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HENRY SMEATON;

A JACOBITE STORY

OF

THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE FIRST.

BY G. P. R. JAMES.

AUTHOR OF "THE FORGERY," "THE WOODMAN," "THE OLD OAK CHEST," ETC., ETC.

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HENRY SMEATON;

A JACOBITE STORY OF THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE FIRST.

BY G. P. R. JAMES.

CHAPTER I.

By the side of the large piece of water in the middle of St. James's Square--

"There is no large piece of water in St. James's Square. It is a very small one."

But there was at the time I speak of, namely, the year 1715; and if you will allow me to go on, you shall hear all about it.

By the side of the large piece of water in St. James's Square, looking at the playing of the fountain, (which was afterwards congealed into a great ugly statue,) and watching the amusements of a gay boy and girl, who had come out of one of the houses--I think it was Lord Bathurst's, and were rowing about in the pleasure-boat on the water, stood a man of some six or seven and twenty years of age, dressed in a garb which did not very well indicate his profession, although the distinctions of costume were in those days somewhat closely attended to. His garments, of a sober colour, were very plain, but very good. Especial care seemed to have been taken to avoid every thing in the least degree singular, or which could attract attention; and it was more easy to say what the wearer was not, than what he was. He was not a Presbyterian minister, although the cut and colouring of his clothing might have led one to believe that he was so; for he wore a sword. The same mark showed that he was not an artisan, but did not so precisely prove that he was not a trader; for more than one shop-keeper in those days assumed the distinctive mark of a higher class when he got from behind his counter and went into a part of the town where he was not known. Yet, had he been one of this butterfly tribe, the rest of his apparel would have seemed more in accordance with his assumed rank.

He was not a courtier; for where was the gold, and the lace, and the embroidery? He was not a physician; for there was no red roquelaure, no gold-headed cane; and who could pretend to call himself doctor without such appendages?

He seemed to have been riding, too; for he had large boots on; and his hat and coat were somewhat dusty. In every other respect, he was a very indefinite sort of personage; but yet, of three nursery-maids who passed him consecutively, taking out children for an airing, as it is called--as if there was any such thing as air in London--two turned their heads, to have another look at his face; and one stopped by the posts which fenced the water, and, while affecting to contemplate the same objects as himself, gave a simpering look towards him, as if to intimate that she had no objection to a little pleasant conversation.

The hard-hearted young man, however, took no notice of her; and she walked on, thinking him a fool, in which she was mistaken.

The Square was now vacant for several minutes, longer, perhaps, than it ever is in the present day, or Than it usually was then; but the fact is, that almost all the possessors of houses in the Square, the elder members of their families, and a considerable number of their servants, had gone down to Westminster, to hear the impeachment of Lord Bolingbroke and the Earl of Oxford. It is true, a footman would occasionally pass from one door to another; and a cook, with a night-cap on his head, an apron before him, and a knife at his side, was seen to ascend the area-steps of a house in the corner, and look out with an impatient expression of countenance, as if the fish had not arrived, or the butcher had failed in punctuality. The only other persons who appeared in the Square were, the stranger gazing at the children, the children in the boat, and an elderly gentleman who, under the name of tutor, had come out to watch them, but who, seated on a garden chair, had forgotten them, and Bolingbroke and Oxford, and every thing else on earth, in the pages of a book containing select fragments of Hesiod and Pindar.

The sun was shining brightly and warmly into the Square; the smoky fluid which Londoners mistake for air tempered the light, and gave a misty softness to the surrounding objects; and altogether St. James's Square seemed a very pleasant sort of place, considering that it formed part of the suburbs of a great city.

There was nothing remarkable in any man staying there for a few minutes to look about him and enjoy himself, especially if he came through any of the dark dens in which commerce carries on her busy warfare in the heart of London; for the contrast was very great. But the stranger stayed more than a few minutes. A whole quarter of an hour elapsed without his changing his position, till at length a curious fantastic-looking man, with a great quantity of riband at his knees and clothing of very gaudy colours, came up to his side, and spoke to him in a low tone.

The new-comer had some excuse for attempting to ornament his person; which, to say truth, greatly needed it. He was short, probably not more than five feet four inches in height; but he made up in width, especially across the hips, which would have required the full extent of a Dutchman's nether garment to cover them decently; and the late King William III., of blessed memory, might well have looked upon him with that favour which he is supposed to have bestowed very liberally upon his countrymen; not indeed that our friend came actually and personally from the shores of Holland, though he certainly looked very like a Dutchman. His features were large and by no means of the most delicate symmetry, the nose having been originally set somewhat awry on the face, and its obliquity being rendered more conspicuous by sundry warts, knots, and excrescences, with which indeed the whole of his countenance was amply provided. The eyes, however, were good, large, open, merry blue eyes; and, though certainly as ugly a personage as one could hope to see, there was yet something--strange to say--very winning in his look, notwithstanding the vast Ramillies wig by which he had contrived to add

to his native ugliness.

Approaching from the side of Charing Cross, with a rolling, somewhat consequential, step, this personage advanced to the stranger who had been standing in the square, and accosted him in a familiar and confidential tone.

"It is settled, Master Smeaton," he said, speaking in a low voice. "They have carried it by a large majority. It would have done you good to be present. I never saw such attitudes."

"It would have been madness in me to go," replied the other. "Who moved the impeachment?"

"Why that depends upon which impeachment you mean," answered his companion. "Walpole moved against Bolingbroke, with one hand clapped in his coat-pocket and the other stretched out for full five minutes, just like that of my nymph with the flower-basket. I could have sworn it had been cast in lead."

"Little use of impeaching Bolingbroke," observed the young man addressed as Smeaton. "He is safe enough, depend upon it; but it was not of him I thought. Bolingbroke with all his abilities is useless to any party, and would be detrimental to most. He has contrived to obtain a character for want of principle, which makes most men doubt and fear him."

"Principle, my dear sir!" said the other, with a low laugh, "what is the good of principle? 'Tis but an obstinate adherence to notions once acquired, after the circumstances have changed that rendered them worth having. Principle is a lane with a stone wall on each side and no room to turn the carriage. Principle is one of those cold, hard, stone statues which, when once broken, there's an end of; not like my dear divinities of lead which, should anything go wrong with them, I can throw into the melting-pot again and bring out in a new shape. No, no; give me, in ethics and in art, pliable materials which will make a Jupiter one day and a dancing fawn the next; a Juno now, and then the Queen of Love. Principle, forsooth! Who has ever heard of principle since the blessed Restoration?"

The young man smiled and mused, and then asked abruptly: "But what of Oxford? Did *that* pass as easily?"

"O yes," replied his companion, "more so, if possible. The hounds are always more eager when the game is in sight. Lord Coningsby did it very well, with grave emphasis and a grand air. Ye gods and goddesses, how he did bespatter the noble Earl! He must declare himself now, if ever."

"Is there any good in his declaring himself?" demanded Smeaton. "Many a man declares himself when it is too late. Twelve months ago, he might have done something; now, golden opportunity has slipped through his fingers, and he is powerless. Yet I do believe he is a profound wise man, if it were not for that vacillating spirit, so often the stumbling-block of great abilities. I have a great mind to go back to France, Van Noost. I do not like my errand."

"Stay awhile, stay awhile," replied the other. "Just come with me, and you shall soon see whether Oxford is as powerless as you think. You shall have proof positive with your own eyes and ears. If he can but be got to speak and act, the power will not be wanting. I tell you," he added, in a lower tone, "fully three-fifths of all England are firm loyalists; and every third man, amongst the Whigs, from Marlborough and Sunderland, down to Townley and Chudleigh, would throw up their hats and cry, 'Long live King James!' if they did but see him in the way of prospering. All the common people, too, are of one mind."

"Ah, the fickle commons!" said Smeaton, thoughtfully, putting his arm through that of his companion. "Where are you going to take me?"

"Only down to the cockpit," replied Van Noost, "to see Oxford return from the House."

"Was he there?" asked Smeaton, in a tone of some surprise.

"Yes," answered his companion. "He came down early to the House in case the bill should be brought up at once; and there he sat as cool as a watering-pot. But he must be coming away now, since his impeachment is voted, and a committee appointed to draw up the articles."

"He shows firmness in these dangerous circumstances, at least," remarked Smeaton. "Perhaps he may be inclined to show vigour also."

While thus speaking, they had entered Pall Mall, which presented a very different appearance from that which it displays in the present day, as well as from that which it had borne half a century before. There were no longer doable rows of trees on the one side and detached houses, with scattered gardens, on the other; but the buildings were still very irregular; and, occasionally, an open piece of ground with a tall poplar or two intervened between a princely mansion--such as Marlborough House, or Schomberg House--and a common inn, such as The Sugar-loaf, or Richards's Tavern.

As Pall Mall was, at this time, a favourite place of residence for strangers visiting the metropolis, the thoroughfare was somewhat crowded; and numerous sedan-chairs were passing along, carrying gentlemen to visits or to chocolate-houses. The footpath, though famous for its

mud in wet weather, was now quite dry; and the feet of the chairmen, as they trotted along in the middle of the road, raised clouds of dust very inconvenient to the eyes.

It might be this circumstance which caused Van Noost's companion to press his hat further over his brows, as he entered this street; and quicken his pace to the discomposure of the other's somewhat jaunty steps. A distant shout, however, seemed to give wings to good Van Noost's feet; for, whispering--"Come on--come on here, across, or we shall be too late. He is issuing out of the House. I know the bark of those dirty muzzles well," he darted to the other side of the way; and, to the surprise of his companion, entered a dingy apothecary's shop, indicated by the sign of a golden pestle and mortar over the door.

"Good morning, Mr. Gingle," he said, to a man who was pounding something in a very large mortar, and raising an inconceivable smell. "Will you just let us pass by your back way into the park? My friend and I want to see the Earl of Oxford come up from the House."

"Go on, go on, Van Noost," replied the shop-keeper, sneezing into the mortar, and hardly raising his eyes. "You know the way; but don't leave the door open."

With this permission, the two companions hurried on through a little back-parlour into a small yard behind the house, and thence, by a doorway in the wall into a narrow passage which led them by some steps into the mall of the park.

As soon as they issued from between the brick walls, the roaring voice of the multitude was again heard, louder and nearer; and, hurrying forward, they passed up a narrow passage out of the park, the door of which, in the two former reigns, had been kept closed, but which was now generally left open as an entrance from the Spring Gardens. Thence, threading numerous narrow passages amongst low pot-houses, mingled in a strange way with finer buildings, and crossing what was called Cromwell's Yard, they entered the world of coffee-houses and taverns, which, at that time, occupied the space known by the name of Charing Cross. Carriages now roll over ground which, in those days, was covered with numerous dwellings; but the thoroughfare was not less crowded then than now; for the multitude, ever thronging to and fro, was compressed into a narrower space; and, on that day especially, the numbers were so great that it was hardly possible for any one to make his way along the street.

At the moment when the two whom we have mentioned more particularly were added to the rest of the human beings there assembled, a sort of compulsory motion was given to the crowd, some being driven forward in the direction of the Haymarket, and others pushed back against the houses behind them, by the advance of an enormous mob up the centre or carriage-way of the street, in the midst of which might be seen, towering above the ocean of heads, a large, clumsy, but highly ornamented, carriage, drawn by four powerful horses. Hats were waving in the air, handkerchiefs fluttering from many a window; and several thousand voices were heard shouting all at once, and "making the welkin ring." Some cried one thing and some another; but the general meaning was alike.

One roared forth, "Oxford for ever!" another, "High Church, High Church and Sacheverel!" another, "Down with the Whigs!" and then again might be heard the shouts of "Ormond, the Duke of Ormond for ever, and away with the Hanover rats!"

Not contented with thus asserting their own temporary opinions, the sturdy ruffians of the mob insisted that all persons whom they passed should give some sign of consenting to the same; and any one who hesitated seemed likely to be roughly handled.

"Off with your hat, and cry 'Oxford for ever!'" roared one fellow in the garb of a sailor, approaching the spot where Van Noost and Smeaton stood.

The latter did not obey the injunction, but remained covered and silent. Van Noost, however, raised his hat and shouted readily; and the man passed on, swaggering and bawling with his companions, and following the carriage of the Earl of Oxford as it moved slowly forward.

The crowd of more respectable persons, collected at both sides of the street, began then to disperse, and Van Noost was turning round to walk away with Smeaton, when a sharp tap upon his shoulder made him suddenly pause and look behind him. At the same moment, a calm clear voice, with a somewhat sarcastic tone, addressed him by name, saying--

"Well, my good friend, Van Noost, you have shouted loudly for Harley to-day, which is generous, seeing that he has little chance of paying the obligation."

"Paid already, my good lord," replied Van Noost, turning round, not in, the least discomposed, and addressing a thin plainly-dressed man of the middle age. "He bought two nymphs and two dairy maids of toe, no longer ago than this time twelvemonth--size of life--dairymaids with pails upon their heads, nymphs with cornucopias in their hands, to say nothing of a little black boy with a dolphin to be put in the middle of a fountain. Surely I am bound to cry 'Long live the Earl of Oxford!' If your lordship will patronise me in the like manner, and should you chance to get into a scrape so as to win the applause of the mob, I will throw up my hat and roar, 'Long live the Earl of Stair!' with the best of them."

"Well, well," replied the Earl, with a smile, "only take care what you are doing, my good friend;

for, though being whipped for a libel has often made a bookseller's fortune, yet the being sent to Newgate for sedition would not greatly benefit a leaden figure-maker, I imagine."

"I did it on compulsion, noble Lord," replied Van Noost, in an indifferent tone. "I make it a point never to quarrel with a mob; for I am a curious piece of statuary, not so easily mended as one of my own figures; and I don't believe any king on earth would help to mend me if I chanced to get head, or bone, broken by resisting the rabble. Would you not have done the same in my place?"

"No," replied the Earl, who seemed for some reason willing to prolong the conversation. "I should have done just as this worthy gentleman who is with you did; kept my hat on, and remained silent. Besides, my good friend, your leanings are well known, although one would have thought that the son of jolly old Van Noost, who came over with King William, would not have inherited a vast store of Jacobitism."

"It was my mother's property I came into," replied Van Noost, with a laugh; "for, though my father was a Dutchman, my mother was a thorough Englishwoman, Betsy Hall by name. My father never meddled with politics, good man; but my mother was a staunch Tory, and a wise one; for she always cried when there was anything to be got, and held her tongue when there was no use in crying. But how happens your Lordship to be on foot amongst the rabble?" he continued, moving as if to pass the Earl who was right in his way. "Have you not been down to the House to see these gay doings?"

"Not I," replied the Earl of Stair. "My business is to stop intrigues, and not to mix with them."

"A hard cut, that, at your friends, my Lord," said Van Noost, bowing low, and taking off his hat. "Bob Walpole wouldn't thank you, I think."

While this short conversation had been going on, the Earl of Stair had more than once directed his eyes, with a quiet inquiring glance, towards Van Noost's companion. That personage, however, had in an easy manner, without the slightest appearance of effort, contrived to keep his face averted, till the movement of Van Noost in advance obliged him to pass the Earl, who then got a full but momentary view of his countenance. The two then walked on; and as soon as they were five or six steps distant, Lord Stair beckoned to a man who was standing at the door of the Rummer tavern, and, on his running up, whispered to him--

"Follow the two persons with whom I have been speaking, see whither they go, and watch, for a little, if they soon separate. Then come and tell me."

Without a word of reply, the man glided away, and soon gained sight of Van Noost and Smeaton as they walked on. He kept at a certain distance behind them, dogged them round the corners of streets, sometimes crossed over the way, and watched them from the opposite side, sometimes even passed them, and then stopped to look at something that seemed to attract his attention. As the crowd in the streets diminished, however, his office became more difficult of execution; and his manœuvres were speedily detected by a quick eye that was upon him.

"There is a man following us, Van Noost," said Smeaton, in a low tone, just as they were entering Piccadilly. "He has dogged us ever since we left Charing Cross."

"He is watching you, not me," answered Van Noost, with a laugh. "My character and domicile are too well known to need watching. See what it is to have an established reputation. But you must not go home, for that might be dangerous. Come on to my little place--I will provide you such dinner as I can give, and will get you out the back way, after dark. In the meantime, we can talk over what is next to be done with Oxford."

The other did not reply, but walked on with his companion. They took their way straight up Piccadilly, which was then still frequently called the Reading Road. Towards the top of the Haymarket, Piccadilly bore somewhat the appearance of a street, although a great number of the first houses were inns for the accommodation of strangers coming to London; but as one proceeded in a westerly direction, the country gained the day over the town; and Piccadilly wore much the appearance of that suburb called Kensington Gore. On the right hand, especially, were many splendid mansions, surrounded by large gardens, affecting a rural air, commencing, I believe, with the houses of Sir John Clarges and Lady Stanhope, and going on with Queensbury House, Burlington House, Sir Thomas Bond's house, (through part of which has been carried the well-known Bond-street,) Berkeley House, with its splendid garden, and several others, built and decorated at an expense, and with a degree of luxury, far beyond the means of any but a very few of our wealthiest countrymen of the present day.

Beyond these splendid mansions, as the two walked on towards Hyde Park, came a very different class of houses, not in continuous rows, though here and there two or three were even then beginning to lean their shoulders together as if for mutual support. Between the buildings were still gardens, and even fields; and the houses themselves seldom soared above the rank of the dwelling of some inferior artist, or some low public-house or waggoner's inn, of which last there was an immense number, under signs which are still perpetuated in the names of streets; the Half Moon, the Black Horse, the White Horse, the Crown, the Dog and Duck, etc. Round the doors of these, and on the benches before them, a number of people were congregated, all

talking and debating, and generally discussing politics; for the Englishman has been, during many ages, rather a political than a politic animal, easily led in any course, it is true, by one who knows his weak points; but having a wonderfully good opinion of his own capacity, notwithstanding, and firmly convinced that he is fit for the rule and governance of states. The names of Harley, Ormond, Bolingbroke, Walpole, Coningsby, Cowper, met the ear at every step; but, without apparently taking any notice, Smeaton and his companion walked on, still dogged by the man who had been set to watch their proceedings, and who kept on the other side of the way, under shadow of the trees.

About a hundred yards beyond the grove of trees surrounding the reservoir, but on the other side of the Reading Road, they came to a house, standing a little back, with a paved court before it, and of which the upper half of the lower and the lower half of the upper windows were covered by an immense sheet of painted canvass representing a variety of curious-looking utensils, mingled with figures of men and women, some in a state of nudity, and some clothed in the quaint and starched fashion of the day, while an inscription underneath announced that Jacob Harris constructed, repaired, and kept in order, fountains of every kind, size, and description, and made chairs and garden-seats, ruined temples, and summer-houses, with various other devices for the ornamenting of parks, pleasure-grounds, and gardens. The description of his talents was long and minute; but Van Noost seemed to hold them in but small esteem; for, as he passed by, and cast his eyes upon the inscription, he said, with a sort of grunt--

"Ha! he's forced to come to me for all his statuary. He can't do that."

Some three or four hundred yards farther on, every step giving the country greater predominance over the town, and a little on this side of the spot where Apsley House now stands, was a small dwelling of two low stories, retreating from the high road, and having a garden before it of about a quarter of an acre in extent. This garden was ornamented with various fruit trees, the medlar, the mulberry, and the ditch-loving elder tree, notorious for its wine; but the principal decoration consisted in a whole host of figures, as large as life, cast in lead, and by no means ill-executed. One might have thought that a living mob had taken possession of the garden, had not the heterogeneous costume of the figures themselves denoted their real nature. Almost all of them were painted "to the life." Here were soldiers presenting their firelocks as if in the act of shooting at you; dairy maids and country lasses with baskets on their heads, long bodices, and gowns tucked through the pocket-holes; mowers whetting their scythes--old Time amongst the rest; negroes, kneeling and supporting sundials, "very black and beautiful," as dear Washington Irving says in his negro cosmogony; to say nothing of fair-skinned nymphs as naked as they were born. The garden was shut in from the road by a rustic fence, with a small gate in the centre; and before that gate Van Noost stopped, and opened it for his companion to pass in.

As soon as Smeaton had entered the garden, the statuary (for so I suppose we must call him), paused and looked round. He instantly perceived the man who had followed them, planted on the opposite side of the way; and, carefully locking the gate, he followed his companion through his grove of leaden figures, pointing out to him, with the mingled affection of a parent and an artist, the various excellences of his on productions. He had no modesty upon the subject--it was a quality indeed which did not greatly embarrass him on any subject, and, probably, Praxiteles did not value the immortal works of his hand, whether in marble or ivory, so highly as Jacob Van Noost estimated his own productions.

"See that Apollo," he exclaimed, pointing to a figure of the Belvidere God. "I have caught the fire and the spirit, you see; and, as for the grace, I think I may venture to say that the little elevation which I have given to the left arm greatly increases it, as well as the dignity."

Smeaton walked on with more speed than was quite flattering to his companion. He was a good-natured creature, however, Van Noost; and he merely gave his shoulders a slight shrug, hurried his own pace, and, arriving before the other at the little old green blistered door, threw it open to give him admission, pointing with his hand, at the same time, to the entrance of a small parlour, the clean-washed and neatly-sanded floor of which you reached by descending a single step. He then shut and locked the house-door, hung up his hat upon a peg behind it, and, entering the parlour, placed a chair for his guest, with a low bow, saying--

"Here you are safe, my lord; and here you had better remain till the grey of the evening. Ay, your noble father often sat in that chair, speaking bad Dutch against my father's bad English, examining his beautiful models, and choosing out such as he wished to possess."

CHAPTER II.

We will now move, for a while, to a far distant scene, and go back to a somewhat earlier period of the year; for, having a violent objection to all stiff rules, I cannot even consent to bind myself by the very good advice of Count Antoine Hamilton--"*Mon ami, toujours commencez par le commencement*;" in which he differed from Horace, and a great many wonderful men of old.

On the western coast of England, and in one of the most beautiful parts of that beautiful coast, is a spot which I must describe, not only for the benefit of those who may profit by it, or of those who may love to identify any place they read of, with some place which they remember or imagine, but because many of the principal events of my tale occurred in the midst of that precise scene. Those who know the sea-board of Devonshire will, I think, have no difficulty in recognising the locality from certain distinctive marks.

The place to which I allude is a little bay, taking somewhat the form of a horse-shoe, and indenting the land deeply. It is formed by a high headland, on the south western side, which shelters it from the prevailing winds. The face of this promontory, to its very extreme point, is one precipitous cliff of cold grey stone, varying from six to nine hundred feet in height, rugged and broken indeed, but apparently pathless; and bold would be the man who should attempt to scale it; still bolder he who should seek to descend from the height above. This is called Ale Head; and the opposite limb of the bay consists of another promontory, not so steep or precipitous, indeed, but still lofty and scarped enough, which bears the name of Ale Down. Neither does it project so far into the sea from the general line of coast, which trends away to the eastward at no very abrupt angle. Protected thus on three sides by very high ground, and with only a somewhat narrow opening in one direction, the waters of that bay, during the greater part of the year, are as soft and tranquil as a dream of heaven; but they are very deep also, for the cliffs run down far below the low water-mark. Standing on the heights above, I have looked down, and beheld the sea lying beneath my feet, as smooth as a mirror and as blue as a sapphire. A hundred-gun ship could anchor in that bay, within pistol-shot of the cliffs of Ale Head.

Between the higher promontory and the lower, however, is a deep dell. I must not call it a valley; for the sides are too steep, and the concavity too narrow, to admit of that name. Down this dell flows a strong deep stream of beautifully clear water, over a rooky bed, from which a large quantity of sand is carried down, forming a soft dry landing-place, where the dell opens upon the bay. This little beach is not at all extensive, being, from the foot of the rock on the one side to the base of the hill on the other, not more than two hundred yards wide, and perhaps forty in depth. Through the centre of it flows the stream into the sea; and, twice a-day, ocean comes up to meet its tributary, covering by far the greater part of the sands.

There were then, and are now--at least I have never seen it without--some five or six boats hauled up on the shore, giving the first intimation which one receives on entering Ale Bay from the seaward, that that wild and lonely scene has human habitations near. But so it is; and, on each side of the little river, commencing at about a hundred yards from the mouth, and ending about a quarter of a mile farther up the dell, are built a number of fishermen's cottages, pressed between the steep hill-side on the one hand and the deep banks of the stream on the other. At various places down the dell, too, little bridges are built across from bank to bank; sometimes merely the trunk of a tree flattened on the side that lies uppermost--sometimes an ill-turned arch of roughly hewn stone. These are all foot-bridges, I need hardly say; for horse, cart, or carriage, never, I believe, ventured so far down the valley.

The next object, speaking of human life, which you see after the boats, on entering the bay, is the end of the lowest fisherman's hut, peeping out through the opening of the valley; but a moment or two afterwards, as you pull on, you will perceive upon the side of the hill to the south-west, if you raise your eyes in that direction, the gables and chimneys of a large old mansion, rising above a wood of considerable extent and luxuriance which clothes the valley nearly to the shore, for in that favoured climate vegetation does not shrink from the sea air; and at no great distance may be seen the trees actually dipping their branches in the waves. They wisely eschew, however, the cutting winds upon the hill top; and the high summit of Ale Head is as bare as the back of a tortoise, and well nigh as brown.

We must look a little more closely at the mansion, however. Let us suppose, then, that we have landed by the side of the stream, crossed the dry sands, and entered the little dell, with light clouds floating rapidly overhead and making the blue bay and the grey cliffs, and the brown downs above, sparkle with gleams like the sweet transitory hopes that brighten, as they pass, the hard stern features of this earthly life. Oh, ye bright visions of imagination, could one but grasp and arrest ye for an hour, how much happier, how much better, might man be!--what a different thing were life! But ye are of air, and only given us, in this stormy scene, to assure the sad and tempest-beaten heart that there is still sunshine above the clouds.

Walking on before the fishermen's cottages, along the very very narrow path, we come to a spot where the road extends, but is no longer carried on upon both sides of the stream. It mounts, too; the valley becomes less deep, more wide. The left, or south-western side, is covered with wood; the right slopes up sharply, clothed with short green sward. Suddenly, at about half-a-mile from the bay, a road branches off to the left, while that which you have been pursuing by the bank of the stream widens out and becomes a good sound carriage-road. We must take the left-hand road, however, which, forming an acute angle with the path by which we have arrived, seems as if its ultimate point, or terminus, as we should now corruptly call it, was destined to be the very highest and farthest part of the promontory of Ale Head. But it has no such ambitious

notions; and, after rising somewhat abruptly for a little way, it runs on towards the sea, with a very slight inclination upwards, winding through the wood till, with a sharp turn to the right, it passes between two gates of hammered iron-work, supported upon stone columns, with large round globes on the top. Then come two or three little glades in a slight hollow of the hill, and then the old mansion, standing on a somewhat higher point. How can one describe it? It is but a collection of innumerable gables, and walls, and windows, built in the reign of Elizabeth, added to in the reign of James, left to go to decay during the Commonwealth, repaired and re-decorated under Charles II. It is all of the grey stone of the country; but the sea air, and the proximity of the woods, have tinged it with many colours, so that its aspect is not that of a venerable old man who has passed his life in peace and tranquillity, but rather like the weather-beaten face of an old sailor, bronzed and tinted by the wind and tempests.

Within, are many rooms and many passages; flights of steps go down, apparently merely for the purpose of going up again; and you are continually meeting doors and new rooms where nobody expected them. But many of these rooms are very handsome--spacious, lofty, and well-formed; and though, to say the truth, they would be more lightsome and cheerful were they not generally panelled with walnut or black oak--yet there is something fine and impressive in that dark carved wainscoting; and, when the sunshine steals in and brightens it, it is like a sweet smile upon the face of age.

In one of these large handsome rooms, upon the first floor above the ground, on a spring day in 1715, sat a girl of about eighteen years of age, in the dress of a highborn lady of that time. I need not, and had better not, describe it; for it was as stiff and as ugly a costume as ever was invented by the capricious taste of man. The character of an epoch is always displayed in the dress of the generation; and what could be expected from the dry gallantry of Louis the Fourteenth's latter days, and the stiff decorum of George the First's? Nevertheless, the most hard and unbending garments in which that fair form could be encased could never have repressed its wild grace or shackled its free light movements. Her maid complained that she burst more bodice-laces than any lady in the country; and it is a certain fact that her hair contrived to disentangle itself from combs and fillets, and sport in the wind like wreaths of smoke, more frequently than she herself wished or even knew. How it happened she could not tell, and she gave herself no great trouble to enquire; for her mind was often wandering after other things, sometimes with the eager sportiveness of a child after a butterfly, sometimes with steady and untiring thought, like a wayfarer on a long journey.

It must be said, too, in justice to her good taste, that she abhorred the vile fashions of the day in which she lived, and would often stand and contemplate the portraits of Vandyke, of which there were several in the house, or other older pictures still, and wonder by what curious process the mind of man had been led to abandon what is flowing and beautiful for that which is rigid and ugly. There was a refuge, however, even in the costume of those times, which saved part of the day from being spent in durance vile; and this was in what ladies called their night-clothes. The term, it is true, was a deceit; and the words, "night-clothes," meant merely a light and easy morning-dress, in which they often spent the early hours of the day before they dressed for parks and promenades. It was put on as soon as they rose in the morning, in exchange for the garments in which they had really passed the night. Sometimes they even went out in those, wrongly called, "night-clothes" before the conventional hour for appearing in public had arrived.

The young lady I have brought before the reader sat a little out of the sun-beams, which, pouring in, and painting the floor with moving tracery, fell also over the table before her; but her eyes could reach the blue sky and catch the clouds wafted over it, as with silent speed they hurried along upon the wings of the wind. It was very still and quiet in that wide high room. The birds could be heard singing without; the busy little flies, those most wonderful pieces of mechanism, buzzed about the windows; and a clock at the top of the stairs ticked faintly. But these were all the sounds; and they seemed only to soothe the silence.

The lady stirred not, spoke not, but sat with her elbow leaning on the table, her cheek, warmly tinged with the rose, resting upon her white hand, the "fringed curtains of her eyes" raised up, and the bright, soft, hazel orbs themselves elevated towards the deep sunshiny heavens. A book was on the table; but she read it not. There was a mandolin in the corner; but she touched it not. Her thoughts were very busy; and her heart was with her thoughts. Yet the images, the questions, the answers which were presented to her mind, touched not upon those topics which any one who did not know her would suppose. She was in the bright expanding time of life, the spring of existence, when the opening bosom of the rose courts the bee. But yet she thought not of love. She knew it not; hardly by name, not at all by sensation, although the young heart will yearn for that which was the only want in Eden's garden when Adam was first formed. It was not of the gay ball, the play, the promenade, or any of the fashionable amusements of the day; for of them she was as ignorant as of love; but problems which have puzzled many an aged philosopher were present to her mind, though not stated in the most philosophical manner. Wildly and strangely they rose, like the fantastic forms of clouds; and she chased them eagerly in thought, as a child chases the fleeting shadows that mock his speed.

"What am I?" she asked herself. "Of what strange elements composed? Body and spirit, soul and mind! What are these things? Is the body the spirit's slave, or the spirit's jailor--servant or master? I can perceive nothing but what it will permit me to perceive. Through its means must be all my communications with things animate or inanimate. There it rules and triumphs. There it is the tyrant, the jailor; and yet I can close my eyes, and the spirit, as if free from its hard bondage,

can wing its flight afar into that bright blue sky, and question the heavens as to what is between myself and them. Can it be that the human race is the great pausing point of God's creation, and that between us and Him there is one vast void, untenanted, inanimate? Or is yonder wide expanse of air, the stars, the heavens, the universe, peopled with beings that I see not? Are there spirits in those clouds that skim like ivory chariots through the sky? Are there creatures of light and joy, now sporting with the sun-beams, or resting under the green leaves of the wood? If so, is it possible that there is no means of communication between me and them, that this body is a barrier between the spirit that I feel within it, and the host of spirits thronging around me? Strange, strange existence? what art thou, what am I?"

On went the mind in the same course, inquiring, eager, keen, but untutored and unsatisfied. All the great problems of human existence seemed to crowd upon imagination and demand an answer from that which cannot give it.

These were strange thoughts for a girl of eighteen; but yet perhaps not unnatural for a quick and active spirit in the circumstances which surrounded her. The heart had no occupation to give; and it was impossible that imagination could rest idle. They were strange thoughts certainly; but such were the thoughts of Emmeline.

She was without companionship. She had none whom she could call friends around her. The poor fishermen of the village of Ale were her nearest neighbours. There was none in the house with her with whom she could exchange thought. It had been so during many years, and her mind carried her back to little else than the same state. Far, far away, in the distant past, images like phantoms were seen by the eye of memory--sweet and pleasant images, too, but faint and ill-defined; beings that she loved, forms that hung over her with affection, voices that sounded musical even in remembrance; but she saw them as through a glass; she could not approach nearer; she could not trace them more distinctly. It was like the sight of a distant land beheld across the sea, pleasant to view, but not to be reached, with the waves flowing between the beholder and it.

After that, and after a succeeding period of darkness, in which she perceived nothing, the figure of a venerable old man, the poor curate of the parish, came on her memory. She remembered him well. He had taught her much, and had seemed to regard her with peculiar tenderness and affection. He had instructed her to think, and to delight in thought; to read, and to ponder on what she read; for she had never received what may be called the trifling parts of a woman's education. Masters, it is true, had been procured for her from neighbouring towns; but they were dull, heavy, material teachers. The only one who had really instructed her was that old clergyman. But now he was gone, and she was without a guide, for the man who had succeeded was a fat and jovial priest who loved the material much more than the mental, and whose weekly sermon laid a heavier burden on the shoulders of his spirit than it was well able to bear. He sought not to acquire or to communicate knowledge, except as to where good wine was given or good punch brewed, or where, and at what hour, the savoury haunch was roasted.

I have said that the old clergyman had taught her much; but there was one subject on which he had taught her nothing: her own fate and history. He had studiously avoided it, suffering--perhaps unwillingly, but still intentionally--the facts of the past to drop from memory. She had sometimes inquired, it is true, but he had always stopped her gravely, and circumstances had occurred to make her think even at the early age of fourteen, which she had reached when he died, that he had been bound by some promise to forbear all such information. She even sometimes suspected that his silence as to her history was part of a compact--the condition on which he was permitted to visit and instruct her.

But with whom was the compact? Probably with that swarthy man who is now walking on the terrace below, booted and spurred as for a journey, and waiting for his horses to be brought round. There is nothing very remarkable in his appearance. His face is not forbidding, his features not ill-formed, though his eyes are perhaps somewhat too near together, and the pupils too small, as if they were always in excess of light. He is about the middle height, stout, but not corpulent, and perhaps fifty years of age. His air and manner are those of a gentleman, his dress rich and costly. He is altogether a good-looking middle aged man, but with a certain look of over-shrewdness that might perhaps warn men to be careful in their dealings with him. This is Sir John Newark, the possessor of Ale Manor-House and estates.

Emmeline could not remember when she had first seen him. It was too far back for memory; but she knew that she was not his child. She *felt* it too, and he always called himself her guardian. By that term he did not mean her tyrant, for he was kind to her, as kind as a man of a cold, calculating, selfish nature could be. Nor was he altogether an unpleasant companion; for, though he had not the slightest spark of imagination, and fancy with him was a bird without wings--though he could not even comprehend the existence of imagination in others, and still less any of the generous and thoughtless impulses of the heart--yet he had a good stock of information upon many subjects, conversed well, and had seen a great deal of the world. He did not in the least understand the character of Emmeline; but yet, as I have said, he was kind to her, and even indulgent. She had her horses to ride, her servants to attend upon her. She was allowed to roam about, through the woods, over the hills, down to the fishermen's cottages, and even to the neighbouring towns. All the restraints he placed upon her were such as the customs of society in that day justified, if they did not require. She was not permitted to visit any house, unless accompanied by an elderly woman, whom he had placed about her, and who acted the part of

duenna with much skill and discretion. When she went to the small town of Seaford, she was always well accompanied, and was never out of sight of some one, except while in Ale Manor-House or Park. There she was at full liberty; and she enjoyed it.

It must not be supposed that she thought Sir John's restraints very hard; she knew that they were in some degree customary; and he had always good reasons to give for every regulation. He would often talk with her on such subjects in the evening, when they sat alone; but there were two or three points which he strove to impress strongly upon her mind, and which created doubts and enquiries; for I must not call them suspicions. He had a great dislike to foreigners--no matter what their class; and when any even of the fishermen or smugglers from the Coast of France visited the little village of Ale, as was sometimes the case, he enjoined Emmeline strictly to hold no communication with them, but to keep herself within the walls of the Park, and to receive nothing from their hands, even though sent as a present.

"You are not fond of gauds or laces, Emmeline," he would say; "that I know right well; but you might think it discourteous to refuse any little gift, presented with the grace which all these men have. Remember, however, these things are never offered without an object, and that generally an evil one."

At first, when she was very young, she listened to these injunctions with unquestioning reverence; but as she grew older and read much, she began first to doubt whether he was not prejudiced, and then, from his constant recurrence to the same theme, to imagine that he had some motive which he did not utter; for she had already discovered, by his dealings with others, that he seldom acted or spoke without a personal object. We too often forget that we teach children our own characters, as well as other things, and that each day is a lesson.

One evening, when perhaps, such thoughts were in her mind, she said, in a musing sort of way, that she should like to see foreign lands and foreigners in their own country. The start that he gave alarmed her; but he answered nothing at the time, remaining, during the whole of the rest of the evening, in deep and somewhat gloomy reverie.

The night following, however, he returned to the subject himself, speaking in a grave but kindly tone, and evidently upon a plan. It seemed as if he had made up his mind to enter upon a subject which he would rather have avoided, and had weighed every word he was to utter.

"You told me last night, Emmeline," he said, "that you should like to visit foreign countries. You know not what you wish, my child. To do so would be your destruction."

"Then I will wish it no longer," she answered, with a bright look, followed by a momentary shade as she added--"But I did not know, I had not heard, that foreigners were so wicked, or their lands so evil. Indeed, I had read of many a high and noble act amongst them, and fancied they were much like Englishmen, only speaking another tongue."

"Far different, Emmeline, and far inferior," answered Sir John Newark; "but, if that were all, I should little care, and would take you readily to some gay foreign court to let you judge of the difference."

"I have seen no courts as yet," replied Emmeline, "and little wish to see them."

"You shall soon," said her guardian; "for it is needful that every woman should see courts who is destined to move in the higher sphere of life. But, to return to what I was saying. To visit foreign lands might be--nay, inevitably would be--your destruction. Some time ere long, and certainly when you marry, I will tell you the whole history of your family. It would be improper now to do so; but thus much I may tell you, that there are pertinacious enemies of your race living beyond the seas, whose anxious dearest wishes would be gratified if they could but get you into their power."

"What would they do with me?" asked Emmeline, simply.

The question seemed to puzzle him; and he paused for an instant, in dark meditation.

"I cannot tell," he said; "but all I know is, that they have ruined many by their schemes. You are the last that remains to destroy. They might indeed," he added, in a thoughtful considering tone, "they might indeed, in consideration of your youth and innocence, restrain themselves to shutting you up in a convent, never to come forth again."

"That would be worse than death," replied Emmeline.

But he went on, not seeming to listen to her.

"Their object might be attained by that means as well as by others; and it is, probably, the course they would take, if they could make all so sure and irrevocable that no chance of your ever appearing again in the world would be left. If they could put you to this living death, they might be content."

Emmeline shuddered, and gazed at him with a look of fear.

"My only care is for you, dear child," he went on to say. "So long as I live, I will defend and protect you. When you are married, your husband, whoever he may be, will do the same; but till then, be warned, my Emmeline. Avoid, as you would a person with the plague, all persons from beyond the seas; for there is no art nor violence to which your enemies would not have recourse, if they saw even a chance of success. Hitherto *I* have guarded you, and will continue to do so; but you are old enough now to take precautions on your own behalf. I have warned you of the danger; keep it ever in mind, and strive to avoid it by every means in your power."

Emmeline answered not, but remained with her eyes cast down and her fair brow bent, as if in earnest thought, till he asked, somewhat sharply--

"Do you hear me, Emmeline? I said, 'strive to avoid this danger by every means.'"

"I will, I will indeed," exclaimed Emmeline, clasping her hands together; but, the next instant, she burst into tears, and ran out of the room.

Her guardian's only observation to himself was--

"It has had more effect than I expected; but it is quite as well."

Great, indeed, was the effect; for it produced the first fear her mind had ever known. She was not aware till then that she had an enemy upon earth. Every human being seemed to love her; all had been kind to her; even the rude, dull, obtuse son of her guardian, a lad about seventeen years of age, somewhat deficient in intellect, was fond of, and gentle with, her; and, when at home (which was seldom, for he was kept at a school in London in the hope of strengthening and brightening his dull and feeble mind), Emmeline could do anything with him. He would sit beside her, choosing by preference a footstool near her feet, listening to all she said, talking to her in return, and seeming to gain some brightness from her light. All had seemed friendly to her; all had seemed kind. But now she found she had an enemy--an enemy of the most dark and irreconcilable kind--an enemy without a cause. It was very terrible to her; and even the vagueness of the information she had received--the dark obscure hints, which merely shadowed forth the passions, and the danger, and the person, added to the horror. It was in vain she attempted to nerve her heart against all fears, or to scan the things which surrounded her in order to discover where any real peril lay, and of what nature it was; her mind was like a timid person wandering in the dark, and casting his eyes round only to find objects of terror for the sight of fancy. All she knew was, that she had an enemy, dark, mysterious, malignant; but that was quite enough to depress, and agitate, and terrify her.

The heart of youth, however, has a restorative power which does not easily fail; and the effect of the words which had been spoken to her, though permanent, was greatly softened during the two or three months which had passed since their utterance. She had taken refuge in thoughts and fancies; she had read more than before, dreamed more--waking, I mean--and had found solace in such occupations. She confined herself more to the park, however; seemed anxious to have more people with her when she went beyond its precincts; and kept altogether to the house, unbidden, for two whole days, when she was told that a foreign cutter was in Ale Bay. Her guardian remarked this conduct, and was well pleased, and now, when he was setting out for London upon business which seemed of importance, from the thoughtful brow which he bore for two days before his departure, he left her, convinced that the apprehensions which he had instilled would act as perfect safeguards during his absence. As she sat there, gazing up towards the sky, Emmeline did not know that he was actually about to depart; for he was not fond of leave-takings, and seldom said farewell when he went away. A minute or two after, however, she heard the sound of the feet of several horses, and, running to the window, saw Sir John Newark in the act of mounting, with two or three servants around him, and a pack-horse held by a man on foot. Her guardian raised his eyes to the window as soon as he was in the saddle; and Emmeline waved her hand, saying, "Adieu!" He merely nodded his head, however, and rode away, leaving her the mistress of the house, and *apparently* of her own actions.

CHAPTER III.

We must now return to the little parlour of Van Noost, the leaden-statue-maker, and suppose that an hour or two has passed since we left him and his companion there together. We have but paused, indeed, to tell a story by the way. In the meantime, Van Noost had rolled about from one part of his house to the other, eager to show every sort of hospitality and attention to his guest. He had called a somewhat buxom cook to conference in his workshop, and had whispered instructions and directions to a man and two or three boys who aided him in his labours, and who instantly issued forth, by the back door of the house, upon what may justly be termed a foraging

expedition, taking their way towards Mayfair and Shepherd's market, though be it understood that Mayfair then actually consisted of fields, on which the fair, till within late years, had been held. In the immediate neighbourhood were a number of public-houses, taverns, and eating-shops, of which one was the notorious Dog and Duck.

Notwithstanding all the precautions he had taken, good Van Noost thought fit to apologise beforehand for the scantiness and meanness of the only fare which he should have to set before his distinguished guest; but Smeaton laughed lightly, laying his hand upon Van Noost's shoulder, and saying--

"I should be little worthy of the name of a soldier, my good friend, if I could not appreciate the excellence of horse-flesh and dead cat in a besieged fortress, in which light I suppose we may look upon your house, as you have taken the pains to lock the door. Whatever you can give me will be very acceptable; for, to say sooth, I had so much to do this morning that I have not broken my fast."

The meal, when it was set upon the table, however, belied Van Noost's disparaging excuses. It was not only abundant, but very savoury, although there was an hereditary smack of Dutch cookery in the dishes which might not have recommended them in general to English palates. Wine, Van Noost had none; but the beer was very good; and after dinner, the worthy entertainer produced from a cupboard in the corner a large black bottle, with a neck like a crane and a body like a goose, which he pressed upon his companion, assuring him that it was filled with genuine old Dutch Cinnamon, the like of which was not to be found in England. As the liquor was potent, however, and Smeaton thought he might as well keep his head cool, he declined the spirit, and left Van Noost to enjoy it himself.

Looking out through the low window, after the meal was over, Smeaton cast his eyes up and down the road before the house, and then, turning to Van Noost, remarked--

"That man is no longer there; and I think I might as well take my departure."

"Oh, he is hanging about somewhere near, depend upon it, my Lord," replied Van Noost. "I beseech you not to hazard yourself in the street till after dark. They will track you home, to a certainty; and then the first thing that greets you to-morrow may be a warrant for the Tower."

Smeaton seemed to entertain no great apprehension of such a result, remarking that with him there was no pretence for so violent a step.

"I would not willingly have them discover my abode, however," he remarked, "for they might hamper my movements. I think I shall return to France at once, Van Noost," he added, thoughtfully.

"Not surely before you have seen Lord Oxford?" said the other, with a look of surprise.

"Perhaps not," answered Smeaton; "but that can be done to-night. The letter I bear will gain me admission at any hour, without raising suspicion in him or any other person as to my real business."

"And even then, my good Lord," observed Van Noost, "if I might humbly be permitted to advise, you would still wait awhile--not in London, not in London, but in some quiet country place, where you would not be known, and yet could receive intelligence of all that passes, and be ready for any occasion, I am but a poor statuary, it is true, better acquainted with the arms of Apollo and the ankles of Venus than with the limbs of policy; but still I think it is better to be on the spot, especially when there is no real danger. At all events, you would be able to judge more of the temper of the people and the chances of success."

"I have judged of the temper of the people already," replied Smeaton, with a significant smile. "I mean of the people of London. I might, indeed, see something more of the country gentlemen, though I much doubt their wit if not their wishes, their discretion rather than their devotion. As to the population of this city, the mob that we saw, shouting 'Long live Oxford!' would in three months shout as gaily at his execution."

"Ay, ay," remarked Van Noost, "the people are always fickle, I know well. The time may come when even leaden statues may be out of fashion." And he sighed deeply at the very thought of such a catastrophe.

At that moment something seemed to catch Smeaton's eye, as he still stood near the window looking out into the road. His face became eager, his brow knitted, his eyes flashed, his lips curled, and his nostrils expanded. The next instant, he threw up the sash, leaped out into the garden, crossed it at a run, (knocking down two leaden soldiers and a wood-nymph,) vaulted over the rustic fence, and, exclaiming vehemently, "How dare you strike that boy so cruelly, sir?" caught by the collar a man who had just knocked down, with a tremendous blow, a young lad in gentlemanly attire, who still lay upon the ground, as if stunned. Smeaton shook the man violently, and the latter replied, in a sharp and insolent tone, struggling to get free:

"Why did he switch my leg then, and dirt all my stockings?"

"A mere accident," answered Smeaton. "He came up the road, swinging his cane about, and merely touched you by accident. Stand still! You shall not go till I know who is your master. The boy is bleeding."

"I shan't stand still," answered the man. "Take off your hand, or I'll serve you as I did him." At the same moment, he, in his turn, grasped Smeaton by the collar, and made an effort to trip him up.

His opponent, however, was younger, more active, and not a whit less strong, though his figure appeared a good deal slighter to the eye, from the symmetry with which it was formed. A struggle ensued, but it lasted not a minute, and at the end, the running footman--for such was Smeaton's opponent--was lying on his back in the dust.

The boy had by this time partly raised himself; and, clapping his hands with childlike satisfaction, exclaimed:

"Well done, well done!"

A little crowd had now collected, but Smeaton noticed nothing at the moment except his adversary, and he once more demanded in a stern tone,

"Who is your master?"

The man was silent, but one of the bystanders exclaimed:

"He's one of the Earl of Stair's men. Don't you see his colours?"

"Ay, I am one of the Earl of Stair's men," growled the footman, rising; "and he will make you pay for what you have done. There are eyes upon you, master."

"He shall punish you or take the act upon himself," answered Smeaton. At the same moment Van Noost pulled his sleeve, whispering:

"You had better come in, sir; yen had better come in. This is a bad business."

"Come, young gentleman," said Smeaton, laying his hand kindly on the boy's arm, "come in here with us, and let us see if he has hurt you much."

The boy followed mechanically; Van Noost locked the gate, which he had opened; the footman went away grumbling, with two or three children running after him to look at him, keeping, however, at a wary distance; and the little crowd which had collected gradually dispersed.

Once in the house, Smeaton and Van Noost applied themselves to stop the bleeding of a wound of no great extent or consequence which the boy had received on his head in falling, and the former asked him a number of questions, to which he received answers neither nonsensical nor without pertinence, but somewhat strange and uncommon. Shakspeare would probably have called them "simple answers," for the meaning of that word simple was not so limited in his day as in ours; yet there was an occasional touch of shrewdness in his replies, which savoured not at all of the simpleton. He used, it is true, expressions sometimes childlike, sometimes not altogether intelligible to those unaccustomed to his way of talking, but often poetical, or perhaps I should rather say figurative. His head he invariably called "his noddle." The ground on which he had fallen he spoke of as "mother earth." The fist of the man who had struck him he denominated "his poulter," and the blow "a dunder." He bore the pain well, and seemed to care little for the accident, but at the same time exhibited a degree of enthusiastic gratitude towards Smeaton (more than commensurate with the service which had hem rendered) for interfering on his behalf, and especially for avenging him on the bully who had struck him.

"Ay, ay," he said, looking eagerly in Smeaton's face, "it was good to teach the coulter-head that he's not too long to lie on mother earth."

In a few minutes he seemed quite recovered; and Van Noost poured him out a little of his Dutch Cinnamon, which, though Smeaton rather disapproved of the remedy, had a marvellous effect in restoring the boy's spirits.

Nevertheless he appeared somewhat eager to be gone; and his companions were not particularly disposed to detain him when they found that he was not seriously injured. Van Noost saw him to the garden-gate, and, on his return, perceived that his companion had fallen into a fit of thought, in which he continued for a moment or two after his host entered.

"I have made up my mind, Van Noost," said Smeaton, at length. "There are circumstances in which it is as well to take the bull by the horns. It is evident that your good friend, the Earl of Stair, has recognised me. Although we never interchanged a word in our lives, he has seen me more than once. I will not play at hide-and-seek with him. I will go to him to-night, and demand that this man shall be discharged for the outrage he has committed."

Van Noost looked astonished--nay, aghast. "But, my dear lord," he exclaimed, "think, for Heaven's sake, of what you are doing. Were it to take a city or to save an empire, it might be worth while to get into the inside of a wooden horse and be wheeled into the lion's den, like the

Greek gentlemen in days of old; but, to punish a running footman, I cannot say that the object is worthy of the risk. Bethink you of your policy, noble lord."

"It is the most politic course, Van Noost," replied Smeaton. "I have nothing to fear but a little inconvenience consequent upon discovery. The discovery being already made, all the danger that can be incurred is incurred already. A part of it may be obviated by boldness. But see who that is ringing at your bell."

Van Noost instantly ran to the window and looked towards the little gate, a large bell, hanging at its side, having been just rung violently.

"It is the boy again," he said, "and a gentleman with two servants. What shall I do?"

"Oh, let them in, let them in," cried Smeaton, in a gay and indifferent tone. "Now that I have resolved to throw off disguise, I may as well hold a levee."

Not without very apparent unwillingness, the worthy statuary called one of his workmen, and bade him open the garden-gate and give admission to the strangers. He did not perform the office himself; for he would be seized with sudden fits of self-importance when he thought it necessary to keep up his dignity. The boy and the gentleman who accompanied him were speedily admitted to the garden; and, leaving the two servants at the gate, walked on to the house, and were introduced unannounced into Van Noost's little parlour.

"That is he, that is he," cried the boy, pointing to Smeaton, who had remained seated till they entered; and the gentleman by whom the lad was accompanied, a well-dressed middle-aged man, advanced, holding out his hand, and saying--"I have to thank you, sir, for your generous interference on behalf of my son."

Taking his offered hand, Smeaton replied with a smile,

"I am sorry that it was not called into activity sooner, or I might have spared him a very heavy blow; but I had not the slightest idea that a great powerful man like that would think of striking a young gentleman of your son's age, for an offence which was, evidently, merely accidental."

"It is too much the habit with our great men, sir," observed the other, "to keep bullies and bruisers in their service. But the Earl of Stair shall hear of this, and learn that, though we are under a foreign king, his creatures must be a little more considerate of the feelings and rights of Englishmen."

"I know nothing of Lord Stair except by report." said Smeaton; "but, from all I have heard, I should not suppose he was one to countenance such outrageous conduct in his servants; and I shall, certainly, request him to dismiss this man on account of his insolence to myself."

"I shall insist upon it," replied the other.

"Although he may never have heard the name of Sir John Newark, yet my possessions and my station in the country will not permit of my being insulted in the person of my son with impunity."

Smeaton smiled slightly as he rejoined--

"I shall hold out no threat, Sir John; but, dealing with Lord Stair as one gentleman with another, shall make it my request that he dismisses that man, as one who disgraces his service. I do not think he will refuse; but, of course, in your own case, you will act as you think fit. Now, to speak of pleasanter subjects," he continued, holding out his hand to the boy; "I did not know, my young friend, when I interfered in your behalf, that I was serving the son of a gentleman to whom I bear a letter from one of his intimate friends."

The boy caught his hand, and shook it eagerly, exclaiming--

"I'm glad of that--I'm glad of that; I was sure my father would like you. You gave the coulter-head a fine fall. I heard all his bones crack and rattle as he tumbled. I should have liked to give him a kick; but that would not have been fair when he was down, you know."

"May I ask, then, to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?" inquired Sir John Newark, who had been eyeing his companion with some curiosity.

"I am called Colonel Henry Smeaton," replied that gentleman; "though my military rank, I suppose, will not be acknowledged in this country, as it has been gained in the service of the House of Austria."

Sir John Newark shook him heartily by the hand, with the air and warmth of an old friend.

"I am most happy to see you, Colonel Smeaton," he said. "I have already received a letter, giving me information that you would probably come to see me at my poor house." Then, dropping his voice to a whisper, he added, "from Lord Bolingbroke."

"The letter I bear is from the Duke of Ormond," said Smeaton, in a colder tone, the name of Bolingbroke appearing to have no great charms for him. "Will you say where I shall have the

honour of delivering it, for at this moment it is not about me?"

"Nowhere, I trust, but at my poor manor-house at Ale," replied Sir John. "It is a pleasure that I have promised myself; and I was even now on the eve of hastening back thither for the purpose of meeting you on your arrival. My son was walking from his school to meet me, in order to go down with me to-morrow, when he was assaulted. But I think you told me, my dear Richard," he continued, "that this other gentleman had been very kind to you also."

And he looked towards Van Noost, who had been standing near the window while the conversation took place.

"O yes," answered the boy. "He gave me some nice stuff, and cockered me up famously; but it was the other that made the big bully take measure of the paving-stones."

"Will you not be seated, Sir John," said Van Noost, putting a chair for the knight, "and allow me to give you a glass of the nice stuff, as your son calls it, which did him so much good?"

"Well, I don't know what its name is," retorted the boy; "but I know it tasted like drinking gingerbread--hot and sweet--and a very nice taste besides."

"Dutch Cinnamon, I'll warrant," said Sir John Newark, laughing, and seating himself. "We are not very much accustomed to such things in my house. So he might well not know what it was. I have almost forgotten the taste of it; but I know it is very good; and I do not at all object, sir, to try your store."

Now, be it known to the reader that, at that period of history, the greater part of the English nation had became afflicted with a disease from which they are not altogether free even yet, although a great physician has lately been amongst them, undertaking its especial cure. The disease I mean is, dram-drinking, which, for some time, affected not only the lower but many of the higher classes. So that there was nothing at all extraordinary in Sir John Newark consenting to drink a glass of very strong spirit even before he had dined. But that worthy gentleman was not without his own particular motives in anything he did, and frequently covered, or attempted to cover, them by an air of frank and straightforward affability. At present, indeed, he seemed to have no thought but of Van Noost's good liquor, watching him as he brought from the corner-cupboard both the long-necked bottle I have before mentioned, and an exceedingly thin wine-glass, with a tall stalk lightly cut and gilt.

"It pours out like cream," observed Sir John, as his host held the neck of the bottle over the glass.

"Ay, this is none of your poisonous drugs such as they sell at the chandlers' shops and the barbers', made out of the lees of old wine, or damaged sugar," replied Van Noost, still pouring; "none of your aqua mirabilis, or aqua salts, or plague-water, or colic-water, but genuine Dutch Cinnamon, imported by my good father in his own sea-stock. Take it, Sir John. I am sure it will do your heart good."

Sir John drank, and praised, and drank again; and then, turning to Smeaton, who was speaking with his son, he said--

"You are hard drinkers on the Continent, I believe, Colonel Smeaton, and would beat us Englishmen at a match any day."

"Not in the countries where I have principally resided," returned Smeaton. "I mean Spain, and some of the Austrian States. I have heard, indeed, of certain fearful orgies amongst the French officers in Spain; but I know little of France or Frenchmen, having merely passed through the country once or twice, and that very rapidly."

"Did you ever chance in your travels to meet with a gentleman named Somerville--Richard Somerville?" asked Sir John Newark, in a careless tone.

Smeaton shook his head, replying--

"No, I never did. In what country is he residing?"

"I really can hardly tell," returned Sir John Newark; "for, though he is a distant relation of mine, we have not held much communication together for many years. France or Lorraine, I believe, was the last country in which he was heard of."

"I think I do remember," remarked Smeaton, in a musing tone, "having heard the name mentioned at Nancy. But they said he had gone to seek his fortunes amongst the Spaniards in the New World. Somerville--yes, that was the name surely."

"Ay, very probable," said Sir John Newark. "I think a rumour of his intention reached me. You never were in those golden countries yourself, were you?"

"Never," replied Smeaton. "The journey is somewhat far; and, as I am well contented with what I have, I feel no inclination to banish myself from civilization in pursuit of wealth."

"I should like to see the country where gold grows," observed Sir John Newark's son, looking earnestly at Smeaton. "If I were a lord in golden land, I would give you a whole tree."

"Thank you, my dear lad," said Smeaton, laughing. "I fear, however, I should have some difficulty in eating the fruit of that tree."

"Why, golden pippins--they would be golden pippins!" cried the boy, clapping his hands at the thought. "I wish I had some now; but they are not ripe yet."

The conversation then took another turn. Sir John Newark became actually gay and jocular, pressed upon Smeaton his invitation to his house at Ale, and did not depart till he had obtained from him a conditional promise to go down and spend a fortnight with him, if he determined to remain any time in England. He shook his new friend by the hand, at parting, with considerable warmth; but there was a degree of hearty cordiality in the boy's grasp of Smeaton's hand, which pleased him better.

"You must and shall come down," said the boy, in a whisper; "and I'll show you all the coves and the paths among the rocks and over the cliffs, where nobody ever perches but I, and the sea-mews, and the fishing-hawks. Old Jones Skinner, the smuggler, broke his neck there; and people are afraid ever since; but you are not afraid of anything, I am sure."

"I trust not," answered Smeaton; and thus they parted.

When they were gone, Van Noost, who had been, for him, remarkably silent and reserved, broke forth, upon the character of Sir John Newark.

"Take care what you do with him, my Lord," he said. "He is not much to be trusted; and, for Heaven's sake, do not let him know your real name. First he has been one thing, then he has been another, just as he thought it served his own interest. He was once very great with Sunderland, in the old King's reign, and with the Duke of Shrewsbury too. Then he paid court to the Duke of Marlborough; and then he was one of Bolingbroke's men. I don't know whether he is a good enemy or not; but I am certain he is not a good friend. He is shrewd, mighty shrewd too, and has contrived to amass great wealth, and gain large estates, by not the fairest means, they say."

"I will be careful, Van Noost," replied Smeaton, quietly; "but yet I think I shall go. Much, however, will depend upon any interview with Lord Stair. He has recognized me, I am sure--nothing escapes his keen eyes--and I will soon see whether that recognition is likely to prove dangerous. If so, I will stay and confront the danger here. If not, I will go down to this Ale Manor for a time, and watch quietly the course of events."

Van Noost shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head, saying,

"Well, my good Lord, well. You must have your own way, and put your head into the lion's mouth, if you think fit; but it is an unpleasant place to rest one's noddle in; and were I you, I certainly would not try it."

Smeaton laughed, replying,

"I do not think the beast is dangerous; but we shall see. And now, my good friend, I think I shall set out; for the shades of evening are beginning to fall."

"Not yet, my Lord, not yet," cried Van Noost, who was evidently much alarmed at his companion's determination. "It is but a cloud come over the sky; and I would fain have you take a little more time to consider. It is well enough for me to brave Lord Stair, and talk as impudently to him as if I were his equal; first, because he can show nothing against me, except that I love one King better than another, and secondly, because I am too powerless and humble to be dangerous; the man who will fight a boar, or a wolf, or even a lion, (saving your presence,) will often turn aside not to tread on a beetle or a worm; but with your Lordship, the case might be very different. You would make a fine cast of the net; and they seem fond of taking great fish just now."

"And very wise they are too," answered Smeaton, with a smile. "A large fish is always better than a small one."

"Wrong, wrong, my dear Lord," exclaimed Van Noost. "Smelts for my money; only they are so dear--a shilling a score--that I can't afford them."

"But, my good friend," replied Smeaton, "you are much mistaken as to my objects and my position, though I strove hard to explain to you what they really are."

"Ah, some of my lead gets into my pate," said Van Noost, with a sigh; "and when an idea is fixed there, it is as stiff as a river-god in a fountain, and requires to be melted and re-cast, before it will take another shape. But your Lordship was going to say--"

"Merely, my good friend," rejoined Smeaton, more gravely, "that I do not come over here to stir up any rebellion in the land, but simply, at the request of a very dear friend, to ascertain

what are the real feelings of the country, and especially of the leading men therein. I have no dangerous papers about me; for I refused to be the bearer of any such. As yet I have communicated with no one but yourself, my object being simply to see with my own eyes, hear with my own ears, and communicate to some who are dear to me the result of my observations. Thus, although avowedly, as all my family have been, a friend of nay legitimate Prince, I have given no excuse for treating me as a rebel to existing authority. The faction that now rules the land can take hold of no word or act of mine. My father, it is true, was banished and proclaimed; but such is not the case with me; and I have a right to walk my native country at liberty."

Van Noost was evidently not convinced; and he contrived to detain his companion with arguments till the sun had actually set. Then, however, Smeaton rose, saying:

"Now, Van Noost, I must really go; but I shall see you to-morrow early, and we will talk farther."

"I will open the back door," said Van Noost, somewhat ruefully, "and let your Lordship out through the garden into the fields. The first turning on the right will take you straight up to the Dog and Duck; and then you cannot miss your way."

"No, no, Van Noost," replied Smeaton. "The open way and the straight, if you please, my good friend; unless you are afraid to have me seen coming out of your house. I am tired of these maskings."

"Heaven forbid that I should be afraid, noble Lord," cried Van Noost eagerly. "I would walk with your lordship to the Council Office itself, if you liked; and, indeed, I think I had better go part of the way with you."

Smeaton, however, declined all company; and, the door of the house and gate of the garden having been opened, he issued forth into Piccadilly, and took his way back towards St. James's street.

Van Noost looked after him for a moment or two, shook his head gravely, and then, once more locking the garden-gate, set to work in the twilight to put the leaden figures, which Smeaton had knocked down, upon their legs again.

CHAPTER IV.

It is curious, what mighty business is transacted in mean places. The destinies of the world, and the widest-spread enlightenment of the human mind, have gone forth from two of the smallest, dirtiest, and most pitiful streets in London, Downing Street and Paternoster Row. John Dalrymple, Earl of Stair, one of the most remarkable men of the age in which he lived, and afterwards celebrated for the extraordinary splendour both of his equipage and his table when ambassador at the court of France, was at this time dwelling in a small hired house in Golden Square. Nevertheless, he had been already marked out for high employments, by the clear-sighted eyes of the Whig ministry of that day; and it was without difficulty, though not until after two enquiries, that Smeaton discovered the house in which he lived. He paused before the door, and looked up in doubt; for the name of the Earl of Stair was so frequently in men's mouths, and his liveries were so well known in the neighbourhood, that the young traveller had expected to find a magnificent mansion, fitted to contain a numerous train of servants.

But let us pass over his surprise and his inquiries, and enter the room of the noble Earl at the moment when Smeaton approached his dwelling. He was seated in a large straight-backed arm-chair, with a round carved oak table on his left hand, having a thick solitary candle close to his elbow, shaded by a fan-shaped piece of green silk fixed in the candlestick. Thus, that keen, penetrating, but noble countenance, was completely in shadow, while the bright light streamed upon a large packet of old papers on the table, and upon one which he held in his hand. Better known to the English historian as a diplomatist and statesman of consummate sagacity than as a general, it may excite some surprise when I state that the paper which he was examining, with a pleasant smile upon his face, contained a rough plan of the battle of Oudenard, with a number of remarks, minute dates, and numbers, written underneath in his own hand. He had drawn it up while hurrying over to England with despatches announcing that great victory, in obtaining which he had borne a considerable share, that he might be ready with all the details in case of being questioned by the ministry. It had been of no service to him at the time; but now the sight of it occasioned pleasant sensations--the memory of triumph and success, the recollection, perhaps, of young bright hopes and great aspirations--at all events, the thoughts and feelings of earlier and happier years. A refreshing breeze is ever blowing from the fields of youth; and, when

we read any record of those former days, we do but open a window to let it in. Melancholy may be mingled with it, and it may bring upon its wings the tolling of the church-bell for all that have departed; but still it is sweet and fresh, and beneficial to the health of the heart.

He laid down that paper and took up another, examined it for a moment and put it aside. In doing so, he touched the pile of old letters; they fell over, and he laid his hand upon another document at random. The instant he looked at it, however, he laid it gently on the table, with a sort of shudder, and fell into deep thought.

While he thus remained, an old staid serving man opened the door and entered the room, without the Earl perceiving him.

"There's a gentleman below, my Lord," said the man, with a strong Scottish accent.

The Earl took no notice, but remained exactly in the same position, with his eyes fired on the floor.

"I beg your Lordship's pardon," said the servant, "but there's a gentleman below seeking to see you, and will indeed take no denial."

Lord Stair started from his reverie, and told the man to repeat what he had said which he did, with the addition of the words, "He bade me give this card to your Lordship."

The Earl took it, and looked at the name before he answered; then a slight, very slight, look of surprise came upon his face; but, bowing his head quietly, he said.

"Put a seat there opposite to me, and show him up."

The man did as he was commanded; and, in a minute after, Smeaton entered the room. Lord Stair rose, bowed, and pointed to the chair apposite, saying,

"Pray be seated, Colonel Smeaton."

His visitor placed himself in the chair in an attitude of easy grace, with his sword drawn up by his side, and the hilt resting on his knee. The old servant departed, and the door closed.

"I have intruded upon you, my Lord," said Smeaton, at once, "to speak upon a somewhat unpleasant subject. I will therefore beg your patience for a moment till I have mentioned all the circumstances."

Lord Stair listened in silence, merely bowing his head, and Smeaton went on to detail the violent conduct of the Earl's running footman towards young Richard Newark, and his after insolence towards himself, assuring him that he had witnessed the whole transaction from the beginning, and that the lad had given no offence but by accidentally touching the man's leg in swinging about his cane as he walked along.

Still Lord Stair listened in profound silence, interrupting the detail neither by comment nor question. When Smeaton had completely done, however, and paused as if for a reply, he inquired, in a somewhat dry tone--

"What is it you wish me to do in this case, Colonel Smeaton?"

"I have trusted, my Lord, from your character," replied Smeaton, "that a simple statement of the facts would be sufficiently to guide you as to what was requisite. But, as you inquire what I could wish you to do, I must reply--to dismiss the man from your service."

"He is a useful fellow," said Lord Stair, with a slight smile. "Pray, what is the alternative, Colonel Smeaton?"

"Nay, my good Lord," replied Smeaton, smiling in return, "I am not quite so pugnacious a person as to come ready armed with a hard alternative. I trust and doubt not your Lordship will do that which is right, without considering any alternative at all."

"Very well," said Lord Stair, more frankly. "I will consider of it for a few minutes. But now let us speak of more important things than appertain to the fate of a footman. You seem surprised, but I mean the fate of a young nobleman, who has, I fear, placed himself in a dangerous situation."

Smeaton paused for a moment, for there was a kindness of tone as well as of look and manner, in Lord Stair, as he introduced the expected subject, which he had not been prepared for. After very short consideration, however, he answered ingenuously,

"If your Lordship alludes to myself, I do not imagine that my situation is dangerous at all."

"Then, why appear in England under a feigned name?" demanded the Earl.

"There may be many sufficient causes, my noble Lord," replied Smeaton, "without apprehension having any share in the motives. I may be poor and proud, as is generally said of

your ancestors and mine; and, to say truth, poverty was one of the causes of my determination not to assume any rank in this country. An unknown stranger, without any pretensions to dignity, can act as he likes; but it would not do for an English nobleman to take up his abode in a little lodging up two pair of stairs."

"In Gerard Street, Soho," added the Earl with a smile. "It is a very good street, notwithstanding. Great men have lived there before now." He paused for an instant in thought, as if considering how he should proceed, and then said, somewhat abruptly--"Are you aware that your father and myself were once intimate friends, and that, although unfortunately differing in our political views, nothing has ever occurred to diminish my regard for him, or, that I know of, his regard for me?"

"I have always heard my late father speak of your Lordship with great respect and esteem," replied Smeaton; "but he never mentioned any intimacy. Indeed, I was not aware that you were personally acquainted."

"Oh yes," replied Lord Stair, in a very marked and peculiar tone of voice. "We were very intimate in the darker days of my life. There are circumstances, my lord, circumstances of deep pain and grief, which occasionally bind men together by stronger ties than any which can be formed amidst joys and pleasures. But I see you do not know my history."

He paused, and fell into a gloomy reverie, which Smeaton suffered him to follow, uninterrupted, for a few minutes; and then, perhaps in order to draw his mind away from thoughts which seemed very painful, the young Colonel recurred to a previous topic, saying--"I can assure your lordship most sincerely that I myself know no danger which I run in coming to England, or even in presenting myself at the house of Lord Stair. I mean that I am not the bearer of any letters, papers, or messages, which can fairly give umbrage to the existing government."

Lord Stair roused himself from his reverie, and replied in an altered tone--

"Letters, papers, and messages may all be absent, and yet your intentions and your acts might place you in a dangerous position. I seek not, my lord, to pry into your secrets, if you have any, but I only wish to warn you, for your own good, that England is, at this present moment, a very perilous place for persons entertaining the views which your family have always entertained, and which, doubtless, you yourself entertain. Let me explain myself in what respects I think it perilous. Not alone are the eyes of government keenly fixed upon every suspected person; not alone are ministers prepared at all points to put down any attempt at insurrection; not alone are they ready to take the responsibility upon themselves of adopting measures, somewhat beyond the law, to meet circumstances not contemplated by the law--though all this might render your circumstances perilous enough; but there are other persons and other designs which may be more dangerous to you. I speak of those blind and infatuated men who entertain vain hopes of being able to overthrow the established government of the country, and alter, by force, the succession to the crown as settled by Act of Parliament."

He had spoken calmly, but somewhat sternly. He now again resumed a milder tone, and went on to say--"These men, deceiving themselves, are ever ready to deceive others; nay, more, are endeavouring, by every sort of artifice, by specious arguments, by false representations, by cunningly devised displays of an unreal power, and by manœuvres too numerous to detail, to lead the unwary or the ill-informed into a belief that schemes, perfectly impracticable, are certain of success. I warn you, my dear lord, of these things, as an old friend of your father; and, to say the truth, nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to hear to-morrow that you had embarked for the continent."

"That, I fear, is impossible," replied Smeaton; "for I have business to transact which must detain me some little time--business," he added, seeing a peculiar expression come over Lord Stair's face, "totally unconnected with politics or party."

"I think you would not say so with any reservation," replied the Earl, and then fell into a fit of musing, which his companion did not interrupt. "I wish," he continued, in a kindly tone, after he had brought his rumination to an end, "I wish you would allow me to deal with you as a friend, and ask you a few questions, in that character, which might be impertinent in a stranger."

"Pray do, my lord," replied Smeaton. "Anything concerning myself alone I will not refuse to answer; but I must beg you not to touch upon the business to which I have alluded, which I have undertaken for a friend, but which is, I give you my honour, merely of a private and domestic nature."

"I shall not meddle with it," replied Lord Stair; "and my questions shall be very simple ones. How long do you intend to remain?"

"Probably not more than three months," replied Smeaton.

"Somewhat long," said the Earl, thoughtfully. "However, if it must be so, we cannot help it. Do you intend to pass that time in London?"

"Certainly not," replied Smeaton. "I shall probably leave London in two or three days, having accepted an invitation to visit Sir John Newark, at Ale Manor, in ----shire."

"With a letter from Bolingbroke," said Lord Stair, drily. "We have heard of that."

"For once, you have been misinformed," replied Smeaton, smiling slightly. "I have no letter from Bolingbroke, and am barely personally known to him. It seems he did me the honour of writing to Sir John Newark, but I cannot be responsible for anything he may have thought fit to say in that letter. The only introduction I bear to Sir John is a friendly letter from the Duke of Ormond, who gave it to me, knowing that I had inquiries to make in that part of the country, and thinking that it might be of service to me; but it has no reference to politics, direct or indirect."

"It is in the hands of government," said Lord Stair, in a quiet tone, "but it will be restored to you. You seem surprised; but your arrival at Dover was known three days ago, and created some suspicion. Your assumption of another name, and your conferences with Van Noost--poor foolish fellow--increased those suspicions; and, when I saw you with that person in the street, I sent a man after you to see where you went, in order that I might have some conversation with you, and save you from pain and annoyance, if not from difficulty. You staid so long, however, with the leaden-figure man, that measures have been taken by other parties in regard to you, which I could have wished avoided."

"Do you mean as affecting my personal liberty!" demanded Smeaton.

"No, not that," replied Lord Stair; "but examinations have been made at your lodging. Do you know much of this Sir John Newark?"

"Little or nothing," replied Smeaton. "I hear he is a waverer in politics, and that is all I know."

The Earl mused again.

"I believe," he said, after a short interval of thought, "that the house of Sir John Newark is as safe a place as any for a gentleman in your position. He is one of those who, to use a vulgar term, do not readily quarrel with their bread and butter. He is more bold in words than in deeds, it is true, but he is not much suspected by government, as there are so many holds upon him. He may always be bound by self-interest. He may always be restrained by fear. I do not mean cowardice--for, personally, he is brave enough; but fear of losing an acre of land, or a hundred guineas, would make him swear allegiance to the devil or the Grand Turk. It is as safe a place for you as any that I know; but still, be on your guard against temptation; for a great number of unruly spirits are in the West, who will, before long, bring a heavy hand upon their own heads, if I am not mistaken. I had fancied, indeed, that you were going northward, and that might have been more dangerous."

"I have but little temptation to go to the north, my good lord," replied the younger gentleman. "It would be a painful sight to see my family estates in the hands of others, and our once splendid property enriching those whom even your lordship will permit me to call traitors."

"I will not find fault with your doing so," replied Lord Stair, with a smile; "for your father was certainly much wronged by near and dear friends, as they professed themselves. If I remember rightly," he continued, "your mother had lands in the West. Supposing they were not confiscated, I can conceive the motives of your journey."

"They were forgotten in the general sweep," replied Smeaton; "and, happily, we had faithful and honest tenants, who would not take advantage of their lord's calamities. They are all that is left us. But I will not, even in so small a point, deceive your lordship," he continued, abruptly, "nor willingly suffer you to deceive yourself. I am not going to the West to visit that small estate, and probably may never set my foot on it. I go simply to transact some business for a friend."

"Is he a *royal* one?" asked Lord Stair, with a keen look.

"No," answered Smeaton, laughing, "nor now at all connected with royalty. My friend is a merchant, but one," he added, gaily, "who does not traffic in any contraband commodities--not even in the delicate lace of treason. I have assured your lordship that this has nothing to do with any matters of state or policy whatever. I have to thank you for many acts of kindness to-night. I must beg you to add one more--to believe me."

"I do, I do," exclaimed the Earl, warmly. "One, accustomed to deal largely with men, judges them fully as much by the countenance as by the words. I remember well when your father and I were studying together, in deep seclusion, with a good minister in Ayrshire, and were told to read the historian Thucydides, we could make nothing of him, though we knew a little of Greek, till your father got from Edinburgh a copy of the work with copious notes in Latin at the bottom of the page. In a moment it became all clear, and we found how often we had been mistaken in our supposed interpretations. Thus one foreign language served to elucidate another; and I have often since had occasion to think that the expressions of a man's face are the notes which the grand commentator, Nature, has given us for the right understanding of his words. I do believe you, sincerely, and think I can insure that you shall not be molested during the three months you propose to stay, provided you pledge yourself to avoid all meddling with the politics of the country."

"I thank your lordship heartily," replied Smeaton, "and fully accept the terms." Then, changing the subject suddenly, he added, "I was not aware that your lordship had studied with my father.

He, being a second son, was intended, at first, to be educated for the bar."

"I also was a second son," said Lord Stair, in a low voice, with the expression of his face changing to a look of the deepest melancholy, "I was a second son, but not then, not then. This fatal hand had by that time done the deed."

The surprise which Smeaton felt at the sudden change in manner, tone, and look, and at the strange words of Lord Stair, could not be prevented from appearing on his countenance, and the Earl, whose eyes were fixed upon him, said, "You do not know the story. It is a sad one, but I often force myself to tell it, and there is something strange in your coming here to-night. The moment before you entered, I had the letter now before me in my hand--the letter of recall out of a long and unjust banishment from the bosom of my family. To your father's kindness and support during those long dark years, I owe much, and I may as well tell you how it all happened."

Smeaton replied in a few common-place words of interest, for there are times when nothing is appropriate but a common-place. The Earl heard him not, however, but kept gazing into vacancy, with a contracted brow and somewhat haggard eye.

"I have it all before me even now," he said, at length, in a low and tremulous tone, "that dark and horrible scene, and its terrible consequences. There are some things which brand themselves upon the mind even of childhood with marks never to be effaced; and, though long years and busy scenes, passions, desires, hopes, joys, acts, feelings, have thronged so thickly into the intervening space that one would think they raised up a cloud between the present and the past which no eye could penetrate--yet there it is, that one terrible hour, as vivid and distinct as when it burst upon me like a blaze of lightning. This hand, young man, took my elder brother's life--not willingly, mark me--not with forethought, nor under the rash impulse of any sudden passion. We were boys together, and loved each other well. I envied him not his elder birth, God knows; I hardly even knew or felt its advantages. It was all in sport; I knew not that the gun was charged. He had presented it at me himself the moment before. God only knows how it was that I was not the victim, and that *he* was not left to mourn *me*. Think then of my horror when the musquetoon went off, and my brother fell at my feet a bleeding corpse! That was the first sickening taste of the bitterness with which my cup was to be filled; but, when, instead of comfort in my agony, and support under the dreadful weight cast upon me, I found the awful misfortune imputed to me as a crime, when, in spite of its being shown and proved, by those who witnessed it, that all were accidental, and my horror and grief was apparent to all eyes, I was cast out from the bosom of my family like an exile, banished to a distance, and treated like a criminal who has only escaped condign punishment by some quirk of law, and who lives with the shame and the reproach and the stigma clinging to him for ever--to describe my sensations then, is impossible. At first, it was all a chaos of sorrow; but gradually the sense of injustice raised up a spirit of resistance, hard, dogged, malevolent, but still serviceable, for it enabled me to bear up. And then, for my blessing and my safety, I found two friends, who gave a better direction to my thoughts--who raised up hope again in my bosom, and softened even the memory of the past. The first was the minister under whose tuition I was placed; a wise and good man, who moved, in his humble sphere, untainted by the vices or the follies of the day. The other was your noble father; a lad some years older than myself, who was pursuing his studies under the same tutor. Oh, how sweetly those days come back on memory, when first my heart opened to his kindness, and when, loaded with anguish, such as is rarely known but in manhood, I told him all my thoughts, and wept upon his bosom like a child! How sweetly, too, come back his counsels and exhortations! how gently, how kindly he soothed my angry feelings! how wisely he taught me to rely on higher and nobler principles for support under my affliction than the mere stern sense of being wronged! how he soothed my irritation, and won me away from my sorrows! My young friend, it is not to be forgotten, and if there was bitterness in the cup pressed hard to my boyish lips, there was sweetness to be remembered too. 'Tis well nigh thirty years ago. I think--perhaps more, for your father married very early--and I have never seen him since; but I forget not one lineament of his face, one tone of his voice, one expression of his countenance, and you are very like him."

As he spoke, the Earl extended his hand to Smeaton, and then added,

"You now can see the causes of the interest I take in your fate. That interest will never diminish, and will always be active in your favour, whenever my duty to the land of my birth and the sovereign whom I serve will give it scope. I am obliged to make this reservation; for it is a rule that I have always acted upon, to suffer no personal feeling whatever to interfere with my actions as a public man. But I trust to your own good sense, to your own good feeling, to preserve you from any position in which your interests would be opposed to my duties."

Smeaton replied not to the Earl's last words, but inquired, in a tone of real feeling,

"How did this sad story end?"

"Perhaps to my advantage," replied Lord Stair. "I recovered my calmness and composure of mind; never my light gaiety of heart. My own conscience acquitted me of any fault but boyish indiscretion; though the memory of having taken a brother's life remained as a dark cloud shading the too fervid heat of youth. I applied myself to intense study. I learned to think when others are dreaming. I sought abstraction from myself in the study of other men. I acquired in boyhood the mind of a man. The stream might be small, indeed, for it was not yet flooded by experience; but it was diverted from its natural channel by the rocks and precipices which

surrounded it. At length, representations from my good tutor of the forced progress I had made, his overpraise of my character, disposition, and abilities, and his mild Christian expostulations against the injustice that was shown me, had their effect; and, at the end of several years, I was called back to my family. I returned with a feeling of dread and anxiety, which was not without cause; for, though I was nominally forgiven, I could see in all faces, I could hear in all tones, that what I had done was not forgotten--that a chilling memory existed of that dark accident, which extinguished all warm affection towards me. An opportunity of escape from such an icy dwelling soon presented itself, and I gladly seized it, by entering the army. Life was of little value to me--less so than to most of my companions; my previous studies gave me some advantages over them; and I became what I now am, succeeding to my father's honours and estates, on his sudden and somewhat mysterious death years ago. Wealth, power, and some share of fame, have all been mine; but I can tell you, my Lord, that I would sacrifice them all, fall back into obscurity, or even poverty, and pursue a humble course of laborious and unknown exertion, in any drudging profession, without a murmur, could I but blot out the past, could I but find some breeze to waft away the one dark cloud that hangs upon memory, could I but wash from my hand the stain of a brother's blood, however innocently shed."

As he spoke, Lord Stair covered his eyes with his hands, and then came a long silent pause. Smeaton knew not how to break it, except by rising to depart; but the movement instantly called the Earl's attention.

"Do not go," he said, "do not go. You must stay and sup with me. We have other things to think of. I should wish to do something that would be of service to you, or might be useful, in case of need; for my mind foreshadows troublous times coming. But I must think of what can be effected."

"I thank you most sincerely, my dear Lord," replied Smeaton, "but assure you as sincerely that I do not propose to meddle with troublous times, nor take part in troublous scenes."

"Propose!" echoed the Earl, with a faint smile. "How many things affect the whole course of our existence, in ways which we never proposed to our minds? Circumstances make man, more often than man makes circumstances. Let no one answer for his actions, even of to-morrow; for we may fearlessly affirm that he knows not what they will be. It is well to be prepared for all."

He rose, and rang the bell, saying, when the servant appeared.

"Supper at the usual hour. This gentleman sups with me."

Then, resuming the conversation, he led it in a different course, talking of many general subjects, and gradually regaining his ordinary tone and manner.

"And now, my young friend," he said, at length, "to return to the object of your coming; what of this business between my running footman, Thomas Hardy, and young Newark, thrifty Sir John Newark's son?"

"I do sincerely hope that your Lordship will dismiss him," replied Smeaton, in an earnest tone, "not to satisfy or gratify me--no, nor even to punish the ruffianly fellow himself, but for the repute and honour of my noble friend, the Earl of Stair. If your Lordship had but heard the comments of the crowd upon the insolence of noblemen's servants, and especially of this man, who was recognized as yours, you would see that this is no specious motive put forth to cover personal anger. I punished the fellow on the spot for what he did to me; but the crowd handled your Lordship's name rather roughly, on the provocation given by him."

"I could swallow that easily," replied Lord Stair, with a somewhat haughty curl of the lip; "but he is, as you have said, a ruffianly fellow. He has broad shoulders, though, and stout limbs, makes his way well through a crowd, and has no more fear than decency. Nevertheless, you have justice on your side. I need hardly say he told his own story before you came; but I detected its falsehood, even in his own showing, reproved him for what he had done, and informed him I should wait till I heard farther before I decided on my conduct. He has had much practice in lying, but does not do it dexterously. He shall be dismissed. Let us say no more on the subject. Look upon it as done, and now, here is supper announced. We will forget all unpleasant things, and I will endeavour to have one peaceful evening before I set out. You have heard, of course, that I am going to take the chief command in Scotland, till Argyle can be made available. Then, I suppose, my destination will be France."

Thus saying, he led the way to a room on the ground floor, where supper was prepared, and Smeaton's evening was passed in a very different manner from that which he had anticipated in the morning. The topics on which they had touched recurred no more. General subjects were alone spoken of, and the only allusion to the fate or fortunes of either was made by Lord Stair, when he promised to send his guest, on the following day, a letter for a gentleman in the West, who might be serviceable to him in case of need.

"You can present it or not, as you think fit," said the Earl; "but, at all events, it will show that I look upon you as my friend, which, I believe I am not too bold in supposing may prove a protection for you against annoyance and suspicion, in case of any troubles arising in the land."

Smeaton thanked him heartily, and thus they parted.

The Colonel remained for three days more in London; but I will not here dwell upon his farther proceedings in the great city, before I may have to speak of them hereafter as fully as their little importance deserves.

CHAPTER V.

It was a bright and cheerful morning; and the scenery round Ale would have been in its greatest beauty, had but one cloud floated in the sky to chequer the landscape with moving light and shadow. But there was not the slightest stain upon the heaven; and the sun in his hot noon, was shining over the flat, waveless sea, and over brown, high-topped hills and deep dells round about. The trees were in their rich foliage, green and full; no speck of road side dust--no particle of soot--smurched the pure leaves; and underneath their branches might be found cool shade, and pure refreshing air, breathing lightly from the sea.

There was a clump of ten or twelve beeches perched upon a little knoll, overhanging the road which led to the nearest town from Ale Manor and village. A few were decayed and hollowed out, leaving little but the bark standing, with two or three long branches stretching forth, and still bearing the verdant livery of youth, even in their extreme old age. Others were in their vigorous prime, too regular and rounded to be very picturesque; while one or two were in that state of half-decay which casts this peculiar tree into the most fantastic forms.

Sitting under one of those nearest to the road, from which it might be distant about fifty yards, was Emmeline Newark. She was shaded from the sun in the position which she had assumed, and, at the same time, caught any wind that was stirring; for, blowing, as I have said, very, very lightly from the sea, it came up the deep dell from Ale Bay and along the course of the stream, seeming to pause, as if in sport, amongst the beeches, and whirling round the wooded knoll. She had a book in her hand; I know not well what it was; it might have been Pope, or Addison, or any of those stars that were setting or rising about that time--never mind a mixed metaphor, dear critic. She was in one of her musing moods, however, and the book lay unnoticed on her knee, as, leaning slightly on one side, with her shoulder supported against the smooth bark of the beech, and her eyes peeping out from under the branches towards the opposite hill and the blue sky above it, she lay, rather than sat, in an attitude of exquisite grace.

The sun was very near the meridian, and his brightness would have been oppressive to the eye, had it not been that the cool colouring of the scene around, the green trees, the brown hills, and the grey rocks, seemed to drink up the rays, or return them softened and mellowed to the eye.

She had sat there some time, without seeing a living creature or a moving thing, except a large bird of prey, which kept whirling in immense circles far over head. But now a man on horseback, in the garb of a servant, leading another horse by the bridle, passed slowly along the road, without noticing her, and took his way up towards the old Manor House. She gazed after him with that feeling of curiosity which is generated by a solitary state of life. She marked him along the road till it was lost in the wood, and, as she did so, some one on foot was heard to pass along under the trees, as if coming up a very steep path from the little village.

"It is Richard," she thought, peeping under the branches. "Poor boy! he has not gained much during the last twelvemonths. He will be a child all his life, I fear."

She then turned to the pages of her book, and began to read. Suddenly the page grew somewhat dim; and she looked up, saying to herself--"There are clouds coming over." But, though she could not actually see the sun, the sky was bright and clear. She read on; but the page grew more and more dim, till at length she could with difficulty distinguish the words.

"A thunder storm must be coming," she thought, shutting the book and rising to take her way home; but, on stepping from beneath the branches of the old beech tree, not a cloud was to be seen upon the sky. All was clear, though the light had diminished to the faintest gleam of twilight; yet it did not resemble either the morning or the evening light. There was no rosy glow, no golden tint, in east or west; a dim grey shadow had spread over earth and sky; and Emmeline could see here and there a star gleaming faintly in the deep concave above, as if night had just fallen, while a dark shadow occupied the place of the sun, with the exception of a narrow crescent of light still remaining at one edge. A sudden and instinctive feeling of terror seized her before reason had time to act. She knew not what she feared; and yet this sudden darkness, this unexpected extinction, as it were, of the great light of the heavens, seemed something very awful. Her heart beat, and her breath came thick. The next instant, however, she said to herself; "It is an eclipse. How strange and wonderful! It is not surprising that men in other days looked upon

these things as portents. I could well nigh be superstitious myself under that black sky at noon-day. The sun is now taking the form of a ring of light, with a dark globe in the centre."

She paused to gaze upon it; and strange wandering thoughts came through her mind, engrossing all her attention. She saw not that, from the edge of the wood, behind and above her--where it stretched out with a sort of spur upon the hill side, leaving a space of about two hundred yards of clear soft turf, only broken by that knoll and clump of beech trees between itself and the road--she saw not that there stole quietly forth, first one figure, and then another, and, with stealthy steps over the soft herbage, came creeping down towards her, keeping the beeches between her and them. The light indeed was hardly sufficient to show her their movements, even had not those trees formed a sort of leafy screen; but, as it was, they were completely hidden; and, not till their steps were close to her, was she aware that she was not alone on the hill-side. She started at the sound of a footfall, and turning round beheld two strangers with their faces blackened. She would have run away towards the house; but, at the same moment, one man caught her by the arm, and the other seized her shoulder.

"*Parde, nous l'avons!*" cried one of them.

The other said nothing, but strove to draw her away in a different direction from that of the house.

All the warnings she had received now flashed upon her memory; all the terrors which Sir John Newark had instilled took possession of her in full force; and, without pausing to question or remonstrate, she screamed aloud for help, while the two men, in spite of her resistance, forced her on in the path which they had chosen.

"They won't hear," said the one to the other, in French. "The wind blows the other way. This eclipse was a lucky chance."

Still, however, Emmeline screamed; and the one who had as yet said nothing put his hand over her mouth to smother her cries, whispering, at the same time, but still in French, what seemed persuasions to come quietly, and promises which she neither heard nor understood.

Freeing her lips, she screamed again and again; and then--oh, blessed sound!--she heard the noise of a horse's feet upon the road.

"It is my guardian," she thought; and another long piercing cry succeeded.

It caught the ear of the horseman on the road. He checked his horse, and beheld by the light, which was becoming now more strong, two men dragging a woman up the hill. There was a steep bank between the road and the turf above; but he struck his spurs fiercely into his horse's sides; and, with a straining effort, the fine powerful beast overcame the obstacle, reached the turf, and sprang forward. Stretching out, as if running a race, the horse, in a few seconds, brought him up to the spot where Emmeline was, and even a little beyond it, before his career could be checked. The latter circumstance, however, was favourable; for it placed the rider between the men and the wood, and also showed him, in passing, that they were determined to resist his interference. As soon as they perceived that the intruder upon their enterprise was alone, the swords of both were drawn; and one of them said to the other, in a low voice, and in French,

"Keep him off, while I take her on. Three hundred yards farther, and we shall be within hail of the boat's crew."

