St. George and St. Michael Vol. II

George MacDonald

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CHAPTER XVII. THE FIRE−ENGINE.

As soon as supper was over in the housekeeper's room, Dorothy sped to the keep, where she found Caspar at work.

'My lord is not yet from supper, mistress,' he said. 'Will it please you wait while he comes?'

Had it been till midnight, so long as there was a chance of his appearing, Dorothy would have waited. Caspar did his best to amuse her, and succeeded,—showing her one curious thing after another,—amongst the rest a watch that seemed to want no winding after being once set agoing, but was in fact wound up a little by every opening of the case to see the dial. All the while the fire−engine was at work on its mysterious task, with but now and then a moment's attention from Caspar, a billet of wood or a shovelful of sea−coal on the fire, a pull at a cord, or a hint from the hooked rod. The time went rapidly.

Twilight was over, Caspar had lighted his lamp, and the moon had risen, before lord Herbert came.

'I am glad to find you have patience as well as punctuality in the catalogue of your virtues, mistress Dorothy,' he said as he entered. 'I too am punctual, and am therefore sorry to have failed now, but it is not my fault: I had to attend my father. For his sake pardon me.'

'It were but a small matter, my lord, even had it been uncompelled, to keep an idle girl waiting.'

'I think not so,' returned lord Herbert. 'But come now, I will explain to you my wonderful fire−engine.'

As he spoke, he took her by the hand, and led her towards it. The creature blazed, groaned, and puffed, but there was no motion to be seen about it save that of the flames through the cracks in the door of the furnace, neither was there any clanking noise of metal. A great rushing sound somewhere in the distance, that seemed to belong to it, yet appeared too far off to have any connection with it.

'It is a noisy thing,' he said, as they stood before it, 'but when I make another, it shall do its work that thou wouldst not hear it outside the door. Now listen to me for a moment, cousin. Should it come to a siege and I not at Raglan—the wise man will always provide for the worst—Caspar will be wanted everywhere. Now this engine is essential to the health and comfort, if not to the absolute life of the castle, and there is no one at present capable of managing it save us two. A very little instruction, however, would enable any one to do so: will you undertake it, cousin, in case of need?'

'Make me assured that I can, and I will, my lord,' answered Dorothy.

'A good and sufficing answer,' returned his lordship, with a smile of satisfaction. 'First then,' he went on, 'I will show you wherein lies its necessity to the good of the castle. Come with me, cousin Dorothy.'

He led the way from the room, and began to ascend the stair which rose just outside it. Dorothy followed, winding up through the thickness of the wall. And now she could not hear the engine. As she went up, however, certain sounds of it came again, and grew louder till they seemed close to her ears, then gradually died away and once more ceased. But ever, as they ascended, the rushing sound which had seemed connected with it, although so distant, drew nearer and nearer, until, having surmounted three of the five lofty stories of the building, they could scarcely hear each other speak for the roar of water, falling in intermittent jets. At last they came out on the top of the wall, with nothing between them and the moat below but the battlemented parapet, and behold! the mighty tower was roofed with water: a little tarn filled all the space within the surrounding walk. It undulated in the moonlight like a subsiding storm, and beat the encircling banks. For into its depths shot rather than poured a great volume of water from a huge orifice in the wall, and the roar and the rush were tremendous. It was like the birth of a river, bounding at once from its mountain rock, and the sound of its fall indicated the great depth of the water into which it plunged. Solid indeed must be the walls that sustained the outpush of such a weight of water!

'You see now, cousin, what yon fire−souled slave below is labouring at,' said his lordship. 'His task is to fill this cistern, and that he can in a few hours; and yet, such a slave is he, a child who understands his fetters and the joints of his bones can guide him at will.'

'But, my lord,' questioned Dorothy, 'is there not water here to supply the castle for months? And there is the draw−well in the pitched court besides.'

'Enough, I grant you,' he replied, 'for the mere necessities of life. But what would come of its pleasures? Would not the beleaguered ladies miss the bounty of the marble horse? Whence comes the water he gives so

freely that he needeth not to drink himself? He would thirst indeed but for my water−commanding fiend below. Or how would the birds fare, were the fountains on the islands dry in the hot summer? And what would the children say if he ceased to spout? And how would my lord's tables fare, with the armed men besetting every gate, the fish−ponds dry, and the fish rotting in the sun? See you, mistress Dorothy? And for the draw−well, know you not wherein lies the good of a tower stronger than all the rest? Is it not built for final retreat, the rest of the castle being at length in the hands of the enemy? Where then is your draw−well?'

'But this tower, large as it is, could not receive those now within the walls of the castle,' said Dorothy.

'They will be fewer ere its shelter is needful.'

It was his tone quite as much as the words that drove a sudden sickness to the heart of the girl: for one moment she knew what siege and battle meant. But she recovered herself with a strong effort, and escaped from the thought by another question.

'And whence comes all this water, my lord?' she said, for she was one who would ask until she knew all that concerned her.

'Have you not chanced to observe a well in my workshop below, on the left−hand side of the door, not far from the great chest?'

'I have observed it, my lord.'

'That is a very deep well, with a powerful spring. Large pipes lead from all but the very bottom of that to my fire−engine. The fuller the well, the more rapid the flow into the cistern, for the shallower the water, the more labour falls to my giant. He is finding it harder work now. But you see the cistern is nearly full.'

'Forgive me, my lord, if I am troubling you,' said Dorothy, about to ask another question.

'I delight in the questions of the docile,' said his lordship. 'They are the little children of wisdom. There! that might be out of the book of Ecclesiasticus,' he added, with a merry laugh. 'I might pass that off on Dr. Bayly for my father's: he hath already begun to gather my father's sayings into a book, as I have discovered. But, prithee, cousin, let not my father know of it.'

'Fear not me, my lord,' returned Dorothy. 'Having no secrets of my own to house, it were evil indeed to turn my friends' out of doors.'

'Why, that also would do for Dr. Bayly! Well said, Dorothy! Now for thy next question.'

'It is this, my lord: having such a well in your foundations, whence the need of such a cistern on your roof? I mean now as regards the provision of the keep itself in case of ultimate resort.'

'In coming to deal with a place of such strength as this,' replied his lordship, '—I mean the keep whereon we now stand, not the castle, which, alas! hath many weak points—the enemy would assuredly change the siege into a blockade; that is, he would try to starve instead of fire us out; and, procuring information sufficiently to the point, would be like enough to dig deep and cut the water−veins which supply that well; and thereafter all would depend on the cistern. From the moment therefore when the first signs of siege appear, it will be wisdom and duty on the part of the person in charge to keep it constantly full—full as a cup to the health of the king. I trust however that such will be the good success of his majesty's arms that the worst will only have to be provided against, not encountered.—But there is more in it yet. Come hither, cousin. Look down through this battlement upon the moat. You see the moon in it? No? That is because it is covered so thick with weeds. When you go down, mark how low it is. There is little defence in the moat that a boy might wade through. I have allowed it to get shallow in order to try upon its sides a new cement I have lately discovered; but weeks and weeks have passed, and I have never found the leisure, and now I am sure I never shall until this rebellion is crushed. It is time I filled it. Pray look down upon it, cousin. In summer it will be full of the loveliest white water−lilies, though now you can see nothing but green weeds.'

He had left her side and gone a few paces away, but kept on speaking.

'One strange thing I can tell you about them, cousin—the roots of that whitest of flowers make a fine black dye! What apophthegm founded upon that, thinkest thou, my father would drop for Dr Bayly?'

'You perplex me much, my lord,' said Dorothy. 'I cannot at all perceive your lordship's drift.'

'Lay a hand on each side of the battlement where you now stand; lean through it and look down. Hold fast and fear nothing.' Dorothy did as she was desired, and thus supported gazed upon the moat below, where it lay a mere ditch at the foot of the lofty wall.

'My lord, I see nothing,' she said, turning to him, as she thought; but he had vanished.

Again she looked at the moat, and then her eyes wandered away over the castle. The two courts and their many roofs, even those of all the towers, except only the lofty watch−tower on the western side, lay bare beneath her, in bright moonlight, flecked and blotted with shadows, all wondrous in shape and black as Erebus.

Suddenly, she knew not whence, arose a frightful roaring, a hollow bellowing, a pent−up rumbling. Seized by a vague terror, she clung to the parapet and trembled. But even the great wall beneath her, solid as the earth itself, seemed to tremble under her feet, as with some inward commotion or dismay. The next moment the water in the moat appeared to rush swiftly upwards, in wild uproar, fiercely confused, and covered with foam and spray. To her bewildered eyes, it seemed to heap itself up, wave upon furious wave, to reach the spot where she stood, greedy to engulf her. For an instant she fancied the storming billows pouring over the edge of the battlement, and started back in such momentary agony as we suffer in dreams. Then, by a sudden rectification of her vision, she perceived that what she saw was in reality a multitude of fountain jets rushing high towards their parent−cistern, but far−failing ere they reached it. The roar of their onset was mingled with the despairing tumult of their defeat, and both with the deep tumble and wallowing splash of the water from the fire−engine, which grew louder and louder as the surface of the water in the reservoir sank. The uproar ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, but the moat mirrored a thousand moons in the agitated waters which had overwhelmed its mantle of weeds.

'You see now,' said lord Herbert, rejoining her while still she gazed, 'how necessary the cistern is to the keep? Without it, the few poor springs in the moat would but sustain it as you saw it. From here I can fill it to the brim.'

'I see,' answered Dorothy. 'But would not a simple overflow serve, carried from the well through the wall?'

'It would, were there no other advantages with which this mode harmonised. I must mention one thing more—which I was almost forgetting, and which I cannot well show you to−night—namely, that I can use this water not only as a means of defence in the moat, but as an engine of offence also against any one setting unlawful or hostile foot upon the stone bridge over it. I can, when I please, turn that bridge, the same by which you cross to come here, into a rushing aqueduct, and with a torrent of water sweep from it a whole company of invaders.'

'But would they not have only to wait until the cistern was empty?'

'As soon and so long as the bridge is clear, the outflow ceases. One sweep, and my water−broom would stop, and the rubbish lie sprawling under the arch, or half−way over the court. And more still,' he added with emphasis: 'I COULD make it boiling!'

'But your lordship would not?' faltered Dorothy.

'That might depend,' he answered with a smile. Then changing his tone in absolute and impressive seriousness, 'But this is all nothing but child's play,' he said, 'compared with what is involved in the matter of this reservoir. The real origin of it was its needfulness to the perfecting of my fire−engine.'

'Pardon me, my lord, but it seems to me that without the cistern there would be no need for the engine. How should you want or how could you use the unhandsome thing? Then how should the cistern be necessary to the engine?'

'Handsome is that handsome does,' returned his lordship. 'Truly, cousin Dorothy, you speak well, but you must learn to hear better. I did not say that the cistern existed for the sake of the engine, but for the sake of the perfecting of the engine. Cousin Dorothy, I will give you the largest possible proof of my confidence in you, by not only explaining to you the working of my fire−engine, but acquainting you—only you must not betray me!'

'I, in my turn,' said Dorothy, 'will give your lordship, if not the strongest, yet a very strong proof of my confidence: I promise to keep your secret before knowing what it is.'

'Thanks, cousin. Listen then: That engine is a mingling of discovery and invention such as hath never had its equal since first the mechanical powers were brought to the light. For this shall be as a soul to animate those, all and each—lever, screw, pulley, wheel, and axle—what you will. No engine of mightiest force ever for defence or assault invented, let it be by Archimedes himself, but could by my fire−engine be rendered tenfold more mighty for safety or for destruction, although as yet I have applied it only to the blissful operation of lifting water, thus removing the curse of it where it is a curse, and carrying it where the parched soil cries for its help to unfold the treasures of its thirsty bosom. My fire−engine shall yet uplift the nation of England above the heads of all richest and most powerful nations on the face of the whole earth. For when the troubles of this rebellion are over, which press so heavily on his majesty and all loyal subjects, compelling even a peaceful man like myself to forsake invention for war, and the workman's frock which I love, for the armour which I love not, when peace shall smile

again on the country, and I shall have time to perfect the work of my hands, I shall present it to my royal master, a magical supremacy of power, which shall for ever raise him and his royal progeny above all use or need of subsidies, ship−money, benevolences, or taxes of whatever sort or name, to rule his kingdom as independent of his subjects in reality as he is in right; for this water−commanding engine, which God hath given me to make, shall be the source of such wealth as no accountant can calculate. For herewith may marsh−land be thoroughly drained, or dry land perfectly watered; great cities kept sweet and wholesome; mines rid of the water gathering from springs therein, so as he may enrich himself withal; houses be served plentifully on every stage; and gardens in the dryest summer beautified and comforted with fountains. Which engine when I found that it was in the power of my hands to do, as well as of my heart to conceive that it might be done, I did kneel down and give humble thanks from the bottom of my heart to the omnipotent God whose mercies are fathomless, for his vouchsafing me an insight into so great a secret of nature and so beneficial to all mankind as this my engine.'

With all her devotion to the king, and all her hatred and contempt of the parliament and the puritans, Dorothy could not help a doubt whether such independence might be altogether good either for the king himself or the people thus subjected to his will. But the farther doubt did not occur to her whether a pre−eminence gained chiefly by wealth was one to be on any grounds desired for the nation, or, setting that aside, was one which carried a single element favourable to perpetuity.

All this time they had been standing on the top of the keep, with the moonlight around them, and in their ears the noise of the water flowing from the dungeon well into the sky−roofed cistern. But now it came in diminished flow.

'It is the earth that fails in giving, not my engine in taking,' said lord Herbert as he turned to lead the way down the winding stair. Ever as they went, the noise of the water grew fainter and the noise of the engine grew louder, but just as they stepped from the stair, it gave a failing stroke or two, and ceased. A dense white cloud met them as they entered the vault.

'Stopped for the night, Caspar?' said his lordship.

'Yes, my lord; the well is nearly out.'

'Let it sleep,' returned his master; 'like a man's heart it will fill in the night. Thank God for the night and darkness and sleep, in which good things draw nigh like God's thieves, and steal themselves in—water into wells, and peace and hope and courage into the minds of men. Is it not so, my cousin?'

Dorothy did not answer in words, but she looked up in his face with a reverence in her eyes that showed she understood him. And this was one of the idolatrous catholics! It was neither the first nor the last of many lessons she had to receive, in order to learn that a man may be right although the creed for which he is and ought to be ready to die, may contain much that is wrong. Alas! that so few, even of such men, ever reflect, that it is the element common to all the creeds which gives its central value to each.

'I cannot show you the working of the engine to−night,' said lord Herbert. 'Caspar has decreed otherwise.'

'I can soon set her agoing again, my lord,' said Caspar.

'No, no. We must to the powder−mill, Caspar. Mistress Dorothy will come again to−morrow, and you must yourself explain to her the working and management of it, for I shall be away. And do not fear to trust my cousin, Caspar, although she be a soft−handed lady. Let her have the brute's halter in her own hold.'

Filled with gratitude for the trust he reposed in her, Dorothy took her leave, and the two workmen immediately abandoned their shop for the night, leaving the door wide open behind them to let out the vapours of the fire−engine, in the confidence that no unlicensed foot would dare to cross the threshold, and betook themselves to the powder−mill, where they continued at work the greater part of the night.

His lordship was unfavourable to the storing of powder because of the danger, seeing they could, on his calculation, from the materials lying ready for mixing, in one week prepare enough to keep all the ordnance on the castle walls busy for two. But indeed he had not such a high opinion of gunpowder but that he believed engines for projection, more powerful as well as less expensive, could be constructed, after the fashion of ballista or catapult, by the use of a mode he had discovered of immeasurably increasing the strength of springs, so that stones of a hundredweight might be thrown into a city from a quarter of a mile's distance without any noise audible to those within. It was this device he was brooding over when Dorothy came upon him by the arblast. Nor did the conviction arise from any prejudice against fire−arms, for he had, among many other wonderful things of the sort, in cannons, sakers, harquebusses, muskets, musquetoons, and all kinds, invented a pistol to discharge a

dozen times with one loading, and without so much as new priming being once requisite, or the possessor having to change it out of one hand into the other, or stop his horse.

One who had happened to see lord Herbert as he went about within his father's walls, busy yet unhasting, earnest yet cheerful, rapid in all his movements yet perfectly composed, would hardly have imagined that a day at a time, or perhaps two, was all he was now able to spend there, days which were to him as breathing−holes in the ice to the wintered fishes. For not merely did he give himself to the enlisting of large numbers of men, but commanded both horse and foot, meeting all expenses from his own pocket, or with the assistance of his father. A few months before the period at which my story has arrived, he had in eight days raised six regiments, fortified Monmouth and Chepstow, and garrisoned half−a−dozen smaller but yet important places. About a hundred noblemen and gentlemen whom he had enrolled as a troop of life−guards, he furnished with the horses and arms which they were unable to provide with sufficient haste for themselves. So prominenf indeed were his services on behalf of the king, that his father was uneasy because of the jealousy and hate it would certainly rouse in the minds of some of his majesty's well−wishers—a just presentiment, as his son had too good reason to acknowledge after he had spent a million of money, besides the labour and thought and dangerous endeavour of years, in the king's service.

CHAPTER XVIII. MOONLIGHT AND APPLE−BLOSSOMS.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, lord Herbert set out for Chepstow first and then Monmouth, both which places belonged to his father, and were principal sources of his great wealth.

Still, amid the rush of the changeful tides of war around them, and the rumour of battle filling the air, all was peaceful within the defences of Raglan, and its towers looked abroad over a quiet country, where the cattle fed and the green wheat grew. On the far outskirts of vision, indeed, a smoke might be seen at times from the watch−tower, and across the air would come the dull boom of a great gun from one of the fortresses, at which lady Margaret's cheek would turn pale; but, although every day something was done to strengthen the castle, although masons were at work here and there about the walls like bees, and Caspar Kaltoff was busy in all directions, now mounting fresh guns, now repairing steel cross−bows, now getting out of the armoury the queerest oldest−fashioned engines to place wherever available points could be found, there was no hurry and no confusion, and indeed so little appearance of unusual activity, that an unmilitary stranger might have passed a week in the castle without discovering that preparations for defence were actively going on. All around them the buds were creeping out, uncurling, spreading abroad, straightening themselves, smoothing out the creases of their unfolding, and breathing the air of heaven—in some way very pleasant to creatures with roots as well as to creatures with legs. The apple−blossoms came out, and the orchard was lovely as with an upward−driven storm of roseate snow. Ladies were oftener seen passing through the gates and walking in the gardens—where the fountains had begun to play, and the swans and ducks on the lakes felt the return of spring in every fibre of their webby feet and cold scaly legs.

And Dorothy sat as it were at the spring−head of the waters, for, through her dominion over the fire−engine, she had become the naiad of Raglan. The same hour in which lord Herbert departed she went to Kaltoff, and was by him instructed in its mysteries. On the third day after, so entirely was the Dutchman satisfied with her understanding and management of it, that he gave up to her the whole water−business. And now, as I say, she sat at the source of all the streams and fountains of the place, and governed them all. The horse of marble spouted and ceased at her will, but in general she let the stream from his mouth flow all day long. Every water−cock on the great tower was subject to her. From the urn of her pleasure the cistern was daily filled, and from the summit of defence her flood went pouring into the moat around its feet, until it mantled to the brim, turning the weeds into a cold shadowy pavement of green for a foil to its pellucid depth. She understood all the secrets of the aqueous catapult, at which its contriver had little more than hinted on that memorable night when he disclosed so much, and believed she could arrange it for action without assistance. At the same time her new responsibilities required but a portion of her leisure, and lady Margaret was not the less pleased with the wise−headed girl, whose manners and mental ways were such a contrast to her own, that her husband considered her fit to be put in charge of his darling invention. But Dorothy kept silence concerning the trust to all but her mistress, who, on her part, was prudent enough to avoid any allusion which might raise yet higher the jealousy of her associates, by whom she was already regarded as supplanting them in the favour of their mistress.

One lovely evening in May, the moon at the full, the air warm yet fresh, the apple−blossoms at their largest, with as yet no spot upon their fair skin, and the nightingales singing out of their very bones, the season, the hour, the blossoms, and the moon had invaded every chamber in the castle, seized every heart of both man and beast, and turned all into one congregation of which the nightingales were the priests. The cocks were crowing as if it had been the dawn itself instead of its ghost they saw; the dogs were howling, but whether that was from love or hate of the moon, I cannot tell; the pigeons were cooing; the peacock had turned his train into a paralune, understanding well that the carnival could not be complete without him and his; and the wild beasts were restless, uttering a short yell now and then, at least aware that something was going on. All the inhabitants of the castle were out of doors, the ladies and gentlemen in groups here and there about the gardens and lawns and islands, and the domestics, and such of the garrison as were not on duty, wandering hither and thither where they pleased, careful only not to intrude on their superiors.

Lady Margaret was walking with her step−son Henry on a lawn under the northern window of the picture−gallery, and there the ladies Elizabeth and Anne joined them—the former a cheerful woman, endowed with a large share of her father's genial temperament; joke or jest would moult no feather in lady Elizabeth's keeping; the latter quiet, sincere, and reverent. The marquis himself, notwithstanding a slight attack of the gout, had hobbled on his stick to a chair set for him on the same lawn. Beside him sat lady Mary, younger than the other two, and specially devoted to her father.

Their gentlewomen were also out, flitting in groups that now and then mingled and changed. Rowland Scudamore joined lady Margaret's people, and in a moment lady Broughton was laughing merrily. But mistress Doughty walked on with straight neck, as if there were nobody but herself in heaven or on the earth, although mortals were merry by her side, and nightingales singing themselves to death over her head. Behind them came Amanda Serafina, with her eyes on her feet, and the corners of her pretty mouth drawn down in contempt of nobody in particular. Now and then Scudamore, when satisfied with his own pretty wit, would throw a glance behind him, and she, somehow or other, would, without change of muscle, let him know that she had heard him. This group sauntered into the orchard.

After them came Dorothy with Dr Bayly, talking of their common friend Mr. Matthew Herbert, and following them into the orchard, wandered about among the trees, under the curdled moonlight of the apple−blossoms, amid the challenges and responses of five or six nightingales, that sang as if their bodies had dwindled under the sublimating influences of music, until, with more than cherubic denudation, their sum of being was reduced to a soul and a throat.

Moonlight, apple−blossoms, nightingales, with the souls of men and women for mirrors and reflectors! The picture is for the musician not the painter, either him of words or him of colours. It was like a lovely show in the land of dreams, even to the living souls that moved in and made part of it. The earth is older now, colder at the heart, a little nearer to the fate of cold−hearted things, which is to be slaves and serve without love; but she has still the same moonlight, the same apple−blossoms, the same nightingales, and we have the same hearts, and so can understand it. But, alas! how differently should we come in amongst the accessories of such a picture! For we men at least are all but given over to ugliness, and, artistically considered, even vulgarity, in the matter of dress, wherein they, of all generations of English men and women, were too easily supreme both as to form and colour. Hence, while they are an admiration to us, we shall be but a laughter to those that come behind us, and that whether their fashions be better than ours or no, for nothing is so ridiculous as ugliness out of date. The glimmer of gold and silver, the glitter of polished steel, the flashing of jewels, and the flowing of plumes, went well. But, so canopied with loveliness, so besung with winged passion, so clothed that even with the heavenly delicacies enrounding them they blended harmoniously, their moonlit orchard was an island beat by the waves of war, its air would quiver and throb by fits, shaken with the roar of cannon, and might soon gleam around them with the whirring sweep of the troopers' broad blades; while all throughout the land, the hateful demon of party spirit tore wide into gashes the wounds first made by conscience in the best, and by prejudice in the good.

The elder ladies had floated away together between the mossy stems, under the canopies of blossoms; Rowland had fallen behind and joined the waiting Amanda, and the two were now flitting about like moths in the moonshine; Dorothy and Dr. Bayly had halted in an open spot, like a moonlight impluvium, the divine talking eagerly to the maiden, and the maiden looking up at the moon, and heeding the nightingales more than the divine.

'CAN they be English nightingales?' said Dorothy thoughtfully.

The doctor was bewildered for a moment. He had been talking about himself, not the nightingales, but he recovered himself like a gentleman.

'Assuredly, mistress Dorothy,' he replied; 'this is the land of their birth. Hither they come again when the winter is over.'

'Yes; they take no part in our troubles. They will not sing to comfort our hearts in the cold; but give them warmth enough, and they sing as careless of battle−fields and dead men as if they were but moonlight and apple−blossoms.'

'Is it not better so?' returned the divine after a moment's thought. 'How would it be if everything in nature but re−echoed our moan?'

Dorothy looked at the little man, and was in her turn a moment silent.

'Then,' she said, 'we must see in these birds and blossoms, and that great blossom in the sky, so many prophets

of a peaceful time and a better country, sent to remind us that we pass away and go to them.'

'Nay, my dear mistress Dorothy!' returned the all but obsequious doctor; 'such thoughts do not well befit your age, or rather, I would say, your youth. Life is before you, and life is good. These evil times will go by, the king shall have his own again, the fanatics will be scourged as they deserve, and the church will rise like the phoenix from the ashes of her purification.'

'But how many will lie out in the fields all the year long, yet never see blossoms or hear nightingales more!' said Dorothy.

'Such will have died martyrs,' rejoined the doctor.

'On both sides?' suggested Dorothy.

Again for a moment the good man stood checked. He had not even thought of the dead on the other side.

'That cannot be,' he said. And Dorothy looked up again at the moon.

But she listened no more to the songs of the nightingales, and they left the orchard together in silence.

'Come, Rowland, we must not be found here alone,' said Amanda, who saw them go. 'But tell me one thing first: is mistress Dorothy Vaughan indeed your cousin?'

'She is indeed. Her mother and mine were cousins german—sisters' children.'

'I thought it could not be a near cousinship. You are not alike at all. Hear me, Rowland, but let it die in your ear—I love not mistress Dorothy.'

'And the reason, lovely hater? "Is not the maiden fair to see?" as the old song says. I do not mean that she is fair as some are fair, but she will pass; she offends not.'

'She is fair enough—not beautiful, not even pleasing; but, to be just, the demure look she puts on may bear the fault of that. Rowland, I would not speak evil of any one, but your cousin is a hypocrite. She is false at heart, and she hates me. Trust me, she but bides her time to let me know it—and you too, my Rowland.'

'I am sure you mistake her, Amanda,' said Scudamore. 'Her looks are but modest, and her words but shy, for she came hither from a lonely house. I believe she is honest and good.'

'Seest thou not then how that she makes friends with none but her betters? Already hath she wound herself around my lady's heart, forsooth! and now she pays her court to the puffing chaplain! Hast thou never observed, my Rowland, how oft she crosses the bridge to the yellow tower? What seeks she there? Old Kaltoff, the Dutchman, it can hardly be. I know she thinks to curry with my lord by pretending to love locks and screws and pistols and such like. "But why should she haunt the place when my lord is not there?" you will ask. Her pretence will hold the better for it, no doubt, and Caspar will report concerning her. And if she pleases my lord well, who knows but he may give her a pair of watches to hang at her ears, or a box that Paracelsus himself could not open without the secret as well as the key? I have heard of both such. They say my lord hath twenty cartloads of quite as wonderful things in that vault he calls his workshop. Hast thou never marked the huge cabinet of black inlaid with silver, that stands by the wall—fitter indeed for my lady's chamber than such a foul place?'

'I have seen it,' answered Scudamore.

'I warrant me it hath store of gewgaws fit for a duchess.'

'Like enough,' assented Rowland.

'If mistress Dorothy were to find the way through my lord's favour into that cabinet—truly it were nothing to thee or me, Rowland.'

'Assuredly not. It would be my lord's own business.'

