of the rear, or lend them any support. On the other hand, the English fleet, being all smaller ships, could sail under a light wind, and harassed the rear with continual assaults. Thus they progressed for two days; but then, being more favoured by the wind, the Spanish ships drew close together, and bade the English defiance. The English Admiral began to apprehend that they would put into Calais, and, after recruiting there, sally forth with augmented force, and overpower him. He determined, therefore, [302] to hazard a battle.

The Spaniards were formed in such excellent order, right across the channel, that it seemed impossible, on a first view, to find a vulnerable point in their whole line. The daring and experience of Drake, however, soon carried out a scheme by which such an opening could be effected.[A] Taking eight old ships, filled with combustibles, which he had brought with him from Portsmouth, he drove them forward as if they had been fire-ships; and directed them straight on the Spanish centre. As he had expected, the line was broken in a moment. With a promptitude that, considering his disparity of force, could not be too highly admired, he immediately bore down on the opening with his whole division. His manœuvre threw the entire line of the enemy into disorder; and Lord Effingham and Hawkins, with the right line of the English fleet, availed [303] themselves of their confusion to fall on their nearer extremity, while Sir Martin Frobisher bore down on its offset.

A terrible and deadly conflict hereupon ensued. The superior calibre of the Spanish guns, though

so much higher from the water, threatened to blow the little squadron of Drake to atoms, but that gallant mariner met them undaunted. Wherever the danger was greatest, his puny figure was seen, like a shadow, flitting before his men, and animating them to renewed efforts by his example. But he did not continue long to fight with mere cannon. After a time, his division advanced, under cover of dense masses of smoke, to meet the enemy at closer quarters, and orders were issued for each ship to prepare to board. Loud cheers emanated from the little squadron as this injunction was carried into force. In despite of a tremendous fire, they quickly ranged alongside the enemy; and with the hardihood of English seamen, which laughs at danger, [304] and defies death, proceeded to board them at the cannon's mouth.

While these operations were in progress, the division of Lord Effingham, as was before stated, had attacked the enemy's outer line. But, though an experienced mariner, the noble Admiral did not, in the outset, proceed so successfully as his assistant, the able and renowned Drake. In one respect, indeed, circumstances were not so favourable to his progress; for the line here was more compact, and not so easily entered. The consequence was, that, in trying to force a passage, his division was scattered, and each individual ship was left to itself. In this melancholy juncture, he became entangled, by a sudden gust of wind, between two of the enemy, each of which was sufficiently strong at once to overwhelm him. Still the intrepid patrician maintained the conflict, and determined, whatever should be the issue, to stand to the last. The overpowering force [305] opposed to him did not suffer what would be the result to remain long doubtful. After a brief interval, it became evident that, despairing of sinking his vessel, they were preparing to board him. Just at this moment, however, another English ship, almost as large as his own, bore down to his rescue, and a thundering cry of "Raleigh! Raleigh!" rang through the air. His leeward enemy, being nearest to his ally, was hereupon obliged to defend her own self, but the foe to windward still prepared to board him. In a few minutes, her boarders, embracing a greater force than his original crew, of which not half were now effective, poured down her sides, and pushed on for his deck. The Lord Admiral received them hand to hand. On his side, all distinctions of rank, not excepting his own, were thrown aside, and every man fought under his own unaided direction. But, struggle as he might, no degree of heroism could withstand the imposing and [306] constantly-increasing superiority of the Spaniards. Step by step, he was driven to the centre of the deck, and hardly enough of the ship remained to him, notwithstanding the inroads on his ranks, on which to maintain a stand. In this position, he was considering whether, as all hope was now lost, it would not be better to blow the ship up, when the whole vessel sustained a violent shock, and started to her very centre. The dense smoke prevented him from discerning what had occasioned the agitation, but he supposed, and truly, that some other ship, not seeing her in the smoke, had run into her bows, and so come in collision with her. The next moment, his conjecture was established; and a tremendous cry of "Clifford to the rescue!" with the rush of a host of feet, assured him of coming succour.