But the stranger was not so easily to be disposed of. His horse was wheeled rapidly; his sword was out of the sheath in a moment; and in another instant he was upon the two men, from whom Emmeline was struggling hard to free herself. As if he at once divined their plan, he suffered the one who had let go his hold of the lady to advance, sword in hand, and aim a blow at him, unreturned, merely making his horse swerve to avoid it; and, pressing hard upon the other, who still held the poor girl in his strong grasp, he forced him to turn and defend himself. The rescuer was obliged to play a wary game, however; for the other man ran up behind, as if to strike him from his horse; but, practised in every military exercise, although the animal he rode had never been trained in the *manège*, he governed his steed with perfect ease with the hand and heel, wheeling him now upon one, now upon the other, parrying a blow here, aiming a blow there; and, in the end, compelled the one who had still the young lady in his grasp, to quit his hold in self-defence.

At the same moment, the loud deep barking of a large dog was heard; and one glance showed the gentleman on horseback an enormous hound, followed quickly by a human figure, running over the hill towards them from the lower wood in which the road seemed to lose itself.

The same sight met Emmeline's eye also; and, finding herself free, she sprang forward towards the new comer; but, exhausted with struggling and with terror, she fell upon the green turf before she had gone twenty yards.

"Run, run, Matthew!" cried the man who had last retained his grasp of Emmeline, still speaking in French; and then, with one of the blasphemous and horrid oaths of which that language has a copious vocabulary, he added; "She has escaped us! Through the wood and by the path round at the back! I will show you the way down the cliff."

Thus saying, he turned to fly with his companion; but still he retired with a sort of sturdy cautiousness, stopping short every ten or twelve paces, and turning round, ready for defence. The stranger, however, seemed in no degree disposed to follow him. His object was accomplished in freeing a lady from the hands of two ruffians; he had no knowledge of the circumstances; and, after pausing for an instant to make sure that the scoundrels had no intention of returning, he sprang from his horse and approached the poor girl, who was now raising herself upon her arm.

"I hope you are not hurt, madam," he said. "Do not be alarmed. The villains have fled, and will not return in a hurry, I think. At all events, I have marked one of them, so that we shall know him in time to come."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! How much I owe you, sir!" was all that Emmeline could utter. At the same time, the great deerhound rushed forward as if to spring at the stranger; but, with that peculiar and marvellous instinct by which dogs of a noble race distinguish friends from foes, he suddenly checked himself in full career, dropped his tail and ears, and, turning from him with a shy and wary glance, as if yet not quite satisfied, approached the lady and licked her hand, fixing his large bright eyes upon her face.

"Let me assist you to rise," said the stranger, offering Emmeline his hand; "here comes some one under whose protection, doubtless, you can be quite safe. Ha, my young friend, Richard Newark! You have made your appearance to help us just at the happy moment."

The young lad caught his hand and shook it heartily, exclaiming:

"What is the matter? What is the matter? I heard Emmeline screaming, and saw you fighting with two men, and just slashing one of them upon the forehead. Why, what a gay coat you've got on! You were dressed in brown in London."

"If it had not been for this gentleman's assistance," said Emmeline, rising slowly, "I should have been carried away, I know not whither--over the seas, I think; for they talked of a boat."

"Ay, he always comes up to help people when they are in need," replied the lad, gazing with a look of affectionate regard at Smeaton. "This is the gentleman, Emmeline, who came and made a jelly of the big footman who knocked me down. There are some people that have the luck of it. I should like to do such things too; but I am always too late. I came out to meet him; for his servant and baggage arrived a minute or two ago; but I thought he would come along the road, else I should have been upon the hill-side in time. That brute, Brian, too, ran after a hare; and I sat down and reasoned with him, asking him if it were decent, in a gentleman of his high degree, to run after small game like that. He was too much ashamed of himself to make any answer; but he lifted up his great hairy nose, and wagged his tail, as much as to say, 'Don't talk any more about it.' Carried you away, Emmeline!" he continued, in his rambling manner. "Where could they want to carry you? They did not hurt you, did they?"

"They pinched my wrists till they will be black and blue, I am sure," replied Emmeline, simply. "But we had better make haste to the house," she continued, "for there may be more of them." Then turning, with a graceful inclination, to Smeaton, while she leaned upon Richard's arm, she added, "My guardian, Sir John Newark, will be most grateful to you, sir, as I am; for, had it not been for your courage and kindness, a scheme, against which he has often warned me, would probably have proved successful, notwithstanding all his precaution."

"I am more than sufficiently rewarded by having rendered you a service," replied Smeaton, in a very common-place tone; but the next instant he fell into a fit of musing, which was only interrupted by young Newark exclaiming, with a laugh--

"I would sooner do a day's work at digging, under a hot sun, than have to catch your horse on this hill side. He'll be at Exeter before to-morrow morning. Talking of the sun, Emmeline, did you ever see anything look so funny as that great shining gentleman did just now--just as if he were sick of a surfeit. He's not much better yet, and looks black enough at the world, though he has now got a cocked-hat of light set on one side of his head. Old Barbara tells me it is an eclipse, and that it's all very curious. She saw one just like it, in the reign of King William, of blessed memory, when all the birds went to roost, and the pigs hid their heads in the straw. I think it more disagreeable than curious. But look! he has caught his horse! He'll catch anything or anybody--perhaps you, my pretty bird, before he has done."

A slight blush came upon Emmeline's face.

"Where are your wits rambling, Richard?" she said. "You should have helped him, Richard."

"Should I?" said the boy, with a start. "I am sorry I did not, then; for I would willingly help him in anything. He is a fine fellow; but I never know what I ought to do, Emmeline. So you must tell me, while he is here."

"Does your father expect him?" asked Emmeline. "He never mentioned it to me."

"Expects him as sure as he does Christmas," replied the lad; "but, like a wise man as he is, he held his tongue, knowing the quality of expectation, which, like a bad sword-blade, breaks through the middle when you most rely on it.

"That is not your own, Dick," observed Emmeline, smiling. "You have borrowed it from some one."

"Stole it, dear Emmy," returned Richard, laughing; "pilfered it from a player in a lace jacket, who strutted about, periwigged, in a barn at Putney last year, and called himself Her Majesty's Servant. But here comes Colonel Smeaton again, with his horse in tow, as the fishermen say. How I should like to be a colonel! I wonder if I shall ever be a colonel, Emmy?"

Before the young lady could answer, Smeaton had rejoined them, and now walked by their side towards the house. He had cast off his fit of musing, and conversed with his two young companions gaily and easily, from time to time asking Emmeline questions in regard to the shameful attack which had been made on her, and endeavouring to ascertain if she had any knowledge of the persons concerned, or the motives by which they were actuated. She was obliged to confess her ignorance, however, merely telling him that her guardian had often warned her that such an attempt was likely, but had entered into no explanations.

It seemed now to have become Richard Newark's turn to muse; and they had very nearly reached the house before he opened his lips. Then, looking up suddenly, he brought forth the fruit of his meditation.

"I've been thinking, Smeaton," he said, "whether we ought not to get all the servants together, and see if we cannot catch these kidnappers."

"They are gone, I am afraid, beyond recall," answered Smeaton, gravely.

"Not they," cried the boy. "They cannot get away except by the river, and we can stop them at the mouth. They took the path up to the top of Ale Head; and, unless they have got wings, they cannot get down there. If I unchain the bloodhound and put him on the scent, he'll find them out for us in a minute."

"Nay, don't, Richard," said Emmeline. "You must not leave the house without defence; for no one can tell how many there may be."

Neither did Smeaton give any encouragement to the boy's proposal. He looked grave and thoughtful; and the matter seemed to drop of itself. The three entered the house together; and Emmeline led the way into the smaller saloon, where Sir John Newark was accustomed to sit in the morning. While, with a timid grace, Emmeline was performing the various offices of hospitality towards Smeaton, Richard Newark slipped quietly out of the room, hurried to the great courtyard, and ran towards an immense bloodhound, which was chained to a kennel near the stable-door. The beast bounded up on his hind legs, tugging at his chain, to caress his young master, who, kneeling down unceremoniously in the dirt, threw one arm about the hound's thick throat, and, while the animal licked his face all over, struggled to unfasten the chain from the collar.

"Don't unchain the dog, Master Richard," said a groom from the stable. "He'll hurt some one, if you don't mind."

"That is just what I want him to do, Bill," replied the lad. "You come along with me. Two men have been trying to carry off Emmeline; and Brian, who hunts by eye, was of no use."

"Have they got her, then?" cried the man, starting forward.

"No, no. Colonel Smeaton came up and broke their noddles," replied Richard; "but I want to catch them. So I have left the three--that is to say, the lady, the colonel, and the dog--in the house, and have come for old Bellmouth, here, to help me. You come along with me, Bill, and make haste. We'll put the hound upon their steps. Then, if he tears them to pieces, it's their affair and his, not mine."

As he spoke, he took his way out of the gates, the dog bounding on before. The groom caught up a stout stick and followed, asking his young master a number of questions, to which he got no satisfactory answer. By the shortest way, partly through the wood, and partly over the hill-side, young Richard Newark soon reached the spot where he had seen Emmeline on first being alarmed by her cries. Here, thrusting the dog's nose to the ground with both his hands, he cried,

"Seek, Bellmouth, seek!"

The enormous brute snuffed round and round, for a moment, without any other noise but the snorting of his nostrils as they were pressed upon the turf; and then the lad called him forward, a few paces higher up, still repeating the cry--

"Seek, Bellmouth, seek!"

The dog obeyed, moving hither and thither, still keeping its muzzle to the ground--and, at length, with a loud yell, sprang forward in the exact direction which the men had taken. Richard Newark and the groom followed as fast as their feet would carry them, cheering on the dog with loud cries; but, dashing away without a fault, he soon outstripped them, giving tongue from time to time, as if to lead them on. He took his course straight through the spur of wood, over the

brown hill beyond, and up in a direct line towards the top of Ale Head. The two pursuers caught sight of him again, as soon as they had passed the wood, rushing in a straight line towards the crags; and the groom remarked,

"We shall catch them now, Master Richard, or the dog will have them into the sea."

The moment after, however, the dog disappeared; for Ale Head, before it breaks off into the abrupt rocky promontory which actually beetles over the waters, is capped, as it were, with a rise in the ground, from which the turf slopes down to the edge of the cliff. So that what was beyond that highest point, and between it and the precipice, could not be seen. On reaching the top, the dog was not visible; but they heard a loud baying from some distance below; and Richard Newark ran forward to the edge of the cliff, while the groom exclaimed--"For God's sake, take care, Master Richard!" and followed with greater caution.

When they gained the edge, however, what had taken place became visible. On a point of rock, close above the water, and reached by an exceedingly narrow path, broken, irregular, covered with loose stones, and interrupted by chasms, which, to an eye above or below, seemed impassable, stood the large bloodhound, baying with a furious disappointed bark, mingled with a sort of shrill whine; while, at the distance of about half a mile from the point, was seen a small boat rowing towards a cutter-rigged vessel lying-to about a couple of miles from the coast.

Richard Newark had paused suddenly at the edge of the cliff, and remained perfectly silent; but the groom, when he came up, exclaimed--"They have got off, sir! We are too late."

"Ay," said the lad, in a thoughtful tone, "they must have known the place well, Bill. I did not think there was a man in England knew that way down, except myself and young Jemmie Harrison, the fisherman's son. It is not the first time they have been here. Here, Bellmouth! Mind your footing, old boy. It's the first time you ever were down there, and you've got no map."

It was some time before he could induce the dog to quit his station on the rock below and begin the ascent. Perhaps the animal did not hear the voice from above at that great distance; but assuredly he saw his young master looking over; for, from time to time, he raised his head towards him, with an angry howl, as if to intimate that the object of their chase had escaped. At length, however, he began to ascend; and, with difficulty, and not, apparently, without fear, for his steps were slow and uncertain, he made his way up to the top of the precipice again, and then gave himself a great and satisfactory shake, and looked up in Richard's face. The boy patted his head, but said nothing, and took his way back to the house in silence.

CHAPTER VI.

From the groom to the stable-boy, from the stable-boy to the kitchen-maid, from maid to maid and man to man, by housekeeper and old butler, the tale proceeded, till every lad and lass and old blue-bottle in the family had heard that two men had seized upon Emmeline, and had only been prevented from carrying her off to a ship near the coast by the timely arrival and the gallant daring of Colonel Henry Smeaton, a gentleman well known to Sir John and Master Richard. True, the story suffered many variations in its course. It was embellished and improved, and gained, at every stage, as the play-bills have it, "new scenery, dresses, and decorations." A great degree of confusion, too, prevailed as usual, in the way in which it was told. One of the maids in relating it to the housekeeper, either by the confusion of her own ideas or the inaccuracy of her language, made Brian, the stag-hound, act a very important and unusual part for a dog.

"Just at that moment, ma'am," she said, "Brian came rushing up; and, with his sword in his hand, he cut one of the men a great gash across the forehead."

"Good gracious!" cried the housekeeper, in considerable alarm and surprise at this strange phenomenon; "how came Brian by a sword?"

"Lawk, ma'am! I meant the gentleman," said the maid. "He cut the man upon the head just as the dog came up."

We cannot, however, dwell upon all these variations. They were numerous and not uninteresting; but we have other things to do. Suffice it to say, all agreed in the general facts that Emmeline had been attacked and rescued, that Master Richard, and Bill, the under-groom, with Bellmouth, the bloodhound, had pursued the assailants to the very top of Ale Head, but that the latter had contrived to get into their boat and put to sea. One of the men, who had been long in the family and knew Sir John Newark's propensity to gather as speedily as possible all the details of what took place in the house during his absence--a quiet, thoughtful, secret sort of man--

walked out leisurely along the road as soon as he had collected all the facts, knowing well that his master would not be long ere he returned from the neighbouring town to which he had gone in the morning. He met him sooner than he expected, indeed; not more than a mile and a half from the house. Sir John was evidently anxious and in haste; for he was keeping his horse and his attendants, three or four in number, at a very quick trot, even against the breast of the hill. The man ventured to stop him, however; and the first words of the knight were--

"The lady--Emmeline? There has been a strange sail seen off the coast."

"Ay, Sir John," answered the man; "and they had very near carried her off. Two of the men got hold of her, your worship, not far from the house either; but just then a gentleman, coming to visit you--one Colonel Seaton, or Smeaton, or something of that kind--heard her screams as he was riding along the road, galloped up, and set her free. They say he cut one of the men terribly across the head. At least, so Master Richard told me; for he was running to help her too, and saw the fight, as they did not give the matter up without a tough struggle."

"Thank God, she is safe!" said Sir John Newark. And, though the motives which produced this pious exclamation might have been of a somewhat mixed nature, he certainly did seem to rejoice sincerely.

Pushing his horse on, even faster than before, he rode with great rapidity to the house, sprang from his horse's back like a young man, and hurried into the small saloon, where he heard voices speaking.

The whole party within were laughing and talking gaily; but the agitation and anxiety on Sir John's countenance at once showed them that he had heard of the events, which they themselves had nearly forgotten in pleasant conversation, and made Emmeline feel grateful for the deep and affectionate interest which he seemed to take in her safety. He shook Smeaton warmly by the hand, saying,

"You have rendered me an inestimable service, Colonel Smeaton, and added to all I owe you for the gallant defence of my son. I learn, too, from London, that Lord Stair has, at your demand, dismissed from his service the ruffian who struck the boy. So it seems you are not only our good angel, but a very powerful angel too."

"My dear sir, you overwhelm me," replied Smeaton, laughing. "I have no more merit in the matter than a man who, favoured by good luck, picks up a purse and restores it to its right owner. As for Lord Stair, I made a point of seeing him immediately; and, upon due representation of the man's conduct, vouched for by my word of honour, his own sense of justice induced him to dismiss him, without any threat or means of compulsion whatsoever. It seems the Earl was an intimate friend of my late father in early years; and that consideration, indeed, might in some degree have influenced him. I trust this fair lady will escape further danger, whatever may be the cause of the attack made upon her; and we were considering just now what would be the best means of protection for her, without subjecting her to the sort of captivity to which she seems inclined to condemn herself, for the faults of others. Your son was proposing for her guards a brace of fierce mastiffs, to go with her wherever she goes; but I contend that he should be, at least, one of her guards himself; and I doubt not, now he has left school, you will arm him with a sword in so good a cause."

Smeaton spoke jokingly; but Sir John Newark looked somewhat grave.

"I am afraid," he remarked, "Richard would not know how to manage a sword. He has never learned to fence."

"Let me have the honour of teaching him," said Smeaton. "I will answer for it, that, in one week, I will make him a very fair swordsman, whether it be with the small sword, the broad sword, or any other weapon of the kind. I have always been reckoned the most expert in my regiment at those exercises."

Sir John was evidently well pleased, and the boy delighted.

"I trust that he will have the benefit of your kind tuition for more than one week," said the former; "and it is certainly advisable that he should accompany his cousin, whenever she goes any distance from the house. But surely, Colonel Smeaton, you have not come all this way from London, to spend but a week in our rural scenes?"

"Oh, no," replied Smeaton. "I shall remain in this part of the country, I dare say, for six weeks; but I cannot intrude upon your hospitality for so long a period."

"If you quit our house one day before," exclaimed Sir John, warmly, "we shall conclude that you think our hospitality very cold, or our house very dull."

His manner was so sincere, and he pressed his invitation so heartily, that Smeaton accepted it without much hesitation, and again turned the conversation to young Richard Newark, pointing out the advantage it would be to him, especially in the somewhat unsettled state of the country, to learn various manly exercises early.

"They might be of great service," he said, "both to him and to you, Sir John. As I came through Dorchester, I saw two of the magistrates of the town taken to the pump in the market-place, and pumped upon till they were well nigh drowned, because they would not cry 'High Church and Sacheverel for ever!' Their cowardly lackeys ran away and left them to their fate; and I did not feel myself called upon to interfere; but I am convinced that one man, with a little knowledge of horsemanship and the spadroon, would have dispersed the whole mob, and saved their worships a wetting."

"It served them right for their thickheadedness," said Sir John Newark, laughing; "and I can easily guess that you did not find yourself called upon to interfere. Your observations are none the less just, however, Colonel Smeaton; and I will send to Axminster, to-morrow, for a good light sword for Richard. My own are all too heavy."

"Pardon me," said Smeaton. "I will supply him with a very serviceable weapon, and as light as he could wish. It was manufactured for the late Duke of Burgundy, when about your son's age, and fell into my hands by accident. It is with the remainder of my baggage, which will be here to-night or to-morrow. You shall get him the less deadly weapons--a pair of fencing-foils, masks, and spadroons; for we must be mindful of the old proverb, and not jest with edged tools."

"There, Richard, you are at the height of your ambition," said Emmeline, to the lad, while Sir John was pouring forth thanks upon Smeaton; "but I suppose, dear boy, with you, as with others, the ambition of to-day will not be the ambition of to-morrow; for that same steep ascent of ambition, the poets tell us, is like the mountains losing their heads in the sky, where we go on climbing, never thinking ourselves sufficiently high till we are above the earth. But what is the matter with you, Richard? You look sad!"

"I do not know why it is, Emmy, dear; but great kindness always seems to make me sad," replied Richard in a low tone. "If I were with that man always, I believe I should soon be a man myself. But I fear that will never be," he added with a sigh. "I feel myself so much younger than other boys of my own years; and I cannot get things into my head as they do. This noddle must have some crack in it, Emmy, to let the thoughts fly out of it as fast as they fly in. It is no better than an old pigeon-house."

"Hush, hush! You must not think so," said Emmeline. "You will do very well, Richard, if you will but attend and be a little less heedless."

"I cannot attend," said the boy. "I never could; and I am less heedless than you think, Emmeline."

Then, leaving her, he went up to Smeaton's side, as he stood talking with Sir John near the window, and, laying his hand upon the Colonel's arm, said, with all the eager impatience of a Child, "When shall I have the sword?"

"To-night or to-morrow," replied Smeaton, with a smile; "but, before you wear it, you must learn how to use it. The first time that you can parry three lunges running, you will be fit to wear the sword."

The boy seemed satisfied, and left the room. The conversation between the master of the house, Smeaton, and Emmeline, then turned for a few minutes to other subjects, such as the eclipse, the beauty of the scenery, the agitated state of the country; but gradually worked itself round to the strange attack which had been made upon Emmeline. Sir John asked both her and Smeaton a number of questions as to the appearance and height of the men, what they had said, and whether she had seen them long before they seized her. As to their appearance, Emmeline could give very little information; but Smeaton described them more accurately, saying:

"One was nearly as tall as myself; and it struck me that I had seen him somewhere before--perhaps in France or Spain; but he was cleverly disguised, his hair or a wig brought far over his face, and an enormous cravat tied in front. He will not be able to disguise himself so easily again, I think; for, though I only contrived to reach him with the point of my sword, it scored his forehead pretty deeply, as I felt it grate upon the bone."

Emmeline gave a slight shudder; and Smeaton added:

"Pardon me, dear lady, for speaking of such horrible subjects; but what I did, depend upon it, was necessary; for they seemed two desperate ruffians, determined not to give up their object without bloodshed. I trust they will never repeat the attempt."

"I think they will not," replied Sir John Newark, musing. "They have had a lesson. But they must have been well informed; for, if the fishermen had been at home, they would not have dared to land. All the men have gone round the point, however; and the wind would not serve to bring them back speedily, even if the appearance of a strange vessel had excited suspicion. I heard of her coming upon the coast this morning, when I was ten or twelve miles distant; and I hastened back with all speed."

"Then had you any cause for alarm?" asked Smeaton.

"Oh, no, not particularly," replied Sir John, with a certain degree of embarrassment; and then

immediately added--"But let me show you the apartments prepared for you, Colonel Smeaton. Everything is ready, I know, though, fearful of any disappointment, I would not give my fair ward the hope of a great pleasure of which she might be deprived."

With this courteous speech, he led the way out of the room, leaving Emmeline musing, and not altogether satisfied.

There is a feature in insincerity which always betrays itself. I know not well in what it lies, this error of demeanour, which shows us that there is something very different flowing on under an apparently calm and clear stream of conversation. But so it has ever been; and it is hardly possible to deceive any one well practised in the world's ways, as to the ingenuousness or disingenuousness of the persons with whom he is brought into contact. The object may not be discerned; the thoughts, the passions, the motives, the wishes, the plans, may all remain hidden; but what we see is that the surface and the depth are different.

In the present instance, however, I must add, for the reader's information, that, in many respects, Sir John Newark's words and demeanour towards Smeaton were sincere. He was truly glad to see him at Ale Manor; he was unaffectedly grateful to him both for delivering Emmeline and for defending his son; he was really anxious, also, that he should remain for some time at Ale Manor. But yet a good deal was concealed; and Smeaton, perceiving this last fact, doubted, in some degree, all the rest. At all events, he said to himself,

"That is not a sincere man. It is clear that what the people in London told me of him is true."

Every care and attention had been bestowed upon the preparations for Smeaton's comfort; two rooms in Ale Manor had been arranged for him; for the house had abundant space for its inmates; and the good old-fashioned furniture, ponderous but convenient, had been freshly dusted and arranged, the windows thrown open, and free air and sunshine admitted, so that the whole bore a cheerful and pleasant look. The outer chamber had been arranged as a sort of sitting-room; the inner contained an enormous four-post bed, with blue velvet hangings; and the small quantity of baggage, which Smeaton had sent on with his servant, was already deposited in the first chamber, and spread out ready for his use. A hand-bell stood upon the table; and, on introducing him into his apartment, Sir John observed,

"I am sorry to say that, in this part of the house, there are no bells hung, but your servant has been placed on the opposite side of the court, so that, by just opening the casement at any time, you can summon him by that instrument on the table."

Thus saying, he left him, giving him notice of the hour of dinner, which was now approaching; and, even before proceeding to change his traveller's dress, Smeaton sat down in one of the large easy chairs, to meditate over his present situation and his prospects.

I shall not pause, however, to analyze his thoughts, but carry him at once to the dining-room. Nor will I dwelt upon an English dinner of the olden time, though it had curious features. Suffice it that it passed pleasantly, and that Smeaton's easy manners and varied conversation soon removed from the mind of Emmeline the feeling of restraint produced by freshness of acquaintance. As soon as dinner was over she rose and retired. Richard Newark did the same, for there were yet many hours of daylight left, and his rambling habits seldom suffered him to remain long in any one spot. Sir John Newark pressed the wine upon his guest, according to the fashion of the day, but Smeaton announced at once his very moderate habits, saying that he feared the school in which he had been brought up did not qualify him to compete with Englishmen in the use of the bottle. He had remarked, too, that during dinner Sir John Newark, while conversing with the utmost apparent frankness, had dropped in questions with regard to foreign countries and to Smeaton's own adventures, which he could not help thinking had a sinister object. He was, therefore, in some degree, upon his guard; but he soon found that his companion knew more than he had imagined.

During the space of about five minutes after the dessert was set upon the table, one or other of the servants came in from time to time, to put more wine on the *buffet*, to carry away this piece of plate or that; but, when the last of them departed, and the door seemed finally closed, Sir John Newark stretched himself back in his chair, and said, with a very peculiar smile,

"Now, my dear Lord, we shall be able to talk more at our ease, though I suppose it will be better for me to keep up the habit of treating you as Colonel Smeaton, rather than as the Earl of Eskdale?"

Whatever he might feel, Smeaton did not suffer the slightest look of surprise to come upon his countenance. In truth, no sooner had he heard that Bolingbroke had named him to Sir John Newark, than he came to the conclusion that his present worthy host had acquired a great deal of true, and probably a great deal of false, information concerning him. He was not, however, very anxious to correct any false impressions that Sir John Newark might have received; for there were various reasons which induced him to wish that the notions of the knight regarding him should be as vague and undefined as possible, and he was well aware that nothing serves to puzzle and confuse the minds of very shrewd and cunning people so much as half knowledge. It is worse than ignorance, for it encumbers the ground. He was resolved, then, on his part, neither to tell nor explain any thing; but to let Sir John pursue his own course, and make any assumptions

which he chose.

After a moment's seeming consideration, Smeaton said, "Perhaps, Sir John, it would be better to avoid my title both in public and in private. The name of Colonel Smeaton gives me quite as much dignity as I can well carry in this country, for the time being."

"Lord Bolingbroke informs me--and I was very sorry to hear it," continued Sir John Newark, after a pause to consider how he should pursue the attack, "that her Ladyship was very unwell when he wrote."

"She was so when I left her," replied Smeaton. "But my last letters informed me she was much better. Otherwise, I should not have ventured to protract my stay in this country."

Let it be remarked that Smeaton hesitated for a moment, at the very first word of the sentence which I have just reported. The original expression which first sprang to his lips, was "My mother;" but, for some reason, he changed it to the words *she*; and, after pausing for an instant, he added,

"Pray, what did Lord Bolingbroke say of her health?"

Sir John Newark took a letter from his pocket, and read as follows:

"The Countess of Eskdale has been very unwell, nearly at death's door. Otherwise, she would have gone over to England too, I doubt not; for they have some lands to claim, and other matters to settle, which might require her presence also. However, she was too ill to go and perhaps it is quite as well that she should not go, as it would only have embarrassed his proceedings."

Smeaton listened quietly while this was read, and then only observed, somewhat drily, that the noble Lord had taken more interest in his affairs than he had been aware of.

"I have had later letters," he added, "since then, and am happy to say that all danger is past."

"Then do you think," demanded Sir John Newark, "that her Ladyship is likely to come over?"

"Assuredly not," replied Smeaton. "She would not venture upon such a journey, without my company and protection."

Whatever there might be in this conversation of a satisfactory kind, and in whatever degree it might affect Sir John Newark personally, certain it is that it had considerable effect upon him. He seemed more frank and free in his whole demeanour from that moment; to put a greater degree of confidence and trust in his guest; and even to be more anxious for his prolonged stay. He had been everything that was courteous before; but now he was warm and pressing.

I need not detail all that look place farther that night. The potations of the host and his guest were neither deep nor strong; and the dinner closed with a walk through the park and neighbourhood in the bright evening air, rather than with bottle upon bottle, as was too much the custom in those days.

Emmeline was not to be found at the moment they set out; Richard was rambling, no one knew where; and, during the course of their *tête-à-tête* walk, Sir John Newark tried hard, and not unsuccessfully, to converse agreeably on indifferent subjects with his young guest. He himself seemed delighted with the Earl's whole demeanour and conversation; and, before the hour of repose, he had found a moment to tell Emmeline that Colonel Smeaton was one of the most charming and distinguished men in the world, laughingly adding,

"You must not fall in love with him, however, my dear child; for he is a married man."

Nothing could have been a greater relief to the mind of Emmeline than this announcement; for she was just at that age when an instinctive inclination to fly from those who are likely to pursue seizes upon the heart of woman; when a dread of the new and undeveloped sensations which are soon to take possession of her makes her shrink shyly and timidly from all that can give them birth. It is only when woman, in very early life, at least, can say to herself, as Emmeline now thought she could say, in regard to Smeaton, "There is no danger with him," that she is in peril of rushing rashly into love. Love is like all great things, affecting us with awe when we first see it from a distance, but soon growing familiar by habit and near approach.

Brought up in perfect seclusion, with few of her own sex to converse with, having none whom she could look upon as a companion, acquainted with no one near her own age, or with those feelings which produce harmony between mind and mind, often bewildered, as I have shown, by her own thoughts, and longing to pour them forth, she was ready--I must not say, she longed, because there was no premeditation--to give her whole confidence, with the guileless heart of youth, to any one who seemed to seek it worthily.

Sir John Newark could be no companion for her. True, he was not without abilities and powers of conversation; but all his thoughts were different from hers. He was a complete man of realities; and, if he had any thing like imagination or fancy at all, the only purpose to which he could dream of applying such faculties was to the devising of schemes for the promotion of his

own interest or ambition. There was something about him, too, she knew not well what--perhaps it might be this very difference of thought and character, this want of harmony between their two minds--but still there was something which forbade confidence. It was not so with Smeaton. Even in his look there seemed to her a very winning expression. His clear hazel eyes, not without fire, nor even keenness, appeared to beam with high and generous soul; and, in his whole demeanour and carriage, was that sort of chivalrous aspect which had generally, in former days, distinguished the party called Cavaliers; with a slight touch of their free and careless gaiety, but no appearance of their reckless licentiousness. There were moments, as we have shown, when he could be calm, thoughtful, and grave enough; but the general tone of his conversation was gay, and even playful, with no touch of satire or *persiflage*--one of the great vices of the day. Much dignity, at times, was evident, but never any haughtiness of demeanour. It gave one the idea that, confident in himself, satisfied with his own position, accustomed in all things to decide rapidly, and habituated from youth to act with ease and grace in any circumstances, he was never thinking at all of himself or his own manner; and that always gives an additional elegance. It was all, evidently, unstudied; and, assuredly, when fair Emmeline lay down to sleep that night, she not only thought Smeaton one of the handsomest and most agreeable men she had ever seen, but, lurking at her heart, was a conviction that, of all beings on earth to whom she could pour out her thoughts freely, such a man would be the foremost.

Nevertheless, she slept soon, and she slept well. Nothing in the slightest degree agitated her feelings. She was not even the least little bit in love with him; and, though, towards morning, a dream visited her pillow which disturbed her much, and from which she awoke with a beating heart, it was only memory re-enacting, with very slight variations, the scene of the preceding day, in which she had been seized by strangers, and rescued by Smeaton.

The same sensations, perhaps increasing a little in power, went on during the next three days. She became, of course, more intimate with her guardian's guest, lost the timidity and restraint of first acquaintance, laughed and talked with him easily, and saw, or thought she saw, more of his mind and character; and every thing she *did* see only tended to strengthen her first impressions. But during those three days she was never alone with him, even for a moment. Sir John Newark was always present, and his presence--it is a curious fact, but so it was--always checked anything like free and confiding intercourse in whatever society he might happen to be. Man has his instincts, as well as the brute creation, and it seemed to be by instinct that people felt Sir John Newark was not to be trusted.

On the day after Smeaton's arrival, the whole party rode over to a town in the neighbourhood, to purchase what was needed for the instruction which Smeaton had promised to give Richard Newark. The gay exercise, the free air, the little occupations of an hour, all made it a pleasant ride; and the morning passed over easily enough, although there was a little bustle and excitement in the town, caused by the apprehension of a man for drinking the health of King James the Third, which was construed into a treasonable act by the worthy magistrates of the place. Their reading of the law, indeed, did not seem much to please the people, who made more than one attempt to rescue the prisoner; but magistrates, in other parts of the country, went somewhat farther, and were known to commit a man for refusing publicly to drink the health of King George. It is strange, that some of the most tyrannical acts upon record have accompanied every movement in behalf of liberty.

On the return of the party to Ale Manor, they found that the rest of Smeaton's baggage had arrived; and, reading the lad's eagerness in his eyes, Smeaton hastened to the room where it had been deposited, and took from a long coffer, which formed one of the packages, a very beautiful sword, light, and easily wielded, with a richly chased hilt of silver and gold intermixed. Carrying it in his hand back to the little saloon in which Richard Newark was still waiting, as if anticipating his intention, the young Earl presented him with the weapon, saying, in a jesting tone, but with some earnestness of words--

"Here, my young friend, I give you a sword which once belonged to a great prince; but I must exact from you a promise, such as was exacted from the knights of old, that you will never draw it, except in the defence of a cause which you think just and righteous; for, depend upon it, if you do, though the blade is of the finest steel, and of the highest temper, it will snap asunder in your grasp."

The boy caught his hand, and kissed it; and Smeaton went on, more lightly, saying--

"To-morrow, you shall have your first lesson in the art of using it."

"Oh, let me come and see," cried Emmeline, eagerly.

"Nay, I must refuse you," answered Smeaton. "Every one is awkward in his first essays, and you must not see your young cousin exhibit till he is somewhat of a master in the art of fence. Am I not right, Sir John?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," replied Sir John Newark. "You must content yourself, Emmeline, with listening to the stamping, only thankful if it does not bring the old house down; for I can assure you an *assaut d'armes* is no joke in a peaceable dwelling."

The lesson was given, and certainly Richard Newark was awkward enough; but he was proud

and pleased, and the rest of that second day was spent in rides about the country. The third day passed much in the same manner, without any event of note; but, as the proceedings of the fourth day will require somewhat more detail, I shall reserve them for the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

An old Norman church, built in the earliest style of that fine but somewhat heavy architecture, stands about five miles from Ale Head and Bay, upon the slope of a gentle hill, with many other hills around it. It is a large structure for the present population of the adjacent country, if one may judge from the appearance of the land immediately round. The hill is part of a long range of downs, undivided by enclosure, and covered by short dry sward, very much like that which spreads over Ale Head itself. No trees are to be seen as far as the eye can reach, except, indeed, two old yew trees standing close to the church, and, probably, planted there by Saxon hands long before the first stone of the present edifice was laid. So close are they, indeed, that the long branches of one of them wave against the mouldings of one of the deep round arched windows, and would, in stormy weather, break the lozenges of the casement were they not kept under by the pruning-knife or shears. A piece of ground is taken in from the hill to form the burial-ground, and is surrounded by a low wall, with only one entrance, covered over with a penthouse raised upon high posts. By this gate, pass in and out all who come to the consecrated ground; the child, to its baptism, the gay wedding party, to the altar; the congregation, to the worship of God; the corpse, to the grave.

About three or four hundred yards below the church, in the bottom of the little valley, through which runs a stream of the clearest and brightest water, are four or five small houses, or cottages, I should call them, built of the grey stone of the country, and most of them thatched. One, however, is of two stories, and has a tiled roof. They have all their little gardens attached, and are kept in tolerably neat order; yet, then one looks at this little hamlet from the downs above, and sees it lying grey upon the green and undivided turf, it has a desolate and neglected look, as if it had been left behind in the world's march to rest in the desert expanse around it. Except those two old yews, there is not a tree near bigger than a currant-bush.

Neither is there any other house to be seen, look which way you will; for the wide downs only serve for sheep-pasture, and have such a look of depopulation that, in some of the slopes of the ground, one might fancy one was standing alone upon the earth, just after the universal deluge had subsided. I know not whether it looks more lonely when all the heavens are covered with grey clouds, or when the bright sun shines upon it from the broad undimmed sky.

Nevertheless, when the musical bell rings on the Sabbath morn from the old pale tower, the desert seems to waken into life, and people come streaming over the hills--now a solitary man or woman, now a group of two or three, now a family, young and old, age and boyhood, now a group of children, sporting as they run. The scene is all changed, and it is very pleasant to behold.

Within that church, too, are records of other days which would seem to show that the neighbourhood was not always so scantily peopled as at present. The gravestones in the churchyard, indeed, are not thick or many, and you can walk at ease, without stumbling, over the little mounds where rest the mortal remains of the peasantry. But within, against the walls, and even let into the pillars, are many tablets of marble, black or white, recording virtues and good qualities, and affection and mourning, which have now left no other memorial behind them. In the aisles, too, and in the chancel (for the church is built somewhat in the form of a cathedral), are various very beautiful monuments of different ages; the mail-clad warrior, spurred and sworded, the pilgrim from the Holy Land, even a mitred abbot, judges, and statesmen, and soldiers of a later day--ay, and the tomb of an infant princess--are there; while, on the pavement on which you tread, the old stained glass window at the east end, the only one remaining, sheds its gem-like colours upon slabs of marble, bearing inscriptions and effigies in brass.

Various are the names which appear in different parts of the church; but, wherever the eye looks, more frequently than any other, will be found that of Newark. Statues under which that name is written, in old Gothic characters, are amongst the Crusaders, and on one black marble figure, near the font, is a good representation of the heavy plate-armour of the days of Henry VIII., while above hangs a silken banner, of which neither the original colour, nor the emblems, can be discovered through the dust and mould encumbering it. Nearer to the communion-table is the monument of another Newark, fresher than the rest, while an inscription below, in modern characters and in bad Latin, attests that the form above represents a gallant soldier of the name of Newark, who fell, bravely fighting for his king, on Naseby field. He is represented, certainly, not in the most classical costume, with a buff coat, large boots, and the end of a lace cravat finely sculptured on his chest. The features are not distinguishable; for, after the monument was raised-

-and it was a bold thing in those days to raise it--Cromwell's soldiers got possession of the church, and with hammers, or perhaps the pommels of their swords, sadly mutilated that statue and many others. It would seem that the family of Newark had been steady loyalists; for, on a tablet hard by, is an inscription to the memory of that warrior's brother, erected during the reign of Charles II., and stating that he died while in exile with his king.

On the morning of the fourth day after Smeaton's arrival at Ale Manor, a ladder was placed against the side of the church, and an old man, with something like a reaping-hook in his hand, was mounted upon one of the high rounds chopping away at the branches of the yew-tree, which approached too close, as I have said, to the window. He was far advanced in life, and his coat, thrown off, lay at the foot of the ladder. He had on, however, a waistcoat with woollen sleeves. His thin and shrunken nether man was warmly clothed, and, to judge from his dress, he was well to do in life. He had a fine bald head, with scanty white hair upon the temples; but his brow was knit as well as furrowed, and a sort of sarcastic expression played about his mouth, which was not altogether agreeable. Otherwise his features were good, and on looking at his face, one did not well know whether to think it pleasing or not.

While he was still hewing away, the solitude of the scene was somewhat disturbed by the trotting of a horse up to the door of one of the houses below, over which hung a large straggling bush, with an inscription underneath, to the following effect:

**"THE NEWARKE ARMES. GUDE BEDS AND FUDE
FOR HOSS AND MAN."**

The animal which now trotted up to the door of this very rural inn was certainly what the worthy landlord might denominate a "*hoss*;" but it looked much more like a barrel on four legs, and those not very long ones. It was, in fact, a little short pursy galloway, as fat as it could be, and this fat must have been of a very perdurable kind, for though the dust with which it was covered, and some splashes of mud upon its legs, seemed to indicate that it had come a long way, yet it had certainly lost none of its bulk by the process of perspiration. It was sleek and well to do, in short, and when its master stopped at the little public-house, it stretched out its nose, as if prepared to ask the first person who appeared, if it could have the dinner and bed which the inscription promised. The rider was a short fattish man, somewhat resembling his beast, but rather more gaudily attired; for the pony contented himself with a coat of grey, while he who bestrid him was dressed, like Joseph, in a garment of many colours.

The old man upon the ladder heard the horse's feet on the road, and turned round to gaze, resting from his work the while. The sight of a stranger in the place seemed to give him no pleasure. He was callous to all such things, and he only set his jaws tight together, and mumbled something to himself. A boy, and then an old woman, came out from the house. The stranger dismounted, took his saddle-bags from the pony's back, and entered the little dwelling. The boy led the pony round to the rear of the house, and the old man assailed the yew-tree again.

If, however, he thought he was to go on uninterruptedly that morning, he was mistaken; for, in about five minutes more, the stranger walked up to the gate of the churchyard, advanced to the foot of the ladder, and looked up. The other took no notice of him whatever, except by stretching forth his arm, and, with greater strength than one might have believed him to possess, striking off a somewhat thicker branch of yew than usual, which fell upon the visitor's head and knocked his hat off.

"Ay! ashes to ashes, dust to dust!" muttered the old man, with a slight smile curling the corner of his mouth.

The other picked up his hat, brushed off the dust with his coat-sleeve, and then, without any observation on the accident, raised his voice, saying,

"I wish you would come down, sexton, and let me into the church."

"What makes you think I am sexton?" asked the old man, gruffly. "I never buried you or any of your kin."

"No, but you look like old father Time," answered the other, laughing; "and he buries all men."

"Then you should take me by the forelock," answered the sexton, whom the joke seemed to mollify a little; "and I have no forelock to take. So you are out, master. I am the sexton, however. But what do you want in the church?"

"I hear you have some fine statues there," replied the other; "and I want to see them."

But the old man was not yet satisfied.

"Why, what do you know about statues?" he asked, running his eye over the round, fat, unstatue-like figure of the other, with a somewhat contemptuous look.

"More than you do, old boy," replied the visitor, "though perhaps you have lived amongst them all your life; for I have made them all my life; and, depend upon it, there is no such way of knowing a thing as making it."

"That depends upon the workman," answered the sexton, beginning to descend the ladder. "I have made graves all my days, and yet don't know them as well as many who are lying underneath there. But I'll let you in," he added, in a more placable tone; "for they are fine monuments, finer than any for a hundred miles round; and, if you do know anything about such things, you'll say so."

When he reached the ground, he picked up his coat, fumbled in his pocket till he got hold of a large bunch of keys, and then, walking round to the door, opened it. The stranger entered, and his guide followed, with his back bowed and his gait somewhat halting. He had the same sort of cynical expression on his countenance as before; but the visitor's first exclamation seemed to please him; for all the pride of his nature--and every man has some pride--centred in his church and its contents.

"Ay, this is something like!" exclaimed our good friend, Van Noost; "I have not seen anything like this in a ride of a hundred and fifty miles."

"Dare say not," observed the sexton. "Did you come all that way to see it?"

"No," replied Van Noost, who was somewhat skilful at evasions; "but I am very glad I have seen it." And, walking on, he began to scan the various monuments with critical eyes.

"Why, the barbarians have been knocking the noses off!" he exclaimed, after a momentary glance at one of the tombs. "Why did you let them do that?"

"Because I could not help it," answered the sexton, with a growling laugh; "seeing I was a baby and they strong men when that was done, and yet I am three score and ten, come Martinmas."

"Ay, Cromwell, that devil, Cromwell, and his sacrilegious fools!" cried Van Noost. "They had no more taste or judgment than pigs in Smithfield."

"That's true--that's true," cried the old sexton, chuckling. "I remember them well enough; for I was a school-boy when old Noll died, and heard him preach once. Those might understand him who could. To me, he seemed to be talking nothing but nonsense; so I grinned, and one of his soldiers gave me a thump in the side with his fire-lock which nearly broke my ribs."

"Then you have cause to remember him," answered Van Noost, "and not to like him either. These are better times, master sexton."

"I don't know that," replied the man, gruffly. "We have got a foreigner for our king, and that's as bad as a Protector--at least, I think so. But I don't know much of such matters," he added, with a look of shrewd caution, coming upon his face. "King George may be a very good man, and Hanover rats as good as any other vermin, for aught I know."

Van Noost laughed aloud, and replied with a significant nod of the head--

"They may have a rat-catcher amongst them some day soon, master sexton; but that is not my business either. Gracious goodness, how dirty these monuments are! And half the brasses are gone out of the marble!"

"Ay, they took the brass to make farthings of," said the sexton; "and, as to the dirt, how can an old man like me keep such things clean? Besides, I don't know how to clean them properly, and I am afraid of spoiling them."

"I'll tell you what, old boy," replied Van Noost; "I am going to stay here for a day or two, and help you. I know all about it; and, if I have time and can get a little clay, I'll cast you a leaden head and put it on that cherub at the corner. A cherub is nothing without a head you know, master sexton, because it has got no body."

"Going to stay here for two or three days!" ejaculated the sexton. "Well, that's funny! I never knew any one stay here a minute after he could help it. Perhaps you have come down to these parts to make inquiries?"

"No," answered Van Noost, "no; I don't like inquiries, and always get out of their way."

The sexton put his finger to his bald forehead, and rubbed it slowly for a moment, repeating the word. "Ha!" more than once, and then Van Noost added in his usual *poco-curante* tone--

"That is the very reason I came down here, master sexton. People were making important inquiries, which offended me, and I left London in a fit of indignation."

Ha! said the sexton again. "I understand. You'll be safe enough here, master. You'll see plenty of curlews, and a sea-mew from time to time. I've known a roe deer too, in my day, down about the woody places; but men and women are the rarest birds of all in this country:" and, laying his old hand familiarly on Van Noost's shoulder, he added, with a laugh, "No bailiff has been seen in these parts for forty years. That I can certify."

"I fear not bailiffs!" exclaimed Van Noost, in a mock tragical tone. "Sexton, I am well to do in

the world. I pay scot and lot, and owe no man any thing--though many owe me, by the way, who will never pay me. No, no, sexton, 'tis not for debt of vile and sordid gold that men, perhaps, may seek me, but for those thin ethereal essences called opinions, which suit not with the tyranny of the times."

The sexton chuckled, for he had a strong sense of the ludicrous, and Van Noost's bombast amused him.

"Ay, ay," he said, laughing and coughing; "how many a man there is who is obliged to make his heels save his head for the indiscretion of his tongue! Now, I'll warrant you've been swaggering about London in praise of King James, till you got frightened to death for fear King George should get hold of you. But you're safe enough here, man, you're safe enough here. Sergeants and pursuivants are as rare here as bailiffs, and it is not likely they'll be able to track you across the hills, even if a price should be set upon your head."

"There is no price upon my head," cried Van Noost, with a strong feeling of nervous apprehension at the very idea. "They could not hurt me even if they took me; but I love my liberty, master sexton, and should pine to death if I were cribbed up in a prison-cell."

"It would take a long time to pine you down even to a moderate size," replied the sexton, in a thoughtful sort of tone. "I've dug many a grave in my day, and there's only one I recollect that would have held you. You are so fat here behind."

"I have committed no crime," continued Van Noost, anxious to disabuse his companion's mind of the idea that he might be harbouring a traitor. "I have committed no crime, I say; and the blessed English law admits that men may talk treason, though they may not do it."

"Ay, the tongue, the tongue!" exclaimed the sexton. "That's what has brought you into danger, I can see well enough. It is an unruly member, as the Bible says; but here you will be quite safe. If I have to bury you, I ought to have a crown more for the width of the grave. I had when the fat parson died, this time thirty years ago, though his heirs said they did not like to pay for his fat. But hark more people on horseback all in one day! Master, I've a notion they've tracked you close."

Poor Van Noost lost his rosy, colour in a moment; for no man liked less the idea of martyrdom than he did.

"For Heaven's sake, my good friend," he cried, as the old sexton peeped through a chink of the church door, which had been left ajar, "for Heaven's sake, cannot you put me somewhere where they will not find me? Let me go into the vestry!"

The sexton eyed him, with his quiet old cynical smile. "How fond fat men are of life!" he said. "The vestry! They'd find you there in a minute. Here, you fool, go in there down into the vaults. They'll not look there, I'll warrant."

As he spoke, he unlocked a small door which lay in a shady nook between two pilasters; and, under the impulse of fear, Van Noost hurried in, without a word, taking his chance of the old man recollecting to let him out again. He saw the head of a flight of steps before him, and was rushing down, when the sound of the key turning in the lock raised up new fears in his mind, and he paused for a moment to listen. The only sound he could hear at first was produced by the slow irregular step of the old sexton upon the pavement of the church, as he again walked towards the great door, and then a loud manly voice from without was heard, as if saying to some one at a distance--"Walk them about till we come back. The air is keen upon these hills, even at midsummer."

The next instant, another voice answered, "I like that free fresh air. It feels like liberty."

"Liberty!" said the other voice. "Have you ever felt the want of liberty?"

"They are marvellous sweet-tongued officers," thought Van Noost, listening. But no reply was made to the question, or, if any, it was drowned by the cough of the old sexton; and, when that had a little subsided, the second voice which had spoken was heard, saying--

"We want to go all over the church, good Master Mattocks."

Van Noost trembled for the security of his hiding-place; but he was relieved in an instant; for the same voice went on saying--

"So you must show us all the monuments and tell us all about them; for this gentleman will not be satisfied with half information, I can assure you."

"That I will, my lady," answered the old man, "that is to say, all I know; for I never like to say things I only guess."

"My lady!" said Van Noost, to himself. "Ho, ho! It is a party come to visit the church; and I am shut up here like a rat in a rat-trap, when I could have given them much more information than that old mummy, who has dealt so long with corpses that he has caught the look of them. I have a

great mind to knock to get out. They'll be in sad want of a better *cicerone*."

Caution, however, got the better of vanity; and, after a little consideration, he began to feel his way down the steps, resolved to see what the vaults contained. At first, the place seemed dark enough; but, as he descended, he found that he had been admitted, not to funeral vaults in the usual acceptation of the word, but to a crypt or underground church, of a much earlier style of architecture than the structure above. Low arched windows, earthed up for at least two-thirds of their height, admitted sufficient light to render every object round dimly visible. Monuments and carvings were seen in various different directions; and, with true antiquarian enthusiasm, Van Noost soon forgot what was passing above in the examination of all that surrounded him.

CHAPTER VIII.

We must return here to an earlier hour in the day of which we have just been speaking. The breakfast at Ale Manor was laid in the dining-saloon, and presented a curious combination of the ancient and modern habits of the English people. Fish, meat, and various sweetmeats were spread upon the board; a large tankard of silver, which might have served up ale at the breakfast-table of Queen Elizabeth, was on the sideboard; and good Bordeaux wine was there in another flagon, for those who adhered to the tastes of their remote ancestors. But, for delicate tastes, the more modern breakfast of coffee and chocolate was prepared. Sir John Newark was in a most gracious mood; his son, Richard, was all life and gaiety; and last came in Emmeline, bright and blooming from her sweet sleep, like a blush rose refreshed by morning dew. Smeaton could willingly have gazed at her long; but he would not allow himself to do so; and the breakfast was proceeding gaily and cheerfully, when one of the servants entered, to inform Sir John Newark that a messenger had brought a letter for him from Exeter. When the letter was delivered and opened, Sir John Newark read it, with a look of grave and anxious thought. Then, nodding to the messenger, who had waited as if for a reply, he said:

"Get yourself some refreshment, and let his worship know that I will not fail to be there by two of the clock."

The man bowed, and quitted the room; and Sir John, turning to Smeaton, with the letter still in his hand, observed, with a somewhat affected laugh:

"Here is a strange affair!"

Then, turning his eye to the page, he read aloud:

"Worshipful Sir--Whereas information has been received, that various evil designing persons are travelling about the country for seditious purposes, some of whom are reported to be proclaimed traitors, and others, persons lying under sentence of various offences and fugitive from justice; and, as it is matter of common notoriety that in various parts of the land, and especially at several places in this county of Devon, serious disturbances have been stirred up contrary to the peace of our Lord the King, and perilous to the state and constitution of this country as by law established; this is to give you notice, that a special meeting of the justices of the peace for this division of the county of Devon is summoned to assemble in this city of Exeter to-morrow, the ---- day of July, in the year of our Lord 1715; and you are hereby invited and required, putting aside all other business, to attend the same, in order to consult as to the best means of preserving the peace of the said county, and frustrating the designs of seditious and disaffected persons.

"(Signed) etc."

He paused for a moment after reading the letter, and then added, with a smile:

"They must have got a fright from some circumstance or other. I hope no friends of ours have given them any cause of suspicion."

"If you allude to me," answered Smeaton, with a frank smile, "I have not, I can assure you, Sir John, and am under so little apprehension on the subject, that I have no objection, if you like, to ride with you to Exeter, if you feel yourself bound to go upon such a curious summons."

"Oh, I *must* go, assuredly," replied the knight; "but you had better remain here. I shall feel

more satisfied in leaving my fair ward here under your good care and protection; for I must take several of the servants with me."

He did not speak without some consideration; but he was forced to decide quickly, for the ride before him was very long; and he was anxious to avoid all appearance of disaffection to the existing government, whatever he might feel. About three quarters of an hour were spent in busy preparation; but Sir John found an opportunity, in the midst of all his bustle, to caution his son more than once to watch carefully over Emmeline, and, if possible, not to quit her side for a moment. Richard promised, with every intention of performing; and the whole party stood on the terrace together to see Sir John depart. They watched him round the sweep till he disappeared into the woods; and then Richard, with a boyish leap over a bush, exclaimed, in a gay tone:

"Now, what shall we do?"

Smeaton smiled to see that, even with the simple boy, the petted and somewhat spoiled child, the presence of Sir John Newark was felt to be a restraint. He replied, however, turning towards Emmeline, and addressing her more than Richard,

"You promised to show me some day a fine old church in the neighbourhood, with some beautiful monuments. Can we not make it the object of a morning's ride to-day?"

Emmeline consented willingly, and said she would get ready directly for the expedition; but Richard did not seem well pleased; and, as soon as she had gone to fulfil her intention, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and said:

"I shan't go. I hate old churches, and old monuments too. What the deuce is the use of going to see a pack of stones put on end? I'll go out fishing. You are quite old enough to take care of Emmeline, I should think; but you had better take some people with you; for my dad is always in a terrible fright for fear somebody should get his bird out of the cage. Poor Emmeline! I wonder she abides it so quietly. I could not, I know, if I were kept tight by a string round my leg like that."

Smeaton gave the boy no encouragement to come with them, merely answering:

"I will take care of the young lady, and warrant she shall come safely back. I will take my own servant with us; and one or two of your people would make our party quite sufficient, even if the country were more disturbed than I believe it really is."

"Then I'll run down and get a boat at once," exclaimed Richard Newark; and, before Smeaton could add another word, he was bounding down the hill, like a great dog.

His companion betook himself to the stable-yard of the mansion, to give directions regarding the horses, and all the little preparations for the proposed expedition; and then, putting on the great riding-boots of the day, he returned to the terrace to wait for Emmeline. It was not long ere she joined him, gay, smiling, and happy at the thought of a pleasant excursion. She looked round for Richard, however, and asked where he was; and, when Smeaton told her that he had declined being of the party, a grave look of anxiety and hesitation came over her face.

"Sir John Newark," she said, after a moment's pause, "does not like me to go far or into any town without the old housekeeper accompanying me."

Her companion smiled, answering gaily:

"But we are going to a church, not to a town; and, on this occasion, you must let me act the old woman."

A joke often prevails where an argument will not. The horses were brought round; Smeaton placed his fair companion in the saddle; and away they went, at a quiet and easy pace, with the three men following them. He was an excellent and graceful horseman, and not unwilling to enjoy, from time to time, the exhilarating sensations of a wild gallop over the green turf; but, for some reason or other, he did not seem, on this occasion, disposed to put the horses out of a quiet canter. Down the stony road he proceeded at a walk, and only quickened his pace a very little when, turning to the left at the end of the wood, they got upon the downs. But Smeaton was a good tactician, and he had his reasons for what he did. Emmeline did not know that such was the case, however; and she grew a little impatient.

"Shall we not have a gallop?" she asked, at length, after some broken conversation on indifferent subjects.

"Presently," answered Smeaton, in a quiet tone. "One cannot gallop and think calmly too."

"Think!" echoed Emmeline, gaily. "Why should you think, Colonel Smeaton? Thinking is the most pernicious thing on earth; and what gentleman has any right to think with a lady by his side?"

"It is impossible to help thinking, and deeply too, with you by my side," answered Smeaton, in a low voice.

Emmeline almost started--it sounded so like a compliment; but Smeaton was not a complimentary person, as she had remarked with pleasure; and she replied, after turning an inquiring glance towards him, in the same light tone, "Why so? do you judge me such an enigma?"

"Not yourself," answered Smeaton gravely, "but your fate and history are an enigma." He paused for a moment, and then added: "For yourself, dear lady, your character is as clear and pure as a diamond, which, if we do not see through it at once, it is because of its too much light; but your history, your circumstances, your fate, do constitute an enigma, which might well make any man of heart and feeling thoughtful."

He spoke very low; but every word fell clear and distinct upon Emmeline's ear, and instantly banished her gaiety.

"It is an enigma I cannot solve," she answered. "I have tried to do so a thousand times, but in vain. Whichever way my eyes turn, it is all darkness; and, weary with straining my sight upon the blank obscure, I have given it up, reduced to remain satisfied with knowing nothing but--which is perhaps as much as most persons know of themselves--that I am. But what is it puzzles *you* about me? What have you seen or remarked to make you believe that there is any mystery?"

"Much," he replied; "the very circumstances in which I first saw you--an attempt to carry you off forcibly from the midst of your family and friends--the constant feverish sort of anxiety displayed by Sir John Newark in regard to you--his unwillingness to suffer you to hold communication of any kind with persons out of his own house."

"Is he unwilling?" exclaimed Emmeline, eagerly. "I do not think it--yet, perhaps you are right," she added gravely. "I remember--perhaps you are right. I do not recollect ever having been suffered to converse alone with any one except the people of the house, and good Doctor Boothe, who is dead. It is strange! I do not attempt to conceal from you that there is a mystery, even to myself."

"And you have tried to solve it, unassisted?" inquired Smeaton.

"Often and often," she answered. "Oh, what would I give to know who were my parents--what I am--what are the causes of all this anxiety about me! I have tried, but tried in vain."

"Perhaps I can assist you," said Smeaton, in a lower tone than ever. "Nay, do not start, and look round at me. Those men behind must not see that there is anything more than ordinary in our talk. Now, let us have a gallop, if you will. I have ventured to open a subject with you, somewhat abruptly, which I have in vain sought an opportunity of touching upon from the first moment of my arrival. We must take opportunity when we find it. Now, shake your rein, dear lady. Give your jennet her head, and let us cast these ideas from us, for a moment or two. They will return before the end of our ride."

"They will not be shaken from me, let me gallop as I will," replied Emmeline. "However, let us forward." And, touching her horse lightly with her riding-whip, she bounded away some paces before her companion.

Smeaton was at her side again in a moment, however; and, when she turned her eyes towards him, as he came up sitting his horse with calm and quiet ease, motionless in the saddle, as if he were a part of the noble animal itself, she could not help thinking him the handsomest man she had ever beheld in her life; and so indeed he was.

To Smeaton, she was an object of great interest--ay, and I must add, of great admiration also. The exquisite beauty of her fate and form was at that moment heightened, not only by a dress which displayed it to the best advantage, but by the attitudes into which the exercise threw her, calling forth innumerable graces, and by the movements of the mind springing from the conversation just past, and filling her eyes with light and eagerness. Their looks met; and, with that sort of sudden sympathy which enables those of like character to read in an instant what is passing in the minds of others, each seemed to divine the feelings of the other. Emmeline's cheek glowed, as if she had been detected in a fault; and Smeaton withdrew his eyes, with a thoughtful look, and made some common-place observation on the scene.

For a few minutes they rode on at the same rapid pace, leaving the servants still farther behind them than they had previously been; and then Emmeline drew in her rein, saying--

"I have had enough of this. You will say I am a capricious girl, Colonel Smeaton. I wanted a gallop when you did not desire one; and I am tired of it as soon as I have got it. But, in truth," she added, "I am anxious that you should go on with what you were saying. I cannot ride fast, in a state of wonder and mystery. You say you can assist me in explaining all the many enigmas of my fate. You say that you have longed to talk with me on this subject, ever since you have been at Ale. You must have very keen eyes, or Sir John Newark must have told you something about me when he saw you in London."

"Neither, dear lady," answered Smeaton, looking behind to see how far off the servants were. "I should have remarked nothing calling for much attention, had I not had previous knowledge; and yet, Sir John Newark would not have suffered me to enter his gates, had he been aware that I

possessed any information whatever regarding you."

"Then you *do* possess information?" exclaimed Emmeline, eagerly.

"You have been an object of interest to me, dear lady," answered her companion, "for some years. This seems strange to you; but it will seem stranger still when I tell you that, most likely, I should not have visited this part of England at all, had you not been here. But, tell me, can you be very discreet? For much depends upon your prudence and your secresy. If I tell you things which have been studiously concealed from you, you must put a guard upon your lips and upon your looks. You must seem as ignorant as ever of all that appertains to your own fate. That bright frankness--that free pouring forth of the heart--must all be checked. You must learn the hard lesson which the world, sooner or later, teaches to all, to conceal the feelings and the thoughts--to hide the treasures of the heart and mind, in short, from the eyes of those who would wrong us. Can you do this?"

"I will try," answered Emmeline, gravely; "though I know not how I shall succeed, for I have never yet been proved. I have no experience in the art of concealment--and yet," she continued, "I fear I have not been altogether so frank as you imagine. I cannot tell why, but there is something in my good guardian--kind and careful of me as he is--which prevents me from telling him all I think--from speaking my wishes or my thoughts upon important things. Any ordinary favour--any common gratification--I could ask, without fear of refusal; but yet the questions I most long to ask I dare not put; the thoughts that are most strong an most busy in my brain I do not venture to pour forth."

"It is an instinct," said Smeaton. "You must, however, try to attain the discretion to which I have alluded; and, perhaps, it may be better for me to say no more till you are more certain of yourself."

"Oh, no, no," said Emmeline. "Do not keep me in long suspense. I will be very prudent, indeed."

"Well, then, first let me ask you a few questions," said her companion; "but pray speak in a low voice; for the men are coming near, and no caution can be too great. Can you recollect anything of your very early years?"

Emmeline shook her head.

"Very little," she replied, "and that little, indistinct and vague. Things appear, indeed, to memory; but they look like the ships I have seen sailing over the sea in a thick mist. I catch a cloudy outline--a strange ill-defined form--for one brief instant, flitting by; and then it passes into the fog again, and I see it no more."

"Let us try if we cannot render these images more distinct," said Smeaton. "Do you recollect ever having lived in other places, different from the scenes around you?"

"No," answered Emmeline, at once. "The old house, and the wood, and the hamlet, and the stream, and Ale Head, and the bright bay, are amongst the earliest things that I remember. I do not think I ever lived anywhere else; for I can recollect little things of no consequence happening at the Manor when I must have been quite a child. I remember well crying over a broken puppet in a room that was then called the nursery. I must have been very young then; and memory goes no farther back."

Smeaton mused.

"I think it is very likely you are right," he said. "I do not know that you ever lived elsewhere; but you must have been surrounded in Ale Manor by other people than those who now dwell in it."

"Oh, yes," cried Emmeline. "Of that I am quite sure; for memories come across me, and trouble me like figures in a dream."

"Do you recollect a lady," asked her companion, "tall and graceful, with a smile peculiarly sweet, and a silvery voice?"

Emmeline gazed down thoughtfully.

"Yes," she said, at length, "I think I do; and she was very fond of me, if I remember rightly. Stay! yes, I remember her quite well. You call her back to my mind. She led me out by the hand upon the terrace to see the soldiers go away. Oh, yes--I recollect it all quite well now."

"And who was at the head of the soldiers?" asked Smeaton.

"I do not recollect," replied the lady, gazing forward into the air.

"Was it a tall, dark, noble-looking man, with a broad hat, and a plume in it?" asked Smeaton.

"No, no," cried Emmeline. "He was standing by my side; and he took me up in his arms, and kissed me, before he mounted his horse. How strange it is that I should have forgotten all this

until now!"

"No, perhaps not strange," replied Smeaton. "A single word will often wake up a long train of memories which have lain asleep for years. The association of ideas has wonderful power; like the wind, touching one string of an Eolian harp, it sets all the harmonies of the heart vibrating. But do you recollect anything more of those times?"

"Not clearly," answered Emmeline; "but still you have awakened enough to lead memory on, I doubt not, through many another path of the past. I see, indeed, you must know much of me and mine. I beseech you, Colonel Smeaton, tell me more."

"I would rather, in the first instance;" he said, "let your own memory do all that it can do--placing it in the right road, and letting it follow out the track, instead of prompting you by information which, after having rested in your mind for a certain time, will seem like memory. But there, if I mistake not, is the church before us. I did not seize so eagerly your offer to show it to me without a motive, dear lady. I wanted to point out to you certain monuments which it contains, and beg you to remark them particularly, for they may afford you much information."

"Oh, I have gazed at them for hours," answered Emmeline, "and could extract nothing from them."

"Perhaps you may be more successful now," replied Smeaton. "At all events, whenever I lay my hand upon a monument, remark it particularly. If we should be alone, I may, perhaps, read a comment on it at the time; but, if there is any one with us--and we must not seem particularly anxious to carry on our observations in private--I will merely lay my hand upon the tomb I wish you to notice, and read the inscription upon it."

"But, then, do you know them already?" asked Emmeline. "Have you ever been here before?"

"Never," answered Smeaton, with a smile; "the words upon the tombs will be sufficient to guide me. But we are coming near. I had better call up the men to hold the horses."

Raising his hand, he beckoned to the servants behind, who rode up just as they reached the little gate of the churchyard.

Both Emmeline and he were very thoughtful when they dismounted; and they walked on towards the great door in silence. Just as they reached it, however, Smeaton turned, and called to the men who were holding the horses in a group, saying--

"Walk them about till we come back. The air is keen upon these hills, even at midsummer."

The rest of the conversation between himself, and Emmeline, and the old sexton, on their first entrance into the church, has been already detailed, as it was overheard by Van Noost; and Smeaton and the lady proceeded along the nave, listening with wonderful patience to the prolix details of the old man. He pointed out to them the tomb of Sir Reginald de Newark, who had gone to the Holy Land with Richard the First, and told them what gallant deeds he had done in battle, and how he had returned to his native country to die at home of wounds received in war against the Saracens. Many a blunder did he make, confounding kings and countries and events in a very disastrous manner. But Smeaton did not correct him, and laid not his hand upon that tomb. Then they came to a large slab of grey marble, with a figure in long robes sculptured on it, having a mitre on the head, and crozier by the side, but with every feature of the face obliterated. This, the old man told them, was the effigy of William de Newark, Bishop of Exeter, who had chosen to be buried in that church, because it stood upon the lands of the family. Still Smeaton passed on, without question or comment. Another and another succeeded; and the old sexton was beginning to think the visitor exceedingly dull, when, approaching nearer to the communion-table, they stood opposite the monument of the gallant soldier who had fallen at Naseby.

This seemed to interest the visitor more, and, stretching out his hand, he laid it on the marble, saying--

"What a pity it is they have so brutally defaced this fine statue!"

The old sexton entered into his usual story about it, told how the church had been occupied by Cromwell's soldiers, and how they had made a stable of the nave. Many were the abominations with which he charged them; and Smeaton asked several questions which helped him on wonderfully with his tale. The Colonel then approached the wall of the church, and, pointing to the tablet which recorded the death of another member of the family, in a foreign land, he asked the old man, after reading the inscription, whether the line had become there extinct.

"Oh, bless you, no, sir," replied the sexton. "After the happy Restoration, this good soldier's son returned with the king. He had been taken abroad by his uncle, who died at Breda. His monument stands there." And leading them across to a darker part of the church, he showed them a tomb with a kneeling figure, having a sword in its hand. The inscription on the marble tablet below was very brief. It simply said--

"To the memory of Algernon, Baron Newark, of Newark Castle and Ale Manor, Knight, who died on the second day of July, 1690, this monument is erected, as a testimony of love and

veneration, by his widow and his son."

"That was the day after the battle of the Boyne," observed Smeaton.

The old sexton nodded his head significantly.

"Ay, sir, so it was. I recollect it well; and when they brought the body home from Ireland, these old hands dug the grave for as noble a lord and as good a man as ever lived. But it was all done very quietly, for people were in great fear of what might happen next; and the monument was not erected till two years after."

Smeaton laid his hand upon it, saying--

"It is fine in its simplicity. What became of the son who is mentioned here?"

"I don't know, sir," answered the man, shortly, and then walked on towards another part of the church, mumbling his jaws together, as if he were muttering something to himself.

Emmeline looked up in Smeaton's face with an inquiring glance; but his only comment was by taking her hand and leading her away. He might press it gently as he did so; but he said nothing till they rejoined the old man, when he inquired, in a careless tone--

"Are there not vaults, or a crypt, to this church? From the height of the pavement, I should think so."

"Oh, yes," replied Emmeline, answering for the sexton. "There is a beautiful crypt."

"Ay, but I have not got the key, my lady," said the old man.

"Why, it is in the door, Mattocks," rejoined Emmeline. "I saw it as we passed." The old sexton laughed aloud.

"That's true, my lady," he said; "but I've got a bird in there, and that's the truth. So that I would rather not open the door if I can help it. Not that I think you would tell, or this gentleman either; for it could do you no good, and might do the poor fellow some harm."

"Oh, be assured we will not tell anything," replied Smeaton. "But we must see the crypt, my good man. To me it is one of the most interesting parts of a church."

"Well, sir, must is must," answered the sexton, "and I cannot stop you, if you like to go. Only mind, you've promised not to tell about seeing any one there."

"We'll be as secret as a father confessor," answered Smeaton, gaily; "but first, I should like to look at your register-books. Cannot we see the inside of the vestry?"

The old man gazed earnestly in his face for an instant, and then replied, coldly and repulsively--

"You can see the inside of the vestry, sir, if you like; but the books are not there. They are always kept by the parson, under lock and key."

"Are they at his house?" asked Smeaton.

"I think not," replied the old man; "but all I know is, that they are not at the church. If you want any certificates out, you must ask the parson."

"Well, let us down to the crypt, then," replied Smeaton. "Can we see down there, think you?"

"Your eyes are younger than mine, and *I* can," answered the sexton, gruffly; and he proceeded to open the door.

"I suppose you are clerk as well as sexton?" said Smeaton, as he passed him.

"I am not regularly appointed clerk," replied the man. "I hold both offices at the will and pleasure of Sir John Newark."

There was something very significant in his tone and manner, as he said these words; but Smeaton merely smiled, and passed on, holding out his hand to guide Emmeline in descending the steps. A few seconds brought them to the bottom; and both looked round, with not unnatural curiosity, to see whom the old sexton had shut up in the crypt. The next minute, however, Smeaton laughed gaily.

"Why, my good friend, Van Noost," he exclaimed, "is that you? What, in fortune's name, has brought you into this part of the country?"

"Ah, noble sir," cried Van Noost, in a lamentable tone, "what a fright you gave me a few minutes ago! It was not fortune, but misfortune, brought me. Have you not heard that the Earl of Oxford is committed to the Tower, and that they are seeking for all his friends and adherents to clap them up in Newgate?"

"No, indeed," replied Smeaton. "Not caring much about it, I have heard little about it; but I fancy you are frightened without much cause, my good friend; for, depend upon it, the falcons which are now on the wing are checking at higher-flying game than yourself. But what made you think of coming to this part of the world?"

"Why, I know it of old to be a lonely desolate part of the country," said Van Noost. "Besides, I knew you were down here; I thought you might give me a little help in case of need."

"How can I do that?" asked Smeaton. "I have no influence with these people. But, come hither for a moment, and speak to me apart. If can help you, I will."

As he spoke, he led the way to the other side of the crypt, where he conversed with the statuary, for a few moments, in a low voice, saying, in the end--

"Well, do as you like. If you find yourself safe here, stay. But, in case of any danger, you can go to Keanton, where you will be quite safe. Tell the people the word I said, and they will take care of you."

"What a beautiful creature she is!" exclaimed Van Noost, whose eyes had been fixed on Emmeline for the last minute or two. "Dear me, what a delicious dairymaid she would make, cast in lead!"

"More fitted for a Grace, I think," replied Smeaton, with a smile. "But, remember, go to Keanton, if you like."

Thus saying, he rejoined Emmeline and the old sexton.

The last words were spoken aloud, and reached the ears both of the sexton and Emmeline. The old man muttered to himself the word, "Keanton," and scratched his head. The young lady turned her eyes quickly towards Smeaton, but made no comment at the time. The party then, followed by Van Noost, commented on the various things they saw; and the worthy artist in lead enlightened them, from time to time, with opinions on the various monuments. No part of the conversation, however, would be very entertaining to the reader; and with regard to the monuments themselves, only one seemed, even to Smeaton, worthy of remark; this was a small tablet fixed in the lower part of a wall, bearing inscribed upon it the following words:

"To the memory of Edward and Henry Newark, sons of Henry Algernon, third baron Newark. They died in infancy."

There was no date; but the monument was comparatively new. Dust, indeed, lay on the marble, somewhat obscuring the letters, with a softening effect, like that of Time on the memory of sorrow; but the pure white stone had not yet acquired the yellow tint of age and decay.

"I suppose that tablet has not been long put up," said Smeaton, touching it with his hand.

"Sixteen years ago, sir, come the day after Michaelmas," replied the old sexton; and there he stopped, evidently not disposed to enter into any particulars regarding the later branches of the Newark family.

Smeaton, however, asked no more questions; but, shaking hands with Van Noost, and giving the old man a piece of money, which seemed more than he expected, left the church, and re-mounted with Emmeline.

The lady and her companion rode on for a few moments in silence; but, at length; Smeaton said, bending his head and speaking low,

"Do you comprehend what you have seen?"

She shook her head gravely, and then replied--

"It is like seeing the picture of a city we never visited. There are houses, and streets, and public places; but, unless we have a guide or a map, we know not what they are. The monuments I have already seen; the names upon them I have heard before; but know not to whom or by whom they were erected."

Smeaton paused, and gazed at her earnestly, as if he hesitated to proceed.

"Dear lady," he said, at length. "I needs must trust you, or rather must trust to your own discretion; for it is yourself and your future fate which is to be influenced by your prudence or imprudence. Let me warn you, however, that your own happiness and the possibility of your obtaining farther information depend upon your concealing from every one that you have received any information at all; but I believe you have a spirit of sufficient power, Emmeline, to govern your words, and even looks, when you know that so much is at stake."

He called her Emmeline for the first time--perhaps before the length of their acquaintance justified it; but it sounded very pleasant to her ear; and, indeed, that day's ride, and the matters of deep interest which had been discussed between them, had drawn them closer to each other than if they had been acquainted many months.

"I will be prudent and careful, indeed," she replied. "I should ill repay your kindness, if I neglected your warning for a moment."

"Well, then," replied Smeaton, "you have seen just now the monument of your ancestor who fell at Naseby; that of his son, your grandfather, who died the day after the battle of the Boyne; and a tablet to the memory of your grandfather's brother, the father of Sir John Newark--"

"And my father?" interrupted Emmeline--"my father?"

"Of that, hereafter," replied Smeaton. "This is enough for one day surely; but I may add that the little tablet in the crypt which we last saw commemorates the death of your two brothers in infancy. They were older than yourself, but perished early. And now, dear lady, I have told you thus much in order to win your confidence; for I may yet have to ask you to trust me in many things; and, in the very first place, I must crave a great boon from you, which is this, to give me every opportunity--nay, to make opportunities--of conversing with you in private; for much yet remains to be said--nay, perhaps much to be done; and I can clearly see that Sir John Newark will not often let our conferences be unwatched, if he can help it. Can you trust me, Emmeline?"

"Oh, yes, I think I can; nay, I am *sure* I can," she answered. "Yet I do not know how I shall manage; for I am unaccustomed to such things. I thank you much for what you have told me; but I must--indeed I *must*--know more. I am not such an enigma to myself as I was; but still there is a cloud over one part of my history which must be cleared away, although I suppose I shall find to the end that there are enigmas in everything in this world. Do you know that even you are beginning to be an enigma to me?"

"How so?" exclaimed Smeaton, looking at her frankly as she gazed, with a smile, in his face.

"I will tell you," she said. "You bade that man in the crypt go to Keanton, if he liked, as if you were its master. Now, I always heard that Keanton was the properly of the Countess of Eskdale, that Countess who went to share her husband's exile."

"That enigma is soon explained," replied Smeaton. "I am her son. Heaven send that I be not soon the Master of Keanton indeed! But I much fear it; for my mother has been very ill. As I ask you for much confidence, I must not withhold any part of mine from you, and therefore I tell you the fact at once. But this is a piece of knowledge, dear lady, that you must conceal from Sir John Newark, although he knows the fact, for, if he finds that I have revealed it to you, it may raise suspicion as to what more I have revealed, which it were well to avoid."

Emmeline mused for a moment or two with her eyes cast down; and then, looking up again, she said--

"Then your name is not Smeaton really?"

"No, indeed," he replied. "My name is Eskdale. But let me explain to you. It is not at all an uncommon custom now, amongst the many who have been driven forth by the rebellions and revolutions in this land, to assume a name different from their own when entering the service of foreign states. Thus, while I have been in the Austrian army, warring in Spain and Italy, I took the name of Henry Smeaton, rose in the service under that name, and never dropped it until my father's death, somewhat more than a year ago. I have with me my commission, granted under that name, and many papers and letters, all addressed to me, or speaking of me, as Colonel Henry Smeaton; so that the title was not merely assumed for the present occasion. But here comes your young cousin, I think, to meet us. His fishing expedition, it would seem, is soon over."

"Poor boy!" replied Emmeline. "He is so volatile, he can pursue nothing long. I do not think he is so much without ability as he seems, for occasionally his thoughts are very bright and fanciful. But it is the power of fixing his attention that he wants. Of that he is utterly devoid, and it is the secret of his great deficiency."

A moment or two after, they were joined by Richard Newark, who exclaimed, in a joyful voice--"I am glad I have found you before my father comes back; for, after we had fished for an hour, I got in a fright, remembering what he had said about not leaving you, Emmy. So I got a horse, and galloped all the way here, thinking every minute I should see him riding back with you. So you must hold your tongue, Emmy, and not let him know that I have been away at all."

All conversation now ended for the time between Emmeline and Smeaton, for the boy's presence was of course a restraint, and the minds of both rested thoughtfully on the subjects of deeper interest of which they had been lately talking. This continued till they reached the mansion; but there they found Sir John Newark had not yet returned, and some time was destined to pass before he again appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER IX.

Emmeline had retired to change her dress. Richard had gone, Heaven knows whither; and Smeaton, after pausing for a few minutes in the hall, seemingly very busy in examining the suits of old armour which had hung there since the days of Elizabeth, but in reality seeing none of them with the mind's eye, though he moved round from one to the other merely like a piece of mechanism, at length walked up the stairs to the two rooms which, as I have said, had been appropriated to his use.

We must draw the curtain of the breast and look in; not perhaps tracing thought by thought--who can, even when he looks into his own heart?--but giving such glimpses as may show sufficiently what was passing within.

"This is unfortunate," he said to himself; "and I must resist such feelings--yet, why? I cannot answer why. She is very, very beautiful, graceful, gentle, bright, unsullied by this foul and dusty world in which we live. Why should I doubt or hesitate? Because my own sensations take me by surprise, and I feel myself led on by impulse rather than by reason. But what does boasted Reason do for us in such things as these? More frequently she misleads than directs us rightly. I will let things take their course. It is but my own happiness I peril; and, without perilling it, I cannot serve Emmeline as I could wish; nay, nor fully keep my promise. I will risk it. Perhaps these sensations will wear away. I remember when I thought myself desperately in love with the Spanish girl, the poor Cura's niece, at Valencia; and it ended in disgust; I do not think it will do so here. Then it was but sleepy black eyes, and a warm sunny cheek, and a neat bodice, and a pretty foot--with passion enough in all conscience, but neither soul nor mind. No, no! Emmeline is very different--yet it may wear off. If I have thought much of her--dreamed of her, I may say, by day and night since I have known her--it is very natural, without love having anything to do with it. Her strange fate, the wrong that has been done her, the greater wrong, I fear, intended her, the eager desire to free her from this thraldom, and to open her mind to her own history--and yet the difficulty of so doing--may all well have created an interest independent of love. Yet she is very beautiful and very charming. There is something winning in that smile, half tender, half playful; and certainly Nature in its happiest leisure never moulded a form of more exquisite symmetry. It makes one's heart beat almost to gaze upon her, surpassing far the highest effort of the sculptor's art, and full of living graces which neither sculptor's chisel nor painter's brush could ever catch or portray. Hark! she is singing! Ay, a well-remembered song of my young days. Her chamber must be near this, from the distinctness of the sounds."

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"Mellow year, mellow year,
 The winter time is near,
  With its frost, and its snow, and its wind;
 When the branches are all bare,
 And tempests load the air,
  And icy chains the dancing rivers bind."
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The song ceased, and the light accompaniment of a lute or mandolin ceased likewise. It seemed but a little outburst of that spirit of music which is in almost every young heart, and Smeaton said to himself--"I will sing her the next stanza. Perhaps she does not know it." And with a rich, mellow, tenor voice, he went on with the song, thus:--

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"Mellow year, mellow year,
 The winter time is near,
  With its frost, and its snow, and its wind;
 When the branches are all bare,
 And tempests load the air,
  And icy chains the dancing rivers bind."
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He listened for a moment; but all was silent, and then, opening the door of his room, he descended again to the saloon. He had hardly been there a moment when Emmeline joined him, with a bright frank smile upon her face, saying, as she entered--

"You have been singing--and one of my dear old nursery songs."

"You left it incomplete," replied Smeaton; "and, as it is one of my dear old nursery songs too, I felt myself called upon for its honour to add the last stanza--at least, the last that I remember; for I believe there are several more."

"Oh, yes," replied Emmeline. "I will sing them all to you some evening, though Sir John Newark is not very fond of music. Are you?"

"I do not know what life would be without it," replied Smeaton. "Mine, I know, would have lost many of its few happy hours."

"And does your wife like music? And does she sing often? And has she a good voice?"

exclaimed Emmeline, putting question upon question before her companion could answer. But a gay smile upon Smeaton's lips stopped her at length.

"My wife, dear lady!" he said, half laughing. "My wife! I hope she will sing, if I am ever fortunate enough to have one; but, up to the present hour, certainly, I have no wife."

Emmeline looked astonished, almost frightened; and, for a moment, she stood, gazing in his face in silence, and then said, in a slow and hesitating manner--

"Sir John Newark told me you had a wife."

"Did he, indeed?" asked Smeaton, with a smile, not unmingled with a look of astonishment; but, the moment after, he added--"Now, I remember, there was conversation between us regarding Lady Eskdale. He must have changed my mother into my wife, it seems, which is contrary, dear lady, to the law of all lands. He pressed the subject upon me, I recollect; and I gave him very short answers, not thinking fit to enter upon my own or my mother's affairs with him. I imagined that he wished to discover what we intended to do with Keanton; but he has led himself into a very great mistake; for I have no wife, I can assure you, dear lady."

Emmeline was agitated, she knew not why. Indeed she did not ask herself. All that she felt was that her heart beat more quickly than usual; that a change seemed to have come over her thoughts and feelings in an instant; that all was altered in the relations between her and her companion. It seemed very strange to her; it confused her, even seemed to alarm her and, with eager quickness, memory ran back over all that had passed between her and Smeaton, as though to ascertain if she had committed no fault towards him under the mistake into which she had been led. She remembered that he had twice called her Emmeline; and she recollected more than once that a look of admiration had come upon his face, when his eyes were turned towards her, the very memory of which deepened the colour in her cheek. She was very young and very inexperienced; and the discovery she had made filled her with many emotions which she strove not to disentangle or to scan, but which, though agitating, were certainly not painful. She remained so long silent, however, busied in these thoughts, that Smeaton himself was somewhat pained.

"She has been only thus bright and frank with me," he thought, "because she believed me to be a married man; and in all the signs of dawning regard which I fancied her looks and words betrayed, I have been mistaken."

Man's heart, however, is a very dark and intricate thing. Solomon and a great many other personages have affirmed this, and I believe it. There is nothing which spurs love on like a little difficulty; and Smeaton, who, a few minutes before, had been doubting whether he was really falling in love at all, and whether he ought to say or do anything which might tend to win her affection, had no longer the least doubt on the subject. He did not pause long to consider; but, taking her hand in his, he said:

"Emmeline, you have been deceived by Sir John's representations; but does this make any difference in your confidence and regard? Will you not trust me--will you not rely upon me, though I be unmarried, as much as you would freely have done, had the tale you heard been true?"

She did not attempt to withdraw her hand from his, but raised her beautiful eyes to his face, asking, simply:

"Ought I?"

"Why not?" he exclaimed. "Could my having a wife make me more a man of honour? Could it render me more anxious to serve you--to free you from a painful, a difficult, a dangerous situation? Could it make you more safe than in trusting to my word as a gentleman and a Christian to use all my efforts for your service, and for the promotion of your happiness alone?"

"No, oh, no," answered Emmeline, is reply to his eager questions; but he still went on, saying:

"Would it not rather throw difficulties in our way? Might it not produce a thousand embarrassments, whereas, if any now occur, you can yourself remove them by a few short words?"

The meaning of the last part of the sentence seemed clear enough; and, after a time, it came back to her memory; but at the moment, confused by a variety of feelings, to her new and strange, and of thoughts which seemed only to become more entangled every moment, she replied:

"I have so little experience--I am so ignorant of how I ought to act, or even what I ought to think, that--"

She paused, unable to conclude the sentence, but, seeing a look of pain on his face, she laid her hand gently upon his, saying:

"Do not let me grieve you. I would not do so for the world. I have the utmost trust, the utmost

confidence in you, and will show it frankly. But add this to all your other kindness; tell me truly and sincerely how I ought to act, what I ought to do, and I will do it. Guide me, guide me, noble friend for I feel that I have none to whom I can look for guidance but you."

The tears rose in her eyes as she spoke, and Smeaton, with a look which could not alarm or agitate her, bent his head and pressed his lips upon her hand.

"I will be your guide, dear Emmeline," he said; "and so God help me as I seek, in guiding you, your own happiness, your own safety, before any other objects whatsoever."

Emmeline raised her eyes to his face, full of bright drops, and his words and that answering look formed a bond between them for life.

There are instincts far stronger, far clearer, far truer, than any conclusion of reason or any deduction from experience. The shrewd, the cunning, the hackneyed in the world do well not to trust to them; for in the first two classes, Nature having endowed them with other qualities for their guidance and defence, in general denies them these instincts, just as she denies horns to a lion, and claws to an elephant; they are provided, and want not farther help; and, with the hackneyed man of the world, if ever possessed of such instincts, they are soon worn out, and the traces of them obscured. But, with the guileless and inexperienced, they are a sure, and often the only, guide and defence.

The same instinctive feeling of dread and doubt which taught her to shrink from Sir John Newark, which barred all confidence and checked all affection, made her heart spring to meet the friendship--perhaps I might call it by a tenderer name--of Smeaton, and long to pour out all its feelings and thoughts before him. The agitation of new sensations, however, checked her for the time, and all she said was:

"Oh, how happy it is to have some one in whom we can wholly trust and rely!"

That was a blessed moment for Smeaton. It was to the affection which had sprung up, and was budding in his heart, like the soft beams of a bright morning sun upon an opening rose, teaching it to expand in all its full sweetness, and he gazed upon her with a look of love which could not be mistaken. Of words there was little need; yet words trembled on his lips which could never be unsaid. Suddenly Emmeline, with a start, withdrew her hand from his. They had thought themselves, throughout the whole scene, alone; but it was not so. The windows were partly open to admit the balmy air; and, though they did not descend to the ground, as modern windows do, yet they were not raised more than a foot or two above the level of the terrace without. For the last two or three minutes, a figure had been standing at the angle of the most westerly window, and looking in, half hidden by the stone-work. It now moved across towards the great door, and the shadow that it cast upon the floor of the room roused Emmeline from her dreams of happiness, with a sensation of fear.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Smeaton, surprised by her sudden start.

"Some one passed across the window," replied Emmeline, with the colour mounting warmly into her cheek.

"Was it Sir John Newark?" asked Smeaton, while a cloud came over his brow. "If so, a full explanation must come before it is desirable."

"I think not," replied Emmeline. "The shadow first caught my eye; and, before could see distinctly, the figure was gone. Nevertheless, I think it was that of Richard."

Smeaton mused for a moment, and then said.

"Of course he will tell his father what he may have seen and overheard, and we must take our determination accordingly, Emmeline."

"I do not think he will," said Emmeline, eagerly; but she paused at the next sentence, adding, more slowly, as if not knowing well how to express what she meant without some violation of propriety: "Very few persons here, I believe, are inclined to tell my guardian anything unless he asks. Why it is, I am sure I do not know, for he is very kind in most things; yet they seem to fear him, and do not like to say what they think, lest they should make mischief. Some of the servants, indeed, but not many even of them, report to him all that passes under their eyes; but I have never dared to speak freely with him upon any thing; and, I believe, Richard feels the same. Hark! there is his foot coming through the great hall. It must have been he who was looking through the window. Poor boy! he would never think of repeating anything which he thought could pain me; but I ought not to ask him to conceal any thing from his father."

"Certainly not," replied Smeaton, frankly. "Let things take their course; only ascertain as soon as possible what he really does do; and, in the mean time, dear Emmeline, let me beseech you to cast away all restraint towards me. It is needful to you and to your own future fate now, and I feel it is needful to me and my happiness, that you should give me every opportunity of speaking to you, consulting with you, advising you in private. Though *I*, perhaps, must find the opportunities, you must aid me to take advantage of them. Much must be decided within the next two or three weeks, and upon what is decided all the future course of your life will depend--and mine also," he

added, in a lower voice. "Ay, and of mine also."

Before she could reply, the latch of the door was raised, and Richard Newark entered the room, with a slow and thoughtful pace, very different from his light irregular walk. Emmeline drew a step back; but Smeaton remained exactly where he was, without the slightest change of look or manner, while the boy advanced into the room, humming to himself the snatch of some old song, as if wrapped up in his own thoughts, and hardly conscious that anybody was there.

"Well, Richard," said Smeaton, "where have you been wandering?"

"I have been upon the terrace for the last five minutes," replied the lad, simply.

"That I know," rejoined Smeaton. "We saw your shadow on the floor."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Richard Newark, evidently with some surprise. "I thought you did not see me; but this preposterous knob between my two shoulders, filled with all sorts of things that never get into other people's heads, betrays me, I suppose, wherever I go. Well, never mind! What matters it to me if nightingales will sit and sing on the edge of a hawk's nest? It is no matter of mine, and I can keep things to myself as well as my elders and my betters. Only, 'ware the springe, noble Colonel. Woodcocks have put their necks into a noose before now."

Emmeline and her lover, for so I think I may now venture to call him, looked at each other, as if uncertain how to act; but then, starting forward, with her wild grace, the beautiful girl laid her hand upon her cousin's arm, saying--

"Do you not love me, Richard? Have you not said that, if you were my brother, you could not love me more?"

The boy's whole manner was changed in a moment.

"That I do, Emmeline," he cried, catching her hand in his, and holding out his other hand to Smeaton. "I love you both, and will do anything I can to serve you. Trust to me, trust to me, and don't be a bit afraid. I will find means to help you at a pinch. I know that my brain is somewhat askew; but that is not my fault, and there is some wit within, though it lies in odd corners. For your sake, Emmeline, and for yours too, Smeaton, I will rummage it out, and try if I cannot make it serviceable. I will do you no harm, if I cannot do you good."

"Take care of that, Richard," said Smeaton, gravely.

The boy nodded his head significantly, and then added, with a loud laugh--

"And now I will be odder than ever, to cover what is going on within; but I can tell you, dear girl, that I have rendered you one service this morning, already; for if *I* had not been at the window, somebody else would."

"Who?" exclaimed Emmeline, with a look of apprehension.