'Once upon a time I was sent to carry my young lady Raven thither—to see my lord earn his bread, as said my lady: and what should my lord but give her no less than a ball of silver which, thrown into a vessel of water at any moment would plainly tell by how much it rose above the top, the very hour and minute of the day or night, as well and truly as the castle−clock itself. Tell me not, Rowland, that the damsel hath no design in it. Her looks betoken a better wisdom. Doth she not, I ask your honesty, far more resemble a nose−pinched puritan than a loyal maiden?'

Thus amongst the apple−blossoms talked Amanda Serafina.

'Prithee, be not too severe with my cousin, Amanda,' pleaded Scudamore. 'She is much too sober to please my fancy, but wherefore should I for that hate her? And if she hath something the look of a long−faced fanatic, thou must think, she hath but now, as it were, lost her mother.'

'But now! And I never knew mine! Ah, Rowland, how lonely is the world!'

'Lovely Amanda!' said Rowland.

So they passed from the orchard and parted, fearful of being missed.

How should such a pair do, but after its kind? Life was dull without love−making, so they made it. And the more they made, the more they wanted to make, until casual encounters would no longer serve their turn.

CHAPTER XIX. THE ENCHANTED CHAIR.

In the castle things went on much the same, nor did the gathering tumult without wake more than an echo within. Yet a cloud slowly deepened upon the brow of the marquis, and a look of disquiet, to be explained neither by the more frequent returns of his gout, nor by the more lengthened absences of his favourite son. In his judgment the king was losing ground, not only in England but in the deeper England of its men. Lady Margaret also, for all her natural good spirits and light−heartedness, showed a more continuous anxiety than was to be accounted for by her lord's absences and the dangers he had to encounter: little Molly, the treasure of her heart next to her lord, had never been other than a delicate child, but now had begun to show signs of worse than weakness of constitution, and the heart of the mother was perpetually brooding over the ever−present idea of her sickly darling.

But she always did her endeavour to clear the sky of her countenance before sitting down with her father−in−law at the dinner−table, where still the marquis had his jest almost as regularly as his claret, although varying more in quality and quantity both—now teasing his son Charles about the holes in his pasteboard, as he styled the castle walls; now his daughter Anne about a design, he and no one else attributed to her, of turning protestant and marrying Dr. Bayly; now Dr. Bayly about his having been discovered blowing the organ in the chapel at high mass, as he said; for when no new joke was at hand he was fain to content himself with falling back upon old ones. The first of these mentioned was founded on the fact, as undeniable as deplorable, of the weakness of many portions of the defences, to remedy which, as far as might be, was for the present lord Charles's chief endeavour, wherein he had the best possible adviser, engineer, superintendent, and workman, all in the person of Caspar Kaltoff. The second jest of the marquis was a pure invention upon the liking of lady Anne for the company and conversation of the worthy chaplain. The last mentioned was but an exaggeration of the following fact.

One evening the doctor came upon young Delaware, loitering about the door of the chapel, with as disconsolate a look as his lovely sightless face was ever seen to wear, and, inquiring what was amiss with him, learned that he could find no one to blow the organ bellows for him. The youth had for years, boy as he still was, found the main solace of his blindness in the chapel−organ, upon which he would have played from morning to night could he have got any one to blow as long. The doctor, then, finding the poor boy panting for music like the hart for the water−brooks, but with no Jacob to roll the stone from the well's mouth that he might water the flocks of his thirsty thoughts, made willing proffer of his own exertions to blow the bellows of the organ, so long as the somewhat wheezy bellows of his body would submit to the task.

By degrees however the good doctor had become so absorbed in the sounds that rushed, now wailing, now jubilant, now tender as a twilight wind, now imperious as the voice of the war−tempest, from the fingers of the raptured boy, that the reading of the first vesper−psalm had commenced while he was yet watching the slow rising index, in the expectation that the organist was about to resume. The voice of his Irish brother−chaplain, Sir Toby Mathews, roused him from his reverie of delight, and as one ashamed he stole away through the door that led from the little organ loft into the minstrel's gallery in the great hall, and so escaped the catholic service, but not the marquis's roasting. Whether the music had any share in the fact that the good man died a good catholic at last, I leave to the speculation of who list.

Lady Margaret continued unchangingly kind to Dorothy; and the tireless efforts of the girl to amuse and please poor little Molly, whom the growing warmth of the season seemed to have no power to revive, awoke the deep gratitude of a mother. This, as well as her husband's absences, may have had something to do with the interest she began to take in the engine of which Dorothy had assumed the charge, for which she had always hitherto expressed a special dislike, professing to regard it as her rival in the affections of her husband, but after which she would now inquire as Dorothy's baby, and even listen with patience to her expositions of its wonderful construction and capabilities. Ere long Dorothy had a tale to tell her in connection with the engine, which, although simple and uneventful enough, she yet found considerably more interesting, as involving a good deal of at least mental adventure on the part of her young cousin.

One evening, after playing with little Molly for an hour, then putting her to bed and standing by her crib until she fell asleep, Dorothy ran to see to her other baby; for the cistern had fallen rather lower than she thought well, and she was going to fill it. She found Caspar had lighted the furnace as she had requested; she set the engine going, and it soon warmed to its work.

The place was hot, and Dorothy was tired. But where in that wide and not over−clean place should she find anything fitter than a grindstone to sit upon? Never yet, through all her acquaintance with the workshop, had she once seated herself in it. Looking about, however, she soon espied, almost hidden in the corner of a recess behind the furnace, what seemed an ordinary chair, such as stood in the great hall for the use of the family when anything special was going on there. With some trouble she got it out, dusted it, and set it as far from the furnace as might be, consistently with watching the motions of the engine. But the moment she sat down in it, she was caught and pinned so fast that she could scarcely stir hand or foot, and could no more leave it again than if she had been paralyzed in every limb. One scream she uttered of mingled indignation and terror, fancying herself seized by human arms; but when she found herself only in the power of one of her cousin's curiosities, she speedily quieted herself and rested in peace, for Caspar always paid a visit to the workshop the last thing before going to bed. The pressure of the springs that had closed the trap did not hurt her in the least—she was indeed hardly sensible of it; but when she made the least attempt to stir, the thing showed itself immovably locked, and she had too much confidence in the workmanship of her cousin and Caspar to dream of attempting to open it: that she knew must be impossible. The worst that threatened her was that the engine might require some attention before the hour, or perhaps two, which must elapse ere Caspar came would be over, and she did not know what the consequences might be.

As it happened, however, something either in the powder−mill or about the defences detained Caspar far beyond his usual hour for retiring, and the sultriness of the weather having caused him a headache, he represented to himself that, with mistress Dorothy tending the engine, who knew where and would be sure to find him upon the least occasion, there could be no harm in his going to bed without paying his usual precautionary visit to the keep.

So Dorothy sat, and waited in vain. The last drops of the day trickled down the side of the world, the night filled the crystal globe from its bottom of rock to its cover of blue aether, and the red glow of the furnace was all that lighted the place. She waited and waited in her mind; but Caspar did not come. She began to feel miserable. The furnace fire sank, and the rush of the water grew slower and slower, and ceased. Caspar did not come. The fire sank lower and lower, its red eye dimmed, darkened, went out. Still Caspar did not come. Faint fears began to gather about poor Dorothy's heart. It was clear at last that there she must be all the night long, and who could tell how far into the morning? It was good the night was warm, but it would be very dreary. And then to be fixed in one position for so long! The thought of it grew in misery faster than the thing itself. The greater torment lies always in the foreboding. She felt almost as if she were buried alive. Having their hands tied even, is enough to drive strong men almost crazy. Nor, firm of heart as she was, did no evils of a more undefined and less resistible character claim a share in her fast−rising apprehensions; she began to discover that she too was assailable by the terror of the night, although she had not hitherto been aware of it, no one knowing what may lie unhatched in his mind, waiting the concurrence of vital conditions.

But Dorothy was better able to bear up under such assaults than thousands who believe nothing of many a hideous marvel commonly accepted in her day; and anyhow the unavoidable must be encountered, if not with indifference, yet with what courage may be found responsive to the call of the will. So, with all her energy, a larger store than she knew, she braced herself to endure. As to any attempt to make herself heard, she knew from the first that was of doubtful result, and now must certainly be of no avail when all but the warders were asleep. But to spend the night thus was a far less evil than to be discovered by the staring domestics, and exposed to the open merriment of her friends, and the hidden mockery of her enemies. As to Caspar, she was certain of his silence. So she sat on, like the lady in Comus, 'in stony fetters fixed and motionless;' only, as she said to herself, there was no attendant spirit to summon Caspar, who alone could take the part of Sabrina, and 'unlock the clasping charm.' Little did Dorothy think, as in her dreary imprisonment she recalled that marvellous embodiment of unified strength and tenderness, as yet unacknowledged of its author, that it was the work of the same detestable fanatic who wrote those appalling 'Animadversions,

She grew chilly and cramped. The night passed very slowly. She dozed and woke, and dozed again. At last,

from very weariness of both soul and body, she fell into a troubled sleep, from which she woke suddenly with the sound in her ears of voices whispering. The confidence of lord Herbert, both in the evil renown of his wizard cave and the character of his father's household, seemed mistaken. Still the subdued manner of their conversation appeared to indicate it was not without some awe that the speakers, whoever they were, had ventured within the forbidden precincts; their whispers, indeed, were so low that she could not say of either voice whether it belonged to man or woman. Her first idea was to deliver herself from the unpleasantness of her enforced espial by the utterance of some frightful cry such as would at the same time punish with the pains of terror their fool−hardy intrusion. But the spur of the moment was seldom indeed so sharp with Dorothy as to drive her to act without reflection, and a moment showed her that such persons being in the marquis's household as would meet in the middle of the night, and on prohibited ground, apparently for the sake of avoiding discovery, and even then talked in whispers, he had a right to know who they were: to act from her own feelings merely would be to fail in loyalty to the head of the house. Who could tell what might not be involved in it? For was it not thus that conspiracy and treason walked? And any alarm given them now might destroy every chance of their discovery. She compelled herself therefore to absolute stillness, immeasurably wretched, with but one comfort—no small one, however, although negative—that their words continued inaudible, a fact which doubtless saved much dispute betwixt her propriety and her loyalty.

Long time their talk lasted. Every now and then they would start and listen—so Dorothy interpreted sudden silence and broken renewals. The genius of the place, although braved, had yet his terrors. At length she heard something like a half−conquered yawn, and soon after the voices ceased.

Again a weary time, and once more she fell asleep. She woke in the grey of the morning, and after yet two long hours, but of more hopeful waiting, she heard Caspar's welcome footsteps, and summoned all her strength to avoid breaking down on his entrance. His first look of amazement she tried to answer with a smile, but at the expression of pitiful dismay which followed when another glance had revealed the cause of her presence, she burst into tears. The honest man was full of compunctious distress at the sight of the suffering his breach of custom had so cruelly prolonged.

'And I haf bin slap in mine bed!' he exclaimed with horror at the contrast.

Had she been his daughter and his mistress both in one, he could not have treated her with greater respect or tenderness. Of course he set about relieving her at once, but this was by no means such an easy matter as Dorothy had expected. For the key of the chair was in the black cabinet; the black cabinet was secured with one of lord Herbert's marvellous locks; the key of that lock was in lord Herbert's pocket, and lord Herbert was either in bed at Chepstow or Monmouth or Usk or Caerlyon, or on horseback somewhere else, nobody in Raglan knew where. But Caspar lost no time in unavailing moan. He proceeded at once to light a fire on his forge hearth, and in the course of a few minutes had fashioned a pick−lock, by means of which, after several trials and alterations, at length came the welcome sound of the yielding bolts, and Dorothy rose from the terrible chair. But so benumbed were all her limbs that she escaped being relocked in it only by the quick interposition of Caspar's arms. He led her about like a child, until at length she found them sufficiently restored to adventure the journey to her chamber, and thither she slowly crept. Few of the household were yet astir, and she met no one. When she was covered up in bed, then first she knew how cold she was, and felt as if she should never be warm again.

At last she fell asleep, and slept long and soundly. Her maid went to call her, but finding it difficult to wake her, left her asleep, and did not return until breakfast was over. Then finding her still asleep she became a little anxious, and meeting mistress Amanda, told her she was afraid mistress Dorothy was ill. But mistress Amanda was herself sleepy and cross, and gave her a sharp answer, whereupon the girl went to lady Broughton. She, however, being on her way to morning mass, for it was Sunday, told her to let mistress Dorothy have her sleep out.

The noise of horses' hoofs upon the paving of the stone court roused her, and then in came the sounds of the organ from the chapel. She rose confounded, and hurrying to the window drew back the curtain. The same moment lord Herbert walked from the hall into the fountain−court in riding dress, followed by some forty or fifty officers, the noise of whose armour and feet and voices dispelled at once the dim Sabbath feeling that hung vapour−like about the place. They gathered around the white horse, leaning or sitting on the marble basin, some talking in eager groups, others folding their arms in silence, listening, or lost heedless in their own thoughts, while their leader entered the staircase door at the right−hand corner of the western gate, the nearest way to his wife's

apartment of the building.

Now Dorothy had gone to sleep in perplexity, and all through her dreams had been trying to answer the question what course she should take with regard to the nocturnal intrusion. If she told lady Margaret she could but go with it to the marquis, and he was but just recovering from an attack of the gout, and ought not to be troubled except it were absolutely necessary. Was it, or was it not, necessary? Or was there no one else to whom she might with propriety betake herself in her doubt—lord Charles or Dr. Bayly? But here now was lord Herbert come back, and doubt there was none any more. She dressed herself in tremulous haste, and hurried to lady Margaret's room, where she hoped to see him. No one was there, and she tried the nursery, but finding only Molly and her attendant, returned to the parlour, and there seated herself to wait, supposing lady Margaret and he had gone together to morning service.

They had really gone to the oak parlour, whither the marquis generally made his first move after an attack that had confined him to his room; for in the large window of that parlour, occupying nearly the whole side of it towards the moat, he generally sat when well enough to be about and take cognizance of what wa's going on; and there they now found him.

'Welcome home, Herbert!' he said, kindly, holding out his hand. 'And how does my wild Irishwoman this morning? Crying her eyes out because her husband is come back, eh?—But, Herbert, lad, whence is all that noise of spurs and scabbards—and in the fountain court, too? I heard them go clanking and clattering through the hall like a torrent of steel! Here I sit, a poor gouty old man, deserted of my children and servants—all gone to church—to serve a better Master—not a page or a maid left me to send out to see and bring me word what is the occasion thereof! I was on the point of hobbling to the door myself when you came.'

'Being on my way to the forest of Dean, my lord, and coming round by Raglan to inquire after you and my lady, I did bring with me some of my officers to dine and drink your lordship's health on our way.'

'You shall all be welcome, though I fear I shall not make one,' said the marquis, with a grimace, for just then he had a twinge of the gout.

'I am sorry to see you suffer, sir,' said his son.

'Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,' returned the marquis, giving a kick with the leg which contained his inheritance; and then came a pause, during which lady Margaret left the room.

'My lord,' said Herbert at length, with embarrassment, and forcing himself to speak, 'I am sorry to trouble you again, after all the money, enough to build this castle from the foundations—'

'Ah! ha!' interjected the marquis, but lord Herbert went on—

'which you have already spent on behalf of the king, my master, but—'

'YOUR master, Herbert!' said the marquis, testily. 'Well?'

'I must have some more money for his pressing necessities.' In his self−compulsion he had stumbled upon the wrong word.

'MUST you?' cried the marquis angrily. 'Pray take it.'

And drawing the keys of his treasury from the pocket of his frieze coat, he threw them down on the table before him. Lord Herbert reddened like a girl, and looked as much abashed as if he had been caught in something of which he was ashamed. One moment he stood thus, then said,

'Sir, the word was out before I was aware. I do not intend to put it into force. I pray will you put up your key again?'

'Truly, son,' replied the marquis, still testily, but in a milder tone, 'I shall think my keys not safe in my pocket whilst you have so many swords by your side; nor that I have the command of my house whilst you have so many officers in it; nor that I am at my own disposal, whilst you have so many commanders.'

'My lord,' replied Herbert, 'I do not intend that they shall stay in the castle; I mean they shall be gone.'

'I pray, let them. And have care that MUST do not stay behind,' said the marquis. 'But let them have their dinner first, lad.'

Lord Herbert bowed, and left the room. Thereupon, in the presence of lady Margaret, who just then re−entered, good Dr. Bayly, who, unperceived by lord Herbert in his pre−occupation, had been present during the interview, stepped up to the marquis and said:

'My good lord, the honourable confidence your lordship has reposed in me boldens me to do my duty as, in part at least, your lordship's humble spiritual adviser.'

'Thou shouldst want no boldening to do thy duty, doctor,' said the marquis, making a wry face.

'May I then beg of your lordship to consider whether you have not been more severe with your noble son than the occasion demanded, seeing not only was the word uttered by a lapse of the tongue, but yourself heard my lord express much sorrow for the overslip?'

'What!' said lady Herbert, something merrily, but looking in the face of her father−in−law with a little anxious questioning in her eyes, 'has my lord been falling out with my Ned?'

'Hark ye, daughter!' answered the marquis, his face beaming with restored good−humour, for the twinge in his toe had abated, 'and you too, my good chaplain!—if my son be dejected, I can raise him when I please; but it is a question, if he should once take a head, whether I could bring him lower when I list. Ned was not wont to use such courtship to me, and I believe he intended a better word for his father; but MUST was for the king.'

Returning to her own room, lady Margaret found Dorothy waiting for her.

'Well, my little lig−a−bed!' she said sweetly, 'what is amiss with thee? Thou lookest but soberly.'

'I am well, madam; and that I look soberly,' said Dorothy, 'you will not wonder when I tell you wherefore. But first, if it please you, I would pray for my lord's presence, that he too may know all.'

'Holy mother! what is the matter, child?' cried lady Margaret, of late easily fluttered. 'Is it my lord Herbert you mean, or my lord of Worcester?'

'My lord Herbert, my lady. I dread lest he should be gone ere I have found a time to tell him.'

'He rides again after dinner,' said lady Margaret.

'Then, dear my lady, if you would keep me from great doubt and disquiet, let me have the ear of my lord for a few moments.'

Lady Margaret rang for her page, and sent him to find his master and request his presence in her parlour.

Within five minutes lord Herbert was with them, and within five more, Dorothy had ended her tale of the night, uninterrupted save by lady Margaret's exclamations of sympathy.

'And now, my lord, what am I to do?' she asked in conclusion.

Lord Herbert made no answer for a few moments, but walked up and down the room. Dorothy thought he looked angry as well as troubled. He burst at length into a laugh, however, and said merrily,

'I have it, ladies! I see how we may save my father much annoyance without concealment, for nothing must be concealed from him that in any way concerns the house. But the annoyance arising from any direct attempt at discovering the wrongdoers would be endless, and its failure almost certain. But now, as I would plan it, instead of trouble my father shall have laughter, and instead of annoyance such a jest as may make him good amends for the wrong done him by the breach of his household laws. Caspar has explained to you all concerning the water−works, I believe, cousin?'

'All, my lord. I may without presumption affirm that I can, so long as there arises no mishap, with my own hand govern them all. Caspar has for many weeks left everything to me, save indeed the lighting of the furnace−fire.'

'That is as I would have it, cousin. So soon then as it is dark this evening, you will together, you and Caspar, set the springs which lie under the first stone of the paving of the bridge. Thereafter, as you know, the first foot set upon it will drop the drawbridge to the stone bridge, and the same instant convert the two into an aqueduct, filled with a rushing torrent from the reservoir, which will sweep the intruders away. Before they shall have either gathered their discomfited wits or raised their prostrate bones, my father will be out upon them, nor shall they find shelter for their shame ere every soul in the castle has witnessed their disgrace.'

'I had thought of the plan, my lord; but I dreaded the punishment might be too severe, not knowing what the water might do upon them.'

'There will be no danger to life, and little to limb,' said his lordship. 'The torrent will cease flowing the moment they are swept from the bridge. But they shall be both bruised and shamed; and,' added his lordship, with an oath such as seldom crossed his lips, 'in such times as these, they will well deserve what shall befall them. Intruding hounds!—But you must take heed, cousin Dorothy, that you forget not that you have yourself done. Should you have occasion to go on the bridge after setting your vermin−trap, you must not omit to place your feet precisely where Caspar will show you, else you will have to ride a watery horse half−way, mayhap to the marble one—except indeed he throw you from his back against the chapel−door.'

When her husband talked in long sentences, as he was not unfrequently given to do, lady Margaret, even when

their sequences were not very clear, seldom interrupted him: she had learned that she gained more by letting him talk on; for however circuitous the route he might take, he never forgot where he was going. He might obscure his object, but there it always was. He was now again walking up and down the room, and, perceiving that he had not yet arranged all to his satisfaction, she watched him with merriment in her Irish eyes, and waited.

'I have it!' he cried again. 'It shall be so, and my father shall thus have immediate notice. The nights are weekly growing warmer, and he will not therein be tempted to his hurt. Our trusty and well−beloved cousin Dorothy, we herewith, in presence of our liege and lovely lady, appoint thee our deputy during our absence. No one but thyself hath a right to cross the bridge after dark, save Caspar and the governor, whom with my father I shall inform and warn concerning what is to be done. But I will myself adjust the escape, so that the torrent shall not fall too powerful; Caspar must connect it with the drawbridge, whose fall will then open it. And pray remind him to see first that all the hinges and joints concerned be well greased, that it may fall instantly.'

So saying, he left the room, and sought out Caspar, with whom he contrived the ringing of a bell in the marquis's chamber by the drawbridge in its fall, the arrangement for which Caspar was to carry out that same evening after dark. He next sought his father, and told him and his brother Charles the whole story; nor did he find himself wrong in his expectation that the prospect of so good a jest would go far to console the marquis for the annoyance of finding that his household was not quite such a pattern one as he had supposed. That there was anything of conspiracy or treachery involved, he did not for a moment believe.

After dinner, while the horses were brought out, lord Herbert went again to his wife's room. There was little Molly waiting to bid him good−bye, and she sat upon his knee until it was time for him to go. The child's looks made his heart sad, and his wife could not restrain her tears when she saw him gaze upon her so mournfully. It was with a heavy heart that, when the moment of departure came, he rose, gave her into her mother's arms, clasped them both in one embrace, and hurried from the room. He ought to be a noble king for whom such men and women make such sacrifices.

To witness such devotion on the part of personages to whom she looked up with such respect and confidence, would have been in itself more than sufficient to secure for its object the unquestioning partisanship of Dorothy; partisan already, it raised her prejudice to a degree of worship which greatly narrowed what she took for one of the widest gulfs separating her from the creed of her friends. The favourite dogma of the school−master−king, the offspring of his pride and weakness, had found fitting soil in Dorothy. When, in the natural growth of the confidence reposed in her by her protectors, she came to have some idea of the immensity of the sums spent by them on behalf of his son, had, indeed, ere the close of another year read the king's own handwriting and signature in acknowledgment of a debt of a quarter of a million, she took it only as an additional sign—for additional proof there was no room—of their ever admirable devotion to his divine right. That the marquis and his son were catholics served but to glorify the right to which a hostile faith yielded such practical homage.

Immediately after nightfall she repaired to Caspar, and between them everything was speedily arranged for the carrying out of lord Herbert's counter−plot.

But night after night passed, and the bell in the marquis's room remained voiceless.

CHAPTER XX. MOLLY AND THE WHITE HORSE.

Meantime lord Herbert came and went. There was fighting here and fighting there, castles taken, defended, re−taken, here a little success and there a worse loss, now on this side and now on that; but still, to say the best, the king's affairs made little progress; and for Mary Somerset, her body and soul made progress in opposite directions.

There was a strange pleasant mixture of sweet fretfulness and trusting appeal in her. Children suffer less because they feel that all is right when father or mother is with them; grown people from whom this faith has vanished ere it has led them to its original fact, may well be miserable in their sicknesses.

She lay moaning one night in her crib, when suddenly she opened her eyes and saw her mother's hand pressed to her forehead. She was imitative, like most children, and had some very old−fashioned ways of speech.

'Have you got a headache, madam?' she asked.

'Yes, my Molly,' answered her mother.

'Then you will go to mother Mary. She will take you on her knee, madam. Mothers is for headaches. Oh me! my headache, madam!'

The poor mother turned away. It was more than she could bear alone. Dorothy entered the room, and she rose and left it, that she might go to mother Mary as the child had said.

Dorothy's cares were divided between the duties of naiad and nursemaid, for the child clung to her as to no one else except her mother. The thing that pleased her best was to see the two whale−like spouts rise suddenly from the nostrils of the great white horse, curve away from each other aloft in the air, and fall back into the basin on each side of him. 'See horse spout,' she would say moanfully; and that instant, if Dorothy was not present, a messenger would be despatched to her. On a bright day this would happen repeatedly. For the sake of renewing her delight, the instant she turned from it, satisfied for the moment, the fountain ceased to play, and the horse remained spoutless, awaiting the revival of the darling's desire; for she was not content to see him spouting: she must see him spout. Then again she would be carried forth to the verge of the marble basin, and gazing up at the rearing animal would say, in a tone daintily wavering betwixt entreaty and command, 'Spout, horse, spout,' and Dorothy, looking down from the far−off summit of the tower, and distinguishing by the attitude of the child the moment when she uttered her desire, would instantly, with one turn of her hand, send the captive water shooting down its dark channel to reascend in sunny freedom.

If little Mary Somerset was counted a strange child, the wisdom with which she was wise is no more unnatural because few possess it, than the death of such is premature because they are yet children. They are small fruits whose ripening has outstripped their growth. Of such there are some who, by the hot−house assiduities of their friends, heating them with sulphurous stoves, and watering them with subacid solutions, ripen into insufferable prigs. For them and for their families it is well that Death the gardener should speedily remove them into the open air. But there are others who, ripening from natural, that is divine causes and influences, are the daintiest little men and women, gentle in the utmost peevishness of their lassitude, generous to share the gifts they most prize, and divinely childlike in their repentances. Their falling from the stalk is but the passing from the arms of their mothers into those of—God knows whom—which is more than enough.

The chief part of little Molly's religious lessons, I do not mean training, consisted in a prayer or two in rhyme, and a few verses of the kind then in use among catholics. Here is a prayer which her nurse taught her, as old, I take it, as Chaucer's time at least:—

Hail be thou, Mary, that high sittest in throne!
I beseech thee, sweet lady, grant me my boon—
Jesus to love and dread, and my life to amend soon,
And bring me to that bliss that never shall be done.

And here are some verses quite as old, which her mother taught her. I give them believing that in understanding and coming nearer to our fathers and mothers who are dead, we understand and come nearer to our

brothers and sisters who are alive. I change nothing but the spelling, and a few of the forms of the words.

Jesu, Lord, that madest me,
And with thy blessed blood hast bought,
Forgive that I have grieved thee
With word, with will, and eke with thought.
Jesu, for thy wounds' smart,
On feet and on thine hands two,
Make me meek and low of heart,
And thee to love as I should do.
Jesu, grant me mine asking,
Perfect patience in my disease,
And never may I do that thing
That should thee in any wise displease.
Jesu, most comfort for to see
Of thy saints every one,
Comfort them that careful be,
And help them that be woe−begone.
Jesu, keep them that be good,
And amend them that have grieved thee,
And send them fruits of early food,
As each man needeth in his degree.
Jesu, that art, without lies,
Almighty God in trinity,
Cease these wars, and send us peace
With lasting love and charity.
Jesu, that art the ghostly stone
Of all holy church in middle−earth,
Bring thy folds and flocks in one,
And rule them rightly with one herd.
Jesu, for thy blissful blood,
Bring, if thou wilt, those souls to bliss
From whom I have had any good,
And spare that they have done amiss.