The tall form of Hildebrand, looking still taller in the smoke, soon incurred the Admiral's notice, and filled his undaunted bosom with new ardour. The rescue swept down the deck like a [307] thunderbolt. So rapid was its progress, that the Admiral scarcely had time, in the confusion, to draw back his men, so that it had nearly slaughtered friends and foes together. It cleared the deck in a moment; and, in the hurry of retreat, not a few of the Spaniards, rather than be captured, leaped overboard, and perished in the sea. The leeward ship had kept up a fire till just before, but she was now silent, and loud cries of "Raleigh! a Raleigh!" which rose from her deck, indicated that she had been boarded by the English. The cries were still in progress, when, covered with grime and gore, and flushed with victory, Hildebrand presented himself before the Admiral.

"Captain Clifford, thou hast done nobly!" cried the Admiral, grasping his hand. "But let us not tarry to talk. We must push our advantage to the utmost."

"Mean'st thou to board the enemy, my Lord?" asked Hildebrand, touching his helmet. [308]

"On the instant," answered the Admiral. "Now, my lads!" he added, in a loud voice, "forward! for God and the Queen!"

A loud shout of "Hurrah for Effingham!" uttered by the whole crew, responded to his appeal, and all hands sprang to windward, and proceeded to clamber up the enemy's bulwarks. They met no opposition. The enemy, without making the slightest resistance, struck his flag, and gave them quiet possession of the ship.

The atmosphere was now comparatively clear, and, from the more elevated deck of the captured ship, the Admiral could view, without interruption, the entire field of action. The battle was over. From sixteen of the enemy, alone a match for the entire fleet of England, proudly floated

> "The flag that's braved a thousand years
> The battle and the breeze!"

Eight more had been sunk, five had been blown up, and the remainder, including the redoubted [309] Admiral, were seen in full flight, followed closely by Drake. The invincible armada was virtually annihilated, and, as he turned to the lower deck, the Lord Admiral, with a proud smile, caught Hildebrand by the arm, and bade him thank God for victory.

"'T is a right glorious one, my Lord," answered Hildebrand.

"And as thou hast behaved nobly therein, thou shalt be its harbinger to the Queen," answered the Admiral. "Speed thee straight to thy ship, and make for Dover. Thence take horse for Westminster, and notify to her Highness, by word of mouth, what hath happed, signifying that I

will further advise her thereof anon.”

“I will away incontinently, my Lord,” returned Hildebrand.

[A] This stratagem was suggested by the Queen.

CHAPTER XVII.

[310]

About nine o’clock on the following morning, Hildebrand, covered with dust, and mounted on a jaded and travel-worn horse, having ridden all night, drew up at the gate of the palace of Westminster. Announcing himself as a messenger from the Lord Admiral, he was forthwith conducted to Sir Ferdinand Georges; and by that personage, who officiated as Lord Chamberlain, marshalled to the presence of the Queen.

“An officer from my Lord Admiral, your Highness!” said Sir Ferdinand, on their entry.

The Queen started to her feet. [311]

“What news, friend?” she cried to Hildebrand.

“God save your Highness!” replied Hildebrand, dropping on one knee at her feet. “The Spanish armada is overcome!”

There was a pause for a moment, when a half-suppressed buzz, in which the Queen herself joined, broke from every one present.

“Now, God be thanked!” the Queen then cried, in a fervent tone. “Where is my Lord Admiral’s report?”

“His Lordship was so eager to advertise your Highness of the victory,” answered Hildebrand, “that he deferred writing thereon, and sends his report by word of mouth. Sixteen ships of the enemy have been captured, eight blown into the air, and five, after a hard struggle, dismasted and sunk. The remainder have been dispersed.”

“’Tis a victory without parallel!” said the Queen. “What is thy name?” [312]

“Hildebrand Clifford, my liege.”

“Ah!” cried the Queen. “We have had a good report of thee afore, and owe thee a meed. Give us thy sword, Sir!”

Hildebrand, still kneeling, drew forth his sword, and, with a low bow, placed it in the Queen’s hand. As she caught its hilt, the Queen raised it in the air, and slapped it lustily on his shoulder.

“In the name of God, rise up, Sir Hildebrand Clifford, knight!” she exclaimed.

Hildebrand, though without being elated—for he had now no savour of earthly distinctions—received back his sword, and sprang to his feet.

“I thank your Highness?” he said.

“Let us see thee here often,” replied the Queen, with a smile, “and before long, too. But, for the present, get thee hence, and betake thee to rest; for we must straight pen a proclamation of thy news to our loving subjects.” [313]

With these words, she extended him her small hand; and, again bending his knee, he raised it to his lips. Then, with a low bow, he rose to his feet, and made his egress.