"Old Mrs. Culpepper was going out for her evening airing," replied the boy, smiling, "with her stealthy tiptoe step, like a cat crossing the greensward on a dewy morning. She tended this way, Emmy; but, when she saw me lolling against the window-frame, she crept off to prowl in another direction. She watches you all the while she is purring round you, more closely than you know, and it is better to have me there than her, I can tell you."

"I am sure it is, Richard," answered Emmeline. "But what you say surprises and shocks me. I did not know that I required watching by any one. So Heaven help me, as I desire and seek no wrong, but only to be as rightly happy as it is God's will I should be."

"No more does a titlark, Emmy," replied the boy; "and yet they shut him up in an iron cage, and only give him a bit of turf to make him remember how joyful he would be if he could spread his freed wings, and soar away up into the sky."

There was something in the simile which touched Emmeline to the heart; her eyes filled with tears; and, darting away, she quitted the room, leaving Smeaton and Richard Newark together.

CHAPTER X.

Sir John Newark rode away towards Exeter. At first he went fast; for the thoughts with which he set out were not altogether devoid of uneasiness. He did not like leaving Emmeline, Richard,

and Smeaton together. Not that there was any definite cause in his mind for the unpleasant sensations that he felt; but, with most men of his character, there is throughout the whole of life a pervading feeling of insecurity which is a hard price, taken at the full sum, and which by slow instalments they pay sooner or later for any advantages obtained by cunning, duplicity, and deceit. They are never secure. They are always afraid of discovery and loss. The house they have built is based upon sand, and they know that it is so. There is an ever-present dread, a dark consciousness of the sword suspended by a hair over them. They may drown the thought in wine; they may outroar the small still voice in revelry and merriment; by laughter and by song they may strive to keep its sounds from their ears; but still it is ever speaking in the secret tribunal of the heart--ever, ever speaking, accusing, condemning, and threatening.

There were times, of course, when this sensation of insecurity was more strong than at others; he never felt safe when Emmeline was left alone with anybody but one of his own creatures; and there was something in the character and demeanour of Smeaton which made him feel that he might be very dangerous to dishonest purposes, if he had a knowledge of them. He quieted himself, however, in some degree, by a belief in his ignorance. He said to himself--

"It is evident he knows nothing of these people, except by hear-say. Moreover, he cannot suspect anything from what he has seen here. He beholds nothing but kindness and affection. I treat her as a daughter, a beloved daughter. No, no, he can suspect nothing. Yet I have seen a light come up into his eyes when he looks upon her, a bland fond smile upon his lip, which is strange for so short an acquaintance. It is natural, perhaps; for she is certainly very pretty; but he is married, so there can be no harm. Yet suppose his wife were to die? Well then, I must shut my gates against him. That is all. He cannot force his way in, unless I choose to let him. Perhaps I may make something of this Keanton property, if one could but get him to entangle himself a little more against the government. He would be glad enough to take a small sum from a friend for that which was likely to be forfeited to the crown. It is a fine estate, full three thousand a-year, and carries, if I mistake not, the barony with it. These troubles must be productive of good, if one knew how to take advantage of them."

This train of thought carried him on further, and away from the subject of his apprehensions. He had been riding fast in order to return speedily; but now he slackened his pace, and proceeded to consider deliberately the condition of the times, the position of the existing government, and especially the state of that part of the country in which he dwelt. He was one of those men--and they are a somewhat numerous class--who are skilful at angling in troubled waters. He was well inclined to stir those waters, too, for the purpose of catching more fish; but he was very careful not to plunge into them too deeply himself. He knew, as well as any agitator of the present day, how to keep just on the right side of law, how to prompt without acting, how to suggest without proposing, how to make dissuasion act as a persuasive, how, in fact, to stir up rebellion without being a rebel, and to act a traitor's part without incurring the punishment of a traitor. He had, moreover, that great skill which consists in leading men, whom you are openly engaged in opposing, to believe that you may be induced by favours to support them; in fact, to put yourself up for sale at a high price, and to force it from the purchaser by annoyance; not to ticket or label the article with the sum demanded, but to let it be understood. This is the most useful of arts in the mercenary world we dwell in, and men do contrive to enact such tricks, and yet bear an unblushing front and a proud carriage, as if the honours and rewards they obtain were yielded to merit, not necessity. In his most vehement tirades against a minister or a government, Sir John could drop some few favourable words to show that he was not hopelessly adverse. He could praise one set of measures while he declaimed against others. He could affect uncertainty with regard to some of their lines of policy. He could pretend to believe the motives good, but the means mistaken. He could single out one man from a ministry, when he saw him falling, and pursue him with the most virulent rancour in order to attribute all the bad acts of his colleagues to him, if they chose to purchase his support after the other's fall.

He was not at all singular. We see such men every day; and, all the time, they are independent men. The very excess of their trimming, when managed skilfully, gains for them, amongst those who do not see deeply into the human heart, a reputation for conscientiousness. They are supposed to sacrifice their friends for their convictions, and to change their convictions from their judgment. Verily, they are wise in their generation.

"This dynasty will stand," said Sir John Newark, to himself. "Yes, it will stand. It may not have the affections of the nation--doubtless, it has not; but it has the passions and prejudices of Englishmen--ay, and their good sober sense too. Love is a mad passion that will not be subservient. Prejudice is a sturdy beast, which will be guided any way, so that it get home at last. There is no lack of zeal amongst the Jacobites. Zeal! Heaven keep us from zeal. It is like a sky-rocket, which no one can direct. The Whigs have something better than zeal. They have firmness, consistence, unity, common sense, energy. Then they have the words, that sooner or later rule the multitude--liberty--freedom--rights--privileges, and those not the rights and privileges of the few, but of the many. The others have nothing but zeal. Heaven help us! And courage--ay, and courage! There is no lack of courage; but with it, luckily, its usual adjuncts, wild rashness, pig-headed obstinacy, and a mighty host of all those brilliant qualities which, sooner or later, bring a party to destruction. Nevertheless, I must be somewhat of a Jacobite for the time--with caution--with caution. I must give a few hints to the people--some encouragement, also, to my Jacobite friends amongst the magistracy, for fear of the vigorous energy of the Whigs frightening them; but with many a saving clause, and much reservation."

With these thoughts, he rode on, and, at the end of a few hours, entered the good old town of Exeter, with dusty dress, and horses and attendants tired.

A good number of people were collected in the open space near the cathedral; for the room in which the magistrates were called to assemble was not far distant, and a rumour of the meeting had spread through the city, that being market-day, and had caused some agitation in the place. Sir John Newark was well known in Exeter, and he was very popular--most rogues are. His name was soon pronounced among the people. They gathered round him, pressed upon his horse, cheered him, asked him questions. The sounds reached some of his fellow magistrates, who had collected in the neighbouring inns, and they came out to see what was the matter. The great body of people gathered together were decidedly Jacobite, and the magistrates, who had their eyes upon the knight, were of the opposite faction; but he managed skilfully between them. To those in the crowd near him, whom he knew, he spoke a few words of a very inflammatory nature; but, when the people called upon him to speak to them aloud, he harangued them for a few minutes, from his horse's back, in language which suggested more than it expressed. He besought them to be peaceable, orderly, tranquil, and to make no disturbances; but he painted, in glowing colours, and with much oratorical power, the disturbances which had taken place in other parts of the country, told them how the men of Dorchester had assaulted and pumped upon the magistrates, when reading a proclamation from the government; how, in another place, they had burnt in effigy "the great personage whom they very improperly called the Elector of Hanover;" how they had driven a party of the military out of one town, and forced the mayor in another to drink King James's health against his will. But, all the time, he besought them to abstain from such unseemly demonstrations of the popular feeling, and assured them that he doubted not, he trusted, he hoped, they would ultimately obtain all they could rightly desire, without any recourse to violence or breach of the law.

His words were not many; but they were very well chosen; and, at the end of his harangue, a great number of the people escorted him to his inn with acclamations. The very inn he selected marked him out as one of the party to which, for the time, he chose to attach himself. It was called the Crown and Sceptre, and was the Jacobite inn. There, however, he had but time to get some scanty refreshment for himself before the hour of meeting; and, leaving his horses and servants behind, he walked to the room where the magistrates were now fast assembling. It presented the usual aspect of such congregations in troublous times, where many persons of the most opposite views are collected to carry out measures in regard to which very few of them are agreed. The Jacobite party was here by far the least numerous; but they were weakened by want of unity in their plans, more than by want of numerical strength. Some were for bold and vigorous demonstration; others were for firm and tranquil moderation; some were for temporising and deceiving, others for throwing off disguise, and avowing their principles, if not their objects, clearly. Sir John Newark instantly ranged himself amongst them, with the most hearty contempt for every one of them; but he shook hands with them all warmly, lent an eager ear to what every man whispered to him, and said a few words in reply, which signified nothing.

The Whig party, on the contrary, were united in object and in purpose. They felt their strength, and were confident in it; yet, at the same time, the entrance of Sir John Newark caused a little stir even amongst *them*. They had a sort of fear of him--not of his power, not of his real talents, not of his courage or energy, but of his subtlety; for subtlety can be carried to a point where it becomes awful. He had established a reputation of never forgiving, of never being turned from his object by any difficulty or opposition, and of seeking it by ways which could not be seen and by means which could not be combated. All that he said or did was a matter a doubt and mystery to those around. His frankness was as suspicious as his reserve; his boldest declarations in favour of a cause were known never to insure it his support; his most resolute opposition to a party gave no guarantee that he would not join it next day. It was known, moreover, that most of his enemies had been ruined by some means or other--and many of his friends.

Inimical critics will say, perhaps, that this character is overdrawn; friendly critics will declare that it is a portrait. To the latter, if there be guilt, I plead guilty; but it is the portrait of one who lived and died in the times of which I write, and not of any man now living.

If a meeting of country magistrates in the present day is irregular and desultory in all its proceedings--and I, as one of that worshipful body, can certify such is the case--if, in a time when artisans are competent to judge of legislation, and people, who can neither read nor write, rule or overrule the opinions of educated men--if, in such a time, we see that many public assemblies, called for the discussion of national and important questions, are very confused and sometimes violent in their discussions and conduct--what could be expected, in the beginning of the last century, when learning and information, if not wit and talent, were confined to the few? Strong native common sense occasionally, in individuals, did a great deal; and perhaps the cases were more frequent than now; for no one can look around him without admitting that, in the present day, common sense in certain quarters is the most uncommon of all things. It is more valuable than any other quality, and very valuable things are rare.

The course of proceedings on the present occasion was in somewhat the following order. The presiding magistrate, a verbose pursy man, with that self-important air and voluminous stomach which carry great weight with the public, made a long speech about matters which he did not comprehend in the least, read some letters from the Secretary of State and other high personages, the sense of which he mangled and left nearly extinct in the reading, and then added

comments in support of the course which he believed the minister to recommend, although in truth it was very different. Then got up a furious Jacobite, railed at the existing order of things, abused the government, spoke of the country being eaten up by foreigners, and asked how it could be expected that, in such circumstances, and devoured by Hanover rats, men should be at all energetic or active in defence of a state of things which the whole country only tolerated for a time. Another and another orator followed. Few of the saner Whigs spoke at all; but some of them showed a good deal of temper; one plan was proposed, and then another; nothing was decided; and nothing seemed likely to be decided. Then, when he saw that time was getting on, and that people would soon become anxious to return to their homes, Sir John Newark rose and addressed the meeting, presuming that no one was likely to speak after him. He said:

"Sir, I believe my loyalty is not at all suspected--"

A murmur ran amongst the Whigs; and he instantly took advantage of it.

"I do not in the least pretend to deny," he continued, "that I am, personally, strongly attached to the ancient royal line of this kingdom. I have always declared the fact, and I have suffered by it in many ways; but that surely can be no imputation upon my loyalty, when I always show myself ready to obey and to execute the laws. I stand in the same position as many others even on that side of the room, whose attachment to the house of Stuart is strong, but their attachment to the laws of the realm stronger. I gave what poor support I could to the government of King William and Queen Mary, because I thought that the rights and liberties of Englishmen required it of me; but I am not disposed, and I trust none here are disposed, to see those rights and liberties violated by one monarch more than by another. Now, as far as I can make out what is intended by the government--or rather, I should say, what is here proposed by some rash and misguided men, who arrogate to themselves, unauthorised, I am convinced, the task of declaring the views of government--it is intended to call upon the magistrates of the county of Devon to employ measures for quieting imaginary disturbances, and for apprehending persons who may be tranquilly passing from place to place on their own business, for aught that has been shown to the contrary, which would render us a nation of spies and bailiffs, be subversive of all personal as well as political liberty, and breed suspicion and distrust between man and man, so as inevitably to end in establishing within these realms a despotism as oppressive as can be found in any of the continental states. Against this, I must and will protest, even if I stand alone; at the same time declaring my willingness and readiness to employ every constitutional means in my power to maintain the peace of the land and the rule of order and law. Do not let us suffer ourselves to be agitated by idle rumours and vain and groundless apprehensions. What proofs have we that any design is on foot for disturbing the peace of the realm, or attempting to overthrow the existing government? What signs of such things are even alleged? Why, no more than the shouting of a London mob round the carriage of the Earl of Oxford, whom, until he is tried and condemned by his peers, I may venture to call a very estimable and intelligent nobleman. Some drunken rioting of 'prentice-boys and coal-heavers, worthy of being repressed by parish beadles and chastised by flogging, rather than being opposed by regular soldiers, and punished by military execution. The sousing in a horse-pond of some foolish and obnoxious magistrates, probably detested and scorned by the multitude rather for their stupidity and injustice than even for their hotheaded zeal upon the present occasion--zeal which we shall not do well to imitate, lest we incur the same contempt and share the same retribution."

"The *only* signs!" exclaimed one of the less discreet of the Whig gentlemen present. "What do you call arming ships on the coast of France in favour of the Pretender, as stated in the Secretary of State's letter, which you have heard read?"

"That it is a case to be dealt with by our Ambassador at the court of France," replied Sir John Newark, adroitly; "and not by a body of country justices of the peace. Besides, what have we to do with Secretary of State's letters? Is a Secretary of State, King, Lords, and Commons at once? and can his mandate supersede the law of the land? All that it is competent for him to do is to exhort us to diligence and activity in the exercise of those functions entrusted to us by the constitution. Arming on the coast of France! What has that to do with gentlemen travelling peaceably from town to town in the county of Devon?"

"But the Secretary says there are suspected persons," replied the same magistrate.

"By whom suspected?" demanded Sir John Newark. "Reasonable cause must be shown for suspicion before we can deal with the case. This Mr. Secretary may be of a naturally suspicious disposition. He may suspect me--you--any of us. But it would be bold thing to apprehend a man merely upon a Secretary's *suspicion*. I, for one, will issue no warrant against any man upon mere suspicion. I will have it shown what are the grounds of that suspicion."

"He did not deal with his own relations so tenderly," said one of the magistrates to another; and a third observed, aloud--

"All we know is, Sir John, that three or four persons, whom nobody knows, have lately passed through certain parts of the county and taken their way towards Ale Head, if not towards Ale Manor House. A foreign vessel also was seen upon the coast; and it is certain that she landed and took off some persons in the close vicinity of your dwelling."

"I should like to ask the worshipful knight whether there is not a suspected person in his

house at the present moment," cried some one, in a loud tone.

Others were going on in the same strain; for, on all such occasions, when one person can be found to lead an attack against an individual, many more will follow. Perhaps Sir John Newark was a little staggered by this close questioning; but he saw that the allusion to the ship gave him an advantage; and, waving his hand, he exclaimed--

"One at a time, gentlemen, one at a time, if you please. You are becoming a little personal in matters which should be considered free from all personality; but I am ready to give every man his answer."

"The best answer to such insinuations is the sword," observed an old hotheaded cavalier, whose brains the snow of sixty years had not been able to cool.

"Poo, poo!" said Sir John Newark. "I repeat that I am ready to answer every question separately; but you must not overwhelm me with too many at once. First, then. If any suspected persons have journeyed towards Ale Manor by land, I know nothing about them, and have heard nothing of them."

"By land! by land!" retorted one of the opposite party, with a scornful laugh.

"Wait a minute," said Sir John Newark, sneeringly. "Next, I answer that I well know that a foreign vessel did appear upon the coast, and did land and take off again some men."

"Tell us if they were *all* taken off, Sir John," shouted one of his opponents from the other side of the room.

"If the gentleman who spoke can prove that one of them remained and can bring him within my grasp, I will pay him down on the spot a hundred guineas, which is somewhat more than the reward of an ordinary thief-taker," replied the knight. "But what is the use of disputing with a thickheaded brawler who cannot hear a sentence to the end? I say, sirs, I *do* know that such a ship appeared off the coast, landed men, and took them off again. I know it well; for I know it to my cost. She came, with what intentions I do not know. She landed men, whose only act, if not their only object, was to insult and endeavour to kidnap my young ward, Emmeline; and they ran away as swift as they could, and re-embarked when frustrated, pursued by my son and servants, with dogs, as if they had been beasts of prey. I was myself from home at the town of Axminster; but, as soon as I heard that a strange sail had appeared upon the coast, I hurried back at full speed, and found that what I could have wished done had been well done in my absence. Now, I will ask if any one of you who ventures to call himself the most loyal in this room can impugn my conduct in this affair? And I repeat that, if any of you will put into my hands one of those men who landed, so that I might bring him to justice for the insult he offered to my ward, and through her to myself, I will pay him a hundred guineas on the spot."

At this moment a dark, stern-looking, elderly man, in a snuff-coloured coat, who had hitherto sat quietly in a corner of the room, rose, and said--just when Sir John Newark was congratulating himself on having avoided all mention of Smeaton's residence in his house--

"The worshipful knight has not answered the question, whether there is or is not a suspected person, at this very time, staying at Ale Manor."

"No one suspected in the least by me," replied Sir John Newark, who saw that he must grapple with the subject. "There is a gentleman staying at my house; but let me add that he it is who saved my young ward from the hands of those ruffians who landed, wounding one of them severely, and that his whole conduct, as far as I know anything of it, is above suspicion. General, you are a brave man, as all the world knows; but I should like to see the bravest of you tell my guest, Colonel Henry Smeaton, that he suspected him of aught. Methinks he would soon have an answer that would satisfy him till the end of his life, even if he lived much longer."

"Perhaps so," replied the other, quite calmly; "but some questions are better decided by pens than by swords, Sir John. Although I have not giving up fighting, and trust I may yet fight again in my country's cause, it certainly shall not be in a private quarrel upon public matters. You say that this gentleman's name is Colonel Henry Smeaton. I should much like to know if he never bears any other name."

"By such only have I known him," replied Sir John Newark, with a slight inclination of the head, and without the least change of complexion; for he never coloured, though he sometimes turned pale.

"Then we have been misinformed, I suppose," replied the other, whose voice seemed to have quieted all the din going on around. "We were told that the Earl of Eskdale was staying at Ale Manor, Sir John. Is it fair to ask you who first introduced this gentleman to you as Colonel Henry Smeaton?"

"I presume I am not under examination," replied Sir John Newark, a good deal annoyed, but determined to evade the question. "However, General, I have no objection to answer you; and, if you think fit, you may take down my reply, perhaps to be used against me on a future occasion."

He spoke with a sneering smile, which had not the slightest effect upon the gentleman whom he addressed, and who continued to look straight in his face, till he went on, saying--

"You asked me, I think, who first introduced my visitor to me as Colonel Henry Smeaton. My reply shall be very simple, and more distinct even than your question. The first time I ever saw him, he introduced himself to me as Colonel Henry Smeaton. That was some weeks ago in London; and I immediately, and on the spot, gave him an invitation to visit me at Ale Manor. I intended to excite your surprise, and I see that I have done it, gentlemen; but I must now dispel that pleasant sensation. My first acquaintance with this gentleman occurred on his defending my son from a gross assault made upon him by one of the Earl of Stair's servants, and punishing the ruffian who had knocked the boy down. I was grateful to my son's preserver and avenger, and invited him to my house; but I have had more cause for gratitude since. Not content with punishing the man on the spot, Colonel Smeaton went that same night to the Earl of Stair, with whom he is well acquainted, and made it his request that the man should be immediately dismissed. Out of friendship for him, the Earl readily acceded; and, behaving with that true honour and dignity which so well becomes him, wrote me a letter, which I have here, to apologise for what his man had done, and inform me of the result. I think, General, you must be well acquainted with Lord Stair's writing. There is the letter."

He stretched forth his hand with the letter as he spoke, and the old officer, advancing a step, took it, and read it aloud. The following were the contents.

"Sir--In answer to your note received this morning, I beg to inform you that the conduct which you complain of in Thomas Hardy, my late servant, was represented to me fully by my friend, Colonel Henry Smeaton, who called upon me last night. As he witnessed the whole transaction, and I have every reason to believe him, from my personal knowledge of his character, and old acquaintance with his family, to be a man of perfect probity and honour, I dismissed the footman at once, and beg to express my regret that servant of mine should have committed so disgraceful an action. I trust the young gentleman whom he assaulted has not suffered any severe injury, and that, when my friend, Colonel Smeaton, returns from the visit which I find he intends to make to your country-house, he will bear me a good report of your son's health.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

"STAIR."

"Undoubtedly, Lord Stair's handwriting," said the old officer, aloud; and, turning to another, who stood near, he added, "We must have been misinformed."

"Pray," cried one of the magistrates, "will you tell us, Sir John Newark, if this Colonel Henry Smeaton is the only visitor in your house at the present moment?"

"This is too bad!" exclaimed Sir John Newark, with well-affected indignation. "Do you suppose, sir, that I am likely to quibble in such a matter as this? There is no one whatsoever in my house but my own family and domestic servants, with Colonel Smeaton and his lackey--a rude ordinary man, whom you might as well take for an archangel as a nobleman. It is by such injurious suspicions of loyal and tried men, that you, and such persons as you, frequently produce disaffection. Such, however, shall not be the case with me; and, having expressed my opinion upon your proceeding, and repelled the insulting doubts which it seems you had thought fit to entertain of myself, I shall leave an objectless meeting, which can produce no good results, and can only tend to irritate the people and induce foolish magistrates to overstep the limits of their duty upon the shallow pretence of zeal. If I might advise, all those who think with me will follow me; for, I believe, the very fact of this meeting may do great harm in the county."

Thus saying, he quitted the room with some thirty or five-and-thirty other gentlemen.

A buzz of conversation succeeded amongst those who remained, the whole assembly seeming to conclude that the business of the day was over, and breaking up into little knots of five or six. In one or two of these groups, the name of Sir John Newark was treated somewhat severely, and his general conduct censured with very little restraint. In most of them, however, the imprudence of those who had first commenced an attack upon him was pointedly blamed.

"Strange should not have been so violent," said one.

"Perry should not have insinuated what he did," remarked another.

"He is a very difficult personage to deal with," observed a third. "He is never to be caught, and is always ready to give back more than he receives in the way of sneers and bitterness."

"He often turns what was intended to annoy him, to his own advantage," remarked a fourth. "The man must be a blockhead or a conceited fellow who attempts to meddle with him. The best way is to let him quietly say out what he has to say, and then to proceed without taking the least notice of him; but, as he has contrived to break up the business of the day, we had better betake

us to our horses' backs."

One dropped away after another till the room was nearly vacant; but a little knot continued in low-toned but eager conversation for nearly three quarters of an hour after all the rest were gone, and in it were the old officer whom we have mentioned, the high sheriff of the county, and two or three gentlemen of importance and discretion.

"It will certainly be the best plan," said the high sheriff. "He is thrown off his guard for the time, and I am willing to take my share of the responsibility."

The general shook his head.

"He is seldom off his guard," he remarked; "but I do not fear the responsibility; and, perhaps, it is the best plan. Government will carry us through, even if we do stretch its authority a little in such a case."

With this observation, the meeting broke up; and the little knot which had remained separated.

CHAPTER XI.

The events which I have narrated in the last chapter occupied nearly two hours, although, in their recapitulation, they fill so small a space. It was thus four o'clock, or somewhat more, before Sir John Newark reached the door of his inn, impatient to return as soon as possible to the Manor House. As we have seen, many of the party which he had now espoused followed him away from the place of meeting. Some mounted their horses and rode into the country; some strayed to the right or left, as soon as they were in the street; some went one way, some another, and but few accompanied Sir John Newark, even a short distance. Sir John was not loved or trusted by any one. All readily availed themselves of his help; all admired the skill and dexterity with which he took advantage of an enemy's mistakes, and sometimes of a friend's; but they did not altogether feel safe in his private society.

There was one garrulous old knight, however--a Sir James Mount--who had no fears of any kind. Wrapped up in his talkative egotism, he thought little of the character and actions of his associates, chattered away gaily to any one who came near him, sometimes very sillily, sometimes well enough, and was ever ready with a smart repartee, at which he himself laughed, to lead the chorus right; and, being full of anecdote and a great gossip-monger, was tolerated and even courted by most of the gentlemen round, though he sadly wearied them till they had contrived to make him dead drunk. This worthy baronet adhered to the side of Sir John Newark all the way to the inn, at which, it would seem, he himself also had put up.

"You posed them, Sir John--you posed them," he said, as they issued from the door. "That smart Mr. Seely got a rap--a rap--a rap, I think. Puppy! his knuckles will ache. It is very droll that I am not good at public speaking--at public speaking--at public speaking, for I am fluent enough--fluent enough--fluent enough, in conversation, I think."

Sir John Newark made no reply; nor, indeed, was any necessary. Sir James Mount paused for a moment to take breath--for he had been walking fast, with a peculiar dancing sort of step; but it was not long before he began again, saying; "Better times coming, Sir John, better times coming, I think; and the king shall have his own again. I dare say, now, you have got some news from over the water--over the water--over the water."

Sir John Newark replied this time; for a good number of people were in the street; and Sir James's conversation was getting somewhat dangerous.

"The last news I have heard of any kind, Sir James," he replied, "was that you had nearly pulled down the old house at Mount Place, and were building a very splendid mansion in its stead."

"Yes, yes, yes," answered the other, tripping along on the tips of his toes. "*Diruit--diruit--diruit, ædificat, mutat quadrata rotundis--rotundis--rotundis*. Not exactly the whole house; only the wings--only the wings--only the wings."

"Getting yourself new wings, Sir James," said Newark, "will make the people say 'tis to fly with."

"Only to fly higher--to fly higher--to fly higher," replied Mount.

"Higher, higher, higher!" echoed Sir John Newark, with a cynical smile; "that is like the skylark. But you were born to *mount*; and so that is natural."

"True, true, true," answered his companion, laughing, and very much pleased at the exceedingly lame pun. "Like the skylark--born to mount--pretty, very pretty!" And he took out his tablets and wrote it down, talking all the time with marvellous perseverance. "Born to mount," he repeated three times, "like the skylark, must have wings, you know, Sir John--must have wings--must have wings. Shall we dine together? I have something very important--important--important, to discharge my mind of."

"I fear that I cannot stay to receive your fire," replied Sir John Newark. "You know I have a guest at Ale Manor, and must be back to entertain him."

"Ay, that's just the thing--just the thing--just the thing," said the old knight. "Is he Lord Eskdale or not--or not--or not?"

They had at this moment just reached the great arched entrance of the inn; and, without answering the question, Sir John called aloud for his horses. He was doomed, however, to disappointment and the society of Sir James Mount; for one of his servants, coming forward, informed him that they had just discovered that one of the horses had lost a shoe, and that his own beast seemed very lame. Sir John Newark was angry; but he uttered none of the oaths and exclamations common in that day, and merely, in a thoughtful and moderate tone, directed the one horse to be shod and the other to be examined by a farrier. Sir James Mount instantly fixed upon the servant, commended his own farrier to him, gave him particular directions where to find him, volunteered an opinion upon the cause of the horse's lameness, without having seen him, and recommended strongly a plaster of soap and boiled turnips, repeating one part of every sentence at least thrice, and sometimes more.

Whilst this was going on, Sir John Newark was meditating what he should next do. It was very difficult, on all occasions, to get rid of Sir James Mount; and, taking into consideration the improbability of his succeeding in an attempt to do so, and the length of time he should probably be obliged to stay, he made up his mind to engage him to dine in a private room, saying to himself--"I shall, at all events, get from him every piece of news that is going about the country, and shall prevent him from doing mischief with his tongue for an hour and a half at least."

Sir James was delighted with the proposal, and, although the hour was somewhat late for the early habits of that period, the number of gentlemen who had visited the town in the course of the day had created great activity at the inn, and dinner was easily procurable.

As soon as it was upon the table in the little parlour to which they were shown, Sir John Newark, who had been kept in some uneasiness by the incessant loquacity of his companion, dismissed the man who brought in the dishes, saying, as soon as he was gone, with a meaning nod, to worthy Sir James--

"It is better to be alone when we may have important subjects to talk of."

"True, true, true," returned the other. "In such things, I am always discreet--discreet--discreet. I know how to be silent--silent--silent, Newark. No one can keep a secret better than I can, in case of need. I was just at that moment--at that moment--at that moment, thinking of Lord Eskdale; but I was as mum as a mouse--mum as a mouse--mum as a mouse, while the man was in the room."

Sir John Newark had by this time made up his mind as to the course he should pursue in case of the Earl of Eskdale's name being again mentioned, and he instantly caught at Sir James's words, saying.

"Ay, the Earl of Eskdale. Can you tell me anything about him? He must now be advancing in life."

"Poo, poo! you are thinking of the father," replied Sir James. "He died last year, quite a young man; not fifty, I should think--I should think--I should think--married very early, you know, and left one son--know them all quite well--Lady Eskdale is an old friend of mine."

"Is that the young Lady Eskdale or the old Lady Eskdale!" asked Sir John Newark; and then, seeing that he had a little betrayed himself, he added, to cover the mistake, "I suppose the young lord is married."

"Married--married--married! Oh dear, no. He is not married," said Sir James; "was not a month ago, at all events; I was over the water upon a little business--business--business. I could not see the old lady, because she was very ill in bed--in bed--in bed; but I inquired into all the particulars of the family, and found them better off than most over there, on account of the Keanton estate--estate--estate."

Sir John Newark was not a little puzzled and alarmed by his worshipful companion's words, and fell into deep thought; but, as the other paused, he said, mechanically, merely to fill up the gap-"Ay, about Keanton?"

"Why, you know," answered Sir James, in his usual rapid manner, "it was never forfeited, because it was settled upon *her*. People thought that she had dissuaded her husband from joining our friends. That was not true; but it saved her property, which was settled somehow--somehow--somehow, and they have taken care to keep it very quiet. The tenants pay their rents to an agent--an agent--an agent, and as little said as possible; for, although Shrewsbury spared them, out of generosity, and Marlborough because he got something by it, I dare say, others might have made a snatch at Keanton, which is better than a penny loaf--a penny loaf--a penny loaf."

"But, I suppose, if the old lady should die, the property would fall to the Crown?" said Sir John Newark, becoming again interested.

"Oh, no! oh, dear no!" replied Sir James. "The young man was a mere boy when the father was attainted; and, as they had good interest with the late Queen, they got a special act of grace in his favour. It is not generally known; but it is true--true--true, I can assure you. So he is right on both sides of the house. If King James comes and prospers, he'll get the Scotch estates and this too, and if the Elector makes his hold good, and Eskdale keeps quiet, he'll get Keanton at all events."

"It is a fine property, and might be made better," said Sir John Newark.

"Yes--yes--yes," rejoined the other knight. "I know it well. It is not ten miles from me. Know every inch of it--very good ground--too much up and down--overrun with wood; but very good tenants--all of them strong loyalists. We might call them all out in a moment of need. But so, this is not the young lord at your house, after all?"

"I only know him as Colonel Smeaton," said Sir John Newark, thoughtfully; for the intelligence he had received produced some vacillation in his mind. "You heard, too, what Lord Stair said of him. Nevertheless, he has all the air and manner of a nobleman; however, Lord Stair would not, I should think--"

"That is nothing--nothing--nothing," interrupted Mount. "*Nom de guerre* perhaps. I recollect he did take some name like that when serving with the Austrian troops in Spain and Italy. That is nothing. Lord Stair is a very shrewd secret man--would not tell tales of his own friends, desperate Whig as he is. He knows better than that. I should like to see this young man. Tell you in a minute who he is--who he is--who he is."

As Sir John had not fully made up his mind, he took no notice of this broad hint, and Sir James did not receive an invitation to Ale Manor. What he had heard, however, induced the former to hurry his departure at any cost, and, after a few minutes more, spent in conversation, eating, and drinking, he called for his chief groom, and inquired for the report of the farrier. That report was unfavourable; the beast would not be in a condition to travel for two or three days; and, taking leave of Sir James Mount, Sir John Newark instantly proceeded to purchase a new horse in order to set out for Ale Manor at once.

Before all this could be accomplished, the saddles put on, and every preparation made, it was nearly seven o'clock, and the knight looked forward to being obliged to end his journey in darkness. He was well accompanied, however, for those were somewhat dangerous times; and, before he was quite out of the city of Exeter, he found that he was destined to have more companions. Coming at full speed down the street, Sir James Mount, followed by two servants, overtook him about a hundred yards beyond the old gates, much to the other's annoyance.

"I will ride with you as far as Aleton Church," said Sir James. "It is only five miles out of my way--out of my way--out of my way, and we can talk as we go. There is something I want to tell you in your ear. Come close--put down your head. Do you know," he continued, in a whisper, "a party of horse, under Captain Smallpiece, has just gone out of the town with Best, the justice, and they are right upon the road before us, as if they were going either to your house or mine--or mine--or mine? We had better reconnoitre them from the tops of the hills, and see which way they take. It would not be pleasant to be at home when such a visit happens."

"Certainly not," returned Sir John Newark, though, to speak truth, he did not exactly mean what he said. He had his own views, however, and he rode on by the side of his chattering companion, buried in thought.

"They are gone to Ale to see for my young guest," he thought. "If he is apprehended, it will serve him right for deceiving me about his marriage. Ay, and it may drive him, though somewhat too fast, on the way I would have him go. If I could but find a means of giving him an intimation to keep out of the way for a time, before the military arrive at Ale, it would do very well. But the party will never let me pass them; and, if I traverse the hills with all these men, we shall be discovered. This babbling old ass, who is not contented with saying a foolish thing without repeating it thrice, would ruin any scheme he had to do with. It would be better to seem to humour him, and to follow his suggestion of reconnoitring. They must stop to water their horses somewhere; and, perhaps, we can pass them then."

Thus thinking, he rode on up the slope of a hill in front, and soon after caught sight of the party of horse winding through the valley below. Well acquainted with every step of the country, he was enabled to follow them unseen amongst the green lanes and hedgerows, keeping a wary

eye upon them all the way, while Sir James Mount continued to pour a perpetual stream of idle prattle into his ear, which annoyed him without distracting his attention from the object in view. The troop went more slowly indeed than suited the wishes or purposes of Sir John Newark; but at length they began to ascend towards the steep bare downs which ran along the sea-coast, on the borders of Devonshire and Dorset. The manœuvres of the reconnoitring party now became more difficult; for, though the road was often cut between deep banks, it was often exposed upon the bare side of the hill, and worthy Sir James became very unruly. He had no diffidence of his own powers, and he would at once have taken the command of an army, although he had never seen a cannon fired in all his life; nor was he willing at all to submit to the cooler discretion of his companion, who sought to pass quietly through the hollow ways, while those whom they were following crossed the more open ground, and to gallop over the wide exposed downs, while the soldiers were hidden by any cut or dip in the road. Struggling with these difficulties as best he might, Sir John Newark, with his companions, came in sight of the little church of Aleton, with the scattered hamlet below, just as the setting sun was spreading a thin veil of purple light over the broad naked face of the hill. The soldiers had then reached the straggling houses of the village; and, to the surprise of all who watched them, they were seen, not only taking the bits out of their horses' mouths, but removing the saddles, as if they intended to remain there all night.

Sir James Mount was full of conjectures as to their purposes; but Sir John Newark's resolution was soon taken, and he exclaimed--

"Well, I cannot remain watching them all night, and I do not intend to slink into my own house by a back way. If you will take my advice, Sir James, you will ride away by the short cut over the hills. I shall go on and talk with them."

He saw a little hesitation in his elderly companion's face, and, to put an end to it, he added--

"For my own part, I have nothing to fear. But I think that journey of yours 'over the water,' as you call it, may prove unpleasant in its results. We could not well spare you just at present."

"No, that must not be--must not be--must not be. I think--I think--I think I had better go. You keep them talking, Sir John, while I gallop over the hills. They cannot chase me, now, for their saddles are off. But, upon my life, I believe they are putting them on again. Good-bye--good-bye?"

And away Sir James went, as fast as he could go, while his companion slowly rode on towards the hamlet.

At some little distance from the houses, Sir John Newark beckoned up one of the servants, on whom he thought he could most rely, and said, in a low voice--

"It is probable that I may stay here some time. You contrive to get away as soon as it is quite dark. Ride on to the house, and tell Colonel Smeaton, in my name, that I think it will be better for him to be out of the way for a few hours. Tell old Mrs. Culpepper to put him where he can lie concealed, and, if he is inquired for, let it be said that he is gone away for a few days."

The servant nodded his head quietly, and Sir John rode on.

Round the door of the little public-house was gathered a group of five or six soldiers, already taking deep draughts of ale; and, dismounting, the knight exclaimed--

"Holloa, my men, what has brought you into this part of the world? We are seldom treated with such a sight here."

"I don't know, sir," answered one of the men, civilly; "but Captain Smallpiece is indoors, taking a glass to comfort him, with the Justice."

"Are you going to halt long?" asked Sir John Newark, in a careless tone. "I shall be glad of your escort, if you are going my way."

"An hour and a half, sir, to feed and rest the horses," replied the man. Having so far satisfied himself, Sir John Newark entered the inn, and walked straight into the only guest-chamber it possessed.

The Justice and the Captain, not being able to obtain wine, were discussing the contents of a small bowl of punch, apparently much to their satisfaction, when the unexpected appearance of Sir John Newark startled them in their potations.

"Why, Sir John!" exclaimed the magistrate, "we thought you were at Ale Manor, by this time."

"You made a mistake, gentlemen," said Sir John Newark, drily. "I had business which detained me in Exeter. But may I ask what is the meaning of all this military display, which 'startles the land from its propriety?' Here, drawer, bring me some punch. My horses are so tired they can go no farther, just yet; and I may as well enjoy this worshipful society in the approved manner."

The Justice looked at the Captain, and the Captain looked at the Justice; but at length the latter replied--

"Why, the truth is, Sir John, we were going to pay *you* a visit at Ale Manor, and luckily having

met with you here, we trust that we shall have the pleasure of your company on the road."

"That depends upon circumstances, gentlemen," observed the other quite calmly. "If you have business with me, it can probably he transacted here as well as at my house."

"Not exactly," answered Justice Best. "The fact is this; the high sheriff and several of our brother magistrates are not quite satisfied in regard to this servant of Colonel Henry Smeaton. They think you may have been deceived, Sir John. It is very easy, you know, to assume a rude and vulgar manner; and, having received very distinct information that the Earl of Eskdale, whom we all know to have been attainted in King William's reign, took his way towards your house, they imagine that this servant may be the man, and they wish him to be apprehended on suspicion."

Sir John Newark laughed aloud.

"What need of a troop of soldiers to arrest a single lackey?" he asked.

"Why, your fishermen in the village are said to be somewhat mutinous," replied the Justice; "and, in case of resistance, you know--"

"You do not suppose, sir, that I would resist or countenance resistance to lawful authority?" interrupted Sir John Newark. "But, if this mare's nest is so very important a one, I think you might have ridden on to find it, without stopping at this house to drink punch."

"We had another little business here, besides," rejoined the Justice, who stood in some awe of Newark; "but our doing so has procured us the advantage, I hope, of your company on the way:"

"Nothing of the kind, sir," retorted Sir John, sharply. "I certainly shall not go with you to see a gentleman, my guest, and the intimate friend of my Lord Stair, insulted in my house, by the pretence that his servant is the Earl of Eskdale, forsooth! You may go on when you please. I shall stay here till this unpleasant business is over. But let me warn you that it be conducted legally; for it shall be strictly looked to, depend upon it."

As he spoke, a man entered with a leathern apron, a dirty face, a bowl of punch in one hand, and a tallow candle in the other; for, by this time, night was falling fast. Sir John Newark's eyes rested on him, for an instant, and a confused doubtful sort of sensation took possession of him, which we all of us feel when we see a face that we know but to which we cannot affix a name. Suddenly, however, the scene of the statuary's house in London came back upon his mind, and the round, odd-shaped, never-to-be-forgotten form of Van Noost, was there before him, in a disguise partaking somewhat of the tapster and somewhat of the blacksmith. A single glance of intelligence passed from one face to the other; but not a word of recognition was uttered. Van Noost set down the candle and the bowl, went back to the tap for a fresh ladle and glass, and then, rolling out of the room, closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XII.

From the turbulent scene amongst the magistrates at Exeter, and the somewhat annoying occurrences which Sir John Newark had met with on the road back, let us turn to the quieter doings at Ale Manor House.

Not long was Emmeline's absence from Smeaton and her young cousin. She came timidly, blushingly, in all the agitation of fresh and strong feelings; but she soon became more tranquil. Dinner, according to the directions of Sir John Newark when he left, was served at the usual hour; and, when it was over, all three walked out to linger away the time in the summer eventide.

After two or three turns up and down the terrace, Richard Newark seated himself upon one of the large guard-stones which marked the separation of the gravel from the turf, from which he commanded a view of two faces of the house, and there he remained for more than an hour, whistling lightly, and apparently lost in thought. Emmeline and Smeaton continued to walk up and down side by side, and their conversation was carried on in tones too low to be heard from the windows of the house. Had any one been watching them, well skilled in the outward signs and symptoms of the sweet madness, he might have divined by the look of tenderness, by the sudden changes of expression, by Smeaton's bended head, by Emmeline's faltering and agitated step, and by the frequent raising of a bright and sparkling look to her companion's face, that he talked of love, and that she listened to him, well pleased.

So, indeed, it was. He led her on, step by step, word by word, himself led on by the growing passion in his own heart. All was said between them which could be said; and, before that walk

was half over, they were plighted to each other, not only in heart and affection, but by words and vows. It might be somewhat sudden; but--as I have endeavoured often enough before to make the reader comprehend--there is no such thing as time. The flowing of events constitutes what we call time. The revolution of the earth round its axis--man's day--is the measure which we have capriciously adopted to mete the passing stream; but how inadequate is that measure to express the value of the thing measured! 'Tis just as if we should sell at the same price the yard of cloth of gold and the yard of dull serge. The events of one day are not more like the events of another than those two woofs. Thoughts and feelings are also events--the events of the mind and soul; and, measured by them, how long a space had Smeaton known Emmeline! The last four-and-twenty hours to both had been a life-time. Cleared of the great mistake regarding time, they had not loved suddenly.

In the little scene which I have depicted--the two lovers walking to and fro within sight of the house--sometimes under the green trees, it is true, but more often upon the soft turf before the terrace--Richard Newark, sitting whistling on the guard-stone--the sky putting on its evening raiment, and the purple draperies of the sun's couch being shaken down over the west, one thing was particularly worth remark; namely, the marvellous patience of the boy. He, so light, so volatile, so full of wild activity, sat quietly there the whole time. It is difficult to explain it, and I can but say, in explanation, that he did it without thought, in all simplicity. The mind might not be very bright or clear; it might be slightly warped from the right direction; but the heart went as straight as an arrow. He felt that Emmeline would like to be alone with Smeaton, and he with her; and, loving them both right well, by an impulse--by an instinct with which thought had nothing to do--he not only left them by themselves, but watched that they were not interrupted, and with love like that of a faithful dog, he watched patiently.

At length, however, Richard Newark rose, and, with a quick step, joined the two lovers. He had seen some one coming round the other angle of the house; and he said, with a laugh--

"There is old Mrs. Culpepper upon the prowl again, Emmy. Take care, pretty bird, take care. That cat's steps are very stealthy."

Emmeline, brighter, but as simple as himself, replied,

"I do not fear her, Dick--I do not fear anything now."

Oh, what a world of revelation was in that little word, *now!* It spoke of feelings totally changed--of hope and trust and confidence sprung up--of the absorption, as it were, of her very being into the being of another--of the vast assurance with which woman's heart reposes upon love.

Richard Newark did not remark it; but Smeaton felt it, and was very happy; for it told him how completely she was his own. They continued their walk, and caught a glimpse of the old woman's figure moving quietly along at some little distance; but they heeded it not, and continued talking in a lighter strain, and of more indifferent things, but, with the spirit that was in their hearts, giving life and energy to their thoughts and words, and breathing tones which each understood as meaning more than the words expressed. There was no weariness for them. The sun sank gradually through the sky, touched the edge of the horizon, dropped below it, disappeared. Purple, and gold, and grey, had each their moment in the western sky, then gave place, and darkness followed. The stars shone out, bright and clear above, not large, but very lustrous; and then the moon began to throw her light upward from the east, preparing to sweep the diamond dust of heaven away from her path on high.

Still Emmeline and Smeaton walked on, and talked of everything. Heaven! how their thoughts rambled, shooting up amongst those stars, flying on fairy wings after the setting sun, wreathing the purple and the gold into fantastic forms, and twining the evening clouds into rosy coronals. Aladdin's palace-builders, all spirits as they were, wrought not so fast or gorgeously as the spirit of love.

But hark! The sound is heard of a distant horse's feet coming at great speed along the road, and the three companions are retiring to the house quickly.

The lights had just been lighted, the windows closed, and they were seated calmly in the smaller saloon, though two of them were trying to banish from look and manner all trace of the emotions which had risen up in their hearts, when a step was heard in the marble hall without, the door opened, and a servant of Sir John Newark entered, followed by the old housekeeper. The man was dusty from the road; and eager haste was upon his face, as he advanced close to Smeaton to avoid being obliged to speak loud.

"Sir John has sent me, sir," he said, "to tell you there is danger abroad, and to say that he begs you to keep out of the way for a short time. Mrs. Culpepper will show you a place where no one can find you; and you had better seek it quickly."

Smeaton gazed at him with some surprise, but without much emotion.

"What is the matter, my good friend?" he said. "I have nothing to fear that I know of. I really do not see what can be the use of my concealing myself; for I have committed no offence, and know not that any one can wish me ill. What is it has alarmed Sir John?"

"I really do not know the whole, sir," replied the man; "but I heard they had a very stormy meeting at Exeter, and that a party of horse was sent out in the evening towards this place. We followed them close, and watched them all along as far as Aleton. There Sir John stopped, I dare say, to try and keep them as long as possible, while I came on to give you warning."

Smeaton laughed, notwithstanding the anxiety which he saw in the countenance of Emmeline.

"My good friend, Sir John," he said, "mistakes altogether my position. I have nothing to fear from troops of horse, nor from bodies of magistrates. They may subject me to some little annoyance, perhaps; but that is all they can do; and I do not think it either needful or dignified to conceal myself. If discovered, as I probably should be, the very fact of my concealment would justify suspicion and look like guilt."

"Perhaps, sir," said the old housekeeper, in that quiet plausible tone which is so very common to housekeepers, "Sir John may request you to do this for his own sake more than yours. He may have denied at Exeter, perhaps, that there is any such gentleman here."

Smeaton looked her full in the face, thinking that she was not paying any high compliment to her master's sincerity and truthfulness, and trying to discover from her countenance whether there was not some latent motive for the course suggested which she did not choose to explain. It was all blank, however; smooth, calm, and inexpressive; and, unable to make anything of it, he replied--

"That alters the question greatly; for I suppose you do not speak without some knowledge, my good lady. However, my best course will be, in such circumstances, to mount my horse and ride away for a time. If I meet with any of these gentry, they must take me if they please; but I should not like to be discovered lurking like a rat in a hole."

Emmeline looked at him sadly, almost reproachfully, as if she would fain have asked:

"Will you leave me so soon, and peril your own safety thereby?"

But the old housekeeper observed, quietly,

"There is not the slightest chance of discovery, sir. I could place you in the priest's chamber, where they say that Henry Garnet, who was afterwards hanged, drawn, and quartered, lay for six whole weeks without being found out, nearly a century ago. There is a way out from it, too, beyond the house; so that, if you heard the door above open, you could get down through the wood to Ale, and away for France in a fisherman's boat. Sir John, in case of need, would take good care to have a boat ready and the way clear."

Smeaton changed his mind in a moment; for the woman's words gave rise to considerations which she little anticipated or knew. He was still of the same opinion, indeed, that boldly to face inquiry, and to meet those who were sent after him, would be the best course for his own safety; for he was well aware that he had nothing to fear from straightforward conduct; but he reflected, at the same time, that, by so doing, he might curtail his stay in the same house with Emmeline; and he moreover foresaw that a time might come when the knowledge of such a secret entrance to Ale Manor House might be serviceable in more ways than one.

These thoughts passed through his mind in a moment; but, before he answered, both Emmeline and Richard Newark had time to speak.

"I beseech you, be guided, Colonel Smeaton," said the young lady, trying to conceal, as far as possible, from the eyes of the housekeeper the feelings of her heart. "Depend upon it, my guardian has good cause for his advice."

"Oh, show it to me, show it to me, Mrs. Culpepper," exclaimed Richard Newark, alluding to the chamber and passage she spoke of.

"I must not, Master Richard," replied the old woman, in a familiar tone. "It is not a secret to be trusted to such a rattle-pate as yours. You and Miss Emmeline must both remain behind, if the gentleman consents to go, which I think he had better do."

"Well, fair lady," said Smeaton, addressing Emmeline, "as you wish it, I will consent, although against my own better judgment. Perhaps Sir John Newark may, after all, have more information than we know; and, as I believe him to be a very shrewd and prudent man and to wish me well, I will follow his counsel. I will leave a private message for him with you and Richard. I will follow you in an instant, Mrs. Culpepper;" and he then added, in a lower tone: "Send the man away, and wait for me a moment without. I will follow you directly."

She only replied by a low curtesy, and retired from the room, closing the door behind her.

"Now, Richard," continued Smeaton, in a whisper, "endeavour to see which way she takes me; and, if you can discover, tell our dear Emmeline. Wherever the door of this chamber is, I will come to it from time to time; and, if I hear a voice I know, I will give such intimation of where it is that you can easily find it."

"I will find it out, I will find it out," answered the boy, laughing. "I will watch the old cat every step that she takes for the next three days, as cunningly as she ever watched any one. She must carry you food."

"I hope so," replied Smeaton, with a smile. "But be careful; and now farewell."

He found Mrs. Culpepper quite as near the door as was discreet; but, if she had been listening, she was disappointed; for the conversation within the saloon could not be heard.

"Now, sir," she said, in a low voice, "tread lightly, that they may not hear our steps. This way, if you please, sir."

She led him through the hall, up the large flight of steps to the floor above, past the doors of his own apartments and those of Emmeline, and then up a small staircase of five or six steps to a large old-fashioned room, fitted up in the style of Queen Elizabeth's days. On one side was an immense bed with green velvet draperies and canopy, having a plume of feathers like a hearse at each corner; and on the opposite side the deep-cut windows with a sort of bench of black oak between them. A number of large pictures hung round the room, none of which, however, descended to the floor; and there was a huge fire-place on the left-hand side, which occupied so much space that it seemed impossible there could be any means of exit here. The door by which they entered was in the middle of another wall; and the panelling seemed heavy and solid.

"Now, sir," said the old lady, closing the door, "you would never find the way in, I think, if I did not show you."

"Perhaps a little examination would discover it," replied Smeaton. "I have been in countries, madam, where such secret places are very common."

"I think I might defy you, sir," she said. "Perhaps it is here," said Smeaton, approaching the black oak bench, and pressing on various parts of the picture frame above. "These walls are thick enough to contain a small chamber."

The old woman smiled; and he went on pressing more tightly upon the frame, and thinking that he felt it yield a little. At length, he heard the click of a spring, and the frame, moving upon a hinge, came slowly forward at one side, showing a room or closet within, of about five feet in width, by ten or twelve in length, raised a foot or two from the floor.

"Well, that is strange!" cried Mrs. Culpepper. "I never saw that before. It must be done for a blind."

"Then, is this not the place?" asked Smeaton.

"Oh, dear, no, sir," replied the housekeeper. "You would be stifled in there. The priest's room is as good a one as this; but that is a good hint to mislead searchers any way. Shut it up, sir, and I will show you the other. Will you have the goodness to try and move back the bed--for it is very heavy."

"I will try," said Smeaton; "but, though I am tolerably strong, I doubt that I shall be able to do it. We do not see such massive furniture now-a-days."

As he spoke, he grasped one of the large posts, and endeavoured to stir the huge bedstead. It moved not in the least, however, and the old housekeeper stood near the head, holding the light and smiling at his ineffectual efforts. Smeaton remarked her countenance, and the peculiar expression which it bore. He saw also that she leaned her right hand against the post at the top of the bed. Approaching her then, with a gay laugh, he said--

"I think I have your secret;" but on pushing back the velvet hangings from the spot upon which her hand rested, he could only perceive one of two immense iron screws which fastened the bed, apparently immoveably, to the wall behind it. He made one more effort, however, to move the bed, but in vain, and then laughingly gave it up, saying; "I must trust to your guidance, madam."

"Dear me," replied the old woman, "I thought you must be stronger than I am; but let me try." And, putting her hand gently to the head post, with hardly an effort, she made the huge bed roll round upon its castors like a heavy door, still remaining attached to the wall on one side, but quite free on the other. When it was thus removed, the fluted velvet back of the bed still remained fastened against the wall; but it might now be easily seen that this was a door which opened without difficulty.

Smeaton drew it back and looked into a large and comfortable room. But he was not a man to shut himself up in a place from which he did not know the means of exit; and he was running his eye rapidly both over the wall and the back of the bed, when the old lady said--

"You see, sir, this thing, that looks like a great bed screw, is, in fact, a catch, which runs into the post and fastens with a spring. To get into the room, you must press the plate upon the post through which it passes, and, at the same time, pull up the screw. Without that, no force on earth would move it. But, the moment you do that, the bed of itself moves forward a little, the catch is thrown off, and you can easily roll it round."

"That is the way in," replied Smeaton; "but now, my good lady, tell me the way out. How am I to unfasten the bed when once you have rolled it back?"

"That is more easily done than the other," replied the old woman. "Look here. This iron bar, made like a screw, passes quite through the beam, with a long handle on the other side, and is fixed upon a pivot. You have nothing to do but to push down the handle, when the catch will be thrown off, and the bed will move an inch or two, so as to prevent it from fastening again. There is, somewhere in there, a block of wood--a sort of rest which you can put under the handle; and then nobody can undo it from the outside without pulling the whole to pieces. I come in here four times every year by myself to see that everything is in order, and that all moves easily. But we must not wait talking. I will show you the way, sir."

And she stepped over the skirting board which was left plain below the opening of the door.

"You see, sir," she continued, pointing to a number of small loop-holes, both round and square, on one side of the room, "you will have plenty both of light and air, and there is no fear of anybody seeing the light even if you made a bonfire here; for those holes are hidden by the stone work round Miss Emmeline's windows on the one side, and by the same round the windows of the room we have just left on the other. I will bring you some supper and anything you may want out of your room as soon as it is all safe; but you had better not come out yourself till I come and tell you; for I do not know how you would pull back the bed again if you were forced to retreat."

"Then show me the other way out which you mentioned," said Smeaton. "I am not very fond of rat-traps, and stories of these secret chambers get abroad about the country. So that people may know more of the way in hither than you believe."

A look of hesitation came upon good Mrs. Culpepper's face, which instantly gave way to her usual smooth expression; and she said, "There is no fear of that, sir. Nobody knows anything of this room but myself and Sir John. I had better go now and make all right below, and I can show you the other way out when I bring your supper."

"No, indeed, my good lady," replied Smeaton, in a determined tone. "You must show me now, or I certainly shall not stay. That piece of mechanism might get embarrassed. I might hear people breaking in. A thousand things might happen to make my discovery here inevitable, if I did not know the other way, and I will not be caught lurking here. If you please, you shall show me now."

"Oh, very well, sir, very well," replied the housekeeper. "It is very easily found. Be so good as to follow me."

Passing through a door to the left of the loop-holes, she led him through a passage, curiously constructed in the wall between the upper and lower row of windows. As soon as it had passed beneath what Smeaton conceived to be the windows of Emmeline's room, came a very narrow flight of stairs, and then another passage. Again came a second descent, steep but broader than the first, which led to what seemed to have been originally a cellar, arched over in brickwork and of no great extent. Beyond it was a long passage, evidently underground, and gently sloping downward till the whole was closed with a stone door in which was a key-hole.

"The key always lies there, sir," said Mrs. Culpepper, pointing to a little niche; "but I must tell you that, when you open the door, there is, just before you, the well, which you must step over to get out, or you might drown yourself. It is an old well with an arch over it, the water of which is thought good for sore eyes; so that the people come here often on a morning to get it; and, when you stand on this side of the door, you may hear all they say as they gossip round the well. The right hand path leads away through the wood at the back of the village to the bay; the left takes round again to the terrace in front of the house; but that is well nigh a quarter of a mile off, and no horses can come round here; for the hill is too steep."

Smeaton did not promise himself any great entertainment from overhearing the gossiping of the fishermen's wives and daughters, but quietly followed his guide back again to the room above. She there left her light with him, passed through the aperture, closed the door, and he could hear her roll back the bed, and the catch click upon the spring.

CHAPTER XIII.

There are moments in the life of every one, when some sudden and unexpected change hurries us rapidly through a bustling and exciting scene, where we are called upon to decide and act suddenly upon unforeseen conditions, and then leaves us to pause and reflect in solitude and silence upon what we have just done. The effect is strange, as all men arrived at mature life must

have felt, when, left to our own thoughts, we scan the busy moments just passed, doubtful whether impulse or reason have guided us, and still more doubtful whether impulse or reason have guided us aright. Often the answer is, "Yes," and often, "No;" and, when it is negative, man, with his great skill in covering his own faults and follies from his eyes, satisfies himself by shrugging up his shoulders, and saying--"I acted for the best--" forgetting too often how much of the fault he would thus palliate is attributable to the evil habit of not making reason his ever-present and ready guide. Exercise her daily, use her upon all occasions, and she will act at the first call. Neglect her for an hour, she falls asleep, and requires time to be roused. All very trite; but do any of us remember this as much as we ought?

When Smeaton stood alone, shut up in the priest's chamber, he began to ask himself if he had done wisely in consenting to be hidden in that retreat, and he could not but acknowledge that love for Emmeline, and the thought of obtaining means of access to her under some remote and uncertain contingences, had shared more in fixing his determination than the consideration either of his own safety or of his own name and character. He saw that he had not acted in accordance with reason; but he too--for he was by no means perfect--treated the error lightly, saying to himself--

"Well, it is done, and cannot be undone. Let us make the best of it. There is always a way out of this secret chamber, that is one comfort; but I had better examine it more closely. I saw the key lying there, it is true, but I did not satisfy myself that it would turn in the lock, and it seemed somewhat rusty."

Thus musing, he took the light from the table, and walked quickly through the passage along which the old woman had led him.

"She was foolish," he thought, "to hesitate about showing me the way. No one could miss it."

At the end of the lower passage, he found the key lying in the little niche, and, taking it up, was about to apply it to the lock, when he thought he heard a step, without being able to distinguish at first whether it was in the passage behind him, or on the hill-side beyond the door. He turned round, and looked, and listened; and then clearly heard the step again, apparently close to him, but on the outside. The next instant, a voice was heard speaking in a grumbling tone, and with a strong Devonshire accent.

"I don't see what is the use of sending us down here," it said. "Why, twenty people could pass us in this wood."

"Never you mind, Jim; do your duty and obey orders," said another voice. "Let other people think what is *the use*. I am sure you would never find out for yourself, if it made you take ten steps off your horse's back. There, get on a little lower down. I'll mount guard here, where the path turns."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed Smeaton, to himself; "the search has begun. I may as well wait here a little. Any one coming down the stairs, and along the passage, would soon be heard; and I think these two gentlemen outside would easily be dealt with."

He accordingly put the candle in the niche where the key had lain, brought the hilt of his sword a little round, and quietly placed the key in the lock. A few minutes passed in perfect silence, the men without either standing perfectly still, or sitting on the edge of the fountain; but then Smeaton's quick ear caught the sound of a distant footfall, which evidently came nearer and nearer, but not by the passage in which he was standing.

"Who may this new visitor be, I wonder!" he mentally ejaculated, and, bending down his head, listened more attentively. The step came nearer and nearer, and approached the door close to which he had placed himself. Then, a loud voice cried "Stand!" and Smeaton could hear the sound of what seemed a spring and a brief scuffle.

"Ugh, ugh! don't strangle me!" cried a good, round, jolly voice. "Man, I am apoplectic, by the blessing of God and the assistance of capons and strong waters. If you twist my cravat in that way, you will get nothing but a dead statuary, which is as bad as a dead lion."

The last words confirmed what the tone of voice had intimated to Smeaton before, that his good friend Van Noost was the person who had fallen into the hands of the Philistines; and, believing, from their conversation that morning, that the poor sculptor had more cause than himself to fear the pursuit of justice, he felt really sorry for him.

"Lion, or whatever else you may call yourself," replied the soldier's voice, "you must along with me. Come, come, no struggling, or I'll break your pate, master. By ----, they say, 'as fat as a lord;' and, if this is a lord, it is a fat one of the sort."

"Ugh, ugh!" cried Van Noost. "I tell you, you will strangle me if you drag me in that way."

Smeaton could bear it no more. The impulse to help the poor caster of leaden figures was too strong to be resisted; and he gave way to it. In a moment, the key was turned in the lock and the door drawn back, hiding completely the light in the niche. A slight gleam of the risen moon showed the waters of the well about three feet across, with a little path beyond, and a soldier

pulling Van Noost along. In a moment, Smeaton was across the well; the man, hearing a noise, turned his head; but, before he could see whence it came, or who was his assailant, a blow from Smeaton's clenched fist forced him to relax his grasp upon the sculptor, and a second, before he could use his sword, sent him rolling down the hill-side amongst the trees and bushes.

"Quick! Come with me!" cried Smeaton, seizing Van Noost's hand, and pulling him on. "Jump!--take a good spring."

The last words were uttered after he himself had cleared the well, and was standing in the passage, but still holding Van Noost's hand across the water. Some of the lead of the statuary's profession, however, seemed to have got into the poor man's hinder quarters, for, though he made a great effort to follow his conductor, he fell short by a few inches; and, had it not been for Smeaton's grasp, might probably have been drowned. The other, however, dragged him into the passage head foremost, and quietly closed and locked the door.

"Hush!" he whispered, seeing that Van Noost was about to speak. "Hush! be perfectly still."

"Jim, Jim," cried the voice of the soldier without--"look after them. They are coming your way--stop them--shoot them dead, if they won't stand."

As he spoke, he scrambled up again towards the path, displacing a large stone which rolled down into the valley. Whether the other soldier took it for a flying enemy or not, I cannot tell; but, instantly after, he vociferated loudly--"Stand!" and the next moment the report of a pistol shot was heard.

Smeaton smiled, and whispered to his companion--"All is safe; but keep perfectly silent."

The sound of many feet running from above was then heard, as some of the companions of the men below hurried down, alarmed by the shot, and great confusion, with much talking, ensued, of which only fragments reached the ears of those in the passage, somewhat after the following fashion.

"What is the matter, what is the matter?" "Here, come here. They have gone down here. I had got hold of him by the neck; but another came up, and knocked me down." "Who did you get hold of?" "They have got a dark lantern with them; for the light flashed out and dazzled my eyes. If you don't make haste, they will be gone. They ran straight down for the bay."

Many other cries, questions, and answers were going on at once; but two or three of the soldiers, answering the call of the man who had fired the pistol below, hurried down the path and, accompanied by him, ran on, some between the back of the houses and the steep hill-side, and others along the verge of the little stream, thus sweeping the whole course of the valley till they reached the smooth white sand on the shore of the bay.

The scene was calm and beautiful, the moon shining brightly over the sheltered water of the bay, and changing it into rippling silver, while Ale Head, dark and shadowy, swept like a gigantic wall round the south-western side, and the opposite point of Ale Down just caught the gleam of moonlight on its high head. It was a scene which might have led a lover of the picturesque, or one of the unhappy children of Imagination, to pause and dream. But the soldiers had no such thoughts; one single object attracted their whole attention. This was a fishing-boat, quietly rowing out of the little mouth of the bay, and darkening a diminutive space on the shining sea beyond.

They drew their own conclusions, which, like most hasty conclusions from insufficient premises, were altogether false. The boat was merely filled with fishermen; and, if the pursuers had paused to consider, they would have comprehended that sufficient time had not elapsed between the firing of the shot above, and the moment that they reached the beach, for any person to have pushed off the boat and rowed to the entrance of the bay. They determined in their own minds, however, that the persons of whom they came in search had made their escape by that means, and one said to the others--

"Well, they are off, that's clear, and there is no use of trying to follow; for, even if we were to get the boats off, I know no more about 'em than a jackass does of a powder-horn. Do you, Symes?"

"No more than you do, corporal," replied the other. "We had better go back to the house and tell the Justice."

"Tell the captain, Symes--tell the captain," replied the corporal. "That is what we must do. We know nothing of Justices. Justice has no more to do with us than my cap has with a bunch of keys. We act under our captain, Symes, and to him I shall go and report. Come along, my men."

In the mean time, while all these events had been passing on the side of the hill and in the passage near the well, other occurrences had taken place in Ale Manor House itself, which I must briefly notice.

Richard Newark had crept quietly after Smeaton and Mrs. Culpepper as far as he dared; and, at all events, had discovered the direction which they had taken. Emmeline had run out upon the

terrace, and, watching the windows above, had gained some farther knowledge from the way in which she saw the light travel. Indeed, she clearly perceived it through the windows next to her own, and it seemed to pause for some time there. A distant sound, however, caused her to return suddenly into the house and order the doors to be closed. This had hardly been done, when the old housekeeper returned; and, going from servant to servant, in her quiet smooth way, cautioned each to say, if Colonel Smeaton was asked for, that he had ridden away to Axminster for the day.

Then came a period of suspense; but it did not last very long; for, at the end of five or six minutes, the approach of the troopers was intimated by the noise of their horses upon the terrace. Sundry orders were given in a loud voice, and then the great bell at the door rang.

"Don't open the door," said Richard Newark, to one of the servants who was crossing the hall. "Let me see who these folks are."

Then, partly opening one of the windows of the saloon, he called out--

"What do you want, my masters? Do you think we hold a horse fair here, that you bring so many beasts for sale?"

"Open the door, in the king's name and to the king's troops," said the officer in command, who had imbibed as much punch as was compatible with the due exercise of his understanding. "We require to search this house."

"That you shall not do, were you twice as tall," replied the boy, boldly, "without a lawful right to do so. Do you know this is the house of Sir John Newark, a Justice of peace for the county?"

"Oh, let them in, Richard," said Emmeline. "You cannot keep them out."

At the same moment, Justice Best advanced on foot to the window, saying--

"Let your people open the door, Master Richard. My name is Best. You have seen me with your father, and must know that I am a Justice of the peace too. Sir John is aware of our coming, and makes no opposition.

"Oh, that is another case, worshipful Master Best," replied the boy. "Open the door, my men, and let in the great magistrate."

Then, taking a light from the table, he went out into the hall and bowed low with mock reverence as the Justice and two or three of the soldiers entered.

"Pray, what is your good will and pleasure, and whom do you seek, worshipful sir?" asked the boy, whose wits seemed to sharpen under exercise. "As for myself, I am quite harmless. I heard an old woman, one day, call me an innocent, and my nurse used to call me her lamb. So that, unless Justice be a wolf, I have nothing to fear from her fangs. Indeed, this knowledge-box of mine is so empty, that there are not materials within it sufficient to manufacture treason, even against a farmer's orchard; and, as for robbery or murder, upon my life they never came into my noddle--always excepting birds' nests and mackerel in the bay."

"You are a merry boy, Master Richard," returned the Justice; "but our purpose in coming hither, is to seek a certain personage, passing for and reputed to be a servant of one Colonel Henry Smeaton. If he is produced at once, we shall give you no further trouble; but if not, we must search the house; for we are credibly informed that this man, in the disguise of a servant, is no other than the Earl of Eskdale, a known adherent of the Pretender. It is impossible for him to escape; for the house is surrounded. So you had better produce him at once. As I wish to do everything with courtesy, however, you had better communicate what I say to Colonel Smeaton, who may escape injurious suspicions if he gives his companion up freely."

"Colonel Smeaton has gone over to Axminster this afternoon," said one of the servants, coming forward, "and won't be back to-night; but, as for his man, your worship, he was in the hall not a minute ago, and making all the maids laugh with his funny stories."

"Ah, very likely," replied the Justice. "We have heard he is a jocular person. This confirms our information. Be so good as to ask him to walk hither, and remember you have admitted that he was in this house not a minute ago."

"To be sure I did," retorted the man, surlily; "and I don't doubt that he'll be in this hall in less than a minute more."

So saying he walked away, murmuring something about a pack of fools, which the Justice did not hear, or did not choose to hear.

Turning quietly to the door of the smaller saloon, his worship observed, in his usual soft and courteous accents, "Perhaps, Master Richard, you will allow me to examine my prisoner in this room. We have had a long ride, and a seat in a chair would be pleasanter to me than to remain in the saddle or to stand upon my legs."

"Ay, they seem weakly," answered the lad; "but you shall have right good leave and license to

sit as long as a hen, if it pleases you, and see what you can hatch--a brood of nonsensicalities, doubtless!" he added to himself, as he followed the Justice into the room. Then, raising his voice again, he said--"Here is Justice Best, Emmy, come to look for Henry Smeaton's servant, accusing him of being attached to the three Kings of Brentford, and committing high treason against the wise men of Gotham. He is going to examine him in here, and we shall have rare fun, I don't doubt. Do stay and see the proverbs of Solomon put into action."

Emmeline, however, was fain to escape from the room, with an inclination of her head to the Justice as she passed; for, although she was desirous enough to hear all that took place, she feared that her anxiety and alarm might be evidenced too strongly.

It was clear enough to Mr. Justice Best that Richard Newark was laughing at him; but, as the lad was generally considered in the county deficient in intellect, he contented himself with saying, "Poor boy!" and seated himself solemnly at the table.

"This fellow is not coming, it seems," said Captain Smallpiece, who had followed with some of the soldiers into the room. "I had better search the house, your worship."

"Nay, nay, nay!" exclaimed the Justice, "have a little patience, Smallpiece. One of you have the goodness to call in my clerk."

"Here I am, sir," said a small man from behind; and, almost at the same moment, Smeaton's servant entered the room, with a curious and peculiar sort of leer upon his countenance, which seemed to show that he, at all events, entertained no apprehension of the result. He was followed by the servant who had spoken to the Justice in the hall, and some other domestics; and, raising his eyes to his face, the Justice asked, with an important air, "Pray, who are *you*, sir?"

"I am Colonel Smeaton's servant," he answered, with a strong Cockney accent. "They told me you wanted me."

"Are you his *only* servant?" asked the Justice, a good deal staggered by the man's appearance.

"He could not have a better," replied the man; "and, though I'm the only one, I'm as good as two; for I groom the horses and valet the master."

"Oh, ho!" ejaculated the Justice. "Now we are coming to it. Methinks a common lackey, sir, would not put on such a demeanour to a magistrate of the county acting in the king's name. My lord, concealment is of no avail. We know all about you, and have full information."

"Lord! lord! *I*, my lord!" cried the man; "to think of my turning out a lord!--I, who was born in a back garret at the corner of Fetter Lane, fattened upon the fumes of soap-suds--for my mother was a washerwoman, your worship--an honest woman, for all that--I, to turn out a lord! Well, the transmogrifications of this 'varsal world are miraculous, I do declare. Has your worship got my certificate in that little book; for if you have, I'll be a lord for all the rest of my life--see if I don't--and get a pension from the King, to keep up my dignity."

"Five foot, eleven, and a half," said the Justice, reading from a paper he had taken out of his pocket-book, and then raising his eyes to the man's figure. "Deuce take it! he does not seem so tall as that."

"Five foot three quarters, without my shoes," replied the man, smartly; "but perhaps I shall grow, seeing that I am only one-and-thirty, and a peer of the realm. I don't see why I should not grow to any height, now I have right and title to hold my head higher than I ever thought to hold it. Humility has shortened me all this while."

"Come, come, sir," said the Justice, thrown into a great state of doubt and indecision. "If you are the Earl of Eskdale, you had better acknowledge it at once; and, whether you are or are not, treat the Court with respect."

"The Earl of Eskdale!" cried old Mrs. Culpepper, who had come into the room with the other servants. Then, seeing that surprise had done what few things ever did do, thrown her off her guard, she added, "No, I can answer for it he is none of that blood. Why, the Earl of Eskdale must be an old white-headed man."

"Ay, ay, but that earl is dead," exclaimed the Justice. "This is the young earl we talk of, my good lady--Mrs. Culpepper, I believe; I hope you are well, Mrs. Culpepper--but don't meddle with this business, for I don't think you can know anything about it."

"How can *you* know, Goody?" cried the servant, turning sharply round to her, with a mock look of indignation. "Pray don't do me out of my dignity--I may be a peer or a prince, for aught you know."

"I never saw such a one," said the old woman, sarcastically; "but I can answer for your being none of the Eskdale family, for they were all tall handsome men and women; and you are no more like them than a beggar's cur is like a stag-hound."

"Civil, you see, civil!" said the man. "You perceive that high station is not without its

inconveniences; but if your worship will only make me out a peer, I will take any title you please. I am quite indifferent as to names. Suppose you call me Lord Fetter Lane, or the Earl of Newgate."

"You may soon have a better right to either title than you expect," growled Captain Smallpiece, who was difficult to convince; but the Justice, whose wits were somewhat clearer, though not very pellucid either, began to have marvellous doubts on the subject of the man's real condition.

"Pray, sir," he said, "if you are really Colonel Smeaton's servant, and nobody else, when did you enter that gentleman's service, and where?"

"In Lunnun town," replied the man, drily, "on the fifth day of June last, at about half past three in the evening. Thank God, I have had a good edication, considering the mess I was brought up in; and I am very reg'lar in my habits--which I owe to my dear departed mother, who always kept her washing-books very correct, and wiped her hands whenever she took them out of the tub. She used to say she could always go into court with clean hands, poor woman; and so can I; for you see I always keep a little book here in my pocket, in which I put down when I enter, and when I quit, a service, and I get my kind masters to sign for me. Some of them don't speak as well as I deserve, it is true; but still they cannot say much harm. There is the book. You may look at it."

"Let me see, let me see," said the Justice; and, taking the book, he read some of the various characters which had been given to the man before him by the different masters whom he had served; one of which was as follows:

"This is to certify that Thomas Higham was in my service for eleven months and three days--a clever fellow, but a saucy rascal--passably honest, and not given to drink. I discharged him for his impudence.

"HENRY SACKVILLE,

"*Deputy Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household*."

Such was the first certificate he read; but there were a number of others, all much to the same purpose, which fully accounted for the time of Master Thomas Higham, from the age of sixteen up to the moment at which he stood before the magistrate.

"There must be some mistake here," said Mr. Best, beckoning up Captain Smallpiece and pointing to the papers before him. At that instant, the report of fire-arms was heard through the window which Richard Newark had left open, and the Justice exclaimed: "Hark! What is that?"

"Some of the fools let a pistol off by accident," answered the military officer. "Being fools, they are always committing some folly."

Having been thus oracular, he proceeded, with a somewhat unsteady gaze, to examine the certificates before him. He was one of those men who, even in their most sober moments (and he was not now sober), have a certain obscurity of mental vision which prevents them from perceiving anything but what is immediately before them. He stumbled and blundered through several of the testimonials, repeating from time to time--"Well, I don't see what that has to do with it. Well, I don't see--Tom Higham may be a good sort of saucy fellow; but who is Tom Higham? I should like to know. You cannot tell that this is Tom Higham."

"But it is very clear that he cannot be Lord Eskdale," replied the magistrate; "for his lordship is six foot high, and this man is five foot four. I am sure there has been some mistake. Our information is decided, it is true, that the Earl was seen passing this way. But we have no proof that he came to this house."

"Well, we had better search at all events," said the officer.

The magistrate, however, was of a different opinion. He thought he had gone quite far enough in offending Sir John Newark, of whom he stood in no little fear; he saw many means which the worthy knight might have of annoying, if not injuring, him, and knew that he would not at all scruple to use them.

A somewhat sharp altercation ensued, which highly amused Richard Newark, and not less Smeaton's servant, who, after it had gone on for some minutes, interposed with his usual saucy leer, saying:

"Will your worships tell me whether I am to be a Lord or not after all? I am very willing to be a Lord, if you wish it."

"Hold your tongue, fellow," said Justice Best. "You interrupt me in explaining to Captain Smallpiece that it would be wrong, discourteous, and perhaps illegal, to search Sir John Newark's

house without information that an attainted person was actually here. All the suspicions were of yourself; and, if they turn out to be groundless, my functions in the case cease. If Captain Smallpiece, indeed, thinks fit to take upon himself--"

Before he could finish the sentence, one of the corporals of the regiment, followed by the men who had been down on the beach with him, pushed his way through the crowd round the door, and saluted in military fashion his commanding officer.

"Well, what the devil do you want, Corporal? I told you to keep watch outside."

"I have come to report that they have got off, sir," said the man. "We could not overtake them before they got into a boat and away."

"Who, who, who?" shouted the magistrate. "Who do you mean by 'they'?"

"Why, the Earl and his servant, I suppose, your worship," replied the corporal. "I got hold of one of them by the neck; but then up comes the other, flashed the light of a dark lantern in my eyes, and, before I could draw sword, knocked me head foremost down the hill. Good luck to the bush that stopped me. They ran away together down through the wood, and passed Jim, here, who fired his pistol at them."

"Ay, that I did," said a man behind him.

"They ran away down to the water, however," added the other, "and, before we could overtake them, had jumped into a boat and were rowing away out to sea."

"There, there, now," cried Mr. Best. "I told you how it would be." And he looked straight at Captain Smallpiece, as if the whole of this mischance had been of that officer's bringing about.

"No, you did not," rejoined the Captain. "You did not say anything of the kind. You were cock-sure, like all the rest of them, that this lackey was the Earl disguised, and that you would pounce upon him here like a hawk on a hedge-sparrow."

"But did you not wish to search the house without the slightest grounds of pretence?" demanded the magistrate. The officer, however, turned away from him, with a look of half-drunken contempt, and, addressing himself to the corporal, asked,

"What sort of men were they, corporal?"

"One was short and fat," said the corporal, "with a great many ribbons about him. The other was a tall man, and seemed youngish, as far as I could see."

"The Earl and his servant without doubt," said the Justice.

"I suppose so," grumbled Captain Smallpiece, in a disappointed tone. "What is to be done now? Shall we search?"

"Search! Search for what," demanded the Justice, "when they have got off to sea? There is no proof they were ever in the house at all, and very probably have been, during the time, down in one of the huts. What is to be done! Why, march off your men as fast as possible, and let us see how we can patch up matters with Sir John Newark. He won't forget it in a hurry, depend upon it. I require you, sir, to march off your men."

"Oh, very well," cried the Captain, indignantly. "That shall be done faster than you like perhaps. There, sound boot and saddle." And he walked away to the door.

"Could you favour me with a glass of wine, Master Richard?" said the Justice, in an insinuating tone. "We have ridden far; and this is dry work."

"Not a drop," replied the boy, boldly. "You came on a fool's errand; and you may go dry away. I can tell you, Master Best," he added, with a laugh, "you'll want all the wit in your noddle to settle accounts with my father; and it would be unkind to take a jot out of the canister by putting wine in. You have had quite enough to-night already, I should think; and, at all events, you'll get no more here."

The servants laughed; and, after trying hard for a look of dignity which would not come, Justice Best walked out of the room, with his clerk sneaking behind him, like a beaten cur.

"There, there," cried Richard Newark, running out into the hall and to the foot of the stairs, "shut all the doors and windows. Emmy, Emmy! Come down. All the fools are gone!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Having already changed the *venue* once in the same chapter, I have judged it best to finish one of those fragments into which the caprice of authorship induces men to divide romances, before I return to Henry Smeaton and his companion in the passage. We must now, however, leave the party in the house, and once more place ourselves by the side of the well where, soon after the last words spoken by Smeaton, the moving away of the soldiers towards the beach could plainly be distinguished; and the path without seemed to be left to solitude and silence.

"They are gone, my good friend," said Smeaton, at length, still speaking in a whisper, lest any lingerer should be remaining behind. "They are gone; but we must still be very cautious, if we would escape danger. In Fortune's name, what brought you over here, Van Noost? If I had not seen you in the morning and recognized your voice to-night, you would still have been in the hands of the Philistines, my good friend."

"Thanks, great Samson, thanks!" cried Van Noost. "The very next figure that I cast--if I live to cast any more--shall be the Hebrew giant, with his friend's jawbone in his hand. I beg your Lordship's pardon for joking; but it is an evil habit of mine from times of old; and I shall jest at my last gasp. You asked me why I came here. Odds life, I do not know where I am; but, if you mean, what brought me towards Ale Manor, all I can tell you is, that it was zeal--zeal, which, like a bad huntsman, is always overrunning the good dog, Discretion."

"Hush!" said Smeaton. "Do not speak so loud. But tell me in a whisper what road your zeal ran this time."

"Good faith," replied Van Noost, "it was in the road of your service, as I thought; but the truth is this; ever since you left me in the morning, till towards the close of day, I have been helping the good old sexton, Mattocks, to clean the monuments in the church, breaking hard jests upon each other's jests, all the time. I borrowed a blacksmith's apron, twisted myself up a paper cap, and stripped off my coat to keep it clean. Your Lordship would not have known me, I looked so much like a journeyman. Just, however, as we were leaving off our work, what should I see, to my horror and consternation, but a troop of horse coming down the hill. There was no time to get my pony, or wash my hands and face, and escape. You know that side of the hill. It is as bare and as round as a baby's cheek. So there was nothing for it but to go down to the little ale-house, keep on the garb I had, which was disguise enough, and persuade the good people to pass me off for a tapster. Well, the soldiers came down, swept all the oats of the hamlet for their horses, called for ale in the true dragoon style, and sat down to boose round the door, while their captain and a certain Justice who was with them demanded punch, in a magisterial tone. Didn't I make the punch strong for them! I paid for an additional bottle of rum out of my own pocket to fuddle their worships; and, if I had dared, I would have treated the whole regiment. A minute after, however, in came Sir John Newark; and he called for punch too. Sharp words enough passed between him and the others; and suddenly, as I brought him in his bowl, I found out from what was said that it was your Lordship these people were going after, and not your poor humble servant. I argued the matter with myself for a minute. Zeal said, 'Go and warn the noble Lord.' Discretion said, 'Take care you don't get caught yourself, Van Noost.' 'A fico for Discretion,' cried Zeal. 'It is quite dark; the soldiers are all drinking; the pony is at the back of the house; there is a good piece of green turf which will do as well to silence his feet as felt to shoe a troop of horses; up into the saddle, Van Noost, and away. Do as you would be done by, man!' So I listened to the last speaker, and got off. To say sooth, though I had some directions, I was not quite clear of the road, and strongly suspect I trotted fifteen miles instead of five. However, I reached the place at last, tied my pony under a clump of trees some way off, and was walking round the house to find a private way in, when I began to perceive that other people had come straighter than myself. I heard horses and voices, and saw men and lights; and my wits got into such a tangle with fright that I could not make out where I was. I ran up one path and down another, and did not know which way to go, till at length a fellow got me hold by the throat, half strangled me, and was dragging me away, when all of a sudden I heard his cheeks give a squelch just like the sound of a lump of cold lead dropping into a furnace, then another tap, somewhat harder than one from a lady's fan; and away he went rolling down the hill. Somebody got me by the paw at the same moment, pulled me along, through a horse-pond I believe, for my feet are all wet; and here I am, your Lordship's most devoted servant; but *where*, who can say?"

"In a safe place for the present, Van Noost," replied the young nobleman; "and I must care for your security as best I can.--Hush! I think I hear them coming past again."

Advancing to the door, he put his ear close to it, and listened. A moment or two after, the men returned from the beach, some of them at least passing along the same path and talking as they went. Smeaton listened with deep attention; but Van Noost continued fidgeting about, notwithstanding an impatient gesture from his companion, who, as soon as the soldiers had passed by, turned sharply round, demanding--"What are you doing with the key? You are stopping up the wards."

"No, no," replied Van Noost, "only taking a model. I always carry some putty in my pocket for the express purpose."

"That is not right," said Smeaton, sharply. "Cease, sir, cease. You have no business with the key."

"Oh, very well, my lord," assented the sculptor, withdrawing the putty from the key, wrapping it up carefully in his handkerchief, and putting it in his breeches pocket. "It is a curious-shaped key too; and I should like to have a model of it--very old--Queen Elizabeth or King Edward, I should think."

Smeaton made no reply, but again turned his ear to the door. All remained silent for some minutes, and then came the blast of a trumpet above.

"I think they are gone or going," said the young nobleman. "I fancy I could distinguish the sound of the horses' feet marching away. Listen, Van Noost!"

"Oh, yes. Praised be God for all things!" ejaculated Van Noost, after he had listened for a moment. "The vagabonds are gone. Let us get out of this burrow."

"Stay a minute," said Smeaton; "we had better get more information first. Wait here for me a short time; and I will go above for intelligence. They will not leave me long without news if the men are really gone."

As he spoke, he took up the light, somewhat it would appear to Van Noost's consternation. "But, my lord, my lord," he said. "I shall not be able to see if you take away the candle."

"What, are you afraid of the dark?" asked Smeaton, laughing. "Well, you shall keep it. Only light me along to the foot of the first flight of stairs. And then, remember, whatever you hear, remain below. If need should be, and you should ascertain that any of these men have remained behind to search the place, you can take your chance of escape by that door; only remember it opens over a well on the hill-side; and, if you do not leap more lightly than you did just now, you will go down like one of your own leaden figures, and be drowned; for the water is up to the brim, and it is deep."

"You forget, my lord," returned Van Noost, "that you were pulling me along head foremost; and I knew not where I was going. I can leap as well as any man, with a clear space before me; but one feels some trepidation in jumping into a dark pit's mouth."

"Well, well, take the candle and light me," said the young nobleman.

Walking quickly on, he reached the foot of the first flight of steps. Then, leaving Van Noost below, he ascended to the priest's chamber to wait in darkness for some intelligence. As he stood and listened--vainly, for some minutes--for any sound in the adjoining chamber, he had time to ask himself whether he had acted altogether rightly in bringing Van Noost into that secret part of Sir John Newark's house; and he concluded that he had no title to do so.

"And yet," he said, to himself, "it is not in reality his house at all."

But that did not quite satisfy him; and he determined, if he found that the neighbourhood was clear of the soldiery, to send the good sculptor forth by the same way he entered, so as to let him see as little of the secrets of the place as possible.

He was becoming somewhat impatient of the oppressive silence, and felt half inclined to open the door and look out, when he heard sounds not far off. A door was opened, closed, and locked, and then the large bed was rolled round upon its castors. The next instant the light shone in, and good Mrs. Culpepper appeared, with a candle in her hand. Her face bore greater traces of agitation than it displayed on any ordinary occasion, and Smeaton began to fear that he had considered himself safe too soon; but the old lady's first words dispelled alarm on that head.

"They are gone, sir," she said, entering the room; "they are gone." And, with trembling hands, she set the candle on the table.

"I am sorry you have suffered such a fright on my account, Mrs. Culpepper," said Smeaton, in a kindly tone; "but I can assure you now, as I did before, that there was nothing to fear on my account."

The old lady seemed hardly to attend to him; and the state of agitation displayed by so very calm and demure a person set Smeaton's fancy busy with fears for Emmeline.

"I dare say not, sir--I dare say not," she said, with quick but faltering accents. "They came looking for the Earl of Eskdale, and your name is Smeaton. And yet," she continued, gazing in his face, "and yet--Will you be kind enough, sir, to let me look at your wrist?"

"I have no objection at all," returned Smeaton, a good deal surprised. "But what can my wrist have to do with this business?"

"I will tell you in a minute, sir; I will tell you in a minute," replied the old woman. "Your right wrist, if you please."

Smeaton drew up the sleeve of his coat as far as it would go, unfastened the studs which held

it together just above the ruffles, and, baring his arm, held it out to her. The old woman took his hand in hers, and, holding his arm near to the candle, leaned her head over it. A large irregular scar appeared some two or three inches above the hand. The young nobleman had often remarked it, but had no recollection how it came there; and now, to his great surprise, he found warm drops falling upon it from the old woman's eyes. The next instant she kissed them away, with an eagerness quite extraordinary; and then, looking up in his face, with the tears still upon her cheeks, she exclaimed--

"Oh, yes, Henry, oh, yes, my lord! I know you now. That mark cost me the bitterest hours that ever I knew in my life."

"Pray explain," said Smeaton. "I do not at all understand what you mean, nor know how the scar came there."

"I will--I will," she sobbed, wiping her eyes. "Often have you sat on these old knees. Often have you clung with your arms round this old neck. I was your nurse, my lord, from the time you were taken from the breast till you were five years old. You were my nursling, my pet, my darling. It seemed as if God had sent you to me to console me for my own child I had lost; and I loved you as few mothers ever loved a child.

"I recollect my nurse Nanny, very well," said Smeaton. "Can you be she?"

"Oh, yes! Nanny Culpepper--poor Culpepper, the serjeant's wife, who was killed," she answered. "But let me tell you, Henry, about that scar. When you were just about four, you were a dear rash boy, and I left you only for a minute in a room where there was a fire. In playing about, you tripped over something, and fell with your arm upon the burning wood. I heard you cry, and ran back in haste; but I found you burnt all across the wrist there. I dared not tell my lord or my lady; for I knew they would be very angry at my having left you; and I thought I should have a hard matter to quiet you. But the moment I told you that, if you made a noise, and they found out what had been done, Nanny would be sent away, and you would never see her again, you dried your eyes and ceased crying altogether. I never saw a child do the like; and, though the wound was very painful and I had not much skill, you suffered me to go on dressing it for you, and doing my best to heal it, till it was well, without ever letting any one see that you were in pain. Fortune favoured me, or I could not have concealed it so long; for those were troublous times. My lord was moving about, and a great deal in London. My lady was often away, too, anxious for his safety; and the wound got quite well before they ever remarked it Then, however, my lord questioned me sharply. I made a sullen answer, and he would have discharged me on the spot; for he was a strong-spirited man, and had much to grieve him. But my lady interceded for me, and I was kept on till he was forced to fly beyond seas. Then, when she was about to join him, he wrote to tell her what servants should accompany her. I was pointedly left out, and I know he had not forgotten me. But how you cried when you left me, I shall not forget. Oh, sir, you do not know what deep root is taken by the feelings of our hearts in those early years. Though you have not altogether forgotten your poor nurse, you have forgotten a great deal of what passed then; but there is not one thing--no, not one of your looks, or any of your little prattle--that I do not remember even now. I love Miss Emmeline very much, too, though she does not know it; but I can never love any one again as I loved you."

"I am sure I loved you well too," replied Smeaton; "for the recollection of my poor nurse is the only thing referring to those days that still remains upon my mind."

"I am sure you did--I am sure you did," she repeated. "But, oh, now, tell me, my lord, what do you mean by saying you are safe? Your father was what they call 'attainted,' I think; and that affected all his family. So how can *you* be safe! They are cruel laws to punish an infant for the fault of his father."

"Make yourself easy, Nanny," replied Smeaton, in a kindly tone. "The attainder was specially reversed, as it affected my mother and myself. She had good friends at the courts both of William and Ann; and you know she is a wise, active, and prudent woman; so that she took every means to secure for her son both safety and competence. It is true, I might be put to much inconvenience by the suspicions of the government--nay, plans and purposes, greatly affecting my happiness, might be frustrated or rendered more difficult of execution than they are already, if I were discovered; but I have nothing else to fear."

"I think I understand," said the old woman. "Does Sir John Newark know who you are?"

"He does," replied Smeaton. "It was very imprudently revealed to him by one who had no business to meddle."

"That is strange--very strange," said the housekeeper, thoughtfully. "You are not married, are you, my lord?"

"No," answered Smeaton; "but I have much reason to believe he thinks I am."

"Ay, I see, I see," rejoined the housekeeper. "Now I understand it. But you must on no account let him know that I have recognised you. He is shrewd and keen. Beware of him, beware of him; for he pursues his objects without fear, or remorse, or hesitation; and few know what those objects are till it is too late to baffle him. He is a kind and good master to me, because I do

everything he tells me, and he does not fancy that he can be watched as closely as he watches others; no, nor that a poor creature like me can perhaps make all his schemes prove vain. Well, well, we shall see. But have a care of him."