This old−fashioned hymn lady Margaret had learned from her grandmother, who was an Englishwoman of the pale. She also had learned it from her grandmother.

One day, by some accident, Dorothy had not reached her post of naiad before Molly arrived in presence of her idol, the white horse, her usual application to which was thence for the moment in vain. Having waited about three seconds in perfect patience, she turned her head slowly round, and gazed in her nurse's countenance with large questioning eyes, but said nothing. Then she turned again to the horse. Presently a smile broke over her face, and she cried in the tone of one who had made a great discovery,

'Horse has ears of stone: he cannot hear, Molly.'

Instantly thereupon she turned her face up to the sky, and said,

'Dear holy Mary, tell horse to spout.'

That moment up into the sun shot the two jets. Molly clapped her little hands with delight and cried,

'Thanks, dear holy Mary! I knowed thou would do it for Molly. Thanks, madam!'

The nurse told the story to her mistress, and she to Dorothy. It set both of them feeling, and Dorothy thinking besides.

'It cannot be,' she thought, 'but that a child's prayer will reach its goal, even should she turn her face to the west or the north instead of up to the heavens! A prayer somewhat differs from a bolt or a bullet.'

'How you protestants CAN live without a woman to pray to!' said lady Margaret.

'Her son Jesus never refused to hear a woman, and I see not wherefore I should go to his mother, madam,' said

Dorothy, bravely.

'Thou and I will not quarrel, Dorothy,' returned lady Margaret sweetly; 'for sure am I that would please neither the one nor the other of them.'

Dorothy kissed her hand, and the subject dropped.

After that, Molly never asked the horse to spout, or if she happened to do so, would correct herself instantly, and turn her request to the mother Mary. Nor did the horse ever fail to spout, notwithstanding an evil thought which arose in the protestant part of Dorothy's mind—the temptation, namely, to try the effect upon Molly of a second failure. All the rest of her being on the instant turned so violently protestant against the suggestion, that no parley with it was possible, and the conscience of her intellect cowered before the conscience of her heart.

It was from this fancy of the child's for the spouting of the horse that it came to be known in the castle that mistress Dorothy was ruler of Raglan waters. In lord Herbert's absence not a person in the place but she and Caspar understood their management, and except lady Margaret, the marquis, and lord Charles, no one besides even knew of the existence of such a contrivance as the water−shoot or artificial cataract.

Every night Dorothy and Caspar together set the springs of it, and every morning Caspar detached the lever connecting the stone with the drawbridge.

CHAPTER XXI. THE DAMSEL WHICH FELL SICK.

From within the great fortress, like the rough husk whence the green lobe of a living tree was about to break forth, a lovely child−soul, that knew neither of war nor ambition, knew indeed almost nothing save love and pain, was gently rising as from the tomb. The bonds of the earthly life that had for ever conferred upon it the rights and privileges of humanity were giving way, and little, white−faced, big−eyed Molly was leaving father and mother and grandfather and spouting horse and all, to find—what?—To find what she wanted, and wait a little for what she loved.

One sultry evening in the second week of June, the weather had again got inside the inhabitants of the castle, forming different combinations according to the local atmosphere it found in each. Clouds had been slowly steaming up all day from several sides of the horizon, and as the sun went down, they met in the zenith. Not a wing seemed to be abroad under heaven, so still was the region of storms. The air was hot and heavy and hard to breathe—whether from lack of life, or too much of it, oppressing the narrow and weak recipients thereof, as the sun oppresses and extinguishes earthly fires, I at least cannot say. It was weather that made SOME dogs bite their masters, made most of the maids quarrelsome, and all the men but one or two more or less sullen, made Dorothy sad, Molly long after she knew not what, her mother weep, her grandfather feel himself growing old, and the hearts of all the lovers, within and without the castle, throb for the comfort of each other's lonely society. The fish lay still in the ponds, the pigeons sat motionless on the roof−ridges, and the fountains did not play; for Dorothy's heart was so heavy about Molly, that she had forgotten them.

The marquis, fond of all his grandchildren, had never taken special notice of Molly beyond what she naturally claimed as youngest. But when it appeared that she was one of the spring−flowers of the human family, so soon withdrawing thither whence they come, he found that she began to pull at his heart, not merely with the attraction betwixt childhood and age, in which there is more than the poets have yet sung, but with the dearness which the growing shadow of death gives to all upon whom it gathers. The eyes of the child seemed to nestle into his bosom. Every morning he paid her a visit, and every morning it was clear that little Molly's big heart had been waiting for him. The young as well as the old recognize that they belong to each other, despite the unwelcome intervention of wrinkles and baldness and toothlessness. Molly's eyes brightened when she heard his steps at the door, and ere he had come within her sight, where she lay half−dressed on her mother's bed, tented in its tall carved posts and curtains of embroidered silk, the figures on which gave her so much trouble all the half−delirious night long, her arms would be stretched out to him, and the words would be trembling on her lips, 'Prithee, tell me a tale, sir.'

'Which tale wouldst thou have, my Molly?' the grandsire would say: it was the regular form of each day's fresh salutation; and the little one would answer, 'Of the good Jesu,' generally adding, 'and of the damsel which fell sick and died.'

Torn as the country was, all the good grandparents, catholic and protestant, royalist and puritan, told their children the same tales about the same man; and I suspect there was more then than there is now of that kind of oral teaching, for which any amount of books written for children is a sadly poor substitute.

Although Molly asked oftenest for the tale of the damsel who came alive again at the word of the man who knew all about death, she did not limit her desires to the repetition of what she knew already; and in order to keep his treasure supplied with things new as well as old, the marquis went the oftener to his Latin bible to refresh his memory for Molly's use, and was in both ways, in receiving and in giving, a gainer. When the old man came thus to pour out his wealth to the child, lady Margaret then first became aware what a depth both of religious knowledge and feeling there was in her father−in−law. Neither sir Toby Mathews, nor Dr. Bayly, who also visited her at times, ever, with the torch of their talk, lighted the lamps behind those great eyes, whose glass was growing dull with the vapours from the grave; but her grandfather's voice, the moment he began to speak to her of the good Jesu, brought her soul to its windows.

This sultry evening Molly was restless. 'Madam! madam!' she kept calling to her mother—for, like so many of

such children, her manners and modes of speech resembled those of grown people, 'What wouldst thou, chicken?' her mother would ask. 'Madam, I know not,' the child would answer. Twenty times in an hour, as the evening went on, almost the same words would pass between them. At length, once more, 'Madam! madam!' cried the child. 'What would my heart's treasure?' said the mother; and Molly answered, 'Madam, I would see the white horse spout.'

With a glance and sign to her mistress. Dorothy rose and crept from the room, crossed the court and the moat, and dragged her heavy heart up the long stair to the top of the keep. Arrived there, she looked down through a battlement, and fixed her eyes on a certain window, whence presently she caught the wave of a signal−handkerchief.

At the open window stood lady Margaret with Molly in her arms. The night was so warm that the child could take no hurt; and indeed what could hurt her, with the nameless fever−moth within, fretting a passage for the new winged body which, in the pains of a second birth, struggled to break from its dying chrysalis.

'Now, Molly, tell the horse to spout,' said lady Margaret, with such well−simulated cheerfulness as only mothers can put on with hearts ready to break.

'Mother Mary, tell the horse to spout,' said Molly; and up went the watery parabolas.

The old flame of delight flushed the child's cheek, like the flush in the heart of a white rose. But it died almost instantly, and murmuring, 'Thanks, good madam!' whether to mother Mary or mother Margaret little mattered, Molly turned towards the bed, and her mother knew at her heart that the child sought her last sleep—as we call it, God forgive us our little faith! 'Madam!' panted the child, as she laid her down. 'Darling?' said the mother. 'Madam, I would see my lord marquis.' 'I will send and ask him to come.' 'Let Robert say that Molly is going—going—where is Molly going, madam?' 'Going to mother Mary, child,' answered lady Margaret, choking back the sobs that would have kept the tears company. 'And the good Jesu ?' 'Yes.'—'And the good God over all ?' 'Yes, yes.' 'I want to tell my lord marquis. Pray, madam, let him come, and quickly.'

His lordship entered, pale and panting. He knew the end was approaching. Molly stretched out to him one hand instead of two, as if her hold upon earth were half yielded. He sat down by the bedside, and wiped his forehead with a sigh.

'Thee tired too, marquis?' asked the odd little love−bird.

'Yes, I am tired, my Molly. Thou seest I am so fat.'

'Shall I ask the good mother, when I go to her, to make thee spare like Molly?'

'No, Molly, thou need'st not trouble her about that. Ask her to make me good.'

'Would it then be easier to make thee good than to make thee spare, marquis?'

'No, child—much harder, alas!'

'Then why—?' began Molly; but the marquis perceiving her thought, made haste to prevent it, for her breath was coming quick and weak.

'But it is so much better worth doing, you see. If she makes me good, she will have another in heaven to be good to.'

'Then I know she will. But I will ask her. Mother Mary has so many to mind, she might be forgetting.'

After this she lay very quiet with her hand in his. All the windows of the room were open, and from the chapel came the mellow sounds of the organ. Delaware had captured Tom Fool and got him to blow the bellows, and through the heavy air the music surged in. Molly was dozing a little, and she spoke as one that speaks in a dream.

'The white horse is spouting music,' she said. 'Look! See how it goes up to mother Mary. She twists it round her distaff and spins it with her spindle. See, marquis, see! Spout, horse, spout.'

She lay silent again for a long time. The old man sat holding her hand; her mother sat on the farther side of the bed, leaning against one of the foot−posts, and watching the white face of her darling with eyes in which love ruled distraction. Dorothy sat in one of the window−seats, and listened to the music, which still came surging in, for still the fool blew the bellows, and the blind youth struck the keys. And still the clouds gathered overhead and sunk towards the earth; and still the horse, which Dorothy had left spouting, threw up his twin−fountain, whose musical plash in the basin as it fell mingled with the sounds of the organ.

'What is it?' said Molly, waking up. 'My head doth not ache, and my heart doth not beat, and I am not affrighted. What is it? I am not tired. Marquis, are you no longer tired? Ah, now I know! He cometh! He is here!—Marquis, the good Jesu wants Molly's hand. Let him have it, marquis. He is lifting me up. I am quite

well—quite—'

The sentence remained broken. The hand which the marquis had yielded, with the awe of one in bodily presence of the Holy, and which he saw raised as if in the grasp of one invisible, fell back on the bed, and little Molly was quite well.

But she left sick hearts behind. The mother threw herself on the bed, and wailed aloud. The marquis burst into tears, left the room, and sought his study. Mechanically he took his Confessio Amantis, and sat down, but never opened it; rose again and took his Shakespere, opened it, but could not read; rose once more, took his Vulgate, and read:

'Quid turbamini, et ploratis? puella non est mortua, sed dormit.'

He laid that book also down, fell on his knees, and prayed for her who was not dead but sleeping.

Dorothy, filled with awe, rather from the presence of the mother of the dead than death itself, and feeling that the mother would rather be alone with her dead, also left the room, and sought her chamber, where she threw herself upon the bed. All was still save the plashing of the fountain, for the music from the chapel had ceased.

The storm burst in a glare and a peal. The rain fell in straight lines and huge drops, which came faster and faster, drowning the noise of the fountain, till the sound of it on the many roofs of the place was like the trampling of an army of horsemen, and every spout was gurgling musically with full throat. The one court was filled with a clashing upon its pavement, and the other with a soft singing upon its grass, with which mingled a sound as of little castanets from the broad leaves of the water−lilies in the moat. Ever and anon came the lightning, and the great bass of the thunder to fill up the psalm.

At the first thunderclap lady Margaret fell on her knees and prayed in an agony for the little soul that had gone forth into the midst of the storm. Like many women she had a horror of lightning and thunder, and it never came into her mind that she who had so loved to see the horse spout was far more likely to be revelling in the elemental tumult, with all the added ecstasy of newborn freedom and health, than to be trembling like her mortal mother below.

Dorothy was not afraid, but she was heavy and weary; the thunder seemed to stun her and the lightning to take the power of motion from the shut eyelids through which it shone. She lay without moving, and at length fell fast asleep.

To the marquis alone of the mourners the storm came as a relief to his overcharged spirit. He had again opened his New Testament, and tried to read; but if the truths which alone can comfort are not at such a time present to the spirit, the words that embody them will seldom be of much avail. When the thunder burst he closed the book and went to the window, flung it wide, and looked out into the court. Like a tide from the plains of innocent heaven through the sultry passionate air of the world, came the coolness to his brow and heart. Oxygen, ozone, nitrogen, water, carbonic acid, is it? Doubtless—and other things, perhaps, which chemistry cannot detect. Nevertheless, give its parts what names you will, its whole is yet the wind of the living God to the bodies of men, his spirit to their spirits, his breath to their hearts. When I learn that there is no primal intent—only chance—in the unspeakable joy that it gives, I shall cease to believe in poetry, in music, in woman, in God. Nay, I must have already ceased to believe in God ere I could believe that the wind that bloweth where it listeth is free because God hath forgotten it, and that it bears from him no message to me.

CHAPTER XXII. THE CATARACT.

In the midst of a great psalm, on the geyser column of which his spirit was borne heavenward, young Delaware all of a sudden found the keys dumb beneath his helpless fingers: the bellows was empty, the singing thing dead. He called aloud, and his voice echoed through the empty chapel, but no living response came back. Tom Fool had grown weary and forsaken him. Disappointed and baffled, he rose and left the chapel, not immediately from the organ loft, by a door and a few upward steps through the wall to the minstrels' gallery, as he had entered, but by the south door into the court, his readiest way to reach the rooms he occupied with his father, near the marquis's study. Hardly another door in either court was ever made fast except this one, which, merely in self−administered flattery of his own consequence, the conceited sacristan who assumed charge of the key, always locked at night. But there was no reason why Delaware should pay any respect to this, or hesitate to remove the bar securing one−half of the door, without which the lock retained no hold.

Although Tom had indeed deserted his post, the organist was mistaken as to the cause and mode of his desertion: oppressed like every one else with the sultriness of the night, he had fallen fast asleep, leaning against the organ. The thunder only waked him sufficiently to render him capable of slipping from the stool on which he had lazily seated himself as he worked the lever of the bellows, and stretching himself at full length upon the floor; while the coolness that by degrees filled the air as the rain kept pouring, made his sleep sweeter and deeper. He lay and snored till midnight.

A bell rang in the marquis's chamber.

It was one of his lordship's smaller economic maxims that in every house, and the larger the house the more necessary its observance, the master thereof should have his private rooms as far apart from each other as might, with due respect to general fitness, be arranged for, in order that, to use his own figure, he might spread his skirts the wider over the place, and chiefly the part occupied by his own family and immediate attendants—thereby to give himself, without paying more attention to such matters than he could afford, a better chance of coming upon the trace of anything that happened to be going amiss. 'For,' he said, 'let a man have ever so many responsible persons about him, the final responsibility of his affairs yet returns upon himself.' Hence, while his bedroom was close to the main entrance, that is the gate to the stone court, the room he chose for retirement and study was over the western gate, that of the fountain−court, nearly a whole side of the double quadrangle away from his bedroom, and still farther from the library, which was on the other side of the main entrance—whence, notwithstanding, he would himself, gout permitting, always fetch any book he wanted. It was, therefore, no wonder that, being now in his study, the marquis, although it rang loud, never heard the bell which Caspar had hung in his bedchamber. He was, however, at the moment, looking from a window which commanded the very spot—namely, the mouth of the archway—towards which the bell would have drawn his attention.

The night was still, the rain was over, and although the moon was clouded, there was light enough to recognise a known figure in any part of the court, except the shadowed recess where the door of the chapel and the archway faced each other, and the door of the hall stood at right angles to both.

Came a great clang that echoed loud through the court, followed by the roar of water. It sounded as if a captive river had broken loose, and grown suddenly frantic with freedom. The marquis could not help starting violently, for his nerves were a good deal shaken. The same instant, ere there was time for a single conjecture, a torrent, visible by the light of its foam, shot from the archway, hurled itself against the chapel door, and vanished. Sad and startled as he was, lord Worcester, requiring no explanation of the phenomenon now that it was completed, laughed aloud and hurried from the room.

When he had screwed his unwieldy form to the bottom of the stair, and came out into the court, there was Tom Fool flying across the turf in mortal terror, his face white as another moon, and his hair standing on end—visibly in the dull moonshine.

His terror had either deafened him, or paralysed the nerves of his obedience, for the first call of his master was insufficient to stop him. At the second, however, he halted, turned mechanically, went to him trembling, and stood

before him speechless. But when the marquis, to satisfy himself that he was really as dry as he seemed, laid his hand on his arm, the touch brought him to himself, and, assisted by his master's questions, he was able to tell how he had fallen asleep in the chapel, had waked but a minute ago, had left it by the minstrels' gallery, had reached the floor of the hall, and was approaching the western door, which was open, in order to cross the court to his lodging near the watch−tower, when a hellish explosion, followed by the most frightful roaring, mingled with shrieks and demoniacal laughter, arrested him; and the same instant, through the open door, he saw, as plainly as he now saw his noble master, a torrent rush from the archway, full of dim figures, wallowing and shouting. The same moment they all vanished, and the flood poured into the hall, wetting him to the knees, and almost carrying him off his legs.

Here the marquis professed profound astonishment, remarking that the water must indeed have been thickened with devils to be able to lay hold of Tom's legs.

'Then,' pursued Tom, reviving a little, 'I summoned up all my courage—'

'No great feat,' said the marquis.

But Tom went on unabashed.

'I summoned up the whole of my courage,' he repeated, 'stepped out of the hall, carefully examined the ground, looked through the arch−way, saw nothing, and was walking slowly across the court to my lodging, pondering with myself whether to call my lord governor or sir Toby Mathews, when I heard your lordship call me.'

'Tom! Tom! thou liest,' said the marquis. 'Thou wast running as if all the devils in hell had been at thy heels.'

Tom turned deadly pale, a fresh access of terror overcoming his new−born hardihood.

'Who were they, thinkest thou, whom thou sawest in the water, Tom?' resumed his master. 'For what didst thou take them?'

Tom shook his head with an awful significance, looked behind him, and said nothing.

Perceiving there was no more to be got out of him, the marquis sent him to bed. He went off shivering and shaking. Three times ere he reached the watch−tower his face gleamed white over his shoulder as he went. The next day he did not appear. He thought himself he was doomed, but his illness was only the prostration following upon terror.

In the version of the story which he gave his fellow−servants, he doubtless mingled the after visions of his bed with what he had when half−awake seen and heard through the mists of his startled imagination. His tale was this—that he saw the moat swell and rise, boil over in a mass, and tumble into the court as full of devils as it could hold, swimming in it, floating on it, riding it aloft as if it had been a horse; that in a moment they had all vanished again, and that he had not a doubt the castle was now swarming with them—in fact, he had heard them all the night long.

The marquis walked up to the archway, saw nothing save the grim wall of the keep, impassive as granite crag, and the ground wet a long way towards the white horse; and never doubting he had lost his chance by taking Tom for the culprit, contented himself with the reflection that, whoever the night−walkers were, they had received both a fright and a ducking, and betook himself to bed, where, falling asleep at length, he saw little Molly in the arms of mother Mary, who, presently changing to his own lady Anne that left him about a year before little Molly came, held out a hand to him to help him up beside them, whereupon the bubble sleep, unable to hold the swelling of his gladness, burst, and he woke just as the first rays of the sun smote the gilded cock on the bell−tower.

The noise of the falling drawbridge and the out−rushing water had roused Dorothy also, with most of the lighter sleepers in the castle; but when she and all the rest whose windows were to the fountain court, ran to them and looked out, they saw nothing but the flight of Tom Fool across the turf, its arrest by his master, and their following conference. The moon had broken through the clouds, and there was no mistaking either of their persons.

Meantime, inside the chapel door stood Amanda and Rowland, both dripping, and one of them crying as well. Thither, as into a safe harbour, the sudden flood had cast them; and it indicated no small amount of ready faculty in Scudamore that, half−stunned as he was, he yet had the sense, almost ere he knew where he was, to put up the long bar that secured the door.

All the time that the marquis was drawing his story from Tom, they stood trembling, in great bewilderment yet very sensible misery, bruised, drenched, and horribly frightened, more even at what might be than by what

had been. There was only one question, but that was hard to answer: what were they to do next? Amanda could contribute nothing towards its solution, for tears and reproaches resolve no enigmas. There were many ways of issue, whereof Rowland knew several; but their watery trail, if soon enough followed, would be their ruin as certainly as Hop−o'−my−Thumb's pebbles were safety to himself and his brothers. He stood therefore the very bond slave of perplexity, 'and, like a neutral to his will and matter, did nothing.'

Presently they heard the approaching step of the marquis, which every one in the castle knew. It stopped within a few feet of them, and through the thick door they could hear his short asthmatic breathing.

They kept as still as their trembling, and the mad beating of their hearts, would permit. Amanda was nearly out of her senses, and thought her heart was beating against the door, and not against her own ribs. But the marquis never thought of the chapel, having at once concluded that they had fled through the open hall. Had he not, however, been so weary and sad and listless, he would probably have found them, for he would at least have crossed the hall to look into the next court, and, the moon now shining brightly, the absence of all track on the floor where the traces of the brief inundation ceased, would have surely indicated the direction in which they had sought refuge.

The acme of terror happily endured but a moment. The sound of his departing footsteps took the ghoul from their hearts; they began to breathe, and to hope that the danger was gone. But they waited long ere at last they ventured, like wild animals overtaken by the daylight, to creep out of their shelter and steal back like shadows—but separately, Amanda first, and Scudamore some slow minutes after—to their different quarters. The tracks they could not help leaving in−doors were dried up before the morning.

Rowland had greater reason to fear discovery than any one else in the castle, save one, would in like circumstances have had, and that one was his bedfellow in the ante−chamber to his master's bedroom. Through this room his lordship had to pass to reach his own; but so far was he from suspecting Rowland, or indeed any gentleman of his retinue, that he never glanced in the direction of his bed, and so could not discover that he was absent from it. Had Rowland but caught a glimpse of his own figure as he sneaked into that room five minutes after the marquis had passed through it, believing his master was still in his study, where he had left his candles burning, he could hardly for some time have had his usual success in regarding himself as a fine gentleman.

Amanda Serafina did not show herself for several days. A bad cold in her head luckily afforded sufficient pretext for the concealment of a bad bruise upon her cheek. Other bruises she had also, but they, although more severe, were of less consequence.

For a whole fortnight the lovers never dared exchange a word.

In the morning the marquis was in no mood to set any inquiry on foot. His little lamb had vanished from his fold, and he was sad and lonely. Had it been otherwise, possibly the shabby doublet in which Scudamore stood behind his chair the next morning, might have set him thinking; but as it was, it fell in so well with the gloom in which his own spirit shrouded everything, that he never even marked the change, and ere long Rowland began to feel himself safe.

CHAPTER XXIII. AMANDA—DOROTHY—LORD HERBERT.

So also did Amanda; but not the less did she cherish feelings of revenge against her whom she more than suspected of having been the contriver of her harmful discomfiture. She felt certain that Dorothy had laid the snare into which they had fallen, with the hope if not the certainty of catching just themselves two in it, and she read in her, therefore, jealousy and cruelty as well as coldness and treachery. Rowland on the other hand was inclined to attribute the mishap to the displeasure of lord Herbert, whose supernatural acquirements, he thought, had enabled him both to discover and punish their intrusion. Amanda, nevertheless, kept her own opinion, and made herself henceforth all eyes and ears for Dorothy, hoping ever to find a chance of retaliating, if not in kind yet in plentiful measure of vengeance. Dorothy's odd ways, lawless movements, and what the rest of the ladies counted her vulgar tastes, had for some time been the subject of remark to the gossiping portion of the castle community; and it seemed to Amanda that in watching and discovering what she was about when she supposed herself safe from the eyes of her equals and superiors, lay her best chance of finding a mode of requital. Nor was she satisfied with observation, but kept her mind busy on the trail, now of one, now of another vague−bodied revenge.

The charge of low tastes was founded upon the fact that there was not an artisan about the castle, from Caspar downwards, whom Dorothy did not know and address by his name; but her detractors, in drawing their conclusions from it, never thought of finding any related significance in another fact, namely, that there was not a single animal either, of consequence enough to have a name, which did not know by it. There were very few of the animals indeed which did not know her in return, if not by her name, yet by her voice or her presence—some of them even by her foot or her hand. She would wander about the farmyard and stables for an hour at a time, visiting all that were there, and specially her little horse, which she had long, oh, so long ago! named Dick, nor had taken his name from him any more than from Marquis.

The charge of lawlessness in her movements was founded on another fact as well, namely, that she was often seen in the court after dusk, and that not merely in running across to the keep, as she would be doing at all hours, but loitering about, in full view of the windows. It was not denied that this took place only when the organ was playing—but then who played the organ? Was not the poor afflicted boy, barring the blank of his eyes, beautiful as an angel? And was not mistress Dorothy too deep to be fathomed? And so the tattling streams flowed on, and the ears of mistress Amanda willingly listened to their music, nor did she disdain herself to contribute to the reservoir in which those of the castle whose souls thirsted after the minutiae of live biography, accumulated their stores of fact and fiction, conjecture and falsehood.

Lord Herbert came home to bury his little one, and all that was left behind of her was borne to the church of St. Cadocus, the parish church of Raglan, and there laid beside the marquis's father and mother. He remained with them a fortnight, and his presence was much needed to lighten the heavy gloom that had settled over both his wife and his father.

As if it were not enough to bury the bodies of the departed, there are many, and the marquis and his daughter−in−law were of the number, who in a sense seek to bury their souls as well, making a graveyard of their own spirits, and laying the stone of silence over the memory of the dead. Such never speak of them but when compelled, and then almost as if to utter their names were an act of impiety. Not In Memoriam but In Oblivionem should be the inscription upon the tombs they raise. The memory that forsakes the sunlight, like the fishes in the underground river, loses its eyes; the cloud of its grief carries no rainbow; behind the veil of its twin−future burns no lamp fringing its edges with the light of hope. I can better, however, understand the hopelessness of the hopeless than their calmness along with it. Surely they must be upheld by the presence within them of that very immortality, against whose aurora they shut to their doors, then mourn as if there were no such thing.

Radiant as she was by nature, lady Margaret, when sorrow came, could do little towards her own support. The marquis said to himself, 'I am growing old, and cannot smile at grief so well as once on a day. Sorrow is a hawk more fell than I had thought.' The name of little Molly was never mentioned between them. But sudden floods of

tears were the signs of the mother's remembrance; and the outbreak of ambushed sighs, which he would make haste to attribute to the gout, the signs of the grandfather's.

Dorothy, too, belonged in tendency to the class of the unspeaking. Her nature was not a bright one. Her spirit's day was evenly, softly lucent, like one of those clouded calm grey mornings of summer, which seem more likely to end in rain than sunshine.

Lord Herbert was of a very different temperament. He had hope enough in his one single nature to serve the whole castle, if only it could have been shared. The veil between him and the future glowed as if on fire with mere radiance, and about to vanish in flame. It was not that he more than one of the rest imagined he could see through it. For him it was enough that beyond it lay the luminous. His eyes, to those that looked on him, were lighted with its reflex.

Such as he, are, by those who love them not, misjudged as shallow. Depth to some is indicated by gloom, and affection by a persistent brooding—as if there were no homage to the past of love save sighs and tears. When they meet a man whose eyes shine, whose step is light, on whose lips hovers a smile, they shake their heads and say, 'There goes one who has never loved, and who therefore knows not sorrow.' And the man is one of those over whom death has no power; whom time nor space can part from those he loves; who lives in the future more than in the past! Has not his being ever been for the sake of that which was yet to come? Is not his being now for the sake of that which it shall be? Has he not infinitely more to do with the great future than the little past? The Past has descended into hell, is even now ascending glorified, and will, in returning cycle, ever and again greet our faith as the more and yet more radiant Future.