His flattering reception at court, so much beyond what he could have expected, had affected his spirits but very slightly, and, though he was far from looking dejected, his countenance presented no trace of that fine, healthful buoyancy, which had once been its characteristic. The complexion of his mind was no less grave and rigid. The oppressive sense of remorse, indeed, which had arisen out of his connexion with Inez, had now subsided, but it had left behind it a deep and settled impression, very painful to endure. He looked at the issue of his suit with Evaline, on which he had built his every hope, with a sort of passionless sorrow—fixed and rooted, although free from despair! He was not sunk in despair! His fine sense of enjoyment, his elasticity of spirit, and his lightness of heart, it cannot be denied, were lost; but his mind retained its vigour, and never thought of bending before its bitter affliction. [314]

On mounting his horse, he determined, as he knew no place nearer, to repair to the inn he had formerly lodged at, at Aldgate; and there take some repose. He rode along slowly, and was not ignorant that, as he progressed, he became an object of curiosity to the various passers-by, probably from his grave and travel-worn aspect. But, however he might look in their eyes, the several wayfarers, certainly, looked no way cheerful in his; for every individual face seemed full of anxiety and concern.

Though the hour was now advanced, the princely city, usually so lively and bustling, was hardly astir, and, in the terror of the expected invasion, all business was at a standstill. The unnatural repose became perfectly distressing as Hildebrand entered the Strand. Anxious to escape the view of it, he was about to spur on quicker, when, to his surprise, some one in his rear called to him by name, and brought him to a stand. It was Bernard Gray. [315]

A thrill of pleasure, such as he had not felt for some time, shot through Hildebrand’s bosom, as he discerned his well-approved friend; and, quickly alighting, he caught him eagerly by the hand.

“What news from the fleet?” cried Bernard, before he could address him.

“The armada is overcome!” answered Hildebrand.

“Go to! Blessed be the Lord!” ejaculated Bernard. “But why lookest thou so mournful, Hildebrand?”

Hildebrand averted his head.

“Ah! is it even so?” cried Bernard. “Well, be of good heart! Shedlock and his wife are dead; I have [316] approved thy mother’s marriage; and thy birthright, which thou fear’dst was lost, is restored to thee. Thou art now the possessor of Clifford Place.”

“Ah, my good Bernard! what avail is it now?” answered Hildebrand. “These toys can please me no more.”

“Be of better heart!” rejoined Bernard. “The Spaniard, Don Felix, who was here of late, hath betook him to Spain, being advised by me that I would otherwise attach him as a spy.”

Hildebrand made no reply.

“Further,” resumed Bernard, “I have read the letter thou didst write me to Sir Edgar de Neville, and, I promise thee, his worship’s bearing thereat was exceeding kind.”

“But what said Evaline?” asked Hildebrand.

“I saw not her,” answered Bernard, “but only the knight. As I read thy letter to him, he would seize me, now and anon, eagerly by the hand, and cry me—‘My poor boy! my brave Hildebrand!’ [317] and, in conclusion, he said, ‘’t was well done—excellent well done;’ and he would unfold it to his fair daughter, so he would.”

“And did he?” asked Hildebrand, anxiously.

“That know I not,” replied Bernard. “But let us forward! I have some business in the Temple here, with one Master Gilbert, a lawyer; and, afterwards, thou shalt command me. Let us thither together!”

Hildebrand offered no objection to his proposal; and, remounting his horse, they set forward, and proceeded towards the Temple. They shortly arrived thither; and Hildebrand, by Bernard’s direction, then gave his horse in care of one of the porters, and alighted.

The lodgings of Master Gilbert, Bernard’s lawyer, were just within the Temple-gate, on an upper floor, looking out on Temple-bar. They soon gained access to the lower floor, the door of which was open. Within, on their entry, they found three individuals—one of whom was Master Gilbert’s [318] scrivener, or clerk; and the remaining two, who were no other than Abigail and Zedekiah, have already appeared on the stage of our history.

The two servants, who had been sitting down just before, started up on the appearance of Bernard, and advanced to accost him.

“Who are these?” inquired Hildebrand.