"I will," replied Smeaton; "and indeed I am upon my guard against him already. He is not aware that I know so much of his history and character as I do."

"He would not suffer you within these doors, if he did," returned the old woman. "But now you can come out in safety; for these people are all gone, and they fancy, from some stupid blunder of their own, that you have got off to sea in a boat, and a fat man with you, whom one of the soldiers vows he got hold of by the neck."

Smeaton laughed.

"I think I can explain one part of their mistake," he said; "and indeed I was going to ask your advice upon a point of some difficulty."

He then related to her all that had occurred with Van Noost and the soldiers, as far as he knew it; but, when he told her that the good statuary was even then waiting below, she shook her head gravely, saying--

"He must not be seen here on any account. Send him away, Henry, send him away, my lord--"

"Nay, nay," said Smeaton. "Call me Henry still, when we are alone; and, at other times, call me, and think of me, as Colonel Smeaton. But this matter puzzles me. I fear that the poor fellow may miss his way, and get into mischief; for I do not think I can describe the road to Keanton so that he can find it, not knowing it too well myself."

"You take him out by the door over the well," replied Mrs. Culpepper; "and I will send round a boy to the path, who shall guide him so far that he can make no mistake. Sir John must never know that he has been in there; and hearken--the moment Sir John comes back, he will make you pledge your honour not to tell the secret of this place to any one. Therefore, if you wish to tell it--and I think, perhaps, you may, if I judge right--do so before he returns."

Smeaton paused thoughtfully, and then said, as if speaking to himself--

"Is it wrong to meet a bad man with his own weapons?"

"No, no," cried the old woman, "quite right. I have been doing so for the last twelve years, and have beat him at them. You look doubtful. *I* have no doubt; and, perhaps, if you knew as much as I do, you would have none either. But never mind. It shall be done for you. If you have scruples, keep them. Emmeline shall know without your telling. Indeed, I have often thought to let her know, as she has a right, but thought it might be dangerous; for, if he once saw that there was the least secret between her and me, I should not be here an hour after, and then all would be lost. But now, get this man away, and then come back. Tell him to wait upon the path till a boy comes up to him, and says, 'Keanton,' and then to follow him. I will wait here till you return, and will find means to talk to you longer to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV.

I am not sure that the phlegmatic temperament, as it is called, is not the happiest for the possessor thereof. People are apt to exclaim--

"Give us great pleasures, even if they be accompanied by great pains."

Hopeful mankind! ye seldom estimate prospective pains at their real worth; and ye always over-estimate the pleasures--till they are gone. Two great races of philosophers, if not more, the Stoic and the Chinese Mandarins, judging more sanely--I am not quite sure that the Epicureans might not be included also, ay, and many more sects--have always sought for the less intense. Whether a respectable fat Bonze, having his toes tickled by his fourteenth or fifteenth wife, without the slightest expectation of anything like high sentimental pleasure, but without the slightest fear of anything like strong mental pain, is or is not in a more desirable condition than Galileo in his dungeon, I will not take upon myself to say; yet one thing is certain--that this world being full of miseries, and when we open the door for one high enjoyment thousands of pains rushing in, there is some policy in having but few entrances to the house, and opening them as seldom as possible.

A phlegmatic temperament has assuredly the advantage of leaving few assailable points at the mercy of an enemy, and the Dutch are generally supposed to be as phlegmatic as any other nation; but such certainly was not the case with Van Noost. Whether, by transplanting, he had acquired more the character of a sensitive plant than of a cabbage, or whether the Norman or Saxon blood, derived from his mother, overbalanced the Frieslandish part of his composition given by his father, I cannot tell; but certain it is, that he was of a very moveable and excitable disposition, notwithstanding the national breadth of his nether man, and the firkin-like rotundity of his whole frame. His soul was a busy fiery little soul as ever was put into a heavy body, and most intensely did he fret and fidget during Smeaton's long absence, although he had a candle to light him, and the coveted key to work upon. Three times he walked along the passage; thrice he measured the size of the key-hole; four times he took an impression of the key; and when, at length, he heard a step coming down from the rooms above, he was all in, what is expressively called, a twitter, lest the person approaching should be any but the person he desired.

Whether he had calculated upon a comfortable sojourn at Ale Manor-House during the night, or whether his imagination suggested dangers which did not exist on the road before him, or whether his long evening ride, added to his morning ride, had somewhat bruised and fatigued the part that pressed upon the saddle, sure it is that he received the intimation that he must ride twelve miles farther, to Keanton, with a somewhat rueful air, and sprang across the little well with less than his promised activity.

Smeaton went first to show him the way, and to help him out if he fell in; and his so doing gave some confidence to the poor statuary; but he still besought his noble companion, even after they had both safely reached the little path, to remain with him till his young guide came. When this was acceded to, he became much more composed, and hardly listened to the directions, repeated more than once, which Smeaton gave him regarding what he was to do at Keanton, so much was he occupied with the contemplation of the little well and the scene around. The moon had now risen higher, so high, indeed, as only just to catch the edge of the waters with a line of silver light; but she displayed beautifully in her pale beams the small Gothic arch of stone-work, let, as it were, into the face of the rock. The deep tank or well at the foot of this acclivity received the bright and healing fountain, from some spot ten or twelve feet below the surface. The light through the half-opened door showed the interior of this little cell with its watery flooring and part of the passage beyond; and the eye could perceive upon the stone door itself how skilfully the workmen had marked out the freestone into divisions, so as to render it like a piece of solid masonry. The effect had been rendered perfect by the exhalations from the fountain, which had tinted it with many hues of green, and red, and yellow.

"I don't see how one could open it from without," said Van Noost, after gazing for a moment. "The well is so deucedly in the way, though I see the place were the key-hole must be well enough."

"I would advise you not to try, Van Noost," said Smeaton, with a smile. "Your legs are not long enough to stretch across. I think mine would do very well."

"Ay, noble lord, I did not cast myself," replied the statuary. "Gad's life! if we could do that, we might see strange changes, according to men's taste. Some of your stumpy balustrade fellows would turn out Apollos; and many a long-legged Antincus would become a clumsy Vulcan. I am as lengthy in mind as you in limb, my Lord, and could leap over mountains, if--if--"

"If the body were not heavier than the soul," said the young Earl, kindly; for he saw that the good man spoke somewhat warmly. "It is not your fault if Nature made you spread forth broad instead of running up tall. Some stones are made into a cupola, others into a column; but they have no choice in the matter, and each had better be satisfied with his condition. You have one advantage of me, however. You can make the figures of other men in a better mould than fortune gave to yourself, and I cannot."

"It would be difficult in your case, my lord," replied Van Noost, well pleased. "I only long for quiet times to take a statue of your lordship as a dancing faun."

"Spare me that! Spare me that!" cried Smeaton, laughing. "The faun had not a good reputation in times of old, nor the dancers in the present day; and, good sooth! I would rather not appear in public in either character. But methinks this boy, who is to be your guide, is long in coming, and I am somewhat anxious to get back into the house again."

"Ay, I can fancy that," replied Van Noost, "if that pretty lady who was with you this morning be within. Do you know, my noble Lord, you must set a guard upon your eyes, if you would not have all the villagers commenting upon your soft sentiments? Why here was the old sexton, Mattocks, saying what a handsome couple you would make, and only thinking of burying you both all the time, though he talked of nothing worse than marriage."

"It would be a pity to stop them," answered Smeaton. "I should imagine they have little to think of, and a marriage or a funeral must be a God-send to the gossips of the place. But now, my good Van Noost, remember, when you are at Keanton you must be very discreet, or you may get into trouble. Keep the eyes of the people off you as much as possible, and mind not to exercise too much in dangerous places."

"But bless your lordship, what am I to do?" exclaimed Van Noost. "You know mine is an active bustling spirit; and, if I am not to exercise my genius upon lead, I shall probably exercise it upon something else. Good faith, I must dabble a little in my old trade, even if it be but in casting little-leaden figures of soldiers and dairymaids, hand-in-hand, for the benefit of the children of the tenantry."

"I did not speak of that exercise of your genius," replied Smeaton. "Cast as many leaden figures as you will, my friend. They can find you a cauldron as big as a witch's, I dare say; and you can set up a shop in the old courtyard. But eschew politics, Van Noost, and keep your hand from the treason-pot. You have put your fat in peril already, it would appear, my good friend. So keep quiet till the danger has passed away. Here comes the boy, I think."

It was as he supposed; and, though the boy, with very limited instructions, had expected only to see one person to guide, so that he was somewhat puzzled on finding two, Van Noost was soon placed under his guidance; and, while Smeaton returned to the house to enjoy for a short space longer sweet converse with Emmeline, the worthy statuary moved away to seek for the pony he had left tied under a tree. It was easily found; for, having been left at some distance, it had escaped all notice from the soldiery; but the beast was tired with its exertions during the day, and was very willing to go at such a pace as suited the convenience of the young guide.

The way seemed to Van Noost interminably long, as all new ways do in the dark; but the distance was in reality by no means very great, and at length the boy, who had chatted very freely with the statuary as they went, pointed to the entrance of a road between two deep hedgerows, telling Van Noost to follow it straight on, and it would lead him to Keanton House.

"There are seven gates to open," said the boy, "and about half a mile over the turf. You cannot miss the road, for it is all straight."

Van Noost, however, did contrive to miss the road; for when he came upon the turf, the moon had gone down; the tracks of the road had disappeared; and, instead of going on as his face was pointed, he turned a little to the left, which led him away from the object he had in view. The summer sun, however, soon befriended him; first by showing him, in the grey twilight of the early morning that he had gone wrong, and then, by greater light, enabling him to get right. He had to turn back nearly a mile, however, the road lying all the way over smooth green turf, covering the gentle undulations of the country, with no indications of a path, but here and there the track of cartwheels in the soft sward, or the prints of a horse's feet. Van Noost was led on, indeed, and in the right direction, by the sight of some fine old trees rising up over the edge of a hollow at the distance of about a mile, and some chimneys, and sharp-pointed gables and roofs, breaking the rounded lines of the foliage.

The sun was just up when the statuary, passing through the elms and oaks, came in sight of the whole building, a fine old irregular mass of brickwork, somewhat like an antique French château, with tall masses of no-styled architecture, small windows very irregularly disposed, and a somewhat superfluous number of doors. Grey and yellow lichens and green moss covered the walls and the eaves; the ivy ran up many of the square tower-like masses, and the house-leek might be seen dropping over the edges of the lower roofs. Ten or twelve tall elms, loaded with rooks' nests, at one corner of the building, marked where the esplanade began which ran before the principal *façade*; but, on the side next to Van Noost, appeared a large farm-yard, surrounded by a low wall and thickly littered with straw, on which reposed a number of cows, promising a plentiful supply of milk, butter, and cheese. The early-rising and consequential cock was strutting about in his gaudy livery; the white, black, and grey ladies of his seraglio were wandering in quest of food. Numerous were ducks in a pond at one corner, and a troop of geese, waddling and curtseying and bending their heads, came forward to taste the morning air, and crop the green grass upon the downs. But no human being was to be seen; man was absent from the picture, and Van Noost raised his eye from window to window, to discover any signs of life within, but in vain.

"This must be Keanton," he said to himself. "It is just the sort of place; but they seem rather late risers here for country people. If they had been at the Ridotto last night, or at the Water theatre, or at the Italians, they might well be lagging in bed; but here, where they have nothing to do but lie down and go to sleep when the sun sets, they might very well get up when he rises, methinks. Hark!"

The sounds which had called his attention increased, and round the corner, by the rookery, came a young peasant-lad in his broad hat and his yellow frock, whistling gaily. All Van Noost's weariness and wandering were forgotten in the joyful sight; and, whipping on his pony, he rode up to the lad, asking him if there was nobody up in the house.

"I cannot tell," replied the youth, with a strong Devonshire accent. "Master Thompson at the farm is up."

As he spoke, he looked very earnestly at Van Noost, and there was a sly, quiet, inquiring glance of the eye, which did not at all harmonize with his gay thoughtless aspect the moment before, as he came whistling along. It was not alone shrewd, but suspicious, and Van Noost said to himself--

"Ay, ay, these tenants are all well drilled not to endanger their master's interests by any

indiscretion. Now, I will answer for it, there would be no slight difficulty in getting any straightforward answer from this good youth. I'll try."

"So, the farmer's name is Master Thompson," he said, aloud. "A very good name, too. Pray, what is your name, my lad?"

"What is yours?" said the young man, looking him point blank in the face.

"That is not the question," answered Van Noost. "I asked what yours is!"

"Then that is not the question either," replied the lad; "but if you be the gentleman come from Exeter, you ought to know my name."

"I have not been in Exeter," replied Van Noost; "and, even if I had, I don't see how I should know your name, when I never saw your face before. If you carried it written upon your forehead like a certain old lady of Babylon, one might know something about it."

"To be sure," replied the lad; "and so should I know something about yours. I am not fond of answering questions, master; so, if you have come to speak to me from Exeter, you had better speak out. Ballimoree!"

"Ballimoree!" exclaimed Van Noost, with surprise. "What in the name of fortune does Ballimoree mean?"

"It means good morning to you, master," said the young man, with a knowing nod of the head; and he walked away, without waiting for any further question.

"Ballimoree! Ballimoree!" mentally ejaculated Van Noost. "What the deuce does he mean by Ballimoree?"

And when he had looked after the young man for a minute or two, he turned his pony's head to see if he could discover the farm-house which had been mentioned. It was by no means difficult to do so, for as soon as he had passed the rookery it became visible, with a number of small houses and cottages, in a little wild dell to the right.

At the door of the farm-house he found a stout elderly man of a very frank and open countenance, and having his hands in his pockets, according to the usually prescribed form of English farmers. Riding up straight towards him, Van Noost considered, as he went, how he should address him, and make his wishes known.

"The noble lord," he thought, "said I was to ask either for Master Jennings or Master Thompson; but then I was not told to say Ballimoree. I was to inform them that I came from the *River Head*, and to bid them give me shelter, food, and protection. It was to Jennings I was to say that; but perhaps the pass-word at Master Thompson's may be, Ballimoree. I'll essay it." And, riding up to the fence before the farm-house, he hallooed out--

"Your name is Thompson, sir, I believe. Ballimoree."

"My name is Thompson, sir," answered the farmer; "but not Ballimoree. What is Ballimoree?"

"Upon my life, I don't know," answered Van Noost, frankly; "but a young lad I met up near the house said 'Ballimoree' to me, and told me that it meant good morning."

"He was funning you, sir," replied the man. "He is a bit of an Exeter lad, is Dick Peerly, and they are all full of their jokes. Pray what is your business with me?"

"I was to tell you, Mr. Thompson, that I come from the *River Head*," replied Van Noost, laying particular emphasis on the last words; "and as I am anxious for some quiet and repose, you or Mr. Jennings are to give me shelter, protection, and food for a time."

The man's whole manner changed in a moment.

"You shall be right welcome, sir," he said. "It will be better that you should speak with Master Jennings; but, in the meantime, pray come in and have some refreshment. The cows will be milked in a minute; but if you like ale and bacon better, we have as good as any in the land. Ballimoree! what could he mean by Ballimoree? Pray come in, sir--pray come in. Give me your horse's bridle. I'll have him put up. A pretty pony, 'pon my life; but he seems to have had enough of it for once."

"Ay, poor beast, he is as tired as, his master," returned Van Noost, walking towards the house. "He never calculated upon such a ride, nor I either."

The farmer pointed to a room on the left side of the entrance of his house, led the pony round to the back, and returned to his guest after a moment or two, with a bouncing, rosy, country maid-servant, bringing in the materials for a hearty breakfast; but that word, "Ballimoree," seemed to puzzle him as much as or more than it had done Van Noost, and he continued murmuring it to himself, even while the woman was in the room. As soon as she was gone, however, and he had pressed his guest to take some food, he returned to the subject openly,

asking--

"Pray, sir, what sort of a lad was this, that said 'Ballimoree' to you? I saw nobody go up that way but Dick Peerly."

"Oh, he was a lad of nineteen or twenty, with flaxen curly hair, and eyes rather close together," Van Noost replied. "He came up at first whistling like a merry innocent sort of noodle; but, when he began to speak, he looked 'cute enough."

"Ay, he is a dead hand at whistling," said the farmer. "It must be Dick Pearly, and 'cute enough he certainly is. I don't half like him; and, if it had not been to oblige my cousin Sam, I would not have had him on the farm at all. I'll ask him what he means by Ballimoree."

"Oh, I dare say, it was only sauciness," observed Van Noost, and so the affair dropped for the time.

Shortly after, Master Jennings was sent for from the great house, where, it would appear, he acted as a sort of steward. He was a grave old man in a brown suit, and was very courteous and polite to Van Noost, as soon as he was told the words which the other had been instructed to address to him. But he and farmer Thompson made many inquiries after their young lord, and expressed great pleasure to hear that he was in their neighbourhood.

"I think he might very well return and take possession openly, sir," said Master Jennings, "though things are looking rather bad just now. Yet, from those who know, I have heard that he is in no danger. However, that is not our affair; and, of course, we shall not say we know anything of his being in the country. You had better come up with me to the great house, and we will soon get a bed ready for you, in case you would like to lie down after your long ride. Anything we can do to make you comfortable, I am sure shall be done."

"I want nothing," replied the statuary, "but some clay, a great cauldron, and as much lead as I can get, and I will show you one or two funny things."

"Anything you want, sir, shall be got directly," said Master Jennings; "but the lead may be somewhat difficult--for I don't think there is much of it down about here. I will show you the way, if you please, sir."

"Have with you, good Mr. Jennings," exclaimed Van Noost, with a theatrical air, as far as the stiffness of his hind quarters would permit of his assuming one; and, after thanking his host of the farm-house for his courteous hospitality, he walked out towards the mansion above.

"Ballimoree!" said farmer Thompson. "I wonder what the deuce he could mean by that. I'll find it out."

CHAPTER XVI.

The account given by Richard Newark to Emmeline and Smeaton, after the latter had returned, comprised nothing that the reader does not know; but he told his tale with great humour, and even some degree of wit, which called a laugh from Smeaton, and made Emmeline smile, although the former found matter in it for much consideration, and the latter for much alarm.

It was now apparent that, the moment he resumed his real name and station, Smeaton would be subject to annoyance and inconvenience, if not worse, from the zeal of the Devonshire magistrates; and, after some thought, he resolved to write to Lord Stair, explaining his position, and begging him to assist in removing the difficulties with which he was surrounded.

"I am determined," he said to himself, "to take no part in the foolish struggles which seem likely to take place in this land, and which I feel convinced can end in nothing but the destruction of those who promote them. Undoubtedly, I look upon the Stuart race of Kings as lawful sovereigns of the country, and did wish that the late Queen had lived long enough to restore her brother quietly to the throne of his ancestors. But nations have rights as well as monarchs, and it is somewhat more than doubtful to me whether the great mass of the reasoning people of this country are not strongly opposed to the return of their ancient Kings. I will take no share in this business."

Richard Newark himself had some questions to ask, as well as the tale to tell, and he put them, as usual, somewhat abruptly.

"Well, Colonel," he said, after some conversation, "now tell us all about the priest's chamber."

"I am afraid I must not, my young friend," replied Smeaton. "That is another man's secret, communicated to me for my own good, and I must not betray it."

"Ah, you won't trust me," said Richard, in a sad tone. "I wonder why it is people will not trust me. I can be as faithful and true as any one."

"Indeed, I would trust you willingly," replied Smeaton, "with anything that is merely my own; but this secret I ought not to divulge either to you or to this dear lady."

"Well, then, I'll try you," said Richard. "Are you, or are you not, the Earl of Eskdale?"

"I am," replied Smeaton, at once. "I tell you, without the slightest hesitation, Richard; but I beg you not to divulge the fact till I have taken measures to effect my safety."

"I was sure of it," cried Richard. "I was quite sure of it. Poor colonels of horse don't have such beautiful swords to give away; and, besides, I suppose, there is something in a lord makes him different from other men. None of you have two heads, I think, nor four arms, nor eight legs; but yet, lack-a-day, there must be some difference; for I said to myself, soon after you came here, 'That man is different from the rest of them.'"

Emmeline looked up in Smeaton's face with a smile, while her cousin spoke, as if she would fain have said--

"I thought so too."

She spoke not, however, and Richard ran out of the room in his wild way to see what all the servants were "making of it," as he termed it. During his absence, which did not last many minutes, words of mutual tenderness were of course uttered by the lovers; but other matters were also to be spoken of besides their young affection, and Smeaton communicated to Emmeline all that had transpired between himself and old Mrs. Culpepper, expressing, at the same time, his belief that she might be fully trusted.

The evening then passed quietly for more than an hour; at the end of which time the trampling of horses and the voice of Sir John Newark were heard. He did not come into the small saloon for several minutes after he had entered the house; and, somewhat to Smeaton's surprise, neither Emmeline nor Richard Newark went out to greet him. But they knew him and his ways better than Smeaton did. The interval was occupied in speaking a few words to Mrs. Culpepper, which seemed to be rather those of inquiry than anything else; but the replies he received were apparently satisfactory, and he entered the saloon with a pleasant and half-laughing air. The whole circumstances of the evening were discussed, he gave his own version of what had occurred, both at Exeter and at Aleton, he inquired minutely into the events which had taken place at the Manor House during his absence, and he ended by saying--

"Well, Colonel, this is a fortunate escape from that which might have proved to be a somewhat unpleasant affair, and the mistake these men have fallen into regarding the flight of the Earl of Eskdale, who has never fled from them at all, will put you quite at your ease, for some time, and save you, I trust, from farther annoyance."

He glanced his eye towards Emmeline and Richard, as he spoke, as if to indicate that it might be better to enter into no more particulars in their presence, and Smeaton very readily took the hint; for, to say truth, he had more confidence in Richard's kindness that in his discretion.

When the two younger members of the family had retired for the night, Smeaton remained, for a few minutes, to give Sir John an opportunity of explaining himself further, but Sir John Newark did not think it necessary to say much more upon the events of that day, merely observing, in a careless and somewhat light tone--

"I hear your lady wife has quite recovered, and I suppose she may soon be expected to join you."

"You are labouring under a mistake, my dear sir," replied Smeaton, at once. "I am quite wifeless."

"Why, I thought," exclaimed Sir John Newark, "that your wife was mentioned between us only the other day." And he assumed, very tolerably, an air of incredulous surprise.

"I beg your pardon, Sir John," returned Smeaton. "You asked after Lady Eskdale, and I replied that she was better; but the name of wife was never mentioned between us. I spoke, indeed, fully with regard to my mother's illness; but, she being the only Countess of Eskdale living, I might naturally assume that your words referred to her. I am a single man, I beg to assure you."

"Well, my lord, a happy condition," remarked Sir John. "Heaven forbid that I should attribute bigamy to you, or saddle you even with a single wife, when you have not got one. I would advise you, however, as you have no wife, to get rid of Keanton; for troublous times are coming, I can see very clearly; and, although you have contrived to keep possession of the estate so long, I fear

very much you would not be able to hold it longer, if there should be anything like a disturbance in the country."

"I trust that will not be the case," said Smeaton, "although I should not, of course, object to the sale of the place if it could be effected at a fair price. Yet there are memories which cling about our old ancestral homes, from the influence of which we cannot well divest our hearts. I know nothing of this Keanton, though I was born there. I recollect not one stick or stone about it--have very rarely heard it spoken of, except for the purpose of giving me information which might be useful to me in any unexpected change of circumstances. Nevertheless, Sir John, so strongly is man's weak heart bound by the fine chain of association, that to put my hand to the deed which conveyed it to others would cost me a pang, severer, perhaps, than any other, except that of seeing it wrested from myself and my mother without that compensation which might secure comfort and happiness to her old age."

"I fear that the latter may be the case ere long," replied Sir John, shaking his head gravely. "From all I have heard this day, and all I have seen, I judge that many months will not pass before we witness convulsions which will be beneficial to the winning party, but utterly ruinous to the great body of the English gentry. For my part, I intend immediately to settle my whole estates absolutely on my son, in such a manner that he could not be deprived of them unless he were to take a part which his youth renders impossible. They shall, in short, be no longer mine, but his; so doubtful am I of the future. As to Keanton," he continued, with an easy and unconcerned air, "I have no doubt that many of the neighbouring gentry would be found ready to pay a reasonable price for it. I myself should be most willing to come forward and offer you such a sum, but for the views I have expressed. I have always a certain amount of money in reserve; but that might be needful to me in case of any reverses; and it is not sufficient to pay a just price for such an estate as Keanton. Nevertheless, if at any time you or your lady-mother should wish by way of mortgage to raise a sum for any present purposes, command me, and you will find me delighted to testify my friendship for you by something better than mere words."

Smeaton made some courteous reply of no great value; and Sir John continued--"speak of course merely in case you do not sell; but, as I have before observed, there are many wealthy country gentlemen around us here, who would be right glad to purchase, I am sure; amongst the rest, Sir James Mount, an excellent old man, and generally considered a person of great ability. Of his genius I have my doubts; but of his high honour and good intentions none. He was talking to me, this very morning, both of yourself and Keanton. As soon as it came out that the suspicions of the magistrates were directed towards you, and that they supposed you were dwelling in my house, he asked me privately if such were really the case. Of course I did not betray your secret even to him. He then went on to speak of Keanton, and it seemed to me that it was a possession he had always coveted."

"He knew my father and my mother in early years," replied Smeaton. "I have often heard him mentioned. Indeed, I have seen him, I think, but am not very sure."

"He is most anxious to see you," returned Sir John; "and indeed, if you think fit to sell the place, I believe he would be found a ready purchaser. I was sorry to disappoint the good old man, for he expressed so eager a desire to greet his old friend's son, that I could have found it in my heart to bring him to my house to-night, had it not been that I look upon another man's secrets entrusted to me just as I should upon his purse if left in my care, a thing which I am bound to return to him untouched."

Now Sir John Newark was well aware that good Sir James Mount had not in reality a stiver at command, and that his passion for alteration and building had already compelled him to mortgage his estate. As Smeaton knew nothing of these circumstances, however, the suggestion would have excited no suspicion had it not been accompanied by profession of pure motives and honourable dealing, which he knew did not form the distinguishing characteristics of Sir John Newark's life.

"I will think of this, Sir John," he said; "and, as to Sir James Mount's knowledge that I am your guest, I really do not see, so much as you seem to do, the great necessity for secresy. I have explained to you that I have, substantially, nothing to fear, except, perhaps, a little inconvenience from zealous stupidity; but I think, in a few days, I shall have removed all danger even of that, for it is my intention to-morrow to write to Lord Stair, begging him to exert his influence in the proper course for enabling me to reside as long as I think fit in this country, upon the clear understanding that my residence here shall in no degree prove detrimental to the dynasty which he serves. At all events, Sir John, pray do not let my sojourn with you induce you for one moment to exclude any guests whom you might otherwise wish to receive; for I cannot at all consent that your hospitality towards me should so embarrass you, and only regret it has already produced so much disorder in your household. And now, with many thanks, good night."

Sir John shook him warmly by the hand; and they parted--Smeaton retiring to his chamber, to think, if the truth must be told, more of Emmeline than of aught else; and Sir John to consider his plans farther, under the aspect which they had now assumed.

Smeaton's carelessness as to discovery was not altogether pleasant to the knight, who would willingly have seen his young guest more embarrassed, and he liked not at all the prospect of difficulties being removed from the course of the latter.

"I must deal with this epistle to Lord Stair," he said to himself. "It will never do to let Eskdale clear his feet of the birdlime altogether. But then again, in the meantime, I can work something, perhaps, out of the indiscretion of that foolish old man, Sir James Mount. It will be easy, as my guest does not absolutely object to see him, to get them into such relations that some of the follies of Sir James may recoil upon the young Earl. If the old knight snaps at the bait of Keanton, I can advance the money on mortgage of the two estates. If he do not, he may help to bring about embarrassments which may make my young bird eager to get rid of what can but be a clog upon him. And yet this bachelorism of his is an unfortunate affair. If Emmeline were out of the way, it would all go well. That, however, cannot be; but I must make myself sure at home."

And, going to the hall-door, he called one of the servants, and bade the man send the housekeeper to him.

CHAPTER XVII.

The events which immediately succeeded to those recorded in the last chapter I must pass over somewhat rapidly; for there was nothing that would much interest the reader in detail. Smeaton's letter to the Earl of Stair was written and despatched, and it may be sufficient to say that it never reached its destination.

Sir John Newark, on the pretence of great courtesy and attention, hardly lost sight of his young guest for a moment, except during the times when he was giving Richard instruction in the use of the sword. Smeaton thus had no opportunity whatever of speaking in private with Emmeline, and the feelings of which the two were conscious kept them more reserved when in the presence of others than they had been before those feelings became known to them. The restraint was very painful to both, and day by day it became more irksome, till, with the impatience natural to youth--impatience that can never bide its time--Smeaton felt inclined to do anything rash to put an end to so oppressive a state of things. Richard, indeed, on the third day, afforded him some means of relief; for, when they were practising in one of the old halls with the doors shut, the lad took advantage of a momentary pause for repose, to say--

"Ay, Colonel, you don't talk to me about it; but I know very well what is going on in your thumper."

"What do you call my thumper, Richard?" demanded Smeaton, with a smile.

"Oh, folks call it 'heart,'" answered Richard, "though there is no meaning in that word, and a great deal in 'thumper'; but what I mean is, that I know very well you are dreaming all this time about our dear little Emmeline. My father takes care that you shall not whisper sugar to her. So, if you have anything to say, you had better tell me, and I will say it for you, because I am sent out with her every day to walk, like Shock, the lap-dog. I may as well talk to her about you as anything else; for she is thinking about you all the time, and falling into such brown studies that, if you ask her what o'clock it is, she looks up in your face, and says, 'Tuesday, I believe.'"

"I wish to Heaven I could speak to her alone for about half-an-hour," observed Smeaton.

"Ay, you cannot do that," returned Richard Newark; "and I must not help you; for, if my father were once to find out that I did, there would be a south-westerly gale and an end of all; but; if you will only tell me anything you want to say, I'll say it for you, word for word, upon my honour."

Smeaton had a great objection to confidants, though, in the countries which he had most inhabited, as well as in the plays and romances of the day, they were almost indispensable accessories to every love affair; but there was something in his love for Emmeline too pure, too delicate, to suffer the idea of entrusting his thoughts towards her to any one. There was no resource, however, and many a message to her did he send by her cousin, cautiously worded indeed, but expressive in some degree of the feelings in his heart.

On the same day that the above conversation occurred, a little after the hour of noon, a gay cavalcade appeared before the house. Sir John Newark affected surprise and some alarm at first; but then, suddenly perceiving that it was Sir James Mount, he left his young guest to say whether he would be present during that worthy gentleman's visit, or not.

Smeaton consented to receive him, without the slightest hesitation, and, the moment Sir James entered the room, recognized a person whom he had seen at the small court of the exiled Stuarts in Lorraine, though but for a few minutes. The worthy magistrate, however, advanced at once toward him, and, taking him respectfully by the hand, congratulated him on his return to England, not indeed addressing him by his real title, for Sir James piqued himself on his policy,

but yet with marks of reverence which the old Tory courtier showed to nothing under the estate of a lord. His language also was so circumambulatory and reiterative, that it might have puzzled a very keen spy, unacquainted with his peculiar style, to make out what on earth he meant, and indeed he rather flattered himself that he spoke, on all occasions of difficulty, in such a way as to be utterly unintelligible to ears not initiated.

"I am truly delighted--delighted--delighted," he said, "to see you, sir, in what may be considered your native country--country--country; and although, habit being second nature, which is sometimes better--better--better than first--for why, if second thoughts are best, should not nature--nature--nature be in the same predicament?--you may consider other lands--other lands--other lands to be more your indigenous--indigenous--indigenous soil, nevertheless, we may felicitate ourselves upon having restored to our country a distinguished personage--personage--personage, who, like a borrowed gem--borrowed gem, illuminated a foreign crown--crown--crown."

Smeaton, though somewhat surprised, replied courteously, that he was exceedingly glad to see a gentleman whom he understood to be an old friend of his family; and the conversation went on for about half an hour, as easily as it could do with the sort of hurdle-race talking of the worthy magistrate. In the course of that conversation, Sir John Newark took a small but not unimportant part, throwing in a few words here and there, to guide Sir James Mount in the direction which he wished him to take. By his management, though that management was not very apparent, not only was the subject of Keanton introduced, but Sir James was led to expatiate upon the advantages of that estate, its close proximity to his own, its charming sites for building, and the great improvements which might be effected if it had the advantage of a resident proprietor. Smeaton thought, with a smile--

"The worthy knight seems really anxious to purchase it; and one knows not, in the state of affairs here, whether it might not be better to humour him."

Next came a cordial invitation to Mount Place, seconded by some such words as--

"I trust you will not be under the least apprehension, sir, in doing me the honour--the honour--the honour of returning my visit; for I am very discreet--very discreet--very discreet. The place shall be kept quite solitary--solitary--solitary for the next three weeks--three weeks, to wait your convenience. Your excellent lady-mother--mother--mother would assure you of my discretion; and in case you should be desirous--desirous--desirous of taking a little--a little peep at Keanton, you can do so--do so--do so in half an hour, with great privacy. The road is quite lonely, through quiet lanes--quiet lanes. No Peeping Toms there; all still and comfortable; not a village or a hamlet on the way; and you can see what is going on--what is going on--what is going on, without any risk."

Smeaton declared that his kind friends entertained more apprehensions for his safety than he did himself, feeling that he had in fact nothing to fear beyond a short temporary inconvenience.

"All danger even of that," he added, "will be over in a few days; and I shall therefore have the greatest pleasure in waiting upon Sir James Mount before my departure from Devonshire."

"Care and caution, noble sir--care and caution--care and caution," said the worshipful gentleman, "are always highly expedient under all circumstances--circumstances. We can never tell what may turn up to-morrow--turn up to-morrow--turn up to-morrow; and therefore it is better to take care what we are about to-day."

"Very true, indeed," replied Smeaton, with a smile. And, with this aphorism fresh upon his lips, Sir James Mount took his leave, never doubting that he had made a very favourable impression.

Emmeline had been in the room during the above conversation, but had not received the slightest notice from Sir James Mount, who was too much taken up with the important secret entrusted to him to think of anything else for the time. Sir John Newark, however, went out with his visitor to see him to his horse's back, according to the courtesies of those times; and Smeaton immediately advanced towards his fair companion with some laughing comment upon the peculiarities of the old man's manners. Emmeline, however, held up her finger, as if to call his attention to what she had to say, and then whispered--

"I wish I could speak with you!--Oh! I wish I could speak with you! Good Mrs. Culpepper came to me for an hour this morning before I rose. She is a friend to me, not a spy upon me, as Richard thinks, and I have much to tell you. Hush! he is coming back!"

Smeaton drew a little farther from her; but yet Emmeline could not altogether banish the eagerness from her look; and the eye of Sir John Newark rested on her fair face the instant he entered the room. He took no notice, however, if he observed anything, but only said in a gay tone,

"Come, Emmeline, let us ride out this breezy day. Colonel Smeaton, will you accompany us?"

"With all my heart!" replied the young nobleman; "but I must put on other apparel."

"So must I," said Emmeline.

"Well, then, to your toilet," cried Sir John. "I will order the horses in the meanwhile. It needs a good gallop to shake off the load of worthy Sir James Mount's words, he piles them upon us so rapidly. Quick, Colonel Smeaton! The horses will not be long."

The moment they were gone, Sir John Newark hurried towards that part of the house inhabited by the servants; and, ordering the horses as he passed, entered the room of the housekeeper. Mrs. Culpepper was busily engaged with an account-book; but she rose when her master entered, and laid down the pen.

For an instant, Sir John Newark gazed at her in silence, with a look not altogether placable; but the old lady bore it with perfect calmness, knowing very well the man she had to deal with.

"I have observed something I do not like," said Sir John, after he had seen that the door was completely closed; but there he paused, and turned his eyes to the ground, as if meditating what he should say next.

"Pray what may it be, sir?" asked the old lady, after waiting a moment. "Nothing in my conduct, I hope."

"No," said her master; "no. I think you would take care; and yet there was a look of consciousness on Emmeline's face just now, when I returned to her and this young man, which has awakened a doubt."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Culpepper. "What could cause that? Had they been talking long?"

"Only for a moment," replied Sir John Newark; "and I heard him laughing just as I quitted the room."

"Then, depend upon it, there was nothing to be afraid of," rejoined Mrs. Culpepper. "People don't laugh when they are talking secrets. Do you think he was laughing at anything you had said or done? For then very likely the lady might look conscious, thinking you might judge she had taken part in what was offensive to you."

It was happily turned; and, after a moment's thought, her master answered--

"It may be so. Not, indeed, that it was me he laughed at, but, probably, the old man, Sir James Mount."

"The old fool!" muttered Mrs. Culpepper, between her teeth. "I would have him as little as possible in my house, if I had one. He is sure to make mischief, if he meddles with any one's affairs."

A dark smile came upon Sir John Newark's face; and he thought, though he did not say it,

"That is what I desire."

There is no tool in a knave's hands so useful sometimes as the innocent mischief-maker who is dangerous to honest people; and, although Sir James Mount's inquisitiveness and indiscretion were usually annoying and sometimes embarrassing to his more astute neighbour, yet he had often been rendered very serviceable to Sir John Newark's plans and purposes. Sir John was very confident in his own abilities, in his knowledge of the world and of the man; and he did not in the least fear to employ him as a tool in any work where it was necessary to lead others into difficulty. He seemed, however, to ponder on his good housekeeper's word's; but his mind soon reverted to the former subject of his thoughts; and he said, with a sterner air:

"I hope you have relaxed none of the care which I enjoined upon you, Culpepper. People occasionally get negligent of such charges in the course of time; and, if I find that such is the case, I must have fresher service for the same purpose. So beware."

"I don't think you have cause to blame me, Sir John," replied Mrs. Culpepper, in her usual quiet tone. "I have performed exactly everything that I promised to perform. I never undertook to watch when you were in the house; but, when *you* were absent, or when I am with her at any distance from your own sight, I will undertake to say that there is not a step she takes, and hardly a word she utters, that is unknown to me. If there is anything between her and this gentleman who is here, the fault is your own, not mine; first, in bringing him hither, and, secondly, in not watching sufficiently what was passing under your own eyes."

"You are mistaken, woman," retorted Sir John, sharply. "I *do* watch with care that you little know. When did I ever neglect to watch?"

"During the four or five first days that he was here," answered Mrs. Culpepper, putting a pickling-pot on one of the shelves behind her, and not losing her composure in the slightest degree. "The second or third day he was alone with her for an hour in the saloon while you were talking with Martin, the horse-couper, about some horses you wanted to buy--"

"And other much more important things," added Sir John, significantly.

"I know nothing about that," replied the housekeeper. "All I know is, that they were there

together; but I do not believe that any harm is done as yet; for, from words and actions which I have heard and remarked, I judge they have said little to each other. The conversation I speak of I contrived to break in upon three times, though I had no business to meddle with it, you being in the house. I wonder he is not smitten, indeed; for she is as pretty a creature as ever eye saw; but then I suppose it is that he has seen a great number of finer-dressed beauties in foreign lands where you say he has been; and, if he is poor himself, I suppose he will want money, which he is not likely to get here. Indeed, he cannot tell that there ever was a chance of it. These foreign soldier-captains are not the people to fall in love with ladies without fortunes. No, no, that is not likely."

She shook her head gravely, as she spoke these words in a moralising tone; and Sir John smiled again as he felt his suspicions give way before the old woman's arguments.

"There is much truth in what you say, my good lady," he observed; "but be pleased to remember that no caution can be too great. I had my own reasons for bringing this gentleman here; but I have been deceived in one particular, ay, and helped to deceive myself. They told me he was married--at least, gave me to understand so. Now, however, I find that he is not; and, although I do not think he is of a mind, nor in a condition, to do so foolish a thing as to wed a penniless girl, when he might do better, yet I will not have the slightest care neglected to ensure that he has no opportunity whatever offered him of filling her ear with lover's prattle. I have told you Emmeline must marry Richard. It is necessary to me and to both of them."

"Very well, Sir John," answered the housekeeper, drily. "I have no interest in the matter."

"I will give you an interest," said Sir John, laying his finger on Mrs. Culpepper's arm. "Now mark me; I promise you, upon my honour, that, the very day which sees Richard's marriage to Emmeline, I will give you one hundred guineas."--

"Ay, now you *do* give me an interest," answered the housekeeper, with a brighter face; "but you will have a hard matter to bring it about, Sir John; Master Richard is so very young--two years younger than the lady Emmeline herself--and then you know again that he is really younger than his years. It is true the young lady likes him well enough to marry him, I dare say; and, if he were but to fall in love with her, as I dare say he will by-and-by--for if you keep them always caged up together what can they do?--she will like him better still. As to this gentleman here, I don't think there is anything in it. I must have seen it, I must have known it. They cannot hoodwink me, though they might blind you."

"How happens it your eyes are so much sharper than mine?" asked Sir John, with a sneer. "I should like to know your secret, if it is so."

"How happens it?" echoed the housekeeper. "First, because I am a woman, and next, because you have a great stake in the matter. Men never see these things; and, when suspicions come across them, always fix upon the wrong person; and then, when they have much at stake, they are sure to be blind altogether, or to see crooked. I have not lived sixty years in the world for nothing, Sir John; and I know men and women both well."

She shook her head oracularly as she spoke; and, although in self-confidence there is something rather annoying to others, yet there is something very impressive too. If a person possessed of it have any talents, it is sure to double them in the estimation of others, while it may treble them in his own. Thus, at all events, something is gained. Even a fool does not suffer by that possession; for, if it does nothing else, it serves to cover his folly from the eyes of more modest fools than himself. Sir John Newark knew Mrs. Culpepper to be nearly as acute as she represented herself, and he took the rest for granted upon her own showing.

With renewed injunctions, then, to watch everything that passed, not only during his absence, but when he was in the house, he left her, and the old lady took up her account-book again, murmuring to herself, "The knave! He thinks that a hundred guineas will do everything."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Several day, passed, and the time elapsed which was requisite to bring an answer from London to Smeaton's letter addressed to Lord Stair. But none arrived, and rumours were thick and busy in the country, of dangerous proceedings in the north of England, and in Scotland. In the immediate neighbourhood of Ale Manor, however, the public mind seemed more quiet and tranquil. Some of the magistrates had relapsed into that careless indifference from which the intelligence of great dangers had aroused them; those of a firmer and more consistent character

were tranquil from a sense of readiness and preparation for any event; and others, more keen, astute, and active, were vigorously carrying on the measures which they had previously resolved to take, but with as much quiet secresy as decision.

In the interior of Ale Manor House, the days passed almost without incident. Both Emmeline and Smeaton saw that they were watched, and put the greatest restraint upon their actions, words, and looks, that was possible with a courteous and kindly demeanour to each other.

Mrs. Culpepper glided about as usual; was seen here and seen there, when nobody expected her; and, by her quiet and demure manner, satisfied even Sir John Newark that she was obeying his orders implicitly.

Richard Newark was the only one who enlivened the scene with little agitations. From time to time, in his rash wild way, and with his figurative but not very choice language, he would touch so close on the well-concealed feelings of the lovers as to alarm them both, and then, darting gaily away to some other theme, leave them scathless. He kept his father in some anxiety too; for a greater portion than ever of his careless, almost reckless, spirit seemed to have entered into him. He contrived to tumble out of a boat into the water far out in the bay, and might have been drowned, as there was nobody in the skiff with him, had not swimming been acquired so early, and practised so continually, that it was almost as natural to him as walking. He burst a fowling-piece, also, by putting in a double charge in a moment of forgetfulness. But he escaped without injury, and only mourned over his shattered gun.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the restraint to which they were obliged to submit was otherwise than very painful to Smeaton and Emmeline. They did not see where it was likely to terminate. It was natural that the male lover should bear this state of things with more impatience than the lady; for women, even in very early life, have a sort of prescience that their portion is to endure without murmuring. Smeaton was almost tempted to cast off all reserve and follow what he felt to be a rash and even a dangerous course. None know, but those who have experienced it, how unbearable it is to be constantly in the presence of a beloved object without the opportunity, even by a whispered word or a glance of love, to tell the feelings that are busy in the heart.

How this might have ended, and whether he might or might not have been hurried into any rashness had this state continued much longer, I cannot say; for, although he had been well drilled by adversity, by difficulties, and by dangers, and was competent to deal as calmly as any man with most of the ordinary things of life, yet he was impetuous by nature, and the sensations which he now experienced were so new and strange to him, that he could not bring them under any rule obtained from experience of the past. That state, however, was not destined to last long; for, on the fourth day after Sir James Mount's visit, as he sat in his room very early in the morning enjoying the splendid rising of the sun, and indulging the thoughts with which lovers vivify the morning beans, he heard a gentle tap at his door. No sound had previously disturbed the silence which had reigned throughout the house during the night; no housemaid's pail had been heard clattering; no ancient serving-man of matutinal habits had unbarred windows and opened doors; and, without venturing to say aloud, "Come in," Smeaton rose to ascertain with his eyes who was his early visitor. He found good Mrs. Culpepper herself standing in the passage without; but, as soon as she saw that he was up and dressed, she entered in silence with her noiseless step, and quietly closed the door behind her.

"I have wanted to see you, sir, for some time," she said; "but Sir John Newark is all eyes; and I dare not let him perceive that I know anything at all of you for fear of spoiling everything. But I thought that old Nanny might very well come to see her boy, even in his bed-room, and so I got myself up early. There are strange stories running about the country, sir. They say, people are actually in arms in the north. Oh, Harry, have nothing to do with them; for this thing will never succeed, depend upon it. More than one half of the gentry, and most men of the middle station, are against it."

"I have not the slightest intention, my dear Nanny, to take any part in these rash movements," replied Smeaton. "I am quite as well aware of their hopelessness as you can be."

"But I fear Sir John," said the old woman. "I fear him very much. He is just the man to keep out of all perils himself, and to put other people in for the purpose of seeing what he can get out of the spoil. I wish to Heaven you were away, pleasant as it is to see you. I wish you were in France again. Can you not go, and keep yourself quiet there?"

Smeaton shook his head with a faint and somewhat melancholy smile.

"I cannot go at present, Nanny," he said. "That is impossible. I have ties to this land now, more hard to break than those which bind me to any other."

"Can you not take her with you?" enquired the old woman, in a low tone. "Listen what I have devised for you. You love her. I know you love her, and she loves you. Take her with you; marry her under my lady's eye, and with her sanction; keep perfectly quiet, whatever takes place in England; and, when all is still again, demand to return and resume your rights, and I will so work here, while you are gone, that that dear child shall have her rights too, in spite of all the cunning of the cunningest man within the four seas."

"But how can it be managed?" asked Smeaton. "And will she go upon so sudden and unexpected a proposal?"

"Have you said nothing to her?" returned the housekeeper, with a look of surprise. "Have you not told her all your heart? I thought--I fancied--I felt sure, on that day that you were so long alone together, that you must have spoken all that need be said. Why, besides the ride in the morning, you were walking up and down the terrace in the evening for more than two hours, with Dick sitting, whistling, upon a stone at a distance."

"She knows that I love her," replied Smeaton; "and I trust that she loves me; but it is a very different thing to promise me her hand at some future period, and to agree to fly with me to a foreign land at a very short notice. The motives, the objects, her own state and condition here, the very necessity of her going, even if she did not go to be my wife, must all be explained to her, and I have no opportunity of explaining. I see her not for a single instant during the day without witnesses; and, though I pass up and down the stairs more frequently, perhaps, than is prudent, for the purpose of catching one stray passing word, I have never met her."

"That is because it is another staircase," observed the old woman. "You pass close by her every day; but there is no door open on this side. Let me see," she continued, pressing her hand upon her eyes. "I think I can manage it for you; but you must be very discreet. You know, I dare say, every corner of your sitting-room there beyond, and you must have remarked a door, like a closet-door, always locked. It is a closet--a mere slip. It leads out into the passage close by the state room--behind which is the priest's chamber. The priest's chamber is close to that of Emmeline, and she can come out of her own room into the same passage. To-night, when you come to bed, you shall find somewhere or another--let me see where I will put it--yes, that will do--you will find, on the upper shelf of that cupboard, there in the corner, the key of the closet which leads to the passage. To-morrow morning early, before any one else is up, rise and go through the closet to the state room. You shall find Emmeline there--or she will come very soon. But mind you do not linger long together, and do not make any noise. Speak low--tread softly--and, on no account, open the way into the priest's chamber; for that would be heard to a certainty by him who sleeps below. You must get her to decide speedily; for the clouds are gathering fast, and I would fain you were gone."

"If I am not to stay with her long," replied Smeaton, "it is very probable that I may not be able to explain all at once."

"Then you must get her to come back the the next morning," said the old housekeeper; "for you must not stay long together--half an hour at the utmost--even if you rise at five. Remember, there are people up in the house always before six; and no one can tell where they may wander. This is a strange household, sir, where every servant is a spy upon the other, and the master a spy upon all. It needs skilful doings; but I so contrive that often, in reporting to him what I do, the other people do just what I desire. They tell him that I am prying here and prying there, whenever he is absent, and am in all sorts of rooms and places, as if I was mistress of the house. That is just what he wants; and though, now and then, when he catches me creeping about, and any one is present, he speaks sharply as if he were angry--it is but a pretence, which no one knows better how to make. *I do* tell him almost everything that happens; but that *almost* covers all I wish to hide. I do him no wrong, because he has no right in this house; and I always keep the means in my own hands of baffling him when I please. If he knew it, I dare say I should soon be found down the deep draw-well in the garden; but he shall not know it till I am safe beyond his reach."

"Then I may trust to find Emmeline there," said Smeaton, with a joyful heart.

"Yes, I think so," replied the housekeeper, in a more doubtful tone than he liked. "She will never refuse to go, surely. I will persuade her, somehow; and love will take part with me. Oh, yes, she will come, I am sure. But now I will go; and, before to-morrow morning, I must contrive to have the locks well oiled and the key placed for you.--Good-bye, my dear boy. Be upon your guard against whatever Sir John proposes; for you cannot tell what scheme may be at the bottom of anything he says or does."

I must not pause to notice all the mingled feelings which occupied the heart of the young nobleman after the old housekeeper had left him. They were agitating enough; and, though her words were well calculated to encourage hope of the speedy fulfilment of his warmest desires, yet they plunged him in thoughtful reveries during the day, which did not escape the keen eye of Sir John Newark. Smeaton saw, however, that his absent mood, and grave and thoughtful countenance, were remarked; and he turned suspicion from the course he feared it might take, by expressing much surprise that he had received no answer from Lord Stair. Emmeline, too, marked change in his demeanour, and was somewhat anxious, if the truth must be told; but, for her an explanation was coming very soon.

I wish that I could, but fear that I cannot, convey to the mind of the reader the feelings with which she listened to the words of the old housekeeper when Mrs. Culpepper visited her that night. I dread that I may suggest, even in the least degree, an idea that she was unwomanly, forward, or bold, when I say that the thought of seeing Smeaton on the following morning in private imparted no other emotion than joy; yet so it was. Emmeline's character, however, was eminently feminine, in the finest, noblest signification of that word. The idea of a clandestine

interview with her betrothed made her whole heart thrill; it agitated, almost overpowered her; but it was all with joy. Her education had involved none of the conventional restraints of women in her class of society; restrained, tied down, she had been, though in a different way. She knew not, she could not conceive, that anything was wrong, anything that could be even construed into wrong, in thus meeting him she loved. Her spirit sprang to meet his, to tell him all she felt, to pour into his bosom the pent-up thoughts of the last week. She could as much have fancied that a skylark could be blamed for trilling his glad song in air over the nest of his feathered mate, as she could be by the good and wise for that which she was about to do. The world is full of conventionalities, which have ever been accumulating since the creation; they are the fetters of the fallen. Adam and Eve found them out as soon as they had tasted the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil; and the green leaves which they twined to cover them formed the first sophistication. But dear Emmeline was in some sort like Eve before she suffered herself to be beguiled by the serpent. She had not tasted of that fruit. She knew little of evil, and had not a heart to imagine it; and, as I have said, the idea of meeting her lover, and enjoying one quiet hour of tranquil conversation with him, suggested nothing but thoughts of joy.

Some vague words, indeed, which the old housekeeper dropped, before she left her, in regard to the coming interview and the influence it was likely to have upon all her future fate, produced a certain feeling of timidity, though not great; and she was up and dressed before Mrs. Culpepper presented herself on the following morning. Her timidity, however, had by this time increased; and she besought the old lady to come with her and be present; but Mrs. Culpepper knew more of love and lovers' feelings than Emmeline, and was quite well aware that she would be one too many at their meeting.

"No, my dear child, no," she said. "Young gentlemen, when they speak to young ladies whom they love, do not like to have old women listening. I will wait in the passage, however, and give you notice when it is time to part; but, as to everything else, you had better be alone."

In her heart perhaps Emmeline agreed with the old housekeeper; at all events, she submitted readily; and, with a faltering step and somewhat agitated air, followed to the place of interview. Smeaton was there before her; and he took care to close the door.

I will not dwell upon what passed between them. Many important things were proposed, discussed, and settled; much was to be told, explained, and listened to; yet nothing was settled, and very little discussed. Marvellous how the time ran on in the words of love and the feeling of happiness! They forgot the future in the present; and they were just approaching the very object of their meeting, when the old housekeeper quietly opened the door and told them it was time to part. Then came the hurried and whispered engagement to meet again on the following morning, with a pledge to each other to act more wisely and providently, and use their time to better purposes.

Thus they parted; and Emmeline, agitated and confused with the inebriating taste of early love, returned to her chamber to dream dreams of happiness. Her head had rested on his bosom; his arms had clasped her to his heart; his lips had been placed on hers. It was all for the first time; and that first time works an eventful change in woman's heart.

They met again upon the following day; and, though strongly tempted as they had been before, they were wise and remembered that much had to be determined. Neither upon this conversation will I dwell any more than upon that which preceded. The reader can easily imagine what were the feelings of a young, innocent, inexperienced girl, when a proposal was placed before her to quit the dwelling in which she had been brought up--to leave the protection to which she had been accustomed--and to go in silence and in secresy to a distant land with one whom she loved dearly, but had not long known. She doubted him not; she trusted him entirely; she felt sure that he would take no base advantage of her confidence; she believed him fully when he told her that she should be to him as a sister till she became a bride; but yet her heart sank and her limbs trembled; and it was with difficulty that her lips could be brought to utter the promise.

Smeaton took every pains to reassure and comfort her. Perhaps the first might seem a strange way; but yet it was a very effectual one. According to a custom which he had seen in other lands, he bound her to himself, and himself to her, by a simple form of betrothal. With her hand in his, he pledged himself to her for ever, and made her repeat the same promise towards him; then they mutually called upon God to bless them as they kept that vow; and then he placed a small jewelled ring upon her finger--an ancient gem of his house--and after leaving it there for a moment, and pressing a kiss upon the hand that bore it, he told her to fasten it round her neck with a ribbon, and keep it always in her bosom.

Still, however, he found her agitated, perhaps I may say alarmed; but then he whispered a few words in her ear, and all irresolution was at an end. Emmeline's bright eyes grew brighter as they fixed upon his face with a look not fuller of surprise than of joy; and, clasping her hands together, she said--

"Then I go safely, rightly. It is a duty. I no longer fear."

"You shall have the paper to-morrow," said Smeaton; "but as soon as you have read it, it had better be destroyed. I have kept it concealed where nobody could find it, even when my baggage was searched in London; but now, in justice to you, my beloved, I must show it, that you may feel

yourself justified in all that you do."

Again they were forced to part. Little more remained to be settled, and that they thought would easily be done. The hour, the manner, the means of flight, were to be arranged; but flight was determined, and they parted happily.

When Emmeline was in the solitude of her own chamber, however, and when all she had promised, all she was about to perform, came upon her mind like a dream--she was moved deeply. Dangers, difficulties, she thought of little; but the strange newness of all that was before her alarmed and agitated her. The very thought of quitting the wild lonely scenes round Ale, quitting them perhaps for ever, produced a very melancholy impression on her mind. There was not a rock or hill, a towering cliff, an indentation of the coast--hardly a tree all around--that she did not know as a familiar friend. They had been the companions of her youth and of her infancy; she had held more communings with them than with human beings; she had peopled them with her thoughts; they had linked themselves to her heart by the strong ties of association; they had been as brothers and sisters to her in the solitude of her own meditations; and, in the absence of other objects of affection, she had clung to them as if they had been living things. Love must be very powerful, to break through all such bonds, and to make the heart yield up, with no other portion of regret than a passing melancholy, all that we have attached ourselves to for many years. Emmeline was going to quit them all, as she thought--to quit them all in a few days, and it was not to be expected that she should do so without some grief; but love had by this time the full mastery, and she did not and would not repent of the promise she had given. Its fulfilment, however, was far more distant than she anticipated; and, before nightfall of that same day, the relation of almost all things round her had been changed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sir John Newark was in a peculiarly gay and lively mood when his noble guest descended to breakfast. He ventured upon a jest or two--a thing rare with him--and discoursed fluently upon matters of literature and affairs of state; not very profoundly, indeed, yet speciously and well. After the meal, he asked Smeaton when he would like to ride over to Mount Place, and the young nobleman replied--

"In a day or two."

Sir John seemed surprised and a little mortified.

"I understood your Lordship," he said, in a cold tone, "that you would go to-day, when we were talking of this matter yesterday; and, judging that it might be as well, that Mount Place should be free of any unpleasant guests, I sent intimation to Sir James this morning that such would be the case. True, I should not have meddled. Busybodies are always doing mischief."

"It matters not," rejoined Smeaton, good-humouredly; for his heart was opened by its own happiness. "I can ride over to-day as well as to-morrow; and, as you have sent, I will do so."

"Pray do not put yourself to any inconvenience," said Sir John Newark, with all his urbanity restored. "I only feared it might mortify the good old man."

"Nay, I will not do that," answered his guest. "I will set off immediately."

"Perhaps you had better wait an hour or two," remarked Sir John, "in case our friend should have any preparations to make."

"Oh, no," returned Smeaton. "I will take the morning ride. The less of ceremony on such occasions the better. Am I to have the pleasure of your company?"

Sir John Newark shook his head with a rueful countenance, saying:

"I shall spend the next two or three hours less agreeably. I have some persons coming to me upon matters of dull business; but, if they leave me in time, I will join you at Mount Place. And now, my dear Lord, let me revert to a subject which has been mentioned between us before. Doubtless Sir James Mount will speak to you about the sale of Keanton. If so, you will hear what he says and decide accordingly. His offer may meet your views, or it may not. Should you decline in his case, and yet wish to raise some money without parting with your property, I have forty thousand pounds quite at your service upon mortgage, if you choose to take it. The estate, I believe, is fully equal to such a burden, still leaving it your own."

They were alone on the terrace at this moment; and, what might have come next, I cannot say; for their conversation was interrupted by Richard Newark running up and enquiring whether Smeaton was about to ride out, as he was wild for a gallop.

"You cannot go with Colonel Smeaton to-day, Richard," replied his father, gravely. "He is going to Sir James Mount's, where your company may not be agreeable."

The lad gave a shy sidelong glance at his father, and then, instantly resuming his light reckless tone, answered:

"I'll ride with him part of the way, then. There can be no harm in that."

Sir John Newark frowned; but Richard pursued his point, and, catching Smeaton by the arm, exclaimed:

"Come, let us go and see the horses made ready."

Smeaton followed him to the stable; and, though he returned for a few minutes to the house in order to make some change in his dress, he saw his entertainer no more that day.

In less than twenty minutes, he and Richard Newark were on horseback, and, followed by the young nobleman's own servant and another man, were riding away in the direction of Mount Place. They spurred on at a rapid rate, and every minute or two Smeaton could see the boy's eyes turned to his face with a sort of inquiring look; but he took no notice--leaving his young companion to explain himself if he thought fit.

"Don't stay long at Mount Place, Colonel," said Richard, after they had gone about half a mile. "Mount Place is a rat-trap."

"I do not understand what you mean, Dick," replied Smeaton; "but I do not think I am likely to be caught."

"What I mean is plain enough," pursued the lad. "I have heard that, in the year ninety-two, a whole party of gentlemen were taken at Mount Place, and then again, later still, some more. The old man himself got off once; but the next time he was taken with the rest, and was eighteen months in prison. Either the lawyers found out that he was not a man, but a monkey, and did not hang him, or else they could prove nothing against him; but they hanged one or two of the others, or did something with them. So, if I were you, I would not stay long at Mount Place, for fear of being made to chew unlawful bacon."

Smeaton smiled; but at the same time demanded, in a grave tone--

"Have you any particular cause for your warning, Richard?"

"No--no," replied the lad, hesitating a little; "only two messengers went off from Ale this morning--one to Mount Place, and the other to Exeter. I have known harm happen after messengers went off, especially when they have gone so early."

Smeaton paused thoughtfully ere he replied.

"I will not stay long," he said at length; "it is but a visit of ceremony."

"Then now I will take some other road," rejoined Richard Newark; "but mind you are home before dinner, or I shall think they have kidnapped you."

"No fear of that," said his companion; "but, as your father evidently did not like your going at all, I think we had better, as you say, take separate paths."

"How goes it with you and Emmeline?" asked Richard, lowering his voice, and giving a gay look towards his companion. "Sad work, noble gentleman! The poor doves in their separate cages have been forced to silence their cooing. Ah, they will be obliged to come to me, in the end, to help them." And, laughing lightly, he turned his horse's head and galloped away.

Smeaton pursued his onward course, directed, from time to time, by the servant of Sir John Newark, who accompanied him; and at the end of little more than an hour came to a part of the country where trim hedgerows and well-cultivated fields showed the neighbourhood of some gentleman's seat. At length, a long and beautiful avenue of tall elms was seen, with the road between the trees, sloping gently upwards, and terminating at what seemed a spacious lawn, with a handsome house raised upon a high terrace above.

"That is Mount Place, sir," said Sir John Newark's servant; and Smeaton, telling him that he should have no farther occasion for his attendance, rode on with his own man.

His old military habits led him to mark everything around him, in travelling, with greater attention than men usually bestow on small objects; and his eyes were soon withdrawn from the house and the scaffold-poles with which the two wings were disfigured, to fresh marks of horses' hoofs deeply indented in the somewhat soft road. These traces were very numerous, and it seemed as if a large cavalcade had recently passed up towards the house. Without slackening his

speed, the young nobleman looked to the right and left, in order to discover, if possible, whether this cavalcade had been a disciplined body or not; but the marks of the horses' hoofs were so irregular, that the suspicion which had first crossed his mind soon vanished. He easily perceived that some of the beasts had been going at a canter, others at a trot; some keeping the middle of the road, and some running upon the green turf under the trees.

Riding on at a good pace, however, the young nobleman soon approached what he had conceived to be a lawn, which now turned out to be a large grass court, or bowling-green, surrounded by dwarf walls, with the road sweeping round, on either side, to the terrace above. He could perceive servants in gaudy liveries standing at the principal door of the house; but there was no appearance of horses; and, trotting on, he dismounted and inquired for Sir James.

"He is within, sir, and expects you," replied the worthy old blue-bottle whom he addressed; and then, turning to Smeaton's servant, he added, "Take the horses round to the court at the back."

But Smeaton interfered promptly. "No, no," he said. "Walk them up and down here upon the terrace. My stay can be but very short."

Thus saying, he turned and followed the servant into the house, passed through a great hall, and up a fine old oak staircase. As he ascended, he heard many voices above; but, without hesitation, he went on. The moment after, the door of a large room was thrown open; and he found himself in the presence of eight or nine persons besides the master of the house.

Smeaton was greatly annoyed at the unexpected position in which he was placed; but his urbanity did not forsake him; and, with good-humoured cordiality, he met the foolish old magistrate, who came forward and addressed him somewhat after the following fashion:--

"Dear me, my noble, friend--noble friend--noble friend, I did not expect you so soon--not so soon--not quite so soon; or I should have been at the door to receive you--receive you--receive you. Let me introduce you to Sir Harry Blake--Sir Harry, Colonel Smeaton--Lord Talboys, Colonel Smeaton." And so he went on round the whole room, repeating each name three or four times with vast volubility.

Smeaton bowed round; and then, drawing himself up somewhat stiffly to check any unpleasant communications which he apprehended might be made, commenced a conversation with Sir James Mount upon the weather and the beautiful scenery round his house. He could see looks of surprise and impatience upon the countenance of several of those present; but he went on in the same strain, giving little opportunity to his host for a change of topic. At length, however, a square-built black-faced man, who was present, cut across the conversation, saying--"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Sir James; but it is high time that we should consider the more important objects of our meeting. I suppose Colonel Smeaton, or by whatever name we are to know him, will take part in our deliberations."

Smeaton instantly caught at the opportunity afforded him. "Really, I have to apologise," he said, "for intruding at such a moment. I expected to find you, my dear sir, quite alone; and, had I known that any important business was to be transacted here to-day, I should not have presented myself. I will now immediately withdraw, and trust to have the pleasure of seeing you again before I quit England."

"But, my dear sir, you do not know--you do not know--you do not know," cried Sir James. "Our meeting was quite of a sudden--quite of a sudden--quite of a sudden. The intelligence that General Foster is in arms for the King--for the King--for the King, and the rumour that his Majesty--his Majesty has actually landed--"

"This is serious news indeed, Sir James," interrupted Smeaton, still drawing towards the door; "but as I have no information myself upon these matters, and have no authority of any kind, I cannot afford you advice or assistance. My visit was merely one of compliment in return for yours; and, as I have business at Keanton, I will take my leave."

With these words, and with a bow to the assembled gentlemen, who seemed a good deal disconcerted, he quitted the room and descended the stairs, followed to his horse's side by Sir James Mount, pouring forth apologies and explanations to which Smeaton turned a deaf ear. He contented himself, as his only reply, with asking the nearest way to Keanton; and, having received information from one of the old servants of the house, (Sir James himself being too much confused by all that had occurred, to answer him distinctly), he rode away, somewhat indignant at the situation in which he had been placed. He judged, and judged rightly, that the persons whom he had seen at Mount Place had been gathered together in haste on the first intimation of his coming, with the view of committing him to participation in the rash schemes which were then beginning to develope themselves; and he clearly saw that, notwithstanding the studious manner in which the old magistrate had called him Colonel Smeaton, his real name and rank had been communicated to every one present.

But other, and even more painful, considerations than those which affected him personally, now pressed upon his attention. The intelligence that a gallant, but not very discreet, officer was actually in arms in a desperate cause, and the rumour that an unfortunate prince, who, up to this

time, had been suffering solely for the errors of his ancestors, had cast himself madly into the difficulties and dangers of an ill-considered insurrection against the existing government, grieved him deeply. By principle or by prejudice, as the reader may think fit to call it, he was attached to the exiled house of Stuart; his ancestors had shed their blood and lost their property in its defence; all the traditions of his family were in favour of its cause; and perhaps no man might have felt more ready to unsheath the sword for its re-establishment on the throne of England, had not many things occurred within the last five-and-twenty years to weaken in him that hereditary attachment which had brought ruin upon his father. His early life had been spent at the little Court of St. Germain, and all that he had witnessed of the mean intrigues of that court, and the shameless ingratitude of its princes towards some of their best and most faithful servants, together with the licentiousness, the weakness, the frivolity, and the baseness of the principal persons who surrounded them, if not of the princes themselves, had produced a feeling of disgust which, although it could not alter his view of the supposed justice of their cause, put an end to everything like zeal in their favour. He felt with Addison's friend, the poet Tickell, in the "Epistle to a Gentleman at Avignon:"

"From James and Rome I feel my heart decline,
And fear, O Brunswick, 'twill be wholly thine;
Yet still his share thy rival will contest,
And still the double claim divides my breast;
The fate of James with pitying eyes I view,
And wish my homage were not Brunswick's due;
To James; my _passions_ and my _weakness_ guide,
But _reason_ sways me to the victor's side."

The progress of the human mind, and the development of more just notions of government and of the rights of people as well as of princes, had been great during the twenty-five years to which I have alluded. Smeaton had mingled with many classes in many countries, had heard opinions and arguments which were never uttered in the courts of Kings, and it was impossible for him to feel in the cause of the house of Stuart that same devoted attachment which had led his father to submit to every loss without murmuring, and to bear ill-usage without complaint. Nevertheless, he felt much pain at the thought of all the disastrous results which might accrue from the enterprise which had now commenced, and his ride onward towards his mother's property was a melancholy one. We must leave him, however, for a little, to inquire into what followed his somewhat abrupt withdrawal from the house of Sir James Mount. That worthy magistrate--shrugging his shoulders, confused and irritated, but thoroughly convinced that everything he had done or could do was perfectly just, proper, and discreet--returned to his companions above, and found them in a state of great excitement. They all fell upon him at once, declaring that he had altogether misled them.

"Why, this man seems as cold a Whig," exclaimed one, "as any Hanover rat that ever swam over the sea from Bremen."

"You represented to me," said another, "that he came over expressly to ascertain what could be done for the good cause."

"You invited me this morning to meet and consult with him," said a third. "I have your note in my pocket at this moment."

"I doubt whether he is the Earl of Eskdale at all," said a fourth. "One of that family would not be so lukewarm."

Here Sir James Mount himself, who had, hitherto, only replied by shrugs and grimaces, found himself on more certain ground, and replied boldly,

"Why, I know him, Sir Harry. I have seen him myself at Nancy--at Nancy--at Nancy. There is not a doubt--there is not a doubt--there is not a doubt of who he is. As to his coldness, it may be all discretion. He came expecting to see and consult with me alone; and, as to my inviting you here, gentlemen--inviting you here--inviting you here, I did it for the best, and on good advice. Look here, what Sir John Newark says."

And, drawing a note from his pocket, he read as follows:--

"My worshipful and excellent friend, I write you these few words to tell you that our friend, the Colonel, will be over with you this morning, to speak upon the important business you wot of. He seems perfectly confident of his own safety, and to entertain no objection to meeting any one--in which, I think, he is rash; but I would have nobody at my house except discreet people, if I were in your case. Keanton is so near you that, most likely, he will go over there before he fully decides upon what he will do. It is a very valuable property; and, I should think, ought to produce a good sum if sold."

"What he means about Keanton--about Keanton--about Keanton, I cannot divine," said Sir

James.

"He means it as a blind," replied one of the others; "and, in case his letter were to fall into any other hands, he would vow that it all referred to some matter of ordinary business. Ah! Sir John Newark, Sir John Newark! we all know him well. He is not to be trusted."

"Stay a minute," said Lord Talboys, "The letter may bear a different interpretation. Sir John distinctly says that the Earl will decide upon nothing till he has been to Keanton. Therefore we could not expect him to open himself to us now. Then again, this matter as to the sale of Keanton may imply that he wishes first to see what funds he shall have at command in order to raise men. You say he is a very celebrated officer, Sir James?"

"Very distinguished--very distinguished--very distinguished indeed," replied the old gentleman.

"You had better burn the letter, at all events," said the black-faced man, who was at once the shrewdest and most determined of the party. "Here, I will strike a light with a pistol-flint."

"No, no, no," said Sir James Mount. "I may have to show it again--show it again. I expect several other friends; but he came so soon--he came so soon--he came so soon. Hark! I hear some of them coming."

Almost as he spoke, one of the servants entered the room abruptly, with a face in which the nose alone was rosy; and his aspect at once alarmed the master of the house.

"What is the matter?--what is the matter?--what is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Why, your worship, there is a body of foot soldiers half way up the avenue," replied the man, "and some forty or fifty horses have just ridden up to the back. I, am sure I don't know how they got into the park."

The confusion and disarray which now prevailed was extraordinary. Poor Sir James Mount was at what is commonly called his wit's end. Some were for running down and gaining their horses as fast as possible to escape. Others were for attempting to defend the house, and others were actually at the door of the room to sneak away, when the voice of Sir Harry Blake was heard, exclaiming--

"Stay, stay. Every one stay. There is no danger whatever, if we act like brave and prudent men. Should these soldiers come with any suspicion, we have only to say, that we have met as a body of magistrates and gentlemen to concert means for the preservation of the peace of our district, very sinister rumours having reached us of risings in different parts of the country. No one can deny our right so to meet, or even say that it was not our duty to do so. Bring a light directly, Joseph," he continued, addressing the servant. "Offer no opposition whatever to whomsoever may be at the head of the soldiers. But the light. The first thing is the light."

As he spoke, he drew the note he had received from Sir James Mount from his pocket, and threw it and another paper into the fire-place. All who were present followed his example; and, as the light did not come as soon as they expected, the pile was set on fire by some gunpowder and a pistol-flint, and every scrap of paper was utterly destroyed. This was not done a moment too soon; for the sparks were still wandering about in the tinder, when the high sheriff of the county entered, accompanied by the elderly general officer, in the brown suit, who had played a quiet but important part at the meeting of the magistrates in Exeter.

"I am sorry to disturb you, gentlemen," said the high sheriff; "but you have met here this morning in somewhat unusual numbers for purposes which require explanation."

"Methinks, to a magistrate of your prudence and experience," said Sir Harry Blake, "but little explanation would be required, if, as I take it for granted, the sinister rumours which have reached us of armed risings in various parts of the country have come to your ears also. But explanation is very easily given. We met in these perilous circumstances to devise means for preserving the peace of this district, and I think you will not deny, Mr. High Sheriff, that it was our duty to do so."

"I was not aware, Sir Harry," replied the gentleman whom he addressed, with a quiet sneer, "that your zeal for the peace of our Lord the King was so warm."

"Warm enough to have left a strong smell of burnt paper behind it," said the general, looking towards the fire-place. "Pray, what may have been those papers just destroyed?"

"Some incendiary addresses," replied Sir Harry, readily, with a laugh. "We thought the flame that they have just made there might be less dangerous than any other they could light up in the country."

"Ha!" said the old general. "Nevertheless, Mr. High Sheriff, I must call upon you to do your duty."

The high sheriff looked round the group assembled, and then said--

"I think I know every face here present; but there is one gentleman whom we expected to have

the pleasure of meeting, and who is not amongst you. Has the Earl of Eskdale been here? Or is he expected?"

"No person of that name has been here," replied one of the gentlemen, boldly; and then, with a spice of malice, he added, "One Colonel Smeaton was here a short time ago; but, not liking our proceedings, he took his departure."

"Oh, Colonel Henry Smeaton," said the sheriff. "That will do." At the same moment, the general took a step towards the door.

"Then I suppose we may as well break up," said Sir Harry Blake; but the high sheriff waved his hand, while his military companion quitted the room.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said. "I must request the pleasure of the company of every one of you to Exeter. Informations have been sworn, of which you shall have copies. Here are warrants against five of you, which it will be my painful duty to see executed; and summonses have been issued against the rest to come in and surrender, which it will be well for them to obey at once."

As he spoke, the general put his head into the room, saying--

"I must away to Keanton, Mr. High Sheriff, and take a party of horse with me. I have got the information I wanted from the servants, and will overtake you on the road to Exeter."

"Join us at Silvercross, general," said the high sheriff. "I shall much need your counsel and assistance. We have four other friends to inquire after, remember; so you had better come on as soon as you have made sure of your man. Now, gentlemen, are you ready, and is it your intention to come peaceably?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Lord Talboys. "*We* met to preserve the peace. *You* apparently come to disturb it."

"It is all very good--very good--very good," said Sir James Mount, who had now a little recovered himself; "but I do not know what I have done to deserve this treatment, and I will have reason for it--reason for it, when I get to Exeter."

"You shall have reason for it here, my dear sir," replied the high sheriff. "I think this is your handwriting--if not, it is an exceedingly good imitation, and, in this letter addressed to Sir William Wyndham, you tell him there is every reason to believe that King James is actually landed in Scotland. Now, who King James is, you best know; but that is a question government is determined to enquire into in conference with yourself, and therefore I am afraid you must take a journey to London. Now, gentlemen, I will show you the way, and I trust that you will follow, without obliging me to send up for you."

Thus saying, he descended the stairs; and one after another of the party above, with dejected looks and crushed expectations, walked down after him, passing between two files of soldiers in the hall. Few words were spoken by any of them; but Sir Harry Blake whispered to Lord Talboys--

"I would bet a guinea to a pinchbeck shoe-buckle, that Newark is at the bottom of this."

CHAPTER XX.

Through quiet hedgerows and calm and solitary lanes Smeaton pursued his way towards Keanton. As he advanced, he thought he recognised the objects around him. It might be fancy, or it might, indeed, be memory; but he had often heard the place described, and two well-executed views of the house and neighbouring grounds always hung in his mother's chamber. So that a clear brawling brook which cut across the road, and a group of old oaks upon a knoll, seemed quite familiar to him, and showed him that he was approaching Keanton rapidly.

Before going to the family mansion, he thought it better to call at the house of farmer Thompson, and inquire into the state of things in the neighbourhood. He found nobody within, however, but the stout servant-maid, who looked at him apparently with some degree of suspicion, and gave very short answers to his questions. "She could not tell where Mr. Thompson was," she said. "She did not know whether Mr. Jennings was at the house or not. Her master might be home soon or he might not, just as it happened. He was very uncertain, 'specially just about harvest-time."

"Well, my good girl," said Smeaton, "there are two things I think you must do for me. Give me

a draught of milk, if you have got any, and call somebody who can tell me more."

He spoke with soldier-like frankness; and the girl laughed, replying:

"Milk you shall have, sir, and welcome, and I'll call somebody else; but, whether they can tell you more or not, I cannot say."

Leaving him in the passage where he stood, she went away towards the back of the house, discussing with herself in half-uttered sentences the question of whom she should call.

"Not Tom," she said; "for he would blurt out everything in a minute, all about the fat man up at the great house, and all. I'll call Dick Peerly. There is no getting anything out of him--at least *I* never could."

After getting a bowl of milk at the dairy, she mounted upon a stone step let into the wall of the yard, and screamed at the top of her voice to good Van Noost's first acquaintance at Keanton, who was working in the field behind.

"Here, Dick, Dick Peerly," she cried, "come hither. Here is somebody wishes to speak to thee, man." Having thus vociferated, she carried the bowl to the stranger.

Dick Peerly sauntered up to the house at her bidding, whistling as usual; but, as soon as he saw the visitor, he put his hand up to his forehead as a salutation, with much greater signs of respect than he had shown to Van Noost.

"Can you tell me, my man, where farmer Thompson is?" asked Smeaton.

"No, that I cannot, sir," replied the lad. "He may be gone to Ballimoree for aught I know."

"Ballimoree!" echoed Smeaton, gazing at him. "Where is that?"

"Why, you fool, Dick, cannot you give the gentleman a reasonable answer?" exclaimed the girl. "It is all his nonsense, sir. There is no such place as Ballimoree."

"I only meant to say, he might be anywhere in the world, sir, for aught I knew," replied the young man, eyeing Smeaton very attentively. "But here he comes up the road, if you want to see him."

Smeaton drank the milk, and then, leaving his horse with the servant, walked on to meet the good farmer, while the maid and the peasant-lad looked after him down the road. The meeting was too far off for them to hear any of the words spoken; but, in an instant, they saw the farmer uncover his head, and stand with his hat in his hand till Smeaton made him a sign to put it on again. Then, without returning to the farm-house, they walked away towards the mansion, making a sign to the servant to follow with the horses.

They reached the great iron gates and went in; the servant followed and disappeared also; and the girl was turning to her work again, when suddenly a clattering sound was heard upon the road near, and a small party of horse came down at full speed.

The moment the lad Dick Peerly beheld them, he darted away to meet them, and, laying his hand on the neck of the charger mounted by an elderly man in a plain brown suit, he uttered the word "Ballimoree."

"Ay, Ballimoree, to be sure," replied the general, ordering his troop to halt, "Are you Dick Peerly?"

The spy, for such he was, nodded his head, saying, in a low tone--"He's up there at the house, or I am quite out. He came not ten minutes ago. But go carefully to work, sir; for there are so many ins and outs in that old place, that he'll get off if you make much noise."

"Come with me, and guide us," said the general. "We will use all caution."

The whole party then rode quietly up the road towards the mansion; but their proceedings had not passed without notice. The servant-girl, startled and surprised by the suddenness of the lad's spring forward to meet the soldiers, ran into the front room of the farm-house, and watched them from the window. Whatever shape her suspicions might take, she resolved at once that her master should not be without help in need; and, casting her apron over her head, she ran out by the back way, from cottage to cottage, and from field to field, saying a few words to every man and boy she met. The effect of what she told was instantaneous. All her hearers seemed enraged and surprised. One got a thick stick, another a flail, another a scythe. One or two ran into the cottages and brought forth old guns used for frightening the birds from the corn; and some eighteen or nineteen men, together with a number of women and boys, were soon directing their steps towards Farmer Thompson's house, all muttering threats against some one who was probably no other than treacherous Master Dick Peerly.

In the meantime, Smeaton and the farmer had, as we have seen, quietly pursued their way to the mansion, and had opened the great door, which was merely latched. A large old stone hall then presented itself; but it was vacant, as were also the rooms to the right and left. Voices,

talking and laughing, however, were heard from a distance; and, as the surest means of discovering where Master Jennings, the steward, was, Farmer Thompson led his young lord towards the great kitchen, in which a stout rosy dame was bustling and scolding the maids. From her they learned that her husband Jennings was out in the little court with "the fat strange man, helping him in his tomfooleries," as she chose to express it.

"They have spoiled my best ladle amongst them," she said; "that is all I know; and I think Jennings is as great a fool as the other, for he has let the two men be called off their work in the garden for his nonsensical lead-melting. But, if my lord chooses all this to go on, there is no help for it, I suppose."

Smeaton smiled; and Farmer Thompson led the way towards the back court, through empty passages and a number of open doors. In the little stone-paved enclosure which they soon reached, an animated scene presented itself. Slung upon a tripod, such as that much in use amongst our friends of the gipsy race, was an immense large pot or caldron with a furious fire of brushwood beneath it. Two men in the garb of labourers were supplying fresh fagots to the flame; and the steward Jennings, a man upwards of sixty years of age, was standing by looking on, while Van Noost himself, the presiding demon of the flame, bustled about, stripped to the waist, and thickly begrimed with smoke and dirt.

For an instant he did not seem to perceive the approach of the young nobleman and his companion, so busily was he engaged in looking into the great pot, and moving some substance in it with a long ladle which he held in his hand. When he saw Smeaton, however, he rolled towards him with a joyous laugh, exclaiming--

"Here I am, my lord--here I am, at my old trade, and in your lordship's service!"

At the same time Farmer Thompson beckoned up the steward and introduced him to his young master. A few kindly words passed from the lips of Smeaton, and expressions of respect and attachment from those of Jennings; after which, Smeaton turned to Van Noost, saying--

"Well, my good friend, what are you about now?"

"Casting balls, my lord--casting balls for pinnacles," replied Van Noost, turning back to his caldron. "There is not one left in the place. What is a pinnacle without a ball, more than a cannon without a shot? Halloo! halloo! who are these gentlemen?"

His exclamation immediately led Smeaton to turn in the direction which Van Noost's eyes had taken; and he beheld, at each of the three doors which led into the court, a small party of dismounted troopers, every man having his cocked pistol in his hand. At the head of one of these parties was the general officer, in his plain brown suit.

"Halt there!" said the old officer, to the men; and he moved quietly alone, and unarmed, towards the scene around the caldron.

Without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment, Smeaton advanced a step or two to meet him, knowing that he himself was the person who must now speak and think for the rest.

"May I ask," said he, civilly, "to what we owe the pleasure of your company, sir?"

"To a somewhat unpleasant cause," replied the general, mildly. "One of the persons without is charged with a warrant for the apprehension of Henry, Earl of Eskdale. I do not know whether I have the honour of addressing that nobleman."

"The same, sir," returned Smeaton. "I shall of course submit, although this is a very inconvenient proceeding, which I was not led to expect. The Earl of Stair assured me that I should not be molested."

"I know not that he had any power to give such an assurance, my lord," remarked the old officer; "but the warrant runs in the name of the high sheriff of the county, and I have no choice but to see it executed, being directed to give him every aid and assistance. Nevertheless, I doubt not that if you could prove such assurance had been given to you, it might have had great influence; but----"

He paused; and Smeaton instantly re-joined--

"I can easily prove the fact, sir. Amongst my baggage at Ale Manor, I have a letter from his lordship to General C----, which I was to deliver, in case of obstruction."

"My name is General C----, my lord," said the old officer; "and I shall be most happy to receive his lordship's commands."

"Then, if you will take the trouble of riding with me to Ale," pursued Smeaton, "you shall have the letter immediately, by which you will see that not only is my presence in England well known to, and permitted by, the government, but that my whole baggage and papers have passed under examination in London."

"This is somewhat strange," observed the old officer; "for no knowledge of such facts have

reached this county. Nevertheless, I fear, my lord, it is my duty to take you to Exeter; and indeed I have not time to turn so far out of the way as Ale."

"I think you are a little hard," said Smeaton. "May I inquire whether I am apprehended on suspicion merely, or upon some positive charge, which might justify my being carried away--to jail as I suppose--not only without the baggage necessary for my personal convenience, but without the very means of showing that such a suspicion can have no just foundation?"

"I do not wish to deal harshly, my lord," rejoined the other, taking out his watch; "and perhaps, as it is not yet two o'clock, I may make such arrangements as may tend to your convenience. I must now put you in the hands of the officer who bears the warrant; but I shall tell him, at the same time, that if he feels it consistent with his duty to take you round by Ale, for the purpose of obtaining what baggage and papers you want, I have no objection. Your lordship demanded whether you are apprehended on suspicion. Such indeed is the case; but I am much afraid that what we have seen here this day must form the basis of a very grave charge."

As he spoke, he pointed with his hand towards the great caldron, by the side of which Van Noost was standing, an image of fat despair, and shaking in every limb, notwithstanding the heat.

Smeaton could not help laughing.

"Pray, General," he said, "what do you think they are about?"

"Casting bullets beyond a doubt," replied the old officer. "We overheard the admission from that man's own lips as he came up. He talked of cannon indeed; but we see none about the place. However, the object is perfectly clear; and he must accompany your Lordship to Exeter."

Smeaton laughed somewhat bitterly.

"Prepossession induces strange mistakes," he said. "If you will ask the man what he was really about, he will tell you; and, if you please, I will tell you beforehand, so that you can compare the two accounts."

"I am not here to take examinations, my Lord," returned the old officer. "Any explanations you have to give had better be reserved for another place. I heard some of the words I have alluded to; and the men heard others. That is all we have to testify to; and I presume there is no doubt of this being a caldron full of lead. At all events I will see."

Thus saying he walked up to the fire, and looked into the large pot, adding, as he did so:

"The matter is very plain. This is boiling lead for casting bullets."

"For casting no such thing," exclaimed Van Noost, in a voice affected both by fear and indignation. "I have not got a bullet-mould in the world, and never cast a bullet in my life. The lead was melted to cast balls for the pinnacles and corners of the roof."

"A very good excuse," said the old officer, drily, staring at the grotesque figure of the statuary. "Pray, sir, what may be your name?"

Van Noost hesitated to reply; and the old general added, with a smile:

"It does not much matter; for, under whatever name you go, we must have you in Exeter, my good friend."

"Well, then, my name is Van Noost," said the statuary, with the boldness of despair. Then, fancying he saw a better chance of obtaining credence for his story if he stated his profession, he added, "Van Noost, the statuary and founder of leaden figures, Decorator of Gardens, etc., etc. I have had the honour of doing many a piece of work for good Queen Anne; and I declare, so help me Heaven, I was doing nothing at all but going to cast round balls for the angles, where you may see the old ones have fallen off."

"I am afraid the balls might have been used for other purposes, good Master Van Noost," said General C----; "but I am very happy to have met with you; for you are wanted in London on a charge of holding seditious correspondence with his Majesty's enemies."

"Upon my word, sir," interrupted Jennings, now speaking for the first time, "the poor man was doing nothing but what he says. You do not recollect me, I dare say; but my name is Jennings; and I believe I am well known to everybody as a peaceful and quiet man, who never meddles with politics or anything that does not concern him. At all events, my Lord knew nothing of the casting; for he has not arrived two minutes; and this is the first time he has been here since he was a boy."

"You had better follow your rule of not meddling, on this occasion also," rejoined General C----. "You may say things that I would rather not hear. I am not at all disposed to act harshly, or put any one to the pain of imprisonment unnecessarily, although I am not sure that, in the strict line of duty, I should not send every one here to Exeter jail. However, I shall content myself with this noble Lord and this worthy statuary, against whom charges exist, independent altogether of the present suspicious transaction. That also will have to be investigated; and then, Master Jennings,

if you have any evidence to give, it will be received.--Now, Corporal Miles, call in Captain Smallpiece."

Having said this, he crossed his arms upon his chest, and looked gravely down upon the ground, till the person he sent for appeared; and then, pointing to Smeaton and the sculptor, he said,

"That gentleman's name is the Earl of Eskdale; and the other is Master Van Noost. I give them both into your custody, Captain Smallpiece; and you will have the goodness to conduct them to Exeter."

"I suppose I am to tie their arms?" said the insolent soldier, interrupting him.

"You are to show them no indignity whatever, sir," replied the general, "but to remember that, for your proper treatment of them, as well as for their safe custody, you will be held responsible. His lordship has expressed a wish to have part of his baggage, and some papers necessary to his defence, from Ale Manor; and I have no objection to him to your riding round that way and permitting him to obtain what he wants. But you will, on no account, lose sight of him; and I think it will be better for you to seal up the rest of his lordship's baggage at Ale Manor, and to mark, with your own hand, all the papers which he may think fit to bring away. These are precautions, my lord, which I am sorry to be obliged to take; but my duty requires them."

The young nobleman bowed stiffly; and Captain Smallpiece demanded in a less bullying tone than ordinary--

"Are you not going with us, then, General?"

"No," replied the old officer. "I must ride after the high-sheriff. Good morning, my Lord. I trust that you will be able to clear yourself of all charges; and, in the meantime, I shall be happy to receive my Lord of Stair's letter--for which I will give you an acknowledgement--and produce it upon the proper occasion."

Thus saying, he walked slowly out of the court, leaving Smeaton and Van Noost to the tender mercies of Captain Smallpiece, who beckoned up his troopers to assist in the removal of the prisoners.

At that period of English history, and for the greater part of that century, the constitution of the armies of England was very different from any thing we have seen in our own time. Abuses, hardly credible to us, so rapid and complete have been the reforms of late years, existed in every branch of the service. When we hear of mere boys being made colonels and general officers, and receiving the pay and appointments due to active service, or when we read of *valet-de-chambres*, bullies, and more degraded persons still, receiving commissions in the army by the influence of debauched and unscrupulous patrons, we are inclined to think that the tale is a romance; but such, alas! is not the fact. These things really did take place; and the mess-table of an English regiment presented a strange mixture, for which we have no parallel at present.

Now Captain Smallpiece was neither of the best nor of the worst of the classes which composed the British army. He was the son of a small hosier at Taunton; and, having been found exceedingly difficult to manage, or to instruct, given to swaggering, swearing, and drinking, his father took a quieter brother to his bosom and his shop, and contented himself with obtaining, for his eldest son, a commission in the army, through the interest of a nobleman who owed him money, and did not choose to pay it.

Placed under a very strict disciplinarian upon first entering the service, Captain Smallpiece decidedly improved. He lost some of his bad habits, or, at all events, he learned to control them; acquired a certain military tone and manner; and, as he was sharp and daring, though somewhat negligent, he gained the reputation of a smart officer. He had been in battle, too--had not run away, and had received a wound in the service, so that he easily contrived to get from an infantry into a cavalry regiment. Nevertheless, the old proverb, in regard to the difficulty of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, was often brought to the mind of his military companions: and to those over whom he had dominion he certainly did not appear in the most favourable light. At the same time, he had certain notions with regard to the perquisites and privileges of his station, which savoured much more of the mercenary sworder of a former day, or of the thief-taker or jailer of his own times, than of the modern soldier. He had no idea of sparing any one the least pain, or yielding to any one the least convenience, without being paid for it; and he had a happy art of making his requirements known without demanding money in formal terms, which might have subjected him to punishment.

Strange as it may seem, by no one would his hints have been more easily understandable than by Smeaton; for he had served too long in foreign armies not to have seen the same conduct even in greater excess. He appeared to enter into the character of the man at once; and, rapidly considering his own peculiar position, made up his mind to pay largely for any concession which might enable him to see Emmeline even for a moment before he was removed to Exeter, or perhaps to London.