But even lord Herbert had his moments of sad longing after his dainty Molly. Such moments, however, came to him, not when he was at home with his wife, but when he rode alone by his troops on a night march, or when, upon the eve of an expected battle, he sought sleep that he might fight the better on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE GREAT MOGUL.

One evening, Tom Fool, and a groom, his particular friend, were taking their pastime after a somewhat selfish fashion, by no means newly discovered in the castle—that of teasing the wild beasts. There was one in particular, a panther, which, in a special dislike to grimaces, had discovered a special capacity for being teased. Betwixt two of the bars of his cage, therefore, Tom was busy presenting him with one hideous puritanical face after another, in full expectation of a satisfactory outburst of feline rancour. But to their disappointment, the panther on this occasion seemed to have resolved upon a dignified resistance to temptation, and had withdrawn in sultry displeasure to the back of his cage, where he lay sideways, deigning to turn neither his back nor his face towards the inferior animal, at whom to cast but one glance, he knew, would be to ruin his grand Oriental sulks, and fly at the hideous ape−visage insulting him in his prison. It was tiresome of the brute. Tom Fool grew more daring and threw little stones at him, but the panther seemed only to grow the more imperturbable, and to heed his missiles as little as his grimaces.

At length, proceeding from bad to worse, as is always the way with fools, born or made, Tom betook himself to stronger measures.

The cages of the wild beasts were in the basement of the kitchen tower, with a little semicircular yard of their own before them. They were solid stone vaults, with open fronts grated with huge iron bars—our ancestors, whatever were their faults, did not err in the direction of flimsiness. Between two of these bars, then, Tom, having procured a long pole, proceeded to poke at the beast; but he soon found that the pole thickened too rapidly towards the end he held, to pass through the bars far enough to reach him. Thereupon, in utter fool−hardiness, backed by the groom, he undid the door a little way, and, his companion undertaking to prevent it from opening too far, pushed in the pole till it went right in the creature's face. One hideous yell—and neither of them knew what was occurring till they saw the tail of the panther disappearing over the six−foot wall that separated the cages from the stableyard. Tom fled at once for the stair leading up to the stone−court, while the groom, whose training had given him a better courage, now supplemented by the horror of possible consequences, ran to warn the stablemen and get help to recapture the animal.

The uproariest tumult of maddest barking which immediately arose from the chained dogs, entered the ears of all in the castle, at least every one possessed of dog−sympathies, and penetrated even those of the rather deaf host of the White Horse in Raglan village. Dorothy, sitting in her room, of course, heard it, and hearing it, equally of course, hurried to see what was the matter. The marquis heard it where he sat in his study, but was in no such young haste as Dorothy: it was only after a little, when he found the noise increase, and certain other sounds mingle with it, that he rose in some anxiety and went to discover the cause.

Halfway across the stone court, Dorothy met Tom running, and the moment she saw his face, knew that something serious had happened.

'Get indoors, mistress,' he said, almost rudely, 'the devil is to pay down in the yard.' and ran on. 'Shut your door, master cook,' she heard him cry as he ran. 'The Great Mogul is out.'

And as she ran too, she heard the door of the kitchen close with a great bang.

But Dorothy was not running after the fool, or making for any door but that at the bottom of the library tower; for the first terror that crossed her mind was the possible fate of Dick, and the first comfort that followed, the thought of Marquis; so she was running straight for the stable−yard, where the dogs, to judge by the way they tore their throats with barking, seemed frantic with rage.

No doubt the panther, when he cleared the wall, hoped exultant to find himself in the savage forest, instead of which he came down on the top of a pump, fell on the stones, and the same instant was caught in a hurricane of canine hate. A little hurt and a good deal frightened, for he had not endured such long captivity without debasement, he glared around him with sneaking enquiry. But the walls were lofty and he saw no gate, and feeling unequal at the moment to the necessary spring, he crept almost like a snake under what covert seemed readiest, and disappeared—just as the groom entering by a door in one of the walls began to look about for him in

a style wherein caution predominated. Seeing no trace of him, and concluding that, as he had expected, the clamour of the dogs had driven him further, he went on, crossing the yard to find the men, whose voices he heard on the green at the back of the rick−yard, when suddenly he found that his arm was both broken and torn. The sight of the blood completed the mischief, and he fell down in a swoon.

Meantime Dorothy had reached the same door in the wall of the stableyard, and peeping in saw nothing but the dogs raging and RUGGING at their chains as if they would drag the earth itself after them to reach the enemy. She was one of those on whose wits, usually sedate in their motions, all sorts of excitement, danger amongst the rest, operate favourably. When she specially noticed the fury of Marquis, the same moment she perceived the danger in which he, that was, all the dogs, would be, if the panther should attack them one by one on the chain; not one of them had a chance. With the thought, she sped across the space between her and Marquis, who—I really cannot say WHICH concerning such a dog—was fortunately not very far from the door. Feeling him a little safer now that she stood by his side, she resumed her ocular search for the panther, or any further sign of his proximity, but with one hand on the dog's collar, ready in an instant to seize it with both, and unclasp it.

Nor had she to look long, for all the dogs were straining their chains in one direction, and all their lines converged upon a little dark shed, where stood a cart: under the cart, between its lower shafts, she caught a doubtful luminousness, as if the dark while yet dark had begun to throb with coming light. This presently seemed to resolve itself, and she saw, vaguely but with conviction, two huge lamping cat−eyes. I will not say she felt no fear, but she was not terrified, for she had great confidence in Marquis. One moment she stood bethinking herself, and one glance she threw at the spot where her mastiff's chain was attached to his collar: she would fain have had him keep the latter to defend his neck and throat: but alas! it was as she knew well enough before—the one was riveted to the other, and the two must go together.

And now first, as she raised her head from the momentary inspection, she saw the groom lying on the ground within a few yards of the shed. Her first thought was that the panther had killed him, but ere a second had time to rise in her mind, she saw the terrible animal creeping out from under the cart, with his chin on the ground, like the great cat he was, and making for the man.

The brute had got the better of his fall, and finding he was not pursued, the barking of the dogs, to which in moderation he was sufficiently accustomed, had ceased to confuse him, he had recovered his awful self, and was now scenting prey. Had the man made a single movement he would have been upon him like lightning; but the few moments he took in creeping towards him, gave Dorothy all the time she needed. With resolute, though trembling hands, she undid Marquis's collar.

The instant he was free, the fine animal went at the panther straight and fast like a bolt from a cross−bow. But Dorothy loved him too well to lose a moment in sending even a glance after him. Leaving him to his work, she flew to hers, which lay at the next kennel, that of an Irish wolf−hound, whose curling lip showed his long teeth to the very root, and whose fury had redoubled at the sight of his rival shooting past him free for the fight. So wildly did he strain upon his collar, that she found it took all her strength to unclasp it. In a much shorter time, however, than she fancied, O'Brien too was on the panther, and the sounds of cano−feline battle seemed to fill every cranny of her brain.

But now she heard the welcome cries of men and clatter of weapons. Some, alarmed by Tom Fool, came rushing from the guard−rooms down the stair, and others, chiefly farm−servants and grooms, who had heard the frightful news from two that were in the yard when the panther bounded over the wall, were approaching from the opposite side, armed with scythes and pitchforks, the former more dangerous to their bearers than to the beast.

Dorothy, into whom, girl as she was, either Bellona or Diana, or both, had entered, was now thoroughly excited by the conflict she ruled, although she had not wasted a moment in watching it. Having just undone the collar of the fourth dog, she was hounding him on with a cry, little needed, as she flew to let go the fifth, a small bull−terrier, mad with rage and jealousy, when the crowd swept between her and her game. The beast was captured, and the dogs taken off him, ere the terrier had had a taste or Dorothy a glimpse of the battle.

As the men with cart−ropes dragged the panther away, terribly torn by the teeth of the dogs, and Tom Fool was following them, with his hands in his pockets, looking sheepish because of the share he had had in letting him loose, and the share he had not had in securing him again, Dorothy was looking about for her friend Marquis. All at once he came bounding up to her, and, exultant in the sense of accomplished duty, leaped up against her, at once turning her into a sanguineous object frightful to behold; for his wounds were bad, although none of them

were serious except one in his throat. This upon examination she found so severe that to replace his collar was out of the question. Telling him therefore to follow her, in the confidence that she might now ask for him what she would, she left the yard, went up the stair, and was crossing the stone court with the trusty fellow behind her, making a red track all the way, when out of the hall came the marquis, looking a little frightened. He started when he saw her, and turned pale, but perceiving instantly from her look that, notwithstanding the condition of her garments, she was unhurt, he cast a glance at her now rather disreputable−looking attendant, and said,

'I told you so, mistress Dorothy! Now I understand! It is that precious mastiff of yours, and no panther of mine, that has been making this uproar in my quiet house! Nay, but he looks evil enough for any devil's work! Prithee keep him off me.'

He drew back, for the dog, not liking the tone in which he addressed his mistress, had taken a step nearer to him.

'My lord,' said Dorothy, as she laid hold of the animal, for the first and only time in her life a little inclined to be angry with her benefactor, 'you do my poor Marquis wrong. At the risk of his own life he has just saved your lordship's groom, Shafto, from being torn in pieces by the Great Mogul.'

While she spoke, some of those of the garrison who had been engaged in securing the animal came up into the court, and attracted the marquis's attraction by their approach, which, in the relaxation of discipline consequent on excitement, was rather tumultuous. At their head was lord Charles, who had led them to the capture, and without whose ruling presence the enemy would not have been re−caged in twice the time. As they drew near, and saw Dorothy stand in battle−plight, with her dog beside her, even in their lord's presence they could not resist the impulse to cheer her. Annoyed at their breach of manners, the marquis had not however committed himself to displeasure ere he spied a joke:

'I told you so, mistress Dorothy!' he said again. 'That rival of mine has, as I feared, already made a party against me. You see how my own knaves, before my very face, cheer my enemy! I presume, my lord,' he went on, turning to the mastiff, and removing his hat, 'it will be my wisdom to resign castle and title at once, and so forestall deposition.'

Marquis replied with a growl, and amidst subdued yet merry laughter, lord Charles hastened to enlighten his father.

'My lord,' he said, 'the dog has done nobly as ever dog, and deserves reward, not mockery, which it is plain he understands, and likes not. But it was not the mastiff, it was his fair mistress I and my men presumed on saluting in your lordship's presence. No dog ever yet shook off collar of Cranford's forging; nor is Marquis the only dog that merits your lordship's acknowledgment: O'Brien and Tom Fool—the lurcher, I mean—seconded him bravely, and perhaps Strafford did best of all.'

'Prithee, now, take me with thee,' said the marquis. 'Was, or was not the Great Mogul forth of his cage?'

'Indeed he was, my lord, and might be now in the fields but for cousin Vaughan there by your side.'

The marquis turned and looked at her, but in his astonishment said nothing, and lord Charles went on.

'When we got into the yard, there was the Great Mogul with three dogs upon him, and mistress Dorothy uncollaring Tom Fool and hounding him at the devilish brute; while poor Shafto, just waking up, lay on the stones, about three yards off the combat. It was the finest thing I ever saw, my lord.'

The marquis turned again to Dorothy, and stared without speech or motion.

'Mean you—?' he said at length, addressing lord Charles, but still staring at Dorothy; 'Mean you—?' he said again, half stammering, and still staring.

'I mean, my lord,' answered his son, 'that mistress Dorothy, with self−shown courage, and equal judgment as to time and order of attack, when Tom Fool had fled, and poor Shafto, already evil torn, had swooned from loss of blood, came to the rescue, stood her ground, and loosed dog after dog, her own first, upon the animal. And, by heaven! it is all owing to her that he is already secured and carried back to his cage, nor any great harm done save to the groom and the dogs, of which poor Strafford hath a hind leg crushed by the jaws of the beast, and must be killed.'

'He shall live,' cried the marquis, 'as long as he hath legs enough to eat and sleep with. Mistress Dorothy,' he went on, turning to her once more, 'what is thy request? It shall be performed even to the half of—of my marquisate.'

'My lord,' returned Dorothy, 'it is a small deed I have strewn to gather such weighty thanks.'

'Be honest as well as brave, mistress. Mock me no modesty.' said the marquis a little roughly.

'Indeed, my lord, I but spoke as I deemed. The thing HAD to be done, and I did but do it. Had there been room to doubt, and I had yet done well, then truly I might have earned your lordship's thanks. But good my lord, do not therefore recall the word spoken,' she added hurriedly, 'but grant me my boon. Your lordship sees my poor dog can endure no collar: let him therefore be my chamber−fellow until his throat be healed, when I shall again submit him to your lordship's mandate.'

'What you will, cousin. He is a noble fellow, and hath a right noble mistress.'

'Will you then, my lord Charles, order a bucket of water to be drawn for me, that I may wash his wounds ere I take him to my chamber?'

Ten men at the word flew to the draw−well, but lord Charles ordered them all back to the guard−room, except two whom he sent to fetch a tub. With his own hands he then drew three bucketfuls of water, which he poured into the tub, and by the side of the well, in the open paved court, Dorothy washed her four−legged hero, and then retired with him, to do a like office for herself.

The marquis stood for some time in the gathering dusk, looking on, and smiling to see how the sullen animal allowed his mistress to handle even his wounds without a whine, not to say a growl, at the pain she must have caused him.

'I see, I see!' he said at length, 'I have no chance with a rival like that!' and turning away he walked slowly into the oak parlour, threw himself down in his great chair, and sat there, gazing at the eyeless face of the keep, but thinking all the time of the courage and patience of his rival, the mastiff.

'God made us both,' he said at length, 'and he can grant me patience as well as him.' and so saying he went to bed.

His washing over, the dog showed himself much exhausted, and it was with hanging head he followed his mistress up the grand staircase and the second spiral one that led yet higher to her chamber. Thither presently came lady Elizabeth, carrying a cushion and a deerskin for him to lie upon, and it was with much apparent satisfaction that the wounded and wearied animal, having followed his tail but one turn, dropped like a log on his well−earned couch.

The night was hot, and Dorothy fell asleep with her door wide open.

In the morning Marquis was nowhere to be found. Dorothy searched for him everywhere, but in vain.

'It is because you mocked him, my lord,' said the governor to his father at breakfast. 'I doubt not he said to himself, "If I AM a dog, my lord need not have mocked me, for I could not help it, and I did my duty."'

'I would make him an apology,' returned the marquis, 'an' I had but the opportunity. Truly it were evil minded knowingly to offer insult to any being capable of so regarding it. But, Charles, I bethink me: didst ever learn how our friend got into the castle? It was assuredly thy part to discover that secret.'

'No, my lord. It hath never been found out in so far as I know.'

'That is an unworthy answer, lord Charles. As governor of the castle, you ought to have had the matter thoroughly searched into.'

'I will see to it now, my lord,' said the governor, rising.

'Do, my lad,' returned his father.

And lord Charles did inquire; but not a ray of light did he succeed in letting in upon the mystery. The inquiry might, however, have lasted longer and been more successful, had not lord Herbert just then come home, with the welcome news of the death of Hampden, from a wound received in attacking prince Rupert at Chalgrove. He brought news also of prince Maurice's brave fight at Bath, and lord Wilmot's victory over sir William Waller at Devizes—which latter, lord Herbert confessed, yielded him some personal satisfaction, seeing he owed Waller more grudges than as a Christian he had well known how to manage: now he was able to bear him a less bitter animosity. The queen, too, had reached Oxford, bringing large reinforcement to her husband, and prince Rupert had taken Bristol, castle and all. Things were looking mighty hopeful, lord Herbert was radiant, and lady Margaret, for the first time since Molly's death, was merry. The castle was illuminated, and Marquis forgotten by all but Dorothy.

CHAPTER XXV. RICHARD HEYWOOD.

So things looked ill for the puritans in general, and Richard Heywood had his full portion in the distribution of the evils allotted them. Following lord Fairfax, he had shared his defeat by the marquis of Newcastle on Atherton moor, where of his score of men he lost five, and was, along with his mare, pretty severely wounded. Hence it had become absolutely necessary for both of them, if they were to render good service at any near future, that they should have rest and tending. Towards the middle of July, therefore, Richard, followed by Stopchase, and several others of his men who had also been wounded and were in need of nursing, rode up to his father's door. Lady was taken off to her own stall, and Richard was led into the house by his father—without a word of tenderness, but with eyes and hands that waited and tended like those of a mother.

Roger Heywood was troubled in heart at the aspect of affairs. There was now a strong peace−party in the parliament, and to him peace and ruin seemed the same thing. If the parliament should now listen to overtures of accommodation, all for which he and those with whom he chiefly sympathised had striven, was in the greatest peril, and might be, if not irrecoverably lost, at least lost sight of, perhaps for a century. The thing that mainly comforted him in his anxiety was that his son had showed himself worthy, not merely in the matter of personal courage, which he took as a thing of course in a Heywood, but in his understanding of and spiritual relation to the questions really at issue,—not those only which filled the mouths of men. For the best men and the weightiest questions are never seen in the forefront of the battle of their time, save by "larger other eyes than ours."

But now, from his wounds, as he thought, and the depression belonging to the haunting sense of defeat, a doubt had come to life in Richard's mind, which, because it was born IN weakness, he very pardonably looked upon as born OF weakness, and therefore regarded as itself weak and cowardly, whereas his mood had been but the condition that favoured its development. It came and came again, maugre all his self−recrimination because of it: what was all this fighting for? It was well indeed that nor king nor bishop should interfere with a man's rights, either in matters of taxation or worship, but the war could set nothing right either betwixt him and his neighbour, or betwixt him and his God.

There was in the mind of Richard, innate, but more rapidly developed since his breach with Dorothy, a strong tendency towards the supernatural—I mean by the word that which neither any one of the senses nor all of them together, can reveal. He was one of those young men, few, yet to be found in all ages of the world's history, who, in health and good earthly hope, and without any marked poetic or metaphysical tendency, yet know in their nature the need of conscious communion with the source of that nature—truly the veriest absurdity if there be no God, but as certainly the most absolute necessity of conscious existence if there be a first life from whom our life is born.

'Am I not free now?' he said to himself, as he lay on his bed in his own gable of the many−nooked house; 'Am I not free to worship God as I please? Who will interfere with me? Who can prevent me? As to form and ceremony, what are they, or what is the absence of them, to the worship in which my soul seeks to go forth? What the better shall I be when all this is over, even if the best of our party carry the day? Will Cromwell rend for me the heavy curtain, which, ever as I lift up my heart, seems to come rolling down between me and him whom I call my God? If I could pass within that curtain, what would Charles, or Laud, or Newcastle, or the mighty Cromwell himself and all his Ironsides be to me? Am I not on the wrong road for the high peak?'

But then he thought of others—of the oppressed and the superstitious, of injustice done and not endured—not wrapt in the pearly antidote of patience, but rankling in the soul; of priests who, knowing not God, substituted ceremonies for prayer, and led the seeking heart afar from its goal—and said that his arm could at least fight for the truth in others, if only his heart could fight for the truth in himself. No; he would go on as he had begun; for, might it not be the part of him who could take the form of an angel of light when he would deceive, to make use of inward truths, which might well be the strength of his own soul, to withdraw him from the duties he owed to others, and cause the heart of devotion to paralyze the arm of battle? Besides, was he not now in a low physical condition, and therefore the less likely to judge truly with regard to affairs of active outer life? His business

plainly was to gain strength of body, that the fumes of weakness might no longer cloud his brain, and that, if he had to die for the truth, whether in others or in himself, he might die in power, like the blast of an exploding mine, and not like the flame of an expiring lamp. And certainly, as his body grew stronger, and the impulses to action, so powerful in all healthy youth, returned, his doubts grew weaker, and he became more and more satisfied that he had been in the right path.

Lady outstripped her master in the race for health, and after a few days had oats and barley in a profusion which, although far from careless, might well have seemed to her unlimited. Twice every day, sometimes oftener, Richard went to see her, and envied the rapidity of her recovery from the weakness which scanty rations, loss of blood, and the inflammation of her wounds had caused. Had there been any immediate call for his services, however, that would have brought his strength with it. Had the struggle been still going on upon the fields of battle instead of in the houses of words, he would have been well in half the time. But Waller and Essex were almost without an army between them, and were at bitter strife with each other, while the peace−party seemed likely to carry everything before them, women themselves presenting a petition for peace, and some of them using threats to support it.

At length, chiefly through the exertions of the presbyterian preachers and the common council of the city of London, the peace−party was defeated, and a vigorous levying and pressing of troops began anew. So the hour had come for Richard to mount. His men were all in health and spirits, and their vacancies had been filled up. Lady was frolicsome, and Richard was perfectly well.

The day before they were to start he took the mare out for a gallop across the fields. Never had he known her so full of life. She rushed at hedge and ditch as if they had been squares of royalist infantry. Her madness woke the fervour of battle in Richard's own veins, and as they swept along together, it grew until he felt like one of the Arabs of old, flashing to the harvest field of God, where the corn to be reaped was the lives of infidels, and the ears to be gleaned were the heads of the fallen. That night he scarcely slept for eagerness to be gone.

Waking early from what little sleep he had had, he dressed and armed himself hurriedly, and ran to the stables, where already his men were bustling about getting their horses ready for departure.

Lady had a loose box for herself, and thither straight her master went, wondering as he opened the door of it that he did not hear usual morning welcome. The place was empty. He called Stopchase.

'Where is my mare?' he said. 'Surely no one has been fool enough to take her to the water just as we are going to start.'

Stopchase stood and stared without reply, then turned and left the stable, but came back almost immediately, looking horribly scared. Lady was nowhere to be seen or heard. Richard rushed hither and thither, storming. Not a man about the place could give him a word of enlightenment. All knew she was in that box the night before; none knew when she left it or where she was now.

He ran to his father, but all his father could see or say was no more than was plain to every one: the mare had been carried off in the night, and that with a skill worthy of a professional horse−thief.

What now was the poor fellow to do? If I were to tell the truth—namely, that he wept—so courageous are the very cowards of this century that they would sneer at him; but I do tell it notwithstanding, for I have little regard to the opinion of any man who sneers. Whatever he may or may not have been as a man, Richard felt but half a soldier without his mare, and, his country calling him, oppressed humanity crying aloud for his sword and arm, his men waiting for him, and Lady gone, what was he to do?

'Never heed, Dick, my boy,' said his father.—It was the first time since he had put on man's attire that he had called him Dick,— 'Thou shalt have my Oliver. He is a horse of good courage, as thou knowest, and twice the weight of thy little mare.'

'Ah, father! you do not know Lady so well as I. Not Cromwell's best horse could comfort me for her. I MUST find her. Give me leave, sir; I must go and think. I cannot mount and ride, and leave her I know not where. Go I will, if it be on a broomstick, but this morning I ride not. Let the men put up their horses, Stopchase, and break their fast.'

'It is a wile of the enemy,' said Stopchase. 'Truly, it were no marvel to me were the good mare at this moment eating her oats in the very stall where we have even but now in vain sought her. I will go and search for her with my hands.'

'Verily,' said Mr. Heywood with a smile, 'to fear the devil is not to run from him!—How much of her hay hath

she eaten, Stopchase?' he added, as the man returned with disconsolate look.

'About a bottle, sir,' answered Stopchase, rather indefinitely; but the conclusion drawn was, that she had been taken very soon after the house was quiet.

The fact was, that since the return of their soldiers, poor watch had been kept by the people of Redware. Increase of confidence had led to carelessness. Mr. Heywood afterwards made inquiry, and had small reason to be satisfied with what he discovered.

'The thief must have been one who knew the place,' said Faithful.

'Why dost thou think so?' asked his master.

'How swooped he else so quietly upon the best animal, sir?' returned the man.

'She was in the place of honour,' answered Mr. Heywood.

'Scudamore!' said Richard to himself. It might be no light—only a flash in his brain. But that even was precious in the utter darkness.

'Sir,' he said, turning to his father, 'I would I had a plan of Raglan stables.'

'What wouldst thou an' thou hadst, my son?' asked Mr. Heywood.

'Nay, sir, that wants thinking. But I believe my poor mare is at this moment in one of those vaults they tell us of.'

'It may be, my son. It is reported that the earl hath of late been generous in giving of horses. Poor soldiers the king will find them that fight for horses, or titles either. Such will never stand before them that fight for the truth—in the love thereof! Eh, Richard?'

'Truly, sir, I know not,' answered his son, disconsolately. 'I hope I love the truth, and I think so doth Stopchase, after his kind; and yet were we of those that fled from Atherton moor.'

'Thou didst not flee until thou couldst no more, my son. It asketh greater courage of some men to flee when the hour of flight hath come, for they would rather fight on to the death than allow, if but to their own souls, that they are foiled. But a man may flee in faith as well as fight in faith, my son, and each is good in its season. There is a time for all things under the sun. In the end, when the end cometh, we shall see how it hath all gone. When, then, wilt thou ride?'

'To−morrow, an' it please you, sir. I should fight but evil with the knowledge that I had left my best battle−friend in the hands of the Philistines, nor sent even a cry after her.'

'What boots it, Richard? If she be within Raglan walls, they yield her not again. Bide thy time; and when thou meetest thy foe on thy friend's back, woe betide him!'

'Amen, sir!' said Richard. 'But with your leave I will not go to−day. I give you my promise I will go to−morrow.'

'Be it so, then. Stopchase, let the men be ready at this hour on the morrow. The rest of the day is their own.'

So saying, Roger Heywood turned away, in no small distress, although he concealed it, both at the loss of the mare and his son's grief over it. Betaking himself to his study, he plunged himself straightway deep in the comfort of the last born and longest named of Milton's tracts.

The moment he was gone, Richard, who had now made up his mind as to his first procedure, sent Stopchase away, saddled Oliver, rode slowly out of the yard, and struck across the fields. After a half−hour's ride he stopped at a lonely cottage at the foot of a rock on the banks of the Usk. There he dismounted, and having fastened his horse to the little gate in front, entered a small garden full of sweet−smelling herbs mingled with a few flowers, and going up to the door, knocked, and then lifted the latch.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE WITCH'S COTTAGE.

Richard was met on the threshold by mistress Rees, in the same old− fashioned dress, all but the hat, which I have already described. On her head she wore a widow's cap, with large crown, thick frill, and black ribbon encircling it between them. She welcomed him with the kindness almost of an old nurse, and led the way to the one chair in the room—beside the hearth, where a fire of peat was smouldering rather than burning beneath the griddle, on which she was cooking oat−cake. The cottage was clean and tidy. From the smoky rafters hung many bunches of dried herbs, which she used partly for medicines, partly for charms.

To herself, the line dividing these uses was not very clearly discernible.

'I am in trouble, mistress Rees,' said Richard, as he seated himself.

'Most men do be in trouble most times, master Heywood,' returned the old woman. 'Dost find thou hast taken the wrong part, eh?—There be no need to tell what aileth thee. 'Tis a bit easier to cast off a maiden than to forget her—eh?'

'No, mistress Rees. I came not to trouble thee concerning what is past and gone,' said Richard with a sigh. 'It is a taste of thy knowledge I want rather than of thy skill.'

'What skill I have is honest,' said the old woman.

'Far be it from thee to say otherwise, mother Rees. But I need it not now. Tell me, hast thou not been once and again within the great gates of Raglan castle?'

'Yes, my son—oftener than I can tell thee,' answered the old woman. 'It is but a se'night agone that I sat a talking with my son Thomas Rees in the chimney corner of Raglan kitchen, after the supper was served and the cook at rest. It was there my lad was turnspit once upon a time, for as great a man as he is now with my lord and all the household. Those were hard times after my good man left me, master Heywood. But the cream will to the top, and there is my son now—who but he in kitchen and hall? Well, of all places in the mortal world, that Raglan passes!'