“The servants of the Lord,” answered Abigail.

Bernard smiled. “They are poor, honest clowns,” he said to Hildebrand, “whom I would, with thy leave, provide for in thy household.”

“Have it so!” returned Hildebrand. “But where didst thou pick them up?”

“They were the servants of Shedlock,” replied Bernard.

“’Twas a goodly sight—a night-burying!” remarked Zedekiah.

“Ay, ay, but be of good cheer!” said Bernard. “You hear, you have both a provision! Now, Master [319] Hildebrand, let us on!”

Without more words, he led the way up a contiguous staircase, followed by Hildebrand. On reaching the summit, he paused before a neighbouring door, leading to Master Gilbert’s chamber, which, without tarrying to solicit admittance, he immediately threw open.

As the door was thus thrown back, Hildebrand’s glance fell, not on the hard countenance of the lawyer, but on the faces of Sir Edgar and Evaline. It required but that one glance, brief as it was, to assure him that he was forgiven—that the height of earthly fruition was still his; and, with a heart overflowing with joy, he darted into the chamber, and caught Evaline in his arms.

“Mine!—my own true love!” he exclaimed, as he pressed the blushing girl to his bosom.

“And with my free consent,” smiled Sir Edgar, in broken accents. [320]

Hildebrand could not speak for a moment.

“When?” he said, at length.

“To-morrow, an’ it so like thee,” answered Sir Edgar.

Hildebrand, still holding Evaline to his bosom, bent down to her ear.

“Shall it be so, sweet Evaline?” he whispered.

The fair girl, whether overcome with her emotion, or restrained by those delicate scruples of her sex, which constitute the charm of modesty, rendered him no oral reply, but gently pressed his trembling hand. As she did so, a loud flourish of trumpets, that made the ear ring again, was heard without.

“What have we here?” cried Bernard.

Thus speaking, he rushed forwards to the chamber-casement, and threw it open.

A concourse of citizens were assembled below; and at Temple-bar, under the archway of the gate, were a troop of mounted heralds, sounding trumpets. As Bernard appeared at the window, the music ceased, and one of the heralds, holding a written paper in his hand, spurred to the front, and, amidst a profound silence, delivered the following [321]

Proclamation.

“Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, of England, France, and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, to our loyal citizens of London, and all others, our loving lieges, greeting:—

“Whereas it is not unknown to us, that our right trusty and singular good subjects, throughout this our realm, look with exceeding alarm for the event and issue of that armada, which, as they are well advised, hath been directed against the peace of God’s Church, and the honour and security of our crown, by Philip, King of Spain, and others,— [322]

“And whereas, it hath ever been our royal care, since we espoused this crown and people, to deliver them, our aforesaid subjects, from all concern and tribulation, and make them and their hearts our happy and only husband,—

“Be it known unto all men, by these presents, that we have this morning received an advertisement from our Admiral, my Lord Howard of Effingham, setting forth that he hath, with great slaughter of the enemy, entirely overcome, and utterly put to the rout, the said Armada, for which we humbly give God our hearty thanks.

“Given under our hand and seal, at our court of Westminster, this 30th day of July, in the year of our Lord God 1588, and the thirtieth year of our reign.

“Elizabeth, R.”

As the herald ceased speaking, the roar of the Tower guns, firing a *feu de joie*, burst on the ear; and the voices of the populace rose in one heart-thrilling shout of [323]

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

THE END.

London: Henry Richards, Brydges street, Covent-garden.

Transcriber's Notes:

Created Table of Contents to facilitate eBook navigation.

Period spelling and hyphenation were retained. Missing punctuation added; extraneous punctuation (quotation marks) removed. However, the following apparent printing errors were detected and corrected (where possible).

"accurary" changed to "accuracy" on page 5. (with surprising accuracy)

"no" changed to "not" on page 24. (and a not very encouraging feature)

"crted" on page 58 is probably a printing error, but the original word could not be determined (the chill of horror that crted over his brain)

"thoughs" changed to "thoughts" on page 68. (struggle with her thoughts unaided)

"familar" changed to "familiar" on page 79. (familiar to me as Master Clifford's)

"exhilirate" changed to "exhilarate" on page 177, to match other occurrences of the word. (to exhilarate her father)

"molestatation" changed to "molestation" on page 251. (she encountered no molestation)

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