"I presume," he said, as soon as the general was gone, "you will permit me to ride my own horse, which is waiting."

"If you pay for his keep and dressing, my lord," replied the captain.

"Oh, yes, I understand all that," said the young nobleman, "I have served many years myself, my good friend, and understand what is right and proper on these occasions. What is done for my own convenience must, of course, be done at my own expense."

Captain Smallpiece grinned graciously; for he at once perceived that he should be spared any embarrassing explanations. However, he thought it best to begin his exactions vigorously at once, for fear of any after resistance; and so, rubbing his head, he observed, in a sort of meditative tone--

"As to taking this round about by Ale, 'pon my life, I do not know what to do. Zounds, my lord, it makes nine miles difference; and that, upon a long march, is something. I don't believe we shall ever be able to reach Exeter to-night if we do; and then I shall have to feed the men and horses; and I doubt whether the magistrates will allow the money. The general did not *order* me to do it. He only said I *might*."

"Which was as good as an order," added the Earl, who had heard him quietly to an end. "As to your expenses being allowed, whether the magistrates do that or not, I shall defray them. We can settle that, captain, at the first place where we stop for any time; but, if we do not go to Ale Manor House, I shall have no means of defraying anything, as, not expecting this adventure, I have not a guinea in my purse."

"Well, we must go, I suppose," grumbled the worthy officer. "That is to say, if you think what General C---- said was intended for an order."

"Oh, that it was, that it was," cried Van Noost, who was struggling, all begrimed as he was, into his smart coat and waistcoat.

"I should take it as such, were I in your place," observed Smeaton; "and I am a soldier, you must recollect, as well as yourself."

"Very well then, come along, my lord," rejoined Captain Smallpiece, assigning two of his soldiers to guard each of the prisoners. "Stand back, fellows! No private talk with people in custody!"

This was addressed to Jennings and Farmer Thompson, who were pressing forward to take leave of their lord. The first bore it with much patience; and the second drew back, and made no farther attempt; but he had a hot and angry brow, and muttered something to himself with regard to basting Captain Smallpiece heartily, before he had done with him.

"Halloo, what is all this?" cried Captain Smallpiece, when they entered the court before the house, and saw through the iron gates a great number of peasantry, armed and unarmed, and bearing a very threatening aspect. "Cock your pistols, my men, and mount your horses."

"Stay, stay a minute, my good friend," said the young nobleman, not liking the appearance of things at all. "Thompson. Jennings, go and speak with those men, and get them away. Let there be no violence, I beg. It may do me harm, but no good; and I am not in the slightest danger."

"I won't have the King's troops insulted," exclaimed Captain Smallpiece, in a loud tone.

"I trust there is not the least chance of it," said the young nobleman. "Go forward, Thompson, and take them away into the hamlet."

The good farmer obeyed, but evidently unwillingly; and as he approached the iron gate to open it, the lad, Dick Peerly, who was within the court with the soldiers, sprang forward, and caught hold of his sleeve, saying something to him which was not heard where Smeaton stood.

But the good farmer pushed him away violently, exclaiming--

"Get thee back, hound! Thou shalt have what thou deservest, if I catch thee in the place in five minutes. I have got other work to do just now."

Going to the gates, he was seen speaking to the people, for a moment or two, evidently having some difficulty to persuade them. At length, however, he walked down the road, with the little crowd following him, though some lingered a while longer, and many turned to look at the departure of the soldiers, when they had got about a hundred and fifty yards from the gates. Smeaton's horse was then brought forward by his own servant, and, as he mounted, the man asked--

"Shall I come with you, sir?"

"Do as you like," replied Smeaton. "I shall not be long in captivity. Perhaps you had better ride with us to Ale Manor, at all events."

"Ah, you impudent varlet!" cried Captain Smallpiece. "You are the rascal who made such fools of us at Ale."

"Heaven help me, noble sir!" replied the man. "I made no fool of you. That would have been trouble thrown away." At the same moment he loosed his lord's stirrup, and jumped out of the reach of the captain's arm.

After some questions, and some trouble, good Van Noost was mounted upon his fat pony, with a very rueful face; and, near the head of the troop, with a soldier on either side, he and the young nobleman rode out of the gates. Smeaton's servant, Thomas Higham, followed at the end of the file, a little indeed in the rear; and, before he left the village, he rode quickly down to the spot where Farmer Thompson was speaking to some people, said a few words to him, and then cantered off after his master.

CHAPTER XXI.

The life of man, like the life of society, goes in epochs. There are periods at which fair fortune or ill fortune seems to begin or end; and a long succession of bright or dark days follows, during which no folly seems capable of clouding the sunshine--no precaution sufficient to avert the storm.

The Earl of Eskdale was that day destined to disappointment when, after a long and tiresome ride, fatiguing from the slowness at which the troop moved, he reached Ale Manor, and was admitted, strictly guarded, to the house and to his own rooms. He found that Sir John Newark had gone out about an hour before, and had taken Emmeline and Richard with him. There was no resource but to procure what letters, money, and apparel he required, and to accompany Captain Smallpiece on the road towards Exeter. The fine wild scenery round Ale looked more beautiful than ever, though the day was not so promising as many which had preceded it. The sky indeed was generally blue, and the air warmer than it had been in the month of July; but ever and anon came heavy masses of cloud, floating distinct, low, and heavy, and looking like the flying island of Laputa to the eyes of Gulliver. From time to time, too, they had let fall, in passing, a few large drops of rain; and, amongst the mistiness which hung about the south-west, might be seen strange forms of hardening vapours of a light reddish hue where they caught the rays of the sun.

When Smeaton descended from the room he had inhabited, in order to remount, he found several of the servants in the hall, with old Mrs. Culpepper at their head. She seemed to witness his captivity with a stoical sort of apathy, which he knew to be far from her nature, and took no more notice of him than by dropping a formal curtsey as he passed. He easily understood her motives, and merely said--

"Be so good as to inform Sir John Newark, madam, that I trust to be back here in a few days. Do not let him make himself at all uneasy on my account; for, as he well knows, I have given no offence to the existing government, and can therefore be in no danger."

"I will tell him, sir," replied Mrs. Culpepper; and the young nobleman mounted and rode on.

The pace at which Captain Smallpiece thought fit to proceed was, as I have hinted, the very slowest possible; and it was evident to Smeaton that he did not intend to reach Exeter that night; but the clouds, which began to gather thick and lurid in the sky some way before they reached the hamlet and church of Aleton, induced him to quicken his movements a little. Rain was beginning to fall when they passed the small public-house; and the sergeant of the troop, who seemed on very familiar terms with his commanding officer, ventured to hint that it might be as well to stop there and refresh the men and horses.

"No, no, Jack," replied the captain. "We must get on a little farther, till we come to Norton-Newchurch. There, we'll halt at old Mother Gandy's. She brews the best, and I owe her a turn."

Perhaps he regretted, before long, that he had determined to proceed; for the menacing aspect of the clouds was soon changed into active operations. Thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain, pursued the party for the next three miles, which was the distance between Aleton and Newchurch, and not a man but was drenched to the skin, when the party dismounted at the door of the inn--if inn it could be properly called, being nothing more than a long rambling public-house, of two low stories, looking like half-a-dozen cottages put together.

As soon as he was under shelter, Captain Smallpiece drew forth his watch, and found that he had contrived to make it six o'clock before his arrival. This was just what he intended, apparently; for he abruptly declared that, with wearied men and horses, it would be impossible to reach Exeter that night. He then made arrangements for the accommodation of his soldiers, and demanded a private room for himself and his prisoners, at the door of which he planted the

trooper whom he most disliked in the party, to perform, in his dripping clothes, the wearisome office of sentry.

"Now, my Lord," he said, as soon as the door was shut, "what will you please to treat the men with? Gadzooks! I shall be glad enough to put something warm into my own stomach; and I dare say they will too, poor devils!"

Smeaton smiled, and replied--

"If you will call the landlady--mother Gandy, as you name her--I will order refreshment for ourselves. As to the men, you had better take these ten guineas to provide them with what you judge necessary."

The Captain had no scruple; and, when the landlady appeared, the young nobleman gave an ample order for good cheer for himself and his companions; and the worthy officer ordered refreshments for the men to the value of about a fourth part of what he had received.

"Set a barrel of good strong ale a-broach for them, madam, on my account," said the young Earl; and, with a low curtsey, the good woman withdrew, while Smallpiece exclaimed, with a coarse laugh,

"D----n it, you must not make them drunk, my Lord."

"I have no such intention, sir," replied Smeaton; "and, if I had, they would get sober before morning."

In one respect, the young nobleman and Van Noost were better off than their captors; for they had dry clothes at hand, of which they did not neglect to avail themselves; and good Van Noost seemed to acquire fresh courage with a dry jerkin. A good supper--for in those old times seven o'clock might be considered as a supper hour--completely restored him to confidence; and Captain Smallpiece, gazing on his washed and rubicund face, and clean apparel, and listening to his flat jokes, and his discourses regarding all his leaden mythology on the Reading road, could hardly believe that he was the same man he had first seen at Keanton, and pronounced him a jolly good fellow. This impression was very greatly increased when Van Noost undertook to manufacture the punch for the whole party, and his brewing turned out to be the most delicious that had ever been tasted.

Fertile in resources, whenever his first panics had subsided, the sculptor's brain was now entirely occupied with the thought of finding means for the escape of himself and his companion, never dreaming that Smeaton had no desire to escape at all. The first and simplest scheme that suggested itself to his mind was to make Captain Smallpiece drunk, and the worthy officer's propensity towards the bottle was written on his countenance in large letters. But insuperable obstacles intervened; the punch being made in the room, there was no deceiving Smallpiece as to the proportions of the rum and the water. Moreover, the worthy captain was upon his guard against himself; and, though he drank fast and hard at first, he soon began to hold his hand. One bowl was emptied without doing harm to any one.

Van Noost began to brew another, but Smeaton told him he should drink no more, and Captain Smallpiece said,

"Nor I either."

The sculptor went on, however, and took a ladle-full, saying,

"I am not afraid. My stomach is stout and my brain too."

"Well, another glass," said the captain, in a resigned tone; and to that other glass he added a second, a third, and a fourth, sometimes making Van Noost drink with him, sometimes stretching forth his hand to the bowl and helping himself almost unconsciously. But his head was a well-seasoned cask, upon which the fresh liquor made little impression. He merely grew somewhat more loud and talkative, more domineering in his manner and his tone.

Then Van Noost thought that, if he could but get Smeaton's servant into the room and the sentry away from the door, they could soon overpower the worthy captain himself, and make their escape from the window, which was on the ground floor; but the young nobleman would not take any hint. He did not want his servant and would not send for him, and Captain Smallpiece continued, with his long legs under the table, and his eyes turned towards the door, so as to see the sentry every time it opened. Some of Van Noost's manœuvres, too, seemed to excite his suspicion; for when, on one occasion, the statuary rose and went to the window, he exclaimed--

"Come, come, sit down, fat gentleman. What are you marauding about for?"

"I only wanted to see if it rained still," replied Van Noost; "but it is quite a fine night, and the moon is coming out between the white streaks."

Captain Smallpiece d--d the moon, and asked what he had to do with her.

"Perhaps she might light you to Exeter, If you like to ride," said the young nobleman, gravely.

"Is such your intention or not, Captain Smallpiece? for I think I hear your men bringing out the horses."

"Not they!" cried the captain, without budging from his seat; "and, if they do, they must take them in again. I gave my orders; if they choose to mistake, it is their own fault."

Van Noost kept quite silent; for the sounds which had reached Smeaton's ear reached his also; and there certainly was a noise as of many feet before the house. Then came a loud burst of talking and laughing, and a merry voice without tuned up some ribald song. A lull succeeded; then more loud talking; then, apparently, angry words, and at last a loud and confused din, as if twenty or thirty people were all shouting at once.

"Some of those blackguards of mine have got drunk, and are quarrelling with the bumpkins," said Captain Smallpiece, in a growling tone. "Well, they must fight it out; but they had better make haste, or *I'll* be in amongst them."

The din increased instead of diminishing; and, at the same moment, a voice was heard speaking to the sentry at the door.

"What is the matter?" shouted Captain Smallpiece, without rising. But, almost as he spoke, there was the report of a pistol; the door burst open; the sentry was thrown headlong into the room; and a number of men rushed in, with white shirts drawn over their garments, and their faces blackened.

Starting on his feet with a tremendous oath, Captain Smallpiece seized Van Noost by the collar, exclaiming--

"This is thy doing, and I will blow thy brains out." At the same time, he pressed a large horse-pistol to the unhappy man's head, and the lock clicked as he cocked the weapon. The fury in his face, and the fierceness of his gesture, showed that he was prepared to execute his threat, and another moment would have sent the poor sculptor to an immortality somewhat different from that which his leaden figures were likely to procure for him. But a tremendous blow from Smeaton's strong arm saved Van Noost's life, and laid the doughty captain grovelling on the ground. As he fell, the pistol went off, and the bullet struck the wall, while he shouted furiously--"Ah, my lord, you shall hang for this!"

What followed it is impossible to describe accurately; for the men from without, rushing in and throwing themselves both upon the officer and the sentry, contrived in the short struggle which ensued to bind them, to overturn the table, break the punch-bowl and glasses, and extinguish the lights. In the midst of this scene, Smeaton found his hand grasped by some one, and a voice said--"Come with me, come with me, and you are safe."

He hesitated for an instant, while a multitude of considerations passed through his mind, rendering it difficult to decide what to do. Another man, however, caught him likewise by the arm, and they hurried him on between them towards the door.

"This way, this way, my Lord," said a voice, which he thought he knew.

All was darkness in the passage, and those who guided him did not take him through the room in which the soldiers had been regaling. The door of the kitchen was open, however, and the interior, as he passed, presented a somewhat strange sight. Two or three of the troopers were lying on the floor, apparently dead-drunk; others were sitting upon benches or stools, with their arms tied tightly behind them; some were in a sleepy state of drunkenness, which rendered them nearly unconscious of what had happened; others were roaring forth a bacchanalian song in spite of their bondage, or sitting, gloomy and stern, mediating over the way in which they had suffered themselves to be surprised.

Amongst the latter was the sergeant, Miles, who caught a glimpse of Smeaton, and exclaimed:

"Ah, my Lord, I know you."

Smeaton paused, as if to reply; but the two men hurried him forward forcibly, and the next moment he was standing upon the road before the inn.

"Here is your horse, sir," said the voice of his servant. "All the things are in the saddle-bag behind. Let us be off as fast as possible. Then the good folks will separate. Quick, my Lord! I will show you the way."

Smeaton mounted in silence amongst a number of horses, and with eight or ten men flitting round, but apparently taking not the least notice of him. They suffered him to ride away after his servant, without even a word in answer to a question he addressed to one of them. Everything was conducted in profound silence; and, in a few minutes, the young nobleman was over the brow of the hill, and out of sight of the house. The servant rode on before, leaving his master to follow, and soon left the high Exeter road on which the inn was situated, for the downs which extended nearly to Mount Place on the one side, and to Ale Manor on the other.

It may be necessary, before I proceed, to take some brief notice of the various thoughts which

had crossed Smeaton's mind during the last few minutes, as his conduct was greatly affected thereby. It must be recollected, that in the whole transaction he was taken entirely by surprise. He was not, indeed, often found unprepared for any event; but all which had occurred had passed so rapidly, that impulse might well act in the place of reason. Though not without a thorough conviction that, if he did not interfere, another moment would terminate poor Van Noost's life, it was upon impulse that he knocked down Captain Smallpiece, and he much regretted the necessity of so doing to save the poor statuary. The consequences of that act presented themselves to his mind the moment after. He saw that it compromised him in a very serious manner, and that a little skilful torturing of evidence, by an experienced lawyer, would connect the fact of his taking part in the active struggle for his liberation, with his having ordered the ale with which the soldiers besotted themselves, and that again with the well-organised plan for his rescue, which he doubted not had been executed by his own tenantry. To all this, moreover, would be joined the lead-melting at Keanton, and the words which Van Noost had spoken, and which General C---- and the soldiers had only partly heard.

The whole of the above incidents would indeed form a chain of evidence tending to the one conclusion, that, notwithstanding his promise to Lord Stair, he had taken active measures to promote the insurrection against the government. He knew well, too, that persons made prisoners in the first outbreak of a rebellion are sure to receive little mercy, and sometimes little justice. Party violence demands victims, and examples must be made to deter the wavering by fear; so that both passion and policy combine for their destruction. If he neglected the means of escape, there was no prospect before him but long imprisonment, or death on a scaffold.

Then came another consideration, and I must leave it to the reader to settle, as he may be old or young, phlegmatic or ardent, how much this contributed to his decision. He thought of Emmeline, of how these events might affect *her*; nay, more, hopes and expectations flashed through his mind of being able, were he finally to succeed in escaping, to execute the scheme of carrying her away to another land, and uniting her fate to his. At the same time, he calculated, with the confidence of youth, upon easily clearing himself of all criminal share in the transactions which had occurred, if time were but allowed for him to prove the facts, and for men's minds to become composed and tranquillised.

Such were the motives on which he acted. I do not mean to say they were altogether just; for I am not drawing a perfect character. They seemed sufficient to him at the time, however, and his next thought was, how best to take advantage of the circumstances in which he was placed. Meditating in silence, he suffered his servant to ride on for about a mile; but then the latter dropped back, touching his hat, and saying--

"That way leads to Aleton Church and Ale, my lord, and that to Keanton. Though I thought you would like to go to Ale, I took a round to avoid the people; but your lordship can do as you like. You are about half way between the two places, somewhat nearer to Keanton perhaps; but I think Ale will be the safest."

"Why do you think so?" demanded &Heaton. "And what made you believe I should prefer going to Ale?"

"Why, my lord," replied the man, in his easy nonchalant way, "at Ale you can have a boat always ready to carry you off to the coast of France for half-a-dozen guineas; and the valley is so narrow, that you can get timely notice if people come down to take you. Then, as to your second question, I have always remarked that gentlemen about your age like better to live in houses where there are pretty young ladies, than in houses where there are nothing but ugly old women. Moths will fly in the candle, my lord, and young gentlemen are very courageous."

Smeaton smiled, and the man was falling back as if to let him lead the way, when his master stopped him, saying--

"Here, ride on beside me, Higham, and tell me how all this business has happened."

"On my life, I don't know, my lord," replied the man. "I had no hand in it, but just getting out your horse and mine, and throwing the saddle-bags across them. All I did was, when they were carrying you out of Keanton, to ride down and tell the stout farmer, who was so, busy, that he had better keep the people quiet for the time; but that, if he set people to look out for us from the top of the hills, he might find means of helping you out of the scrape before you got to Exeter."

"I am grieved at this," said Smeaton, somewhat sternly. "You should not have done so without orders. These poor people have now seriously compromised themselves with the government for an object which I did not at all desire, and I myself am thereby placed in very unpleasant circumstances. Do you think any of them were recognised by the soldiers?"

"Oh dear, no," replied the man. "I'll tell you how it all happened, my lord. When I heard you had ordered the men a whole barrel of humming ale, I naturally thought you intended to make them drunk. There were ten soldiers besides the sentry. A barrel holds six-and-thirty gallons. Now that is three gallons and a half a man. I say I could think nothing else, my lord, than that you meant to intoxicate the party; so I determined to help, and I treated them all round to a glass of strong waters to begin with. Just about nine o'clock, when the ale had worked, and the strong waters had helped it, and the men were three parts tipsy, in came three country fellows, and

called for a pint a-piece. The soldiers began jeering them, and I thought they took it wonderfully quiet, for they only jeered them again, and there was a good deal of laughing and noise. Then came in two more country lads, strong likely fellows enough, and they too sat down and talked. A minute or two after, some people on horseback came up to the front of the house, and had the landlady called out; and three of the soldiers went out after her, and we could hear a great roaring and noise about the door, and one of the half-tipsy soldiers said, drowsily, 'I dare say they are all smugglers from Ale.' This set one of the countrymen to pick a quarrel with him, and, just when they were coming to blows, in rushed a whole set of tall hearty fellows, with white shirts on, and their faces blackened. They pounced upon the soldiers like so many goshawks, and, without much of a struggle, tied them, one and all, as tight as if they were going to Tyburn. There was some cracked crockery, indeed, and a stool or two upset; but it was all done very gingerly, for I was not away two minutes, getting out the horses, and it was over before I came back."

"But what made you get out the horses at all?" demanded Smeaton.

"Why, just when the black-faced fellows were coming in, one of the countrymen whispered to me--'Get out your lord's horse in a minute, and give him to the man who is holding the others at the door.' However, as I was saying, it was all done and over when I got back, the soldiers all tied, and as mute as mice; and one of the men said, in a feigned voice--'Where is your lord? The old woman won't tell.' So I led them along up to the sentry, going first myself. He spoke a word or two, and asked what all the noise was about; and when I tried to get hold of him, he fired his pistol, and in the struggle we both tumbled into the room. Your lordship knows all the rest."

"But were all these men from Keanton, do you think?" his master inquired.

"I don't think it, my lord," replied Higham. "The black-faced fellows, at least, looked much more like Ale men, and they carried their hands inside out, like other marine animals. No, I think they came from Ale; but it is clear enough they were in league with the bumpkins; and I saw the jolly old farmer outside of the door. That I could swear to."

"Pray mention it to no one, then," said Smeaton; "for I should be very sorry that he suffered for this rash enterprise."

"The men might be smugglers, after all, my lord," observed the servant, "and might just get a hint when they came up. They are always ready enough to take part in a riot, and to thrash the soldiers. I cannot say how it was, but I tell you all I know."

The information thus received did not induce Smeaton to take a better view of the aspect which the whole circumstances might present when brought into a court of justice. Here was his own servant acting with the mob who had rescued him, attempting to seize and disarm the sentry, and taking a prominent part in the whole affair. Nor did he at all feel sure that, though acting with the best intentions, the man had told him all. It seemed to him improbable that his horse should be so speedily saddled without some previous intimation of the attempt which was about to be made; but he thought it better not to question him any farther, and pursued his way in silence towards Aleton Church.

The round they had taken made the distance fully six miles; but at length the building began to appear upon the side of the hill; and the Exeter road was perceived descending into the village. The moon, though occasional clouds still flitted over her, was shining with peculiar brightness after the storm, and by her light he perceived a number of persons both on horseback and on foot taking their way in the same direction as himself. They were going along in so leisurely and unconcerned a manner, that he could hardly fancy them the persons so lately engaged in a daring and hazardous act, although the white garments with which the greater number of them were covered seemed to mark them out as the same. He thought it better to avoid them, however, on all accounts; and, for that purpose, being higher up on the hill than the church, he so directed his course as to bring the building between himself and them. Before this was accomplished, however, he saw one figure separate from the rest in order to climb the hill; and, in the short round form, he recognised, with great satisfaction, a strong resemblance to good Van Noost.

"Those are some of the men, my lord," said the servant, "going back to Ale, you see. I should not wonder if they were smugglers after all."

Smeaton was very much puzzled. A suspicion had more than once crossed his mind, from the words of young Richard Newark, from Sir John's eagerness to induce him to go that day to Mount Place, and from all which had occurred after, that his worthy host had led him into a trap. Yet who could have sent these people to rescue him except Sir John Newark?

"If that is Van Noost, I will know," he said to himself; and, turning again to the servant, he asked--"Is not that very like the stout man who was made prisoner with me? I hope so; for I was anxious about him."

"Oh, yes, my lord, that is he," replied the man; "but there is no fear about him. He is too fat for any harm to happen to him. He'll roll like one of those things called buoys at sea, which are tumbled about in all sorts of ways, but always get right end uppermost."

"I must speak to him, however," said Smeaton. "Here, hold the horse, and I will go up to him

on foot. If I ride after him, he will run."

"And burst himself," added Higham, taking his lord's horse.

Van Noost, in the meantime, had climbed the hill, approached the wall of the churchyard, and entered the gates; but when Smeaton, following with a quick step, approached them, he found them locked, to his great surprise, and Van Noost nowhere to be seen. Without hesitation he vaulted over the low wall, and then ventured to call upon his stout friend's name. At first there was no reply; but upon his exclaiming again, "Van Noost, Van Noost, I want to speak with you," the head and shoulders of the statuary were protruded from behind a buttress, and he came forward as soon as he saw who it was that called.

"Ah, my dear lord," he said, "I am so glad to see you at liberty, and glad enough to find myself so too. You had better come in here where I am going. I am dead tired, I know, and I dare say you are too--those cursed saddle-bags have so fatigued me. But we shall be quite safe here; and I have got half a loaf and a long Oxford sausage with me."

"Where do you intend to hide?" asked Smeaton. "It will be better for you to come on with me to Ale, whence we can easily get to France."

"I would if I could; but I cannot," replied the poor man. "I have been so bumped and thumped and knocked about, that I have not got a leg to stand upon. I am going down into the crypt. There is an end of my old candle left, just to keep away the ghosts, and I shall be quite safe there."

"But how will you get in?" asked Smeaton.

Van Noost laughed.

"Ah! my lord," he said, "I have a fondness for keys, you know. I don't keep keys long in my hands without having a model of them. I have got a key for the door of the hiding-place at Ale; for I thought, whatever your Lordship might say, it might, some day, be of use to you; and I made one out of an old key at Keanton as soon as I got there."

Smeaton paused in thought for a minute, and then said.

"Give me that key, Van Noost. I should like to have it; and now, mark what I am about to say. *You* only know how far you have committed yourself with the government. I am going on to Ale--but not, in all probability, to the Manor House. I shall take up my abode in one of the cottages, if I can find a room. I shall have a boat kept ready to convey me to France in case of need; and, if you think it better for yourself to quit this country, you can come and join me at Ale before daylight to-morrow, resting here in the meanwhile. Some time will probably elapse before we are pursued, for the soldiers will doubtless go on to Exeter in the first place."

"I'll not fail, my dear Lord--I'll not fail," replied Van Noost; "and yet how can I go to France? It will almost break my heart.--My statues! How can I leave all my statues? And yet, as I may say, the parting has already taken place.--But let me get the key. It is in the saddle-bags by the little door.--Would that I had never meddled with politics!"

As he spoke, he turned back towards the church, accompanied by the young nobleman, who endeavoured to learn from him, without much success, by whose orders the men from Ale had joined the rescue party. They had all been "monstrous silent," Van Noost said; but, when the Earl added some farther questions as to whether they had ever mentioned Sir John Newark's name, the worthy sculptor exclaimed, somewhat vehemently.

"Ay, that they did, my Lord--at least, one of them; and I think you had a great deal better not go near Ale Manor again. From what one of them said, as two talked together, I made out that none of all this bad business would have happened if it had not been for Sir John. They say he has played the same trick to others before you, and always *peaches* and *plays booty*, except in the matter of smuggling."

"Then he did not order the rescue?" asked Smeaton.

"Oh, dear, no," answered Van Noost. "He sent messengers to Exeter in the middle of last night, with letters to the high-sheriff. So you may judge of the rest."

"Give me the key, my good friend," said Smeaton, through whose brain were passing many rapid considerations regarding his future conduct. "Did you make acquaintance with the parson of this place when you were here?"

"Ay, that I did, and rose high in his favour too," replied the sculptor. "He is a good, fat, jolly priest as ever waddled."

"And thinks of the things of this life, more than of the things of another, perhaps?" asked Smeaton.

"Ay, truly," responded the statuary. "He has more gods than one. A pipe of wine, a purse of guineas, a sucking-pig, or a haunch of venison, are better than any rubric for him, I wot."

"I must see to this," said Smeaton, in a musing tone; and, although the statuary could not divine whether he alluded to the parson or the pig, the purse or the pipe of wine, he did not venture to ask any questions, but got the key out of his saddle-bags. Having given it to Smeaton, the latter bade him adieu, and rode away.

CHAPTER XXII.

I trust the reader remembers well the description before given of the little village of fishermen's cottages at Ale, and of the way in which the road, after separating into two, in order to send off a branch to Ale Manor House, proceeded to the entrance of the village, and there dwindled into a narrow path, for want of room between the steep banks to reach the seaside in its original breadth. Smeaton passed the turning of the road towards the Manor, though evidently with some reluctance; for he paused an instant before he made up his mind, and then rode on more slowly. Five hundred yards onward brought him to the spot where it was necessary to dismount; but, before he had completely reached it, two men came out from under the shadow of the bank, and stood directly in his way. The moonlight enabled him to see, however, that they bore the ordinary garb of the fishermen of the place, which, I need hardly tell the learned reader, was very different from the fishermen's garb of the present day, and much more marked and picturesque. From these men he apprehended no opposition, even if they were not of the very party which had liberated him; and he was soon saluted in a civil tone, with the words--

"Good night, sir. You know you cannot ride down here. We thought it was some of the soldiers."

Smeaton dismounted, and gave his horse to his servant to hold; and, walking forward a little way with the two men, he explained to them his desire to obtain shelter in the village, and concealment from everybody for a time.

At first there seemed some hesitation in their replies; and the young nobleman began to fancy that the danger in which he stood, and which might pursue him even there, made them look upon him as an unwelcome guest; but, when he frankly put the question whether they were afraid to receive him, one of them replied with a laugh--"Lord bless you, no, sir. All the soldiers in Exeter should not take you out from amongst the men of Ale. Unless they brought cannon against us, they could do nothing in this village. We would beat them out with hand-spikes. It is not that at all. You are right welcome to all that we can do for you; but they say you are a lord; and you'll find the best house in the place but a poor hole for such a one as you."

"But, my good friend, I am a soldier," replied Smeaton; "and, when I tell you that I have slept for a month together upon the bare ground, you will easily judge that one of your houses will be quite as good as a palace to me. All I want is shelter and concealment for a little time."

"That you shall have, sir," replied the other man, who was somewhat older; "and, as for concealment, we have got plenty of places where the devil himself would not find you. We sometimes let the custom-house people come and search just for the fun of the thing; and yet, somehow or another, we contrive to supply the whole country round with Bohea, which never paid toll to King or Queen either."

"From what I saw to-night," said Smeaton, "you must have horses amongst you also; and my two beasts are in some degree an embarrassment to me, unless I can stable them somewhere."

"You will have to stable them on the downs, sir," said the younger man; "for there are no such things as stables in Ale. But, stay a bit; I think I can manage it. Farmer Tupper will take them in, I dare say; he knows how to hold his tongue. As to horses for ourselves, Lord bless you, when we want them, which is not above once a-month, we borrow them of our neighbours. Many a good farmer, and gentleman too, finds his horses not fit for much work on the day after the new moon. But then, what does he care? Every now and then he finds a pound of tea for his wife, or a bundle of Flemish hosiery for himself, lying at his door or on his window-sill; and he thinks himself well paid for his horses' night-work. Here, my man--Master Higham--you get down and go with your master. I'll lead the horses across the down to Tupper's farm; but take off the bags first. Grayling, you had better take the gentleman to your house, for you have more room, and my wife had a babby yesterday morning; so there is a fine squalling. Bless its little heart! It has got a pipe like a boatswain's whistle."

Thus saying, he led away the horses, leaving his companion with the young nobleman and his servant, the latter of whom seemed, during his stay at Ale Manor, to have become very intimate with all the good fishermen of the village. Before walking on, however, Smeaton judged it better

to take immediate precautions for guarding against surprise, and inquired whether a lad could not be hired to watch the road, and give early notice of the approach of any party of soldiers. The old fisherman, Grayling, laughed.

"Lord bless you sir, you don't know us," he said. "Don't you trouble yourself at all about it. No soldier or anything else comes within three miles of us without our knowing it. 'Tother night, when they came to the Manor, we were all ready for them if they had come on. You were ready for then, too, it seems, though how you got out of their way we do not know. I had a great mind to give the fellows who came down to the bay looking for you a drop of salt water to drink for poking their noses into Ale; and some of our men could scarcely be prevented from doing it, but it would only have made a noise; and so it was better let alone. However, you can rest quite as safe here as if you were a hundred miles out at sea. They shan't catch you in Ale, I'll answer for it. So come along, sir."

In a few minutes more, Smeaton and his servant were introduced into the fisherman's cottage, the lower story of which, consisting of a room on either side and a good wide passage between them, was encumbered with a variety of articles belonging to the man's craft or mystery, some of which were not of the most pleasant odour. Salted fish, sails, nets, fishing-lines, spars, oars, boat-hooks, barrels of tar, tallow candles, and a number of things which I cannot describe, were huddled together in the rooms and in the passage, exhaling a smell, as I have said, more powerful than fragrant, which was considerably assisted by a quantity of smoke issuing forth from the room on the left-hand side. There, at the cheek of the fire; as they termed it, sat the old man's old wife, with two or three young dolphins; her grand-children, playing about as merrily as if it had been noon. To her the fisherman introduced his guest, and whispered a word in her ear which instantly made her clamber up a steep little staircase which came down without guard or balustrade, not into the passage, but into the middle of the very room where she had been sitting. The floor above, I may mention, contained four rooms, and was nearly double the size of the floor below, which is only to be accounted for by the fact of the house being built against the steep side of the hill, which left not more than eight-and-twenty feet of flat ground between its base and the river.

The good lady not returning immediately, the fisherman himself went up after her, and found her, like all ladies when visited by an unexpected guest, in a great and setting-to-rights bustle.

"Pooh, pooh!" said the old man; "don't make such a piece of work, mother. He is quite a plain gentleman, and has been a soldier. He must have the back room too; for there he'll be snuggest."

"But suppose you want to get the tea out, Jack?" said the old lady. "Why, the bed is just over the hiding-hole."

"All the better," replied the man. "He may have to hide there before we have done with him. It is not the first time, I think, mother, that we have hid a man there; and so we must do now, if it is needful. Here, we'll put the chest for a seat at the foot of the bed. You bring the table out of 'tother room. Then it will all look mighty comfortable. But we must get him some supper before he goes to bed; and I'll broach that little keg I brought in last time."

"I hope he'll pay for what he has," said the old lady; "for we cannot afford to be giving away the things for nothing."

"There, there, don't be a fool," rejoined her husband. "Madam Culpepper will take care we are none the worse for it; and we all of us owe her much more than that comes to."

When they descended the stairs they found Smeaton playing with the children, who were in high glee; but his servant was no longer with him.

"I have sent my man up to the house," he said. "He can stay there without danger to himself, for to-night at least; and he may be of service to me."

The old man seemed startled, and not well pleased.

"You know best, sir," he said gruffly; "but--"

"But what, my good friend?" interrogated Smeaton. "You seem not to like my having done so."

"Why, sir, if he tells Sir John that you are down here, it may be a bad business," replied Grayling. "Mayhap you do not know Sir John as well as we do."

"I think I do," rejoined Smeaton, with a smile; "and, for that reason, I told the man not to say where I am, but merely to let them know I had been rescued and had ridden away. I have left him to tell his own tale; but I can trust him; and, depend upon it, Sir John will know nothing of the matter."

"Well, well. That is all right," responded the fisherman, his look brightening. "If he sees Mrs. Culpepper first, she'll tell him what to do."

A sudden light broke upon Smeaton's mind. "Pray was it Mrs. Culpepper," he said, "who directed you to come to my rescue?"

The old man laughed.

"You are quite under a mistake, sir," he said. "None of us came to your rescue. We know nothing about it. Ask any man in the place, and he'll tell you the same. There has not been one of them a couple of hundred yards from the place to-night."

A sly smile contradicted his words, and Smeaton, comprehending the truth, answered laughingly:

"Nevertheless, Master Grayling, there is a great streak of scot, or some black stuff, all the way down your cheek."

"The devil there is!" cried the man, starting up, and walking with the candle to a little looking-glass that hung against the wall. "Here, mother, give us a tuft of oakum." And, having got what he demanded, he rubbed his weather-beaten cheek hard, and then threw the oakum into the fire.

"It is a rule here, sir," he said, "never to speak of anything that we do beyond the cross-road; and it is a good rule too; so neither you nor any one else will get anything out of us, ask what questions you will. Sir John is a keen hand, and he tried it more than once at first; but he could make nothing of it, for we all know that a man's greatest enemy is his own tongue. You could not make that little child there blab, I'll be bound. But I dare say you know that Mrs. Culpepper has a brother and two nephews living over at Keanton; good solid men they are, who know how to held their tongues too, and that is all I shall say upon the subject. So now, sir, if you like to have a glass of Geneva and some broiled fish, we'll have our supper."

Smeaton explained that he had supped already, and the old man, lighting a fresh candle, conducted him up the stairs to his bed-room. When they were in it and the door shut, he put down the light and said: "You won't be very comfortable here, sir, but you'll be very safe, and I'll tell you how to manage. But, mind you, I'm going to put myself a bit in your power; so you must keep my secret as well as I'll keep yours. That window there looks up the hill; but nobody can come down that way, and from it you can see all the way up the path by what they call the blind man's well. Then look here. Underneath that bed, three of the planks lift up, altogether. They play upon a pivot; so you have nothing to do but put your knife under, and lift them as I do now. There, you see, is the top of a ladder, going down into our storehouse, as we call it, though old mother Grayling will call it my hiding-hole. If you get notice that anybody is coming, you have nothing to do but to go down there, shut the trap after you, and push in the bolt. Light enough enters through the chinks for you to see in the day-time; but don't take a candle in, and mind you don't tumble over the bales and other things."

"Is it cut in the rock?" asked Smeaton.

"Oh, dear no," replied the man. "You see it is the corner made by this floor sticking out above the other. It looks just like the rest of the house outside, and may be dug a bit down into the ground; for there are two steps up to get out below. But that was done before my time."

"Then one can get out from below?" asked Smeaton.

"To be sure," answered the man. "How could we get the goods in else? You'll soon see the door on the inside, though nobody can't see it on the out; and, should any people come looking after you, and you want to get away to sea, that's the best way. You shall always find a boat ready, and men to jump into her too, and we'll take care that the way is clear for you. So now, good night, sir."

"Stay a minute," said Smeaton. "I might have to go in great haste, and not be able to pay you, at the moment, either for your services or my entertainment. I should like to do so now, therefore, and also for the hire of a boat to take me to France."

"No, no, sir. As to all that," returned the man, "you must speak to my old woman. She is ready enough to take money--so don't give her too much of it; and, for the boat, you can pay the men who take you. That is all fair. What *I* have to do is, to see that they are ready, if I don't go myself, which is likely. Good night, sir. You'll see the old woman to-morrow, sure enough."

Thus saying, he went away, and closed the door, and Smeaton, seating himself at the table, gave himself up to thought.

He was not long in determining his course, and what the result of his reflections was, may be judged by some words which he spoke aloud, as one is apt to do when hesitation gives place to reflection.

"He is only to be fought with his own weapons," he said. "I owe it to her, to myself, and to others. Yet, if possible, she must be mine before we go. The occasion will justify the precipitancy."

After again pausing in thought, for a minute or two, he approached the little window, opened it, and looked out. Finding that the distance from the sill to the ground was not above five or six feet, he quietly let himself down, and walked, though with much difficulty, owing to the steepness of the hill, to the little path which led up to the well. Opposite the well, he paused; and, striding

across, so as to rest his right foot upon the opposite brim, he applied the key Van Noost had given him to that part of the chiselling in the rough stone-work which he fancied must conceal the key-hole. He had some difficulty in finding it, however; but, at length, succeeded. Van Noost was a clever artificer. The key turned even more easily than that from which it had been modelled, and Smeaton, satisfied that he could command access to Emmeline at any time he pleased, locked the door again, and returned to his chamber at the cottage. Then, exploring his saddle-bags, he brought forth from them a little round case, very generally used by notaries of that time, which contained some sheets of writing-paper, pens, and an ink-bottle; and, seating himself at the table, he wrote a rapid letter to Lord Stair, explaining the circumstances in which he was placed.

"It is now more than a week, my lord," he said, "since I wrote to your lordship, requesting you to use your influence, with the government in order to obtain my formal recognition as an English subject, and offering to comply with every proper form that may be required in such a case. I stated to you that I had inviolately adhered to the promise I gave you not to meddle in any shape with political matters, but that, nevertheless, I understood measures had been taken for arresting me, notwithstanding the assurances I had received from your lordship, Since I wrote the above letter, which, I fear, can never have reached you, I have every reason to believe that a scheme has been devised for driving me into the hands of parties opposed to the existing government.

"I was induced this morning by Sir John Newark to go over to a house called Mount Place to return the visit of its owner, and found a number of gentlemen with him, though I had been led to believe he would be alone. As I discovered at once that they were discussing questions of much political importance, I took my leave and retired, not having been, in the whole, two minutes in the house. I then rode on to my mother's property of Keanton, where I had previously sent the good man, Van Noost, whom you know, in order to keep him out of danger. He was amusing himself, at the moment of my arrival, in casting leaden globes to replace some others which had been blown or knocked off the pinnacles of the house; but before I had been ten minutes at Keanton, the place was taken possession of by a party of soldiers, and I and Van Noost were apprehended upon warrants previously issued, to which General C----, from a misapprehension of what the poor statuary was doing, added a charge of casting bullets for the purposes of civil war. Given into custody of one Captain Smallpiece and a party of horse, I and my fellow prisoner were taken to an inn, where the officer determined to remain for the night, although I expressed my desire to proceed to Exeter. The peasantry had previously shown themselves inclined to resist my apprehension, and here a large body of men found means to introduce themselves into the inn, and to overpower the troopers, who were mostly drunk. In the affray, Captain Smallpiece was in the act of shooting Van Noost, who had taken no part whatever in the struggle; and, to save the poor man's life, I was obliged to knock the officer down. Feeling that such a chain of circumstances--some of which were evidently accidental, though some were brought about for the purpose of involving me in the rash schemes of others--would form a very dangerous kind of evidence against me, and knowing the peril of being one of the first persons proceeded against in troublous times, I took advantage of the opportunity of making my escape, with the resolution of writing immediately to your lordship; a resolution which I now execute. Every word of the statement here given is true, upon my honour as a gentleman and a soldier. Since I have been here, I have held no communication with any one on political affairs. I have taken no part in any disturbances or any schemes whatever; but the assurance given me by your lordship, that I should not be molested, has been grossly violated by the authorities here, as if it was their object and intention to drive me into the arms of the disaffected. Nothing shall do so, if I can by any means avoid it; and it is my intention immediately to return to France. If I am prevented from doing so, however, by any active pursuance of the sort of persecution to which I have been subjected, and I find my earnest desire to remain tranquil, and to take no part in any political affairs whatever, thus frustrated, I must of course follow those measures which I judge requisite for my own safety."

He added a few words more, in regard to the general object of his letter, took a copy of it, and addressed it to the Earl in London. After having done so, he retired to rest, and slept as tranquilly for some hours as if the course of the preceding day had been calm and smooth.

CHAPTER XXIII.

There were lights in many of the windows of Ale Manor House when Thomas Higham approached by the back way. The gates of the great court behind, however, were bolted, and the bloodhound bayed loud and deep at the man's approach; but after he had rung the bell, and the animal had snuffed under the gates for a moment, his hoarse bark was silenced; he recognized a

friend. Higham soon obtained admission, and found the household in much commotion from the rumours which had reached Ale during the evening. Various was the aspect of the different servants whom he encountered as he was led to the presence of Sir John Newark. Those who had been but a short time in the family were full of wonder and amazement at all the events which rumour had detailed and magnified, and did not scruple to show their surprise and curiosity. The elder servants, who knew their master and his affairs better, were calm and silent, and asked no questions whatsoever. They had observed that Sir John Newark; though he had affected much surprise at the news of his guest's apprehension, had been in reality but little affected thereby; and, when a rumour of his escape had been carried to Sir John, a glance of angry disappointment had crossed the knight's countenance, which did not escape notice. They understood him pretty well, and read such slight indications aright. We seldom reflect that we are a constant object of study to our servants; that we are, as it were, a model set up for them to draw in their own minds, and that, walking round us in every position of life, they have full opportunity of completing the sketch.

Led on by the butler, Higham was conducted through the great stone hall to the room in which the knight usually sat. He found him alone; for he had sent both Emmeline and his son away, in order to reflect upon his course more at leisure. Something had gone wrong in his plans; and they required to be rectified. He had announced, on the very first intelligence of the young Earl's capture, that he should ride in the early morning of the following day to Exeter, in order to see what could be done for him; in truth, to see what could be done for himself in regard to Keanton. In prison and in danger, Sir John thought, Smeaton would not be very difficult to deal with; and, if he were, it would be easy to tighten his bonds a little. Moreover, another object had been gained by his apprehension. The vague fears regarding Emmeline, which had taken possession of the knight's mind as soon as he discovered that his guest was unmarried, had been increasing lately with a sort of instinct, and he rejoiced to have his guest removed.

Though a bold man, as we have seen, Sir John Newark was also a timid one. It seems a paradox, yet it is true, and similar cases are not unfrequent. He was bold in devising, bold even in executing, schemes for his own aggrandizement; but he was timid in fruition. He never fancied himself safe. He was always taking precautions. The only imagination he had was for difficulties and dangers; and one bold scheme for the attainment of a particular object was continually succeeded by another for the purpose of securing what had been obtained. It is strange, but true, that most of the cruel acts and many of the rash ones found on the page of history had their source in cowardice.

Smeaton's escape was therefore doubly disagreeable to him; and, when he heard the bell of the great court ring, and imagined that his noble guest might have returned to seek shelter in his house, he instantly set to work to hold a somewhat tumultuous counsel in his own breast as to how he should demean himself to attain his double object. The entrance of the servant instead of the master, however, put a stop to these considerations; and he asked impatiently--

"Well--well, where is your Lord?"

"Really, sir, I don't know," replied the man, who, having received but vague directions from the young Earl, thought himself privileged to lie at liberty. "I did not know that I should not find him here; but they say he has not come; and he took the road towards Keanton, sure enough. Perhaps, I had better set out to seek him."

Sir John thought before he replied.

"Then this rumour of his having been rescued is true?" he said, at length.

Higham nodded, and added to that mute mode of assent the words,

"A great pack of country fellows did it. Most of the soldiers were drunk, and were overpowered in a minute. I had no hand in it, however."

"Sir John leaned his head upon his hand, and mused.

"Then you positively do not know where he is?" he inquired.

"No, really, I cannot say, Sir John," answered Higham. "I dare say, at Keanton, hiding amongst his tenants."

"Not unlikely," said the knight. "I think you had better not go just at present. Wait here to-night, and get some refreshments. To-morrow, perhaps, your Lord may send for you; and, if not, and you go to seek for him, you shall bear him a message from me."

"Would it not be better for him to come here, sir?" asked Higham, ever willing to probe the minds of those with whom he was brought in contact. "I think he would be safer in this out-of-the-way place than anywhere."

"On no account, on no account," exclaimed the knight, caught in the trap laid for him. "Of course," he added, after a moment's reflection, "suspicion will be directed towards this house, from the fact of my intimacy with your Lord. The place will be searched, probably more than once; and his own safety requires that he should avoid the neighbourhood. His tenantry at

Keanton, probably, can conceal him for the time; and, as soon as pursuit has somewhat abated, it will be well for him to get out of the county, if not out of the kingdom. I speak against my own wishes and my own views," he continued, seeing an expression on the man's face which he did not clearly understand. "Nothing would give me so much pleasure as to see your master, and to offer him every assistance in my power; but to persuade him to come here, would be leading him to destruction. If I knew where to find him, I would go and visit him; for I have no personal fears in the matter, my good friend, whatever you may think."

"Oh, dear no, sir," answered Higham. "I don't think at all. I dare say, however, I shall very soon hear where my Lord is to be found; for he told me, when last I saw him, to come to Ale Manor; and, whenever I hear, I will let your worship know."

"Do so--do so," said Sir John Newark; "and now go and get yourself some supper. I dare say you are hungry after all this bad work."

"As a fox-hunter," rejoined Higham, and turned towards the door; but Sir John thought he might as well add a stroke or two to the picture of danger he had been drawing; and he called to the man, just as he was quitting the room--

"Tell my people, if any party should come to search the house during the night, not to open the doors till they have my orders."

"I won't fail, sir," replied Higham; and then, closing the door, he threaded his way through the passages towards the servants' part of the house, saying to himself, "Now for the old housekeeper. I wonder my Lord trusts that sly old hunks. But I must do as he has told me. She must be playing double somewhere, that is clear enough; but whether with my Lord and the young lady, or with worshipful Sir John, I cannot tell."

Quietly tapping at good Mrs. Culpepper's door, he went in; and the eagerness with which she looked towards him showed at once that his visit was not altogether unexpected, She made him a sign to shut the door, and then said, abruptly--

"Have you any news from your master? And is he safe?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the man. "He is quite safe, and told me to tell you--"

"Hush!" interrupted the old woman, putting her finger to her lips. "Not now go and get yourself some refreshment in the servants' hall. There are not more than two or three up. Pretend to fall asleep in your chair. They will soon leave you; and I will come when I am certain that all is quiet. Stay, I will order your supper." Then, approaching close to him, she asked, in a whisper, "Where is your Lord?"

"Here, in Ale village," returned Higham, in the same low tone; and, opening the door, the old housekeeper passed out.

Crossing the end of the passage at the very moment, as if going towards his own bed-room, was Sir John Newark himself; and, raising her voice, without a moment's hesitation, Mrs. Culpepper said, in a somewhat sharp tone--

"Pray, Sir John, is this man to have supper at this time of night?"

"Certainly," replied her master. "He has had a very fatiguing day; and it is not *his* fault that he is late."

"Well then, fellow, come with me," said the housekeeper, walking away with him to the servants' hall. There she ordered him some supper, in a cold and commanding tone, and left him to enjoy it.

Higham played his part well. He ate and thank, nodded, took another cup of ale, and then seemed to fall fast asleep. The three servants who were still up dropped off one by one, and left him, with a kitchen lamp on the table, to follow when he thought fit to wake. He remained for half an hour longer, however, undisturbed, and had nearly fallen asleep in reality, when Mrs. Culpepper again appeared, and quietly closed the door behind her.

"Now, what says your lord?" she demanded, speaking very low.

"He bade me tell you, ma'am," replied the servant, "that he is quite well and in safety, and begs you to let those know who may be anxious."

The old housekeeper slowly nodded her head, to show that she comprehended, and then said--

"What more?"

"Why, only that he is here, in Ale, I was to say," answered the man, "at the house of a fisherman, named Grayling, and that he hopes, in spite of all that has happened, to be able to carry out what was proposed, with your good help."

Again Mrs. Culpepper nodded her head, and merely asked--

"Is that all?"

"He told me to ask you, ma'am," said Higham, "if it would be safe for him to venture here; for he much wishes to speak with you and somebody else, whose name he did not mention--perhaps he means Master Richard."

"Perfectly safe, if he could come in private," replied Mrs. Culpepper; "but most dangerous if he were to be seen. Yet stay. He is quite secure at Grayling's for two or three days. Now, mark what you must do. Rise early to-morrow, before daylight; go quietly down to him at the cottage, and tell him what I say--he will understand you. Tell him, the means of coming in, in private, he shall have by you to-morrow night. I cannot get the key at present. As soon as you have delivered the message, come back here, and mind you close and lock the doors behind you just as you found them. Take care, likewise, to make no noise."

"If I am to go early in the morning," observed the man, "I had better stay where I am. I will put the edge of the tankard under my head, and then my nodding will wake me, from time to time."

"Don't put it too often to your lips," retorted Mrs. Culpepper, gravely; "for your master's safety and happiness depend on your carefulness just now."

"Lord bless you, ma'am, I've been accustomed to these things," said Higham, "and could sit with a tankard of strong waters under my nose for a month without ever touching a drop, if there was any business to be done at the end of it."

"You will not lose your reward if you are faithful," said the old woman; "and so, good night."

As soon as she was gone, Higham murmured to himself--

"She is, on the right side, I *do* think. She must be a wonderful cunning old woman."

With this reflection, he folded his arms on the table, laid his head upon them, and in a few minutes was fast asleep: Every time the house-clock struck, however, he looked up and counted; and, at the hour of four, shook off his drowsiness, took a tolerable draught from the flagon, and then crept quietly out of the servants'-hall. He had the choice of three doors by which to make his exit. That of the great hall, however, had, to his knowledge, a very bad habit of creaking on its hinges. That which led into the court led also to the bloodhound; and, though he was not at all afraid of the animal's bite, he was afraid of his bark. There was a little door, however, which led into a lesser Court, formed expressly, it would seem, for the entertainment of the men and maid servants of the family; and by this convenient passage Higham took his way out, with little difficulty and no noise.

Nothing interrupted him on his way to the village; and there, by the lights he saw in several of the cottages, he perceived that many of the inmates were up, preparing for some of their lawful or unlawful occupations. A light was in old Grayling's house also; and, looking through the window, which had no shutters but plenty of bars, he saw the old man with a short pipe in his mouth, lighting the fire in the kitchen.

Tapping at the window, Higham soon brought the fisherman to his door; and, with one accustomed to somewhat perilous enterprises, very little explanation was needful.

The young Earl was soon wakened, and the message delivered. That message threw Smeaton into a fit of thought, which lasted, however, not long. Impulse, impulse! It is always getting the better of us, till it is worn out and has lost its spring with years. It was very powerful, I fear, in Smeaton's case, when, rising and dressing himself as rapidly as possible, he said to the man:

"You must go back. Get speech of Mrs. Culpepper as soon as possible, and tell her that she will find me in the priest's chamber. Say that I am sure I can get back unobserved by passing through the trees, and that, as speed is everything, it will be better to form our plans quickly. If she cannot come this morning, I will be there again at night. You must come with me, however, in the first instance. Now, lock that door."

The man obeyed, with some surprise; but was more surprised still when he saw his master descend from the window as he had done on the preceding night. Being a great deal shorter, he had some difficulty, to say the truth, in following, but, with Smeaton's assistance, succeeded at length, and reached the ground in safety.

"Now go on before me," said the Earl; "and, if you meet any persons coming down this way, say something to them in a loud tone. Keep straight on that path."

"Oh, sir, I know it very well," returned the man. "Many a time I have been down here since we came."

"Hush!" said Smeaton. "Go on, and keep silence."

Doing as he was bid, with the darkness rapidly giving way to twilight, the man walked up towards Ale Manor, taking a quick furtive glance behind him from time to time to see whither his master was going. Suddenly, however, when he turned round to look the young nobleman had

disappeared; and it is unnecessary to inform the reader which way he had bent his steps.

The moment the stone door beyond the well was closed, Smeaton found himself in utter darkness; but, feeling his way with his hands, he reached the steps upwards, and soon after began to gain air and light. Nobody came near him for somewhat more than a quarter of an hour; and Smeaton's spirit grew impatient of the restraint. The moments were passing quickly, on which so much depended, and yet no progress was made.

"The sun must have risen," he thought; "and perhaps Emmeline is already up. It is strange I hear nothing of my old nurse! Perhaps that foolish fellow has forgotten his errand, or missed his opportunity, or committed some other blunder. I must speak with her at once, if at all; and we shall soon have the whole household up."

As he thus thought, impatience overcame all other considerations; and he approached the door which led into the state bed-room beyond. No great difficulty presented itself in pushing back the panel; and, making as little noise as he could, he issued forth from the hiding-place. The room was vacant. After pausing a moment and listening for a step, he quietly opened the door and went out into the passage. Nobody was there; but the door of Emmeline's room was close beside him; and he thought he heard the sound of some one moving within. The temptation was too great to be resisted, and he tapped gently at the door. At first there was no reply; she did not hear the tap; but again a sound was audible within like the quiet opening of a window; and he tapped once more.

The next instant he heard a light step near the door, and it opened. Surprise, which was the first expression on Emmeline's beautiful face, changed in a moment to joy; and, forgetting all things in the untutored wildness of her delight, she cast herself upon his bosom and wept. Smeaton held her to his heart and kissed her tenderly, drawing her in silence towards the state chamber; but Emmeline whispered:

"No. Come in here. It will be safer. This is my own sitting-room. No one will come hither." And she led him into that large, airy chamber in which she was first introduced to the sight of the reader.

Impossible would it be to attempt any detailed account of the brief conversation which ensued--so much was to be told, so much to be spoken of, so many words of tenderness and affection to be uttered. Emmeline poured forth her whole heart. She knew not, she could not conceive, any motive, when once that heart was given, and its love acknowledged, for concealing, from him she loved, anything that passed within it. She spoke of all she had suffered since the moment when she heard of his arrest; of all the grief, of all the anxiety, of all the sleepless thought. She spoke, too, of her joy to see him safe and free. But the voice of happiness is still and low, and Smeaton had to read one half of her sensations in her eyes.

As but very little time could be spared, however, he told her as speedily as possible all that he proposed. He explained that his purpose of returning at once to France was unaltered, if she would still consent to go with him, but thought it would be far better that she should give him her hand before they took their departure; adding, he had but little doubt that he could so arrange that the ceremony should be duly and irrevocably performed.

She replied at once, without hesitation or reluctance--

"Whatever you tell me, Henry, I will do; and it will be much better that I should go as your wife. I am yours altogether; and, if occasionally, since I promised to go with you, feelings of doubt--perhaps, I might almost say, of self-reproach--have come across me, for so joyfully consenting to quit the protector of my childhood, those feelings have all passed. His conduct towards you, his betrayal of you, would remove all scruples. All was explained to me last night, and I never heard of darker baseness. To me, too, he has behaved very ill, and to my parents worse. What I looked upon as kindness and protection have been, in reality, policy and imprisonment; and I have every right to leave him who has no right to detain me. Hark!"

Her exclamation was caused by a sound at the lock of the door. The next instant the door was opened, and Mrs. Culpepper appeared. She showed no surprise, but much agitation; and, without closing the door, she beckoned to Smeaton, saying, in a low tone--

"This is madness, Henry. Indeed, my lord, you must fly this instant. You can return at night; but do not come out of the priest's chamber till I knock for you. Come, my lord, come. Sir John is already moving in his room."

With one more embrace, Smeaton and Emmeline parted; and, holding up her finger to enjoin silence, Mrs. Culpepper led the young nobleman back to the priest's chamber, closing the aperture behind him. She then returned, at once, to Emmeline's apartment, and, having shut the door, said--

"Run into your bed-room, dear lady, and answer me aloud through the door."

Emmeline did as she was asked, and then the old housekeeper put several questions as to her night's rest, and several matters of ordinary interest, receiving somewhat wondering replies. But the old woman was politic; and she was still speaking, when Sir John Newark knocked at the

door, saying--

"Who are you talking to, Emmeline?"

Mrs. Culpepper instantly opened the door, and replied--

"It is I, Sir John."

Her voice was as calm and quiet, her manner as unruffled and staid as usual; but Sir John Newark beckoned her out of the room, and then said, in a low tone--

"I heard a noise as if the entrance to the priest's room had been rolled backward and forward."

"Yes, Sir John," replied the old lady. "By your own orders, I go frequently to see that it opens and shuts easily. I always go early or late; but I thought I heard the young lady moving in her room, and I went to see what could have got her up so early."

Sir John Newark did not speak for a minute, but looked at the housekeeper quietly from under his eyebrows, and she saw at once that he doubted her. She was too much accustomed, however, to meet and frustrate his suspicions to be at all alarmed, though she felt some degree of apprehension, from various causes, when he said, at length--

"I have not been in that priest's room for two or three years. I should like to look round it again."

"Very well, sir," replied Mrs. Culpepper, adding internally--"Pray God the dear boy be gone!"

Sir John Newark moved into the stateroom, with a certain quickness of step which showed how little satisfied he was; but the old proverb. "The more haste the worse speed," was verified in his case. He walked at once up to the head of the bed to move it back; but he had either forgotten the trick, or he mismanaged it in his hurry; so that after one or two efforts he was obliged to have recourse to Mrs. Culpepper, who, in order to avoid all suspicion, opened the entrance at once. Sir John Newark instantly stepped in, gave a quick glance round the room, and then advanced to the door leading to the passages below. Finding himself surrounded by darkness, however, he stopped at the end of the first two or three steps, and said, somewhat sharply, "Bring me a light."

The old housekeeper retired to obey; and, during her absence, which was as short as possible, her master remained with his head bent and his ear intently listening. When he had obtained the light, he walked quickly forward, followed by Mrs. Culpepper, and did not pause till he reached the stone door which led out upon the hill-side. He put his hand upon the lock; but it was fastened, and then, holding the candle to the little niche at the side, he looked in. The key was in its place, and he retired satisfied.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was nine o'clock before Sir John Newark entered the room where preparations had been made for breakfast. He found his son Richard talking gaily to Emmeline in the window, while she replied with a bright and smiling face. Although, considering his designs respecting Emmeline and his son, it might be supposed that such a sight was pleasant to him, yet that poisoner of all peace, suspicion, would not have it so. Emmeline's excessive anxiety during the preceding day, after tidings had been received of Smeaton's capture, had not escaped his notice, although she had striven hard to conceal the emotions which were busy in her bosom, and now she seemed so bright and cheerful that he said to himself, "She must have some intelligence."

He resolved to watch her carefully; but, happily for Emmeline, emotions as strong, though very different from, those of the day before, had still possession of her. They were more joyful, more hopeful, but perhaps even more thrilling; and, several times during the meal, she fell into deep fits of thought. Suspicion is always vacillating, and Sir John began to doubt whether he had been right or not. His son contributed, too, to remove the fancy which possessed him by saying, with one of his wild laughs, towards the middle of breakfast. "I was telling Emmy when you came in, father, that we should have this Colonel Lord back again here very soon. Great fish always lie on the same bank."

"I do not know, Dick," replied his father, gravely. "I think it is very improbable you will ever see him again. If he is wise, he will betake himself to France immediately. Otherwise he may very well chance to leave his head on the scaffold some morning."

Richard laughed, exclaiming. "Well then, he had a great deal better kick it before him across the sea. A precious foot-ball it would make."

Emmeline gave a slight shudder, and Sir John dropped the conversation till the meal was ended, when he said, "The Earl's servant is here, as I dare say you know, Dick; but he has had no news of his master, and fancies he must be at Keanton."

"Oh, I know Higham is here," answered the lad; "for I had a long talk with him just before you sent for him. He told me all about the rescue. What fun it must have been to see those lubberly soldiers all tied, and lying heads and tails like herrings in a barrel! I wish I had been there. I should have liked to help poor Smeaton, and leather the jacket of that long captain. Higham says his master knocked him down just as he did the Earl of Stair's great bully, and vows that the punch-bowls jumped up a foot off the table with the shock of his fall."

"Well, Dick," observed his father, "the servant talks of riding over by the tops of the downs to Keanton to see for his lord. Now, as you know there is nothing I would so willingly do as assist this noble gentleman, you and I will ride over with the man to within half a mile of Keanton. Then, if he finds his master, we can establish some communication with him, and perhaps assist him."

He paused a moment, and then, turning to Emmeline, he added; "I fear you cannot go with us, my dear child. Maiden modesty forbids your running about the country to inquire for a young cavalier. I think, too, it might be as well for you to remain within during our absence. There will be parties of soldiers, doubtless, scouring the country in various directions, and they are neither the most civil or civilized."

"I have no inclination to go out," replied Emmeline, simply. "I am tired with all the anxiety of yesterday."

Sir John Newark, his son, and Smeaton's servant, were soon on horseback; and, without any other attendant, they set out, turning sharp to the left after quitting the gates of the Manor House, and winding round the edge of the woods till they reached nearly the top of Ale Head. Thence pursuing their course across the downs, with the high cliffs beetling over the sea at the distance of about a quarter of a mile on their left, they continued their course, alternately rising and descending up the brown hills and down into the green solitary hollows which extend fifteen or sixteen miles along the coast.

At the distance of about seven miles from Ale Manor, however, they came to one of these hollows, which assumed more the appearance of a regular valley, with a bright and beautiful little stream flowing down it towards the sea. Here they halted; Higham received instructions to ride on before, while the other two slowly followed, and Sir John added:

"We will wait at the distance of about half a mile from Keanton. Tell your Lord that we are there, if he thinks it safe to come and speak with us. If not, bring us some tidings of him; but enter the village very cautiously, lest the good people of Keanton should have fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

Higham nodded his head and rode away. Sir John Newark, who had been very silent during the first part of the journey, now entered into an eager conversation with his son, which, as I must refer to it afterwards, I need not notice more particularly here. Suffice it to say, that the father spoke, earnestly and apparently impressively, and that the son, though at first he listened with eagerness and looks of surprise, and strove afterwards to fix his wandering attention upon his father's words, soon resumed his usual manner, and laughed and talked gaily and wildly, flitting round the subject rather than resting upon it.

After they had reached the spot which had been fixed upon as their halting-place, Sir John and his young companion remained for about three quarters of an hour in expectation, Richard getting off and on his horse, throwing pebbles into the stream, and showing many signs of impatience. Sir John marked him with a slight smile, and at length Higham made his appearance again, trotting quietly and unconcernedly down towards them.

"He is not there, Sir John," said the man, riding up "at least so all the people say; but they are mighty stingy of their words this morning. However, one thing is certain. They have heard nothing of the Exeter people, and I make out pretty surely that my Lord is not very far off, and that they know it."

"Ah, how do you make that out?" asked Sir John Newark.

"Why, one man began talking about a stranger having come to Blacklands late last night; but his wife stopped his mouth in a minute; and, when I asked where Blacklands was and what it was, he gave a rambling sort of answer. But, I believe, it must be some farm near at hand."

"It is five miles off," replied Sir John, immediately; "a wild and solitary place, shut out from the whole neighbourhood, and a very likely spot indeed for a fugitive to take refuge in. We had better ride over there. You are sure there are no soldiers in the village?"

"Not a man, sir," answered Higham; "and besides, they have got people on the top of the hill to

look out."

"Well then, we will take that way, as it is the shortest," said the knight--"Come, Richard."

"I think I shall go back," said Richard Newark. "I am tired of this work. I'll go back and have a gossip with Enemy."

"Do not be rash, Dick," replied his father, holding up his finger, with a smile. "Remember, slow degrees at first! You do not scare birds that you want to drive into a net."

The lad laughed, and saying, "Oh, I'll not be rash," turned his horse's head, and cantered quietly away. When he had gone about a couple of miles, however, he fell into deep thought, took his feet out of the stirrups, let the reins drop on the horse's neck, and, for more than half an hour, proceeded at a walk. Then, as if suddenly rousing himself, he whistled a bit of a light air, put his horse into a quick pace again, and rode on to the Manor House.

It was very usual with Richard to stand in the stable-yard after a ride, till he had seen saddle and bridle removed and the horse rubbed down; but now he left his beast immediately in the hands of the groom, and walked across the court till he came to a place where a large Irish eagle was chained to a heavy perch. The bird was fierce and untameable; but Richard approached it without fear, and took hold of the padlock on its leg. He had hardly done so when it struck him with its bill more than once; but he proceeded boldly till he had unfastened the chain from its leg, and given it a vehement push from the perch. The bird instantly took wing, and soared into the sky. Richard Newark laughed aloud, and, without looking after it, wiped some drops of blood from his forehead, and walked into the house. He pursued his way quietly through the passages, looked into the lesser and the greater saloon, and then, mounting the stairs, walked up to the door of Emmeline's sitting-room. There he paused a moment; and then, murmuring: "What a fool I am!--but I knew that long ago," he opened the door without knocking, and went in. Emmeline was seated near the window, gazing down upon the woods below; but she turned instantly at her cousin's step, and started up, exclaiming--

"What is the matter, Richard? What has happened? The blood is streaming down your face!"

"Nothing at all has happened, Emmy dear," replied Richard. "Only, as often occurs in this world, a friend took me for an enemy, and pecked my pate. Come here and sit down, and I will tell you all about it, though there is nothing worth hearing to tell. Sit down here, Emmy," he continued, again wiping away the blood, "There, put yourself in that chair; and I will sit on the stool at your feet, as I used to do before they sent me to school to see what part of my brain was sound."

"But what have you been doing, Richard?" said Emmeline, seating herself as he desired her.

"Nothing but giving liberty to an eagle," replied the boy; "and he pecked me while I was unchaining his foot."

"Oh, you should not have done that, Dickon," said his fair companion. "Your father will be angry."

"Why so?" demanded the lad. "The bird was mine. He was given to me, and I had a right to do what I liked with him. Well, Emmy," he continued, after a moment or two, "we have heard nothing of Smeaton, and a dull ride we have had of it. So I left my daddy to trot on his way, and came back."

Emmeline was silent; for she did not wish to speak upon the subject of her lover at all; but Richard went on in a rambling sort of tone, saying,

"Ay, dull enough it was; and, while we were waiting for Tom Higham's coming back, my father had some serious conversation with me, as he calls it. I hate serious conversation, Emmy."

"But you should always attend to what your father says to you, Richard," observed Emmeline, "and to everything that he tells you, *which is right*."

The last words were uttered after a moment's pause, and in a lower tone.

"Very true," replied Richard, half laughing. "What you say is always true, Emmy, but the worst of it is--I suppose the soft place in my brain prevents it--my father and I can never agree upon what is quite right. The fact is, dear girl, I see one side, and he sees the other, as the old story-book has it; and, if one side is black, and the other side is white, we can never agree in opinion. Do you know what he was telling me to-day?

"No, indeed," answered Emmeline. "I cannot conceive."

"Why, he was telling me," said Richard, looking down and speaking in an absent manner--"he was telling me that he intended me to marry you and you to marry me; that it must be; that the fate and fortune of us both depended upon it."

Emmeline trembled violently; and, as the shoulder of Richard Newark rested against her arm, he felt how much agitation his words produced. The moment after, Emmeline felt his hand laid

gently upon hers, and she asked, in a low voice,

"What did you say to him, Richard?"

"Nothing much to the purpose," replied Richard; "for he set all my thoughts rambling and galloping like huntsmen at the field-halloo. I laughed and talked as if I had been very happy; but I was thinking all the time, Emmeline. First, I thought (what I never thought of before) how very happy it would be to marry you--and how you might make anything you liked of me--and what a changed being I should be if you were my wife--and how dearly I should love you--and how I *do* love you--and a great many other foolish things. Nay, don't shake, dear Emmy! There is no fear with your own poor Dick."

"I am not afraid, Dick," responded Emmeline, pressing the hand he had laid upon hers; "for I know right well that, whatever faults your head may have, your heart has none."

"That's a good girl," returned Richard Newark. "Well, I thought a great deal more still. After all these foolish things had had their gallop, I thought I would not marry you for the whole world; or if all the kings and queens in the world were to try to force us."

"Indeed, Richard?" said Emmeline, with a faint smile. "You had good reasons, doubtless."

"To be sure I had," replied the lad. "In the first place, I know that I am not worthy of you, that I am not fit for you. In the next place, I know that you would not like it; that you love another; and, that, if you were driven to marry me, you would always be thinking of him, and loving him, and not me. I should be your jailor, and not your husband, and I should be wretched too; for I should be always flying after your thoughts, like a sparrow-hawk after a lark, to see if you were not thinking of your lover all the time. You know you love him, Emmy. You love him very well, very dearly, and I do not wonder at you."

The rosy colour that spread over her face, and neck, and forehead would have been sufficient answer; but she said, in a low though distinct tone--

"I do."

There was a pause, of a moment or two, and then Richard said--

"What a fool I should be, Emmeline--a greater fool than I am, and that is bad enough--if I suffered my wits to be set wool-gathering by any nonsense about ever marrying you, or putting Smeaton out of your head. But still, Emmy," he continued, in a tender tone, "you will love me after a sort--as you always have--as a kind friend--as a sister."

"Indeed I will, Richard," exclaimed Emmeline, earnestly, "and love you all the better for your conduct this day. Now I know what you mean by setting the eagle free; you would fain set Smeaton free of all difficulties, if you could."

"No, dear Emmy," pursued Richard; "I did not exactly mean that. Indeed I do not clearly know that I meant anything; but, as I rode homeward, and thought how happy you might be if people left you to do just what you liked, I wished to help you to do so--to make you quite free; and then, when saw the poor eagle in the court, I thought how happy he would be if he could soar away in the skies again at his own pleasure, and then the thought came across me of what my father would say if I unchained the bird's leg, and I answered myself, that I had a right--that the bird was mine--that he had been given to me, and so had you; and, therefore, I determined to set you both free. I do not know how it was; but, somehow, there seemed a likeness between your fate and his; though when he fluttered his wings, and struck at me, as I unchained him, I said to myself, Emmeline will know better, and so she does."

"Indeed she does, Richard," replied Emmeline; "and she will never mistake you for an enemy."

"But do you know, Emmeline," continued her cousin, "that I have a strange notion it would be better for us both to dissemble a little? for I fancy my father has some suspicion about you and Smeaton."

"I fear I am a bad dissembler," returned Emmeline, incautiously. "I cannot but dread that Sir John sees I have been dissembling with him lately."

Richard, however, did not ask in what respect, but rambled on as usual.

"Oh, we all dissemble more than we are aware," he said. "Here, I never thought to deceive my father in anything; and yet, for some reason--either from something in himself or in me--I never can tell him all I think. I never can turn my heart inside out before him, as I can with you. When I should most wish to say all, and make him understand everything that is going on inside of me, some devil, I think it is, comes and stops me, and makes me go rambling away with vague answers about nothing at all, which he may take one way or another, just as he likes. But what I mean is, not that we should just exactly dissemble; for, as you love me well, and I love you well, it is not dissembling to seem to do so. I would only have you look happy when I am with you, and I'll try to make you so too; for I'll talk to you of Smeaton, and we'll plan plans and plot plots about him, and all sorts of pleasant things."

"There can be no harm in that, Richard," replied Emmeline, in a graver tone than her young cousin had expected; for he was trying, though hardly knowing it, to win her mind away from all heavy thoughts. But, to say sooth, Emmeline was somewhat puzzled how to act towards him. There was so much candour, so much frank kindness, in his whole conduct, that her heart smote her for not telling him all she knew and all she intended. She remembered, however, that the secrets in her heart were not altogether her own--that she had only a divided right over them; and, though it cost her some pain, she was silent.

Richard went on talking with her even after he heard the sounds which accompanied his father's return; and, when he left her and went down the stairs, although he was inclined to be more thoughtful than perhaps he had ever felt in his life, he assumed a gay and joyous look.

"Well, Dick," said his father, when he met him; "where have you been all this time?"

"I have been sitting with Emmeline ever since I came back," replied the lad; "and we have been talking of all sorts of things. She is a dear girl indeed."

"But what is the matter with your forehead?" said his father. "Did your horse fall?"

"Oh, no." cried Richard. "It was that brute of an eagle. I was tired of seeing him sitting moping on his perch; so I went to unchain him, and he pecked me on the head."

"Why, you foolish boy, you have not set him free?" exclaimed Sir John.

"Oh, yes, I have," answered Richard; "and he pecked me for my pains. But Emmeline did not peck me, whatever I said to her. So I care not. No chance of my being hen-pecked, father." And, with a gay laugh, he turned away.

Sir John Newark was well pleased with what he had done. "Women are strange beings," he said. "Who knows but what this boy's wild, dashing, lighted-hearted thoughtlessness--so like his weak mother--may not be metal more attractive in the girl's eyes than soberer sounder reason? At all events, he will be a check and a guard upon her; and even supposing her fancy has kindled into thoughts of love in the society of this young Earl, it can only render something for love to lean upon more needful to her when he is away. I have seen such things. It will do. I am glad I spoke to the boy and told him my intentions."

Sir John Newark thought he had more reason to congratulate himself still, when, a few hours afterwards, he received a peremptory summons to attend the authorities at Exeter on the following day. He mused for a minute or two before he returned an answer; but, in the end, he determined to assume a bold tone; and, calling for the messenger, he told him to inform those who sent him, that he (Sir John) would come right willingly, provided he was assured before noon that his house would be subject to no violence, and his family to no annoyance or insult, as on a former occasion.

"Hints are given in this letter," he said, "of a suspicion that the Earl of Eskdale is harbouring in this house or neighbourhood. Tell the high-sheriff, who seems taking upon him the office of Lord Lieutenant, that, after the proofs of loyalty which I have lately given, no such suspicion should be entertained; but, before you go, and while your horse is feeding, I insist upon it that, by search or cross-examination of the servants, and by inquiry in the village, you ascertain whether there be any ground whatever for such a doubt. Satisfy yourself fully, and then report accordingly; first to me, and then to those who sent you. I shall set off at eleven to-morrow for Aleton, and will thence go on to Exeter, if I am met there by a full and proper assurance that, when I return, I shall not find my house has been visited by a party of soldiers while I have been allured to a distance."

The man, who was a person of somewhat superior station and intelligence, took advantage of the permission given to him, and made himself, as he thought, perfectly certain that no one, in Ale Manor House at least, knew where the Earl of Eskdale was. The village, too, he visited; but there he got gruff and indifferent answers, and once or twice became somewhat afraid of pursuing his inquiries. Perhaps these fears tended to make him more easily satisfied than he otherwise would have been; but the conclusion he came to was, that the rough fishermen knew nothing of the matter, and did not like to be troubled with things that concerned them not. Before he departed, he saw Sir John Newark again, and told him the result of his inquiries. Sir John was very gracious; for the result was as satisfactory to him as it could be to any one.

"No," he said to himself, "no. He is at Blacklands, clear enough, though they would not own it. Or else this man; whom they spoke of going towards Exmouth, may have been he."

He dismissed the messenger, however, with a fee, as was not uncustomary in those venal times, and rested more tranquilly than he had done the night before, only wishing that he could hold some communication with the young Earl for a day or two, to fix his meditated grasp upon Keanton.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was about nine o'clock at night when two persons on foot approached the little hamlet of Aleton. One of them advanced a little before the other, as if to reconnoitre; but all was still and quiet in the place; and even the small public-house, unused, in that remote district, to late visitors, was closed. Light could be seen within, indeed, through the chinks of the rude window-shutters; and it is probable that the latch of the door would have yielded to the hand of any belated traveller; but there was no other sign of active life to be perceived without.

The two persons of whom I have spoken, however, passed by the door of the inn, and approached a house--the only other dwelling which deserved the name--a little farther on the road to Exeter. Stepping up to the door, the shorter of the two travellers knocked with his hand; but the application producing no response from within, he was fain, though apparently very unwilling to make a noise, to take hold of an iron wire which hung at the side of the door with a bunch of hammered iron at the end of it, and give a gentle pull. A tinkling sound was immediately heard, and then the voice of a woman, saying aloud, to some one in an inner room, as she moved along the passage--

"I dare say it is nothing but old Drayton dead, and they have come to talk to you about the funeral."

The next instant, the door was opened; and Van Noost (for he was the summoner) inquired if Parson Thickett were at home.

"Oh dear, yes, Master Smith," replied the servant (for people even in those days called themselves Jack Smith when they sought concealment); "and he will be very glad to see you. He could not think what had become of you. Is this gentleman your friend?"

Van Noost nodded his head and entered the house, followed by Smeaton. The maid shut and bolted the door again, and then led them on into the parson's little parlour, where they found that reverend personage enjoying himself according to his evening wont. There was one lighted candle on the table; but the room, though small, was obscure; for a thick cloud of tobacco-smoke floated in it. On the hob of the vacant grate lay the pipe from which that smoke had proceeded; and close at the parson's elbow was a tall bottle containing some sort of spirits, a plate and knife, with a lemon, and a pot of sugar. Between him and the candlestick, however, was an open Greek book in old and tattered binding; for Parson Thickett was an erudite man, notwithstanding some little failings. In person, he was fatter than Van Noost, and of a very different sort of fatness. His limbs were large, but seemed almost disjointed, or at best held loosely together by the lax integuments that covered them. His stomach was large and prominent, betraying beneath his cassock--for he was generally in canonicals--a vast hemisphere of black. His face was somewhat coarse, it must be acknowledged. He had a large ear and a large lip, and, not contented with a large chin, he had two of them. There was a good deal of shrewdness, however, and a certain portion of fun about his grey watery eye; and his whole face lighted up with jovial good humour as soon as he saw the statuary.

"Ha, my worthy friend!" he cried, starting up with greater agility than might have been expected, and grasping Van Noost's hand warmly. "Where have you been so long? I thought the Philistines were upon you, by Jove. What of the brasses? What of the monuments? What of the inscriptions? By Jove, I thought you had left your work half done; and it might have remained long enough undone for me; for scrubbing brass and marble is no part of my calling. I love my flock well enough; but, when once I've got them under ground, I've done with them.--Ha! who is this gentleman?"

"A friend of mine," replied Van Noost, "who has come to talk to your reverence about a little business."

"He is welcome," cried the jolly parson. "Sir, you are welcome. We will talk of business presently. Now, we'll have a bowl of punch, and fresh pipes.--Betty, Betty!"

Smeaton tried to persuade him that he was in haste, and could not stay; but Parson Thickett would take no denial.

"I will have my way," he cried, laughing. "I will have my way, by Jove, for this time. You shall have your way the next time, upon my sacred word of honour."

"Indeed?" said Smeaton.

"Of a verity," returned the parson, "unless you ask me for the tithe pig that was brought in this morning. That is a reservation."

The glasses and pipes were brought in, fresh hot water procured, and the brewing

commenced; but, as soon as the door was shut, Smeaton thought he might as well begin upon the subject of his visit.

"I will, certainly hold the tithe pig reserved," he said; "for I trust to be able to increase your reverence's store of pigs instead of diminishing them."

"Ay, indeed!" ejaculated the parson, squeezing a lemon hard between a pair of pincers. "I think I know what you are come about. I heard all the news this morning from the packman--how they are up in Northumberland, and how the King has been proclaimed in Scotland, and all the rest of it. Well, well. I am no fighting man; but the King shall have my prayers; and Smith here can tell you that I have well indoctrinated my congregation. There is not one of them who does not say, over his beer--or his cider, if he comes from the other side of the hills--'Here's to him over the water!'"

"Nay, my reverend friend, you are making a mistake," replied Smeaton. "My business is altogether personal. I want you to perform the marriage ceremony for myself and a young lady."

"That I will, my lad, that I will," exclaimed the parson, joyously. "It is the function which I perform most willingly; for there is always something merry to be said at the beginning, and always something good to be eaten at the end."

"I fear there will not be, in this instance," observed Smeaton, gravely; "for no wedding feast will be prepared."

"Never mind, never mind!" retorted the parson. "There is some fun in matrimony, at all events. I'll buckle you so fast that you shall neither of you get loose again in a hurry. Give me the names. I'll have the banns published next Sunday."

"But we do not intend to have any banns either," said Smeaton.

"Better and better!" cried parson Thickett. "You *must* have a licence; and that is a fee in my pocket."

"Then you are a surrogate?" said his companion. "That smooths one great difficulty."

"No, not exactly a surrogate," returned the other, leaving off his punch-brewing, and growing somewhat interested in the conversation. "I am a 'peculiar;' that is to say, young gentleman, I have a peculiar jurisdiction ecclesiastical here, under the dean and chapter of Exeter. I can grant licences, and prove wills, according to the canon, being a bachelor of laws, as well as a doctor of divinity, let me tell you.--Now, thank God for all good things!" he continued. "This is the first time I have had to exercise my peculiarity--to my own profit, at least."

The frame of mind which he was in seemed very favourable to Smeaton's object; but, when the young nobleman, with some precaution, explained to him fully what that object was, the worthy parson looked somewhat aghast. The name of Sir John Newark, indeed, was not mentioned; but, by some way, he jumped at the conclusion that the lady referred to was Emmeline; and Smeaton did not contradict him. He shook his head gravely, rolled his fat thumbs round each other for a minute or two, and then shook his head again. Van Noost, however, came to the rescue, judging rightly that the first impression of fear would wear off under the influence of the glass.

"Come, parson," he said, "think of the punch a little. It is getting cold."

"So it is, by Jove," cried the parson, ladling out the punch. "Here, take a glass, sir. It will keep up the spirits of both of us; for this is a bad business."

"Not at all," returned Smeaton, laughing. "It is perfectly right and proper. All that we require secresy for is to prevent the intermeddling of persons who have no right to meddle."

"But Sir John Newark is her guardian," said the parson, drinking some of his punch.

"Not so," replied the young nobleman. "He is no more her guardian than you are."

"You must have some guardian's consent," said Parson Thickett. "That I know, because I've got the register of her birth in there--" and he pointed to a large box in one corner of the room.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Smeaton. "Will you have the kindness to give me a copy of it? I fancied that Sir John Newark kept the registers at Ale, and would not let you have them."

"Not he," replied his reverend companion. "A fico for Sir John Newark! The stingy hound has not asked me to dinner for three years, and moreover tries to defraud me of my dues. He'll pay no tithes of mint and cumin, not he. So the last time I had my hand upon the registers I took them away. He had had them then four years; and that was four years too many. You shall have a copy. He'll not much like that; and, if I marry you, there will be an awful explosion."

He finished his speech with a good draught of punch; and Smeaton remarked:

"I hope there is no 'if' in the case, my good sir. You promised, if I would let you have your way, you would let me have mine."

"So I did, so I did," cried the priest, with a jolly laugh; "but, upon my life, you must tell me something more; first, about her being under age. That is the devil, as you have not got any guardian's consent."

"Nay," replied Smeaton. "There you are mistaken, my reverend friend. Have the goodness to look at that."

As he spoke, he put into the clergyman's hand a sheet of paper, on which were written two or three lines, in a fine bold style.

"Ha! What is here?" ejaculated the parson. "Then this is her lawful guardian, is it?"

"I am ready to swear it," replied Smeaton; "and our good friend here, whom you know, will testify--"

"Oh, I'll testify anything you like," interrupted Van Noost, drinking off his punch and holding out his glass. "There, parson, give me some more, and don't let us have any further objections, there's a worthy divine. You know you will come to it in the end. We'll find means to melt you."

"But suppose I do not come to it?" asked Doctor Thickett, looking at Smeaton. "What will you do then?"

"I have simply one alternative," replied Smeaton gravely. "If you refuse, I shall go back to Ale, and, authorised as you see by this paper, take the lady to France with me this very night, as soon as the moon rises."

"What, unmarried!" exclaimed the priest, with an affected look of horror. "That cannot be; that cannot be. I *must* marry you, by Jove, to prevent scandal."

"Exactly," replied Smeaton, with a smile. "That is in reality my object. We can be married as soon as we reach Nancy; but I think, on every account, it would be better that the ceremony should be performed before we set out."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," replied Doctor Thickett. "Let me look at that paper again. I want to see how the case stands."

Pushing the punch away from him, he examined the paper accurately, and at length, lifting his eyes, said:

"You are, then, the Earl of Eskdale?"

"He is none other, upon my say-so," chimed in Van Noost; "and, as we cannot cast many men out of one mould, as we cast statues, I will answer for it that there is not a copy of him extant."

The priest, however, was deeply cogitating the contents of the paper.

"This does not exactly say you are to marry her," he observed at length; "but, as it tells the young lady that, in perfect confidence of your honour and integrity, she is to do whatever you direct, I suppose we must take the consent for implied. Well, that is got over. Now then, the thing is, how to manage it. I don't care a rush for Sir John Newark; but I think *you* will find him difficult to manage. How will you ever smuggle her out of the house, and up here to the church, between the hours of eight and twelve?"

"I am afraid," replied Smeaton, "that the church must not be the place, and the hour somewhat different."

"But, my good Lord, my good Lord," said Parson Thickett, "the canon. You forget the canon. Canon one hundred and four. Why, I should be punished, and you might be punished, too, by the act affecting clandestine marriages."

"Which take place every day notwithstanding," added Smeaton.

"Ay, ay, by Hedge parsons, Mayfair parsons, and Fleet parsons, but not by a regular Doctor of Divinity. Why, I might be suspended for six months from the execution of my office, and I am not sure that they would not touch the temporalities. As for the office, deuce take it. I don't care much for that. I want a trip to London, and that would give me a holiday."

"Pray, how much might be the value in money of your loss, if suspended?" asked Smeaton.

"Why, the matter of well nigh fifty good pounds," replied the parson; "and that is a mat sum to risk."

"It is," assented the young nobleman; "but there is a way of insuring you against risk, my reverend friend. Suppose that, the moment you have concluded the marriage ceremony, I put into your hand this little rouleau, containing one hundred golden guineas of the late queen. You would be sure enough then. Moreover, the marriage need not be published immediately in this country; and, even if it were, I believe that none but the lady's lawful guardian could move in the business against you."

"That alters the affair very much," said Thickett, with a very comic twinkle of his eye. "I think it must be done."

"Good," replied Smeaton. "I see we understand each other. Perhaps you are not fully aware of all the privileges of your peculiar jurisdiction; but, at all events, in a case like this, now that the only real and substantial difficulty is removed--that respecting the consent of the lady's guardian--you must swallow any other little technical objections, which probably will never be taken notice of."

"Ah, my Lord, you have a winning way with you," said Doctor Thickett; "but you have not drunk a drop of your punch." And, with a resigned sigh, he filled himself another glass to the brim.

The rest of the arrangements were soon made. It was agreed that, on the following night, about the same hour, the worthy Doctor should walk down to the village of Ale, and there put himself entirely at Smeaton's command. The register of Emmeline's birth was then produced and copied; and, rewarding him well for his small trouble, Smeaton took himself back to Ale with Van Noost.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Important business came thick and fast upon all the magistrates of the western counties of England; for, though parties were very nearly balanced, and the prompt, vigorous, and judicious measures of the Whigs--somewhat unconstitutional as, perhaps, they were at times--overawed the Tories or Jacobites, and kept down any open outbreak, yet positive information was received, if not of a thoroughly organised and widely extended plot, at least, of an immense number of smaller and detached conspiracies, which only wanted time and opportunity to unite and co-operate. Exeter itself was but little tainted; but in nearly all other parts of Devonshire, in Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and Gloucestershire, nightly meetings were held, at which some of the most influential persons in the county were present, and the very small body of troops quartered at Exeter were insufficient to perform the duties cast upon them in the neighbouring portions of the country.

The arrival of Captain Smallpiece, and the account which he gave--not a very accurate one--of the surprise of his party and the rescue of his prisoners, called forth a burst of anger and disappointment from the more bustling and vehement magistrates, and somewhat alarmed even the more prudent. Nothing was talked of but sending a larger force to scour the country and re-capture the young Earl of Eskdale and his companion, and proclamations were proposed, offering a great reward for his apprehension. In time, however, the counsels of the more prudent prevailed. They represented to their brethren that there was quite sufficient for the troops to do in several other directions; that, if they sent a large force down into the comparatively wild and scantily-populated district round Ale and Keanton, more important parts of the county must be left open for the movements of the disaffected, and many gentlemen whom it was desirable to secure would have ample time to escape; while, if but a small force was sent, it would only provoke a collision with the adverse peasantry, who would probably gather in great numbers on the first signs of determined hostility towards them. Captain Smallpiece had stated positively that the inn had been invaded by between forty and fifty men; and, though eager to go and take vengeance, he was desirous of having an effective force with him, and, therefore, laid great stress upon the probability of the number of opponents being increased.

General C---- made some allowance for exaggeration; but still he represented to the very zealous justices that it would be much better to let the effervescence in that quarter subside; and, by securing every suspected person of influence who could be easily and rapidly laid hold of, crush rebellion in the bud without any bloodshed.

"Take my word for it," he said, "when these poor misguided fellows find there is no one to lead or to support them, they will resume their ordinary occupations; and then, if it be judged necessary, the leaders can be apprehended and punished. In the meanwhile, this young Earl will either come in and make submission, or will fly beyond seas again, and the latter would be no bad thing. You must remember, gentlemen, you have proceeded somewhat sharply against him, upon authority the value of which you know best; and, although government considered it necessary to make sure of all suspected persons, and render them impotent for evil, yet there is no desire on the part of his Majesty or his minister, either to cram the jails with prisoners, or to treat as traitors those not actually apprehended in arms."

These last words, which were taken as a rebuke, created a good deal of ill-feeling, and roused

a pettish spirit of resistance. None of the magistrates judged fit to interfere with the actual movements of the troops; but they insisted upon issuing a proclamation, offering a reward for the apprehension of the Earl of Eskdale; and some information which reached Exeter during that evening made them plume themselves mightily upon their sagacity. Four men were sent out, two in one direction, and two in another, to paste up the proclamations on the doors of dwelling-houses and farms; and, in their tour round the country, they obtained intelligence of a strange messenger having passed across towards Exmouth, and of his having called at the farm of Blacklands, where he asked particularly if the Earl of Eskdale was at Keanton, and then inquired the way to Ale Manor, but without going along the road pointed out. These tidings had scarcely been received in Exeter, when intelligence came from Exmouth of the appearance of this strange messenger in the town, of his having held communication with several disaffected persons, of his selling his horse, which was completely foundered by hard riding, and of his purchasing another, with which he rode away over the downs towards Dorsetshire.

On hearing this, General C---- took a pinch of snuff, coolly remarking--

"Then we shall, probably, soon hear more. He won't get to Colyford uncaught."