'They tell strange things of the stables there, mistress Rees: know you aught of them?'

'Strange things, master? They tell nought but good of the stables that tell the truth. As to the armoury, now—well it is not for such as mother Rees to tell tales out of school.'

'What I heard, and wanted to ask thee about, mother, was that they are under ground. Thinkest thou horses can fare well under ground? Thou knowest a horse as well as a dog, mother.'

Ere she replied, the old woman took her cake from the griddle, and laid it on a wooden platter, then caught up a three−legged stool, set it down by Richard, seated herself at his knee, and assumed the look of mystery wherewith she was in the habit of garnishing every bit of knowledge, real or fancied, which it pleased her to communicate.

'Hear me, and hold thy peace, master Richard Heywood,' she said. 'As good horses as ever stamped in Redware stables go down into Raglan vaults; but yet they eat their oats and their barley, and when they lift their heads they look out to the ends of the world. Whether it be by the skill of the mason or of such as the hidden art of my lord Herbert knows best how to compel, let them say that list to make foes where it were safer to have friends. But this I am free to tell thee—that in the pitched court, betwixt the antechamber to my lord's parlour that hath its windows to the moat, and the great bay window of the hall that looks into that court, there goeth a descent, as it seemeth of stairs only; but to him that knoweth how to pull a certain tricker, as of an harquebus or musquetoon, the whole thing turneth around, and straightway from a stair passeth into an easy matter of a sloping way by the which horses go up and down. And Thomas he telleth me also that at the further end of the vaults to which it leads, the which vaults pass under the marquis's oak parlour, and under all the breadth of the fountain court, as they do call the other court of the castle, thou wilt come to a great iron door in the foundations of one of the towers, in which my lord hath contrived stabling for a hundred and more horses, and that, mark my words, my son, not in any vault or underground dungeon, but in the uppermost chamber of all.'

'And how do they get up there, mother?' asked Richard, who listened with all his ears.

'Why, they go round and round, and ever the rounder the higher, as a fly might crawl up a corkscrew. And there is a stair also in the same screw, as it were, my Thomas do tell me, by which the people of the house do go up and down, and know nothing of the way for the horses within, neither of the stalls at the top of the tower, where they stand and see the country. Yet do they often marvel at the sounds of their hoofs, and their harness, and their cries, and their chumping of their corn. And that is how Raglan can send forth so many horseman for the use of the king. But alack, master Heywood! is it for a wise woman like myself to forget that thou art of the other part, and that these are secrets of state which scarce another in the castle but my son Thomas knoweth aught concerning! What will become of me that I have told them to a Heywood, being, as is well known, myself no more of a royalist than another?'

And she regarded him a little anxiously.

'What should it signify, mother," said Richard, 'so long as neither you nor I believe a word of it? Horses go up a tower to bed forsooth! Yet for the matter of that, I will engage to ride my mare up any corkscrew wide enough to turn her forelock and tail in—ay, and down again too, which is another business with most horses. But come now, mother Rees, confess this all a fable of thine own contriving to make a mock of a farm−bred lad like me.'

'In good sooth, master Heywood,' answered the old woman, 'I tell the tale as 'twas told to me. I avouch it not for certain, knowing that my son Thomas hath a seething brain and loveth a joke passing well, nor heedeth greatly upon whom he putteth it, whether his master or his mother; but for the stair by the great hall window, that stair have I seen with mine own eyes, though for the horses to come and go thereby, that truly have I not seen. And for the rest I only say it may well be, for there is nothing of it all which the wise man, my lord Herbert, could not with a word—and that a light one for him to speak, though truly another might be torn to pieces in saying it.'

'I would I might see the place!' murmured Richard.

'An' it were not thou art such a—! But it boots not talking, master Heywood. Thou art too well known for a puritan—roundhead they call thee; and thou hast given them and theirs too many hard knocks, my son, to look they should be willing to let thee gaze on the wonders of their great house. Else, being that I am a friend to thee and thine, I would gladly—. But, as I say, it boots nothing—although I have a son, who being more of the king's part than I am—.'

'Hast thou not then art enough, mother, to set me within Raglan walls for an hour or two after midnight? I ask no more,' said Richard, who, although he was but leading the way to quite another proposal, nor desired aid of art black or white, yet could not help a little tremor at making the bare suggestion of the unhallowed idea.

'An' I had, I dared not use it,' answered the old woman; 'for is not my lord Herbert there? Were it not for him—well—. But I dare not, as I say, for his art is stronger than mine, and from his knowledge I could hide nothing. And I dare not for thy sake either, my young master. Once inside those walls of stone, those gates of oak, and those portcullises of iron, and thou comes not out alive again, I warrant thee.'

'I should like to try once, though,' said Richard. 'Couldst thou not disguise me, mother Rees, and send me with a message to thy son?'

'I tell thee, young master, I dare not,' answered the old woman, with utmost solemnity. 'And if I did, thy speech would presently bewray thee.'

'I would then I knew that part of the wall a man might scramble over in the dark,' said Richard.

'Thinks thou my lord marquis hath been fortifying his castle for two years that a young Heywood, even if he be one of the godly, and have long legs to boot, should make a vaulting horse of it? I know but one knows the way over Raglan walls, and thou wilt hardly persuade him to tell thee,' said mother Rees, with a grim chuckle.

As she spoke she rose, and went towards her sleeping chamber. Then first Richard became aware that for some time he had been hearing a scratching and whining. She opened the door, and out ran a wretched−looking dog, huge and gaunt, with the red marks of recent wounds all over his body, and his neck swathed in a discoloured bandage. He went straight to Richard, and began fawning upon him and licking his hands. Miserable and most disreputable as he looked, he recognised in him Dorothy's mastiff.

'My poor Marquis!' he said, 'what evil hath then befallen thee? What would thy mistress say to see thee thus?'

Marquis whined and wagged his tail as if he understood every word he said, and Richard was stung to the heart at the sight of his apparently forlorn condition.

'Hath thy mistress then forsaken thee too, Marquis?' he said, and from fellow−feeling could have taken the dog in his arms.

'I think not so,' said mistress Rees. 'He hath been with her in the castle ever since she went there.'

'Poor fellow, how thou art torn!' said Richard. 'What animal of thine own size could have brought thee into such a plight? Or can it be that thou hast found a bigger? But that thou hast beaten him I am well assured.'

Marquis wagged an affirmative.

'Fangs of biggest dog in Gwent never tore him like that, master Heywood. Heark'ee now. He cannot tell his tale, so I must tell thee all I know of the matter. I was over to Raglan village three nights agone, to get me a bottle of strong waters from mine host of the White Horse, for the distilling of certain of my herbs good for inward disorders, when he told me that about an hour before there had come from the way of the castle all of a sudden the most terrible noise that ever human ears were pierced withal, as if every devil in hell of dog or cat kind had broken loose, and fierce battle was waging between them in the Yellow Tower. I said little, but had my own fears for my lord Herbert, and came home sad and slow and went to bed. Now what should wake me the next morning, just as daylight broke the neck of the darkness, but a pitiful whining and obstinate scratching at my door! And who should it be but that same lovely little lapdog of my young mistress now standing by thy knee! But had thou seen him then, master Richard! It was the devil's hackles he had been through! Such a torn dishclout of a dog thou never did see! I understood it all in a moment. He had made one in the fight, and whether he had had the better or the worse of it, like a wise dog as he always was, he knew where to find what would serve his turn, and so when the house was quiet, off he came to old mother Rees to be plaistered and physicked. But what perplexes my old brain is, how, at that hour of the night, for to reach my door when he did, and him hardly able to stand when I let him in, it must have been dead night when he left—it do perplex me, I say, to think how at that time of the night he got out of that prison, watched as it is both night and day by them that sleep not.'

'He couldn't have come over the wall?' suggested Richard.

'Had thou seen him—thou would not make that the question.'

'Then he must have come through or under it; there are but three ways,' said Richard to himself. 'He's a big dog,' he added aloud, regarding him thoughtfully as he patted his sullen affectionate head. 'He's a big dog,' he repeated.

'I think a'most he be the biggest dog *I* ever saw,' assented mistress Rees.

'I would I were less about the shoulders,' said Richard.

'Who ever heard a man worth his mess of pottage wish him such a wish as that, master Heywood! What would mistress Dorothy say to hear thee? I warrant me she findeth no fault with the breadth of thy shoulders.'

'I am less in the compass than I was before the last fight,' he went on, without heeding his hostess, and as if he talked to the dog, who stood with his chin on his knee, looking up in his face. 'Where thou, Marquis, canst walk, I doubt not to creep; but if thou must creep, what then is left for me? Yet how couldst thou creep with such wounds in thy throat and belly, my poor Marquis?'

The dog whined, and moved all his feet, one after the other, but without taking his chin off Richard's knee.

'Hast seen thy mistress, little Dick, Marquis?' asked Richard.

Again the dog whined, moved his feet, and turned his head towards the door. But whether it was that he understood the question, or only that he recognised the name of his friend, who could tell?

'Will thou take me to Dick, Marquis?'

The dog turned and walked to the door, then stood and looked back, as if waiting for Richard to open it and follow him.

'No, Marquis, we must not go before night,' said Richard.

The dog returned slowly to his knee, and again laid his chin upon it.

'What will the dog do next, thinkest thou, mother—when he finds himself well again, I mean? Will he run from thee?' said Richard.

'He would be like neither dog nor man I ever knew, did he not.' returned the old woman. 'He will for sure go back where he got his hurts—to revenge them if he may, for that is the custom also with both dogs and men.'

'Couldst thou make sure of him that he run not away till I come again at night, mother?'

'Certain I can, my son. I will shut him up whence he will not break so long as he hears me nigh him.'

'Do so then an' thou lovest me, mother Rees, and I will be here with the first of the darkness.'

'An' I love thee, master Richard? Nay, but I do love thy good face and thy true words, be thou puritan or roundhead, or fanatic, or what evil name soever the wicked fashion of the times granteth to men to call thee.'

'Hark in thine ear then, mother: I will call no names; but they of Raglan have, as I truly believe, stolen from me my Lady.'

'Nay, nay, master Richard,' interrupted mistress Rees; 'did I not tell thee with my own mouth that she went of her own free will, and in the company of the reverend sir Matthew Herbert?'

'Alas! thou goest not with me, mother Rees. I meant not mistress Dorothy. She is lost to me indeed; but so also is my poor mare, which was stolen last night from Redware stables as the watchers slept.'

'Alack−a−day!' cried goody Rees, holding up her hands in sore trouble for her friend. 'But what then dreams thou of doing? Not surely, before all the saints in heaven, will thou adventure thy body within Raglan walls? But I speak like a fool. Thou canst not.'

'This good dog,' said Richard, stroking Marquis, 'must, as thou thyself plainly seest, have found some way of leaving Raglan without the knowledge or will of its warders. Where he gat him forth, will he not get him in again? And where dog can go, man may at least endeavour to follow.—Mayhap he hath for himself scratched a way, as many dogs will.'

'But, for the love of God, master Heywood, what would thou do inside that stone cage? Thy mare, be she, as thou hast often vaunted her to me, the first for courage and wisdom and strength and fleetness of all mares created—be her fore feet like a man's hands and her heart like a woman's heart, as thou sayest, yet cannot she overleap Raglan walls; and thinks thou they will raise portcullis and open gate and drop drawbridge to let thee and her ride forth in peace? It were a fool's errand, my young master, and nowise befitting thy young wisdom.'

'What I shall do, when I am length within the walls, I cannot tell thee, mother. Nor have I ever yet known much good in forecasting. To have to think, when the hour is come, of what thou didst before resolve, instead of setting thyself to understand what is around thee, and perchance the whole matter different from what thou had imagined, is to stand like Lazarus bound hand and foot in thine own graveclothes. It will be given me to meet what comes; or if not, who will bar me from meeting what follows ?'

'Master Heywood,' cried goody Rees, drawing herself with rebuke, 'for a man that is born of a woman to talk so wisely and so foolishly both in a breath!—But,' she added, with a change of tone, 'I know better than bar the path to a Heywood. An' he will, he will. And thou hast been vilely used, my young master. I will do what I can to help thee to thine own—and no more—no more than thine own. Hark in thine ear now. But first swear to me by the holy cross, puritan as thou art, that thou wilt make no other use of what I tell thee but to free thy stolen mare. I know thou may be trusted even with the secret that would slay thine enemy. But I must have thy oath notwithstanding thereto.'

'I will not swear by the cross, which was never holy, for thereby was the Holy slain. I will not swear at all, mother Rees. I will pledge thee the word of a man who fears God, that I will in no way dishonourable make use of that which thou tellest me. An' that suffice not, I will go without thy help, trusting in God, who never made that mare to carry the enemy of the truth into the battle.'

'But what an' thou should take the staff of strife to measure thy doings withal? That may then seem honourable, done to an enemy, which thou would scorn to do to one of thine own part, even if he wronged thee.'

'Nay, mother; but I will do nothing THOU wouldst think dishonourable—that I promise thee. I will use what thou tellest me for no manner of hurt to my lord of Worcester or aught that is his. But Lady is not his, and her will I carry, if I may, from Raglan stables back to Redware.'

'I am content. Hearken then, my son. Raglan watchword for the rest of the month is—ST. GEORGE AND ST. PATRICK! May it stand thee in good stead.'

'I thank thee, mother, with all my heart,' said Richard, rising jubilant. 'Now shut up the dog, and let me go. One day it may lie in my power to requite thee.'

'Thou hast requited me beforehand, master Heywood. Old mother Rees never forgets. I would have done well by thee with the maiden, an' thou would but have hearkened to my words. But the day may yet come. Go now, and return with the last of the twilight. Come hither, Marquis.'

The dog obeyed, and she shut him again in her chamber.

CHAPTER XXVII THE MOAT OF THE KEEP.

Richard left the cottage, and mounted Oliver. To pass the time and indulge a mournful memory, he rode round by Wyfern. When he reached home, he found that his father had gone to pay a visit some miles off. He went to his own room, cast himself on his bed, and tried to think. But his birds would not come at his call, or coming would but perch for a moment, and again fly. As he lay thus, his eyes fell on his cousin, old Thomas Heywood's little folio, lying on the window seat where he had left it two years ago, and straightway his fluttering birds alighting there, he thought how the book had been lying unopened all the months, while he had been passing through so many changes and commotions. How still had the room been around it, how silent the sunshine and the snow, while he had inhabited tumult—tumult in his heart, tumult in his ears, tumult of sorrows, of vain longings, of tongues and of swords! Where was the gain to him? Was he nearer to that centre of peace, which the book, as it lay there so still, seemed to his eyes to typify? The maiden loved from childhood had left him for a foolish king and a phantom−church: had he been himself pursuing anything better? He had been fighting for the truth: had he then gained her? where was she? what was she if not a living thing in the heart? Would the wielding of the sword in its name ever embody an abstraction, call it from the vasty deep of metaphysics up into self−conscious existence in the essence of a man's own vitality? Was not the question still, how, of all loves, to grasp the thing his soul thirsted after?

To many a sermon, cleric and lay, had he listened since he left that volume there—in church, in barn, in the open field—but the religion which seemed to fill all the horizon of these preachers' vision, was to him little better than another tumult of words; while, far beyond all the tumults, hung still, in the vast of thought unarrived, unembodied, that something without a shape, yet bearing a name around which hovered a vague light as of something dimly understood, after which, in every moment of inbreaking silence, his soul straightway began to thirst. And if the Truth was not to be found in his own heart, could he think that the blows by which he had not gained her had yet given her?—that through means of the tumult he had helped to arouse in her name and for her sake, but in which he had never caught a sight of her beauteous form, she now sat radiantly smiling in any one human soul where she sat not before?

Or should he say it was Freedom for which he had fought? Was he then one whit more free in the reality of his being than he had been before? Or had ever a battle wherein he had perilled his own life, striking for liberty, conveyed that liberty into a single human heart? Was there one soul the freer within, from the nearer presence of that freedom which would have a man endure the heaviest wrong, rather than inflict the lightest? He could not tell, but he greatly doubted.

His thought went wandering away, and vision after vision, now of war and now of love, now of earthly victory and now of what seemed unattainable felicity, arose and passed before him, filling its place. At length it came back: he would glance again into his cousin Thomas's book. He had but to stretch out his hand to take it, for his bed was close by the window. Opening it at random, he came upon this passage:

And as the Mill, that circumgyreth fast, Refuseth nothing that therein is cast, But whatsoever is to it assign'd Gladly receives and willing is to grynd, But if the violence be with nothing fed, It wasts itselfe: e'en so the heart mis−led, Still turning round, unstable as the Ocean, Never at rest, but in continuall Motion, Sleepe or awake, is still in agitation Of some presentment in th' imagination.

If to the Mill−stone you shall cast in Sand, It troubles them, and makes them at a stand; If Pitch, it chokes them; or if Chaffe let fall, They are employ'd, but to no use at all. So, bitter thoughts molest, uncleane thoughts staine And spot the Heart; while those idle and vaine Weare it, and to no purpose. For when 'tis Drowsie and carelesse of the future blisse, And to implore Heav'n's aid, it doth imply How far is it remote from the most High. For whilst our Hearts on Terrhen things we place, There cannot be least hope of Divine grace.

'Just such a mill is my mind,' he said to himself. 'But can I suppose that to sit down and read all day like a monk, would bring me nearer to the thing I want?'

He turned over the volume half thinking, half brooding.

'I will look again,' he thought, 'at the verses which that day my father gave me to read. Truly I did not well understand them.'

Once more he read the poem through. It closed with these lines:

So far this Light the Raies extends, As that no place It comprehends. So deepe this Sound, that though it speake, It cannot by a Sence so weake Be entertain'd. A Redolent Grace The Aire blowes not from place to place. A pleasant Taste, of that delight It doth confound all appetite. A strict Embrace, not felt, yet leaves That vertue, where it takes it cleaves. This Light, this Sound, this Savouring Grace, This Tastefull Sweet, this Strict Embrace, No Place containes, no Eye can see, My God is; and there's none but Hee.

'I HAVE gained something,' he cried aloud. 'I understand it now—at least I think I do. What if, in fighting for the truth as men say, the doors of a man's own heart should at length fly open for her entrance! What if the understanding of that which is uttered concerning her, be a sign that she herself draweth nigh! Then I will go on.—And that I may go on, I must recover my mare.'

Honestly, however, he could not quite justify the scheme. All the efforts of his imagination, as he rode home, to bring his judgment to the same side with itself, had failed, and he had been driven to confess the project a foolhardy one. But, on the other hand, had he not had a leading thitherward? Whence else the sudden conviction that Scudamore had taken her, and the burning desire to seek her in Raglan stables? And had he not heard mighty arguments from the lips of the most favoured preachers in the army for an unquestioning compliance with leadings? Nay, had he not had more than a leading? Was it not a sign to encourage him, even a pledge of happy result, that, within an hour of it, and in consequence of his first step in partial compliance with it, he had come upon the only creature capable of conducting him into the robber's hold? And had he not at the same time learned the Raglan password?—He WOULD go.

He rose, and descending the little creaking stair of black oak that led from his room to the next storey, sought his father's study, where he wrote a letter informing him of his intended attempt, and the means to its accomplishment that had been already vouchsafed him. The rest of his time, after eating his dinner, he spent in making overshoes for his mare out of an old buff jerkin. As soon as the twilight began to fall, he set out on foot for the witch's cottage.

When he arrived, he found her expecting him, but prepared with no hearty welcome.

'I had liefer by much thee had not come so pat upon thy promise, master Heywood. Then I might have looked to move thee from thy purpose, for truly I like it not. But thou will never bring an old woman into trouble, master Richard?'

'Or a young one either, if I can help it Mother Rees,' answered Richard. 'But come now, thou must trust me, and tell me all I want to know.'

He drew from his pocket paper and pencil, and began to put to her question after question as to the courts and the various buildings forming them, with their chief doors and windows, and ever as she gave him an answer, he added its purport to the rough plan he was drawing of the place.

'Listen to me, Master Heywood,' said the old woman at length after a long, silence, during which he had been pondering over his paper. 'An' thou get once into the fountain court thou will know where thee is by the marble horse that stands in the middle of it. Turn then thy back to the horse, with the yellow tower above thee upon thy right hand, and thee will be facing the great hall. On the other side of the hall is the pitched court with its great gate and double portcullis and drawbridge. Nearly at thy back, but to thy right hand, will lie the gate to the bowling−green. At which of these gates does thee think to lead out thy mare?'

'An' I pass at all, mother, it will be on her back, not at her head.'

'Thou wilt not pass, my son. Be counselled. To thy mare, thou wilt but lose thyself.'

Richard heard her as though he heard her not.

'At what hour doth the moon rise, mistress Rees?' he asked.

'What would thou with the moon?" she returned. "Is not she the enemy of him who roves for plunder? Shines she not that the thief may be shaken out of the earth?'

'I am not thief enough to steal in the dark, mother. How shall I tell without her help where I am or whither I go?'

'She will be half way to the top of her hill by midnight.'

'An' thou speak by the card, then is it time that Marquis and I were going.'

'Here, take thee some fern−seed in thy pouch, that thou may walk invisible,' said the old woman. 'If thee chance to be an hungred, then eat thereof,' she added, as she transferred something from her pocket to his.

She called the dog and opened the chamber door. Out came Marquis, walked to Richard, and stood looking up in his face as if he knew perfectly that his business was to accompany him. Richard bade the old woman good night, and stepped from the cottage.

No sooner was he in the darkness with the dog, than, fearing he might lose sight of him, he tied his handkerchief round the dog's neck, and fastened to it the thong of his riding whip—the sole weapon he had brought with him—and so they walked together, Marquis pulling Richard on. Ere long the moon rose, and the country dawned into the dim creation of the light.

On and on they trudged, Marquis pulling at his leash as if he had been a blind man's dog, and on and on beside them crept their shadows, flattened out into strange distortion upon the road. But when they had come within about two miles of Raglan, whether it was that the sense of proximity to his mistress grew strong in him, or that he scented the Great Mogul, as the horse the battle from afar, Marquis began to grow restless, and to sniff about on one side of the way. When at length they had by a narrow bridge crossed a brook, the dog insisted on leaving the road and going down into the meadow to the left. Richard made small resistance, and that only for experiment upon the animal's determination. Across field after field his guide led him, until, but for the great keep towering dimly up into the moonlit sky, he could hardly have even conjectured where he was. But he was well satisfied, for, ever as they came out of copse or hollow, there was the huge thing in the sky, nearer than before.

At last he was able to descry a short stretch of the castle rampart, past which, away to the westward, the dog was pulling, along a rough cart−track through a field. This he presently found to be a quarry road, and straight into the quarry the dog went, pulling eagerly; but Richard was compelled to follow with caution, for the ground was rough and broken, and the moon cast black misleading shadows. Towards the blackest of these the dog led, and entered a hollow way. Richard went straight after him, guarding his head with his arm, lest he might meet a sudden descent of the roof, and lengthening his leash to the utmost, that he might have timely warning of any descent of the floor.

It was a very rough tunnel, the intent of which will afterwards appear, forming part of one of lord Herbert's later contrivances for the safety of the castle; but so well had Mr. Salisbury, the surveyor, managed, that not one of the men employed upon it had an idea that they were doing more than working the quarry for the repair of the fortifications.

From the darkness, and the cautious rate at which he had to proceed, holding back the dog who tugged hard at the whip, Richard could not even hazard a conjecture as to the distance they had advanced, when he heard the noise of a small runnel of water, which seemed from the sound to make abrupt descent from some little height. He had gone but a few paces further when the handle of the whip received a great upward pull and was left loose in his grasp: the dog was away, leaving his handkerchief at the end of the thong. So now he had to guide himself, and began to feel about him. He seemed at first to have come to the end of the passage, for he could touch both sides of it by stretching out his arms, and in front a tiny stream of water came down the face of the rough rock; but what then had become of Marquis? The answer seemed plain: the water must come from somewhere, and doubtless its channel had spare room enough for the dog to pass thither. He felt up the rock, and found that, at about the height of his head, the water came over an obtuse angle. Climbing a foot or two, he discovered that the opening whence it issued was large enough for him to enter.

Only one who has at some time passed where lengthened creeping was necessary, will know how Richard felt, with water under him, pitch−darkness about him, and the rock within an inch or two of his body all round. By and by the slope became steeper and the ascent more difficult. The air grew very close, and he began to fear he should be stifled. Then came a hot breath, and a pair of eyes gleamed a foot or two from his face. Had he then followed into the den of the animal by which poor Marquis had been so frightfully torn? But no: it was Marquis himself waiting for him!

'Go on, Marquis,' he said, with a sigh of relief.

The dog obeyed, and in another moment a waft of cool air came in. Presently a glimmer of light appeared. The opening through which it entered was a little higher than his horizontally posed head, and looked alarmingly narrow.

But as he crept nearer it grew wider, and when he came under it he found it large enough to let him through.

When cautiously he poked up his head, there was the huge mass of the keep towering blank above him! On a level with his eyes, the broad, lilied waters of the moat lay betwixt him and the citadel.

Marquis had brought him to the one neglected, therefore forgotten, and thence undefended spot of the whole building. Before the well was sunk in the keep, the supply of water to the moat had been far more bountiful, and provision for a free overflow was necessary. For some reason, probably for the mere sake of facility in the construction, the passage for the superfluous water had been made larger than needful at the end next the moat. About midway to its outlet, however—mere drain−mouth in a swampy hollow in the middle of a field—it had narrowed to a third of the compass. But the quarriers had cut across it above the point of contraction; and no danger of access occurring to lord Herbert or Mr. Salisbury, while they found a certain service in the tiny waterfall, they had left it as it was.

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CHAPTER XXVIII. RAGLAN STABLES.

The passage for the overflow of the water of the moat was under the sunk walk which, reaching from the gate of the stone court round to the gate of the fountain court, enclosed the keep and its moat, looping them on as it were to the side of the double quadrangle of the castle. The only way out of this passage, at whose entrance Richard now found himself, was into the moat. As quietly therefore as he could, he got through the opening and into the water, amongst the lilies, where, much impeded by their tangling roots, which caused him many a submergence, but with a moon in her second quarter over his head to light him, he swam gently along. As he looked up from the water, however, to the huge crag−like tower over his head, the soft moonlight smoothing the rigour but bringing out all the wasteness of the grim blank, it seemed a hopeless attempt he had undertaken. Not the less did he keep his eye on the tower−side of the moat, and had not swum far before he caught sight of the little stair, which, enclosed in one of the six small round bastions encircling it, led up from the moat to the walk immediately around the citadel. The foot of this stair was, strangely enough, one of the only two points in the defence of the moat not absolutely commanded from either one or the other of the two gates of the castle. The top of the stair, however, was visible from one extreme point over the western gate, and the moment Richard, finding the small thick iron−studded door open, put his head out of the bastion, he caught sight of a warder far away, against the moonlit sky. All of the castle except the spot where that man stood, was hidden by the near bulk of the keep. He drew back, and sat down on the top of the stair—to think and let the water run from his clothes. When he issued, it was again on all−fours. He had, however, only to creep an inch or two to the right to be covered by one of the angles of the tower.

But this shelter was merely momentary, for he must go round the tower in search of some way to reach the courts beyond; and no sooner had he passed the next angle than he found himself within sight of one of the towers of the main entrance. Dropping once more on his hands and knees he crept slowly along, as close as he could squeeze to the root of the wall, and when he rounded the next angle, was in the shadow of the keep, while he had but to cross the walk to be covered by the parapet on the edge of the moat. This he did, and having crept round the curve of the next bastion, was just beginning to fear lest he should find only a lifted drawbridge, and have to take to the water again, when he came to the stone bridge.