Though he treated the matter lightly, to all appearance, the old general did not regard the journey of this messenger as at all unimportant. The persons and the places he visited, proved sufficiently the object of his coming; and, by his arrest, it was reasonably supposed that much information as to the feelings and intentions of many persons might be obtained. The old officer was as quiet as ever, but very active. He knew and understood well that the apprehension of a single stranger, a mere bearer of letters and messages, was a very different and much more simple affair than the arrest of a nobleman in the midst of a tenantry who bore a feudal, I might almost say, a clannish, affection to his house. A number of couriers, armed, but in a civil garb, went forth from Exeter that evening. They were not unsuccessful. The stranger was met with, just crossing the border into Dorsetshire, by one of those sent to seek him. He was a stout fellow, and armed; and the courier bespoke him quietly. The stranger, however, was very uncommunicative, and showed himself desirous of getting rid of all company; but the other pursued him closely, and never left him till he could obtain assistance for his apprehension. He was then immediately seized and conveyed to Exeter, where, upon being searched, a great number of letters were found upon his person, many of them in hands well known in the county, and all of them bearing one peculiar address; namely--"To the General commanding-in-chief for his Majesty." They were all broken open and read without ceremony; and the man himself was then subjected to a long examination, which revealed a great deal more, and gave point to all the ambiguous expressions contained in the letters.

A change now took place in all the proceedings of the authorities at Exeter. Persons, whose apprehension had been before a great object, were now left to escape, or to act as they pleased, and immediate measures were adopted against individuals who had been hitherto neglected or unsuspected. Troops were called in from different quarters, and marched in the most opposite directions; and many of the good quidnuncs of the capital, when they heard of these movements without understanding their causes, blamed severely the vacillating conduct of the people at Exeter, and prognosticated a general rising in the west.

For a dull chapter, this is long enough. The consequences of all these proceedings will be seen; and, in the mean time, we will go to matters of more individual interest.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It blew a gale of wind right up the long valley between Ale harbour and Aleton. The night was dark and cloudy. The sky, if not constantly covered with black vapours, was so frequently shrouded by them as only to allow the momentary gleam of a star. On, on, the clouds hurried confusedly over the firmament, like the thoughts of the human mind in a moment of sudden perplexity.

A stout man, well lined within and well cased without, battled sturdily with the blast as he walked down the valley. Many impediments did he meet with; his cravat was nearly torn from his neck; his long black garments fluttered like streamers in the wind; and, more than once, his three-cornered hat was blown off and sent hurrying away along the road. At length, after having caught it for the third time, with a some what ungodly oath, he tied it tightly upon his head with a pocket-handkerchief, and pursued his way in greater security. He was often half strangled, it is true; still he had not now, as before, to double the distance by the constant pursuit of his hat. Puffing and snorting, and venting many a malediction on those who had brought him such a journey on such a night, he made his way forward, supported by the thought of a hundred

guineas as the reward of all his toils. About a mile from Aleton, he passed a man upon the road, who seemed to know him, for he said, "Good night, Master Parson," and walked on; but, at the entrance of the hamlet, he was encountered by our good friend, Van Noost, who whispered--

"Is not this an unlucky night?"

"Ay, by Jove!" answered Parson Thickett. "I wonder what people are thinking of, to choose such nights for being married on."

"They must think less who go to sea on such a night," said Van Noost. "I would not, for all the world. I would rather stay on shore and have my head cut off."

The parson only laughed, and, walking on, they were soon at Grayling's cottage-door, which readily opened to admit them. The doctor was easily consoled for his long walk on that stormy night, for comforting appliances were within Grayling's cottage, and Smeaton took care that he should be well supplied. The old fisherman himself was in a somewhat grumbling and surly mood, and more than once went out, stayed a few minutes, and returned. Poor Van Noost sat by the fire-side, with his eyes fixed upon the flame, unable to cheer himself, even by the strong waters. From time to time he lifted his ear and listened, as the leaden casements of the cottage rattled and shook in the blast which came rushing up the stream, and though to the children he was good-humoured and kindly as ever, it was evidently with a painful effort that the little statuary forced himself to notice them.

Smeaton, too, was grave and thoughtful. The idea of exposing Emmeline, in a night like that, to the fury of the stirred-up ocean in an open boat, was one that he could not entertain. Had he been alone, with any purpose to accomplish, he would not have hesitated for a moment; but we often feel fears for others which we know not for ourselves; and, even if he could have sheltered her from the cold blast and the dashing spray, he would not have risked a life so precious to him upon that tempestuous sea. Still, the thought of delaying their departure, even for a few hours, was very grievous to him. He knew right well how much may intervene between the cup and the lip. He had a sort of anxious dread about the morrow, and he hoped, and half persuaded himself, that the wind would go down as the night advanced.

Towards ten o'clock, however, old Graying returned after a short absence, bringing his nephew and another man with him.

"It is no use, my lord," said the younger Grayling. "The Ale is getting heavier every minute, and it is so dirty in the wind's eye, that there is no chance of a lull before noon to-morrow. As to getting off to-night, that you cannot do. We might get a boat out of the bay, indeed; but she would not live five minutes off the head. I have seldom seen such a sea running as there is now on the Cobstone; for you see, my lord, the wind being south-western by south----"

But Smeaton interrupted him, saying--

"I will take your opinion, my good friend. There is no use in explaining; I should not understand you if you did. For my own life I should not care; but, where others are concerned, I must be more cautious."

"We don't care much for our own lives either, my lord," said the fisherman; "but I think you would find it a hard matter to get any one to go off with you to-night, especially if there is to be a lady in the boat."

"Then I suppose I shall have to come down to-morrow?" whispered Parson Thickett to the young nobleman, near whom he was sitting.

"No, no, my reverend friend," replied Smeaton. "Your office can be performed in a hurricane as well as in the calmest weather; and, in a few minutes, we will go to the place where your assistance will be necessary. We must, however, have the cottage clear first, and obtain intelligence that all is safe."

"Ay, ay," added the parson. "Make sure of that."

After staying a few minutes, conversing with his uncle, the younger Grayling went away with the other man who had accompanied him; and, soon after, the children were sent to their beds. Smeaton looked anxiously at his watch; and then, gazing out at the door, he said--

"I think my servant is coming now."

But he was disappointed. A man arrived who was a bearer of what, to Smeaton, was bad news. The new comer was a stout peasant, of a somewhat superior class, who looked round, shook hands with old Grayling and his wife, whom he called uncle and aunt, and then, doffing his hat, advanced to the young nobleman, and presented him a letter.

"That, my lord, is from Farmer Thompson, my cousin," he said. "I undertook to bring it over; for we find that some of our people are not to be trusted."

Smeaton broke open the letter, and read the contents with an anxious eye, and a look of

considerable emotion.

"What is all this?" he said, at length. "I do not understand it."

"Why, it is all true, my lord," replied the young man, bending down his head, and speaking in a whisper. "I saw it, and read it myself, posted upon the very walls of Keanton, setting a price upon your lordship's head, with the royal arms at the top, and 'God save the King' at the bottom. It made all the good men amongst us quite mad."

"It is not *that* I am speaking of at all, my good friend." returned Smeaton. "The proclamation here mentioned, perhaps, might be expected; though, I must say, such proceedings, after the assurances I have received, are by no means right and justifiable. But what I allude to, are these latter words." And, holding the paper to the light, he read:

"According to your lordship's orders, I have sounded the tenantry, and find almost every man under forty ready to obey you in all things. Some of them, however, have not arms. But about twenty are fully prepared, and will be ready to mount at a moment's notice as soon as your lordship arrives. The rest can follow you by one or two at a time, in a day or so, as soon as the arms come from Exmouth."

He ceased reading, and looked in the young man's face, as if for explanation.

"Well, my lord," said the other, "I don't understand you."

"Nor I this intelligence," added Smeaton. "I sent no orders to sound the tenantry, or to levy men."

"Such orders certainly came, my lord," replied the young man; "not by your own servant, but by another person, who seemed to know all about you."

"This is some base fraud," said Smeaton, musing. "However, my good friend, stop and refresh yourself for a little, while I write a letter to your cousin. Tell him that I thank him for his zeal, but that nothing could be farther from my thoughts than to authorise any raising or arming of the tenantry. I hope, however, this has been done so cautiously as not to call the attention of the magistrates upon you."

"We all met on horseback," said the young man, with a laugh, and a shrug of his shoulders, "upon the green before the great gates; but I don't know that any one saw us."

Smeaton thought gravely, and then replied--

"If it be possible, I will ride over before daybreak to-morrow. Stay, I will write."

Going hastily up to his room above, he wrote a few words in the same sense as those he had just uttered; and, on descending, found the young man quite ready to depart. Parson Thickett, too, was becoming impatient to return to his own dwelling, for it was now past eleven o'clock; and, with a long bleak walk before him, he did not at all relish delay. Smeaton was evidently no less anxious; but still a quarter of an hour elapsed before the man Higham appeared. At the end of that time, however, he entered the cottage, with his gay saucy look, expecting, probably, to find no one except the old fisherman in the lower room; but, as soon as he saw his lord, he said, respectfully--

"They are all gone to bed, my lord, and I dare say will soon be in a comfortable doze; for Sir John and half the servants have ridden hard to-day, and the rest have drunk hard, which comes to much the same thing."

"Now then, my reverend friend," said Smeaton, rising, "we will go, if you please. Van Noost, you must come with us. Higham, go on before to within a yard or two of the place where the small path quits the carriage road to the house. There stop, and make sure that no one comes that way without our having notice by some means."

"I understand," replied the man. "Wrangle, quarrel, talk loud, whistle, shout, or something! I understand. I'll manage it, my lord."

Thus saying, he walked out of the cottage, and Smeaton and the reverend doctor followed.

The young nobleman led his companion round between the two next cottages, desiring Van Noost to go a little in advance, and then said, in a low tone--"There is one question I wish to ask you, Doctor Thickett, which is this:--The marriage you are about to celebrate will be a good and perfect marriage, notwithstanding some slight informalities--is it not so?"

"Just, just," replied the parson. "They may suspend *me*; but they cannot unmarry *you*. They may punish you by the statute for a clandestine marriage; but they cannot make the marriage of no effect. Marriage is like a good thrashing; when once inflicted, it cannot be got rid of."

"And now, my good friend," pursued Smeaton, pausing, "you must suffer me, I believe, to tie a handkerchief over your eyes."

"Pooh, pooh! what Is the use of that?" exclaimed the doctor, laughing. "I know where you are taking me, just as well as you do. I would not have gone so quietly if I had thought you were taking me into the lion's den except by a back way. Why, the priest's chamber, and the way in and out, has been a tradition at the rectory ever since those puritanical times when many an honest parson was forced to take refuge from skull-cap and Geneva, broadsword and bandolier. There used to be a key up at the church; but, by Jove, my predecessor was fool enough to give it to Sir John. How you got in, I cannot make out."

Smeaton did not think it necessary to explain, but led the parson on, and found Van Noost at the well with the door open. Doctor Thickett was, with some difficulty, got across the water; and then, when the door was closed, a match was kindled and a lamp lighted.

"Now tread cautiously," said Smeaton, leading the way, with the light in his hand.

When they entered the priest's room, however, it was still vacant; and, trusting to the promises he had received, the young nobleman did not venture to proceed any farther.

"This has been a chapel once, I think," observed Doctor Thickett, looking round the room. "Some notice of it is in the books up at the church. There," added he, pointing to one of the sides, "is where the communion-table must have stood."

Smeaton held up his finger to enjoin silence; and, in a minute or two after, a slight sound was heard at the extremity of the room adjoining the next chamber. Cautiously, and as noiselessly as possible, the state bed in the other room was drawn back, and the door which it concealed was opened. All eyes were turned to that side, and there was certainly some emotion, if not some anxiety, in the breast of each. The light shone, however, upon the figure of the old housekeeper, who advanced quietly, holding Emmeline by the hand. The poor girl trembled a good deal, with agitation rather than fear, and her face was very pale. But Smeaton advanced at once, and took her hand, whispering some low tender words, which instantly called her eyes to his face, and the warm glow into her cheek again.

Mrs. Culpepper had stopped the moment they were in the room; and now, looking anxiously in her foster-son's face, she whispered--"What an awful night it is, my lord! Everything is ready; but--"

"It is quite impossible," interrupted Smeaton, "to expose this dear girl on the sea in such a tempest; still, as this worthy clergyman has come here to perform the ceremony, the marriage had better take place to-night; and, before to-morrow, I trust the wind will have gone down. What say you, dearest Emmeline?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Emmeline. "I shall feel more happy--more--more certain of what I am doing, and what is right to do, when I am your wife, than I do now. Besides, new difficulties might spring up."

"You are right, dear young lady, you are right," said Mrs. Culpepper. "Once wedded to him, wherever he may find you, he has a right to claim you; and, against whatever wrong is done you, he has a right to protect you. Besides, he is bound to take care of himself for your sake."

The young nobleman smiled, with a glad and happy look at his beautiful bride, and then led her on towards the spot where Doctor Thickett and Van Noost were standing.

The stout priest would fain have said something jocose; but Emmeline's timid look, and Smeaton's dignified bearing, at the moment restrained him, and he contented himself with asking--"This is all with your consent and full consideration, Mistress Emmeline?"

"Entirely," she replied, without raising her eyes to the face of the clergyman, which she knew right well, and did not much like.

"Well then, we have nothing to do but to begin," said Doctor Thickett; and, opening the book, he read the service for the celebration of marriage from beginning to end, without sparing them one word of it; and, when he had finished, he added, "Well, that is done and tight. They cannot untie that knot, let them tug as they will."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Smeaton, pressing, Emmeline's hand in his own. "But we must each have some proof that this dear knot is tied, Doctor Thickett."

"Wall, I will register it as soon as I get home," said the priest. "I could not bring the great lumbering book with me."

"Doubtless," assented the young Earl; "but, if you please, we will each have a certificate under your hand, and those of the witnesses present, that the marriage has taken place. Van Noost, you have an inkhorn with you, I think."

"Everything ready, everything ready," cried Van Noost. "Here is ink, and pen, and paper, and a table. So now, Doctor, write away."

"Ah, well. I came to read, not to write; but I may as well do it," said the parson, sitting down to

the table, and beginning to scrawl in a large but crabbed hand. "There, my lord, that is for you. There, my lady, that is for you. And now, this is my first fee and reward, by immemorial privilege," he added, pressing his great lips upon Emmeline's cheek.

She shrunk from him, unable to resist her sensation of dislike; but he only laughed, and, turning to Smeaton, received from him the full reward which had been promised. "And now," he said, aloud, "I had better take myself home. My part of the affair is over."

"Show him the way, Van Noost," said Smeaton. "I will join you at Grayling's cottage very shortly."

The statuary was prompt to obey, and led the fat parson forth, taking. Mrs. Culpepper's candle to light them.

Emmeline had borne up well; she had replied clearly and distinctly when taking upon her the irrevocable vows which bound her to the man she loved; but it must not be supposed she had undergone no deep emotions. Every thrilling sensation had been felt; every wide-extending association had presented itself; all the hopes, all the anxieties, all the bright dreams, all the shadowy forebodings, all the realities, all the imaginings, which attend the pledging of a young and innocent heart to the one loved and trusted, had hurried through her bosom and her brain in those few brief minutes. Yet she had borne up; she had seemed calm after her first entrance into the room. Love, and strong resolution, had given her power to conquer all agitation, till the words were spoken, the vow was uttered, and she was his for ever. Then, however, the mingled emotions rushed back upon her, together with the overpowering feeling that the great change was accomplished; that she was not her own, but his; that her fate was no longer lonely; that she was one with him she loved; and, had it not been for the arm which glided round her, she would have sunk to the ground where she stood.

The old housekeeper left them, to watch, in the passage, though she had little fear of any interruption; and, to Emmeline and her young husband, it seemed but a moment, though an hour had passed when she again appeared, with a face of some anxiety and alarm.

"I hear horses' feet, my lord," she said. "Quick! You had better speed away. I know not what it may be; but it is strange at this hour of night. Some one will soon be up; for the sounds are on the road near the house. Quick, my lord, quick! Away!"

"Hark, hark!" cried Emmeline. "There are people speaking loud and angrily. Oh, Henry, go, go, for Heaven's sake!"

A brief moment given to thought--one more embrace--and Smeaton was gone. Emmeline followed the old housekeeper out of the room; and the secret entrance was closed as noiselessly as possible. The fair girl, the bride, the wife, retired to her own solitary chamber, while the lover and the husband took his way to his place of refuge.

When were they to meet again? Who can ever say who asks himself that question when parting from another?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Sleep was not destined that night to visit the eyes of the young Earl of Eskdale. He made his way through the passages to the stone door near the well--opened it cautiously, and looked around. Nobody was to be seen; and the sounds which had alarmed them above had ceased. Closing the door and locking it, he hastened back to the cottage of Grayling, seated himself with the old man, who was still up by the fire, and inquired whether he had heard any noise. But the sounds had not reached the hamlet; and, after waiting half an hour, the old man went out to seek intelligence. When he returned, he brought the servant, Thomas Higham, with him, whose explanation was so far satisfactory, that it showed Smeaton, or, at least, led him to believe, that no fresh peril was to be apprehended for the time. The high words which had been heard by the lover and his fair bride had passed between the servant and a messenger from Exeter, and were provoked by Higham himself, in order to give early intimation to his master that the household was likely soon to be disturbed.

"You see, my Lord," he said, "the truth is, Sir John rode a great part of the way to Exeter this morning, having been summoned thither, I dare say, upon your affairs. But he would not go the whole way, because he had required that assurance should be given him on the road, that his house should not be taken possession of during his absence; and no messenger met him. The fellow says he was detained, and could not come on till to-night. I dare say, he got drunk and

forgot all about it; but I picked a quarrel with him in order to let you hear."

"Then it was merely the messenger with whom you were speaking?" said Smeaton. "Do you know what reply he brought to Sir John?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Higham. "I got that out of him in his passion. He said we were all insolent alike, Sir John and his servants (one of whom he took me to be); and that the magistrates at Exeter would give no such assurances to anybody, till Sir John had explained his conduct."

"Is he gone?" demanded his master.

"Oh, yes, my Lord," replied Higham. "I kept hiding in the wood till I heard him trotting back again; and then I was just coming hither, when I met old Stockfish here."

"Then I will ride over at once to Keanton," said Smeaton, "if you can get me your horse out of the stable."

"Why, it is only the pack-horse, my Lord," replied Higham; "and though it is as strong as a lion, it is as slow as a bear."

"It matters not," replied his master. "It would take too long to get either of the others from the farm. Bring it down to the end of the hamlet as speedily as possible, and then remain here till I come back, in order that they may think you are riding it yourself."

The man sped away; the horse was soon brought; and, about two in the morning, Smeaton was on his road towards Keanton. On his arrival, he found that, though most persons in the little village were asleep, two Or three of the principal farmers were congregated at the house of Thompson, waiting for his arrival. He was received with every sort of respect; but, nevertheless, there was a somewhat gloomy and dissatisfied look about the men, which gave him some key to their feelings. They said that the message they had received in his name had so completely misled them, that every preparation had been made for taking up arms, and without much secresy or disguise.

"If we stand hesitating, my Lord," said one of the men, boldly, "the people of Exeter, who have had spies amongst us, won't fail to be down upon us when we least expect them; and then we shall be marched away to prison. Nobody doubted, my Lord, that the order came from you; for the only thing that surprised us was, that you had not given it long before. We are, every one of us, willing to shed our blood for our right King, under the command of your Lordship, whose good father was ever ready to draw the sword in a just cause; but we should not like to spend the rest of our lives in jail without striking a blow, right or wrong."

Smeaton was a good deal mortified, for there was but little time to give long explanations as to his motives, or to show the worthy men around him how hopeless was the course they were inclined to pursue. He told them, however, briefly but clearly, that he credited in no degree the assertion, so frequently made by the Jacobite party, that the majority of the people of England were anxious for the return of the Stuarts. He had convinced himself, he said, that such was not the case; and he added, what seemed to surprise them very much, that he thought the people of any country had a right to some voice in the disposal of the crown. It must be remembered that the divine right of kings had at that period been rarely questioned; that where, as in the case of England, it had not only been questioned but set aside, the new doctrine of the people's rights had only made way with one party; and that that party had shown themselves so far doubtful of their own position as to choose for their sovereign a member of the same family whose head they had repudiated. The men to whom Smeaton spoke had been bred up under his ancestors, with the notion of this divine right inculcated upon them from infancy, almost as a part of their religion; and it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that they marvelled exceedingly to hear their young lord pronounce doctrines which to them seemed little less than treasonable. They could comprehend his arguments much better, however, when he went on to explain to them that the chances of an insurrection even in the north of Great Britain being successful were exceedingly small at that time; and that no chance whatever existed of a rising in the west of England prospering for above a day. He showed them that, from the information they themselves possessed, it was clear that all the principal leaders of the Jacobite party in Devonshire and Somersetshire had been secured, by orders of the government; and that no force could be raised sufficient to resist the troops which were ready to act against the Pretender.

"Yes, my lord," replied the farmer who had before spoken; "but we might make our way across the country, to help our friends in the north; and that *I* shall do, for one, now I have made up my mind."

The man spoke in a dogged and determined tone; and several others who were present, though they said little, seemed much inclined to follow his example. The time thus ran on for about an hour in fruitless discussion; and then it became necessary for the young nobleman to return to his place of refuge. He could, therefore, only entreat those by whom he was surrounded to pause and consider well before they acted upon a resolution which might hurry them into dangers they had not yet fully calculated.

With this advice he left them; and, according to custom on such occasions, his conduct became the subject of much comment after he was gone. Some blamed him as a waverer; some of the

more rash affected to doubt his courage; and others marvelled at what could possess him; when some one, in a jocular manner, alluded to the pretty lady at Ale Manor as the probable cause of their lord's hesitation and reluctance. As usual, when any likely solution of a difficult question is suggested, every one seized on the idea thus started; poor Emmeline was looked upon as a sort of Cleopatra who kept their Marc Antony in the toils of love; and the good farmers set themselves seriously to consider whether no means existed of forcibly withdrawing their young lord from this entanglement.

In the meanwhile, Smeaton rode back towards Ale; but, as always happens when speed is required, more than one impediment came in his way. It was still blowing hard, although the gale was somewhat more moderate; and the young nobleman's horse laboured and panted up the hills as if his lungs were unsound. This, however, would only have produced a delay of about a quarter of an hour; but a much more serious obstacle soon presented itself. The beast cast a shoe; no means of replacing it were near at hand; and it was impossible to proceed with anything like speed.

Embarrassed and annoyed, the young nobleman nevertheless pursued his way, though day dawned and the sun rose when he was fully six miles from the village of Ale. Two courses were before him: either to ride on boldly and risk a meeting with those whom he wished to avoid, or to hide in some of the hollows of the hills till night fell, taking his chance of obtaining food from the shepherds or herdsmen who fed their cattle on the downs. But a feeling of recklessness had come over him, proceeding not alone from the conversation which had just passed, but also from a perception of the manifold dangers of his position and of the difficult situation in which he was placed; and he had determined to go forward at all hazards, when he perceived some one on foot, apparently watching him from the summit of one of the neighbouring hills. As soon as the man got sight of Smeaton riding below, he ran down towards him as fast as possible; and the young Earl conjectured that there was an intention of cutting him off on the road towards Ale.

"I can deal with one at least," he thought, and pushed on somewhat more rapidly, although his horse now went very lamely.

But the person on the hill ran fast, and cut him off at a turning in the path he was pursuing, when, to Smeaton's surprise, he beheld the face and figure of his servant, Higham, who, holding up his hand to prevent his farther advance, besought him not to ride on, on any account.

"You cannot get to the village, my Lord, but by passing round the Manor house, and it is in possession of the soldiers from Exeter. They have taken Sir John out of his bed this morning, and intend to carry him away to Exeter, a prisoner. He talks very high, but looks low, and so I thought I might as well run on to tell you, and keep myself out of harm's way."

"Sir John Newark!" exclaimed Smeaton, in utter amazement; for the character of the knight was in no degree a secret to him, notwithstanding all the pains taken to conceal his real views and objects. "Are you sure, Higham, that I am not the real object of the search, and that Sir John is not arrested either from his having hidden me in his house so long, or as a sort of security for my discovery?"

"Lord bless you, no, my Lord!" replied Higham. "Sir John Newark is lagged for Sir John Newark's own doings. He has played fast and loose with every government for many a long year, and has won a precious deal by the game--at least, so the people here say. He has made people in London fancy he is much more powerful in Devonshire than he is; and so, whenever he wanted anything, he made a show of going over to the other party, and got what he required. Now, if he wanted Keanton, for instance, and thought that the Whigs were likely to win the day, he would become very high church indeed, and pretend to be plotting with your Lordship just to be bribed to give it up and betray you. But such a man is caught out in the end. He cannot carry on such a game without making some mistake, and the magistrates here are desperate sharp. I was in the house when the soldiers came, and it oozed out amongst them that Sir John was charged upon some letter found on a messenger, in which he had gone a little too far. As to seeking for your Lordship, they never asked for you at all; and, though they got possession of the house quietly enough, they knew better than to go into the village to make any search. They would have been thrashed out soon enough. All they wanted was Sir John, and him they have caught and put in a bag. But nevertheless, I think it would be better for you to keep out of the way till the men are gone and have taken their prisoner with them; for there is a great chance, if they found you, that they would bag you too. As soon as they are gone, you have got the game in your own hands; for there will be nobody at Ale to stop your doing what you like, and I can go and watch from the top of Ale Head to see when they pass up the road."

The words of Higham were like the voice of Hope, promising bright things which might, or might not, be performed; but if a doubt previously existed in the mind of Smeaton, as to whether he should or should not go forward, it was at once removed. To try to make his way into Ale, so long as the soldiery were at the Manor House, would have been madness; and, consequently, choosing his course at once, he determined to retreat a little way into the hollows, and to send the man up to the high ground above Ale Head, whence a considerable portion of the road the soldiers were obliged to travel was visible. He accordingly sought out a spot whence he could keep his eye upon his servant, whilst Higham watched the road, and arranged with his master a sort of code of signals for the purpose of communicating what his observations discovered from the height, without obliging the Earl to descend. But the man had not been more than ten

minutes at the highest point of the coast when, by stretching out his right arm in the same direction as the road to Exeter, he indicated that the guard and their prisoner had set out.

Waiting a few minutes, to give time for their passing out of sight, the young nobleman moved his horse slowly forward, choosing the soft turf to ride over as the best for his horse's unshod feet; but, the moment he altered his position, Higham ran down again to meet him, and informed him that it would be better to wait a little; for, though the greater number of the soldiers were out of sight, yet two were far in the rear of the rest, and might recall the others in a moment.

"Sir John is determined to take it at his ease," added the man; "for he has got his great coach and six horses, with a servant on horseback at each wheel. It looks, for all the world, like the Lord Mayor's coach, and goes as slow; but, at all events, it will serve his purpose, and both make him comfortable in the inside, and delay the people who have him in custody."

"Then, do you think he meditates escape?" asked the young Earl.

"That is as it may be, my lord," replied Higham. "If he hopes for any one to help him, he is quite mistaken; for the fishermen would not stir a finger for him, and the peasantry do not like him much better, as far as I can hear. He is a sorry fellow, and a proud one, and won't find many friends in the world; but, perhaps, he thinks to get off by some trick, and then, if he does join the prince's army, he will have taken the first strong resolution he ever did in his life--but he won't do that. He will hold fast by the ruling power in the end, depend upon it; for Sir John is his own sovereign, and nobody is so despotic with him as his own interest."

Smeaton mused awhile, and then moved slowly forward again, sending his servant a little in advance to see that the country was clear. No obstacle, however, presented itself. The cavalcade was out of sight; the grounds round Ale Manor were perfectly solitary, and not even a herd or a labourer was to be seen. Dismounting from his horse, where the road to the Manor House turned into the wood, the young Earl descended on foot to the village, from which a sound of loud talking came up the side of the hill. He found the greater part of the people of the place--men, women, and even children--assembled in one of the little gardens which, fenced with large flat stones, lay here and there between the cottages. All seemed in a state of great excitement; but it was evidently not excitement of an angry character; for some laughed, while others talked loud, though in no very sad tone.

As soon as Smeaton was seen advancing, by those on the outside of the little crowd, one stout fellow waved his hat and cried, "Hurrah!" and congratulations poured thick upon him as he advanced amongst them.

"Ay, my Lord, we were in a bit of a fright about you," said old Grayling, grasping his hand unceremoniously in his great, broad, hard fist; "but not much either, for we sent out people to see that they did not get hold of you."

"Perhaps, he does not know that the soldiers have been here, uncle," said the younger Grayling.

"No, not here, Dick, not here," said the stout old man. "They dared not put their noses in here, if they had been five times their number. Up at the house they might do what they liked. That was no business of ours. But they are gone now, and have a long march to Exeter. So that all is safe for a day or two."

"Then I suppose I can safely go up to the house," said the young nobleman. "I wish to hear the particulars of all this business."

"Ay, safe enough," replied the old man, with a meaning laugh; "safer, I fancy, than when you lived there quite at your ease, my lord. A bad friend is worse than a bad enemy."

"But won't you have something to eat, sir?" inquired Dame Grayling. "I'll get you something in a minute."

Smeaton, however, declined, and turned his steps by the shortest path towards the house, thinking, with joy, it must be acknowledged, of the removal of many obstacles in his way by the arrest of Sir John Newark. Bitterly was he destined to be disappointed, as is often the case when we suffer our hopes to be elated without a full knowledge of the circumstances. He found everything quiet and tranquil about the house, though he could hear some of the servants, as he approached, talking together in the stable-court, and his eye ran over the windows, to see if Emmeline was at any of them. Nobody, however was visible, and he lifted the latch of the great door, to go in as usual. But the door was locked, and he had to ring the bell and wait several minutes before he gained admission. The servant, who appeared at length, was one of the younger men; and, putting on a rueful aspect, with perhaps a touch of hypocrisy, he was proceeding to inform the young nobleman of the sad event which had occurred, when Mrs. Culpepper herself glided into the hall, saying, with a low curtsey--

"If you will walk into the saloon, my lord, I will tell you all about it."

Smeaton followed her, with some anxiety, for there was an ominous gloom upon her face, which he did not think the mere arrest of Sir John Newark was likely to produce.

"You have heard what has happened!" she said, immediately the door was closed.

"That Sir John Newark has been made prisoner, and sent to Exeter," replied Smeaton.

"To London--to London," returned Mrs. Culpepper. "He will not even be examined at Exeter, they say, but be sent off to Newgate or the Tower at once. He has long been playing double with them, and now they have found, upon a courier, a letter of his to the Earl of Mar, which, by the explanations of the messenger, they make out to be full of treason. But that is not the worst of it. He has taken the Lady Emmeline with him, whether she would or not. We knew not what to do--whether boldly to tell of her marriage, or still to keep it secret. To say that she was married to you would have been to make matters worse, and now, I will own, I am at my wits' end."

This was a terrible blow to Smeaton; one, indeed, on which he had never calculated, and difficulties presented themselves in all ways. If he lingered in that part of the country till tidings were obtained from London, he was sure to be taken, and probably kept a prisoner at Exeter; while, on the other hand, the intelligence he had received from the fishermen had shown him that every road between Devonshire and the capital was strictly watched and guarded; so that it was next to impossible for him to pass in that direction without discovery. Still, however, his mind was turned towards making the attempt at least, and the only consideration was, how to do so in safety. He could devise no means; but good Mrs. Culpepper came to his aid with a plan which seemed feasible.

"To try and get over the whole distance by land," she said, "is hopeless; but the boatmen will easily take you round, and land you on some quiet part of the coast near Abbotsbury or Weymouth, whence you can easily get to London under another name, and I don't know that London is not as good a hiding-place as any in the land."

Smeaton's inclinations led him that way. Hope, too, unextinguishable Hope, was busy in his breast, telling him that in the capital much could be done which he would vainly attempt to do by letter. He would see Lord Stair, he thought; he would cast himself upon his honour, upon his generosity. He would explain his own conduct, and recall to that nobleman the assurances he had given him not long before. Then, when freed from the perils which now surrounded him, he could, with safety to her and to himself, claim his beautiful bride, and set at defiance the arts of open enemies or pretended friends.

"I will set out at once," he said, after having given a few minutes to thought. "Yours is the best plan, my dear Nanny; and I will lose no time in executing it. I have at least one good friend in London, who has the will and the power to see justice done me."

"Pray take some refreshment before you go," said the housekeeper, in the tone of old affection. "You have turned pale with all these bad news, and look harassed and grieved."

"Well indeed may I, Nanny," replied the young Earl, laying his hand kindly on her arm. "Were there nothing else, surely the loss of my dear Emmeline, within ten short hours after she became mine, is enough both to grieve and agitate me. But I need no refreshment, and shall not be content till I am on my way."

"Nay, but stay a little," said the old housekeeper. "I can send down and order the boat directly, while you take some food, and besides, Richard, I am sure, will be glad to go with you as soon as he comes back."

"Has he not gone with his father!" exclaimed Smeaton, in great surprise.

"Oh, no, my lord," replied the housekeeper. "He was not here at the time. He has not been in the house since five o'clock this morning, when he rode away on one of his wild expeditions. We all thought he had gone to seek you at Keanton."

"I did not meet with him," said Smeaton; "but doubtless he will be glad to follow his father; and, though his presence may be some embarrassment to me, yet, poor boy, it is well that he should go with me."

"Better tell him all, my lord," observed Mrs. Culpepper. "You may trust his word if he promises secresy; for, though a little twisted by one thing or another, God gave him good wits at the first, and a good heart too. Hark! That must be his horse. Yes, he is calling for a groom. He must have heard what has happened; for that is not his usual way of speaking. Stay:--I will get you both some food and wine. He will want it as much as you."

She had hardly left the room when Richard Newark entered it; his manner of speech and bearing were wholly, almost miraculously, changed, as, with a heated face and eyes full of wild light, he exclaimed, "Ah, you have heard the tidings, Eskdale! They have taken away my father, which was what I always expected, and Emmeline too, which, I did *not* expect; for she meddled with nothing, and he meddled with everything. Now, what do you intend to do? I know what *I* intend to do, if the chain and collar will let me."

"I propose," replied Smeaton, "to take boat at once, land somewhere near Weymouth where we are not known, and thence make our journey to London under fictitious names. I take it for granted that you are anxious to follow your father; and, if you like to accompany me, I shall be

glad, although there is no need of your doing so; for doubtless you would be permitted to pass unquestioned. As for me, the plan I propose offers the only chance of my being able to reach the capital except as a prisoner. But you must decide at once, Richard."

"What do you want in the capital?" asked. Richard Newark. "What have you to do in that great ugly mixture of dirt, brick houses, and coal smoke?"

"I have much business, and important business, there," answered Smeaton. "Lord Stair pledged his word to me that I should remain safe and unquestioned in this country for a time, if I meddled in no degree with politics. I have not done so, and yet you know how I have been treated."

Richard Newark laughed, and shook his head with a thoughtful and abstracted air. "I must not say what I would fain say," he remarked--"no, no, I must not. It is very odd that one's fate is so often managed for one! You have been played upon, Smeaton."

"At all events," replied Smeaton, "I have written two letters to Lord Stair, to neither of which I have received an answer. He is a man of honour and a gentleman, who will not deny his plighted word; and I must go to London to claim its fulfilment."

"There are two reasons why you must not," said Richard, "and good ones too, whatever you may think. First, you can't; and, secondly, there would be no good in going if you could. Listen to me, listen to me. A ship of war is lying off the mouth of the bay, sent down, as I learn, to watch the coast and search every boat. That is for the 'can't.' Now for the 'good of going.' Lord Stair is not in London. He is in command of the troops in Scotland; and, if you want him, noble Lord, you must go north." Then, opening the door, he shouted, "Where is the Flying Post that came yesterday? It was in this room last night."

In answer to his call, a servant brought him one of the newspapers of the day, where, amongst other brief and uncommented announcements, appeared a paragraph, stating that the Earl of Stair had set out on the morning preceding to take command of the troops in Scotland, and keep the rebels in check till a larger army could be assembled to chastise them.

Smeaton looked at the date of the paper, which, as it had come by an express courier, was very recent.

"If I set out at once," he said, "I may, by hard riding, catch him in Yorkshire or Northumberland. It states here that he will be in York on Monday next--somewhat slow travelling in a business of such importance; but doubtless he has reinforcements with him. I will get my horses in, and ride off at once."

"I will be one with you," added Richard Newark; "for I am travelling north too."

"Will you not go to join your father?" asked the young Earl, in much surprise.

"Not I," replied the lad. "I could give him no help; and he would not have it if I could. My father is quite sufficient for himself, noble Lord--at least, he thinks so, and he never thanks any one for meddling with his affairs, though he meddles with other people's often enough, whether they thank him or not. But now let us get ready. I do not know whether these people have carried off your baggage or not. Mine will be soon trussed. Heaven send me occasion to use the sword you gave me! But you had better go to Keanton first, and take people enough to force the way, in case Hanover and Pulteney should try to stop you. If you don't go there, your people, I can tell you, will set out by themselves, and perhaps do more than you like or think of. I was there half an hour after you this morning, and how I missed you I do not know."

For a minute or two Smeaton did not reply, but remained in deep thought.

"So be it," he said at length. "Come down, Richard, and join me at the end of the village as soon as you are ready. I must send for my horses, and, in the mean time, will bid my servant pack up the baggage which was left here."

"Be sure first that it has not been taken away," observed the lad.

"I trust it has not been," answered Smeaton; "for my stock of money is running low; and there are some jewels and other things of value in those large trunks, which are worth money at all events."

"Oh, the people at Keanton will furnish you with money, I am sure," said Richard, "if you will lead them where they like."

"That is what I am least inclined to do, I fear," returned Smeaton. "Therefore I will go up and see, that I may be under obligations to one."

He found his baggage where he had left it, returned to the saloon, partook of some of the refreshments which Mrs. Culpepper had provided, and then hastened away to make his arrangements in the village. More than once during his conversation with Richard Newark, it had struck him that a strange transformation had come over the lad's manner. His tone was decided

and quick, and his look grave, perhaps sad, even when he laughed. But Smeaton had too many things to think of, to comment at length, even in his own mind, on this alteration, and the impression was swept away as soon as made.

The hurry and confusion of a rapid departure had many additions in Smeaton's case. What was to be done with good Van Noost, was not the least consideration. When notice of the approach of troops towards Ale Manor had been first received in the village, the statuary instantly hid himself, no one knew where; but now he had re-appeared upon the scene, and the young nobleman could not bear the thought of leaving him behind for the consequences of his own indiscretion. The appearance of a ship before Ale Harbour, which had thrown the whole village into a state of commotion, prevented the possibility of Van Noost's escape by sea, and rendered the necessity the greater of all suspected persons hastening their departure without delay. The fishermen anticipated that the ship's boats would enter the harbour every moment; and they seemed to regard the landing of a number of seamen with much greater apprehension than an attack by a party of soldiers. They showed no inclination to abandon their friends, however; but at the same time eagerly assisted in all preparations which were necessary to put them beyond the reach of this new danger.

The horses were brought to the village with great rapidity; the baggage was packed and loaded without delay; and, as Van Noost's fat pony was lost to his affectionate master for ever, a stout farmer's nag was procured for him, on whose broad back the little round man was placed like a plum-pudding on a trencher. Still the man who had been set to watch on the beach of the bay, and at the top of Ale Head, brought no intelligence of any movement on board the ship to create alarm, and all was quiet when the party of fugitives, consisting of Smeaton and Richard Newark, with Van Noost and two servants, rode away towards Keanton, where they arrived without interruption. There, for a time, I must leave them, to take up their history at an after period.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Considering the period of the year, which was only the end of September, the day was cold and wintry, when a party, consisting of some sixteen horse, took their way through one of the remote districts of Northumberland. The sky was covered with a film of grey cloud, and the wind, keen and chilling, as if loaded with hail or snow, swept over the bleak hills and moors.

Northumberland was, at that time, from many local causes, far behind the rest of England in point of cultivation and numbers. Remote from the capital either of England or Scotland, and holding but very scanty communication with the rest of Europe, the power and authority of government was less felt and acknowledged in the great northern county than elsewhere; old thoughts and habits clung to the inhabitants with greater tenacity; news circulated less freely, and men were more under the influence of the great proprietors than perhaps in any other English shire. The party of horse, therefore, which I have mentioned, and which was headed, as the reader may suppose, by the young Earl of Eskdale and Richard Newark, not only passed unquestioned through a district where a great majority of the people were attached to the Stuart cause, but were received in the small towns and villages with much cordiality, as soon as it was perceived that they were not soldiers of the House of Hanover. The Northumberland man has a certain degree of northern cautiousness about him; but he is by no means without the merry English spirit, and a good portion of wit. Few inquiries were made of the travellers as to the end and object of their journey; but a sly and jesting allusion was often ventured to the cause of the exiled king, and every information was given voluntarily regarding the insurrectionary movements in Scotland, and the general feelings of the people of the county itself.

The report, which had reached the west, of Forster and others being in arms in Northumberland, proved to have been greatly premature, and Smeaton now found that nothing was certain as to the proceedings of the malcontents and the government, except that warrants were out for the arrest of the Earl of Derwentwater, and Forster of Ramborough, member for the county, together with several other persons of less note, and that the Earl and his companion, with several of their friends, were closely concealed.

The situation of the young Earl of Eskdale was peculiar; but his being placed in it had been brought about by circumstances which affected many at that period, and led them unwillingly to actions which they did not at first contemplate, and into a position which they had anxiously striven to avoid. A hundred instances of noblemen and gentlemen could be cited, who were led on, little by little, from a mere abstract feeling of loyalty and attachment towards the exiled house of Stuart, to a complete and sometimes furious enthusiasm in their cause, to an active part in insurrection, and to their own utter destruction. Such was not altogether the case with

Smeaton; but it must be acknowledged that, before he reached Northumberland, his feelings and views were very greatly altered. The zeal and eagerness of all those by whom he was surrounded of course had their effect.

Few men--perhaps no young man--can prevent himself from being altogether infected by the enthusiasm of others, especially if no antidote be at hand, and certain it is that the young nobleman was inclined to look more favourably upon the conduct of the exiled princes, to make more allowance for their faults, and to regard their cause more hopefully, than he had been when we first saw him in London. Moreover, the treatment which he had received in Devonshire, the evident determination of the local authorities, if not of the government, to molest and persecute him, notwithstanding the strong assurances he had received from Lord Stair, and the contemptuous silence with which, as it appeared, that nobleman had treated his letters, irritated him greatly against the House of Hanover. It was certain, he thought, that one at least of those letters must have reached the hands for which both were intended, although the second, perhaps, might not have arrived in London before the Earl had taken his departure from the capital. Why had he neglected to reply? Was he inclined to violate his plighted word, or to connive at its violation by others? Or had he suffered his mind to be warped by false reports? and, if he had, was he justified in so doing before stronger proof was adduced than any which Smeaton imagined could have been furnished by his enemies?

"I have kept my word to the letter," said the young nobleman, to himself; "but I cannot bear this much longer. If they will drive me into insurrection, it is not my fault. But I will yet make one more effort for an explanation; and if that fails, I and they must abide the consequence."

A sigh followed the conclusion of this train of thought; for a moment's reflection showed him, notwithstanding some new-lighted hopes, where the evil consequences of the course, along which he was being hurried, were most likely to fall. It is true, he had not committed himself in any degree, either with Richard Newark, or with the farmers and stout yeomen who had accompanied or followed him from Keanton: Although he suffered them to join his party--for he could hardly refuse to do so after they had placed themselves in a dangerous situation on his account--he told them from the first that he had pledged himself to the Earl of Stair to take no part in any of the political movements that were going on, if suffered to remain quietly in England for a short period.

"I have kept my part of the compact," repeated he, "and I have been treated ill; but, before I actually violate it, I must learn from the Earl what is the meaning of the conduct pursued towards me. Perhaps, all may be explained on both sides; and, if so, I will keep my word to the letter, leaving you, my good friends, to follow what course you think fit."

Some of the men received the announcement rather sullenly; but others smiled with light-hearted shrewdness, thinking that their young Lord's scruples would soon be overcome when once he found himself in the focus of the insurrection.

During the last day's march, many a wild and exaggerated report had reached the little party of the progress of the insurgent force under the Earl of Mar, and of risings in various other parts of England. Mar's army was swelled to the number of thirty thousand men, according to these rumours; he had been joined by all the principal noblemen in Scotland; the Highland clans were universally flocking to him; the Lowlanders were rising in every direction; the town of Perth had been taken by a *coup-de-main*; and a large magazine of arms and ammunition on the coast of Fife was said to have fallen into the hands of the insurgents. King James himself was reported to have landed on the western coast with an auxiliary army, commanded by the gallant Duke of Berwick, and the forces of the House of Hanover were stated to be a mere handful, collected in Stirling and surrounded on every side by the legions of King James. In short, tens were magnified into hundreds, and hundreds into thousands, on the Jacobite side, and every small advantage was reported as a great victory; while the numbers of the opposite party were diminished in proportion, and the great abilities of those who commanded them overlooked or unknown.

Smeaton himself received these rumours for no more than they were worth; and, perhaps, did not yield them even sufficient credit. Mar had, it is true, taken possession of Perth; his forces had certainly greatly increased; and the Master of Sinclair, one of his officers, had seized a small store of arms at Burntisland. The forces of the government, too, at Stirling, were quite inadequate, in point of numbers, to cope with a regular army, commanded by a man of skill and experience; but Mar was totally deficient in both these points; and his army consisted of a mere mob of brave men, with little discipline and small cohesion amongst them. True was it, also, that General Whetham, who remained in command at Stirling till the middle of September, had shown but little ability to encounter the grave and dangerous circumstances in which he was placed; but on the side of the Jacobites all the advantages of number, zeal, and fiery courage, were more than counterbalanced by the incapacity of the commander, and the insubordination of the troops; while, on the part of the government, numerous bodies of disciplined soldiers, and officers of decision, experience, and courage, were hurrying to the scene of action, and preparing to crush the insurrection which had been already suffered to proceed too far.

Vainly did Smeaton ask for tidings of the Earl of Stair, till, on the day which I have mentioned, a farmer told him, somewhat sullenly, that two regiments of dragoons belonging to the Earl of Stair had passed the border that morning, and that there was an ill-looking fellow at their head, with a number of lackeys in the rear, whom he doubled not was the Earl himself and his servants.

This news seemed sufficient; and, without delay, he hurried on till nightfall, gaining information of the march of these troops as he proceeded, till, on the best opinion he could form, he judged that they could not be much more than one march in advance. The place where he was obliged to halt could hardly be called a hamlet, but rather a group of small farm-houses gathered together in a rich valley amongst the hills. No inn, no place of public entertainment whatever, was to be found; but the good farmers of the place not only willingly took in the travellers in separate parties, but seemed almost to expect some such visitation. Nods and hints were not wanting to signify that the cause of their guest's movements was known; and the worthy Northumbrian, at whose house Smeaton and Richard Newark were lodged, with their two servants, whispered in the ear of the young nobleman, that it would be better for him to keep quiet where he was, the whole of the next day, as Lord Stair's dragoons were at Wooler, and there was some talk of their halting there to refresh, before they proceeded north.

The news was less unsatisfactory to the young Earl than the farmer imagined; and his first act was to write a letter to Lord Stair, and to direct his servant to take it early on the following morning. He then returned to the room where he had left Richard Newark, and informed him of what he had done.

The lad laughed.

"Then, most likely, we shall all soon be in the hands of the Philistines," he said. "Your noddle, Eskdale, is doubtless much better than mine; but I don't think mine would have concocted a scheme for giving this good lord an opportunity of sending back a party to pick us up, just as if we were something he had dropped on the road. Twenty Tories, and an Earl at their head, would make a good cast of the net for any Hanover fisherman."

"I have not been so imprudent as you think, Richard," rejoined his friend. "I can be careful for my friends as well as for myself. I have not mentioned to Lord Stair that there is any one with me, and have told him that I shall follow the messenger ten miles on the road to-morrow, to meet the man on his return, and that, if he assures me that I shall be safe to come and go, I would present myself at his head-quarters, in order that our conduct may be mutually explained. I will send you intimation by the messenger, if I do not return to join you myself."

"And what am I to do?" asked Richard Newark, with a somewhat gloomy and desponding look. "Here I am, like a boat turned off to sea without sail or oar or compass."

"If you would take my advice, Richard," replied his friend, "it would be exactly what I have given you more than once before; namely, to make the best of your way to London, and join your father. That advice I give to you, because I think the course of your duty is clear, and because I believe your single arm would be of very little service to the cause you are so anxious to serve, although I have not thought it fit or right to dissuade these good men of Keanton, who are with us, from following the course they have chosen for themselves. But the case is very different with you. You are young and inexperienced, and may, hereafter, bitterly regret the step you are now taking. They are older, know and see the consequences of all they are doing, and are only acting in consonance with principles long entertained. Were I to follow my own inclinations--my habitual prejudices, as I may call them--I should, undoubtedly, lead them on the way they are going but still I should give you the same advice as I give now."

"Then why do you not follow your own inclinations?" asked Richard, sharply. "I won't believe that you are a man to hesitate at doing anything merely because you think it is dangerous. All these men suppose it is because you have no great hope of success that you will not join the King's army."

"They do me wrong," said Smeaton. "I put before them what I thought a just view of the probabilities, because I would not have them act blindly; but I have used no other means of dissuasion. You ask me why I do not follow my own inclination," he continued, thoughtfully; "and I do not know that I shall be able to make you comprehend the reason."

"Try, try," said Richard Newark. "My skull is thick, I know; but, if you tap at the right place, you will get in."

"It is a very painful situation, Richard," said Smeaton, "when a man's reason, in points of such importance as those which are now agitated in England, takes part against the prejudices in which he has been brought up. My father was happier. He never entertained a doubt that kings possess their power by divine appointment, or imagined that the people had justly any voice in the choice of their rulers. To this principle he sacrificed all his earthly possessions, and would have sacrificed life itself. Neglect, ill-treatment, duplicity on the part of the princes whom he served, made no difference in his opinions. He lived and died in them; and, during my early life, I heard of none other. Ten years ago I should have thought exactly the same as my father, though I felt more than he did the wrongs that were done him, and the insolent indifference with which he was treated. Although I despised our rightful sovereign as a man, I should have been ready to shed my blood for him as a King. Since that time I have mingled much with the world, have been out of the atmosphere of such prejudices, have learned to think and reason for myself, and have come to the conclusion that, as kings rule for the benefit of the people, the people have a voice in their selection; that, in fact, kings have no rights but what they derive from their subjects. Now, if I could convince myself that the majority of the people of England did really desire King James

for their sovereign, or even that people were equally divided for and against him, I should not hesitate to draw my sword in his cause; for my prejudices are still strong, though they are weakened. But I am not convinced that such is the case; and all I have seen hitherto tends to an opposite conclusion. This is one view of the case; but there is another, which is even still more powerful with me. I pledged myself to Lord Stair, that I would meddle in no way in this struggle for three months."

"But he has not kept his word with you," cried Richard, vehemently. "You cannot be bound by a compact which he has broken."

"It is that which I am anxious to ascertain," replied his friend; "and that I will ascertain to-morrow. If I find he has really violated his word with me, or suffered it to be violated by others, of course I shall hold myself entitled to act as I please. But I can hardly suppose that this is the case; for I have always believed that his character, as a man of honour, is above suspicion; and I would not, for life itself, by any rash act of mine, justify him in saying that I took advantage of the unauthorised conduct of those western magistrates to violate my plighted word."

Richard Newark fell into a fit of thought; but he never long retained any very sombre impressions; and, after the pause of a moment or two, he broke into a laugh, inquiring--

"Do you not think that our dear Emmeline may have something to do with your great discretion?"

"Nothing," replied Smeaton, thoughtfully, "nothing, I trust and hope, though I do not scruple at once to say, Richard, that, for her sake, I would do anything that did not affect my honour. Nay, more--"

He paused for an answer; for he was strongly tempted to tell his young companion how indissolubly his own fate and that of Emmeline were now bound together; but he hesitated on the very point of uttering the words. Richard was so wild, so rash--there might occur so many events to render the safe keeping of that secret important, and there seemed so many chances of his letting it escape him in one of his thoughtless moods--that a moment's reflection decided the Earl to be silent on the subject, at least for the time.

"Well, what more?" cried Richard, impatiently.

"I have tried the question with myself a dozen times," replied the Earl; "and, though I need not tell you I love her dearly, I do not believe that that love has been suffered to interfere at all in the decision I have come to."

"Well, well," said Richard Newark, shrugging his shoulders, "when we march into London and proclaim King James, you shall have her; and I will give away the bride. A pretty father I shall make! I suppose I must hire a white beard for the occasion. You act as you like; and I must take my chance, as you will not lead me to draw the sword which you have taught me to use. I will take our King's side, and stay by it. I am sick of seeing people wavering between two parties--my father, from policy, and you from scruples. There, I don't mean to offend you, noble friend. I doubt not you are quite right, and that your head was made for something better than being run against a wall, which was evidently Nature's intention when she furnished me with this noddle of mine; but you will own that, having seen all I have seen, I may well say, 'No time-serving for me.' I have heard people tell that my father has got together a great estate by now running with one party and now with another. It is but right that his son should break it to pieces again by sticking tight to one, be it fortunate or unlucky. And now I shall go to bed. Don't you dream of Emmeline, or you'll go ever to Lord Stair to a certainty."

Thus saying, he rose and left the room; and Smeaton remained some time longer in thought.

CHAPTER XXX.

The morning was bright and beautiful; the clouds of the preceding day, although they had not passed off entirely, had broken into detached masses, soft, white, and buoyant, but low down, moving slowly across the blue sky, and leaving large intervals for the rays of the sun to stream through, and paint the brown moors in all the magic colouring of autumn. A faint aerial mist was seen softening the distant parts of the landscape, as Smeaton rode slowly over the solitary hills which lay tumbled about in large rounded masses, marking the frontier line of England and Scotland. The alternation of shadow and of gleam brought forth as varied and as beautiful colours as those which paint the dolphin at his death. The free pure air, the rich changing prospect, the wide expanse of view, all seemed to breathe hope, if not happiness; and that strange mysterious

sensation, that elevated and expansive feeling, to which I can give no name, but which takes possession of the heart when first we quit the busy haunts of men to plunge into a wide solitude, came strongly upon the young Earl as he strained his sight along the distant hills and valleys. Not a soul was to be seen, not a living creature but a large bird of prey floating slowly in vast circles over his head. It was the early morning.

His servant had gone forward about half an hour before; the road which they had both to follow had been clearly pointed out; and Smeaton expected a ride of some twelve or thirteen miles before he could meet the messenger on his return. He gave himself up to thought, but not to that train of thought which perhaps might seem the most natural in his circumstances. He entered into no vain speculations as to the reply he should receive from the Earl of Stair. He suffered not his mind to rest upon the state of parties in the country, or upon the probabilities of the success or failure of the insurrection. He did not even dwell for a moment upon the various rumours of the day before, nor try to free himself, by reason, from any of those impressions--not exactly new but revived--which had been produced in him by the zeal and enthusiasm of all those by whom he had been lately surrounded. His thoughts were of Emmeline, and Emmeline alone. That wonderful thing, association, had called up her image almost as strongly, as distinctly, as if her beautiful face and fair form had been before his eyes. The brown heath, the rounded hills, the gleams of sunshine, the floating clouds, the free elastic air, all brought back to memory the morning of his ride to the old church at Aleton; and Emmeline was the principal object in all that remembrance painted.

His thoughts and feelings, however, were his own, and peculiar. I do not believe that there are any two moments in a man's life in which he is exactly the same being, however well the general harmony of the character may be maintained. Years make a difference; months, days, events, circumstances, experience. The changes may be very sudden, or they may be so gradual as to be imperceptible at the time they are taking place; yet, fix any lengthened period, and we find them marked and distinct in the mind as well as in the body. There is as much difference between the sensations of forty and of twenty, as between the face or form of the man and of the boy. Whether for better or for worse, we change them. They are things of the day, which pass from us and return no more.

Smeaton's love for Emmeline was intense, powerful, enthusiastic; but it was the love of a man, not of a boy. Ten years before, his thoughts would have been very different when turned towards her; more agitating, perhaps, but not so deep and strong. He dwelt, as a lover might dwell, on the beautiful memory of her look, the symmetry of her person, the music of her voice, the wild untutored graces of her mind, the heart-breathing spirit which pervaded everything she said and did; and the longing to hold her to his bosom again came upon him very strongly. He thought, too, with pain, of what must be her sensations, what her distress of mind, to be torn from him and carried away against her will, at the very moment when their happiness seemed almost secure; but it was not with that impulsive rashness which, a few years before, might have led him to fly to her in spite of obstacles, and without taking means to remove any of the difficulties which beset their path. He was old enough to struggle with his impulses, and generally to overcome them when he felt them to be rash.

Thus, in mingled meditation, he rode on, with sweet and pleasant images presented by memory, and painful reflections chequering the too bright vision.

He had not gone more than eight miles when he saw a man rapidly approaching down the slope of the opposite hill. He could hardly believe that his servant had returned so soon; yet the figure was so much the same--a diminutive man on a tall horse--that, though some distance intervened, he recognized him. They met at the bottom of the valley, and Smeaton asked eagerly,

"Well, what news? Have you brought me a letter?"

"I have brought your own back again, my Lord," replied Higham, holding it out to his master, as he rode up; "and no other answer could I get."

"No answer!" echoed Smeaton, taking the letter, and seeing that it had been opened. "What did he say, or cause to be said to you?"

"Oh, he said very little," replied the man, "and caused nothing to be said at all; for he seemed quite capable of speaking for himself, and that pretty sharply. He broke open the letter, read it through from beginning to end, and then thrust it into my hand, saying, 'You had better ride back again.' I asked if he would not send an answer by me, or if he would send one afterwards. But he said no answer was needed, and called out: 'Take it back to him who sent you. That is the only answer.'"

Smeaton's cheek burned, and his heart beat angrily.

"This is insult," he muttered. "This is insult as well as injury. Some day I may call him to account for it."

"I must say for him, my Lord," added the man, "that it was not a lucky moment to fall upon; for he was at the head of the men drawn up on the little green, and just ready to march."

"That is no excuse," said Smeaton. "The same number of words, the same amount of breath,

the same space of time, would have conveyed an honourable as a dishonourable reply. He might have said that he would write when he was at leisure, that he would see me if I would follow him, and that I might do so in safety. It would have cost no more time." Then, turning round his horse, with his heart all on fire, he asked himself: "Shall I stoop to be a beggar for simple justice? No, no. The case is very clear. They have made up their mind to drive every one they doubt into insurrection. They say, Those who are not for us are against us: They have chosen their part with regard to me. It is time that I should choose mine with regard to them."

He had ridden slowly as he went; but he returned at a gallop, though the rapid motion did not tend to calm his feelings. The farm-house where he had slept was vacant of its guests. Richard Newark, his servant, and all the Keanton men were gone; but they had left word that, if Smeaton returned and sought them, he would find them at a place called the Waterfalls. The Earl ordered the baggage-horse to be prepared directly, and, in the mean time, applied to the farmer for directions on the way after his party.

"I'll guide you, sir," replied the man. "There is something going on that I have an itching to have a hand in, and I think I'll pay some of the Newcastle keel-men for throwing me into the Tyne, in one of their brute frolics."

Smeaton gladly accepted his guidance, and, in about half an hour, they set out; the Earl riding a little in advance, and alone, while the stout farmer jogged on, conversing with the servant, Higham. They took their way through a more cultivated part of the country than that which Smeaton had passed in the morning; but they soon turned toward the hills again, and the farmer pointed out a piece of ground on the right, saying:

"That is Plainfield, my Lord."

Smeaton, however, was busy with his own thoughts, and made no inquiry, not knowing anything which should make Plainfield remarkable.[1] A few minutes afterwards, they began to ascend a somewhat steep hill, riding over the green turf; and, as they wound round it to lessen the sharpness of the ascent, the young nobleman caught sight of a small party of horse gathered together at the distance of about a mile. "There are our friends, I think," he said.

"Ay, my lord, I dare say they are," replied the farmer.

The words seemed insignificant enough; but they were spoken in a significant tone, and the servant, Tom Higham, gave a low laugh.

A rise in the ground, in another moment, hid the party they had seen; and, spurring quickly on, Smeaton soon came to the top of the height, whence a view of the country could be commanded for several miles. The prospect was very picturesque. The brown hill-side descended somewhat abruptly towards the more even country below, and was channelled by a sort of glen or ravine, through which leaped and tumbled a small mountain stream, fringed here and there with low trees and shrubs, but ever and anon glancing out under the eye, and catching the sunlight on its foam and spray.

Half way between the top of the hill and the head of this ravine was gathered together a party of men on horseback; not more than, if so many as, very frequently assembled on the most innocent occasions. In ordinary times, one would naturally have supposed that the little meeting consisted of a hunting party, or perhaps two or three dozen of gentlemen assembled to run their greyhounds. Besides those in this central situation, two or three small groups of horsemen were seen coming up from below at different degrees of speed, according to the steepness of the ascent; but still the whole number together might very well have formed a sporting party, only no dogs were to be seen. In the midst of the principal group, Smeaton's eye instantly picked out Richard Newark, who was mounted on a tall and remarkable white horse; and, riding quickly down towards him, he was soon by his side. The Keanton farmers, who were there assembled, greeted the approach of their young lord with a sort of half cheer, and one of them exclaimed aloud--"God bless your lordship! I thought you would not abandon us in time of need."

"What news from Lord Stair?" asked Richard, in a whisper.

"None," replied Smeaton, bitterly. "He sent back my letter, opened, but without reply."

"Then I must have been mistaken," said Richard Newark. "I thought that other hands must have been stirring your pottage for you, noble friend. Now, the case is clear enough. Old Hanover won't have you for the giving."

"I never intended to give myself to *him*," replied Smeaton. "Nothing should ever induce me to draw my sword *against* a prince who has been pushed from the succession to the throne on a false and ridiculous pretence. But, if they will force me to draw the sword *in his favour*, I cannot help it. They must be gratified. Who are all these?" And, as he spoke, he ran his eye over the rest of the persons present, who, gathered together in various knots, were regarding him with inquiring looks.

"Oh, you shall soon know them," returned Richard. "Common cause makes quick acquaintance. General Forster, here is my friend, the Earl of Eskdale--Lord Derwentwater, the Earl of Eskdale--Lord Widrington, the Earl of Eskdale."

"By my faith, we have more lords than soldiers," said the latter nobleman, with a laugh, "and more stout hearts and strong arms than weapons of war. It is to be hoped that supplies will flow in upon us somewhat rapidly."

"Come, come, my lord," said Forster, "you ought not to be the first to cry out, seeing that you have brought us the fewest men and the scantiest supply."

"Why, I only heard of the business last night," replied Lord Widrington, "and thought this was but a preliminary meeting. Doubtless, we shall have men enough, and weapons enough, too, when once it is known we are in arms."

"Doubtless, doubtless," said the Earl of Derwentwater, a young and handsome man, with a peculiarly prepossessing expression of countenance. "I am glad to see your lordship here," he continued, addressing Smeaton. "Your family have suffered much in the cause we all advocate, and I hope, by the success of our enterprise, you will recover what it lost--a success which, from the news we have just received, seems to be beyond doubt."

"Indeed!" said Smeaton. "May I ask what news that is?"

Derwentwater replied by detailing, in somewhat glowing language, and with a slight colouring from his own enthusiasm, all the first partial successes of the insurgents in Scotland. The greater part of the intelligence was merely confirmatory of the rumours which had reached Smeaton during the preceding day, that the Earl of Mar had taken Perth, that arms and ammunition had been seized at Burntisland, that the army of King James III. was daily increasing in numbers, that money was flowing in rapidly, and that, while the troops of the House of Hanover were in a very critical position at Stirling, Mar was preparing to force the passage of the Forth, and that the Western clans were menacing the rear of King George's army. It was added, that a great number of towns and districts of much importance had openly declared for the House of Stuart, and that King James had been proclaimed at Aberdeen, at Dunkeld, at Castle Gordon, at Brechin, at Montrose, at Dundee, and at Inverness, while the whole of Galloway and Dumfrieshire was stated to be flaming in insurrection.

Broad general facts, without the small circumstances which modify them, and sometimes affect their whole bearings, are very apt to produce the most erroneous conclusions; and, as Lord Derwentwater stated not, and, probably, knew not, the multitude of counterbalancing disadvantages under which the insurrectionary leaders lay, Smeaton naturally was led to look with a much more hopeful eye on the cause he had now determined to espouse.

His new acquaintance mentioned one important fact; namely, that the Duke of Argyle had taken command of the troops at Stirling. "But," added he, "with all his skill, he will have no easy task to prevent defeat, and, probably, surrender." He was not mistaken; for, had Mar possessed ordinary military knowledge and experience, there can be little doubt that the gallant nobleman opposed to him would have been forced to retreat, if retreat had been possible; but neither Derwentwater nor Lord Eskdale were at all personally aware that Mar was not a soldier, and the inconceivable folly of appointing a man totally destitute of military science to command an ill-disciplined army, in circumstances of the greatest delicacy and danger, did not once enter their imaginations. Nevertheless, the well-known skill, courage, and determination of Argyle, and the strong resolution he had shown in taking command in person of the small force at Stirling, led Smeaton to suspect that he either knew of circumstances, or calculated upon events, of which the Jacobite party in England were not at all aware.

It was too late now, however, he thought, to hesitate, even if his decision had depended upon the probabilities of success; and he joined the rest of the party in a hasty consultation, in which, from his want of all knowledge of the country round, he could give very little advice, except in regard to military matters, where he possessed more experience than any one present. Glad to have amongst them an officer of some skill, the noblemen and gentlemen present proceeded to an inspection of their little force, amounting, in all, at this time, to only sixty or seventy horse. Arms they literally had none, except the ordinary riding-swords used at that period in England (which were of little if any use in the field), and here and there a brace of pistols at the saddle-bow. It was evidently an insurrection hurried forward without thought or preparation.

Every man, however, knew of some place where people would come in, in numbers great, to the standard of King James; but Smeaton pointed out that the most pressing necessity was to arm those who were already collected. The first blow, he said, should be struck at any place where their local knowledge showed them that a store of the necessary weapons was to be procured; but no one knew where any such supply existed, except at Newcastle, which they were manifestly too feeble to attack. It was judged, therefore, needful to recruit their numbers even before they sought for arms; and those who were best acquainted with the district proposed that they should proceed to Rothbury and Warkworth, as the line in which recruits were most likely to come in.

Smeaton had nothing to object; and, forming into something like regular array, they rode from the place of meeting after a discussion which, though hurried and desultory, occupied several hours. The Northumbrian noblemen and gentlemen were full of hope and enthusiasm; but the young Earl, who had so unwillingly joined them, viewed the matter with less sanguine anticipations, and, from the expressions of his new companions, derived no very favourable idea of their capability of conducting a great enterprise to a successful conclusion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

What need I tell of the first proceedings of the small body of gentlemen whom we have seen set out on the path of insurrection? How they marched to Rothbury, and thence to hermit-loving Warkworth; how they received small reinforcements as they went along, and proclaimed King James the Third wherever they came; and how at Morpeth their numbers were increased to three hundred horse--are all facts well known to everybody. Neither need I pause to describe the disappointment and apprehension occasioned by the scantiness of the numbers which came in on each day's march, nor dwell upon the anxious consultations which took place night after night, when they still found themselves unprepared for any enterprise of importance.

All hope of successfully attacking Newcastle soon passed away, and only one event occurred to brighten the dark prospect before them--namely, the capture of Holy Island by one of their number, Lancelot Errington, a gentleman of ancient family long resident near Hexham. The very next tidings received, however, were to the effect that the small fort had been retaken by the troops from Berwick, and that Errington was wounded and a prisoner.

This was a bitter disappointment; for the least success in such perilous enterprises raises hope high, and often paves the way for other advantages. They flattered themselves that they only wanted some happy exploit to rouse the neighbouring gentry in their favour, to encourage the timid and confirm the wavering. But the disaster which followed this first gleam extinguished all such vain hopes, and the principal leaders met, the evening after the intelligence was received, to consult as to what was to be done.

They were bold and high-hearted men, though few of them brought skill, experience, or wisdom to the cause; and not one of them would listen to the course which, probably, some inward conviction told each of them was the only path of safety--namely, dispersing their followers, abandoning the enterprise, and making their submission. Yet what was to be done? All their expectations of a general rising were at an end; they had no infantry, nor weapons wherewith to arm infantry; troops were reported to be marching towards them from various quarters, and all they had to oppose to them was only three hundred horse!

Many a plan was proposed--many a course suggested--at their sad conference, till, at length, Smeaton, who had sat silent and thoughtful, with his head resting on his hand, looked up, saying:

"It seems to me, my lords and gentlemen, that there is but one thing to be done. With such scanty means as we can command, no great purpose can be effected. We cannot even undertake one of those trifling enterprises which, when successful, often change altogether the fortunes of such movements as these. We must have more men before we can do anything."

"Ay, but where are we to get them, my good lord?" asked Lord Widrington. "That is the question which puzzles us all."

"Thus," replied Smeaton, boldly. "We have certain intelligence that Lord Kenmure, the Earl of Nithsdale, and other noblemen and gentlemen, are in arms, just across the border, to the number, we are assured, of four or five hundred men. They have already undertaken several movements of importance; and, when joined by our small force, will be able to effect much more. The object of our own body, and of that under the noblemen I have mentioned, should be to unite as soon as possible, which can easily be done, either by our withdrawing at once from Northumberland, and joining Kenmure, or by that nobleman advancing to our support, and enabling us to undertake some enterprise of importance. Much can be done either in the north of England, or in the south of Scotland, by eight hundred men, which cannot even be thought of by three hundred, and my own opinion is, that we should march at daybreak to-morrow, to effect our junction with Viscount Kenmure; and, by giving force and vigour to the insurrection in the Lowlands, occupy the troops of the House of Hanover, and enable the Earl of Mar to profit fully by his advantageous position and the number of his forces."

This proposal, like every other proposal, in a meeting where there is no real subordination, called forth a long and rambling discussion, and a great variety of opinions. Every one saw the wisdom of joining the two streams of insurrection in one; but none agreed as to the mode in which it was to be effected. National prejudices and antipathies, engendered by long border warfare, were by no means extinct; and, although some few saw the prudence of Smeaton's suggestion of withdrawing from Northumberland and confining their operations, for the time, to the south of Scotland, others declared that many of their followers would abandon the cause, if such a retreat were attempted, and one gentleman boldly announced his belief that, in that case, they should not take fifty men across the border with them. This opinion prevailed, and it was

determined to negotiate with Lord Kenmure for the advance of his forces into England.

The next question was, who was to be the negotiator? No one present was personally acquainted with the Scottish nobleman--and, to say truth, few liked to undertake a task in which they might very naturally expect to meet with a repulse; for every one felt it to be but little likely that Kenmure would cross the border with his men, without some better inducements than they had in their power to hold out. At length, after a number of excuses had been given by various gentlemen in the room, for not undertaking the task, the Earl of Eskdale volunteered to be the person.

"I will endeavour," he said, "if you entrust me with the commission, to induce Lord Kenmure to join you, and will, of course, refrain from pointing out to him, whatever may be my own opinion, that it would be wiser for you to join him. However, I cannot use any arguments in opposition, if he should urge the latter course; but it will be better for General Forster to write to him by my hands, employing all those arguments which have been conclusive in his own mind."

Forster, however, was very unwilling to write, and only in the end consented to give such credentials to the young Earl as would show that he was authorised to treat by the whole party. Even these he would have postponed till the following morning, alleging various motives for delay; but Smeaton interrupted him somewhat impatiently, saying,

"There is no time to be lost, sir. The distance is considerable, if the forces of Lord Kenmure are at Moffat, as we have been informed. We are more than thirty miles from Wooler; and, whether I take the road by Coldstream or direct to Kelso, nearly two days must be consumed in my journey alone. Then will come the negotiation, which may be more tedious than we imagine, as well as the march of the troops hither. I shall, therefore, most decidedly set out to-night; and, if I might advise, you would, at all events, retire upon Rothbury, which is so far on the way to meet our friends from the north. If there is any delay, you may all be cut to pieces before they arrive to your support."

"Oh, we shall retire to Rothbury, of course," said Lord Derwentwater; "and the credentials can soon be prepared without much trouble to any one. If you are willing to set out so speedily, it must not be any act of ours that delays you."

"In half an hour I shall be ready," replied Smeaton, rising; "and, in the meantime, I trust that the paper will be drawn up."

It was a full hour, however, before he set out; and then, notwithstanding the entreaties of Van Noost to be allowed to accompany him, the young Earl departed, only attended by his servant.

The light was already failing rapidly; and, before many minutes had passed, night fell over his road. A little more than three hours brought him to Wooler, with tired horses and a somewhat anxious mind; for he felt all the importance of the mission he had undertaken, and the movement of troops in the neighbourhood of Berwick rendered it not at all improbable that he might be stopped upon the way. He found the little town of Wooler quiet and soldierless, however; and, as the hour was not late, he had no difficulty in procuring refreshment at the little inn for himself, his servant, and his horses.

Anxious to cross the border, beyond which the general feelings of the country people rendered the roads more safe to persons engaged in the Jacobite cause, he only gave himself an hour and a half's rest, and then set out again, taking the direct road to Kelso, which, though at that time steep and rugged enough, had great advantages over that by Coldstream, both in point of distance and of security; for he had learned at Wooler that a small party of horse had occupied the latter town during the morning. He was forced to proceed somewhat slowly, indeed; for his horses had been in exercise already during the early part of the day; and the wearisome twenty miles to Kelso occupied several hours.

The whole town, when he entered it, was profoundly still, and the inhabitants plunged in sleep. Not a solitary light was to be seen in any window; and the young nobleman had no means of knowing whether he might not rouse a lion instead of a lamb, if he attempted to wake any of the good citizens from their slumbers. In these circumstances, he resolved to push forward, notwithstanding the weariness of his horse, and trust for hospitality to the first small hamlet or cottage he could meet with. He reckoned without his host however; for, at that time, the country between Kelso and Hawick was much less thickly peopled than at present; and, after going some two miles farther, he was fain to turn the horses into a green meadow at the bottom of a valley, and seek shelter for himself and his servant beneath a loose stone wall.

The autumnal wind was blowing bleak and cold; but the beasts were better off than the men, for they soon found provender sufficient in the meadow, while their riders were left without food. Tom Higham groaned in the spirit as he sat, wrapped up in his cloak, shivering behind the wall; and Smeaton could hear him more than once muttering to himself--

"I am a mighty great fool. That is as clear as moonshine."

Perhaps the young nobleman thought the same of himself; but he bore his situation more patiently; and, shrouding himself from the cutting blast as well as he could, tried to obtain some sleep, as he had often done in other lands under similar circumstances.

It was in such lonely and darksome hours, when the mind was the most depressed, and action impossible, that the thought of Emmeline frequently presented itself to Smeaton. The remembrance was like an angel visit; for although many a melancholy and many an anxious train of ideas was awakened by the recollection of her and of her fate, yet there was something in the images then called up which left his mind calmed and even cheered. I believe it is a quality of high pure love to strengthen and to elevate, however adverse may be the circumstances. The images which now arose in his mind effectually banished sleep; and, when the grey daylight at length began to appear in the east, he was still waking, though his servant had been long buried in deep slumber. Smeaton rose at once, and, rousing the man, told him to catch the horses, and replace the saddles and bridles.

"Ay," cried Tom Higham, "we had better do that before any one comes and catches *us*; for the beasts have had a good feed at Sawney's expense, and a canny Scot is not a man to let us off scot free if he catches us."

"He shall not need," replied Smeaton, taking out his purse and putting down a couple of shillings on the top of the stone wall. "I trust he will find them; but if not, my conscience is free."

The horses gave them some trouble, for they were not at all willing to quit their comfortable pasture for the hard stony road; and just when the young nobleman had got his own beast by the forelock, he heard the voice of his man calling for help in lamentable accents. Turning round, he beheld good Master Higham in the grasp of a very tall stout man, in an ordinary farming dress; and, leading his horse up, he inquired what was the matter.

"I cannot understand what he means," cried Tom Higham; "but I know that he talks something about spearing me, or my spearing at him, though devil a spear there is amongst us."

Smeaton, however, more conversant, from his family connections, with the language of the country, was soon made to comprehend that the farmer, having seen two horses in his field from the window of his house, which lay hard by, though the darkness had previously concealed it, had come down in high wrath to repel an intrusion which, to say truth, was somewhat common at that time and in that part of the country.

"My good friend," replied the young nobleman, "we took refuge here in the night, neither very well knowing the way nor where to find shelter, and I certainly did not intend to go away without paying for the grass which the horses have taken."

"No that likely," replied the marl, doggedly. "If ye wanted shelter, why did na ye joost tirl at the pin up by, or gie a halloo under the window?"

"Because I did not know there was a window near," replied Smeaton, with a smile. "As to my intention of paying you, you can satisfy yourself; for, before I went to help my servant in catching the horses, I put a couple of shillings down on the top of the wall, which I thought must be sufficient for the grass they had eaten."

The cautious farmer let go his hold of Higham's neck; but, before he expressed himself satisfied or otherwise, walked straight to the wall and took up the money, which he speedily found. His countenance brightened at once, and the young Earl said to himself, with a somewhat cynical smile--"I wish my poor father's countrymen would not give so much cause for the imputation of greediness which their southern neighbours are so ready to throw upon them."

He was mistaken, however, in the present instance; for, as soon as he approached, the good farmer held out the money to him, saying--"Here, tak the siller. It was no for that I was a bit cankered wi' the wee body." And he went on to explain that it was the fact of the horses being put into the field without his leave which had roused his ire. "There's na that man leeving," he continued, "wha can say I ever grudged him a bit for himself or his beastie; but ye might hae found a better beild up by, if ye had just trotted on a bit."

Nothing would serve him now but he must give the two travellers some breakfast at what he called "his wee thack housie," which proved to be a very comfortable farm dwelling.

As information was one of the Earl's greatest wants, he readily accepted the invitation, much to the joy and satisfaction of Tom Higham, who soon contrived to catch his horse and follow his master and the farmer as they walked away out of the field and up the road. It was not easy to induce the latter to speak upon any dangerous subject. The moment that politics, or the state of the parties then existing, was mentioned, he curled himself like a hedgehog, to use Tom Higham's expression, and it was not till he had discovered that his less wary guest was going to Moffat for the purpose of seeing the Viscount Kenmure, that he at all unfolded himself. Then, indeed, he spoke more freely, but with a certain degree of caution still, as if not yet quite convinced that the English traveller was not trying to worm the secret of his political propensities out of him. He cared not for one King or the other, he said; no, not a bodle. He was a peaceable man, and they might fight it out amongst them; but, as for the Viscount Kenmure and "his handfu' of men," he had heard tell, but he would not warrant it, for he knew nothing of his own knowledge, that he was not at Moffat at all, but at the town of Hawick.

At the same time, as far as slight indications went, he seemed not to be ill-disposed to the cause of the House of Stuart. He took particular pains to direct Smeaton right on the road to

Hawick, and insisted upon feeding both the horses with something more solid than the grass which they had cropped during the night. Gradually, too, he relaxed a little in regard to intelligence, and informed the young nobleman that there was no force capable of opposing the march of the Jacobite forces within many miles. He added that he had heard at Kelso market that Kenmure had given the good folks of Dumfries a fright some days before, but that, finding the citizens better prepared than he had expected, he had retreated to Langholm, and thence to Hawick. As to the number of Kenmure's forces, he either could not or would not give any information; but it was at all events satisfactory to the young nobleman to find that his journey was greatly shortened; and, after having partaken of the worthy man's good cheer, he remounted, and set out upon his way.

A ride of a few hours brought him to Hawick; but he found that Kenmure had not thought fit to take up his quarters in the town itself, but had occupied a village at a few miles' distance, where his cavalry was less likely to be embarrassed in case of attack. Thither, then, the young nobleman pursued his journey, guided by a country lad on foot; for the directions he received were far too elaborate and confused to be easily comprehended.

In consequence of various delays, he did not come in sight of the village till towards three o'clock, and then but very few symptoms of anything like a numerous body of men were to be perceived. A sentry, if so he could be called, with a broadsword at his side and a pistol in his hand, was seen at the end of the long street of straggling irregular houses which constituted the village; and here and there, a person in the garb of a gentleman, booted and spurred, but with no other arms than his sword, was observed loitering about the doors. No precaution was taken on his entering the village, the sentry merely directing him, when he asked for the Lord Kenmure, to the minister's house near the kirk; and, wending his way through heaps of filth and cabbage stalks, which occupied a certain space before every house, and rendered the road well nigh impassable for any vehicle on wheels, he at length reached the entrance of the manse, before which stood a similar figure to that which kept sentry at the commencement of the village. The approach of a couple of horsemen had caused a little commotion in the place; and two or three heads were thrust from the windows as Smeaton rode up, but he was admitted to the room in which the Viscount sat, without any delay, and presented to him the brief note he bore from Mr. Forster.

A long deliberation ensued, in the course of which many questions were asked by the Scottish nobleman. Smeaton told him the exact truth in regard to the numbers and position of the little insurgent force in Northumberland, adding that they had heard that the Lord Kenmure's troop amounted to five hundred men.

"I wish it did," replied the Viscount, with a somewhat cold laugh. "I think if that had been the case, my Lord, you would have had to come on to Dumfries. No, no. I will deal honestly by you, as you have dealt by me. If you are a handful, we are less. We do not number more than one half the force you say General Forster has with him."

"Then the more need of your immediate union," observed the young Earl.

"Ay, but it would have been better for him to come to me than for me to go to him," responded Kenmure. "Something might have been done here; but I gather from what you say, my noble friend, that little is to be done on the other side of the border; and every step I take in that direction draws me farther from my resources and from all chance of support, of which we have good hope from the north."

"It is too late now, I fear, my Lord," said Smeaton, "to consider such objections. Perhaps the course you mention might have been wisest. Here are two small parties, engaged in the same cause, but separate from each other, with considerable bodies of the enemy's troops hovering round them. If you continue in this state of isolation, at fifty or sixty miles distance, you are liable at any moment to be cut up in detail, without the power of aiding each other, and probably before your succour from the north can arrive. Allow me to urge that it would be very much better for you to march without delay to join the gentlemen in Northumberland. You will then have a force of about five hundred men united, with which you can show a firm face to the enemy, even if you cannot undertake any great enterprise; and, should it be judged necessary after consultation with General Forster, you can fall back upon your resources here, and make good any well-chosen position till you are reinforced."

"Well, well," replied Lord Kenmure, "I must consult with my friends here before we can decide; but, in the mean time, I must care for your accommodation during the night. We have crammed the manse as full as it can hold already; and I fear you will have but poor accommodation.--Some one be good enough to call Quartermaster Calderwood."

This was accordingly done; and, after a short consultation between that personage and Lord Kenmure, the young Earl was placed in his hands, to be conducted to the only quarters which could be assigned to him, and left the manse somewhat doubtful as to the result of the consultation which was about to commence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Darkness was rapidly descending, when the Earl of Eskdale, guided by Quartermaster Calderwood, entered the little street of the hamlet. They found Tom Higham amusing himself with talking nonsense in a strong London jargon to some Scotch lads assembled round the door, who hardly understood what he said, and whose own language was well nigh incomprehensible to him. His master beckoned him to follow with the horses, and was led to the very outskirts of the village, where a small cottage appeared, in no very good state of preservation, and quite separated from the rest of the hamlet, being situated in the midst of its own garden or kail-yard.

"This is the only place I can assign to your Lordship," said Calderwood, as they approached; "and I fear you must share it with another gentleman who joined us this afternoon from France. There is room, however, for two; and I must dispose of the servants elsewhere."

"I am in no way nice, Quartermaster," replied Smeaton. "I have been too much accustomed to a life in arms to mind sleeping under that wall, should it be necessary."

"Ah, my Lord, I am glad to hear it," replied Calderwood. "We are sadly in want of a few men of experience amongst us."

The ordinary reflection passed through Smeaton's mind, that the more men are wanting in experience themselves, the less are they inclined to profit by the experience of others; but he forbore reply; and Calderwood opened the door. No passage, no internal door, shut the single room in the lower part of the house from the external air; and, on entering, Smeaton found himself at once in a large apartment, tenanted by four persons. One was in the garb of a servant; two others seemed to be the master of the tenement and his wife, a sandy-haired man and a black-haired woman of about forty years of age; and these three were bustling about, apparently preparing for the evening meal. The fourth person was seated before a blazing fire on the north side of the cottage. He was tall, stout, and apparently well dressed; but the last gleam of day being on the point of extinction, no candles lighted, and a considerable quantity of smoke in the room, not much could be discerned of his figure by the flickering flame of the fire.

Mr. Calderwood spoke a few words to him, explaining the necessity under which Lord Kenmure lay of quartering another gentleman in the same tenement. The stranger immediately rose, with some polite expression of pleasure, and, while the good woman of the house lighted a solitary candle, advanced to meet the new corner.

The presence of the stranger was dignified and easy, his figure fine, and his face, if not altogether handsome or pleasing, striking and remarkable. He had much the air of a military man; and his profession, or his propensities, seemed indicated by a deep and somewhat recent scar upon his brow.

The moment he saw Smeaton, his face flushed either with pleasure or some other emotion; and the young nobleman, after gazing at him for a moment, as if partly recognising him and partly doubting his own eyes, held out his hand, saying:

"This is an unexpected pleasure."

The stranger took his offered hand and shook it hard, but with a peculiar look, not the most cordial. Putting his face close to Smeaton's ear, he said--

"Call me Somerville. My name is Somerville here."

Smeaton quietly inclined his head, saying:

"I believed you were in very distant lands, Mr. Somerville. When did you return to Europe?"

"Three or four months ago," replied his companion. "I have been wandering about in France since.--Now, my good woman, will my supper never be ready? Come, bestir yourself, and add something to it for this gentleman, who is doubtless as hungry as I am."

There was evidently a feeling of restraint upon him as he spoke, which he endeavoured in vain to cover by an affectation of ease and carelessness; and the moment he had addressed this adjuration to the woman of the house, he fell into a fit of thought, without at all attending to her grumbling reply.

Smeaton was also thoughtful; but he did not lose his ease and calmness; and, by a few good-humoured words, soon induced their hostess to hurry herself somewhat more than she had been doing previously.

I might give a long detail of all the little events which took place during the next hour, and

relate how Smeaton's servant, and the servant of the gentleman calling himself Somerville, were provided with quarters elsewhere; how a bare-legged damsel, with all the beauty of youth and health, a clear complexion, and large bleak eyes, came in to borrow a pot, and was not suffered to depart without many gallant compliments and a half-resisted kiss from Mr. Somerville; and how two pretty children, with very scanty clothing, from a neighbouring cottage, stood leaning upon each other, and watched the strange gentlemen who had come, while they enjoyed the meal prepared for them. But I must pass over all such minute facts, and bring the reader at once to the moment when, after having concluded their supper, Smeaton and his companion were alone together, the host and hostess having retired to their early rest, leaving the two gentlemen with a large jug of whiskey on the table and a kettle of hot water on the fire.

More than once during the earlier part of the meal, Somerville had given a momentary glance at his companion's face from under his heavy eyebrows, but withdrawn it as soon as he perceived that Smeaton's eyes were directed towards him. He meditated much, and often too; and, as I have said, there was an uneasy air about him which surprised his comrade for the time; for, when he had known him slightly some years before, he was famous for that easy daring impudence which was much affected in all countries by the class called men of wit and pleasure.

When they were left alone together, however, Smeaton at once changed the tone of the conversation, saying:

"Well, now we are without witnesses, we may speak of more interesting matters, Newark. When did you return from South America? I heard with great surprise, when I was at Nancy, that you had determined to turn merchant, and had taken some *nom-de-guerre*."

"Ay, a merchant *adventurer*," retorted the other, laying great stress upon the last word. "But it was more in the latter than the former character that I went, my good Lord. I have been back, as I told you, about three months, after having gilded my purse with a few ducats in the new world, let the Dons' blood when they were in danger of calenture from too much heat, and basked in the sweet smiles of the olive-brown dames of Peru and Mexico. I got tired of that, as of everything else in this wearisome world; and, hearing that stirring times were coming in this quarter, I thought I might as well return and stake a trifle--such as life and fortune--upon the game that is to be played, in the hope of recovering, somehow or another, a portion of what I and mine have lost."

"Did you see your uncle and aunt when you were in France?" asked Smeaton, fixing his eyes steadily upon him.

"No," replied the other, in a careless tone. "The good Lord, my uncle, is somewhat worse than senile, having fallen into a decrepitude of temper as well as of mind and body. He has turned himself into a corn-merchant, too, which does not suit my notions of propriety; and, as he never appreciated my high qualities and good points, I did not think it worth while to trouble him with my presence."

"I know you never agreed," remarked Smeaton; "and of course it is not for me to say which was in the right--"

"Meaning that I was in the wrong," said the other, with a laugh.

But Smeaton continued, as if he had not been interrupted, saying:

"You do not do him justice when you talk of senility. His mind is as clear and strong as ever, and his bodily frame but little shaken by the passing of years. I have had every opportunity of judging, having passed some weeks with himself and Lady Newark before I came to England."

"Ah! is he so strong in virtue and in muscles?" exclaimed the other, with a bitter laugh. "Heaven receive him to the place of saints, and that right speedily!"

"Nay, nay," said Smeaton. "I am sure, Newark, that wish is more upon your lips than in your heart."

"It is not, by ----," cried the other, with a fierce oath. "I should then be Lord Newark, at all events; and, as to ever getting back the lands as well as the lordship, that would be as the stars willed it, and they have always been kinder to me than he."

"I do not think you ever judged him fairly," said Smeaton, gravely. "He was certainly very kind to you in early life, and strained his small means to afford you a high education along with his two poor sons; but--"

"But I was what old women call wild, you would say," cried the other, who seemed to have a great habit of interrupting. "Well, I *was* wild, and scoffed a little at the doctrines and notions of elderly gentlewomen of both sexes, liking much better the doctrines of younger ladies, and occasionally quarrelled with gentlemen and soldiers who entertained heretical notions as to my right and liberties in certain cases. But what of that? I was none the worse for that. No, no, Eskdale. The head and front of my offence was his own weakness, folly, or treachery, in suffering his daughter to remain in the hands of the knave, John Newark."

"How could he help it?" asked Smeaton. "His life was not worth an hour's purchase if he ventured into England; and there was no one in this island on whom he could rely to take her from the sort of imprisonment in which she was kept, and replace her under her father's care. Doubt not, he would willingly have done it, had it been possible."

"Why did he not rely on me?" retorted the other, vehemently. "I would have released her, and brought her safely to France. I offered to do it--I had everything prepared; but he would not hear of it."

Ho muttered something to himself which Smeaton did not clearly hear, and then went on aloud--

"He made me appear like a vain boaster in the eyes of a dozen people. I told sweet John Newark that I would take away the girl from him, and cut his throat in the house where he has ensconced himself so snugly. I will do it too, before I have done with him."

"You must get him out of the Tower first," replied Smeaton; "for he is safely lodged there by this time."

"Ha!" exclaimed the other, laughing aloud. "A bagged fox! But come now," he continued, in a gayer tone; "what report do you make of that fair west countrie which I hear you have been visiting lately? Was Sir John flourishing when you were there? And what adventures did you meet with?"

"Sir John was quite well, and apparently prosperous," replied Smeaton; "that is to say, till the very day I came away, on the morning of which he was apprehended, and sent, I imagine, to the Tower. As to adventures, I met with few, and those not much worth relating."

He paused for a moment, asking himself if he should say more; but the other again went on, inquiring--

"What of the lady, what of the fair lady, sweet Mistress Emmeline? Is she as beautiful as I hear?"

"She is very beautiful and very amiable," replied Smeaton.

"And the son, Sir John Newark's son?" demanded the other. "They say his father intends to marry him to Emmeline, in the hope of securing his title to the estates, under all circumstances, and obtaining the title of Baron Newark, whatever party is in power. Did you hear anything of all this?"

"Nothing," replied Smeaton, thoughtfully. "From the character of the man, indeed," he continued, "such a scheme is not unlikely; but I do not think there could be any idea of carrying it immediately into execution. Richard Newark is a mere boy, some years younger than Emmeline herself. When first I saw him in London, he was rude, wild, and strange; but he has wonderfully improved, both in intellect and manners, in the troublous scenes we have gone through; and, though he will ever be eccentric, and very different from other persons, yet there are high and good qualities in him which make me love and esteem him much."