It was well for him that Dorothy and Caspar had now omitted the setting of their water−trap, otherwise he would have entered the fountain court in a manner unfavourable to his project. As it was, he got over in safety, never ceasing his slow crawl until he found himself in the archway. Here he stood up, straightened his limbs, went through a few gymnastics, as silent as energetic, to send the blood through his chilled veins, and the next moment was again on the move.

Peering from the mouth of the archway, he saw to his left the fountain court, with the gleaming head of the great horse rising out of the sea of shadow into the moonlight, and knew where he was. Next he discovered close to him on his right an open door into a dim space, and knew that he was looking into the great hall. Opposite the door glimmered the large bay window of which Mrs. Rees had spoken.

There was now a point to be ascertained ere he could determine at which of the two gates he should attempt his exit—a question which, up to the said point, he had thoroughly considered on his way.

The stables opened upon the pitched court, and in that court was the main entrance: naturally that was the one to be used. But in front of it was a great flight of steps, the whole depth of the ditch, with the marble gate at the foot of them; and not knowing the carriageway, he feared both suspicion and loss of time, where a single moment might be all that divided failure from success. Also at this gate were a double portcullis and drawbridge, the working of whose machinery took time, and of all things a quick execution was essential, seeing that at any moment sleeping suspicion might awake, and find enough to keep her so. At the other gate there was but one portcullis and no drawbridge, while from it he perfectly knew the way to the brick gate. Clearly this was the preferable for his attempt. There was but one point to cast in the other scale—namely, that, if old Eccles were still the warder of it, there would be danger of his recognition in respect both of himself and his mare. But, on the

other hand, he thought he could turn to account his knowledge of the fact that the marquis's room was over it. So here the scale had settled to rebound no more—except indeed he should now discover any difficulty in passing from the stone court in which lay the MOUTH of the stables, to the fountain court in which stood the preferable gate. This question he must now settle, for once on horseback there must be no deliberation.

One way at least there must be—through the hall: the hall must be accessible from both courts. He pulled off his shoes, and stepped softly in. Through the high window immediately over the huge fireplace, a little moonlight fell on the northern gable−wall, turning the minstrels' gallery into an aerial bridge to some strange region of loveliness, and in the shadow under it he found at once the door he sought, standing open but dark under a deep porch.

Issuing and gliding along by the side of the hall and round the great bay window, he came to the stair indicated by Mrs. Rees, and descending a little way, stood and listened: plainly enough to his practised ear, what the old woman had represented as the underground passage to the airiest of stables, was itself full of horses. To go down amongst these in the dark, and in ignorance of the construction of the stable, was somewhat perilous; but he had not come there to avoid risk. Step by step he stole softly down, and, arrived at the bottom, seated himself on the last—to wait until his eyes should get so far accustomed to the darkness as to distinguish the poor difference between the faint dusk sinking down the stair and the absolute murk. A little further on, he could descry two or three grated openings into the fountain court, but by them nothing could enter beyond the faintest reflection of moonlight from the windows between the grand staircase and the bell tower.

As soon as his eyes had grown capable of using what light there was, which however was scarcely sufficient to render him the smallest service, Richard began to whistle, very softly, a certain tune well known to Lady, one he always whistled when he fed or curried her himself. He had not got more than half through it, when a low drowsy whinny made reply from the depths of the darkness before him, and the heart of Richard leaped in his bosom for joy. He ceased a moment, then whistled again. Again came the response, but this time, although still soft and low, free from all the woolliness of sleep. Once more he whistled, and once more came the answer. Certain at length of the direction, he dropped on his hands and knees, and crawled carefully along for a few yards, then stopped, whistled again, and listened. After a few more calls and responses, he found himself at Lady's heels, which had begun to move restlessly. He crept into the stall beside her, spoke to her in a whisper, got upon his feet, caressed her, told her to be quiet, and, pulling her buff shoes from his pockets, drew them over her hoofs, and tied them securely about her pasterns. Then with one stroke of his knife he cut her halter, hitched the end round her neck, and telling her to follow him, walked softly through the stable and up the stair. She followed like a cat, though not without some noise, to whose echoes Richard's bosom seemed the beaten drum. The moment her back was level, he flung himself upon it, and rode straight through the porch and into the hall.

But here at length he was overtaken by the consequences of having an ally unequal to the emergency. Marquis, who had doubtless been occupied with his friends in the stable yard, came bounding up into the court just as Richard threw himself on the back of his mare. At the sight of Lady, whom he knew so well, with her master on her back, a vision of older and happier times, the poor animal forgot himself utterly, rushed through the hall like a whirlwind, and burst into a tempest of barking in the middle of the fountain court—whether to rouse his mistress, or but to relieve his own heart, matters little to my tale. There was not a moment to lose, and Richard rode out of the hall and made for the gate.

CHAPTER XXIX. THE APPARITION.

The voice of her lost Marquis, which even in her dreams she could attribute to none but him, roused Dorothy at once. She sprang from her bed, flew to the window, and flung it wide. That same moment, from the shadows about the hall−door, came forth a man on horseback, and rode along the tiled path to the fountain, where never had hoof of horse before trod. Stranger still, the tramp sounded far away, and woke no echo in the echo−haunted place. A phantom surely—horse and man! As they drew nearer where she stared with wide eyes, the head of the rider rose out of the shadow into the moonlight, and she recognised the face of Richard—very white and still, though not, as she supposed, with the whiteness and stillness of a spectre, but with the concentration of eagerness and watchful resolution. The same moment she recognised Lady. She trembled from head to foot. What could it mean but that beyond a doubt they were both dead, slain in battle, and that Richard had come to pay her a last visit ere he left the world. On they came. Her heart swelled up into her throat, and the effort to queen it over herself, and neither shriek nor drop on the floor, was like struggling to support a falling wall. When the spectre reached the marble fountain, he gave a little start, drew bridle, and seemed to become aware that he had taken a wrong path, looked keenly around him, and instead of continuing his advance towards her window, turned in the direction of the gate. One thing was clear, that whether ghostly or mortal, whether already dead or only on the way to death, the apparition was regardless of her presence. A pang of disappointment shot through her bosom, and for the moment quenched her sense of relief from terror. With it sank the typhoon of her emotion, and she became able to note how draggled and soiled his garments were, how his hair clung about his temples, and that for all accoutrement his mare had but a halter. Yet Richard sat erect and proud, and Lady stepped like a mare full of life and vigour. And there was Marquis, not cowering or howling as dogs do in spectral presence, but madly bounding and barking as if in uncontrollable jubilation!

The acme of her bewilderment was reached when the phantom came under the marquis's study−window, and she heard it call aloud, in a voice which undoubtedly came from corporeal throat, and that throat Richard's, ringing of the morning and the sunrise and the wind that shakes the wheat—anything rather than of the tomb:

'Ho, master Eccles!' it cried; 'when? when? Must my lord's business cool while thou rubbest thy sleepy eyes awake? What, I say! When? —Yes, my lord, I will punctually attend to your lordship's orders. Expect me back within the hour.'

The last words were uttered in a much lower tone, with the respect due to him he seemed addressing, but quite loud enough to be distinctly heard by Eccles or any one else in the court.

Dorothy leaned from her window, and looked sideways to the gate, expecting to see the marquis bending over his window−sill, and talking to Richard. But his window was close shut, nor was there any light behind it.

A minute or two passed, during which she heard the combined discords of the rising portcullis. Then out came Eccles, slow and sleepy.

'By St. George and St. Patrick!' cried Richard, 'why keep'st thou six legs here standing idle? Is thy master's business nothing to thee?'

Eccles looked up at him. He was coming to his senses.

'Thou rides in strange graith on my lord's business,' he said, as he put the key in the lock.

'What is that to thee? Open the gate. And make haste. If it please my lord that I ride thus to escape eyes that else might see further than thine, keen as they are, master Eccles, it is nothing to thee.'

The lock clanged, the gate swung open, and Richard rode through.

By this time a process of doubt and reasoning, rapid as only thought can be, had produced in the mind of Dorothy the conviction that there was something wrong. By what authority was Richard riding from Raglan with muffled hoofs between midnight and morning? His speech to the marquis was plainly a pretence, and doubtless that to Eccles was equally false. To allow him to pass unchallenged would be treason against both her host and her king.

'Eccles! Eccles!' she cried, her voice ringing clear through the court, 'let not that man pass.'

'He gave the word, mistress,' said Eccles, in dull response.

'Stop him, I say,' cried Dorothy again, with energy almost frantic, as she heard the gate swing to heavily. 'Thou shalt be held to account.'

'He gave the word.'

'He's a true man, mistress,' returned Eccles, in tone of self−justification. 'Heard you not my lord marquis give him his last orders from his window?'

'There was no marquis at the window. Stop him, I say.'

'He's gone,' said Eccles quietly, but with waking uneasiness.

'Run after him,' Dorothy almost screamed.

'Stop him at the gate. It is young Heywood of Redware, one of the busiest of the round−heads.'

Eccles was already running and shouting and whistling. She heard his feet resounding from the bridge. With trembling hands she flung a cloak about her, and sped bare−footed down the grand staircase and along the north side of the court to the bell−tower, where she seized the rope of the alarm−bell, and pulled with all her strength. A horrid clangour tore the stillness of the night, re−echoed with yelping response from the multitudinous buildings around. Window after window flew open, head after head was popped out—amongst the first that of the marquis, shouting to know what was amiss. But the question found no answer. The courts began to fill. Some said the castle was on fire; others, that the wild beasts were all out; others, that Waller and Cromwell had scaled the rampart, and were now storming the gates; others, that Eccles had turned traitor and admitted the enemy. In a few moments all was outcry and confusion. Both courts and the great hall were swarming with men and women and children, in every possible stage of attire. The main entrance was crowded with a tumult of soldiery, and scouts were rushing to different stations of outlook, when the cry reached them that the western gate was open, the portcullis up, and the guard gone.

The moment Richard was clear of the portcullis, he set off at a sharp trot for the brick gate, and had almost reached it when he became aware that he was pursued. He had heard the voice of Dorothy as he rode out, and knew to whom he owed it. But yet there was a chance. Rousing the porter with such a noisy reveillee as drowned in his sleepy ears the cries of the warder and those that followed him, he gave the watch−word, and the huge key was just turning in the wards when the clang of the alarm−bell suddenly racked the air. The porter stayed his hand, and stood listening.

'Open the gate,' said Richard in authoritative tone.

'I will know first, master,—' began the man.

'Dost not hear the bell?' cried Richard. 'How long wilt thou endanger the castle by thy dulness?'

'I shall know first,' repeated the man deliberately, 'what that bell—'

Ere he could finish the sentence, the butt of Richard's whip had laid him along the threshold of the gate. Richard flung himself from his horse, and turned the key. But his enemies were now close at hand—Eccles and the men of his guard. If the porter had but fallen the other way! Ere he could drag aside his senseless body and open the gate, they were upon him with blows and curses. But the puritan's blood was up, and with the heavy handle of his whip he had felled one and wounded another ere he was himself stretched on the ground with a sword−cut in the head.

CHAPTER XXX. RICHARD AND THE MARQUIS.

A very few strokes of the brazen−tongued clamourer had been enough to wake the whole castle. Dorothy flew back to her chamber, and hurrying on her clothes, descended again to the court. It was already in full commotion. The western gate stood open, with the portcullis beyond it high in the wall, and there she took her stand, waiting the return of Eccles and his men.

Presently lord Charles came through the hall from the stone court, and seeing the gate open, called aloud in anger to know what it meant. Receiving no reply, he ran with an oath to drop the portcullis.

'Is there a mutiny amongst the rascals?' he cried.

'There is no cause for dread, my lord,' said Dorothy from the shadow of the gateway.

'How know you that, fair mistress?' returned lord Charles, who knew her voice. 'You must not inspire us with too much of your spare courage. That would be to make us fool−hardy.'

'Indeed, there is nothing to fear, my lord,' persisted Dorothy. 'The warder and his men have but this moment rushed out after one on horseback, whom they had let pass with too little question. They are ten to one,' added Dorothy with a shudder, as the sounds of the fray came up from below.

'If there is then no cause of fear, cousin, why look you so pale?' asked lord Charles, for the gleam of a torch had fallen on Dorothy's face.

'I think I hear them returning, doubtless with a prisoner,' said Dorothy, and stood with her face turned aside, looking anxiously through the gateway and along the bridge. She had obeyed her conscience, and had now to fight her heart, which unreasonable member of the community would insist on hoping that her efforts had been foiled. But in a minute more came the gathering noise of returning footsteps, and presently Lady's head appeared over the crown of the bridge; then rose Eccles, leading her in grim silence; and next came Richard, pale and bleeding, betwixt two men, each holding him by an arm; the rest of the guard crowded behind. As they entered the court, Richard caught sight of Dorothy, and his face shone into a wan smile, to which her rebellious heart responded with a terrible pang.

The voice of lord Charles reached them from the other side of the court.

'Bring the prisoner to the hall,' it cried.

Eccles led the mare away, and the rest took Richard to the hall, which now began to be lighted up, and was soon in a blaze of candles all about the dais. When Dorothy entered, it was crowded with household and garrison, but the marquis, who was tardy at dressing, had not yet appeared. Presently, however, he walked slowly in from the door at the back of the dais, breathing hard, and seated himself heavily in the great chair. Dorothy placed herself near the door, where she could see the prisoner.

Lady Mary entered and seated herself beside her father.

'What meaneth all this tumult?' the marquis began. 'Who rang the alarum−bell?'

'I did, my lord,' answered Dorothy in a trembling voice.

'Thou, mistress Dorothy!' exclaimed the marquis. 'Then I doubt not thou hadst good reason for so doing. Prithee what was the reason? Verily it seems thou wast sent hither to be the guardian of my house!'

'It was not I, my lord, gave the first alarm, but—' She hesitated, then added, 'my poor Marquis.'

'Not so poor for a marquis, cousin Dorothy, as to be called the poor Marquis. Why dost thou call me poor?'

'My lord, I mean my dog.'

'The truth will still lie—between me and thy dog,' said the marquis. 'But come now, instruct me. Who is this prisoner, and how comes he here?'

'He be young Mr. Heywood of Redware, my lord, and a pestilent roundhead,' answered one of his captors.

'Who knows him?'

A moment's silence followed. Then came Dorothy's voice again.

'I do, my lord.'

'Tell me, then, all thou knowest from the beginning, cousin,' said the marquis.

'I was roused by the barking of my dog,' Dorothy began.

'How came HE hither again?'

'My lord, I know not.'

"Tis passing strange. See to it, lord Charles. Go on, mistress Dorothy.'

'I heard my dog bark in the court, my lord, and looking from my window saw Mr. Heywood riding through on horseback. Ere I could recover from my astonishment, he had passed the gate, and then I rang the alarm−bell,' said Dorothy briefly.

'Who opened the gate for him?'

'I did, my lord,' said Eccles. 'He made me believe he was talking to your lordship at the study window.'

'Ha! a cunning fox!' said the marquis. 'And then?'

'And then mistress Dorothy fell out upon me—'

'Let thy tongue wag civilly, Eccles.'

'He speaks true, my lord,' said Dorothy. 'I did fall out upon him, for he was but half awake, and I knew not what mischief might be at hand.'

'Eccles is obliged to you, cousin. And so the lady brought you to your senses in time to catch him?'

'Yes, my lord.'

'How comes he wounded? He was but one to a score.'

'My lord, he would else have killed us all.'

'He was armed then?'

Eccles was silent.

'Was he armed?' repeated the marquis.

'He had a heavy whip, my lord.'

'H'm!' said the marquis, and turned to the prisoner.

'Is thy name Heywood, sirrah?' he asked.

'My lord, if you treat me as a clown, you shall have but clown's manners of me; I will not answer.'

"Fore heaven!' exclaimed the marquis, 'our squires would rule the roast.'

'He that doth right, marquis or squire, will one day rule, my lord,' said Richard.

"Tis well said,' returned the marquis. 'I ask your pardon, Mr. Heywood. In times like these a man must be excused for occasionally dropping his manners.'

'Assuredly, my lord, when he stoops to recover them so gracefully as doth the marquis of Worcester.'

'What, then, would'st thou in my house at midnight, Mr. Heywood?' asked the marquis courteously.

'Nothing save mine own, my lord. I came but to look for a stolen mare.'

'What! thou takest Raglan for a den of thieves?'

'I found the mare in your lordship's stable.'

'How then came the mare in my stable?'

'That is not a question for me to answer, my lord.'

'Doubtless thou didst lose her in battle against thy sovereign.'

'She was in Redware stable last night, my lord.'

'Which of you, knaves, stole the gentleman's mare?' cried the marquis.—'But, Mr. Heywood, there can be no theft upon a rebel. He is by nature an outlaw, and his life and goods forfeit to the king.'

'He will hardly yield the point, my lord. So long as Might, the sword, is in the hand of Right, the—'

'Of Right, the roundhead, I suppose you mean,' interrupted the marquis. 'Who carried off Mr. Heywood's mare?' he repeated, rising, and looking abroad on the crowd.

'Tom Fool,' answered a voice from the obscure distance.

A buzz of suppressed laughter followed, which as instantly ceased, for the marquis looked angrily around.

'Stand forth, Tom Fool,' he said.

Through the crowd came Tom, and stood before the dais, looking frightened and sheepish.

'Sure I am, Tom, thou didst never go to steal a mare of thine own notion: who went with thee?' said the marquis.

'Mr. Scudamore, my lord,' answered Tom.

'Ha, Rowland! Art thou there?' cried his lordship.

'I gave him fair warning two years ago, my lord, and the king wants horses,' said Scudamore cunningly.

'Rowland, I like not such warfare. Yet can the roundheads say nought against it, who would filch kingdom from king and church from bishops,' said the marquis, turning again to Heywood.

'As they from the pope, my lord,' rejoined Richard.

'True,' answered the marquis; 'but the bishops are the fairer thieves, and may one day be brought to reason and restitution.'

'As I trust your lordship will in respect of my mare.'

'Nay, that can hardly be. She shall to Gloucester to the king. I would not have sent to Redware to fetch her, but finding thee and her in my house at midnight, it would be plain treason to set such enemies at liberty. What! hast thou fought against his majesty? Thou art scored like an old buckler!'

Richard had started on his adventure very thinly clad, for he had expected to find all possible freedom of muscle necessary, and indeed could not in his buff coat have entered the castle. In the scuffle at the gate, his garment had been torn open, and the eye of the marquis had fallen on the scar of a great wound on his chest, barely healed.

'What age art thou?' he went on, finding Richard made no answer.

'One and twenty, my lord—almost.'

'And what wilt thou be by the time thou art one and thirty, an' I'll let thee go,' said the marquis thoughtfully.

'Dust and ashes, my lord, most likely. Faith, I care not.'

As he spoke he glanced at Dorothy, but she was looking on the ground.

'Nay, nay!' said the marquis feelingly. 'These are, but wild and hurling words for a fine young fellow like thee. Long ere thou be a man, the king will have his own again, and all will be well. Come, promise me thou wilt never more bear arms against his majesty, and I will set thee and thy mare at liberty the moment thou shalt have eaten thy breakfast.'

'Not to save ten lives, my lord, would I give such a promise.'

'Roundhead hypocrite!' cried the marquis, frowning to hide the gleam of satisfaction he felt breaking from his eyes. 'What will thy father say when he hears thou liest deep in Raglan dungeon?'

'He will thank heaven that I lie there a free man instead of walking abroad a slave,' answered Richard.

"Fore heaven!' said the marquis, and was silent for a moment. 'Owest thou then thy king NOTHING, boy?' he resumed.

'I owe the truth everything,' answered Richard.

'The truth!' echoed the marquis.

'Now speaks my lord Worcester like my lord Pilate,' said Richard.

'Hold thy peace, boy,' returned the marquis sternly. 'Thy godly parents have ill taught thee thy manners. How knowest thou what was in my thought when I did but repeat after thee the sacred word thou didst misuse?'

'My lord, I was wrong, and I beg your lordship's pardon. But an' your lordship were standing here with your head half beaten in, and your clothes—'

Here Richard bethought himself, and was silent.

'Tell me then how gat'st thou in, lunatic,' said the marquis, not unkindly, 'and thou shalt straight to bed.'

'My lord,' returned Richard, 'you have taken my mare, and taken my liberty, but the devil is in it if you take my secret.'

'I would thy mare had been poisoned ere she drew thee hither on such a fool's errand! I want neither thee nor thy mare, and yet I may not let you go!'

'A moment more, and it had been an exploit, and no fool's errand, my lord.'

'Then the fool's cap would have been thine, Eccles. How earnest thou to let him out? Thou a warder, and ope gate and up portcullis 'twixt waking and sleeping!'

'Had he wanted in, my lord, it would have been different,' said Eccles. 'But he only wanted out, and gave the watchword.'

'Where got'st thou the watchword, Mr. Heywood?'

'I will tell thee what I gave for it, my lord. More I will not.'

'What gavest thou then?'

'My word that I would work neither thee nor thine any hurt withal, my lord.'

'Then there are traitors within my gates!' cried the marquis.

'Truly, that I know not, my lord,' answered Richard.

'Prithee tell me how them gat thee into my house, Mr. Heywood? It were but neighbourly.'

'It were but neighbourly, my lord, to hang young Scudamore and Tom Fool for thieves.'

'Tell me how thou gat hold of the watchword, good boy, and I will set thee free, and give thee thy mare again.'

'I will not, my lord.'

'Then the devil take thee!' said the marquis, rising.

The same moment Richard reeled, and but for the men about him, would have fallen heavily.

Dorothy darted forward, but could not come near him for the crowd.

'My lord Charles,' cried the marquis, 'see the poor fellow taken care of. Let him sleep, and perchance on the morrow he will listen to reason. Mistress Watson will see to his hurts. I would to God he were on our side! I like him well.'

The men took him up and followed lord Charles to the housekeeper's apartment, where they laid him on a bed in a little turret, and left him, still insensible, to her care, with injunctions to turn the key in the lock if she went from the chamber but for a moment. 'For who can tell,' thought lord Charles, greatly perplexed, 'but as he came he may go?'

Some of the household had followed them, and several of the women would gladly have stayed, but Mrs. Watson sent all away. Gradually the crowd dispersed. The tumult ceased; the household retired. The castle grew still, and most of its inhabitants fell asleep again.

'A damned hot−livered roundhead coxcomb!' said lord Worcester to himself, pacing his room. 'These pelting cockerel squires and yeomen nowadays go strutting and crowing as if all the yard were theirs! We shall see how far this heat will carry the rogue! I doubt not the boy would tell everything than see his mare whipped. He's a fine fellow, and it were a thousand pities he turned coward and gave in. But the affair is not mine; it is the king's majesty's. Would to God the rascal were of our side! He's the right old English breed. A few such were very welcome, if only to show some of our dainty young lordlings of yesterday what breed can do. But an ass−foal it is! To run his neck into a halter, and set honest people in mortal doubt whether to pull the end or no!

How on earth did he ever dream of carrying off a horse out of the very courts of Raglan castle! And yet, by saint George! he would have done it too, but for that brave wench of a Vaughan! What a couple the two would make! They'd give us a race of Arthurs and Orlandos between them. God be praised there are such left in England! And yet the rogue is but a pestilent roundhead—the more's the pity! Those coward rascals need never have mauled him like that. Yet had the blow gone a little deeper it had been a mighty gain to our side. Out he shall not go till the war be over! It would be downright treason.'

So ran the thoughts of the marquis as he paced his chamber. But at length he lay down once more, and sought refuge in sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE SLEEPLESS.

There were more than the marquis left awake and thinking; amongst the rest one who ought to have been asleep, for the thoughts that kept her awake were evil thoughts.

Amanda Serafina Fuller was a twig or leaf upon one of many decaying branches, which yet drew what life they had from an ancient genealogical tree. Property gone, but the sense of high birth swollen to a vice, the one thought in her mother's mind, ever since she grew capable of looking upon the social world in its relation to herself, had been how, with stinted resources, to make the false impression of plentiful ease. For one of the most disappointing things in high descent is, that the descent is occasionally into depths of meanness. Some who are proudest of their lineage, instead of finding therein a spur to nobility of thought and action, find in it only a necessity for prostrating themselves with the more abject humiliation at the footstool of Mammon, to be admitted into the penetralia of which foul god's favours, they will hasten to mingle the blood of their pure descent with that of the very kennels, yellow with the gold to which a noble man, if poor as Jesus himself, would loathe to be indebted for a meal. In 'the high countries' there will be a finding of levels more appalling than strange.

Hence Amanda had been born and brought up in falsehood, had been all her life witness to a straining after the untrue so energetic, as to assume the appearance of conscience; while such was the tenor and spirit of the remarks she was constantly hearing, that she grew up with the ingrained undisputed idea that she and her mother, whom she had only known as a widow, had been wronged, spoiled indeed of their lawful rights, by a combination of their rich relatives; whereas in truth they had been the objects of very considerable generosity, which they resented the more that it had been chiefly exercised by such of the family as could least easily afford it, yet accepted in their hearts, if not in their words, as their natural right. The intercession through which Amanda had been received into lady Margaret's household, was the contribution towards their maintenance of one of their richer connections: the marquis himself, although distantly related, not having previously been aware of their existence.

But Amanda felt degraded by her position, and was unaware that to herself alone she owed the degradation: she had not yet learned that the only service which can degrade is that which is unwillingly rendered. To be paid for such, is degradation in its very essence. Every one who grumbles at his position as degrading, yet accepts the wages thereof, brands himself a slave.

The evil tendencies which she had inherited, had then been nourished in her from her very birth—chief of these envy, and a strong tendency to dislike. Mean herself, she was full of suspicions with regard to others, and found much pleasure in penetrating what she took to be disguise, and laying bare the despicable motives which her own character enabled her either to discover or imagine, and which, in other people, she hated. Moderately good people have no idea of the vileness of which their own nature is capable, or which has been developed in not a few who pass as respectable persons, and have not yet been accused either of theft or poisoning. Such as St. Paul alone can fully understand the abyss of moral misery from which the in−dwelling spirit of God has raised them.

The one redeeming element in Amanda was her love to her mother, but inasmuch as it was isolated and self−reflected, their mutual attachment partook of the nature of a cultivated selfishness, and had lost much of its primal grace. The remaining chance for such a woman, so to speak, seems—that she should either fall in love with a worthy man, if that be still possible to her, or, by her own conduct, be brought into dismal and incontrovertible disgrace.

She had stood in the hall within a few yards of Dorothy, and had intently watched her face all the time Richard was before the marquis. But not because she watched the field of their play was Amanda able to read the heart whence ascended those strangely alternating lights and shadows. She had, by her own confession, conceived a strong dislike to Dorothy the moment she saw her, and without love there can be no understanding. Hate will sharpen observation to the point of microscopic vision, affording opportunity for many a shrewd guess, and revealing facts for the construction of the cleverest and falsest theories, but will leave the observer as blind as any

bat to the scope of the whole, or the meaning of the parts which can be understood only from the whole; for love alone can interpret.

As she gazed on the signs of conflicting emotion in Dorothy's changes of colour and expression, Amanda came quickly enough to the conclusion that nothing would account for them but the assumption that the sly puritanical minx was in love with the handsome young roundhead. How else could the deathly pallor of her countenance while she fixed her eyes wide and unmoving upon his face, and the flush that ever and anon swept its red shadow over the pallor as she cast them on the ground at some brave word from the lips of the canting psalm−singer, be in the least intelligible? Then came the difficulty: how in that case was her share in his capture to be explained? But here Amanda felt herself in her own province, and before the marquis rose, had constructed a very clever theory, in which exercise of ingenuity, however, unluckily for its truth, she had taken for granted that Dorothy's nature corresponded to her own, and reasoned freely from the character of the one to the conduct of the other. This was her theory: Dorothy had expected Richard, and contrived his admission. His presence betrayed by the mastiff, and his departure challenged by the warder, she had flown instantly to the alarm−bell, to screen herself in any case, and to secure the chance, if he should be taken, of liberating him without suspicion under cover of the credit of his capture. The theory was a bold one, but then it accounted for all the points—amongst the rest, how he had got the password and why he would not tell—and was indeed in the fineness of its invention equally worthy of both the heart and the intellect of the theorist.

Nor were mistress Fuller's resolves behind her conclusions in merit: of all times since first she had learned to mistrust her, this night must Dorothy be watched; and it was with a gush of exultation over her own acuteness that she saw her follow the men who bore Richard from the hall.

If Dorothy knew more of her own feelings than she who watched her, she was far less confident that she understood them. Indeed she found them strangely complicated, and as difficult to control as to understand, while she stood gazing on the youth who through her found himself helpless and wounded in the hands of his enemies. He was all in the wrong, no doubt—a rebel against his king, and an apostate from the church of his country; but he was the same Richard with whom she had played all her childhood, whom her mother had loved, and between whom and herself had never fallen shadow before that cast by the sudden outblaze of the star of childish preference into the sun of youthful love. And was it not when the very mother of shadows, the blackness of darkness itself, swept between them and separated them for ever, that first she knew how much she had loved him? What if not with the love that could listen entranced to its own echo!—love of child or love of maiden, Dorothy never asked herself which it had been, or which it was now. She was not given to self−dissection. The cruel fingers of analysis had never pulled her flower to pieces, had never rubbed the bloom from the sun−dyed glow of her feelings. But now she could not help the vaporous rise of a question: all was over, for Richard had taken the path of presumption, rebellion, and violence—how then came it that her heart beat with such a strange delight at every answer he made to the expostulations or enticements of the marquis? How was it that his approval of the intruder, not the less evident that it was unspoken, made her heart swell with pride and satisfaction, causing her to forget the rude rebellion housed within the form whose youth alone prevented it from looking grand in her eyes?

For the moment her heart had the better of—her conscience, shall I say? Yes, of that part of her conscience, I will allow, which had grown weak by the wandering of its roots into the poor soil of opinion. In the delight which the manliness of the young fanatic awoke in her, she even forgot the dull pain which had been gnawing at her heart ever since first she saw the blood streaming down his face as he passed her in the gateway. But when at length he fell fainting in the arms of his captors, and the fear that she had slain him writhed sickening through her heart, it was with a grim struggle indeed that she kept silent and conscious. The voice of the marquis, committing him to the care of mistress Watson instead of the rough ministrations of the guard, came with the power of a welcome restorative, and she hastened after his bearers to satisfy herself that the housekeeper was made understand that he was carried to her at the marquis's behest. She then retired to her own chamber, passing in, the corridor Amanda, whose room was in the, same quarter, with a salute careless from weariness and preoccupation.

The moment her head was on her pillow the great fight began—on that only battle−field of which all others are but outer types and pictures, upon which the thoughts of the same spirit are the combatants, accusing and excusing one another.

She had done her duty, but what a remorseless thing that duty was! She did not, she could not, repent that she

had done it, but her heart WOULD complain that she had had it to do. To her, as to Hamlet, it was a cursed spite. She had not yet learned the mystery of her relation to the Eternal, whose nature in his children it is that first shows itself in the feeling of duty. Her religion had not as yet been shaken, to test whether it was of the things that remain or of those that pass. It is easy for a simple nature to hold by what it has been taught, so long as out of that faith springs no demand of bitter obedience; but when the very hiding place of life begins to be laid bare under the scalpel of the law, when the heart must forego its love, when conscience seems at war with kindness, and duty at strife with reason, then most good people, let their devotion to what they call their religion be what it may, prove themselves, although generally without recognising the fact, very much of pagans after all. And good reason why! For are they not devoted to their church or their religion tenfold more than to the living Love, the father of their spirits? and what else is that, be the church or religion what it will, but paganism? Gentle and strong at once as Dorothy was, she was not yet capable of knowing that, however like it may look to a hardship, no duty can be other than a privilege. Nor was it any wonder if she did not perceive that she was already rewarded for the doing of the painful task, at the memory of which her heart ached and rebelled, by the fresh outburst in that same troubled heart of the half−choked spring of her love to the playmate of her childhood. Had it fallen, as she would have judged so much fairer, to some one else of the many in the populous place to defeat Richard's intent and secure his person, she would have both suffered and loved less. The love, I repeat, was the reward of the duty done.

For a long time she tossed sleepless, for what she had just passed through had so thorougly possessed her imagination that, ever as her wearied brain was sinking under the waves of sleep, up rose the face of Richard from its depths, deathlike, with matted curls and bloodstained brow, and drove her again ashore on the rocks of wakefulness. By and by the form of her suffering changed, and then instead of the face of Richard it was his voice, ever as she reached the point of oblivion, calling aloud for help in a tone of mingled entreaty and reproach, until at last she could no longer resist the impression that she was warned to go and save him from some impending evil. This once admitted, not for a moment would she delay response. She rose, threw on a dressing−gown, and set out in the dim light of the breaking day to find again the room into which she had seen him carried.

There was yet another in the house who could not sleep, and that was Tom Fool. He had a strong suspicion that Richard had learned the watchword from his mother, who, like most people desirous of a reputation for superior knowledge, was always looking out for scraps and orts of peculiar information. In such persons an imagination after its kind has considerable play, and when mother Rees had succeeded, without much difficulty on her own, or sense of risk on her son's part, in drawing from him the watchword of the week, she was aware in herself of a huge accession of importance; she felt as if she had been intrusted with the keys of the main entrance, and trod her clay floor as if the fate of Raglan was hid in her bosom, and the great pile rested in safety under the shadow of her wings. But her imagined gain was likely to prove her son's loss; for, as he reasoned with himself, would Mr. Heywood, now that he knew him for the thief of his mare, persist, upon reflection, in refusing to betray his mother? If not, then the fault would at once be traced to him, with the result at the very least, of disgraceful expulsion from the marquis's service. Almost any other risk would be preferable.

But he had yet another ground for uneasiness. He knew well his mother's attachment to young Mr. Heywood, and had taken care she should have no suspicion of the way he was going after leaving her the night he told her the watchword; for such was his belief in her possession of supernatural powers, that he feared the punishment she would certainly inflict for the wrong done to Richard, should it come to her knowledge, even more than the wrath of the marquis. For both of these weighty reasons therefore he must try what could be done to strengthen Richard in his silence, and was prepared with an offer, or promise at least, of assistance in making his escape.

As soon as the house was once more quiet, he got up, and, thoroughly acquainted with the "crenkles" of it, took his way through dusk and dark, through narrow passage and wide chamber, without encountering the slightest risk of being heard or seen, until at last he stood, breathless with anxiety and terror, at the door of the turret−chamber, and laid his ear against it.

CHAPTER XXXII. THE TURRET CHAMBER.

When mistress Watson had, as gently as if she had been his mother, bound up Richard's wounded head, she gave him a composing draught, and sat down by his bedside. But as soon as she saw it begin to take effect, she withdrew, in the certainty that he would not move for some hours at least. Although he did fall asleep, however, Richard's mind was too restless and anxious to yield itself to the natural influence of the potion. He had given his word to his father that he would ride on the morrow; the morrow had come, and here he was! Hence the condition which the drug superinduced was rather that of dreaming than sleep, the more valuable element, repose, having little place in the result.

The key was in the lock, and Tom Fool as he listened softly turned it, then lifted the latch, peeped in, and entered. Richard started to his elbow, and stared wildly about him. Tom made him an anxious sign, and, fevered as he was and but half awake, Richard, whether he understood it or not, anyhow kept silence, while Tom Fool approached the bed, and began to talk rapidly in a low voice, trembling with apprehension. It was some time, however, before Richard began to comprehend even a fragment here and there of what he was saying. When at length he had gathered this much, that his visitor was running no small risk in coming to him, and was in mortal dread of discovery, he needed but the disclosure of who he was, which presently followed, to spring upon him and seize him by the throat with a gripe that rendered it impossible for him to cry out, had he been so minded.

'Master, master!' he gurgled, 'let me go. I will swear any oath you please—'

'And break it any moment YOU please,' returned Richard through his set teeth, and caught with his other hand the coverlid, dragged it from the bed, and, twisting it first round his face, flung the remainder about his body; then, threatening to knock his brains out if he made the least noise, proceeded to tie him up in it with his garters and its own corners. No sound escaped poor Tom beyond a continuous mumbled entreaty through its folds. Richard laid him on the floor, pulled all the bedding upon the top of him, and gliding out, closed the door, but, to Tom's unspeakable relief, as his ears, agonizedly listening, assured him, did not lock it behind him.

Tom's sole anxiety was now to get back to his garret unseen, and nothing was farther from his thoughts than giving the alarm. The moment Richard was out of hearing—out of sight he had been for some stifling minutes—he devoted his energies to getting clear of his entanglement, which he did not find very difficult; then stepping softly from the chamber, he crept with a heavy heart back as he had come through a labyrinth of by−ways.

About half an hour after, Dorothy came gliding through the house, making a long circuit of corridors. Gladly would she have avoided passing Amanda's door, and involuntarily held her breath as she approached it, stepping as lightly as a thief. But alas! nothing save incorporeity could have availed her. The moment she had passed, out peeped Amanda and crept after her barefooted, saw her to her joy enter the chamber and close the door behind her, then 'like a tiger of the wood,' made one noiseless bound, turned the key, and sped back to her own chamber—with the feeling of Mark Antony when he said, 'Now let it work!'

Dorothy was startled by a slight click, but concluded at once that it was nothing but a further fall of the latch, and was glad it was no louder. The same moment she saw, by the dim rushlight, the signs of struggle which the room presented, and discovered that Richard was gone. Her first emotion was an undefined agony: they had murdered him, or carried him off to a dungeon! There were the bedclothes in a tumbled heap upon the floor! And—yes—it was blood with which they were marked! Sickening at the thought, and forgetting all about her own situation, she sank on the chair by the bedside.

Knowing the castle as she did, a very little reflection convinced her that if he had met with violence it must have been in attempting to escape; and if he had made the attempt, might he not have succeeded? There had certainly been no fresh alarm given. But upon this consoling supposition followed instantly the pang of the question: what was now required of her? The same hard thing as before? Ought she not again to give the alarm, that the poor wounded boy might be recaptured? Alas! had not evil enough already befallen him at her hand? And if she did—horrible thought!—what account could she give this time of her discovery? What indeed but the truth?

And to what vile comments would not the confession of her secret visit in the first grey of the dawn to the chamber of the prisoner expose her? Would it not naturally rouse such suspicion as any modest woman must shudder to face, if but for the one moment between utterance and refutation. And what refutation could there be for her, so long as the fact remained? If he had escaped, the alarm would serve no good end, and her shame could be spared; but he might be hiding somewhere about the castle, and she must choose between treachery to the marquis—was it?—on the one hand, and renewed hurt, wrong, perhaps, to Richard, coupled with the bitterest disgrace to herself, on the other. To weigh such a question impartially was impossible; for in the one alternative no hurt would befall the marquis, while from the other her very soul recoiled sickening. Thus tortured, she sat motionless in the very den of the dragon, the one moment vainly endeavouring to rouse up her courage and look her duty in the face that she might know with certainty what it was; the next, feeling her whole nature rise rebellious against the fate that demanded such a sacrifice. Ought she to be thus punished for an intent of the purest humanity?

There came a lull, and with the lull a sense of her position: she sat in the very, jaws of slander! Any moment mistress Watson or another might enter and find her there, and what then more natural or irrefutable than the accusation of having liberated him? She sprang to her feet, and darted to the door. It was locked!

Her first thought was relief: she had no longer to decide; her second, that she was a prisoner—till, horror of horrors! the soldiers of the guard came to seek Richard and found her, or stern mistress Watson appeared, grim as one of the Fates; or, perhaps, if Richard had been carried away, until she was compelled by hunger and misery to call aloud for release. But no! she would rather die. Now in this case, now in that, her thoughts pursued the horrible possibilities, one or other of which was inevitable, through all the windings of the torture of anticipation, until for a time she must have lost consciousness, for she had no recollection of falling where she found herself—on the heap in the middle of the floor. The gray heartless dawn had begun to peer in through the dull green glass that closed the one loophole. It grew and grew, and its growth was the approach of the grinning demon of shame. The nearer a man can arrive to the knowledge of such feelings as hers is the conviction that he never can comprehend them. The cruel light seemed gathering its strength to publish her shame to the universe. Blameless as she was, she would have gladly accepted death in escape from the misery that every moment grew nearer. Now and then a faint glimmer of comfort reached her in the thought that at least the escape of Richard, if he had escaped, was thus ensured, and that without any blame to her. And perhaps mistress Watson would be merciful—only she too had her obligations, and as housekeeper was severely responsible. And even if she should prove pitiful, there was the locking of the door! It followed so quickly, that some one must have seen her enter, and wittingly snared her, believing most likely that she was not alone in the chamber.

The terrible bolt at length slid back in the lock, gently, yet with tearing sound; mistress Watson entered, stood, stared. Before her sat Dorothy by the side of the bedstead, in her dressing−gown, her hair about her neck, her face like the moon at sunrise, and her eyelids red and swollen with weeping. She stood speechless, staring first at the disconsolate maiden, and then at the disorder of the room. The prisoner was nowhere. What her thoughts were, I must only imagine. That she should stare and be bewildered, finding Dorothy where she had left Richard, was at least natural.

The moment Dorothy found herself face to face with her doom, her presence of mind returned. The blood rushed from her heart to her brain. She rose, and ere the astonished matron, who stood before her erect, high−nosed, and open−mouthed like Michael Angelo's Clotho, could find utterance, said,

'Mistress Watson, I swear to you by the soul of my mother, that although all seeming is against me, W—'

'Where is the young rebel?' interrupted mistress Watson sternly.

'I know not,' answered Dorothy. 'When first I entered the chamber, he had already gone.'

'And what then hadst thou to do entering it?' asked the housekeeper, in a tone that did Dorothy good by angering her.

Mistress Watson was a kind soul in reality, but few natures can resist the debasing influence of a sudden sense of superiority. Besides, was not the young gentlewoman in great wrong, and therefore before her must she not personify an awful Purity?

'That I will tell to none but my lord marquis,' answered Dorothy, with sudden resolve.

'Oh, by all means, mistress! but an' thou think to lead him by the nose while I be in Raglan,—'

'Shall I inform his lordship in what high opinion his housekeeper holds him?' said Dorothy. 'It seems to me he

will hardly savour it.'

'It would be an ill turn to do me, but my lord marquis did never heed a tale−bearer.'

'Then will he not heed the tale thou wouldst yield him concerning me.'

'What tale should I yield him but that I find—thee here and the prisoner gone?'

'The tale I read in thy face and thy voice. Thou lookest and talkest as if I were a false woman.'

'Verily to my eyes the thing looketh ill.'

'It would look ill to any eyes, and therefore I need kind eyes to read, and just ears to hear my tale. I tell thee this is a matter for my lord, and if thou spread any report in the castle ere his lordship hear it, whatever evil springs therefrom it will lie at thy door.'

'My life! what dost take me for, mistress Dorothy? My age and holding deserves some consideration at thy hands! Am I one to go tattling about the courts forsooth?'

'Pardon me, madam, but a maiden's good name may be as precious to Dorothy Vaughan as a matron's respectability to mistress Watson. An' you had left me with that look on your face, and had but spoken my name to it, some one would have guessed ten times more than you know—or I either for that gear.'

'I must tell the truth,' said mistress Watson, relenting a little.

'Thou must, or I will tell it for thee—but to the marquis. Thou shalt be there to hear, and if, after that, thou tell it to another, then hast thou no mother's heart in thee.'

Dorothy gave way at last and burst into tears. Mistress Watson was touched.

'Nay, child, I would do thee no wrong,' she rejoined. 'Get thee to bed. I must rouse the guard to go look for the prisoner, but I will say nothing of thee to any but my lord marquis. When he is dressed and in his study, I will come for thee myself.'

Dorothy thanked her warmly, and betook herself to her chamber, considerably relieved.

CHAPTER XXXIII. JUDGE GOUT.

Dorothy had hardly reached her room when the castle was once more astir. The rush of the guard across the stone court, the clang of opening lattices, and the voices that called from out−shot heads, again filled her ears, but she never once peeped from her window. A moment, and the news was all over the castle that the prisoner had escaped.

Lord Charles went at once to his father's room. The old man woke instantly. He had but just laid his hand on his mane, not mounted the shadowy steed, and was ill pleased to be already, and the second time, startled back to conscious weariness. When he heard the bad tidings he was silent for a few moments.

'I would Herbert were at home, Charles, to stop this rat−hole for me,' he said at length. 'Let the roundhead go—I care not. I had but half a right to hold him, and he deserves his freedom. But what a governor art thou, my lord? Prithee, dost know the rents in thine own hose, who knowest not when thy gingerbread bulwarks gape? Find me out this rat−hole, I say, or I will depose thee and send for thy brother John, whom the king can ill spare.'

'Have patience with me, father,' said lord Charles gently. 'I am more ashamed than thou art angry.'

'Thou know'st I did but jest, my son. But in truth an'thou find it not I will send for lord Herbert. If he find what thou canst not, that will be no disgrace to thee. But find it we must.'

'Think you not, my lord, it were best set mistress Dorothy on the search? She hath a wondrous gift of discovery.'

'A good thought, Charles! I will even do as thou sayest. But search the castle first, from vane to dungeon, that we may be assured the roundhead hath indeed vanished.'

As he spoke the marquis turned him round, to search the wide gray fields again for the shadowy horse that roamed them tetherless. But the steed would not come to his call; he grew chilly and asthmatic, tossed to and fro, and began to dread an attack of the gout.

The sun rose higher; the hive of men and women was astir once more; the clatter of the day's work and the buzz of the day's talk began, and nothing was in anybody's mouth but the escape of the prisoner. His capture and trial were already of the past, forgotten for the time in the nearer astonishment. Lord Charles went searching, questioning, peering about everywhere, but could find neither prisoner nor the traitorous hole.

Meantime mistress Watson was not a little anxious until she should have revealed what she knew to the marquis, for the prisoner was in her charge when he disappeared. In the course of the morning lord Charles came to her apartment to question her, but she begged to be excused, because of a certain disclosure she was not at liberty to make to any but his father. Lord Charles, whom she had known from his boyhood, readily yielded, and mistress Watson, five minutes after he had left his room, followed the marquis to his study, whither it was his custom always to repair before breakfast. He was looking pale from the trouble of the night, which had resulted in unmistakeable symptoms of the gout, listened to all she had to tell him without comment, looked grave, and told her to fetch mistress Dorothy. As soon as she was gone, he called Scudamore from the antechamber, and sent him to request lord Charles's presence. He came at once, and was there when Dorothy entered.

She was very white and worn, and her eyes were heavily downcast. Her face wore that expression so much resembling guilt, which indicates the misery the most innocent feel the most under the consciousness of suspicion. At the sight of lord Charles, she crimsoned: it was one thing to confess to the marquis, and quite another to do so in the presence of his son.

The marquis sat with one leg on a stool, already in the gradually contracting gripe of his ghoulish enemy. Before Dorothy could recover from the annoyance of finding lord Charles present, or open her mouth to beg for a more private interview, he addressed her abruptly.

'Our young rebel friend hath escaped, it seems, mistress Dorothy!' he said, gently but coldly, looking her full in the eyes, with searching gaze and hard expression.

'I am glad to hear it, my lord,' returned Dorothy, with a sudden influx of courage, coming, as the wind blows, she knew not whence.

'Ha!' said the marquis, quickly; 'then is it news to thee, mistress Dorothy?'

His lip, as it seemed to Dorothy, curled into a mocking smile; but the gout might have been in it.

'Indeed it is news, my lord. I hoped it might be so, I confess, but I knew not that so it was.'

'What, mistress Dorothy! knewest thou not that the young thief was gone?'

'I knew that Richard Heywood was gone from his chamber—whether from the castle I knew not. He was no thief, my lord. Your lordship's page and fool were the thieves.'

'Cousin, I hardly know myself in the change I find in thee! Truly, a marvellous change! In the dark night thou takest a roundhead prisoner; in the gray of the morning thou settest him free again! Hath one visit to his chamber so wrought upon thee? To an old man it seemeth less than maidenly.'

Again a burning blush overspread poor Dorothy's countenance. But she governed herself, and spoke bravely, although she could not keep her voice from trembling.

'My lord,' she said, 'Richard Heywood was my playmate. We were as brother and sister, for our fathers'lands bordered each other.'

'Thou didst say nothing of these things last night?'

'My lord! Before the whole hall? Besides, what mattered it? All was over long ago, and I had done my part against him.'

'Fell you out together then?'

'What need is there for your lordship to ask? Thou seest him of the one part, and me of the other.'

'And from loving thou didst fall to hating?'

'God forbid, my lord! I but do my part against him.'

'For the which thou hadst a noble opportunity unsought, raising the hue and cry upon him within his enemy's walls!'

'I would to God, my lord, it had not fallen to me.'

'Thinking better of it, therefore, and repenting of thy harshness, thou didst seek his chamber in the night to tell him so? I would fain know how a maiden reasoneth with herself when she doth such things.'

'Not so, my lord. I will tell you all. I could not sleep for thinking of my wounded playmate. And as to what he had done, after it became clear that he sought but his own, and meant no hair's−breadth of harm to your lordship, I confess the matter looked not the same.'

'Therefore you would make him amends and undo what you had done? You had caught the bird, and had therefore a right to free the bird when you would? All well, mistress Dorothy, had he been indeed a bird! But being a man, and in thy friend's house, I doubt thy logic. The thing had passed from thy hands into mine, young mistress,' said the marquis, into the ball of whose foot the gout that moment ran its unicorn−horn.

'I did not set him free, my lord. When I entered the prison−chamber, he was already gone.'

'Thou hadst the will and didst it not! Is there yet another in my house who had the will and did it?' cried the marquis, who, although more than annoyed that she should have so committed herself, yet was willing to give such scope to a lover, that if she had but confessed she had liberated him, he would have pardoned her heartily. He did not yet know how incapable Dorothy was of a lie.

'But, my lord, I had not the will to set him free,' she said.

'Wherefore then didst go to him?'

'My lord, he was sorely wounded, and I had seen him fall fainting,' said Dorothy, repressing her tears with much ado.

'And thou didst go to comfort him?'

Dorothy was silent.

'How camest thou locked into his room? Tell me that, mistress.'

'Your lordship knows as much of that as I do. Indeed, I have been sorely punished for a little fault.'

'Thou dost confess the fault then?'

'If it WAS a fault to visit him who was sick and in prison, my lord.'

The marquis was silent for a whole minute.

'And thou canst not tell how he gat him forth of the walls? Must I believe him to be forth of them, my lord?' he said, turning to his son.

'I cannot imagine him within them, my lord, after such search as we have made.'

'Still,' returned the marquis, the acuteness of whose wits had not been swallowed up by that of the gout, 'so long as thou canst not tell how he gat forth, I may doubt whether he be forth. If the manner of his exit be acknowledged hidden, wherefore not the place of his refuge? Mistress Dorothy,' he continued, altogether averse to the supposition of treachery amongst his people, 'thou art bound by all obligations of loyalty and shelter and truth, to tell what thou knowest. An' thou do not, thou art a traitor to the house, yea to thy king, for when the worst comes, and this his castle is besieged, much harm may be wrought by that secret passage, yea, it may be taken thereby.'

'You say true, my lord: I should indeed be so bound, an' I knew what my lord would have me disclose.'

'One may be bound and remain bound,' said the marquis, spying prevarication. 'Now the thing is over, and the youth safe, all I ask of thee, and surely it is not much, is but to bar the door against his return—except indeed thou didst from the first contrive so to meet thy roundhead lover in my loyal house. Then indeed it were too much to require of thee! Ah ha! mistress Dorothy, the little blind god is a rascally deceiver. He is but blind nor' nor' west. He playeth hoodman, and peepeth over his bandage.'

'My lord, you wrong me much,' said Dorothy, and burst into tears, while once more the red lava of the human centre rushed over her neck and brow. 'I did think that I had done enough both for my lord of Worcester and against Richard Heywood, and I did hope that he had escaped: there lies the worst I can lay to my charge even in thought, my lord, and I trust it is no more than may be found pardonable.'

'It sets an ill example to my quiet house if the ladies therein go anights to the gentlemen's chambers.'

'My lord, you are cruel,' said Dorothy.

'Not a soul in the house knows it but myself, my lord,' said mistress Watson.

'Hold there, my good woman! Whose hand was it turned the key upon her? More than thou must know thereof. Hear me, mistress Dorothy: I would be heart−loath to quarrel with thee, and in all honesty I am glad thy lover—'

'He is no lover of mine, my lord! At least—'

'Be he what he may, he is a fine fellow, and I am glad he hath escaped. Do thou but find out for my lord Charles here the cursed rat−hole by which he goes and comes, and I will gladly forgive thee all the trouble thou hast brought into my sober house. For truly never hath been in my day such confusion and uproar therein as since thou earnest hither, and thy dog and thy lover and thy lover's mare followed thee.'

'Alas, my lord! if I were fortunate enough to find it, what would you but say I found it where I knew well to look for it?'

'Find it, and I promise thee I will never say word on the matter again. Thou art a good girl, and thou do venture a hair too far for a lover. The still ones are always the worst, mistress Watson.'

'My lord! my lord!' cried Dorothy, but ended not, for his lordship gave a louder cry. His face was contorted with anguish, and he writhed under the tiger fangs of the gout.

'Go away,' he shouted, 'or I shall disgrace my manhood before women, God help me!'

'I trust thee will bear me no malice,' said the housekeeper, as they walked in the direction of Dorothy's chamber.

'You did but your duty,' said Dorothy quietly.

'I will do all I can for thee,' continued mistress Watson, mounted again, if not on her high horse then on her palfrey, by her master's behaviour to the poor girl—'if thou but confess to me how thou didst contrive the young gentleman's escape, and wherefore he locked the door upon thee.'

At the moment they were close to Dorothy's room; her answer to the impertinence was to walk in and shut the door; and mistress Watson was thenceforward entirely satisfied of her guilt.

CHAPTER XXXIV. AN EVIL TIME.

And now was an evil time for Dorothy. She retired to her chamber more than disheartened by lord Worcester's behaviour to her, vexed with herself for doing what she would have been more vexed with herself for having left undone, feeling wronged, lonely, and disgraced, conscious of honesty, yet ashamed to show herself—and all for the sake of a presumptuous boy, whose opinions were a disgust to her and his actions a horror! Yet not only did she not repent of what she had done, but, fact as strange as natural, began, with mingled pleasure and annoyance, to feel her heart drawn towards the fanatic as the only one left her in the world capable of doing her justice, that was, of understanding her. She thus unknowingly made a step towards the discovery that it is infinitely better to think wrong and to act right upon that wrong thinking, than it is to think right and not to do as that thinking requires of us. In the former case the man's house, if not built upon the rock, at least has the rock beneath it; in the latter, it is founded on nothing but sand. The former man may be a Saul of Tarsus, the latter a Judas Iscariot. He who acts right will soon think right; he who acts wrong will soon think wrong. Any two persons acting faithfully upon opposite convictions, are divided but by a bowing wall; any two, in belief most harmonious, who do not act upon it, are divided by, infinite gulfs of the blackness of darkness, across which neither ever beholds the real self of the other.