"Is he with his father in London?" asked the other, quietly.

"No," replied Smeaton. "He came with me into Northumberland to join the Northumbrian gentlemen now in arms; and, if Lord Kenmure agrees to the proposal which I have brought him this evening for a union of the two forces, you will see him in a day or two. In that case," he continued, gravely, almost sternly, "I must request you to treat him with all kindness, remembering that his father's faults are not his, and that he is under my protection."

The other laughed, though the hint galled him a little.

"Oh, certainly," he replied. "Your high and mighty protection, Lord Eskdale, will not be needed against me. I am not going to quarrel with a boy, nor to cut his throat because his father's ought to have been cut long ago. So there was no need of any threat."

"I used no threat indeed, Newark," said the Earl; "but, knowing you are of a quick and impetuous temper, merely suggested considerations which I thought would enable you to control it."

"Ay, right good," returned the other; "but there is no fear. I am not quarrelsome now-a-days, Heaven knows, or there is many a man I might quarrel with, without seeking out a boy for the purpose. But what, in this rout and dispersion, has become of fair Emmeline herself? Have you brought her too with you into Northumberland?"

"No indeed," replied the young Earl. "Sir John has taken her to London with him."

"Damnation!" muttered the other. "Why," he added, after an effort to control himself, "if he had left her behind at Ale, nothing would have been so easy as to get her off to France."

"But he did not so leave her," replied Smeaton, calmly. "And now, Newark, I will go and lie

down in the room they showed me; for I have ridden hard and far, and passed last night under a stone wall. I must be up early, too, in the morning; for these noble lords here must come to a speedy decision; and that decision must be communicated at once to General Forster."

"Well, I shall stay here and make some way in the flagon," said the other. "Though this stuff, which is just the same as they call usquebagh in Ireland, is little better than molten fire, yet I feel that my blood wants a little warming in this accursed cold country."

"Your blood was always hot enough," observed Smeaton, moving towards the end of the stairs; "and that spirit is too strong for me. So good night, Newark." And he retired to rest.

The other remained for two hours or more, till the candle had nearly burnt into the socket. During that time, however, he drank little, but was absorbed in deep meditation, chequered apparently by many various feelings; for now he laughed, and now he looked stern and fierce.

"He did not recognise me," he muttered. "That is clear. No, not even by the mark he put upon my forehead. He shall pay that debt; but not just now. I can wait, and the interest will accumulate. We may make something of this," he again muttered, after a long pause. "We may make something of this. Let me see. John in prison on a charge of high treason; William marries the heiress, and then--what then? Why, services to the House of Hanover; one slight whirl of the weather-cock, and all is safe, especially if one could bring some intelligence with one. A Newark on the side of Hanover! That seems a strange figure of speech. One starts at it. Why should I care for whom I draw my sword? What have the Stuarts done for me? Ah! ha! ha! Doubtless, there will be plenty to keep me in countenance."

Thus saying, he rose, and retired also to rest.

Before daybreak, on the following morning, the young Earl was up and dressed, and the sky was still grey, when a messenger from Lord Kenmure reached him, requesting his presence at that nobleman's head-quarters. He found everything in bustle and activity, and he could see at once that a resolution was taken.

"We have just come to a sudden determination, my lord," said Kenmure, when Smeaton entered. "We find that Brigadier Macintosh, instead of advancing at once, after passing the Frith of Forth, has marched towards Edinburgh. He writes word, however, that he will join us shortly with his infantry, if we can maintain ourselves for a few days in the south, and gather together a body of cavalry. We have, therefore, resolved to advance as far as Rothbury to effect our junction with General Forster. It will then be necessary to retire across the border, and take measures for keeping up our communication with Macintosh. We shall consequently be your companions, instead of your followers, on the march."

In an hour from that time the troop was mounted, and on its way; but, when in full array, its numbers and its equipment were inferior even to the young Earl's expectations.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was on the evening of the brightest day which had shone for the last fortnight, when the Earl of Eskdale, accompanied by Mr. William Newark, under the name of Somerville, and followed by their two servants, rode into the small town of Rothbury. They found the place all gay and busy, the news of the advance of Lord Kenmure having reached it some hours before, and spread joy and expectation amongst the disheartened gentlemen of Northumberland. Half-a-dozen times, in riding through the little street, the young nobleman was stopped to inquire how far distant was the Scottish force; and his reply of "Half a day's march" seemed to give universal satisfaction.

One of the readiest to accost him was Van Noost, who, after having received his answer to the first question, ran on by the side of the Earl's horse, telling him, with great pride and satisfaction, that he had taken upon himself the duty of engineer and armourer that he had repaired and polished innumerable guns and pistols, and cast some thousands of bullets for the service of the forces.

"Your Lordship's quarters are quite ready for you, too," he cried. "I have taken care of that. All the Keanton men are lodged together in those two white houses; and in the one on this side is a capital apartment for you, next to the quarters of Master Richard. By the way," he continued, "a boy has arrived from Ale Manor with a large packet for you, which should have come to hand six days ago; but the poor lad has had to hunt us all over the country; and it is wonderful how he has escaped the enemy; for he has been in the very heart of General Carpenter's dragoons at

Newcastle, and brought us intelligence of all his doings."

A few steps more took them to the house which Van Noost had pointed out; and Richard Newark came down to the door to meet his noble friend. He greeted him with every mark of joy and satisfaction; but glanced his eye, from time to time, towards Smeaton's companion with a look of inquiry and distrust. He rambled on, indeed, in his usual way, saying, as the Earl dismounted and gave directions regarding the horses and the servants:

"Well, Eskdale, so you have brought us the Scots. Now there is hope of doing something; for all this marching and countermarching is poor stuff; and I have felt like one out of a flock of sheep, driven hither and thither by the shepherd's dog. The man does not hear me. The Scotch wind has blown away his hearing. Eskdale, I say, there is a large packet come for you from Ale, addressed to you in Madame Culpepper's own peculiar cipher. I had a thousand minds to break it open; for I longed for news, and I am sure there must be some for me. But a seal--I don't like fingering a seal. Strange that a little bit of red resin, under the effect of our prejudices, should be stronger than an iron box!"

Smeaton shook him warmly by the hand, and, requesting his companion of the march to follow, entered the house with his young friend, who asked, in a low voice--

"Who have you got there? His face does not please me."

"It is, nevertheless, the face of a relation of yours," replied Smeaton. "I will introduce him to you as soon as we are alone; but let me see this packet. It may contain news of importance."

At the top of the first flight of steps were two good rooms, one of which, on the right hand, was retained for the use of the young nobleman; and here he found the packet which had been mentioned. Breaking it open at once, he perceived that it contained two letters for himself, and two for Richard Newark. Giving the latter instantly to his young friend, he invited Somerville to seat himself before he opened the letters which bore his own address, although one of them, in a small delicate hand--more like that of a lady in the present day than one of those times--seemed too precious to be long delayed. As soon as he had shown this piece of attention to his guest, he retreated into the window, and eagerly broke the seal of the letter addressed as I have mentioned. He was not deceived. Emmeline's name was at the bottom of the lines that were written upon the page; and, with a beating heart, he read words which might well have come from a more experienced mind or a less tender and affectionate heart. Yet love and tenderness were evident throughout, as the contents may show.

"My beloved Husband,--I snatch a moment and an opportunity to write to you, knowing what you must feel, but not knowing what you are doing. Anxious as I am to hear where you are, and all that you can tell me of your proceedings, I fondly believe that you are more anxious still to hear of your Emmeline. I am in London, in a small lodging near the Tower, at number thirty-two, in Tower Street, surrounded by the servants of my cousin, Sir John Newark, and, as he believes, cut off from all communication with other persons by their means. Amongst them, however, is one planed there by her who has befriended us at Ale Manor, and who has found means to assure me that he is devoted alone to my service. He will contrive to convey this to Devonshire. The time allowed me is but short.

"And now, what shall I say to you, my dear husband? I need not speak of love and gratitude. I need not tell you how my whole heart is devoted to you. I need not say how earnestly I wish it were possible for you to come yourself, and either claim me as your own in the face of all the world, or take me home in secret to spend my life with you in quiet retirement and content. But I must beseech you on no account to venture near this city, unless you can do so in perfect safety; to sacrifice for Emmeline no security, to run no risk, and above all, not to let affection for her--that eagerness to see her which I am sure you feel--nor the indignation which you must experience at the conduct you have met with, induce you to take any part in the struggle for the crown of these realms, which your own calm and ever just judgment does not warrant. I am sure you will not, and yet I write these words because I feel that it will be a comfort to you to know that Emmeline has no selfish wish to be gratified at your expense. Consult your own honour; consult your own dignity. Think of her; love her for ever, but do not let one thought of her, one feeling for her, influence you in circumstances where duty and honour are concerned, knowing that your honour is far dearer to her than her own happiness or her own life.

"Oh, how I long to see you! How I long to tell you, dear Henry, all I have suffered, all I have thought, all I have felt--to pour out my whole soul and heart to him who has alone seen and known them. But let not my longing have the least weight with you. Act as if I had never existed, or as if you had never known me; but let the memory of your Emmeline be as the miniature-portrait of one well loved, ever nearest to your heart, and think, whenever you think of her, that she is blessing you, and praying for you, and beseeching Heaven to guide, preserve, and prosper you in whatever course your own wisdom and God's grace shall lead you.

"I know not how to end my letter. The words seem so strange that I have to write; and yet I am--I feel--I know I am--

"Your affectionate and dutiful wife,

"EMMELINE ESKDALE."

Smeaton, with all his warm and strong enthusiasm was not a man of that soft and melting character which tender feelings, and what was then called "sentiment," easily moved to tears. In those days, and for nearly a century afterwards, there was what I may call a lachrymose school, which was weeping on every occasion where anything touching presented itself or could be found. He was not of this school, and hardly knew of its existence; yet the words of his dear and beautiful Emmeline brought the moisture into his eyes, and he turned to the window that no one might mark what he considered a weakness.

The other letter contained merely a few lines from Mrs. Culpepper; but they were not of much significance, merely informing him that Sir John Newark was lodged in the Tower to await trial, that the accompanying epistle had come from the Lady Emmeline, together with the letters addressed to Mr. Richard Newark, and that she herself, Mrs. Culpepper, was most anxious to hear of his proceedings, pointing out at the same time the boy who brought the letters as one, whose wit and conduct justified the fullest confidence.

In the mean while, Richard Newark had opened the two letters addressed to himself, which were both in his father's hand, and had been written evidently under the idea that they might be opened and read before they were forwarded. The first was dated Exeter, and contained but a few lines, which were to the following effect:

"My dear son,--I beseech you, as soon as you receive these, to set out and join me without any delay. Should I be removed from Exeter before your arrival, you will easily gain intelligence of where I am, along the road. Follow quick, and delay not, as you value the love of

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN NEWARK."

The second letter was more in detail, and in not so mild a tone. It told the young gentleman that his father was detained a prisoner in the Tower, that his cousin Emmeline was lodging in the neighbourhood, desiring an opportunity of serving her uncle and guardian, and that she required protection and assistance in her desolate and solitary course. Sir John then went on to say, clearly with a view of conveying his complete submission and attachment to the government, that he had heard, with great pain, a rumour that his son had taken part with those who were attempting to subvert the existing government, and establish the sway of *the Pretender*, and he went on to command him, on his duty to his father, to separate himself from all such rash and disloyal persons, and immediately make the best of his way to London, taking up his abode in the house which had been engaged for his cousin Emmeline.

Richard Newark concluded the reading of his letters with one of his wild laughs, and then turned his look to Smeaton, who was still standing in the window, with his eyes fixed upon the lines he had received from Emmeline.

"Well, noble Earl," said the lad, "what news have you?"

Smeaton beckoned him up, and, with a sudden determination, put Emmeline's letter in his hand.

Richard Newark started at the first words, and his cheek became somewhat pale. For the moment he went no farther, but laid his finger on the line--"My beloved husband." He said nothing; but his look was a question, and Smeaton answered--"Even so, Richard." At the same time, he slightly raised his finger and looked towards the other side of the room, where Somerville, or William Newark, was seated, fondling the hilt of his sword, and observing everything while he affected to observe nothing. Richard caught Smeaton's hand in his own, and wrung it hard, saying, in a low voice:

"I am sorry I have dragged you into this thing. You should have gone after her. You can go even now."

"Impossible, Richard," replied Smeaton, in the same low tone; "but *you* can, and you must. My station, my age, my name, my family, all forbid me to quit this cause when I have once embarked in it. Such is not the case with you. Emmeline requires protection, assistance, and support. To you I trust her in the fullest and most implicit confidence, and I beseech you to fly to her and to give her that aid which I cannot--I must not--attempt to afford."

"No, no," cried Richard, aloud, with a laugh, "no, no!" And then, suddenly breaking off, he exclaimed: "But you promised to introduce me to a relation, noble Earl. Confer the favour, I

beseech you. I am poor in such things. I have but one father and a cousin in my purse; and I am avaricious of more wealth."

Smeaton put away his letters, and introduced his young companion to William Newark, begging Richard to get hold of their Quartermaster and find good quarters for their visitor.

Richard suffered his cousin to shake him by the hand, but eyed him still like a shy fiery horse, glancing askance at the approach of an unskilful rider. The other, however, was all ease and self-possession, rejoiced exceedingly, as he said, to see his young cousin, spoke with expressions of regret of Sir John's confinement in the Tower, and cursed the chance which deprived the cause of so strong an arm and so skilful a head.

He then began to talk of his quarters, and Richard led him away to seek them with an air which he seemed to think very satisfactory, but which Smeaton, who knew the lad better, judged to be anything but an indication of amicable feelings towards his newfound friend. The young nobleman's thoughts, however, were soon engrossed in other matters; for Emmeline's letter reawakened many a pleasant, many a painful train of reflections, and he gave himself up to memories for more than half an hour, before he turned his steps towards the quarters of General Forster.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It is wonderful how rapidly Somerville, as he called himself, gained to all appearance upon the good opinion of his young cousin. They became quite intimate. Richard found out for him a very comfortable room, sat and talked gaily with him for more than an hour, and then left him with a promise to come and sup with him *tête-à-tête* that night, that they might talk over matters of family interest.

Quarters had not been procured for William Newark too soon; for hardly an hour had passed ere a troop of some seventy men entered the town, headed by a person named Douglas, whom good old Mr. Robert Patten terms a gentleman, but who, nevertheless, followed the ancient and honourable occupation of horse-stealing upon the border. In the bustle and confusion which attended the congregation of a body of between three and four hundred men, most of them calling themselves gentlemen, in the small town of Rothbury--little farther communication took place between Richard Newark and the Earl of Eskdale. They met once, and Smeaton thought fit to give his young friend a hint in regard to the character of his cousin.

"He was always wild, rash, and intemperate," he said, "yet with a great deal of shrewdness, which deprived him, of one excuse for the commission of follies. He cannot be said to have committed any from mere thoughtlessness, and I do not think that your father feels at all well disposed towards him."

"Doubtless," replied Richard; "nor do I. I don't like that cut upon his forehead. It is an ugly gash, resembling the one you gave the fellow at the back of Ale Head, when they were carrying away Emmy. It is quite as well to mark a friend that we may know him again. I don't think your handwriting on that fellow's head can be mistaken."

"You let in light upon me," said Smeaton, gravely; "and, if your suspicion is correct, I think him more than ever to be avoided."

"To be watched, noble friend--to be watched," returned Richard, with a laugh.

"I am the best watchman in the world. I recollect waiting three hours without moving hand or foot--I don't think I winked an eye--watching with my cross-bow for a hare, till Miss Puss came out, hopping, on her hind legs, with her ears up and her whiskers wagging, and I hit my mark. People call me wild and foolish; but I can always watch and make something of it--and I *will* watch now."

The concluding words were said with peculiar emphasis, and the moment he had uttered them, he turned away and plunged into a little crowd which had gathered round the last comers.

It was night when the two cousins sat down to their supper together which William Newark had taken care to make as good and plentiful as the circumstances would permit. He had even contrived--Heaven knows how--to get two or three flagons of tolerable wine; but he did not show at first any inclination to drink deep, and began the conversation with topics very different from those which chiefly occupied his thoughts.

"Our numbers are swelling," he said, as soon as the servants had put the food upon the table and retired. "That was a large troop which came in this morning, and I saw a whole crowd of foot mounting the white cockade."

"Oh, yes," replied Richard Newark. "The horse were a goodly body; thieves, sheep-stealers, smugglers, cattle-lifters, all well to do in the world, and expert in their professions. Take care of your purse, cousin of mine, if you have got one, for transfer is easy amongst gentlemen of that class. As for the infantry, poor men, they only come in for disappointment. It is wonderful how much more zeal than discretion there is in infantry. If soldiers were only things to be fired at and not to fire again, we should have had one of the best-equipped armies of infantry in the world by this time. Thousands have come in with a sweet petition for arms; and, though they have been daily sent away with the assurance that we have no arms to give them, they still march in, offering their services."

"I should think arms would be easily procured from your western side of the country," observed Somerville. "You are so near the coast of France, and have such excellent places for landing them."

"Ale Bay, for instance," added Richard, with a sharp look, and then a laugh. "Ay, but the worst of it is, Cousin Bill, that the people at Ale are always watching for something or another; and he would be a cunning man who could land without being caught. My father knows that, or he would not have lived there so long."

"Ay, he cannot choose where he lives now, poor fellow," responded William Newark; "but I should think he would be somewhat uneasy at leaving our fair cousin, Emily, there. Take some wine, Richard."

"Emmeline, Emmeline," cried Richard, pouring out for himself some wine, "not Emily; how ignorant you are! But he is not at all uneasy about leaving her there, because he has taken her with him." And he laughed quite like a fool.

"Taken her to the Tower!" exclaimed his cousin. "I did not know they would receive a prisoner's family with him."

"Nor I either," replied Richard; "but they have not received her; she lives near with the servants and people, and my father took her to keep her out of harm's way. I have often heard him say that, if he had anything he wished to keep secret and snug, London was the place for the purpose. Now Emmeline is just in that case, and therefore you see he acts upon principle. Oh, he has a head, has he not? The Hanover people won't get it off so easily as they imagine; for he knows how to take care of it, as well as how to use it."

"Ay, doubtless," said the other. "And so the lady lives near the Tower, does she?"

"In good sooth," answered Richard, in somewhat of a mocking tone. "But what matters that to you, cousin of mine? It is a long way from this place to London. If you had a telescope, you could not see her."

"That would depend upon its strength," replied William Newark, "although, as I know not rightly where she lives, I could not well point it. In what street does she dwell? I know London thoroughly."

He spoke in an easy indifferent tone, judging that the lad would readily betray the place of Emmeline's abode, and making no allowance whatever for that shrewdness which is often joined to great simplicity.

"Oh, Heaven knows," replied Dick. "It is in some street, and the street has got a name; but what that name is has passed from my noddle these six hours, and the letters, as in duty bound, I put into the fire."

"Ha! you have had letters, have you?" exclaimed his cousin. "Who were they from, and what news did they give you?"

"They were from my father," replied Richard, "and gave me no news whatever, but merely commanded me to leave off soldiering, and go to London directly."

William Newark paused, and meditated for a moment or two, while Richard watched his countenance, keenly and searchingly, but with no more appearance of interest than if he had been marking the progress of a shadow on the wall. He saw a variation in the expression of his cousin's face; and, in truth, a total change had come over his plans. But Richard said nothing, quietly leaving the other to develope his own purposes.

"Do you know, Richard," said William Newark, at length, "I think your father is very much in the right in ordering you to join him in London, both on your account and his own. Your staying here in arms might damage him very much, and even bring his head to the block."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Richard. "What! cut off the father's head for the son's fault? That is reversing the line of succession, I think, and is neither heraldry nor justice."

"It sometimes happens, however," answered his cousin; "and the people will naturally say, that you would never have joined the insurrection, being so young, if your father had not prepared you to do so. Therefore, if you love your father, and would save his life, you had better do as he bids you; I might say, indeed, if you love yourself, and would save your own life, you would do so."

"I don't much care about my life," replied Dick; "but I have some small notion of honour."

"There is no honour to be got here," replied the other. "I am a man of honour too, and would cut any man's throat who said I was not; but I intend to leave these people, and that very speedily. Between you and me, Dick, there is neither honour, profit, nor safety to be had here. This insurrection will not succeed. Here are two generals with mighty armies of three or four hundred men, and neither the Englishman nor the Scotchman has the slightest knowledge of military matters. Kenmure and Forster are two quiet country gentlemen, who never saw a shotted cannon fired in their lives. They will get all who follow them into some horrid scrape, where you will be able to do nothing but hold out your hands for the king's troops to come and tie them. There will be disgrace, and ruin, and punishment. If there was a chance--if their own folly in appointing incapable country gentlemen to command in military operations did not deprive the cause of all likelihood--if we were going to fight like men instead of being trapped like sparrows, which will certainly be the end of it--I would let no danger daunt me. But as it is, Dick, I fairly tell you I shall march for London. You may do as you like."

His cousin's words were evidently not palatable to Richard Newark, who sat gloomy and silent for a minute or two, with his eyes bent upon the table, saying nothing, till his Cousin exclaimed, with a laugh--"Come, take some wine, Dick. It will cheer you."

"No," replied Richard, and pushed the flagon from him. At length he went on, setting his teeth hard--"Well, I will go. I can do them little good, and can be of more service to true-hearted folks there than here. I will go, cousin of mine. When do you set out?"

"Early to-morrow," replied William Newark. "I don't think it needful to tell Kenmure or Forster that, having been accustomed to serve under generals, I do not like to be commanded by bumpkins. I can write all those sweet things afterwards."

"I must tell Eskdale, however," said Richard Newark. "I cannot leave him without explanation."

"Take my advice, and do not say a word," answered his cousin. "He will only try to persuade you to remain by arguments you should not listen to."

"Not he," cried Richard Newark, with a scoff. "All his arguments go the other way. He has never ceased teasing me to go to London after my father, and to take care of Emmeline, and all that. However, I'll consider of it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed William Newark, in evident surprise at what he heard of the young Earl's conduct; and than he bit his lips to prevent himself smiling while he thought, "What a set of fools these people are! Surely one good head would be a match for a thousand of them."

Conceit is always an adjunct to cunning, and indeed is that adjunct which most frequently renders fruitless the dexterity of its companion. William Newark was mistaken in his calculations of Richard Newark's character; and, though every now and then he felt some misgivings from certain sharp turns of expression used by his young relation, he could not divest his mind of the idea that Richard was a mere pliable and eccentric boy, whom he could soon find means to twist into any shape he pleased. "I will use him as a tool," he thought, "to work my own purposes; but I must make haste. While his shrewd father remains in the Tower the stage is clear for me to play what part I please. Once let him get out, and I may meet with more than my match."

Richard Newark would drink no more wine, and soon after rose to return to his own quarters. He promised his cousin, however, to be ready to ride with him early on the following morning, with the full resolution of keeping his word. When he got beyond the door, however, he laughed aloud, and muttered, "Egad! What a fine thing it is to be called a fool! Men are always showing you their plans when they think you cannot make any use of the knowledge. Master William, you want watching, and you shall have it. I will be your shadow till I see you safe beyond the seas again. Ha, ha! The fool thinks to get hold of Emmeline, not knowing she is another man's wife already. He shall find himself mistaken."

With these thoughts he walked slowly to his own quarters, debating with himself whether he should tell Smeaton of his intentions. It was more in accordance with his character to set out without communicating with any one; but still his heart was kind and affectionate; and, when he reflected upon the pleasure it would give to Emmeline to receive a letter from her husband, he soon made up his mind. He found the young Earl seated quietly in his room, and alone; and a long conversation took place between them which I need not dwell upon here. Richard, indeed, did not tell his friend all his motives for the step he was about to take. He did not even mention that William Newark was to be the companion of his journey. He had no skill in explanations, and very often found it difficult to explain the motives of his actions to himself, rarely if ever attempting it to others; and in this instance he would have been obliged to enter into long details from which he shrank.

For his part, the Earl felt a sensation of relief and thankfulness, not easy to be described, when he heard Richard's resolution. To see the kind-hearted lad placed beyond the perils attending upon a desperate enterprise and a hopeless cause, would have afforded in itself much matter for rejoicing; but to know that Emmeline, in the difficulties and discomforts which surrounded her, would have the support and assistance of one so affectionate, true, and honest, took a great part of the heavy load from his heart. The conversation naturally turned to his marriage with Emmeline, in regard to which Richard evidently entertained some curiosity, and Smeaton succinctly detailed to him the whole facts, sparing the name of his father as much as possible. He then applied himself to write to Emmeline in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of any evil result, if the letter should fall into the hands of others; and, having done so, he committed it to the charge of his young companion, and bade him good night, never doubting that he should see him on the following morning.

The fatigues which Smeaton had undergone during the four preceding days made him exceed his usual period of rest by a few minutes; but, on rising, he found, to his surprise, that Richard had been gone more than an hour.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Many men were in the Jacobite army, both in the south and in the north, who, judging of the future by the present, and by the appointment of the most incompetent persons to offices of high command, clearly foresaw that a catastrophe of a dark and terrible kind must await the insurrection. That catastrophe, however, as far as the little body collected in the south was concerned, was now approaching with great rapidity.

I shall not trust to my own pen for the details of all that occurred during the next few days, but will merely abridge, and render a little more clear, the account of an eye-witness who shared in all the perils of the time, but contrived in the end, by a timely recantation and abundant testimony against his companions, to slip his own neck out of the halter into which he aided to place theirs.

Up to the time indicated in the last chapter, General Forster, as he was somewhat ludicrously called, and the gentlemen who accompanied him, had entertained sanguine hopes of being able, after their junction with Lord Kenmure, to surprise the important town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; but, before the evening of the eighteenth of October ended, all such expectations were dispelled by the intelligence that General Carpenter, a man of great experience and decision, had thrown himself into Newcastle with one regiment of foot and three regiments of dragoons. This was a force which they had no means of opposing successfully, and great anxiety was felt for the junction of the Scotch troops. That junction was effected on the morning of the nineteenth, in an open piece of heathy ground, broken by the remains of what was once an extensive wood, and known as Rothbury Forest.

With no slight eagerness the two forces examined each other as they approached; and, if the gentlemen of Northumberland felt some disappointment at the scantiness of Kenmure's numbers, the Scotch gentlemen experienced, perhaps, more at seeing their English friends so ill provided with horses and arms. Lord Kenmure's little force, consisting of four squadrons of horse, certainly displayed much more the appearance of a royal army on a miniature scale than the irregular body of the Northumbrians. Armed with good stout broadswords, and mounted on strong sinewy horses, they advanced with trumpets sounding and colours displayed, and surrounded by a chosen body of gentlemen, was borne what they called the standard of King James, formed of blue silk richly embroidered with the arms of Scotland on one side and the thistle on the other, while long streamers of white ribbon hung from the corners, likewise embroidered in gold with the words--"For our wronged King and oppressed country." "For our lives and liberties."

The whole force when united made at this period a body of about six hundred men; and, a hasty council being called, it was determined immediately to march towards Wooler as preparatory to a retreat into Scotland, which had now become inevitable. It was much to be feared, indeed, that General Carpenter would not suffer them to effect this object; but, happily for them, the intelligence that Brigadier Macintosh with a large body of Highlanders had crossed the Frith of Forth, and was in full march for the south, had reached that distinguished officer and Lord Kenmure simultaneously; and, unable to obtain exact information as to Macintosh's strength or line of march, Carpenter judged it inexpedient to leave so important a place as Newcastle without other defence than the somewhat doubtful loyalty of the inhabitants. From Wooler the insurgent force marched straight towards Kelso, seizing arms wherever they could find them, and also appropriating to themselves any public money they could lay hands on.

About the middle of the day, however, they all halted on a wild moor a few miles from the town, having received information that it was occupied by Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, with a considerable force--that the streets were barricaded, and several pieces of cannon placed in position. It was soon discovered, however, that Sir William Bennet, who was only supported by a body of militia, had taken fright at their approach and quitted the town, leaving some store of arms and ammunition behind him. Intelligence was also brought that Macintosh and his Highlanders were advancing rapidly from Dunse, and it was accordingly determined to march to Kelso at once, both in order to join their friends, and to possess themselves of the arms which Bennet had left behind him.

The Scotch cavalry passed through the town without halting, in order to meet their Highland friends at Ednam Bridge; but the Northumbrian gentlemen remained in Kelso, which had been appointed as the general place of rendez-vous. The expectation of finding any great store of the munitions of war were disappointed; for nothing appeared except some small pieces of cannon taken from Hume Castle, a trifling quantity of gunpowder, and a number of good serviceable broad swords, which had been concealed in the church, and which proved a great relief to the half-armed Northumbrian troops. A short time after, Macintosh and the Highlanders entered the town, with their bagpipes playing, and the sturdy old veteran who commanded them marching at their head. The forces now assembled consisted of some fifteen hundred infantry and six hundred cavalry, and many a good citizen of Kelso, who had not yet dared to avow his attachment to the House of Stuart, now shouted loudly for King James, adding thereunto much outcry against the obnoxious measures of the House of Hanover.

"No malt-tax! no Union! no salt-tax!" was vociferated by several hundred voices; but the worthy citizens confined themselves to words, keeping cautiously clear of any overt acts.

The following day, being Sunday, was spent in religious observance, and on the Monday, the whole troops being drawn up in the market-place, King James III. was proclaimed with great solemnity, and a lengthy manifesto read, sufficient to tire the patience of the best disposed. Not content with dealing more in words than actions, the insurgent force continued idle in Kelso till the Thursday following, wasting the three most precious days which were granted to them in the whole course of the insurrection. The troops of General Carpenter were fatigued and discouraged; his numbers were inferior to their own; the whole south of Scotland was open to them, and every inducement, combined with opportunity, to lead them in an active and energetic course.

But division was in their councils. One proposed that they should cross the Tweed and boldly attack Carpenter's force before it had recovered from long and frequent marches; another strongly urged to march to the westward in order to join the western clans, and, with their aid, attack Dumfries and Glasgow, threatening the flank and rear of the Duke of Argyle's army, while Mar, attacked him in the front. The English gentlemen, on the contrary, strongly advocated a sudden and rapid incursion into England; declaring their conviction that multitudes would rise and join them as they passed through Lancashire, while Carpenter, with his wearied and harassed forces, would be unable to follow, or might easily be defeated if he did. Every officer of any experience opposed this insane suggestion; but, nevertheless, it prevailed, and each day brought over fresh converts to that opinion from amongst the thoughtless and inexperienced.

It would seem that no decision had been arrived at, when they marched for Jedburgh on Thursday the twenty-seventh of October, and hesitation and some symptoms of panic were very evident on the way. Twice or thrice, an alarm of the enemy being upon them created great confusion, ending in merriment when they discovered that parties of their own troops were the cause of all their apprehensions. At Jedburgh a halt of two days took place, and here the fatal resolution of entering England was adopted. An unexpected difficulty, however, arose. The Highlanders--at the suggestion, it is supposed, of the Earl of Wintoun, who was highly popular with them--piled their arms, and refused positively to march out of their own country.

After long discussions, they were persuaded to proceed as far as Hawick, and indecision again appeared in the councils of the leaders. The opinion of the wiser party had gained strength by the resolute opposition of the Highlanders, and so far prevailed, that a considerable party of horse was detached towards Dumfries, with the promise of being followed by the whole of the army. Hardly had this body departed, however, when another change of resolution took place. The English gentlemen received, or pretended to have received, dispatches from Lancashire, assuring them of the support of twenty thousand men, and an immediate march into England was determined. Messengers were sent to recall the party which had been detached to Ecclesfechan; but the great difficulty still remained with the Highlanders, who once more positively refused to cross the border. Persuasions, entreaties, and even bribes, as it is said, were urged upon both leaders and men, and proved so far successful that a considerable body at length agreed to march. More than five hundred, however, adhered to their first resolution, and, separating into small parties, abandoned the army, and took their way homeward by the west. The other diminished body of the insurgents marched on towards Carlisle by Langholm and Longtown, gaining here and there a few volunteers, and hearing rumours of parties of the enemy's cavalry hovering about them in different directions. Money, which was much wanted, was gained at several places by the confiscation of the public revenues; but the people in general looked upon the progress of the Jacobites with indifference, and no signs for some time appeared of any general movement in favour of the Stuart cause.

After crossing the border, Forster assumed the command of the whole army, in virtue of a commission from the Earl of Mar; and, wisely judging that Carlisle, though but poorly garrisoned, was too strong for his small force, he marched to Brampton, and thence advanced towards Penrith, where a bloodless triumph awaited him over a body of men collected to oppose his march. The Lord Lonsdale, strongly attached to the cause of the House of Hanover, and, though still very young, a man of courage and decision, had collected a considerable body of the horse-militia of Westmoreland and Lancashire, and added to it the *posse comitatus* of the shire. He was strenuously aided by the Bishop of Carlisle, and the numbers collected at a little distance to the northward of Penrith amounted to no less than fourteen thousand men.

This undisciplined mob was drawn up on a small moor across which the insurgent army was likely to pass, with some woody lanes and broken ground at a little distance in the front. Intelligence of their proceedings had reached the insurgent leaders, but they resolutely marched on, prepared and eager for battle. The Highlanders, it would seem, were the first who issued from the lanes; but they did so in good order, and immediately extended themselves in battle array. The cavalry followed; but the very sight of anything like a disciplined army was sufficient to overthrow all confidence in the *posse comitatus*; the spirit of flight seized on them all; arms were thrown away in haste, and the whole country was speedily covered with the flying multitude. Lord Lonsdale, left with a few of his own servants, was forced to take refuge in Appleby Castle, and the Bishop of Carlisle was hotly pursued on his road to Rose Castle by a worthy belligerent clergyman, who had formerly been a curate in his diocese.

The flight and utter dispersion of the enemy gave great encouragement to the insurgents, and the spoils of the field supplied them with many articles of which they stood in great need. Arms, horses, and powder were taken in considerable quantities, and they entered Penrith the same day in good order, and flushed with success. They were very civilly received in the town, and further stores, as well as a considerable sum of money, were obtained. After refreshing themselves for a day at Penrith, the insurgents moved on to Appleby, without receiving any of the reinforcements which they expected. On the contrary, indeed, it would seem that many desertions took place; for no great confidence was entertained by the men in their commanders, and little obedience shown except in moments of urgent danger.

From Appleby to Kendal, and thence to Kirby Lonsdale, they marched on unopposed; but neither from Westmoreland nor Cumberland did they receive any of the reinforcements they expected, till on their march from the latter place towards Lancaster. Here, however, they were joined by a number of the Roman Catholic gentry, and were farther encouraged by the news from Lancashire, which represented the whole county is ready to rise and join them. Manchester, then comparatively an insignificant little town, but somewhat famous for the unruly disposition of its inhabitants, declared for King James, with very little reserve, and began to raise and arm bodies of men for his service. Lancaster, however, had well nigh proved a stumbling-block in their way; for Colonel Chartres, and some other officers attached to the House of Hanover, were anxious to take measures for its defence, and even proposed to blow up the bridge. The fears, however, and, perhaps, the disaffection of the majority of the inhabitants, frustrated all their designs; and, marching into the town, the insurgents possessed themselves not only of money, arms, and ammunition, but also of six pieces of cannon, which they found in a ship belonging to so peaceable a personage as a Quaker.

These cannon were speedily mounted upon wheels; and during the stay of the insurgent force, which was from the seventh to the ninth of November, small parties of gentlemen continually came in, unhappily for themselves, and joined in an enterprise which was now fast tending to a disastrous conclusion. It must be said, however, that they aided greatly to hurry the catastrophe. During the whole of the long march from Jedburgh to Lancaster, the leaders of the insurrection, as may well be supposed, had been anxious to obtain information of the movements of the enemy's troops. General Carpenter's small corps was that which they principally dreaded, and we are assured that Forster spared neither money nor exertion to gain intelligence. It was known that Carpenter had immediately pursued the insurgent force as soon as he learned their line of march; but he was reported to be at a considerable distance in their rear; and a certain Mr. Paul, another Jacobite clergyman, who had doffed the cassock to assume military costume, brought positive intelligence into Lancaster that General Carpenter was at Barnard's Castle in Durham with men and horses sorely fatigued. The other Lancashire gentlemen, who came in from time to time, assured Forster and his companions that no body of King George's troops could approach within forty miles without their receiving intelligence of it; and, in an evil hour, it was determined to waste more time in Lancaster merely as a resting-place, even after the plan had been decided upon for advancing into a district where a great accession of force was to be expected.

That plan was generally as follows; viz., to march direct upon Manchester, where the cause of the House of Stuart had numerous partisans, to seize upon Warrington Bridge, and to extend their operations to Liverpool, of which they hoped easily to make themselves masters. Orders were even given, it is said, for advancing at once; but the acquisition of cannon, and the rumours from the country, rendered them somewhat apathetic; so that from Monday the seventh, till Wednesday the ninth, of November, they remained refreshing themselves in Lancaster, while the forces of their adversaries were drawing closer and closer around them. The ninth proved a very wet and stormy day; but the march towards Preston was begun early in the morning; and it would seem that some misgivings began to be entertained regarding the intelligence which had been received from the country. Rumours spread through the small force, that large bodies of King

George's troops were being collected to oppose their advance; and the necessity of taking up a position which would enable all their friends in the midland and western counties to join them was felt, but too late.

The roads were bad, and rendered nearly impassable by torrents of rain; the infantry struggled on, fatigued and somewhat disheartened, and even the cavalry found it difficult to advance in anything like order. Accordingly, at the small town of Garstang, it was determined that the foot-soldiers should halt for the night, while the cavalry pushed on for Preston, and dislodged a small body of dragoons quartered in that place. The dragoons did not pause to be attacked, but marched out at the approach of the insurgents, who rejoiced as for a victory, and took up their quarters in the town. On the following day, Thursday, the tenth of November, the whole of General Forster's force was reunited in Preston, and the usual ceremonies of proclaiming King James III., and praying for him, by name, in the church, took place.

At Preston another delay occurred. No intelligence of the enemy's proximity was received; and, instead of marching upon Manchester on the Friday morning, as had been first determined; a halt was resolved upon until Saturday. During the whole of Friday the insurgents enjoyed themselves in Preston with a feeling of the utmost security, and it was not till the troops were under arms on Saturday that any intimation was received of the rapid advance of General Wills upon Preston.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was during the evening of the ninth of November, on which the cavalry of the insurgent army marched into Preston, that a party consisting of three mounted men followed the course of one of the small deep lanes, of which there are several in that part of the country. The cavalry was proceeding in the same direction by a wider road to the right; and one of the horsemen of whom I have spoken lost no opportunity of getting upon any elevated spot, in order either to descry their course of march, or to study the features of the country. Wherever the banks of the lane sloped down and showed a way to higher ground, wherever a gate gave exit to the right or left, that horseman passed through, and gazed about him. The two others were less watchful, and seemed contented enough with the shelter of the lane. One of them was tall and not very well made, riding his horse in a slovenly and slouching manner; the other fat and short, not the most graceful cavalier in the world, but one who showed a very discreet adherence to the saddle.

The rain poured down in torrents; the mud was up to the horses' fetlocks; and a cold cutting wind blew the half-congealed drops into the travellers' necks and ears, notwithstanding an ample garniture of cloaks, with collars raised high and fastened tight before. It was as miserable an evening for a journey as could well be conceived; nevertheless, the latter of the two who remained in the lane contrived to keep his companion in a merry humour, eliciting frequent peals of laughter from him, partly at the matter of his anecdotes, partly at the manner of the narrator.

"Ay," he observed, with a strong Scotch accent--"ay, Mr. Van Noost, you are doubtless a very clever man in your way, and pretty gods and goddesses, shepherds and shepherdesses, you can make out of cold lead, as you tell me. But I can do more than that."

"I don't doubt it, my lord," replied Van Noost, chuckling a little at the idea, notwithstanding. "You are a great man, and I an a very insignificant one; yet I should not mind working against your lordship for a wager as to who should cast the best Diana."

"Let her alone, man, let her alone," said Lord Wintoun, with a laugh. "Keep to Venus; you may beat me there. I should beat you at Dianas; for I should cast them in cold iron suited to such a hard-hearted goddess. Lead is the fitter stuff to make Venus of; for we all know that she was every now and then in the melting mood. Why, man, if these fellows, who call themselves generals, and have no more knowledge of war than my nag, would but give me a leathern apron and a sledge-hammer, I could do them more service than they'll ever let me do them at the head of a regiment. In the one case, I could make them pikes to arm the common people; but in the other, I have the command of a regiment, as it is called, which is to obey everybody but me."

Van Noost's curiosity was excited, but not by the most important part of Lord Wintoun's reply.

"Why, my lord," he said, "how came your lordship to learn such a trade as making pike-heads?"

"It came by nature and a little observation," replied the Earl. "You see, dearly beloved Van Noost, I thought it just as well at one time to travel; and I had a strong inclination to see more of

the world than the lords and ladies in it, which, after all, are like a sheaf of arrows, all cut to one length and tricked out in the same manner. So I put by my dignity for the time being, dressed myself up as a blacksmith's boy, got a place with one of the dingy craft, and engaged to blow the bellows."

Van Noost burst into a loud laugh, observing:

"You soon got tired of that, my Lord, I dare say?"

"Not I," rejoined Lord Wintoun. "I blew bellows and hammered iron for two whole years, ate pumpkin soup, drank sour wine, and cooked my own omelette for a treat on Sundays."

Van Noost laughed again, thinking he would rather not have partaken his Lordship's fare; but Lord Wintoun went on, saying:

"Nay, more, I took many a buffet from the blacksmith's daughter, with a patience which might have lessoned Job; and one time his wife would have basted me with a broom, but I took up a red-hot horse-shoe and threatened to set fire to her petticoats, though they were too short in all conscience to suffer much curtailment decently. The good woman laughed, like a merry soul as she was, and laid down the broom, while I quenched the horse-shoe."

"Perhaps the daughter was the attraction," said Van Noost, slyly. "Did she give nothing but buffets, my noble Lord?"

"Faith, nothing to me," replied Lord Wintoun; "and, as to attractions, those which she had were more vast in extent than peculiar in power. She was well nigh as big as her father; and, though she had two great black eyes, they were not much better than one; for they drew to a point so close towards her nose, that it was like a cross fire from the angles of a fortress; and, if she saw anything at a distance, I am sure it must have been reversed. Then her mouth! Heaven and earth, her mouth! The very memory is painful. When it was shut even, it looked like what we Scotchmen call a slit in a haggiss; and, when it was open, it looked like the entrance of the bottomless pit. It could never have been borne, had not the nose counterbalanced it."

Again Van Noost laughed heartily, exclaiming:

"The love! The joy! What happiness your Lordship must have had in her dainty society!"

"Good faith, I have fared worse than I did there," said Lord Wintoun, "and, I fear me, shall fare worse still. A man without a head is of no use to himself or any one else, Master Van Noost; and I doubt that I shall long have one upon my shoulders. How does yours feel? Is it shaky?"

"Not very easy, my good Lord," replied Van Noost, in a dolorous tone. "At times a certain sick qualm comes over my stomach, as if I had eaten half-cooked pork. But does your Lordship really think the case so bad?"

"As bad as it can be," answered Lord Wintoun. "Take my word for it, Van, your fat will soon be as cold and hard as one of your own leaden figures, unless you contrive to be politic."

"But what would you have me do?" inquired the poor statuary. "I think things seem going well enough for my part."

"Poor man!" ejaculated Lord Wintoun. "You have eyes, doubtless, for the heads of your statues, but none it seems for your own. However, here comes your pet, Lord Eskdale. Ask him. What do you think he is galloping about the country for, upon the top of this knoll and over that hill, and through the other gate, or leaping his weary horse over a fence like a cat through a window? You don't know? I'll tell you then. He is looking out to see if he can perceive, through all this rain, the enemy's troops, which he knows will be upon us before three days are over. He is not to be fooled, like your Forster and Kenmure, with the fancy that we shall be allowed to march through the land at our leisure. Well, Eskdale, do you see them?"

"It is hardly possible to see at all," replied the young Earl; "but I see nothing except our own men on the right, and the church of Preston, I suppose, a few miles off."

"What do you think Carpenter is doing?" asked Lord Wintoun.

"In truth, I do not know," returned Smeaton; "probably marching after us till he knows he has us in a net, ready to fall upon us the moment it is advisable. We shall make a good fight of it, though, I doubt not; for most of these gentlemen have strong hearts, if not strong heads."

"Ay, the garret story is very empty," said Lord Wintoun. "Do tell this good poor man, Eskdale, why you have refused all command in our great army."

"Simply, because I would not have any responsibility," returned Smeaton, "in an enterprise which is destined to end in misfortune and disgrace. There is no officer of experience whom I would not have served under, in whatever capacity he chose to assign me. But Mr. Forster, though a very good country gentleman, I dare say, is no soldier; and it requires fully as much skill and experience, my noble friend, to command an army as to cut out a wooden spoon. Any one who may attempt either without some practice will cut his fingers and spoil his work."

"Then, my good Lord, why do you not leave them?" interrogated Van Noost, with a very unpleasant choking sensation about the throat. "Here is this noble Earl of Wintoun trying hard to persuade me that it would be better for me to run."

"Faith, Van Noost, I think he is right," replied Smeaton, with a smile, adding, in a half-joking manner--"The difference is very great between you and us, Van Noost. You see, as you are fully as broad as both of us, you run a double risk of musket bullets. Besides, if we should be taken, great men can find friends to pray for them. Now, who would pray for you, I know not, but your cook and your garden shepherdesses. Seriously, however, with all the zeal in the world, I don't think you can do much good here to the cause, and none to yourself; and, if you would take my advice, you would ride away, surrender yourself to some magistrate, submit to penance for your sins, and save your body from Carpenter's carving-knives or your neck from a hempen cravat. Our honour keeps us here; but you have not much honour to gain by staying with us; and, in the circumstances, can lose little by leaving us. I give you my word that, had I not been burdened with an Earl's title, I would have left the force the moment that the mad determination of marching into England was taken. I am not bound to serve under lunatics; but it would give too severe a shock to the cause for two noblemen suddenly to abandon it."

"That is what brought me back to Langton," said Lord Wintoun; "for I had fully determined to go, rather than be led to slaughter like a sheep, and that without even the object of my fleece or my flesh. But I asked myself how many would follow my example if I went; and that thought brought me back."

The idea of being led to slaughter like a sheep did not seem at all palatable to poor Van Noost, and he continued silent and dismal during the remainder of the way. Smeaton took up his quarters with several other gentlemen, forming a part of the little force which they called the gentlemen volunteers, who had no separate command, and who served under no particular leader. Some supper was hastily prepared; and all the usual resources of soldiers employed for whiling away anxious thought and making the present pass cheerfully. The claret-flagon--for, both at Lancaster and Preston, good wine was found--circulated freely amongst the higher classes of the insurgents, while the fiery aid of brandy, either plain, diluted, or made into punch, kept up the spirits of the rest.

Of his favourite beverage, punch, Van Noost, who sat at the same long table as the Earl of Eskdale, drank so much that the young nobleman felt some apprehension lest his salutary terror should pass away, and he should abandon his purpose of quitting the insurgent army and making his submission; but towards the close of the evening Van Noost came up to him, and whispered--

"I shall depart early to-morrow, my good Lord, and go as straight to London as they will let me. Has your Lordship anything to write that I can take charge of?"

Smeaton was inclined to seize the opportunity eagerly; but a moment's reflection showed him that, by giving his humble friend even a single letter, he might endanger the good man's safety, if he should fall into the hands of the enemy. He therefore called him aside, and charged him with a few words to Emmeline. They were sad as well as few; for his own expectations were all dark and gloomy, and he did not wish to raise up hopes which he felt certain would be disappointed. He said little more to Van Noost, and that was by way of warning. He urged him strongly to give himself up voluntarily to any magistrate, if he found the least difficulty in making his escape through the country; to submit unconditionally, but at the same time to avoid making any statements which could either betray the condition of those with whom he had been in companionship, or deprive them of any advantages in the present or the future.

He then retired to his chamber, saying he was fatigued, and would seek rest; but the rest he took, though he might find bodily repose, was not that of the mind. He slept not at all for the next three hours, but remained seated motionless, near the window, in deep thought.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

At an early hour in the morning of Saturday, the twelfth of November, a good deal of bustle and commotion filled the streets of Preston. Private gentlemen and military officers were seen running hither and thither; and all who had command of regiments or squadrons, as their little bodies of men were called, received a summons to attend a council at General Forster's quarters at the Mitre inn. The Earl of Eskdale was not one of these, however. He had refused all command, notwithstanding pressing importunities; for his military skill had been seen and appreciated, even by those who would not follow his advice in the time of action. Nor was he, to say the truth, even up at the hour when this bustle began; for, as I have shown in the preceding

chapter, he had been watchful and sleepless during the greater part of the night; and, when he did at length lie down to rest, fatigue brought on a deep and lasting slumber, from which all the noises of the awakening town were hardly sufficient to rouse him. He had, it is true, many bitter and painful thoughts to deal with in his waking hours; but those thoughts had little to do with the conduct of the expedition in which he was engaged; and over him, as over a great many others who had joined the ill-starred enterprise, had come a sort of hopeless indifference, which left him little care of what might be the next move in the game of folly and madness then being played.

About half past seven, however, his servant, Higham, entered the room where he slept, with a white and anxious countenance. Smeaton was up and partly dressed; and, looking quietly in the man's face, he said--

"Well, Higham, give me my sword. I suppose the Hanover troops are upon us, by your chop-fallen look."

"Ah, my lord, God forgive us our sins!" exclaimed the man. "It will come to fighting this time; for they say that General Wills, with ten thousand men, is marching upon Preston, and can already be seen from the top of the windmill."

"I suppose you do not object to the fighting, Higham," said his lord. "You have always been foremost in brave words, my good friend; and I shall certainly expect that you now act up to them."

"I will do my best, my lord--I well do my best," replied the servant; "but I had rather not be killed just now, if I could help it. I have done a great many wrong things, I am afraid; and I should much like time to repent."

"It is not a very long operation," observed Smeaton, with a faint smile, continuing his dressing. "God's grace can give repentance at any time, and render it effectual. A short prayer, my good friend, and a strong resolution to do better for the future, is what I would advise you to make, and then come and fight like a man on the side you have espoused."

"Ah, but, my lord, I have wronged you too," said Higham; "and that is one of the things I would repent of and atone for."

"Well, well," responded Smeaton, "I have no time now to hear confession of sins. I must go and see what is the truth of all this you tell me. As for the rest, I freely forgive you, my good man, for any little offence, known or unknown by me, which you may have committed against me. It is very unlikely that both you and I should come alive out of this day's work, if matters are going as you say; and, whichever is taken, let as part in charity. I forgive you with all my heart, Higham, for any fault in your duty to me."

"Ah, my Lord!" cried Higham, with a rueful look, "if you knew all--"

He did not conclude his sentence, however; for, at that moment, without any application for admittance, Van Noost burst into the young nobleman's room; and Smeaton, anxious for the good man's safety, made a sign to the servant to leave them together alone.

"Have you heard the news, my Lord, have you heard the news?" cried Van Noost, in a state of great excitement, but without any signs of fear. "General Wills will be here in a few hours, they say."

"So I have heard," rejoined Smeaton; "but, my good friend, I did hope that you were far away before this time."

"I am very glad I was not," said Van Noost, rubbing his hands; "for I have a plan--such a plan!--for the defence of the place, if your Lordship will but propose it to General Forster. It cannot fail. It is sure to succeed."

Smeaton had not always the best opinion of Van Noost's plans, but the man spoke very earnestly; and the young nobleman replied, with a smile--"Well, Van Noost, tell me what it is; and, if it seem to me feasible, I will propose it to those in command."

"It is this, my noble lord," replied Van Noost; "and it must succeed. General Wills is advancing from the side of Wigan with an overwhelming force. In two hours, they tell me, he will be in the town. If we run away and leave it empty, he will pursue us with his cavalry without a minute's delay; so that we shall all be cut to pieces before we can make our escape. Now, what I should propose is this: to make an appearance as if the town were defended, even after we are all gone; for, by seizing the bridge over the Ribble we can delay them for a while."

"That bridge will, of course, be maintained at any cost," remarked Smeaton; "but, if General Wills is marching from Wigan, we shall not be able to pass that way without fighting."

"No, my good lord, no," replied Van Noost. "I do not propose to escape that way. Of course it will take some time to reconnoitre the bridge; but let the men retreat from it into the town and follow the main body which, in the mean time, must be marching down Fishergate Street to the meadows. I have examined all the ground well. There are two good fords for horse or foot across

the Ribble. Then the road to Lancaster is open before us; and we shall have a town which we can defend, or a port from which we can sail."

"I doubt much if you will find that road open now, Van Noost," replied the Earl, "though undoubtedly the possession of those fords is a great object; but I do not yet see how you will make General Wills imagine the town is defended after we have left it."

"Give me but two hours," replied Van Noost, "and I will dress you up men of straw, so like Highlanders that you would swear you saw their bare knees."

Smeaton began to laugh.

"Indeed, my good lord," continued Van Noost, somewhat warmly, "the plan is a good one. I could make fifty or sixty of these men, and dispose them in beautiful groups at the ends of the streets. The General would never think of making his attack upon a town apparently defended, without long preparations and skilful dispositions. In the mean time we should be getting to Lancaster."

"No, no, Van Noost," replied Smeaton. "As stuffed men cannot fire muskets, General Wills would not long be deceived. Your idea regarding the defence of Ribble Bridge, and your suggestion to seize the two fords, are both very good, and I will mention them to General Forster as coming from you; but spare me the straw Highlanders. And now, my good friend, let me urge you most strongly to take your departure from this place. Indeed I was in hopes you were gone long ago. Depend upon it, Van Noost, all who remain here are destined either to die in Preston or to be made prisoners. Had we a man of experience and military skill to command us, we might fight successfully, or we might retreat successfully; but, as it is, there is no hope of either. You are not a fighting man, Van Noost; you can gain no glory here; and, if you will take my advice, you will not delay a moment, but ride out of the town as long as the way is clear. And now, farewell, my good friend. I can stay no longer; for I must go to ascertain what is the exact truth of the reports which have reached me."

As he spoke, he shook his companion kindly by the hand; and poor Van Noost, with drooping head, and tears in his eyes, walked down with him to the door of the house.

The young nobleman took his way along the street towards the Mitre Inn, observing the faces of all the persons he met. The streets were very full; for the news of General Wills's approach had spread rapidly; and Highland clansmen and night-riding borderers, Lancashire Roman Catholics, and Northumbrian gentlemen, were all hurrying out to gain farther intelligence of the enemy, or to ascertain the plans of their own leaders. Those whom Smeaton actually met, were generally of the inferior class--the common men as they were called; and he remarked an expression of dogged resolution in their countenances from which he argued well. I mean to say he inferred that their resistance would be obstinate and vigorous, if not successful: so that perhaps good terms might be made, even if a victory could not be won. On entering the Mitre Inn, however, he found a number of gentlemen in the passage, and many more in a front room on the ground floor, who were waiting to hear the result of deliberations which were going on in an upper chamber. Amongst these he perceived anything but the same looks which he had remarked in the men of inferior station. There was an appearance of discouragement, of doubt, in some instances of apprehension, which was very painful to witness; and the only one who seemed perfectly at his ease was the Earl of Wintoun, who now took no part in the councils of General Forster. The silence amongst such a multitude of persons was very remarkable; few spoke at all, and those who did speak raised not their voice above a whisper. The Earl of Wintoun himself sat on an old mahogany stool, playing with his sword, which he held between his knees, and humming a Scotch air with the most perfect appearance of indifference.

"Well, Eskdale," he said, as the other approached him, "have you heard the news? The Elector's people are marching from Wigan to attack us, they say."

"Then we shall have what might have been expected long before," replied Smeaton, in a cheerful tone--"some good hard blows; and God defend the right!"

"Amen!" ejaculated the Earl. "I wonder what they intend to do. They are a long time in deliberation. But, after all, that may well be; for, while men of science would see that only one thing is to be done, our good friend Forster has the whole world of imagination to go through before he can fix upon a plan. Doubtless it will be something very extraordinary when he does draw the lot by chance."

"Nay, nay, I dare say we shall do very well," replied the young nobleman. "Forster is a brave man, and I strongly suspect that unconquerable resolution is what will be more serviceable here than anything. Of course, ordinary precautions will be taken, and it seems to me that much generalship will not be required."

"The men will fight to the death," said a young gentleman of the House of Athol, who was standing near. "If we had but heads amongst us, we have plenty of hearts." And then, with a knitted brow, and a sharp glance of his eye round the chamber, he added, sternly, "But we will have no trifling, no cowardice."

"Of that I imagine there is little chance," replied Smeaton, coolly. "But here I think are the

officers coming down, Captain Murray."

A noise was heard of many feet upon the stairs; and the next moment Forster himself looked into the room, and, when he saw Lord Winter and the young Earl of Eskdale, advanced towards them, followed by several others. His look was cheerful and assured, and his manner composed and courteous.

"We have much needed your advice, my lords," he said; "and I truly wish you would sometimes join our councils. You have doubtless heard the rumour that General Wills is advancing from Wigan. I can hardly believe the fact, and am now going out with a small party to ascertain if it be so or not. If it be, I trust we shall give a good account of this general."

"Doubtless," replied Smeaton, calmly. "Is it fair to ask if you have determined upon any plan of resistance?"

"Not fully," replied Forster; "and I shall be glad of any suggestion from your experience, my lord."

"I doubt not, sir," replied Smeaton, "that you will take all requisite precautions, such as securing the fords over the Ribble, and taking possession of Ribble Bridge, which, when I examined it, seemed to me very capable of being converted rapidly into a strong point of defence."

"Ay, indeed!" said Forster. "Does not it lie somewhat distant from the town for that purpose?"

"Assuredly," replied the young nobleman, "if you are determined upon making your defence in the town; but the high ground about it, the number of hedges and lanes in the neighbourhood, and many other advantages, afford an excellent position behind the bridge for a small army furnished with cannon, and principally, consisting of infantry, opposed to a larger force, strong in cavalry alone. At all events, there can be no harm in seizing the bridge at once; for it could be well defended for several hours by a mere handful of men."

"True, that is very true," replied Forster; "and it shall be done immediately. Colonel Farquharson of Invercauld, may I ask you to undertake this task, and seize upon Ribble Bridge with one or two companies of foot?"

The gallant soldier whom he addressed, with hardly a word of reply, left the room to obey the order he had received, and Forster, after having mused a moment, said, in a loud tone--

"To delay the enemy's advance for a few hours is as good as a victory; for, beyond all doubt, the greater part of the Elector's troops will come over to the army of their real sovereign unless they are led into battle immediately before they have time for consideration."

This was evidently said for effect; and it is wonderful at what delusive hopes men will catch in desperate situations. The expectation spread of great desertion from King George's troops as soon as the two forces should be in presence; and, after pausing for a minute or two more, Forster proceeded to the door of the inn, where his horses were already waiting for him. He took but very few men with him; and, from amongst all the gentlemen present, his strange choice of a companion fell upon Robert Patten, the clergyman, who, in the military spirit which had seized upon him, acted the part of aide-le-camp throughout that eventful day. The assembly at the Mitre did not altogether break up on his departure; but to the silence which had pervaded the lower part of the house succeeded a confused and buzzing clamour of many voices, in the midst of which Smeaton and the Earl of Wintoun quietly walked away together.

"We seem to be in a very active but not very industrious state," said Lord Wintoun to his companion, in a quiet and rather sarcastic tone. "What do you intend to do, Eskdale?"

"I shall order my horse and ride out of the town, to see the state of things with my own eyes," replied the young Earl. "Not very *industrious* indeed! Why, the people are all sauntering about, as if we were waiting for the opening of a fair, and not of a battle."

"A sheep has its throat cut," said Lord Wintoun, "whether it struggles and kicks or not; so perhaps it is best to undergo the operation quietly. You are not going to leave us, I suppose, Eskdale?"

"No, my good lord, no," replied Smeaton. "I will be back in Preston before a shot is fired; but I must say, King James has treated us rather hardly in placing us under the command of so incapable a man."

Thus saying, he turned up the little street which led to the inn where he lodged, and, calling aloud for his servant, ordered him to bring round his horse at once.

"I wish, my lord," said Higham, in a very subdued tone, "you would let me speak with you for a few minutes. I have a good deal to say."

"By and by, Higham, by and by," replied Smeaton. "At present I am in haste; for I would fain see into this matter with my own eyes."

The man seemed about to speak again; but his lord made an impatient gesture with his hand, and, as soon as the horse was brought up, mounted and rode away. As he went through the narrow streets and lanes which then led out into the country, he heard more than one unpleasant observation from the groups which were collected everywhere.

"There goes another," said one man.

"I wonder any one stays who can get away," said a second.

"Ay, ay, these high Tory gentry take care of themselves," observed a third.

But no one attempted to stop the young nobleman's progress; and to all idle comments he was very indifferent. Beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the town, he found the country nearly deserted; the distance to Ribble Bridge, in which direction he first turned his steps, was somewhat longer than he expected; but, from the summit of a little elevation upon the right, he perceived the small body of Highlanders marching towards the spot which he had advised Forster to occupy; and, still gazing round, a cloud of dust, rising at the distance of several miles in the direction of Wigan of Lane, seemed to show him that the advance of General Wills's army was something more serious and substantial than mere rumour. A minute or two after, a single horseman, dressed entirely in black, was seen galloping along the road in the direction of the bridge over the Ribble. Smeaton spurred forward towards him, instantly recognising Mr. Patten, and saluted him with the inquiry of--

"What news?"

"Oh, they are coming, they are coming," replied the clergyman, with a bold and assured face; "and I am just going to tell Lieutenant-Colonel Farquharson to withdraw his men from the bridge and retire into the town."

"In Heaven's name, upon what motive?" demanded Smeaton. "Has General Forster formed any plan, or not?"

"Oh, he has formed a very excellent plan," replied the clergyman, with a conceited air. "It cannot be put in execution, however; for the ford above is not to be found. The General, my Lord, had determined to pass the river and get into the rear of the enemy, or at all events attack them on the flank, But as this has now become impossible, he wishes Colonel Farquharson to retire and to confine the whole defence to the town."

Smeaton looked at him with an expression of scorn and surprise, and then, without any farther notice, turned his horse sharply, and rode towards the banks of the river.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Smeaton struck the banks of the stream some little distance above the bridge, and with a keen and rapid eye traced the whole distance within the range of sight. He instantly marked a spot where there was a gentle undulation of the ground, and where the river spread out wide. "There must be one ford," he thought; but, not satisfied without positive proof, he rode quickly on till he reached the place, and pushed his horse through the water and back again. Then turning round, he was tracing the stream towards the bridge, when he perceived Van Noost mounted on a tall horse, and pursuing a course at an acute angle with his own, as if tending towards Preston. The statuary rode on at a rapid rate; and his short broad frame was agitated terribly by the quick pace of his rough-trotting horse. The legs flew out; the shoulders heaved at every stretch; and the bent back and head leaning far over the saddle bow showed how he laboured in the effort. The voice of Smeaton, raised loud to call his attention, made him give a sudden start in the saddle which had nearly overset the equilibrium--for he was no very skilful cavalier; but as soon as he perceived who it was, he pulled hard at the right rein and rushed across the little piece of open ground towards his noble friend.

"They are coming, my Lord, they are coming!" he cried, in a voice full of excitement, evidently not of the most pleasant kind. "I have seen their advance-guard myself. It is impossible to pass them; and I don't know what to do. I must back to Preston, I suppose, even though they catch me and cut my head off, leaving my body like a collar of brawn."

"Come here with me," cried Smeaton. "I will show you a way." And, without waiting for a reply, he rode on to the ford he had discovered, and pointed to it with his hand. "Over there, Van Noost," he said. "Take the left-hand road, and then make a circuit, keeping to the westward, till--"

"But, my Lord, my Lord," interrupted Van Noost, "they say General Carpenter is at Clitheroe, or very near it."

"If you keep well to the west," remarked Smeaton, "you will come to Garstang and Lancaster; but speed on, my good friend. No time is to be lost."

"I shall never find it," replied Van Noost, with a rueful shake of the head. "Cannot you come, my Lord, and show me the way?" The young Earl smiled at the little kindly cunning of his poor friend; but he shook his head, saying:

"No, no, Van Noost, I must back to Preston. Remember my message to my dear lady, and tell her, if she sees me no more, that I loved her with my whole heart to my last hour. Away, away, my good friend! No more words."

Seeing the good man pass safely through the ford, he once more turned his horse towards the bridge. When he reached it, he found that, according to the orders which had been sent, Farquharson and his Highlanders had abandoned its defence. He could just catch a sight of the tartans winding up the narrow lane; but he paused for a moment to gaze at the bridge before he rode after them. It was long, narrow, flanked with stout stone walls, and every foot of the ground on the Preston side was defensible. The young nobleman felt that a great mistake had been committed; that *there* was the place to fight, and that upon such a spot a small and irregular army like that of the insurgents, aided by cannon and sheltered by the hedges and high banks, might have won a victory even against a superior force of regular troops. He sighed as he turned away, and rode after the withdrawing party. When he reached its head, he bowed to the commander, with whom he had a slight acquaintance, saying:

"So you have been withdrawn from the bridge, Colonel Farquharson."

"Even so, my good Lord; and now for the rat-trap," replied Farquharson, with a light indifferent laugh, adding, the moment after--"We shall bite our catcher's fingers, however, I dare say; and that is some satisfaction."

"But a poor one," rejoined Smeaton. "I would rather have flown at their throats by the side of the Ribble."

So saying, he rode on.

All was bustle and activity when he entered Preston; the scene was completely changed from the morning; the excitement of preparation, the prospect of speedy battle, the very occupation of mind and body, had restored spirit and energy everywhere except amongst the superior officers, who, conscious by this time, of their general's incapacity, entertained no very sanguine expectation of the result. Some, sullen and gloomy, watched all that was taking place, giving a few directions, but sharing little in the toil; others remained in the inns and private houses in melancholy despondency; but others, amongst whom was the young Earl of Derwentwater, laboured cheerfully and zealously in the construction of the barricades which were already in rapid progress. Their example cheered, and their looks inspirited, the men; and Smeaton was soon in the midst of them, labouring with the best.

Bid little time was allowed for the construction of the defences, and that little was only obtained in consequence of General Wills being unable to conceive it possible that Forster had abandoned so important a point as the bridge over the Ribble. He hesitated in attempting to pass it; he caused the whole ground in the neighbourhood to be carefully reconnoitred, fully believing that the hedges would be found lined with musketry, and his march was thus retarded nearly an hour. At length, however, the first men of his small army were seen from the tall house of Sir Henry Haughton; but, by that time, all was prepared to receive them. Four main barricades had been erected, with a number of smaller ones in different streets; the windows of the houses on each side, together with the lanes and inclosures, had been garnished with infantry as far as the smallness of the force would permit, and everything showed the determination of making a resolute defence. But the leaders of the insurrection had, strangely enough, determined to defend only what may be called the heart of the town; so that the barricades had not been pushed to the entrance of any one of the streets, and several narrow lanes gave the enemy an opportunity of penetrating some way, at least, into the place completely unmolested.

Smeaton found the barricades nearly half completed when he re-entered the town. Following the example of the Earl of Derwentwater, he cast off his coat and laboured with the best to complete the defence which was being constructed in the main street, a little below the church. He could not refrain, however, while pausing for a moment to take rest, from expressing his surprise to old Brigadier Macintosh, who stood near, that the barricade had not been placed at the extreme end of the street towards Wigan.

"If the enemy push forward," he said, "with anything like vigour, a third of the town will be in their hands in five minutes."

"My good Lord," replied the old officer, somewhat sullenly, "even if you were right--which I think you are not--it is too late to mend the matter now. To defend the extreme ends of the streets, where there are so many narrow lanes and avenues, would require three times the force of foot I have at command."

"This barricade, at all events," observed Smeaton, "might have been placed near the corner of that other street a hundred yards below--I mean just near the sign of the Ram there. It would then command both the approaches, and the flank could no more be turned there than here. If the enemy get possession of that tall house, they will gall us sorely."

"Ah!" retorted the old officer, "young men are always wiser than their elders."

And, turning away, he walked to the other end of the barricade.

"Let him alone, Eskdale," said Lord Derwentwater. "He is as obstinate as an old pig, and gets perverse and sullen in proportion to difficulties and dangers."

"I *will* let him alone, my good Lord," replied the young nobleman; "but I think it a duty to myself and to all, to do what I can to remedy the mistake which has been committed. You keep the men to their work, and I will be back in a minute or two. That great cart, if it could be brought down, turned over, and filled with stones and earth, would make a very good defence at the corner there."

"What are you going to do?" asked Lord Derwentwater, seeing Smeaton resume his coat and turn away.

"I am going to seek for Captain Hunter," replied Smeaton. "He is a man of activity, resource, and shrewdness, and will, I doubt not, lend me a few of his marksmen, if he can spare them, to occupy those houses down below, so as both to keep them for ourselves, and to gall the enemy in their advance up the street. Where do you think I shall find him?"

"He is up with Miller and Douglas on the Liverpool road," answered Lord Derwentwater. "Add my request to your own; the idea is a very good one." And, while Smeaton remounted his horse and hurried away, the other nobleman continued to animate the men, not only by his own personal exertions, but by distributing amongst them all the money he had about him.

In ten minutes, Smeaton returned with a body of some fifty men and Captain Hunter, the borderer, whose moss-trooping propensities and experience had rendered him a very serviceable man of action in any great emergency. Passing the barricade, without speaking to any one, they hurried on down the street till they reached the first turning out of it, where, dividing into two bodies, the one dispersed through the neighbouring houses on either hand, taking post at the windows, while the other body, consisting of about twenty men, advanced some way down the narrow lanes, which led out into the fields near the entrance of the high road to Wigan.

In the meantime, Brigadier Macintosh had remained watching the operation with his arms crossed on his chest; but the moment he saw the men enter the mouth of the lane, he despatched a messenger after them, to order them instantly back. They returned unwillingly, with Hunter at their head; but those in the houses were suffered to remain, and did good service throughout the day.

At some period during the morning, and before the attack actually commenced, Captain Innes, with a body of about fifty Highlanders, was thrown into the tall house belonging to Sir Henry Haughton which the young Earl of Eskdale had pointed out; but they were recalled almost immediately, and the house left to its fate. In the confusion and hurry of that fatal day, it was not known who gave the order for their advance, or that for their recall.

The cannon of which the insurgents had possessed themselves was divided amongst the different barricades; but the difficulty was to find gunners; for only one man in the whole army even pretended ever to have fired a cannon in his life; and he, by the time the guns were planted, had imbibed a sufficient quantity of brandy to render the accuracy of his aim rather doubtful. A small powder-magazine was established near the centre of the town, and a lame man, incapable of any great exertion on foot, but zealous, active, and determined, was appointed to carry supplies on horseback to the several barricades.

As soon as all the arrangements were completed, and the foot-soldiers stationed behind the hasty works which had been constructed, the gentlemen volunteers, as they were called, retired to the churchyard, with their horses at hand, ready to sally out upon the enemy whenever a favourable occasion occurred. General Forster established his head-quarters at the Mitre Inn, with his horses at the door, ready to carry him wherever his presence might be needed, and it is now admitted on all hands that he showed no lack of courage or activity during the day.

When all was ready, a sort of solemn pause succeeded to the bustle; the noise and confusion died away in the town, and the occasional subdued talking of people in knots, with, from time to time, a loud-spoken word of command, or a call from one officer to another at a distance, were the only sounds that arose in the streets of Preston. From the fields and lanes beyond, however, came the beat of the drum and the blast of the trumpet, nearer, nearer, nearer yet; first in one spot, then from two or three different points around, showing that the forces of King George had reached the outskirts of the city, and were spreading themselves round it preparatory to a general attack. In silent and awful expectation the insurgents awaited the appearance of the heads of the enemy's columns. Sternly and steadfastly they gazed over the barricades, and no sign of fear or wavering was visible; yet it was a terrible situation, to be thus waiting inactive for the commencement of a struggle which all well knew was for life or death.

At length, some boys, and a woman with a child in her arms, came running up into the main street out of the lane in which Smeaton had posted the party of Hunter's troop, afterwards withdrawn, and fled at full speed towards Macintosh's barricade. They were suffered to pass, and entered, exclaiming breathlessly--

"They are coming up the lane, they are coming up the lane!"

No body of soldiers appeared, however, for several minutes, and neither drum nor fife was heard. At length, however, a young officer, in his full uniform and with his sword drawn, entered the street from the head of the lane, paused calmly in the midst, and gazed up and down. In an instant, the word was given at the barricade, the muskets were levelled, and the shot poured down the street. But there the young officer still stood, now examining the barricade, now raising his eyes to the houses on either side, amidst the rattle of musketry and the whizzing of balls, as calmly as if he had been in a drawing-room.

"Upon my life, that is a gallant fellow," said Smeaton, to the Earl of Carnwath, who was standing near. "I wonder who he is."

"That is Lord Forester," replied the other nobleman. "I know him well by sight. He is lieutenant colonel of Preston's regiment, the old Cameronians. I did not know they would be brought against us. If he does not mind, he will be shot down, poor fellow."

As he spoke; however, the young officer retired into the lane; but it was only to return at the head of his regiment and to charge up the street. A small body of dragoons appeared at the same time to support the infantry; but a tremendous fire was opened upon the whole force, both from the barricade and the houses around, which instantly checked their advance; a number of the Cameronians and several of the dragoons were seen to fall; and, drawing up his men across the street, Lord Forester restored order which had been lost for a moment or two, directing the men to keep up a sharp fire upon the barricade, while detached parties from the rear and flanks stormed some of the houses and took possession of the mansion of Sir Henry Haughton, which had so imprudently been left undefended.

Though the troops of the government made no progress up the street, they still remained firm in face of the barricade, and the drunken gunner was now ordered to point and fire the cannon upon them. He adjusted both guns before he fired either; but, from haste, stupidity, or drunkenness, the elevation of the first he discharged was so high that the ball, passing far over the heads of the soldiers, struck the chimney of a low house at the side of the street, and brought it thundering down upon the heads of some of Honywood's dragoons behind. The other gun was more accurately adjusted, and the ball went straight through the attacking force, killing and wounding several men in its passage. All haste was made to reload the two cannons; and, in the mean time, a continual sharp fire was kept upon the Cameronians from the barricade and the houses round. Nevertheless, Lord Forester maintained his ground; Haughton's house was filled with musketeers; several other houses were taken after a severe struggle, and a constant fire was kept up from the front upon the insurgents of the barricade. At length, however, the young officer was seen to fall; but he rose again immediately, and continued to give his orders, pointing here and there with his sword, while one of the men tied a handkerchief round his leg.

"A charge of cavalry," observed Smeaton, to Lord Kenmure, "would drive them out of the town."

"Well, try it gentlemen, try it," said General Forster, who had just ridden up, and was speaking to Lord Derwentwater. "Mount your horses and follow me. We will get the brigadier to open a way for us."

Every one was in the saddle in a moment, and moved in good order down the street, while Forster rode on before; and the fire of the King's troops, passing over the barricade, struck down one or two of the volunteers and several of their horses. As they approached the barricade, no movement was made to let them pass out; and Forster was seen speaking vehemently to Brigadier Macintosh, who, with a dogged look of defiance, turned sullenly away just as Smeaton arrived upon the ground. What had passed before, none of the other gentlemen heard; but Forster now exclaimed, in a loud and angry tone--"Very well, sir, very well. Please God, if we are successful, and your master and mine ever obtains his rights, I will bring you to a court martial for your conduct."

Then, turning to the noblemen and gentlemen who had come up on horseback, he said, "Brigadier Macintosh objects to our making this sally, my lords. We had better therefore retire again to the churchyard, as there is no need of our exposing ourselves here when we cannot be of service. My Lord Derwentwater, I will ride up to one of the other barricades, and see if there is nothing to be done there; for I feel that this inactivity must be painful to a body of zealous and brave men, all burning for his Majesty's service."

Thus saying, he rode away; and the other gentlemen retired slowly up the street, with the bullets still flying amongst them, conversing, even in a laughing tone, upon what had taken place, and the conduct of those with whom they were engaged.

"I hope Macintosh will not let them gain the barricade," said Lord Derwentwater, looking

towards Smeaton as the most experienced amongst them.

"No fear at present, my lord," rejoined the young Earl. "He has stout men enough with him to keep out any force they can bring against him without cannon. He is a dogged resolute fellow too; and his honour is now staked upon the result, as he refuses counsel and assistance. Do you know where Colonel Oxburgh is, my lord? I have not seen him all day?"

"In an ale-house, at his prayers," replied Lord Derwentwater, with a laugh. "So I am told, at least. When I saw him this morning, he was telling his beads with great devotion. And my good Lord Widrington, too, is absent from amongst us; but he has the gout, you know."

Just as he spoke, a foot soldier ran up, saying, "They want more powder, my lord, at the barricade. Have you any in the churchyard?"

"Not a spoonful," replied Lord Derwentwater, turning in at the gates of the cemetery, while the bullets whistled thicker and more fiercely up the street, as if the troops below had been reinforced, and a gentleman of the name of Ferguson was struck from his horse, with his leg shattered in a fearful manner.

"I will ride up and send some down directly," said Smeaton, galloping on.

The firing still increased; and the street, rising with a considerable slope, exposed any one passing along it near the top, more than even at the barricade. But the young Earl passed unscathed, and, reaching a narrow little court where the powder was piled up in bags, he found the lame man, waiting on horseback with a considerable load behind him, ready to set out in whatever direction he might be wanted.

"They are in great need of powder, my good friend," said Smeaton, "at the brigadier's barricade; but pause a moment till the fire slackens a little."

The man, however, put his horse in motion, and one of his companions, who stood near, exclaimed, "You will be killed, Rob, to a certainty, if you attempt to carry it up to the barricade now."

"I know that," replied the other, calmly. "That I cannot avoid; but, as they want it, although I cannot carry it quite up to them, I will carry it as far as I can." And, so saying, he rode on.

Smeaton turned out of the little court, and looked after him down the street. He saw him pass the churchyard, and get nearer and nearer to the barricade; but, while he was still at about fifty yards' distance, he beheld the poor fellow fall forward on the horse's neck, clutching convulsively at the mane. In another instant he would have fallen from the saddle; but, before he did so, a ball struck the horse also; and both went down together. Some men ran out of one of the neighbouring houses and took the poor fellow up, while the powder was carried forward to the barricade by others on foot.

But Smeaton's attention was now drawn another way by sounds which came from a different part of the town. A loud shout like a cheer, mingled with the report of musketry and artillery, showed that the battle was raging fiercely there also; and, turning his horse, he rode quickly in the direction whence the sounds proceeded, to see if anything was wanted or could be done. Guided by the ear, he made his way down a long narrow lane, which led out into the fields, and soon came in sight of another barricade, at which Lord Charles Murray, a son of the Duke of Athol, commanded. This young nobleman had seen some service as a cornet of horse in the reign of Queen Anne; but he had thrown up his commission at the commencement of the insurrection, and now appeared at the head of a body of his clan, dressed in the Highland garb, and covered with smoke and blood. The firing had ceased for the time; but a good many dead and wounded men lay both before and behind the barricade; and the young officer was leaning on his sword, speaking to Patten, the clergyman, who was beside him on horseback.

"Ah, my good Lord," said the young nobleman, as soon as he perceived the Earl of Eskdale, "I am sending Patten here for some aid from the churchyard. We have had a sharp affair, as it seems you have had down below; but we have beaten the Hanover people back for the present, and, with a little aid, can maintain our ground till nightfall, which is not far off, I see. You are welcome to share in our work. If you will take a musket, there lies one in the hands of poor Jock Murray, who had just killed a stout Londoner with it before he was shot down himself. I hope it will be as fortunate in your hands."

"I hope so," replied Smeaton, laughing, and springing to the ground. "Mr. Patten, if you send up men, send up my servant with them to hold my horse."

The pugnacious clergyman promised not to forget; and in a few minutes Higham came running up, long before the appearance of the expected succour. The attack upon the barricade had been in the meantime renewed, and a furious fire was kept up by both parties. Lord Charles Murray was mounted on a pile of stones, giving his orders as coolly as if out of all danger, and the Earl of Eskdale, at a part of the barricade which had by some means been destroyed, was supplying by his own skill and experience the inefficiency of the only gunner who had been found to serve the two cannon which had been allotted to this position.

The servant ran up with a boldness and activity which a little surprised his lord; and when he received orders to look after the horse, which had been left in charge of a Highland soldier, he contented himself with tying the beast to a hook on a neighbouring barn, and then, mounting the barricade close to where his master stood, discharged a musket at the advancing enemy.

"What have you done with the horse, Higham?" asked Smeaton, somewhat sharply. "I ordered you to take care of him."

"He is quite safe, my lord," replied the man, "and out of reach of the fire. I do beseech you, let me have a shot or two at these men. They killed my father when I was but a child--shot him at the back of his own cottage door."

"None of these before you, Higham," said the Earl; "these seem all mere lads. But do as you please if the horse be safe. Only come down from the top of the barricade. You can fire as effectually from behind it."

"Oh, my good lord, if you would but let me speak a few words with you!" said the man, in an earnest tone. "When we have beat them back, pray let me speak with you!"

"Well, so be it," replied his master, struck by the man's eagerness. "But come down at once, my good fellow. Come down, I say!"

Almost as he spoke, Higham turned to obey; but he either missed his footing, or some of the heterogeneous material of the barricade gave way under his feet; for he suddenly fell headlong down behind the defence.

The young Earl had not time to ascertain if he were hurt or not; for, led on by their gallant officers with a loud cheer, the party of assailants rushed forward to the charge, determined, apparently, to storm the barricade. A well-directed and sustained fire from the Highlanders, and from both pieces of cannon, however, checked them before they were within a hundred yards of the defence, and they were once more driven back in confusion.

A few minutes after, a party of fifty gentlemen volunteers came up to support the weary defenders of the barricade; and when Smeaton turned to look for his servant, the poor fellow was nowhere to be seen.

A very short space of time was allowed for enquiry or repose. The troops of the Government were speedily rallied, and again brought forward; but the effect of the reinforcement, both upon the energy of the defenders and the heaviness of the fire, was soon perceptible to the officers of the attacking body. Their men were repulsed more rapidly than before, and fled in greater confusion from the hail of shot that was poured upon them. Night was approaching; it was evident that the barricade could not be carried by the force then before it; and slowly and reluctantly the commander of the assailants withdrew his force, just as the sky was growing dark. An angle of the road concealed, in a great degree, their movements, and some men were sent out over the barricade to ascertain whether the attack was actually abandoned. But even after they returned, announcing that the Government troops were in full retreat, a hurried and desultory conversation was carried on amongst the officers and gentlemen within the barricade, in regard to the events of the day.

Lord Charles Murray was almost ignorant of what had taken place at the other points of defence; but the gratifying news was brought in that the enemy had been repulsed at all points, except in front of Brigadier Macintosh's barricade, where they still maintained possession of some houses, and kept up a severe fire on all who attempted to pass. There were many words, and even some laughter and rejoicing, on the bloody spot where they stood, but little of what could be called either conversation or counsel. Yet some ventured to suggest one thing as advisable to be done, and some another; and Lord Charles Murray, without expressing an opinion, gave some directions for guarding the defence. Taking Smeaton's arm, he turned away, saying--

"By my soul, I must have some food and drink, Eskdale. I have been fighting here since two o'clock, and, though the men have had brandy and beer enough, I have tasted nothing."

Smeaton walked away with him, unfastening his horse, and leading him as he went. As soon they were out of ear-shot of the rest, his gallant companion asked, in a low voice--

"And what do you think had better be done in this affair?"

"Give the men three hours' rest, and then either retreat upon Lancaster, through the meadows, or attack General Wills in his camp," replied the young Earl. "He is evidently but little of a commander, and I think we might have an easy victory before he is reinforced, or effect a quiet retreat to a more defensible place, for the town is not one half invested."

"We must abide the commands of our elders and betters, I suppose," replied Lord Charles, "though it is certain that, if Wills is a bad general, Forster is a worse. However, here I stop to feed like a tired horse, if I can. Will you come in and sup?"

"Thank you, no," replied the young Earl; "I must go to look for my servant, who, I fear, is

wounded, poor fellow!"

Thus saying, he and Lord Charles parted.

As Smeaton walked back to the upper part of the town, Preston presented a strange and gloomy scene. The firing at the other barricades had ceased; but still from time to time a single shot or a whole volley was heard from the houses near Macintosh's barrier, where either party had lodged itself; and there, it must be remarked, the struggle continued throughout the night. The shops and dwellings were all closed along the streets; the inhabitants kept carefully within doors, and few people were met, except here and there a soldier hastening from one point to another, a wounded man plodding painfully to seek for relief, or a dead or dying man borne along by three or four others. From different parts on the outskirts of the town rose up a lurid glare, which lightened the vacant streets, showing that one party or the other had fired some of the houses in the suburbs, and the distant drum and trumpet-call from without, mingled wildly with the sound of the bagpipe which was heard from two of the barricades.

The only groups of any size were collected round the doors of different public-houses, which were kept open for the entertainment of the men, and at these Smeaton received full confirmation of the fact that the troops of the Government had, as he supposed, been repulsed at all points. A feeling of triumph animated all with whom he spoke, in which he was far from sharing; but it is not impossible that, had the commanders been capable of taking advantage of the spirit of the hour, a different result might have attended the defence of Preston.

Nowhere, however, could Smeaton hear of his servant; and, after a long and fruitless search, he retired to his quarters, and threw himself down to rest after his fatigues.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The morning of Sunday the 13th dawned dull and heavily. The flames of the burning houses had been extinguished without doing much damage, although, had there been any wind, it is probable that Preston would have been reduced to a heap of ashes. The firing from the houses continued at intervals, and, once or twice, parties of King George's troops appeared in the streets, but instantly retreated under a sharp fire, by which several of the soldiers and officers were killed or wounded. A small number of prisoners, too, were made by the insurgents, and, amongst the common men, high spirit and resolution were displayed, though the officers shared little in their anticipations of success. It is true, the latter had better means of judging; for the first prisoners that were made on that morning brought the intelligence that forces were pouring in upon Preston from different quarters, and that General Carpenter, with three regiments of cavalry, had passed the night at the small town of Clitheroe, about twelve miles distant. The next who came in informed them that General Carpenter was within sight; and, a few minutes after, some of their own men, from the higher buildings of the town, discovered his force advancing at a quick trot.

The soldiery were eager for action, and murmured loudly at the inactivity of their commanders. But no movement of any kind was made. Forster, Lord Widrington, Colonel Oxburgh, and some others, continued in close consultation at the Mitre; and Smeaton, after having obtained all the information he could from the gentlemen who thronged the lower story of that inn, walked away by himself, and, entering the church, mounted as high as he could in the tower, to observe the motions of the enemy without. Two or three gentlemen were there before him, and they pointed out the newly arrived regiments of cavalry, which were drawn up in fine order on the right of General Wills's army. Smeaton said nothing, except "They have no cannon, I see," and continued to gaze from the tower with very little satisfaction at the sight presented. Two officers, followed by a small party of dragoons, were seen to ride away at a slow pace from the main body of the army, and to direct their course completely round the town, sometimes exposed to view as they crossed the open fields and meadows, sometimes hidden by the trees and hedgerows. From time to time they stopped; and, more than once, a trooper was suddenly detached from the escort, and galloped away to one of the regiments which were in position. Immediately, a small body would advance, and, riding quietly on, station themselves opposite to one or other of the many entrances to the town.

To the experienced eye of Smeaton, the proceedings which were taking place were very clear. He saw that a mind of greater intelligence than that of General Wills was now brought to act against the insurgents in Preston, that General Carpenter was changing all his predecessor's arrangements, and that, in a very short time, the town would be completely invested, and all chance of escape cut off. The thought of abandoning the cause individually had never crossed his mind. He had taken part in the insurrection most unwillingly; but, having done so, he considered

himself entirely identified with it. Nevertheless, he could not see without a sigh the chance of the whole army effecting a retreat pass away. But despair begets indifference, and, from the moment he beheld the movements of General Carpenter, he felt that all was lost. He hummed a gay French air as he descended the narrow staircase from the tower; and, though his face was thoughtful, it bore no trace of despondency.

Some gentlemen were gathering round the great gate of the churchyard, and about to take up their old position within its walls; but the young Earl turned towards the little door on the left, near which was passing at the moment, on horseback, a merry Northumbrian physician, named Alcock or Walker (for he had an alias), who had acted as principal surgeon to the army during the preceding day. Anxious to obtain some intelligence of his servant, Smeaton hurried after him and laid his hand upon the bridle. The doctor seemed somewhat in haste; but, as soon as the young nobleman mentioned the subject of his anxiety, he replied:

"Oh yes, my Lord, yes, the poor devil is shot in the stomach; and, if he have not the strength of an ostrich, he will not easily digest his yesterday's supper. By the way, I recollect he was exceedingly anxious to see you; but I did not know where you were."

The doctor seemed very desirous to move forward; but Smeaton still detained him, and, asking where poor Higham was to be found, learned that the man had been carried into a private house near the barricade where he had fallen. The young nobleman then proceeded to ask some further questions regarding the man's state; but the worthy doctor's impatience could be restrained no longer; and, leaning down his head, he whispered in Smeaton's ear--

"I beseech you, my noble Lord, let me go. I have made up my mind that we cannot do any service here, now that Carpenter and his bullies have arrived; and, as I reconnoitred the ground pretty strictly yesterday, I know that I can get out by Fishergate Street, across the meadows and the ford, and away. If you will take my advice, you will do the same."

Smeaton shook his head, saying, with a smile:

"Make haste, doctor, make haste! Carpenter is altering all the posts, and in five minutes he will be in those same meadows, across which lies your way."

Thus saying, he let go the bridle, and Doctor Alcock trotted off. I may add that he was just in time; for he and two or three others contrived to get out of the town and across the ford, under the very eyes of General Carpenter, who probably did not think it worth while to detach any of his escort in pursuit.

Smeaton, in the mean time, with a quick step, took his way towards the other end of the town, in order to visit the poor wounded man; but, to reach the place, he had to pass the door of the Mitre Inn, and he soon saw symptoms of confusion and turbulence, which caused him to pause for a moment. The common soldiers were by this time all stationed once more at the barricades, and a good number of the gentlemen volunteers were collected in the churchyard; but some thirty or forty gentlemen, not of the highest rank, were either standing round the door or crowding the passage of the inn. All were talking together eagerly; some were gesticulating vehemently, and one young man, of the name of Murray (not Lord Charles Murray), between whom and Smeaton a certain degree of intimacy had sprung up, as soon as he perceived the latter, ran up to him and caught him by the arm, saying, in a low but stern and eager voice,

"My Lord, I pray you come with me for five minutes. These men within are betraying us; they are for giving us up into the hands of the enemy; the enemy we conquered yesterday at every point. Come with me, I beseech you. You are a man of rank, and also of experience; a soldier, a brave man. They must listen to you."

"They have listened to me very little," returned Smeaton; "otherwise, we should not have been in our present situation; but go on. I will follow you."

Murray, whose eyes were flashing fire, and whose whole face was working with excitement, instantly darted back to the crowd, pushing his way fiercely through it and along the passage. Smeaton followed with a calm grave air, more to learn what was taking place, than with any hope of his voice being attended to. His young acquaintance reached the stairs, and mounted, taking three steps at a time, till he reached the door of a room, at which stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand.

"You cannot pass, sir," said the man. "The officers are at council."

"We must be of their council, too," responded Murray; and, without hesitation, he threw open the door and entered, followed by Smeaton, the sentinel making no effort to oppose them.

The scene within was already turbulent enough; for the whole party, consisting of some ten or twelve, were talking together loudly and vehemently. Colonel Oxburgh, Lord Widrington, a Jesuit named Pierre, Sir James Anderton, and one or two others, were standing round General Forster, with a small table between them and another party, who seemed arguing some question with them very fiercely.

"Sir," said Forster, with a flushed face, in answer to something which had just been said, "you

are insulting. I place before you the plain straightforward facts of the case. There is no chance for us whatever, except in taking advantage of the success of yesterday to obtain a favourable capitulation."

"Capitulation! Who talks of capitulation?" exclaimed young Murray, pushing forward quickly.

"*I* do, sir," replied Forster; "I, the general of this army, by the commission of King James. We are completely surrounded, outnumbered, and our store of powder is failing fast. I have not spared my person. I have not shrunk from the fire of the enemy; but I can see and judge of what is necessary as well as any rash boy in England; and I say, the only chance of our not being slaughtered to a man, is to endeavour to make terms."

"What, with fifteen hundred gallant men, who would cut their way through a rock of stone rather than surrender!" exclaimed Murray, violently. "I will tell you what, General Forster; the soldiers--the brave common soldiers--will not hear of surrender. There are some gentlemen and noblemen amongst us, too, who are men of heart, and will not permit this. Here stands the Earl of Eskdale; a man of great experience, and as unprejudiced as any one. His voice, I am sure, is not for surrender."

"Certainly not," replied Smeaton; "for I would rather die with my sword in my hand, face to face with the enemy, than lay my head down on a block on Tower Hill; and I believe that is the only choice."

"My lord, you are in no command here," said Forster. "I am the general in command of these troops, by the King's authority; and, so long as I live, no one else shall command them."

"I do not in the least seek to do so," rejoined Smeaton. "I only give an opinion."

Before he could conclude the sentence, however, Captain Murray interrupted, exclaiming in a loud voice--

"This shall annul a traitor's commission which he is unworthy to hold!" And, drawing a pistol out of his belt, he levelled it at Forster's head, and pulled the trigger. Some one,[2] however, struck up the muzzle just as he was in the act of firing, and the ball lodged in the wainscot, about two feet above the mark.

A scene of indescribable confusion ensued, in the midst of which the vehement young officer was arrested and removed from the room. It was not for several minutes that anything like tranquillity was restored, and then Smeaton turned towards General Forster, saying--

"I regret this event exceedingly, General Forster; but I trust that the young man's intemperance and criminal conduct will not divert your attention from the truth of what he said. My belief is, that you will find it impossible to persuade the common soldiers to surrender, though they would risk less by it than we should; and I do not think any man would be safe who would propose such a thing to them."

"Nobody proposes to surrender, my lord, except upon favourable terms," retorted Forster, sharply; "and, if those could be obtained, I suppose nobody would be fool enough to refuse them. However, permit me to say that the advice which you have withheld from us during the whole campaign is not now desired."

"My advice was freely offered in the beginning," returned Smeaton, coolly, "but was treated, as all reasonable advice has been treated, with contempt, and was therefore never volunteered again till my own honour and life were concerned. I now not only give my advice, but protest, in the face of these gentlemen, against surrender upon any terms but those which shall secure our honour; and, having said thus much, I wish you good morning."

"Depend upon it, my lord," said Forster, in a milder tone, "if we do treat for surrender at all, which is not yet determined, it shall be only on such terms as shall be satisfactory to all."

Every one knows what it is to begin to parley with an enemy superior in force to ourselves; and it would be tedious, even to the few readers who may be unacquainted with the events of that fatal day, to enter into details of all that occurred during the next four-and-twenty hours. Confusion, hurry, discontent, dismay, pervaded the whole town. Rumours spread of the intention to surrender; and the troops were more than once ready to fall upon their officers and put them to the sword, but were kept quiet by means of gross and shameful falsehoods. They were told that General Wills had sent in to offer honourable terms, promising that the lives and liberties of all would be guaranteed; and were assured that the coming and going of Colonel Oxburgh, and several of the royal officers, between the camp and the town, solely had reference to minute points in the capitulation. In the meanwhile, however, the messages which went out commenced with bold and somewhat excessive demands; but gradually firmness and courage oozed away. General Carpenter and General Wills sternly refused all terms, and only promised that, if the insurgent force surrendered at discretion, it should not at once be put to the sword. "No other terms," they said, "would be granted to rebels with arms in their hands." One small concession, however, was made: namely, that a cessation of arms should be granted till seven the next morning, in order to allow time to persuade the common soldiers to submit; but hostages were exacted to insure that no farther defences were thrown up in the town, and that no persons

should be permitted to escape.

A night of intense anxiety, discussion, persuasion, turbulence, and confusion, succeeded; but, before the appointed hour, despair had taken possession of almost all hearts, though there is some doubt as to whether the Highland troops were not deceived to the very last, and induced to believe that they laid down their arms upon favourable conditions. Before seven o'clock, the noise and confusion had subsided into sullen and discontented submission; the Highlanders were drawn up in the market place; the noblemen and gentlemen who had joined in the insurrection remained at their various quarters; and, with drums beating and trumpets sounding, Generals Carpenter and Wills entered the town at the head of their troops, from the Manchester road on the one side and the Lancaster road on the other.

It was a moment of some anxiety; for there was no certainty, even to the last minute, whether the troops of the insurrection would not make use of their arms in one last desperate effort in the market-place. But they had no confidence in their officers, no plan arranged amongst themselves; and, surrounded by a large body of cavalry and infantry, any attempt at resistance would have brought on a massacre rather than a fight. They laid down their arms, therefore, at the word of command, and were marched off by companies to the church, where they were kept pent up for many days under a strict guard. Some of the royal officers were then sent to receive the arms of the officers and gentlemen volunteers, who were put under arrest in various inns and private houses; and thus ended an insurrection which had begun rashly, and been carried on without skill or even ordinary discretion.

In the transactions which preceded the surrender Smeaton had taken no part except that which I have mentioned. From the Mitre he had proceeded to the house where his servant, Thomas Higham, lay, and found the poor fellow in a weak and apparently sinking state. The surgeon, who was with him at the time, and who had just extracted the ball, would not suffer any conversation, but expressed some hope of his recovery if he were kept quite quiet; and Smeaton, leaving a small sum of money with him to provide any comforts he might require, departed with a promise to visit him again if possible.

When, about half past eight o'clock, one of the royal officers entered the young nobleman's quarters, he found him calmly writing letters, with his sword and pistols on the table before him. He treated his prisoner with perfect courtesy; received his arms and, handed them to an orderly behind; and then, pointing to the letters, said, "I fear these cannot be permitted to pass, my lord, without being submitted to the generals in command."

"I do not expect it," replied Smeaton; "but I think they will find nothing to object to. One is to my mother, which I should much wish forwarded to her as soon as possible, if she be still living. The other is to the Earl of Stair; and I should wish you to place it in the hands of General Carpenter, who will perceive that it refers to matters which have been already in discussion between us, and in regard to which I think I have been hardly treated. I know not, indeed, that it can have any influence on my ultimate fate; and that fate I trust I am prepared to meet as a man of courage and a man of honour; but I write it as a full explanation of my whole conduct, that no stain may be upon my character, and that it may be apparent that I have not in the slightest degree, or in any way, forfeited my given word. I trust that the Earl of Stair will be able to explain his conduct as satisfactorily. I do not accuse him; but there has been a fatal mistake somewhere."

The officer took the letters and promised to give them into the hands of General Carpenter, adding, in a kindly tone,

"If there is anything I can do for your convenience, my lord, consistent with my duty, you have merely to command me."

"Nothing that I know of," replied Smeaton; "except, indeed, if you would exert your influence to have kind treatment shown to a poor servant of mine, who was severely wounded on Saturday at Lord Charles Murray's barricade.

"I will see to his comfort myself," said the officer; and then, putting down his name and the house where he was to be found, he added, "I will see to this directly. I fear I must put a sentinel at your door, my lord, till you are otherwise disposed of; but he will have directions to consult your convenience as far as possible."

Thus saying, he withdrew; and Smeaton was left alone in his room, a prisoner.

CHAPTER XL.

I must now turn to different scenes, and to people whom I have long left, in order not to break

the chain of events immediately affecting the young Earl of Eskdale.

In one of the narrow streets leading away from Tower Hill, there is a house rather better than the others, but still small and inconvenient. Centuries ago, that street was the resort of many a gay and gallant attender upon the court; and, even at the time I speak of, was inhabited by a respectable though poor class of the population. It was the place where captains of ships trading between London and foreign ports usually found lodging during their stay on shore. The house I have mentioned was the best of those lodging-houses, and, through the kindness of the governor of the Tower--who was an easy kind-hearted man, as all his conduct to his prisoners showed--it had been hired for the family of Sir John Newark, immediately upon his arrival in custody of the messengers from Exeter. Let it be remarked, the whole house had been kind; and the good woman to whom it belonged, who had had the good luck before to let the whole of her apartments at once, went joyfully into a garret at a neighbour's, to make way for Emmeline and the servants.

How the fair young Countess of Eskdale had passed her time in that small dingy house; how sad had been her thoughts as, day by day, she received news from the north, and heard of her husband's part in the insurrection; how, at the end of about six weeks, she was joined by old Mistress Culpepper, and how, with marvellous fortitude and strength of mind, the good old servant supported the young lady in the sore trial which she underwent, I must not stop here to detail.

Emmeline sat alone in a little room on the ground floor, with small and narrow windows, parted by mullions and transoms, and affording but little light. She had paid her daily visit to Sir John Newark in the Tower, and had returned from a very unsatisfactory interview. The political prisoners, made at various times during the insurrections of 1715 and 1716, were treated, as all the world knows, with a degree of lenity--not to say laxity--during the time of their imprisonment, which contrasted strangely with the unrelenting severity shown to many of them in the end; and men, waiting for trial and destined to a bloody death, were suffered to enjoy the society of their friends almost without restriction; nay, more, were suffered to revel, to gamble, to drink within the dark walls which were only to be succeeded by the walls of the tomb, and to employ any means they might think fit, innocent or vicious, to wile away the time and banish the grim thoughts of approaching doom.

All these facilities were given to Sir John Newark; and, indeed, nothing was wanting to his comfort except liberty; but yet the imprisonment weighed upon him, and rendered him irritable and suspicious. To be deprived of all power of scheming--to be obliged to sit idle when he fancied that great opportunities for playing the game in which he was well practised were constantly occurring--to find the government maintain a cold and ominous silence in return for all the advances which he made, and to know that they had proofs against him of very dangerous intrigues, though not, perhaps, of high treason itself--all tended to depress and to annoy him more than the mere loss of his personal freedom.

During the last week he had, for the first time of his life, shown himself irascible and harsh towards Emmeline. He insisted that whenever she stirred out of the house, even to the gates of the Tower, she should be attended by two of his men servants, and she discovered that one or the other of these men was sent for daily, and examined strictly by his master as to where she had been, whom she had spoken with, and what she had done; in fact, that she was watched in London as she had been at Ale Manor. It is not, perhaps, wonderful that she felt more annoyed now than she had ever before felt at this espionage; for, until the arrival of the old housekeeper, it was carried on so strictly that she could hardly obtain any information regarding those events in the north, on the turn of which depended her whole happiness for life.

The good woman's appearance at the house, which was sudden and unexpected, was a great comfort to the poor girl. She no longer sat and wept by herself, or, with her eyes fixed upon the embers of the fire, gave herself up to thoughts which passed in rapid succession, like dark and terrible shadows of approaching misfortunes. Good Mrs. Culpepper sat with her now the greater part of each day, obtained information for her, talked of him she loved; and there was consolation in the very companionship, though the housekeeper was in no way cheerful; for her own anticipations regarding Smeaton were gloomy and sinister. She did not suffer them to find voice, indeed; yet her whole manner and words were tinged with sadness. Even that which afforded poor Emmeline the greatest delight gave her no comfort.

About three weeks before the period of which I speak, a letter had reached the lady, delivered by an unknown hand, but bearing the signature of her husband. It was the letter which Smeaton had written to her at Rothbury, and committed to the charge of Richard Newark. As her cousin's name was not mentioned, however, and he had never himself appeared, Emmeline knew not who had brought it; and she pored over it day after day as the only comfort of her solitary life; but the confirmation which that letter gave of the rumour that Smeaton was actually engaged with the insurgents in the north only excited darker apprehensions for his fate in the mind of his old nurse. It was in vain that tidings arrived, which produced some consternation in the minds of the good Londoners, by showing that the rebels were making a bold and, apparently, successful irruption into England; it was in vain that she heard of their advance towards Carlisle, or of the dispersion of the great body of militia in Penrith Moor, of the insurgents having seized upon Lancaster, and of the arming of Manchester in their favour; Mrs. Culpepper shook her head with a sigh. She had seen insurrection and civil war before, and her expectations were all sad.

On the morning of which I speak, a rumour reached her of the fatal events of Preston; and, after Emmeline's visit to Sir John Newark, on which occasion Mrs. Culpepper accompanied her, the old lady went out into the town to see if she could obtain farther intelligence. Emmeline sat alone then in that small gloomy room, and her thoughts were very dark and sorrowful. She reasoned with herself, as was her wont, upon human life, and the strange turns of fate. She asked herself what was the ruler of this world, and what was his decree? Were the good, and the wise, and the kind-hearted, fated to sorrow and misfortune; the cunning, the remorseless, the unfeeling, to prosperity and triumph and success? Was hope only given for disappointment? Was imagination but the heightening curse to make all the bitterness of earth more bitter? Were the susceptibilities of everything that is beautiful and excellent in life only given to sharpen the sting of adversity, and make the edge of sorrow cut more deeply? She could hardly believe it; and yet, when she turned her eye to history, or even pondered what her own small experience taught her, she could hardly doubt that such was the case; and the only moral she could derive from the consideration was, that--"The reward of the good is not here."

Yet that is an oppressive and chilling conviction to the ardent heart of youth. It is a hard discouragement at the commencement of life's weary way. It requires an amount of faith and hope as its antidote which few of the young possess. It is one of the bars of the sieve though which the wheat is sifted from the chaff. Emmeline might and did turn her thoughts to God and to another world. She might and did feel that there was the rewarder and the reward; but yet her heart felt very sad to see the blight upon all the flowers of earth, and to fear that none would ever be matured into fruit.

While she was thus pondering sadly, she saw a man pass up the street, whose figure had something in it familiar to her eyes. In an instant after he repassed, and looked up towards the house. She instantly remembered his face. It was connected in her mind with a scene and a moment never to be forgotten. It was connected indissolubly with the memory of him she loved; and, by a sudden impulse, she sprang forward and opened the window.

"He must have seen my husband," she thought. "He must bear me some tidings, some message; a letter, perhaps."

Van Noost (for he it was) stopped the moment he heard the window open, looked up and down the street, which was vacant at the moment, and then approached.

"Lady, lady," he said, "I wish to speak with you. I bear you a message from one you know and love."

"Speak it now, speak it quickly," said Emmeline, clasping her hands together in her eagerness.

"Ay, lady, it is a sad message and a sad tale," rejoined the good statuary, with tears rising in his eyes; "and you will hear it soon enough."

"Speak, sir, speak!" cried Emmeline. "What did my Lord say?"

"He said, dear lady," answered Van Noost, "that he feared there was little hope of himself and the others escaping from the position in which they had placed themselves, much against his wishes and advice. He besought you, however, to take comfort, what ever might happen to him, and to place your trust in God. He would not write, he said, for fear of his letter falling into other hands; for I myself escaped with difficulty; but he bade me assure you that, whatever occurred, he loved you with his whole heart till his last hour."

"Then where is he? What has become of him?" asked Emmeline. "Tell me, tell me."

"I left him at Preston, madam," replied Van Noost, "but surrounded by the King's forces, and ready every moment to be overwhelmed by numbers. He insisted upon my leaving the army and making my peace with the government; but he himself remained, though fully aware of all the danger."

"At Preston!" said Emmeline, thoughtfully. "How long is it since you left him?"

"This is the ninth morning," replied Van Noost. "I reached London three days ago, and gave myself up to government. I looked honest, I suppose; or else they could not do without my statues any longer; for, after keeping me in prison two days, and examining me strictly, they let me go back to my own house upon the sole condition of showing myself to a messenger twice in every four-and-twenty hours."

"Nine days!" exclaimed Emmeline. "That is a long time. Has no news arrived from Preston since?"

Van Noost looked down upon the ground; and his good rosy countenance turned white with emotion.

"You have some tidings," said Emmeline, in a low tone. "Tell me what they are, I beseech you, sir. I can bear them, whatever they be. Speak quickly, or my heart will break."

"Alas, lady!" ejaculated Van Noost.

"He is dead," said Emmeline, in a tone wonderfully calm. "He has been killed in the battle!"

"No, no! Not so, indeed," replied Van Noost. "He is a prisoner, lady, but not dead. All the rest are prisoners too."

Before he ended, Emmeline's ear was deaf to his words. Fancy had so fully possessed her, only the moment before, with the idea of her husband's death, that when she heard he was still living, though a captive, the change from despair to hope was too sudden; her heart beat for a moment violently, then became still as if in death; and she sank upon the floor.

Poor Van Noost was shocked and terrified; he thought he had killed her; and he would fain have made his way through the window to give her help; but just at that moment the tall and stately form of Mrs. Culpepper appeared coming up the street; and, as soon as she saw him looking in at the window, she hurried her pace, asking him sharply--

"What are you doing here, sir, staring in at the window of this house? Are you a thief who would fain break in and steal? Ah," she continued, as he turned more fully towards her, "I think I have seen your face before. Yes, I recollect you now. What are your tidings? Where did you leave my Lord? Is he amongst the prisoners?"

"He is, madam," replied Van Noost, who stood in great awe of the stately presence of the housekeeper. "He is amongst the prisoners, if, by 'my Lord,' you mean the Earl of Eskdale. But I beseech you, look to the lady within; for a message I have just borne her has, I fear, well nigh broken her heart."

"Or the rash telling it," said Mrs. Culpepper, somewhat sternly; but she added the next moment: "You did not intend it, I dare say. Come in with me." And she knocked sharply at the door. It was opened by one of the men, who seemed somewhat surprised to see her accompanied by a stranger. But no one in the household ventured to question the proceedings of Mrs. Culpepper; and, telling Van Noost to follow, she entered the room on the right hand. They found Emmeline lying where she had fallen, with her cheek as pale as the lily, and her eyelids closed. It was long before she could be brought to herself; but the old housekeeper sent away the servants, told Van Noost to wait without and she would speak with him, and then whispered comfort in the poor girl's ear.

"All will go well, dear lady," she said. "All will go well, sweet Emmeline. He is a prisoner; but he is still living; and there are a thousand chances in his favour. They may try him, but not condemn him. They may condemn him, and yet pardon him. They may be obdurate, yet he may escape. He *shall* escape, too, if there be wit in woman's head, such as men say. Take heart, take heart; everything is to be gained, so long as his life is safe."

It is wonderful how readily an old proverb springs before all other expressions in moments of haste or grief.

"Oh yes, while there is life there is hope," responded Emmeline, sobbing. "It was the joy of finding he was living, when Van Nooses first words had made me believe him dead, that overcame me. But where is Van Noost? Let him tell me more." And she looked towards the window wistfully.

"The man is in the hall," replied Mrs. Culpepper. "I will call him in."

She accordingly summoned Van Noost, and ordered one of the servants who was still with him in the hall to go below and mind his work, in a tone that admitted no reply. Van Noost was then questioned eagerly, and told the whole tale of his escape and the circumstances in which he had left the Earl of Eskdale. The good man was going on to disburden himself of all the news which he had gathered in London of the surrender of the insurgent army at Preston; but Mrs. Culpepper cut him short, saying--"What is your name, good sir, and where do you live?"

"My name is Van Noost," replied the statuary. "It is a well-known name. I am the famous artist in lead; and I live on the Reading Road, nearly opposite the end of Constitution Hill."

A grim smile came upon Mrs. Culpepper's face; and she said--"Very well. Perhaps we may want you. I doubt not you are willing to serve this young nobleman who so befriended you in getting you out of Preston."

"I would serve hits with my life's blood," replied Van Noost; "but, gadzooks! I must take care not to burn my fingers in the business again."

"You are more likely to burn your fingers with your lead than with any business we shall give you," observed Mrs. Culpepper, drily; "but, for the present, good-bye, sir; and if you get any news or hints worth hearing, pray let us have them. But be discreet; ask for me--Culpepper, the housekeeper; and, if I be not within, wait till I come."

"By my life, an imperious dame," said Van Noost to himself, as he retired; and the housekeeper, after remaining for a moment or two in silent thought, turned to Emmeline, saying--

"Comfort yourself, dear lady. I will away to Sir John, and carry him the intelligence I have got,

which, probably, has not yet reached the Tower. I must contrive to get rid of some of these men who are here, for they will hamper our movements; and I think in this Preston business I can find an excuse for sending one at least, if not more, down to Ale. He has not forgotten the bait of Keanton yet, and will rise at it as readily as ever."

CHAPTER XLI.

Slowly, and for him very soberly, with his eyes bent upon the ground, and his thoughts heavier than his own statues, Van Noost took his way across the little street towards a turning which led away to the westward some small distance higher up. He had not passed the doors of three houses, however, when suddenly a voice called him by name; and, turning round, he saw the outline of a man's figure standing some way down a narrow entrance passage, and beckoning to him with his hand.

"Van Noost," said the voice again, "come hither. I want you. Come hither, man of flesh and lead. There is no danger to your carcase. A dagger would lose itself before it found your ribs. Don't you know me, man?"

"I can't see your face," replied Van Noost, "but, odds wounds! your voice is very like that of Master Richard Newark, who left us at Rothbury."

"Come in, come!" cried the other. "Do not stand chattering there like a pie on an elm tree, calling all the other birds to wonder what the fool is prating of. If you know my tongue, that is enough. Sound is as good as sight, and sometimes better. Come in, I say, thou man of molten images."

Without farther question, Van Noost entered the doorway, although with some degree of trepidation; for the poor man had been sadly shaken by all that he had lately undergone--fat being no case-hardening of the nerves, as many of us must very well know. No sooner was he within the door, however, than Richard Newark threw it sharply to, caught him by the arm, and drew him along towards a small room on the left, where the stronger light showed the statuary that he had not been mistaken. The small chamber was a fair specimen of an ordinary lodging house of the day--dingy with ages of uncleaned walls and unwhitened ceilings. Wooden chairs of an indescribable brown; a table of the same hue and material; a corner-cupboard garnished with broken cups and saucers--a piece of sealing-wax--a tallow candle in a brass candlestick, and a bottle with two or three glasses; a looking-glass of the breadth of one's hand; an old cracked punch-bowl, and two apostle spoons, made up the furniture. To these were added a pair of tobacco-pipes on the table, with a pile of shag tobacco in an open box, and several other articles, the peculiar property of the young tenant.

But if to find Richard Newark, the son of the wealthy and somewhat ostentatious Sir John, in so lowly a dwelling, excited the wonder of the statuary, what was his surprise at the appearance of the young man himself! The gay apparel which Richard, with youthful vanity, had ever affected, was partly cast aside, and he stood before Van Noost in the garb of a seaman, with large breeches tied with enormous bunches of rib-band at the knees, grey stockings, and half a foot of clean shirt shown at his waist. The upper man displayed the marks of a rather superior station. The long-waisted broad-flapped coat, with a small silver lace, seemed to indicate an aspirant to future command, and at the same time gave him the appearance of a man five or six years older than he really was; while the waistcoat of embroidered silk, and the laced cravat, showed the remnant of still higher pretensions.

"Will Van Noost sit down and take a pipe?" said Richard Newark. "We will soon have a glass of grog and a good gossip. Ay, do not stare till your eyes leap into the tobacco-box. Here I am, a sailor for the nonce; and, on my life and soul, I have a great mind to remain one till my dying day. Why, man, I never knew what freedom was before. Here I can go where I like, do what I like, say anything I please, to man, woman, or child, and no one takes offence or calls me a fool for my pains. 'Tis but a mad trick of the sailor-lad, do what I will, and I have learned more man's knowledge in this garb, during the month I have been in London, than I should have learned during ten years at Ale."

"Pray God, Master Richard, you have not learned more than is good for you!" ejaculated Van Noost. "I had an apprentice from the country, who was quite spoiled with three months' residence in London."

"But I am no apprentice, noble lead-boiler," retorted Richard. "What makes you think there is anything spoilable in me? I am not a haunch of venison, nor a new-caught trout, a cream tart, nor

a jelly, to grow mouldy on a moist day, or stink in the nose when the wind is southerly. What makes you think I may, can, might, could, should, or ought to be spoiled?"

"Why, because I find you here, sir, masquerading in a low house," replied Van Noost, "while your beautiful cousin is pining in solitude in a house hard by, your father a prisoner in the Tower, and your best friend in bonds at Preston."

Richard Newark was instantly serious, and he leaned his head on his hand for a moment, in deep thought.

"You are wise," he said at length; "very wise, as this world's wisdom goes. So all men would judge me, seeing only what you see. But you are mistaken, nymph-maker. As to my father, his life is saved, if it ever was in danger, which I do not think. The son's virtue in abandoning rebels has been taken for an equipoise to the father's guilt in encouraging them underhand. That I have made sure of. Deserters and recreants are prime favourites now at court; and, as I was one of the first, I was abundantly well received."

He paused, with a bitter and sarcastic expression of countenance, and then went on--

"As to Emmeline, do not think, Master lead-melter, that I forget her. What am I here for? What am I in this garb for? Is it not to watch over her in secret, and turn the danger from her when it may come? Do I not know every step she takes through the streets? Do I not know when she goes out and when she returns? Do I not see every one who approaches her door? Poor Smeaton!" he continued, in a sadder tone; "what help can be given to him, Heaven knows! I do not. I wonder if it be true that he is one of the prisoners at Preston. Methinks he is not a man to be taken in the same sweep of the net with less fishes."

"Ay, sir, but he would not leave the less fish in the net and break through it himself, as he might have done," replied Van Noost.

"And as you did," said Richard Newark; and then, after a moment's silence, he added. "And so did I. Pshaw, man, do not look red in the gills about it! We are the wise men, and Smeaton the fool; but there are wiser men even than ourselves. For instance, the man who not only turns his back upon his friends, but sells them; the man who makes a merit of his treason, and bargains for something better than forgiveness. Do you understand me?"

"Faith, but darkly, Master Richard," answered Van Noost. "If you know any such, you know more than I do."

"I know one at least," replied Richard; and then, in his usual rambling way, he returned to the subject of his friend, saying, "Poor Smeaton! his has been a hard fate, to be lured into the fatal trap--cheated into the net at the very moment of his happiness. He has had foul play, Van Noost."

"Ay, he complained much of Lord Stair," observed Van Noost. "That man did not behave well to him."

"Lord Stair!" cried Richard Newark, with a laugh. "There were others who behaved worse than Lord Stair. Indeed, I know not that Lord Stair behaved ill at all; but others did. Lord Stair did not intercept his letters; Lord Stair did not lure him to meetings of conspirators upon false pretences; Lord Stair did not give information secretly against him, pretending to be his friend; but others did. Lord Stair did not take every means to drive him into rebellion, in order to get his estate; but others did."

"Who--who?" asked Van Noost, eagerly.

"My father," answered Richard Newark; and a dead silence followed for several minutes.

At length Van Noost said, in a low quiet tone--

"I think, Master Richard, if all this can be proved, the government would deal with the Earl of Eskdale's case favourably."

"And who is to prove it?" exclaimed Richard, vehemently. "Am I to go and denounce my own father to the government? Am I to expose all these turnings and windings of his to grave officials in flowing wigs?"

"No; but you might tell Lord Stair himself," replied Van Noost. "You might show him how this noble lord has been wronged; and, if he really have any regard for him, and be the man that people say he is, he will intercede for him with the King."

Richard Newark leaned his head upon his hand, and mused.

"Lord Stair is in Paris," he said, at length; "and I cannot--I must not--quit this spot. Besides, how do we know that Smeaton is living even now? They have shot some forty of their prisoners at Preston."

"Those were only officers who had served in King George's forces," replied Van Noost, "and, being found in rebellion, were tried by a court martial and executed on the spot; but the noble

Lord was not amongst them. I have seen the list this very day. He is amongst those whom they are marching up to London."

"Well, we shall see, we shall see," said Richard. "We shall have time, at least. Time is everything in this world, as the grasshopper says; and, if I dared stir from this place, perhaps I might do something; but I must see Smeaton first. They keep them somewhat loosely in their prisons; and I shall get in, I dare say."

"But what keeps you here, sir?" asked Van Noost. "You surely cannot be tied down to this one little street."

"Very nearly," replied the young gentleman. "I am seldom absent for many minutes till that house opposite is shut up at night. Did you ever see a cat sitting before a mouse-hole, Van Noost, hour after hour, looking half asleep, yet ready to spring the moment the little brown gentleman, with the long tail, pops out, and nothing showing her impatience but by the convulsions of the tip of her tail? Well, I am just the cat, watching for I what know will follow, though I know not when. My scoundrel mouse is winding about in his secret holes and crannies, and thinking I know nothing of his doings. But let us talk of other things. I will think of all this, and you come and see me every day. There, drink some brandy and smoke your pipe. Or will you have wine? We will get wine in a minute. Here, William, John! My two hounds, where are you?"

To Van Noost's surprise, two men, or rather lads, for neither of them certainly was two-and-twenty, appeared in answer to the young gentleman's summons, dressed both alike, yet not exactly in livery, though they evidently acted the part of Richard Newark's servants. One was sent one way for meat, and another for wine; and, changing his place, the young gentleman seated himself behind a blind near the window, whence he could see down the little street in which the house stood. When the men had returned and set down the things which had been ordered, with plates, glasses, and knives, Richard moved his place again, saying to the elder of the two--

"Mind the watch, for I shall be busy for an hour or so."

"A bird shall not fly past without our seeing him," replied the man, and left the room with his companion.

At all times, and in all circumstances, Van Noost was well pleased to eat and drink. Care, fear, or anxiety never took away his appetite, and he did ample justice to the viands set before him.

A rambling desultory conversation followed; but Richard Newark would not suffer it to fall back into the channels through which it had been previously flowing. He talked of all that had occurred during the insurrection, of his own escapade to the north, and of what he had seen and done while travelling about with the Northumbrian gentlemen; and, though his conversation and his manners were now more like his former self, yet Van Noost could not help being much struck with the great change which had come over him within the last few months. That short period of busy existence--the companionship of men, and the association with superior minds--had effected a remarkable transformation; but the manliness of manner and decision of thought which he had gained could only be attributed to the habit and necessity of acting for himself, and the development, under such necessity, of a character naturally decided, sharp, and fearless, though rather distorted and out of shape.

The time passed pleasantly enough, and, on his departure, Van Noost promised to return. He did not fail to keep his word, but went back more than once, gaining in some degree upon Richard Newark's confidence at each visit, and consulting with him upon what was to be done in the case of the Earl of Eskdale.

The result of these consultations we shall see hereafter; but one thing Van Noost could not comprehend in his companion; namely, the obstinacy with which he refrained from going to see his fair cousin, and from even letting her know that he was in her immediate neighbourhood. The good statuary tried many circuitous ways of arriving at his motives; and, when at length he asked him distinctly, Richard replied, with one of his wild laughs--

"Ay, you could not understand, Van Noost; and, to say truth, I myself do not understand. I have seen birds caught by perching on lime twigs. Things have been put into my head which I wish had never come into it. Besides, I am better where I am. I can do more, devise more, prevent more, when I am working unseen. No, no, it would never do; but I must tell you what, good friend; I must have a little liberty and some fresh air. I must arrange, and trust to my two boys for a day now and then. I am getting ill in this close hole, and my brain begins to spin and whirl round as it used to do at school. Can you not contrive to hire us a couple of horses? for mine I sold when I came to London. We will have a ride, Van Noost--we will have a ride on the north road."

Van Noost readily consented, and it was agreed that the next day, at the hour of noon, he should be with a pair horses in Smithfield, where Richard Newark was to join him.

The young gentleman was on the spot before him, and there was an eagerness and excitement in his look, which the statuary did not understand. Springing on the horse's back, Richard Newark set off at a pace much too fast to be agreeable to his companion. They soon cleared the

suburbs of London, however, passing a great number of people on the road, some on horseback and some on foot, who were all tending the same way, though at a more sober pace.

"I wonder what these people are all pouring out of London for," said Van Noost, as they rode along. "There must be some sport going forward."

"Ha! ha! don't you know!" exclaimed Richard, wildly. "They are going to meet the prisoners coming in, and so am I!"

This announcement was not altogether palatable to the good statuary, who felt certain that he should be recognized by some of the prisoners, and be placed in an awkward position. It was not, indeed, that he feared his acquaintance with those who had joined in the insurrection would in any degree endanger his personal safety; and, to do him justice, he would have risked that under any circumstances; but, as it was, he had made a clean breast of it to the Secretary of State, and obtained even more than he could expect, amounting, in fact, to a conditional pardon. The thought, however, of having fled from Preston; of not remaining with Roman courage (which he always had an ambition of displaying, if his constitution would but have let him) to fall with a falling cause, and of having sneaked away in much haste and trepidation at the approach of real danger, made him feel very awkward when he thought of encountering his former companions in rebellion. He explained his feelings to Richard Newark as well as he could, hinting, at the same time, that the young gentleman himself was in a similar situation.

But Richard only laughed aloud, saying, "Well, get out of the way then, when we come near them. Pop into an inn, or hide your shame-faced noddle in some barn or shed. As for me, I shall go up and speak to any one I know. I am not the least ashamed of anything I have done, and I will cut that man's throat who says I have cause to be."

They rode on as far as Highgate, leaving the crowd behind them as they went; and, a little beyond that place, they saw a cloud of dust upon the road before them, which seemed to announce the approach of the prisoners. There was a small public-house near, in which Van Noost took refuge as speedily as possible. Richard Newark dismounted also; but he remained on the outside of the house, with his arms folded on his chest. Half an hour elapsed, however, before the procession which they expected appeared; for the dust which they had seen was raised merely by a large party of horse grenadiers and foot guards, sent out to meet the unfortunate prisoners from Preston and escort them into London.

After calling for something for the good of the house, Van Noost placed himself at the window of the little sanded parlour, with a number of other persons, while the road before him was occupied by a small crowd from Highgate and the neighbouring villages. At length, the advance of a large body of men along the road was descried; and on they came at a slow pace, while a loyal shout of "Long live King George, and down with the Pretender!" burst from the crowd without.

Poor Van Noost's heart felt very big; and, when he saw the whole indignity to which his poor friends had been subjected, it was too much for him. Noblemen and gentlemen of high and distinguished character, men of honour and refinement and unblemished reputation, were being marched into London with their arms pinioned with ropes, each of their horses led by one of the foot guards, often by a mere common halter, while a large party of cavalry preceded and followed but did not flank them, as if for the express purpose of exposing them fully to the gaze of the multitude. Van Noost caught a momentary glance of many whom he knew, and especially of the Earl of Eskdale; but he saw little of what passed after, except that Richard Newark ran forward, laid his hand upon Smeaton's knee, and spoke to him eagerly, walking by the side of his horse till one of the soldiers put him rudely back.

The poor statuary's eyes filled with tears; and, retiring from the window, he made place for those who were struggling to get forward.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Tower the Marshalsea, Newgate, and other London jells, were filled to overflowing. Prison regulations, which were few, and those not very strict, were all, but entirely neglected; and scenes of revelry and merriment, the most discordant with the place and all it associations, occurred is the cells of the captives. It was not alone that the Tory or High church party, waking from the apathy in which they had indulged as long as activity could have been serviceable to the cause, now contributed large sums of money to make the fate of the captives as comfortable as a captive's fate can be; it was not alone that the numerous friends and relations of the prisoners

flocked to give them consolation and support of every kind; but a revolution took place in that strange fickle thing, public opinion; and many of those who, had not their rank and station stood in the way, would have gone out, with the hooting mob to witness the entrance of the rebel prisoners into London, now began to regard them as martyrs and laud them as heroes. Crowds hurried to see them and to testify their sympathy. No one who could find or frame even a specious pretext for admission was excluded; all hours and seasons were forgotten; and the gates of Newgate were often thrown open in the midst of the night, to admit a visitor, a servant, or a friend. The jailors declared that they were worn to death with the continual turning of the keys; yet they did their work very willingly--from no great feeling of compassion, perhaps, but for the golden rewards which were sure to follow.

In the Tower, where the noblemen who had joined in the insurrection were confined, a greater degree of decency certainly prevailed; but, even here, very great laxity existed; and, from ten o'clock in the morning till the same hour at night, the doors were opened to almost any one who required admittance. In fact, the conduct of the authorities, from the day of the surrender at Preston till the termination of the whole tragedy, is perfectly unaccountable; so capricious and strange were the alternations of lenity and severity. During the march to London, it often happened that, on one day, the prisoners of note would be confined in separate chambers, and not permitted to see or speak with any one, while, on the very next, they were allowed to wander about any towns they passed through; each under the charge of a soldier, visiting their friends, or purchasing whatever articles they required in the shops. One day, they would be compelled to sleep upon damp stone floors, with none of the comforts or conveniences of life; and the next they would dine with the officers of their escort, faring sumptuously on all that the place could afford. At one time, the sick and the feeble were provided with coaches to carry them, with nothing but a trooper at the window; and then, at Barnet, they were pinioned on their horses, and led into London like condemned felons. Thus, too, after their arrival at the place of their destination, they were allowed to live in luxury, and, alas! in many cases in licentiousness, while all the time the terrible catastrophe was being prepared with stern relentless determination.

In many instances, the prisoners themselves, at least those of thoughtful and high-toned character, were obliged to entreat their jailers to exclude the mixed multitude which flocked in to see them; and even then they were often greatly annoyed; for the virtue of the turnkeys was not stout enough to, resist the bribes which were frequently given for admission to the cells. The greater number, indeed, were well-pleased with the attentions they received, and laughed, joked, and drank with the strangers who presented themselves; but it must be said that a general impression prevailed amongst them, that the facts of their having surrendered at discretion, and of their being spared for the time, would secure them from the penalties of treason. Many were even ignorant of the terms on which the surrender had been made, and thoroughly believed that a promise of pardon had been given, and others felt quite confident that the exertions of influential friends would gain for them the lenity of a merciful sovereign.

But George the First was *not* merciful. Perhaps it would be too much to accuse him of a disposition naturally cruel; but his heart was as hard as that of any man who ever lived, and his conduct to the young Countess of Nithsdale would prove the truth, even if it were not witnessed by many another act.

Amongst those who took the least cheering view of his situation, was Henry Earl of Eskdale, who flattered himself with no vain expectations. On entering the chamber assigned to him in the Tower, he looked round it as his last abode before he went to the scaffold; and, although the small sum of money he had remaining was sufficient to procure him comforts for the time, he counted it over with care, and assigned a certain portion for each day's wants, calculating, as well as he was able, the time likely to elapse before his death.

The morning after his arrival a number of persons were admitted to see him, and at length he was glad to give the turnkey a guinea, as an inducement to exclude every one but those who could declare they were his personal friends.

"I have much need of thought and reflection, my good sir," he said; "but, if I am to be troubled with strangers all day long, however kindly their visits may be meant, I shall have no time to prepare to defend my life, or to meet my death as becomes me."

"If your Lordship will give a list of those you wish to see," replied the man, "I will keep out all others."

Smeaton wrote down the names of the few whom he thought likely to visit him; but he had some difficulty when he came to the dearest name of all. It was too sacred a name to be lightly spoken of; and therefore, to meet all cases, he wrote down broadly: "Any one of the name of Newark, any one of the name of Eskdale;" and then thinking of poor Van Noost, he added his name to the paper, saying, as he gave it to the man:

"If any one should urge strongly that he is a personal friend, let him send in his name, and I will tell you whether to admit him or not."

The man had not even closed the door, however, when Van Noost presented himself; and his agitation, on seeing his noble friend in captivity, had something in it both touching and grotesque. He wept like a child; but the pathetic was greatly lessened by his attempts to conceal

his emotion and speak through his tears. Smeaton treated him with great kindness, congratulated him upon his escape and his freedom, and listened patiently, to his account of all he had undergone since they met. But he then turned the conversation to matters of deeper interest to himself, by enquiring if his visitor had seen Emmeline as he promised.

Van Noost almost started from his chair, exclaiming:

"Good gracious! I had nearly forgotten. I saw her this very morning, my Lord; and she charged me with a message to say that she would be here this evening as soon as it grew dark, if you would permit it; and, indeed, who would not permit it? It seemed as if she thought the time between this and night would never come to an end. I believe she world have run here at once, if the old lady, Madame Culpepper, had not dissuaded her."

Smeaton did not reply immediately; for many contending feelings were busy in his bosom. To hold her once again to his heart; to tell her how he had thought of her since they parted; to learn; from her own lips, her views, her wishes, her feelings; to consult with and to counsel her, were all motives which prompted him to say "Yes," without a moment's hesitation. But he feared risk, and embarrassment, and perhaps even misfortune, to her whom he loved better than himself. He knew not that she was accustomed to come daily to the Tower; that her person was known to the warders and many of the officers of the prison, and that she was always accompanied by sufficient men to protect her, as far as they were permitted to go. He thought of Emmeline only as the simple inexperienced girl of the Manor House in Devonshire, timid even in her innocent boldness, utterly unlearned in the world and the world's ways. He knew not that she, as well as Richard, had been schooled in sorrow, and that her mind had put forth new powers, and her heart gained firmness, since they parted.

Can he be blamed, however, if he yielded, in some degree, to his own wishes? He fancied that he considered all things fairly for her good, as well as for his own happiness; but, perhaps, he was not altogether unbiased when he said,

"Tell her, Van Noost, that I ardently long to see her; but yet I would not have her come, especially at night, unless she can do so in perfect safety, and in secresy also; for, till we have well considered the next step, I do not wish our marriage to be made public, and I must have no spot rest upon her name, even for her love to me. If she can come safely, she knows what joy it will give me. If she can not, that joy would be dearly purchased by peril to her. So tell her, Van Noost. Go, my dear friend, go; and let her have my answer quickly."

"I will, my good Lord, I will," replied the statuary, fumbling in the wide pocket of his coat; "but there is another matter I had well nigh forgot too. Here is something I promised to deliver to your Lordship."

And, as he spoke, he produced a little packet--in shape very much like a schoolboy's ruler, wrapped up in paper, and sealed at both ends--which he laid upon the table.

"What is this, Van Noost?" said the young nobleman, taking it up, and surprised at its weight. "This is money, my good friend. I cannot accept of this."

"Indeed, my Lord, you must," responded Van Noost, "or make a great many people very unhappy. It is your share of a purse made up amongst the loyal and true hearts of London, for the support of all the Preston prisoners, and for their aid in their imprisonment, their defence, or--" and he sunk his voice in a whisper--"or their escape. You have no more than your fair share; and I doubt not that, in a few days, a very much larger sum may be raised, of which your portion will be brought to you also, either by me or by somebody else."

"Their escape!" said Smeaton thoughtfully. "Think you that escape is possible, Van Noost?"

"Nothing more possible, my Lord," replied the statuary. "Why, never was such a scene known as there is now in the prisons. Money is abundant--all order is gone. The jailors think they do quite enough if they only lock the doors. They vie with each other in being corrupt; and, if we could but raise a few thousand pounds to bribe the scoundrels, and we managed the thing properly, your lordship might walk out of these gates in open day, without officer, turnkey, or warder seeing you. Such is the strange effect of a pair of gold spectacles."

"Would I could feel so certain," returned Smeaton. "The few thousand pounds you speak of could soon be raised. A word in my dear mother's ear would speedily procure it, if she be still living; and, if not, I could procure it myself."

"Think you so, my lord, think you so?" said the statuary. "Would you but trust me so much as to write down merely the words, 'Believe what the bearer shall tell you on my account,' sign your name, and address it to the Dowager Countess? I see they allow you paper, pens, and ink."

"With all my heart, Van Noost," replied Smeaton. "I am quite sure you would rather injure yourself than me."

And he wrote down on a sheet of paper the words which had been required.

When he had sanded the paper and was handing it to Van Noost, a sound of bolts being drawn

was heard at the door. The statuary hurriedly concealed what he had received, and the next moment Richard Newark came in. He advanced towards the Earl with a frank bright look, and shook him warmly by the hand. Then, turning to Van Noost, he said,

"Ha! idol-maker! Are you here? Get you gone--get you gone to Emmeline, and stay with her till I come. The dear *gouvernante* has gone forth questing like a spaniel dog upon a pheasant, from a hint I gave her last night. Do not leave her for a minute; and, if the man refuses you admittance, pull his nose boldly, and walk in. He is an arrant coward; so you may venture safely."

"I will--I will, sir," replied Van Noost. "He shall not stop me on such an errand."

"If there be two of them," continued Richard, "knock down one. That will be enough for the other."

Van Noost hurriedly took up his hat and left the room; and Richard Newark, taking Smeaton's hand in his, said, in a quieter tone than usual,

"Come, Eskdale, sit down and talk to me. I must try and keep my poor whirling brain steady for a minute or two, while you tell me all and everything with regard to your transactions with Lord Stair. There is your only chance of safety. If you can show that you were driven into the insurrection against your own inclination by the conduct of others, as I know you were, a skilful lawyer tells me that you will certainly be pardoned. New listen to what I know, then fill up the gaps, give me some proofs, and I will follow the scent as keenly as my bloodhound, Bellmouth. You sent a letter long before the outbreak to Lord Stair. That letter never reached him. It was stopped by my father. You went over to Mount Place, led to believe that you would see nobody but one old fool; and you found twenty or thirty, young and old, assembled, on a hint from my father, to meet you and trap you into treason. The Exeter people sent down dragoons, who sought you at Mount Place, and thence tracked you to Keanton; for they had secret information from Ale Manor."

"But what could be your father's motive?" asked Smeaton.

"Keanton, for the first; to get you out of the way of Emmeline, for the second," answered Richard. "But never mind motives. Let us deal with facts. You afterwards, in the north, sent your servant with a letter to Lord Stair, on receiving intelligence that he was on before us at Wooler. Now, Eskdale, I doubt that letter ever having been seen by him. Nay, I am quite sure it was not."

"Higham assured me," said the young Earl, "that it was put into his hand, that he opened it, read it, and returned it with contempt. What can make you think that he never saw it?"

"Because Lord Stair was, on that very day and hour, more than seven hundred miles from Wooler as the crow flies," replied Richard. "His regiment was there, true enough; but *he* was in Paris. A man cannot be in two places at once, noble friend. But come, do not pause and wonder. This is all I know. Fill up, fill up! Let me hear the whole; and I will try if my wits are not worth something, in spite of all folks may say against them."

Smeaton did as he was bidden; and, sitting down at the table with his young companion, he gave him a clear and complete narrative of everything that had occurred after his arrival at Ale Manor, and showed him the copies he had taken of his letters to Lord Stair. More than once Richard asked him to stop for a moment, and wrote down the heads of what he had heard; and then, looking at the letters, he said--

"May I take these with me to copy? You shall have them to-morrow; for you may need them. Strange that a piece of paper should sometimes be the best armour for a man's neck!"

"Take them, take them," replied Smeaton. "They are but unauthenticated copies, and could not be given in evidence, if Lord Stair has not received them. Yet I can hardly believe that Higham would play me such a trick."

"Where did you hire him?" asked Richard.

"He was recommended to me by the man in whose house I lodged," replied the young Earl; "a good honest fellow, who had been a servant to the Earl of Oxford."

"Put about you by the Jacobites," replied Richard, with a laugh, "to keep you steady in the cause, and commit you to it if you wavered. The man must be found and made to tell the truth."

"Hear you will have to seek him in the grave," said Smeaton; "for he was sorely wounded at Preston, where he fought as boldly as a lion."

"Never mind," replied Richard. "Some of these letters must have reached Lord Stair, I think; and, if I get at him, I will jump upon his back, and never take my spurs from his side till we have passed the winning-post. Good-bye, Eskdale, good-bye. Your trial will not come on for a month, they say; and you wont see me for a fortnight, perhaps; but I'll be working all the time. Tell Emmeline to mind well every step she takes; for the villain scoundrel, William Newark, alias Somerville, has made his peace with the court, pretends that he is the most loyal subject of King George, has betrayed all that he knew of Kenmure's and Forster's secrets, and is watching with

all his eyes to pounce upon Emmeline. He cannot rightly make out where she is; for I have puzzled him about it. But he thinks that if he could but get her into his hands, Ale Manor--which is hers, you know--would be his, and he would be a great man in his generation. Once more, good-bye, Eskdale; and, if you hear that I am drowned, shot, stabbed, or otherwise disposed of, do not forget me. Say to yourself--'I was kind to the boy; and he loved me well.'"

Thus speaking, he hurried to the door, and halloo'd to the turnkey to let him out.

CHAPTER XLII.

I will not dwell upon the first interview between Emmeline and her husband; I will not dwell upon many that took place, for many did take place between the time of his arrival as a prisoner in London and the day of his trial. There are sanctities in the deep emotions of the heart, the violation of which nothing but a holy cause can justify. I have no right to eat the show-bread on the altar of their love. I have no right, be they real or be they ideal characters, to intrude into the secrets of their hearts, and place the thrilling nerves beneath a microscope for the public eye. Suffice it to say that they met often, daily, sometimes twice a-day, by the skilful management of her who had been the young Earl's nurse; and that no annoyance or inconvenience happened to the young Countess of Eskdale during nearly a month, although some circumstances of suspicion--a number of strange men hovering about the house, and the appearance of others dogging them in their walk to the Tower--caused some apprehension in the mind of the old housekeeper, and induced her to redouble her precautions.

Emmeline had seen her cousin more than once. Kind, affectionate, self-devoted, he showed himself during their short and scanty interviews; but those interviews were not very many. Suddenly he disappeared, telling his fair cousin that he was about to visit Paris, but without mentioning the business on which he went; for, although he was very sanguine in all things, he loved her too well to give her hopes which might be disappointed, or to shackle her exertions in other directions by expectations from the uncertain projects he had in view. She knew that he went for the purposes of her husband's defence, and she thanked him with her whole heart; but this was all she knew, and, when he was gone, she felt anxious and eager for tidings which did not come.

Thus passed the days of a long imprisonment; but several steps had been gained, notwithstanding. The extreme laxity of those who had charge of the prisoners had become apparent, and Smeaton had established a certain sort of friendship with his jailers; but the principal fact was that they showed themselves accessible to bribes; so that the probability of escape was reasonably added to the probability of acquittal or of pardon. Nevertheless, with hope for their guide, they flattered themselves that the delay in bringing the prisoners to trial arose from the intention of sparing them; but they experienced a bitter disappointment in the end, when Smeaton and the rest were impeached of high treason by the House of Commons, and their trial came on with unusual rapidity.

As is well known, the greater part of the insurgent noblemen pleaded guilty. But Smeaton would not join in this plea. He acknowledged the whole share he had borne in the rebellion; he entered into minute details of all that had occurred; he showed, as well as he had the means of showing, that he was actually driven to join the insurgents; but he could bring no proof of the fact. Richard was still absent, although he had promised to return in a fortnight, and nothing had been heard of him when the trial took place. Smeaton's mere unsupported word had little weight with the peers; but, while most of the others were, upon their own plea, condemned at once, a space of time was taken to consider and to allow for the collection of evidence before his trial.

The lawyers laboured hard to induce him to withdraw his plea of not guilty, and cast himself upon the royal mercy; but, although his mind, till the insurrection had actually begun, had been in that doubtful and undecided state which is most painful to men of a determined and resolute character, yet, once having joined in it, either the prejudices of early education resumed their sway, or the enthusiasm of his companions infected his own mind, and he could not bring himself to believe that there was guilt in supporting by arms the sovereign whom all his family had served, and whose claim to the throne of England they had never on any occasion renounced. He did not feel himself guilty, and he would not plead guilty. It was a dishonouring word, a word that he would not have attached to any part of his conduct by his own act, and he resolutely adhered to his former plea. He gave no unnecessary trouble indeed; he admitted all the facts as they stood charged against him; but he contended that his acts were loyal and not treasonable, and it was only as an admission that he stated he had been willing to submit quietly to the existing state of things. To this, he added a detail of the transactions between himself and the Earl of Stair.

His defence was frequently interrupted; for the English law often decrees that the evidence which would clearly exculpate any man from all moral blame shall not be received in his justification. But he persevered in his course, and the very men who condemned him felt for him, and hardly believed their own words when they pronounced him guilty.

It is a strange thing, that law of treason, which affixes the most odious moral censure upon acts heroically mistaken and sometimes sublimely just; which compels men, by rigid rules and the admission of false premises, to pronounce that to be guilt which they know to be virtue; which places the same stain upon the lowest and most selfish crimes, and upon the most elevated patriotic deeds. A great fault exists somewhere; it is true, order and respect for law must be maintained; the will of the majority must rule; it may be, even, that, for general security, men must be punished for bold attacks upon existing institutions; but let us not be called upon to denounce as guilt that which is mistake, or enthusiasm, or virtue.

The dark scene was over; the verdict was given, the sentence pronounced, the blade of the axe turned towards the prisoner, and one more of the gallant and the true was carried back from the bar to the Tower, to await the fate of a traitor.

In the anticipation of that moment, Smeaton had often felt how terrible it would be; he had doubted his own courage, his own fortitude; he had nerved his mind to resist all the impulses of his mortal nature, lest he should meanly and faint-heartedly supplicate for life, as others had done. He recollected that there were many endearing ties around him; that youth, and love, and hope, and high health, and all the bright amenities of being, attached him to the world in which he was; that it was full of delight and enjoyment to one so constituted mentally and bodily, and that the thought of parting with it in its hour of greatest excellence might well shake his resolution and undermine his firmness. But when each peer had pronounced his judgment, and when the frightful and barbarous sentence was passed, it was marvellous, even to his own mind, how calmly he bore himself, how firm and composed he felt. It seemed for the moment as if the tremulous, vibrating, anxious cord between hope and fear was snapped, and that his feet were firmly fixed upon the rock of fate. Take away hope, and there is no such thing as fear.

During a short space of time all hope was over in his bosom. But, in the meanwhile, others were preparing hope for him, and to two separate scenes we must turn, where busy love was eagerly exerting itself, in different ways and without concert, to avert the blow from his head. I know not which to depict first; for they both occurred on the same day, and very nearly at the same hour; but perhaps I had better choose the one which, from presenting few if any characters already brought under notice, may have the least interest for the reader.

Into a gorgeous room of a palace, containing a number of distinguished persons--some marked out to the eye by the splendour of their apparel, some by their beauty or their grace--entered a middle-aged man, small in stature, insignificant in appearance, and with his somewhat large head rendered more ridiculously conspicuous by a huge Ramillies wig. He was dressed in tea-coloured velvet, with his sword by his side and his hat on, and the door by which he entered was thrown open for him by one of the high noblemen of the Court; while another, bearing a light in either hand, walked backwards into the room before him. He was a very mean-looking person; cold, unloveable in aspect, looking like a small dancing-master in a holiday suit; but yet he was a King.

At one side of the room, supporting herself by the back of a chair, stood a tall and queenly woman of some sixty years of age. Her natural hair, as white as snow, appeared slightly from beneath the weeds of widowhood, and her striking and beautiful face--beautiful even in sorrow--was pale and worn with long and heavy sickness. The moment the king entered, she advanced towards him, with a step firm and dignified; but she sank upon her knees as she came near, and stretched out her hands towards him, holding what appeared to be a petition.

"Who are you, madam, who are you?" asked the King, in French.

"I am the unhappy Countess of Eskdale, sire," replied the lady, in the same language. "I do beseech you, hear me, and receive my petition for my poor son. Spare him, gracious monarch--spare him, and I pledge--"

She was not permitted to finish the sentence. The cold-hearted King drew back at her first words, and, with a sort of frightened and repulsive look, turned towards a different door from that by which he had entered. But the lady caught him by the skirt of his coat, pleading with all the earnestness of maternal love for her son's life, while he rudely endeavoured to shake himself free, walking with a quick step towards the other side of the room, and literally dragging her after him as she still kept her hold, endeavouring to force the petition upon him.

A gentleman with a cut upon his brow, who had entered with the monarch, now whispered in his ear in French:

"Be firm, sire! Be firm! Shall I remove her?"

The monarch made an eager motion of assent, and the other, casting his arms round Lady Eskdale, tore her away. The paper, which she held in her hand, dropped to the ground; and, instantly rising to her full height, as the monarch passed the door, she turned a look of dignified anger on him who had interposed to prevent the reception of her petition, and exclaimed aloud,

in English--

"Oh, William Newark, William Newark! Ever ready, like the viper, to sting the hand that has fostered you, and to aid in all that is hard and selfish!"

"Poor lady!" said the gentleman thus addressed, with a look of contemptuous pity, and he followed the King. But there was another who followed also; a grave-looking man of the middle age, with a calm and placid countenance and a blue ribbon across his breast. With a quick but easy step, he hurried on, and overtook King George just as he had crossed an ante-room and was about to enter a large drawing-room beyond--round which were grouped a great number of brilliant-looking people in a blaze of light. He ventured to stop the sovereign in his advance, saying something to him in a very low tone in the Latin language; for many of the first nobility of England, at that period, did not speak French or German, and the first George's stock of English was not very copious.

"Who is he--who is he?" asked the monarch, also speaking Latin, though not in its greatest purity. "What does he want at this hour?"

"He bears despatches from Lord Stair, sire," the nobleman answered who had spoken to him; "and is charged to deliver them immediately into your Majesty's own hands. He is the young gentleman whom your Majesty declared to be more praiseworthy, on account of his speedy repentance and atonement, than others who had never joined the rebellion."

He spoke still in a low tone; but the monarch replied, aloud, "Admit him--admit him. He is a strange boy; but whatever comes from my Lord Stair is worthy of immediate attention."

"The despatches were to be delivered in private, sire," observed the other; "but the bearer was detained for want of horses on the Dover road. Shall I--"

"So be it, so be it," replied the King. "Close the doors again. Make everybody quit the room but you and Walpole, my lord; and then bring the young man in."

The personage to whom he spoke proceeded to fulfil his commands, and William Newark, in obedience to those commands, quitted the room with a scowling brow, which was not brightened by the passing of Richard Newark in the very doorway. He did not venture to say anything, however, and the lad advanced with a small packet in his hand straight towards the King, without any other salutation than merely a low bow.

"Bend your knee, bend your knee," said the elderly nobleman, in a whisper, and the lad, after a moment's hesitation, did as he was directed.

"I am glad to see you again, young gentleman," said King George. "You have been to Paris, I suppose." And, at the same time, he took the packet and broke it open. It contained two sheets; but, before he proceeded to examine either of them, the monarch added a question. "Do you know," he asked, "why Lord Stair happened to address me personally instead of the Secretary?"

"Because the matter was for your Majesty's own ear," replied Richard Newark, somewhat abruptly. "We do not give an apple to one boy to hand it to another, for fear he should eat it himself."

The King laughed good-humouredly, and proceeded to read the first sheet, which, beginning at the bottom of the first page, and ending at the top of the fourth page, did not seem to contain much matter. Whatever that matter was, it seemed to give the King great satisfaction. "That is good; that is very good," he said. "He is an invaluable man. We shall know how to honour him. All is safe in that quarter." He then turned to the other sheet, and his face instantly changed.

"Ha!" he said, with a curling lip, and an irritable eye "More about this Lord Eskdale! He joined the rebels wittingly, adhered to them till the last moment, was taken with arms in his hands, and he must die. I have signed the warrant."

"Then kill me first, sir," rejoined Richard Newark, bluffly, "for I first helped to engage him in the rebellion; and, had it not been for his advice, I should never have quitted it. He went against his own will, as your Majesty will see if you read; and, if he dies, it will be as a bird that is caught in a trap because he was deceived by the baits set for him. Your Majesty cannot understand till you read, any more than I can see through that wall; for there is a great deal beyond your sight or mine, unless a door be opened for each of us to look through."

The King gazed at him for a moment in utter surprise, as if completely astounded by the lad's impudence; but gradually a sense of the justice of what he had heard seemed to overpower the slight sense of anger; and, without answering a syllable, he turned his eyes to the paper, and proceeded to read it to the very end. When he had done so, the expression of his countenance was again greatly changed; a hesitating and embarrassed look came upon his face. He put his finger under his large wig, rubbed his temple, and pulled up one of his stockings, which had somewhat slipped down the leg, and most likely tickled his shin; then, turning to another gentleman present, he said, "Come with me, Mr. Walpole--come with me, my Lord. I will go to my cabinet for a moment."

Thus saying, he took two steps towards the door by which he had entered, but then turned a sharp glance upon Richard Newark, who was standing by with a vacant air, looking down at the hilt of his sword. It was the same sword which Smeaton had given to him.

The monarch's look was certainly not very placable at first; but something seemed to touch the risible organs in his brain or heart--wherever they may lie--and we all know that in those organs a great deal of the milk of human kindness is secreted. He laughed, low but gaily, and said--

"Get away, sir, get away. Lord Stair has trusted his letters to a somewhat indiscreet messenger."

"The best in the world could not have done better, your Majesty," replied Richard Newark, boldly; "for he has delivered them safely into the best hands in the realm."

If he meant it, nothing could have been more dexterous than his reply. It was a compliment, slightly veiled under a rudeness. But I very much doubt whether he did mean it. However, King George smiled most graciously, saying:

"Go, sir, go. We shall not forget you."

Richard Newark bowed and retired, while the King again took a step or two towards the door.

Before he passed out of the room, however, the King turned to a gentleman with a florid countenance, saying:

"We shall not meet that woman again, I hope; for I have not quite made up my mind. Keep that man, Sir William Newark, from me. I do not like him as I did."

So saying, and suffering Mr. Walpole and one of his attendants to precede him, he followed slowly and thoughtfully out of the room.

The adjoining chamber was by this time vacant; the unhappy Lady Eskdale had quitted it the moment after she had received so violent a rebuff, and the courtiers who had been present when she sought to force her petition upon the King, concluding that he had passed on into the drawing-room, had thronged thither by another way. But a full hour elapsed before the monarch joined his guests.

Now let us turn to the other scene which I have mentioned, in which strong affection was busily engaged for Smeaton's deliverance, but in a different manner. Let us break into the middle of it, however; for what is to follow will explain what is passed.

"No, no, dearest lady," said old Mrs. Culpepper, in a low but eager tone. "It must not be. The boat is prepared, the ship ready to sail the moment his foot is on board. You must go with him, and all will be safe."

"Then who is to stay and personate him in the prison?" asked Emmeline. "Indeed it must be as I have said. Although you have bribed the people to shut their eyes, yet I do not believe they dare venture to let three people pass out when only two have passed in. In this I will have my way, indeed. I fear nothing. I do not believe there is any man so cruel as to punish a wife for saving her husband's life, I will wrap myself in his *roquelaure*, and sit brooding over the fire. My heart may beat; but no one will see it. My eyes may overflow; but I will cover them with my hands. The first plan was the best--far the best, and it is my bounden duty, as well as my earnest wish, to risk anything to myself for his sake. Oh, Heaven what happiness will it be hereafter, even if they should shut me in a prison and never let me see his face again, to think that I have saved him!

"It is the same plan still, dear lady," replied Mrs. Culpepper, with her usual calm and quiet manner; "but you must not, cannot execute it in the way you propose. Consider your height, the difference between your tiny figure and his. They would be blind indeed to mistake you, and we cannot expect them to be so blind as that. I am shorter than he is, but still I am very tall, and the difference will not easily be seen. They will not mark very exactly, especially if he put his handkerchief to his face and seem to weep. My clothes will nearly fit him too; and--"

"And will you--will you stay in his place?" asked Emmeline, gazing in her face, with a look of wonder and gratitude. "What will you say when they find you there? You have no such excuse as I have."

"I will say, lady," replied the woman, earnestly, "that he drank the milk from this breast as an infant; that he was to me as a child, when God had taken my own; that he was my nursling, my beloved, my only one, when I had lost all else, on earth who loved me, or whom. I could love. Then, if they choose to shorten my days or make me pass them in a prison, it is but little they can take away and little they can inflict. It must be so indeed, Lady; and now we are only losing time. They will not let us pass in or out after eleven. It is now past nine, and it will take some time to disguise him as we wish. Haste then, to get on your hood. I am quite ready. With this *sacque* above my other clothes, and a large French *capote*, everything is ready to hide his face and figure."

Emmeline looked down thoughtfully; but she said nothing, for her heart was too full to speak, and in a few minutes they set out upon their adventure, followed by two men servants, whom the old housekeeper had already prepared for the task in hand.

The moment they were gone, however, one of Sir John Newark's men, who had lived at Ale for several years, and who had been accustomed to act as one of his spies upon all that took place in the house, crept silently out and pursued them with a stealthy step down the little street. He saw them cross Tower Hill, and obtain admission at the gates; and then, turning to the right, he approached a house in a neighbouring street, hurrying his walk as much as he could without converting it into a run. At the moment he reached the door, one of the ordinary hackney coaches of the day drew up, and a gentleman in somewhat brilliant attire descended with a slow step. The man waited till he had paid the fare, and then plucked him by the sleeve, whispering something in his ear. The gloomy and discontented face of the other instantly cleared up, and he exclaimed, with a mocking laugh--"Ha, ha! Then they have put themselves in the trap. I will away to the Tower. You stay and watch at the gates. But no--better let them be caught in the very act, just when they fancy themselves secure. It will be more meritorious to bring him back after he has actually escaped than to prevent him from doing so. You are sure, quite sure? It would never do to take an old raven instead of a young hawk."

"I am quite sure," replied the man; "for I overheard it all, as I listened at the hole I have made in the wall. This morning, I could not make out which of the two it is who is to play his part; but just now I heard, and I am quite certain. The old woman was his nurse, it seems, and is ready to sacrifice her life for him."

"Well, well, go to the gates and watch," rejoined William Newark. "Give instant information if they come forth. I will go and get a messenger. There is one lives hard by."

The servant did as the other bade him; but he had not remained many minutes near the gates of the Tower when some quick steps approached, and he turned round towards the new corners.

"Ha, ha, old Truepenny!" said Richard Newark, taking the man's arm in a firm grasp; "what are you on the watch for here?"

"Nothing, Master Richard," answered the man. "I am only just taking the air."

"You won't let your intentions take the air, at all events," retorted Richard Newark. "I know you, serviceable knave! This is the fellow," he continued, turning to the two young men who accompanied him, "this is the fellow who informed of the smuggled tea."

"Then I will baste him to a stock fish," cried one of the youths, brandishing his cudgel.

"No, no," interposed Richard, with a laugh. "Wait till you get him back at Ale, and then tar and feather him. Hasten off, Argus, or we will leave you no eyes to see out of."

The man had no hesitation in obeying; and, as soon as the young gentleman had relaxed his grasp, ran across the open space as fast as his legs would carry him.

Richard Newark then turned towards the gates again; but, taking three steps in advance, paused, and, after a moment's thought, with his hand pressed upon his brow, quietly glided away to a little distance, followed by the two lads.

CHAPTER XLIII.

At the hour of half past ten, two persons issued forth from the room in the Tower in which the young Earl of Eskdale had been long confined. Both were dressed in female apparel; both were apparently much affected, and it appeared very natural that they should be so, as the following morning was appointed for the bloody spectacle of an execution on Tower Hill. The limbs of the younger and shorter lady trembled so much that they could hardly bear her up; but the other, though apparently weeping and holding a handkerchief to her eyes, seemed much more firm, and contrived to support the wavering steps of her companion as they passed out into the passage.

The jailer who opened the door to give them exit from the room looked in and saw a tall figure wrapped in a red cloak laced with gold, seated by the fire, with the head leaning on the hand. "All is right," he cried, speaking to another man at the top of the stairs hard by. "Pass them out!"

Hastening onward through the passages and courts of the Tower, as fast as the agitation of the fair girl would permit, they came without obstruction to the outer gate, where the two men

servants were waiting in the little gate-house. The turnkey who accompanied them seemed to be a kind-hearted man for one in such an office; and, while the wicket was being opened, he said--"Don't take it so much to heart, lady. Perhaps he may be pardoned after all."

One of the tall warders who stood near gave him a grim contemptuous look, and uttered a short cruel laugh; but the two visitors, without reply, passed unopposed through the wicket, and stood upon Tower Hill. The men servants followed, and the gate was closed.

Still keeping profoundly silent, they all walked on with great speed, not towards the little street in which Emmeline had lived, but towards the end of another street. When they were half way across the open space, the latter of the two bent down, saying in a whisper--"Bear up, bear up, dear Emmeline. We are well nigh safe now."

But hardly were the words uttered when two or three men came quickly across, and one of them taught hold of the apparently elder woman's arm, exclaiming, with a mocking laugh--"You are a tall lady, upon my soul, to walk upon Tower Hill of a night! Gadzooks, we must see more of your ladyship!"

Another man--who subsequently turned out to be a messenger sent in pursuit--at the same moment seized the young Earl (for I need hardly say it was he) with a hard strong grasp, exclaiming--"Henry, Earl of Eskdale, I charge you, in the King's name, to make no resistance."

With a faint despairing cry Emmeline sank to the ground, while they dragged Smeaton away from her side. The two servants, running up, demanded--"Who are you who dare to stop these ladies?" and angry words began to pass; but Smeaton interposed, saying--"It is in vain, it is in vain. Look to your lady, my good men. Convey her home safely. God bless you, my Emmeline!"

"What is the matter, what is the matter here?" cried Richard Newark, suddenly appearing with two or three more, while the man who had first seized upon Smeaton left him in the hands of the messenger, and raised Emmeline from the ground.

"Ah, Master Dick!" he exclaimed, "have *you* a finger in this pretty pie? Better put yourself out of harm's way, young man, as fast as possible."

"How dare you touch that lady, scoundrel?" demanded Richard, in a voice furious with passion, as he recognised the person of William Newark. "Take that for your pains!" And, holding the scabbard of his sword with his left hand, he struck his cousin a furious blow with the right.

William Newark started forward and drew his sword; Richard's was not long in the sheath; but the servants interposed, and parted them for the time, though not till words had been spoken--some in loud anger, some in the low tones of intense hate--which bore their fruit soon after. The last four of those words were uttered in a whisper.

"At seven, and alone," said Richard, in his cousin's ear.

The other nodded his head, and turned sullenly away, while Richard aided to raise the unhappy girl, whose last hope had been extinguished by her husband's recapture, and carried her, still insensible, to her dwelling.

In the mean time, the messenger and two of his men conducted their prisoner back to the gates of the Tower with feelings in the bosom of Smeaton too dark, too painful, for description. To his own fate his mind had been long made up, and the extinction of a brief hope of escape added little to the load he had to bear; but the thought of what might befall Emmeline in consequence of her effort to save him, and of the certain consequences to the devoted woman who had placed her liberty and even her life in peril for him, was too heavy to be borne with anything like calmness.

Arrived at the gates of the Tower, they found the wicket, to their surprise, open, and a good deal of confusion under the archway of the gate-house. Some twelve or fourteen men were collected; a buzz of tongues was going on; and some loud and angry words were being spoken. The lieutenant-governor himself, in a silk dressing-gown, was present, with a man beside him, holding a lantern; and just as the messenger passed the wicket, still holding the prisoner fast by the arm, they heard that officer exclaim--

"Shut the gate, shut the gate! Every one keep silence! If you can be discreet, no harm may come of this. If not, some of your necks may pay for it.--Ha! who have we here?"

"An escaped prisoner, Mr. Lieutenant," answered the messenger, who was willing to take all possible credit to himself. "I am sharp enough; and I got information of this fine plot."

The lieutenant-governor stared at him coldly, with no great appearance of satisfaction in his countenance.

"Pray, Mr. Messenger," he said, after a moment's thought, "had you any warrant for what you have done?"

The man looked aghast at the question, but replied, in a somewhat insolent tone--

"I needed no warrant to apprehend a convicted traitor whom you have suffered one way or another to slip out of the Tower."

The lieutenant still gazed at him with a frowning brow and teeth tight shut, and then said--

"You may have to prove, Mr. Messenger, that you possess such a justification of your conduct. *I* tell you, you have not."

Then, turning to one of the warders, he said, in a sharp tone--

"Shut the wicket, I say, and lock it. Let no one pass in or out till I return. Keep that man safe too," he continued, pointing to the messenger, "and be perfectly silent with him. Let no one exchange a word with him, as you value the King's favour.--My Lord of Eskdale, will you do me the honour of accompanying me back to your chamber? I wish to speak a few words with you.--Let go his arm, sir, this instant!"

The messenger instantly relaxed his grasp; and Smeaton, not less astonished than his captor, followed the lieutenant in silence back to the room where he had been confined. They found the door open; but within stood the turnkey, looking gloomy enough, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and old Mrs. Culpepper, with the young Lord's *roquelaure* now cast off, seated in her usual attire before the fire. The moment she heard steps, however, she started up, and, gazing at Smeaton, clasped her hands together in silence, with a look of unutterable anguish.

"Remove her to my lodging," said the lieutenant, speaking to the turnkey, "and keep her there under your guard till I come."

The young Earl, however, started forward, and took her by the hand.

"Thanks, excellent woman!" he exclaimed, "a thousand thanks! I pray God, as one of my last prayers, that he may defend you and my Emmeline, and shield you from all the ill consequences of this night."

Before she could reply--for her voice was choked with sobs--she was removed from the room; and the lieutenant, carefully closing the door, said, with a faint and rueful smile--

"That dress does not become you, my Lord. Let me beg you to throw it off, for I hardly know whether I am speaking to the Earl of Eskdale or an old woman."

"That is easily done," replied Smeaton, casting off the loose garment called a *sacque*, which was, for three-quarters of a century, a favourite habiliment of the ladies of France and England. "Now, sir, I am your prisoner again. I beseech you to leave me, for the last few hours of my life, to the thoughts which befit the occasion; and, if it be possible, to conceal the events which have taken place, so as to shield that excellent creature and all others from the consequences."

"This is a very awkward affair, my Lord," observed the lieutenant, thoughtfully; "and, upon my life, I do not well know what is to be done. Will your Lordship answer me this one question on your honour? Were any of the jailers--I do not wish you to specify the individual--were any of the jailers accessory to your escape?"

"Not in the least, to the best of my knowledge and belief," replied Lord Eskdale. "They have had from me the ordinary gratuities and nothing more; nor am I aware of their having connived in the least. They were deceived, as you yourself, perhaps, might have been by the disguise."

"I thank your Lordship for that assurance," said the lieutenant; "for it sets my mind greatly at ease; but yet I hardly know how to act."

"Methinks, if you were simply to report that I had endeavoured to escape, and had been prevented, that would be all that your duty requires."

"I do not know that," replied the lieutenant. "It is true, I never yet heard of a pardon being revoked; but certain it is, that an attempt to break prison--"

"A pardon!" exclaimed Smeaton, with his heart beating more vehemently than it would have done at the sight of the block and axe. "What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean, my Lord, exactly what I say," replied the lieutenant-governor. "Just at the time when your Lordship must have been preparing to effect your escape, the Secretary of State's messenger brought me a letter, authorising me to announce to you His Majesty's free pardon, and to say that, though it will not pass the seal till to-morrow, you may consider yourself from this moment at liberty. How the events of this night may be construed, and what I ought to do in these circumstances, I really cannot tell. As a man of honour, my Lord, what ought I to do?"

In a state of terrible agitation, Smeaton walked twice up and down the room; and then, turning to the lieutenant, he said--

"No consideration, sir, shall make me ask you to neglect your imperative duty. You must inform the King, however terrible the state of suspense must be to me, and however perilous may be the result. I could wish it, indeed, done immediately; but at this hour of the night--"

"My Lord, you are, indeed, a noble man," replied the lieutenant; "and I do not think you will lose by your conduct. I had retired to bed, somewhat unwell, before the messenger arrived. He insisted upon my being awakened, and some delay consequently occurred. Otherwise, the pardon would have been announced to you before you made this attempt. When I came to your room with the information, as I was commanded, I found you gone. But I will tell you what I will do. His Majesty is still up, for there is a court to-night; and I will immediately set out and lay before him or the Secretary of State the facts as they are. Stay! Perhaps it may be better for you to write to the King yourself; and I will be your messenger. It is absolutely needful this step should be taken at once. You have writing-materials here. Pray, write as briefly as possible, while I put myself in a different dress to present myself at the palace."

Thus saying, he left him; and Smeaton proceeded, with a rapid hand, to write as follows:--

Sire--"Your Majesty's gracious clemency has been this moment announced to me; and I beg to lay humbly the expression of my gratitude before you. I know not anything but your own merciful consideration which can have induced you to spare me, though I assure you, on my honour, that the facts which I stated without proof at my trial, regarding the causes which, if I may use the term, had driven me or misled me to take arms, were strictly true. Let me also assure you that, henceforth, neither directly nor indirectly, will I ever be found opposing your title to a crown which I am now thoroughly convinced you hold by the will of a great majority of the people, if you still condescend to extend your mercy towards me. But at the same time, I feel it right you should be informed that, at the very moment your gracious pardon was notified at the Tower, I was engaged, without the participation of any one within these walls, in an attempt to effect my escape from prison, fully believing that in its success lay my only chance for life. That attempt was frustrated; and I will not even endeavour to persuade the royal officers of the Tower to conceal the facts from you, but willingly leave my life at the disposition of a monarch who has already shown himself more merciful towards me than I could have expected."

He had hardly concluded when the lieutenant returned; and, in a few minutes, the young nobleman was left once more alone, to wait with painful anxiety for the result.

But, in the meanwhile, we must follow the lieutenant to the palace. The Secretary of State was called out to speak with him; and, after a brief conference, returned to the court. An hour passed, and a few minutes more, while the lieutenant remained in an ante-room, waiting the King's pleasure. At length, the sound of many people passing out was heard, with the roll of carriages; and a page entering bade the officer follow him to the King's closet. Unable to speak either French or Latin, he could simply lay the Earl of Eskdale's letter before the King, and trust to the secretary to translate it accurately, and give any farther explanation. When the monarch had heard the whole, however, he laughed good-humouredly, saying--

"Escape! Of course he did try to escape. What could a gentleman in his situation do better? No, no; our sign-manual is to the pardon. It only wants the seal, and we will not revoke it. We could not revoke a pardon, gentlemen. Severity may be re-considered--mercy never. Besides, it is clear from the evidence of Lord Stair, and from that of Colonel Churchill, who took Thomas Higham's dying deposition, that this young nobleman had no will to the work they put him upon; that he was at heart our own, notwithstanding the prejudices of his family; and that the machinations of this Sir John Newark, and others, abused a somewhat rash and hasty disposition. Something must be done with that same knight. I fear we cannot touch him for treason; but as to seditious practices, there must be some law which will affect him."

"I am not sure, Sire," replied Mr. Stanhope, one of the secretaries of state, "that this gentleman's acts do not amount to treason. His letter to the Earl of Mar is undoubtedly treasonable."

"Well, well, see to it, see to it," said the King, "As to this young lord, let the pardon pass. He may be set free at once."

"His Majesty says he will not revoke the pardon, Mr. Lieutenant," said the Secretary. "You may set Lord Eskdale at liberty. But I think it would be better if he were to pass some time in France."

The lieutenant of the Tower bowed and withdrew. Much to his satisfaction, few questions had been asked; and, returning to the Tower as fast as a pair of slow horses would draw him, he entered once more that abode of gloom and sorrow. He found the messenger who had seized Smeaton on Tower Hill, still in the gate-house, and ordered his liberation, saying--

"You have somewhat exceeded your duty, sir; but it was in ignorance. I find that the Earl of Eskdale's pardon was already signed. I have no orders with regard to you. So you may go free; but you had better be cautious."

He then proceeded straight to the room of his former prisoner, bearing him the joyful tidings that his pardon was confirmed.

"As to this old lady," he said, "who chose to personate a young gentleman, nothing whatever

has been said with regard to her; and therefore I suppose I must take upon myself the responsibility of letting her go, having no warrant to detain her. With regard to yourself, my lord, you can either remain here for the night, or depart if you please. But I must not fail to inform you that Mr. Secretary Stanhope hinted it might be better for you to pass some time quietly in France. Will you pass out to-night or to-morrow?"

"To-night, assuredly," replied the young Earl. "I would fain bear the comfortable tidings myself to those whose hearts are now full of mourning, and first to that good old woman who has risked so much for me."

"Come with me, then," said the lieutenant.

In about half an hour Smeaton, holding his good old nurse by the hand, passed free through the gates of the Tower, with one of the governor's servants carrying his little stock of baggage after them.

They took their way straight towards the street in which Emmeline's abode had been fixed; and, though it was now nearly three o'clock in the morning, lights were still to be seen through the crevices of the shutters. It was with no slight anxiety that Smeaton waited for the opening of the door, and it seemed long before it was unfastened. At length, however, one of the men who had accompanied the Lady Emmeline that night to the Tower appeared with a light, and uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise when he saw the faces of those who had just knocked.

"Hush!" said Smeaton, in a low voice. "How is your lady?"

"Oh, my lord, she will be well enough now," replied the man.

"Hark!" said Richard Newark, from the little parlour. "Hark! Emmeline, look up. I told you so. There is hope--there is comfort still." And, as he spoke, he threw open the door.

Emmeline had been sitting with het fair face, deluged in tears, covered by her hands; but, at her young cousin's words, she looked up--started forward--and in an instant was in her husband's arms.

I need not pause upon all the explanations that were given. I need not tell the joy that was felt; and, indeed, as to the farther events of that night, it is only necessary to say that, after hearing but a very small portion of Smeaton's story, Richard Newark left the lovers to their own happiness.

On the following morning, about eight o'clock, a note, written in a crabbed boy-like hand, was given to the Earl of Eskdale, who opened it hastily and read these words:--

"Noble friend,--I am going to try, this morning, whether you are a good fencing-master, and whether the blade you gave me is worth handling. Should I not join you and dear Emmy by eight o'clock, you will hear something of me in Mary-le-bone fields. God bless you both for a pair of loving turtles. If you don't see him again, think, from time to time, of

"Poor Dick."

Emmeline had not yet risen; and Smeaton, calling some of the servants hastily together, set out with terrible feelings of apprehension, for the spot which the note had indicated, and which, I may remark, was notorious at the time for the number of duels which it witnessed. Calling some people, who were better acquainted with the locality than themselves, to their aid, they searched the fields, which then extended where now stands Baker Street and the adjacent masses of houses, for some time without success; but, at length, they came upon the body of a man lying on his back, with his sword still clutched in his grasp, an old scar on his brow, and a sword-wound right through his chest. Life had evidently been extinct for some time; and Smeaton, who knew him well, bestowed little thought upon him.

Near the spot where he lay, which was one pool of gore, the ground was again dabbled with blood; and, tracking the drops which marked the frosty grass for nearly three hundred yards, they came to a place where, under some tall trees, and with his back leaning against one of them, sat Richard Newark, near a stile which he had apparently attempted, in vain, to reach. His face was ashy pale, and his hand rested languidly against the tree; but he still held a handkerchief, sopped in blood, to his right side, as if to staunch the bleeding of a severe wound. He could not speak nor even lift his head at first; but Smeaton, while one of the men ran off for a surgeon and some restoratives, unbuttoned his waistcoat, and with remarkable skill soon contrived to stop the current which was draining away his life. He recovered a little in a few minutes; and, after the arrival of the surgeon, who immediately gave him some of the essences then in vogue, looked up, with a light smile, in his friend's face, saying, "Ha, ha, Eskdale! I have paid our friend all debts; but that which vexed the scoundrel most was that he should be killed by the hand of a boy, as he called me. How he did curse when he was dying! Well, you may set up for a fencing-master when all other trades fail, though he did whip me his point over the arm, because I did not turn my

wrist quick enough, as you taught me."

The surgeon insisted upon his keeping silence; and a door, taken off the hinges, being obtained, he was placed upon it and carried away to the nearest house where lodging could be procured. There the wound he had received was more fully examined, and proved to be in reality of no very dangerous character, except from the great loss of blood it had occasioned. Before evening, he was better and stronger; and the sight of Emmeline and her husband by his bedside seemed to revive and cheer him greatly. But as the tidings of another fatal duel in Mary-le-bone fields began to spread, inquiries and investigations were set on foot which, it was evident, could not long be baffled. The fact of the duel having taken place without seconds, or witnesses, rendered the youth's situation rather perilous; and a long consultation took place that night between the Earl of Eskdale and the surgeon.

On the following morning, early, a ship in the Thames, bound for Dunkirk, received some five or six persons on board, and set sail immediately. Amongst them was Richard Newark, who was carried into the vessel on a mattress. There was also the young and beautiful Countess of Eskdale, somewhat pale and anxious of look, who sat upon the deck as they dropped down the river, with her hand resting on that of a tall dignified lady, advanced in life and habited in deep mourning. The rest of the party consisted of Smeaton, two men servants, the good old woman who had played such a conspicuous part in the events which have been narrated, and a maid servant.

There can be no doubt that the government at that time connived at the escape of many persons from the rigour of the law; and certain it is that the vessel I have mentioned was suffered to set sail without any obstruction. The passage was smooth and easy; and the whole party landed safely on the shores of France.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The darker scenes of the early part of the reign of George I. had passed away, and, though there were troubles and contentions in many parts of Europe, and conspiracies and designs against the existing government in England, general tranquillity reigned in this island, and prosperity and happiness were following fast upon the steps of peace.

But I must lead the reader away from England to a small village in France, some eight or nine miles from the capital; a sufficient distance to retain all its rustic quietness, and yet near enough to allow the intelligence of the great world to penetrate before it had grown very stale. At the distance of half a mile from this village was placed a small French château, built in a little trim park on a rising ground. The château had nothing remarkable about it; it was just like all other châteaux at the same period; a congregation of oddly-shaped masses of building, with several little round towers, having conical slated roofs, like candles with extinguishers on their tops. It had a sunny and pleasant aspect, however, and an avenue of fine old walnut trees ran up to it from the high road.

In a small room in this château, very quietly furnished, sat a group of people, with some of whom the reader is already acquainted, enjoying a pleasant dessert of wild strawberries and light Burgundy wine. Perfect contentment was upon all their countenances, and harmony in all their hearts. One young man, indeed, was pale and grave, though serene in aspect.

But I must begin with those of whom the reader as yet knows little. They consisted of two elderly people and one young lady. The first was a fine dignified man, somewhat beyond the middle age, with hair very grey but with eyes still bright and keen. The second was a lady younger, but not by many years; and, though they were both advanced in life, as I have said, they continued to call each other by the names of early affection.

Passing from one part of the chain of life to another very distant, we must notice that bright-looking curly-headed boy, little more than two years old, seated on the knee of that very beautiful girl whom he calls "mother," in the good old Saxon tongue. It is Emmeline's boy, and I need not say who is that gentleman by her side. An old lady close by, now a little bowed with age, is the Dowager Countess of Eskdale.

But who are the two whom I have mentioned as rather beyond middle life? Emmeline calls them "father, mother;" and looks at them with love none the less because she was so long bereaved of their fostering care. The pale young man in a military dress, with signs of mourning, too, in his apparel, is Richard Newark, and that fat, round, rosy-pippin personage--Heaven! what a crowd of leaden figures rush upon the imagination as one looks at him!

"It is strange, Dick," said Lord Eskdale, "that you and good Van Noost should have arrived here this morning after we have not met for so long a time! Do you know, Emmeline," he continued, turning to his wife, "that this is the anniversary of the day on which I first set eyes on that dear face?"

"Do you think I can ever forget it, Henry?" she answered. "It is the first of my days of brightness. It is like a sweet song remembered in a happy dream."

"And how can I ever thank you, my dear Lord," continued her husband, addressing her father, "for giving me that commission to seek and regain for you your daughter, which has ended in bestowing such happiness on myself?"

"There are two things, my dear Harry, for which many sage friends have blamed me," replied Lord Newark, "which I can never regret, and of the wisdom of which even those who blamed me are now convinced; the one, my having trusted a young man, whom I knew to be the soul of real honour, with so delicate a task; the other, my having set at nought all ideas of imaginary dignity, and, as a merchant, having secured to my family that competence which I had lost by doing my duty as a soldier. I am proud of both these acts, and both have ended in happiness. Had my poor boys but lived to see this day, there would be little in the past even to bring one cloud of melancholy over my setting sun."

Richard Newark looked up in his face as he spoke, and asked--

"Would you never regret, my good Lord and cousin, having lost in the cause of a bad prince those fair lands in Devonshire, to which I am sure, if you feel like me, you must cling even in memory?"

"Not a whit, Dick," replied the old nobleman. "The favours of fortune, or, as some would call them better, the gifts of God, are loans, my dear boy, to be resumed when it is His pleasure; and--
"

"Then I have borrowed them long enough," interrupted Richard Newark, in his abrupt way; "and it is high time they should be restored."

"No, no, Dick," said Lord Newark. "They are yours since your father's death. I have nought to do with them, and could not enjoy them even if you gave them up."

"They are not mine at all," replied the young man, "never have been mine, never have been my father's."

"But the forfeiture, the forfeiture!" exclaimed Lord Newark. "If they are not yours, whose are they?"

"Emmeline's," replied her cousin. "The forfeiture extended not to her. They were settled by deed upon your dear lady and her children, male and female, two years before the forfeiture. You lost them by drawing the sword against King William. She lost them, and your sons lost them, by accompanying you in the war and in your flight. You four are specially named in the act of attainder; and the lands fell to her at once as the next heir. The cunning lawyers, I believe, outwitted themselves by making the black and white parchment so particular; but the original act, always preserved by my father, was found by Van Noost when he went down to patch up an old monument in Aleton church by putting a leaden hand on a stone figure. I was always sure there was something of the kind, or my father would not have kept such a sharp watch upon Emmy. He was not a man to keep pet birds in a cage for the sole purpose of feeding them and hearing them sing. God rest his soul! He did it all for me; and so I must say no more."

Lord Eskdale looked to Emmeline, with a thoughtful enquiring glance; and she read his meaning in an instant.

"I will not take them, Dick," she said. "I cannot, will not, take them from you. Am I not right, Henry?"

"But you must, sweet lady," replied Richard. "With what is left, I have enough, and more than enough; so that you do not make me pay back all that has been unjustly taken. The lands were conveyed to my father by gift of the crown, saving the appearance of any nearer heir not named in the act of forfeiture. The lands are yours therefore, and ever have been yours. I will have nothing to do with them. I tell you, dear cousin, I have enough, and far more than enough, for a single man."

"But you may marry, Richard," said Emmeline. "You are very young to make vows of celibacy."

"Never, never, Emmy," he said. "I will not transmit to others an infirmity." And he laid his finger significantly upon his forehead.

A moment of grave silence succeeded; and then, looking at her father, Emmeline, said--

"Would that I could give them back to you, my father!"

"There is nothing to prevent you, Emmy," said Richard Newark. "Lord Stair tells me that your

father can hop over the sea and perch upon Ale at once, if he will but promise to live peaceably under the government that exists. In a word, the attainder can be reversed in a moment upon such a promise. His not having joined in the last affair, where we all burnt our fingers more or less, has won him high favour."

Lord Newark bent down his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought.

"But come, let us talk of other things," said Richard Newark, after pausing for an instant. "Business is dull work; and that is settled. There is only one thing you must promise me, Eskdale and Emmeline. When you are Lord and Lady of Ale Manor, you must let me have my little room up two pair of stairs when I come to see you; and old Mrs. Culpepper, when she is housekeeper again, must not make the maids throw what she used to call my rubbish into the fire."

Emmeline held out her hand to him kindly; and her husband assured him that he should be as free as air in any house of his.

"I have already made free with this house, at all events," replied Richard Newark; "for I have asked Colonel Churchill to come down here to-morrow. He wants much to see you again, Eskdale; and, I can tell you, you owe him something more than a dinner and a bottle of wine."

"He was exceedingly courteous to me when I was a prisoner," said the young Earl; "and I shall be very happy to see him."

"Ay, but you owe him more than that," answered Richard Newark.

"Let me tell him, let me tell him," cried Van Noost, who had sat marvellously silent after the allusion to the leaden hand upon the stone figure. "Let me tell him; for I first ferreted out the facts, and got Colonel Churchill to write them down for my Lord Stair. After he had received your surrender at Preston, my noble Lord, he went to visit that rascal, Tom Higham, on his death-bed, and from his own lips heard that the fellow had deceived you; that, bribed to lead you on into the rebellion, he had given your letter into the hands of the Colonel of Lord Stair's regiment, who tore it open, read it, and sent it back, bidding him tell you that Lord Stair was in Paris, and that if you would send a messenger to him, doubtless everything would be explained, as that noble Lord had never failed in his word; not one syllable of which the rascal told you."

"Heaven forgive him!" said Smeaton. "He did much harm."

The conversation proceeded in the same tone. But enough of it has been given for all the purposes of this book. Were I to paint another scene, it would be that of Christmas eve at Ale Manor House, where, round the wide fire-place of the great hall, might be seen the faces of the same persons as were seated round the table of that small *château*.

But the story is long enough; and the reader's fancy must supply the rest.

FOOTNOTES.

Footnote 1: It was the place where the Earl of Derwentwater first openly took part in the insurrection.

Footnote 2: Mr. Patten declares that he was the man who saved Forster's life; but this is somewhat doubtful.

THE END.

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