Dorothy ought to have gone at once to lady Margaret and told her all; but she naturally and rightly shrank from what might seem an appeal to the daughter against the judgment of her father; neither could she dare hope that, if she did, her judgment would not be against her also. Her feelings were now in danger of being turned back upon herself, and growing bitter; for a lasting sense of injury is, of the human moods, one of the least favourable to sweetness and growth. There was no one to whom she could turn. Had good Dr. Bayly been at home—but he was away on some important mission from his lordship to the king: and indeed she could scarcely have looked for refuge from such misery as hers in the judgment of the rather priggish old−bachelor ecclesiastic. Gladly would she have forsaken the castle, and returned to all the dangers and fears of her lonely home; but that would be to yield to a lie, to flee from the devil instead of facing him, and with her own hand to fix the imputed smirch upon her forehead, exposing herself besides to the suspicion of having fled to join her lover, and cast in her lot with his amongst the traitors. Besides, she had been left by lord Herbert in charge of his fire−engine and the water of the castle, which trust she could not abandon. Whatever might be yet to come of it, she must stay and encounter it, and would in the meantime set herself to discover, if she might, the secret pathway by which dog and man came and went at their pleasure. This she owed her friends, even at the risk, in case of success, of confirming the marquis's worst suspicions.

She was not altogether wrong in her unconscious judgment of lady Margaret. Her nature was such as, its nobility tinctured with romance, rendered her perfectly capable of understanding either of the two halves of Dorothy's behaviour, but was not sufficient to the reception and understanding of the two parts together. That is, she could have understood the heroic capture of her former lover, or she could have understood her going to visit him in his trouble, and even, what Dorothy was incapable of, his release; but she was not yet equal to understanding how she should set herself so against a man, even to his wounding and capture, whom she loved so much as, immediately thereupon, to dare the loss of her good name by going to his chamber, so placing herself in the power of a man she had injured, as well as running a great risk of discovery on the part of her friends. Hence she was quite prepared to accept the solution of her strange conduct, which by and by, it was hard to say how, came to be offered and received all over the castle—that Dorothy first admitted, then captured, and finally released the handsome young roundhead.

Her first impressions of the affair, lady Margaret received from lord Charles, who was certainly prejudiced against Dorothy, and no doubt jealous of the relation of the fine young rebel to a loyal maiden of Raglan; while the suspicion, almost belief, that she knew and would not reveal the flaw in his castle, the idea of which had begun to haunt him like some spot in his own body of which pain made him unnaturally conscious, annoyed him more and more. To do him justice, I must not omit to mention that he never made a communication on the matter

to any but his sister−in−law, who would however have certainly had a more kindly as well as exculpatory feeling towards Dorothy, had she first heard the truth from her own lips.

For some little time, not perceiving the difficulties in her way, and perhaps from unlikeness not understanding the disinclination of such a girl to self−defence, lady Margaret continued to expect a visit from her, with excuse at least, if not confession and apology upon her lips, and was hurt by her silence as much as offended by her behaviour. She was yet more annoyed, when they first met, that, notwithstanding her evident suffering, she wore such an air of reticence, and thence she both regarded and addressed her coldly; so that Dorothy was confirmed in her disinclination to confide in her. Besides, as she said to herself, she had nothing to tell but what she had already told; everything depended on the interpretation accorded to the facts, and the right interpretation was just the one thing she had found herself unable to convey. If her friends did not, she could not justify herself.

She tried hard to behave as she ought, for, conscious how much appearances were against her, she felt it would be unjust to allow her affection towards her mistress to be in the least shaken by her treatment of her, and was if possible more submissive and eager in her service than before. But in this she was every now and then rudely checked by the fear that lady Margaret would take it as the endeavour of guilt to win favour; and, do what she would, instead of getting closer to her, she felt every time they met, that the hedge of separation which had sprung up between them had in the interval grown thicker. By degrees the mistress had assumed towards the poor girl that impervious manner of self−contained dignity, which, according to her who wears it, is the carriage either of a wing−bound angel, the gait of a stork, or the hobble of a crab.

Of a different kind was the change which now began to take place towards her on the part of another member of the household.

While she had been intent upon Richard as he stood before the marquis, not Amanda only but another as well had been intent upon her. Poor creature as Scudamore yet was, he possessed, besides no small generosity of nature, a good deal of surface sympathy, and a ready interest in the shows of humanity. Hence as he stood regarding now the face of the prisoner and now that of Dorothy, whom he knew for old friends, he could not help noticing that every phase of the prisoner, so to speak, might be read on Dorothy. He was too shallow to attribute this to anything more than the interest she must feel in the results of the exploit she had performed. The mere suggestion of what had afforded such wide ground for speculation on the part of Amanda, was to Scudamore rendered impossible by the meeting of two things—the fact that the only time he had seen them together, Richard was very plainly out of favour, and now the all−important share Dorothy had had in his capture. But the longer he looked, the more he found himself attracted by the rich changefulness of expression on a countenance usually very still. He surmised little of the conflict of emotions that sent it to the surface, had to construct no theory to calm the restlessness of intellectual curiosity, discovered no secret feeding of the flame from behind. Yet the flame itself drew him as the candle draws the moth. Emotion in the face of a woman was enough to attract Scudamore; the prettier the face, the stronger the attraction, but the source or character of the emotion mattered nothing to him: he asked no questions any more than the moth, but circled the flame. In a word, Dorothy had now all at once become to him interesting.

As soon as she found a safe opportunity, Amanda told him of Dorothy's being found in the turret chamber, a fact she pretended to have heard in confidence from mistress Watson, concealing her own part in it, But as Amanda spoke, Dorothy became to Rowland twice as interesting as ever Amanda had been. There was a real romance about the girl, he thought. And then she LOOKED so quiet! He never thought of defending her or playing the true part of a cousin. Amanda might think of her as she pleased: Rowland was content. Had he cared ever so much more for her judgment than he did, it would have been all the same. How far Dorothy had been right or wrong in visiting Heywood, he did not even conjecture, not to say consider. It was enough that she who had been to him like the blank in the centre of the African map, was now a region of marvels and possibilities, vague but not the less interesting, or the less worthy of beholding the interest she had awaked. As to her loving the roundhead fellow, that would not stand long in the way.

In this period then of gloom and wretchedness, Dorothy became aware of a certain increase of attention on the part of her cousin. This she attributed to kindness generated of pity. But to accept it, and so confess that she needed it, would have been to place herself too much on a level with one whom she did not respect, while at the same time it would confirm him in whatever probably mistaken grounds he had for offering it. She therefore met his advances kindly but coldly, a treatment under which his feelings towards her began to ripen into something a

little deeper and more genuine.

During the next ten days or so, Dorothy could not help feeling that she was regarded by almost every one in the castle as in disgrace, and that deservedly. The most unpleasant proof she had of this was the behaviour of the female servants, some of them assuming airs of injured innocence, others of offensive familiarity in her presence, while only one, a kitchen−maid she seldom saw, Tom Fool's bride in the marriage−jest, showed her the same respect as formerly. This girl came to her one night in her room, and with tears in her eyes besought permission to carry her meals thither, that she might be spared eating with the rude ladies, as in her indignation she called them. But Dorothy saw that to forsake mistress Watson's table would be to fly the field, and therefore, hateful as it was to meet the looks of those around it, she did so with unvailed lids and an enforced dignity which made itself felt. But the effort was as exhausting as painful, and the reflex of shame, felt as shame in spite of innocence, was eating into her heart. In vain she said to herself that she was guiltless; in vain she folded herself round in the cloak of her former composure; the consciousness that, to say the least of it, she was regarded as a young woman of questionable refinement, weighed down her very eyelids as she crossed the court.

But she was not left utterly forsaken; she had still one refuge—the workshop, where Caspar Kaltoff wrought like an 'artificial god;' for the worthy German altered his manner to her not a whit, but continued to behave with the mingled kindness of a father and devotion of a servant. His respect and trustful sympathy showed, without word said, that he, if no other, believed nothing to her disadvantage, but was as much her humble friend as ever; and to the hitherto self−reliant damsel, the blessedness of human sympathy, embodied in the looks and tones of the hard−handed mechanic, brought such healing and such schooling together, that for a long time she never said her prayers by her bedside without thanking God for Caspar Kaltoff.

Ere long her worn look, thin cheek, and weary eye began to work on the heart of lady Margaret, and she relented in spirit towards the favourite of her husband, whose anticipated disappointment in her had sharpened the arrows of her resentment. But to the watery dawn of favour which followed, the poor girl could not throw wide her windows, knowing it arose from no change in lady Margaret's judgment concerning her: she could not as a culprit accept what had been as a culprit withdrawn from her. The conviction burned in her heart like cold fire, that, but for compassion upon the desolate state of an orphan, she would have been at once dismissed from the castle. Sometimes she ventured to think that if lord Herbert had been at home, all this would not have happened; but now what could she expect other than that on his return he would regard her and treat her in the same way as his wife and father and brother?

CHAPTER XXXV. THE DELIVERER.

But she found some relief in applying her mind to the task which lord Worcester had set her; and many a night as she tossed sleepless on her bed, would she turn from the thoughts that tortured her, to brood upon the castle, and invent if she might some new possible way, however difficult, of getting out of it unseen: and many a morning after the night thus spent, would she hasten, ere the household was astir, to examine some spot which had occurred to her as perhaps containing the secret she sought. One time it was a chimney that might have door and stair concealed within it; another, the stables, where she examined every stall in the hope of finding a trap to an underground way. Had any one else been in question but Richard, the traitor, the roundhead, she might have imagined an associate within the walls, in which case farther solution would not have been for her; but somehow, she did not make it clear to herself how, she could not entertain the idea in connection with Richard. Besides, in brooding over everything, it had grown plain to her that both Richard and Marquis had that night been through the moat.

Some who caught sight of her in the early dawn, wandering about and peering here and there, thought that she was losing her senses; others more ingenious in the thinking of evil, imagined she sought to impress the household with a notion of her innocence by pretending a search for the concealed flaw in the defences.

Ever since she had been put in charge of the water−works, she had been in the habit of lingering a little on the roof of the keep as often as occasion took her thither, for she delighted in the far outlook on the open country which it afforded; and perhaps it was a proof of the general healthiness of her nature that now in her misery, instead of shutting herself up in her own chamber, she oftener sought the walk around the reservoir, looking abroad in shadowy hope of some lurking deliverance, like captive lady in the stronghold of evil knight. On one of these occasions, in the first of the twilight, she was leaning over one of the battlements looking down upon the moat and its white and yellow blossoms and great green leaves, and feeling very desolate. Her young life seemed to have crumbled down upon her and crushed her heart, and all for one gentle imprudence.

'Oh my mother!' she murmured,—'an' thou couldst hear me, thou wouldst help me an' thou couldst. Thy poor Dorothy is sorely sad and forsaken, and she knows no way of escape. Oh my mother, hear me!'

As she spoke, she looked away from the moat to the sky, and spread out her arms in the pain of her petition.

There was a step behind her.

'What! what! My little protestant praying to the naughty saints! That will never do.'

Dorothy had turned with a great start, and stood speechless and trembling before lord Herbert.

'My poor child!' he said, holding out both his hands, and taking those which Dorothy did not offer—'did I startle thee then so much? I am truly sorry. I heard but thy last words; be not afraid of thy secret. But what hath come to thee? Thou art white and thin, there are tears on thy face, and it seems as thou wert not so glad to see me as I thought thou wouldst have been. What is amiss? I hope thou art not sick—but plainly thou art ill at ease! Go not yet after my Molly, cousin, for truly we need thee here yet a while.'

'Would I might go to Molly, my lord!' said Dorothy. 'Molly would believe me.'

'Thou need'st not go to Molly for that, cousin. I will believe thee. Only tell me what thou wouldst have me believe, and I will believe it. What! think'st thou I am not magician enough to know whom to believe and whom not? Fye, fye, mistress! Thou, on thy part, wilt not put faith in thy cousin Herbert!'

His kind words were to her as the voice of him that calleth for the waters of the sea that he may pour them out on the face of the earth. The poor girl burst into a passion of weeping, fell on her knees before him, and holding up her clasped hands, cried out in a voice of sob−choked agony—for she was not used to tears, and it was to her a rending of the heart to weep—

'Save me, save me, my lord! I have no friend in the world who can help me but thee.'

'No friend! What meanest thou, Dorothy?' said lord Herbert, taking her two clasped hands between his. 'There is my Margaret and my father!'

'Alas, my lord! they mean well by me, but they do not believe me; and if your lordship believe me no more

than they, I must go from Raglan. Yet believing me, I know not how you could any more help me.'

'Dorothy, my child, I can do nothing till thou take me with thee. I cannot even comfort thee.'

'Your lordship is weary,' said Dorothy, rising and wiping her eyes. 'You cannot yet have eaten since you came. Go, my lord, and hear my tale first from them that believe me not. They will assure you of nothing that is not true, only they understand it not, and wrong me in their conjectures. Let my lady Margaret tell it you, my lord, and then if you have yet faith enough in me to send for me, I will come and answer all you ask. If you send not for me, I will ride from Raglan to−morrow.'

'It shall be as thou sayest, Dorothy. An' it be not fit for the judge to hear both sides of the tale, or an' it boots the innocent which side he first heareth, then were he no better judge than good king James, of blessed memory, when he was so sore astonished to find both sides in the right.'

'A king, my lord, and judge foolishly!'

'A king, my damsel, and judged merrily. But fear me not; I trust in God to judge fairly even betwixt friend and foe, and I doubt not it will be now to the lightening of thy trouble, my poor storm−beaten dove.'

It startled Dorothy with a gladness that stung like pain, to hear the word he never used but to his wife thus flit from his lips in the tenderness of his pity, and alight like the dove itself upon her head. She thanked him with her whole soul, and was silent.

'I will send hither to thee, my child, when I require thy presence; and when I send come straight to my lady's parlour.'

Dorothy bowed her head, but could not speak, and lord Herbert walked quickly from her. She heard him run down the stair almost with the headlong speed of his boy Henry.

Half an hour passed slowly—then lady Margaret's page came lightly up the steps, bearing the request that she would favour his mistress with her presence. She rose from the battlement where she had seated herself to watch the moon, already far up in the heavens, as she brightened through the gathering dusk, and followed him with beating heart.

When she entered the parlour, where as yet no candles had been lighted, she saw and knew nothing till she found herself clasped to a bosom heaving with emotion.

'Forgive me, Dorothy,' sobbed lady Margaret. 'I have done thee wrong. But thou wilt love me yet again—wilt thou not, Dorothy?'

'Madam! madam !' was all Dorothy could answer, kissing her hands.

Lady Margaret led her to her husband, who kissed her on the forehead, and seated her betwixt himself and his wife; and for a space there was silence. Then at last said Dorothy:

'Tell me, madam, how is it that I find myself once more in the garden of your favour? How know you that I am not all unworthy thereof?'

'My lord tells me so,' returned lady Margaret simply.

'And whence doth my lord know it?' asked Dorothy, turning to lord Herbert.

"An' thou be not satisfied of thine own innocence, Dorothy, I will ask thee a few questions. Listen to thine answers, and judge. How came the young puritan into the castle that night? But stay: we must have candles, for how can I, the judge, or my lady, the jury, see into the heart of the prisoner save through the window of her face?'

Dorothy laughed—her first laugh since the evil fog had ascended and swathed her. Lady Margaret rang the bell on her table. Candles were brought from where they stood ready in the ante−chamber, and as soon as they began to burn clear, lord Herbert repeated his question.

'My lord,' answered Dorothy, 'I look to you to tell me so much, for before God I know not.'

'Nay, child! thou need'st not buttress thy words with an oath,' said his lordship. 'Thy fair eyes are worth a thousand oaths. But to the question: tell me wherefore didst thou not let the young man go when first thou spied him? Wherefore didst ring the alarm−bell? Thou sawest he was upon his own mare, for thou knewest her—didst thou not?'

'I did, my lord; but he had no business there, and I was of my lord Worcester's household. Here I am not Dorothy Vaughan, but my lady's gentlewoman.'

'Then why didst thou go to his room thereafter? Didst thou not know it for the most perilous adventure maiden could undergo?'

'Perilous it hath indeed proved, my lord.'

'And might have proved worse than perilous.'

'No, my lord. Other danger was none where Richard was,' returned Dorothy with vehemence.

'It beareth a look as if mayhap thou dost or mightst one day love the young man!' said lord Herbert in slow pondering tone.

'My spirit hath of late been driven to hold him company, my lord. It seemed that, save Caspar, I had no friend left but him. God help me! it were a fearful thing to love a fanatic! But I will resist the devil.'

'Truly we are in lack of a few such devils on what we count the honest side, Dorothy!' said lord Herbert, laughing. 'Not every man that thinks the other way is a rogue or a fool. But thou hast not told me why thou didst run the heavy risk of seeking him in the night.'

'I could not rest for thinking of him, my lord, with that terrible wound in the head I had as good as given him, and from whose effects I had last seen him lie as one dead. He was my playmate, and my mother loved him.'

Here poor Dorothy broke down and wept, but recovered herself with an effort, and proceeded.

'I kept starting awake, seeing him thus at one time, and at another hearing him utter my name as if entreating me to go to him, until at last I believed that I was called.'

'Called by whom, Dorothy?'

'I thought—I thought, my lord, it might be the same that called Samuel, who had opened my ears to hear Richard's voice.'

'And it was indeed therefore thou didst go?'

'I think so, my lord. I am sure, at least, but for that I would not have gone. Yet surely I mistook, for see what hath come of it,' she added, turning to lady Margaret.

'We must not judge from one consequence where there are a thousand yet to follow,' said his lordship. '—And thou sayest, when thou didst enter the room thou didst find no one there?'

'I say so, my lord, and it is true.'

'That I know as well as thou. What then didst thou think of the matter?'

'I was filled with fear, my lord, when I saw the bedclothes all in a heap on the floor, but upon reflection I hoped that he had had the better in the struggle, and had escaped; for now at least he could do no harm in Raglan, I thought. But when I found the door was locked,—I dare hardly think of that, my lord; it makes me tremble yet.'

'Now, who thinkest thou in thy heart did lock the door upon thee?'

'Might it not have been Satan himself, my lord?'

'Nay, I cannot tell what might or might not be where such a one is so plainly concerned. But I believe he was only acting in his usual fashion, which, as a matter of course, must be his worst—I mean through the heart and hands of some one in the house who would bring thee into trouble.'

'I would it were the other way, my lord.'

'So would I heartily. In his own person I fear him not a whit. But hast thou no suspicion of any one owing thee a grudge, who might be glad on such opportunity to pay it thee with interest?'

'I must confess I have, my lord; but I beg of your lordship not to question me on the matter further, for it reaches only to suspicion. I know nothing, and might, if I uttered a word, be guilty of grievous wrong. Pardon me, my lord.'

Lord Herbert looked hard at his wife. Lady Margaret dropped her head.

'Thou art right, indeed, my good cousin!' he said, turning again to Dorothy; 'for that would be to do by another as thou sufferest so sorely from others doing by thee. I must send my brains about and make a discovery or two for myself. It is well I have a few days to spend at home. And now to the first part of the business in hand. Hast thou any special way of calling thy dog? It is a moonlit night, I believe.'

He rose and went to the window, over which hung a heavy curtain of Flemish tapestry.

'It is a three−quarter old moon, my lord,' said Dorothy, 'and very bright. I did use to call my dog with a whistle my mother gave me when I was a child.'

'Canst thou lay thy hand upon it? Hast thou it with thee in Raglan?'

'I have it in my hand now, my lord.'

'What then with the moon and thy whistle, I think we shall not fail.'

'Hast lost thy wits, Ned?' said his wife. 'Or what fiend wouldst thou raise to−night?'

'I would lay one rather,' returned lord Herbert. 'But first I would discover this same perilous fault in the

armour of my house. Is thy genet still in thy control, Dorothy?'

'I have no reason to think otherwise, my lord. The frolicker he, the merrier ever was I.'

'Darest thou ride him alone in the moonlight—outside the walls.'

'I dare anything on Dick's back—that Dick can do, my lord.'

'Doth thy dog know Caspar—in friendly fashion, I mean?'

'Caspar is the only one in the castle he is quite friendly with, my lord.'

'Then is all as I would have it. And now I will tell thee what I would not have: I would not have a soul in the place but my lady here know that I am searching with thee after this dog−and−man hole. Therefore I will saddle thy little horse for thee myself, and—'

'No, no, my lord!' interrupted Dorothy. 'That *I* can do.'

'So much the better for thee. But I am no boor, fair damsel. Then shalt thou mount and ride him forth, and Marquis thy mastiff shall see thee go from the yard. Then will I mount the keep, and from that point of vantage look down upon the two courts, while Caspar goes to stand by thy dog. Thou shalt ride slowly along for a minute or two, until these preparations shall have been made; then shalt thou blow thy whistle, and set off at a gallop to round the castle, still ever and anon blowing thy whistle; by which means, if I should fail to see thy Marquis leave the castle, thou mayest perchance discover at least from which side of the castle he comes to thee.'

Dorothy sprang to her feet.

'I am ready, my lord,' she said.

'And so am I, my maiden,' returned lord Herbert, rising. 'Wilt go to the top of the keep, wife, and grant me the light of eyes in aid of the moonshine? I will come thither presently.'

'Thou shalt find me there, Ned, I promise thee. Mother Mary speed thy quest?'

CHAPTER XXXVI. THE DISCOVERY.

All was done as had been arranged. Lord Herbert saddled Dick, not unaided of Dorothy, lifted her to his back, and led her to the gate, in full vision of Marquis, who went wild at the sight, and threatened to pull down kennel and all in his endeavours to follow them. Lord Herbert himself opened the yard gate, for the horses had already been suppered, and the men were in bed. He then walked by her side down to the brick gate. A moment there, and she was free and alone, with the wide green fields and the yellow moonlight all about her.

She had some difficulty in making Dick go slowly—quietly she could not—for the first minute or two, as lord Herbert had directed. He had had but little exercise of late, and moved as if his four legs felt like wings. Dorothy had ridden him very little since she came to the castle, but being very handy, lord Charles had used him, and one of the grooms had always taken him to ride messages. He had notwithstanding had but little of the pleasure of speed for a long time, and when Dorothy at length gave him the rein, he flew as if every member of his body from tail to ears and eyelids had been an engine of propulsion. But Dorothy had more wings than Dick. Her whole being was full of wings. It was a small thing that she had not had a right gallop since she left Wyfern; the strength she had been putting forth to bear the Atlas burden that night lifted from her soul, was now left free to upbear her, and she seemed in spirit to soar aloft into the regions of aether. With her horse under her, the moon over her, "the wind of their own speed" around them, and her heart beating with a joy such as she had never known, she could hardly help doubting sometimes for a moment whether she was not out in one of those delightful dreams of liberty and motion which had so frequently visited her sleep since she came to Raglan. Three shrill whistles she had blown, about a hundred yards from the gate, had heard the eager crowded bark of her dog in answer, and then Dick went flying over the fields like a water−bird over the lake, that scratches its smooth surface with its feet as it flies. Around the rampart they went. The still night was jubilant around them as they flew. The stars shone as if they knew all about her joy, that the shadow of guilt had been lifted from her, and that to her the world again was fair. She felt as the freed Psyche must feel when she drops the clay, and lo! the whole chrysalid world, which had hitherto hung as a clog at her foot, fast by the inexorable chain our blindness calls gravitation, has dropped from her with the clay, and the universe is her own.

At intervals she blew her whistle, and ever kept her keen eyes and ears awake, looking and listening before and behind, in the hope of hearing her dog, or seeing him come bounding through the moonlight.

Meantime lord Herbert and his wife had taken their stand on the top of the great tower, and were looking down—the lady into the stone court, and her husband into the grass one. Dorothy's shrill whistle came once, twice—and just as it began to sound a third time,

'Here he comes!' cried lady Margaret.

A black shadow went from the foot of the library tower, tearing across the moonlight to the hall door, where it vanished. But in vain lord Herbert kept his eyes on the fountain court, in the hope of its reappearance there. Presently they heard a heavy plunge in the water on the other side of the keep, and running round, saw plainly, the moat there lying broad in the moonlight, a little black object making its way across it. Through the obstructing floats of water−lily−leaves, it held steadily over to the other side. There for a moment they saw the whole body of the animal, as he scrambled out of the water up against the steep side of the moat—when suddenly, and most unaccountably to lady Margaret, he disappeared.

'I have it!' cried lord Herbert. 'What an ass I was not to think of it before! Come down with me, my dove, and I will show thee. Dorothy's Marquis hath got into the drain of the moat! He is a large dog, and beyond a doubt that is where the young roundhead entered. Who could have dreamed of such a thing! I had no thought it was such a size.'

Dorothy, having made the circuit, and arrived again at the brick gate, found lord Herbert waiting there, and pulled up.

'I have seen nothing of him, my lord,' she said, as he came to her side. 'Shall I ride round once more?'

'Do, prithee, for I see thou dost enjoy it. But we have already learned all we want to know, so far as goeth to

the security of the castle. There is but one marquis in Raglan, and he is, I believe, in the oak parlour.'

'You saw my Marquis make his exit then, my lord?'

'My lady and I both saw him.'

'What then can have become of him?—We went very fast, and I suppose he gave up the chase in despair.'

'Thou wilt find him the second round. But stay—I will get a horse and go with thee.'

Dorothy went within the gate, and lord Herbert ran back to the stables. In a few minutes he was by her side again, and together they rode around the huge nest. The moon was glorious, with a few large white clouds around her, like great mirrors hung up to catch and reflect her light. The stars were few, and doubtful near the moon, but shone like diamonds in the dark spaces between the clouds. The rugged fortress lay swathed in the softness of the creamy light. No noise broke the stillness, save the dull drum−beat of their horses' hoofs on the turf, or their cymbal−clatter where they crossed a road, and the occasional shrill call from Dorothy's whistle.

On all sides the green fields, cow−cropped, divided by hedge−rows, and spotted with trees, single and in clumps, came close to the castle walls, except in one or two places where the corner of a red ploughed field came wedging in. All was so quiet and so soft that the gaunt old walls looked as if, having at first with harsh intrusion forced their way up into the sweet realm of air from the stony regions of the earth beneath, by slow degrees, yet long since, they had suffered an air change, and been charmed and gentled into harmony with soft winds and odours and moonlight. To Dorothy it seemed as if peace itself had taken form in the feathery weight that filled the flaky air; and as her horse galloped along, flying like a bird over ditch and mound, her own heart so light that her body seemed to float above the saddle rather than rest upon it, she felt like a soul which, having been dragged to hell by a lurking fiend, a good and strong angel was bearing aloft into bliss. Few delights can equal the mere presence of one whom we trust utterly.

No mastiff came to Dorothy's whistle, and having finished their round, they rode back to the stables, put up their horses, and rejoined lady Margaret, where she was still pacing the sunk walk around the moat. There lord Herbert showed Dorothy where her dog vanished, comforting her with the assurance that nothing should be altered before the faithful animal returned, as doubtless he would the moment he despaired of finding her in the open country.

Lord Herbert said nothing to his father that night lest he should spoil his rest, for he was yet far from well, but finding him a good deal better the next morning, he laid open the whole matter to him according to his convictions concerning Dorothy and her behaviour, ending with the words: 'That maiden, my lord, hath truth enough in her heart to serve the whole castle, an' if it might be but shared. To doubt her is to wrong the very light. I fear there are not many maidens in England who would have the courage and honesty, necessary both, to act as she hath done.'

The marquis listened attentively, and when lord Herbert had ended, sat a few moments in silence; then, for all answer, said,

'Go and fetch her, my lad.'

When Dorothy entered,—

'Come hither, maiden,' he said from his chair. 'Wilt thou kiss an old man who hath wronged thee—for so my son hath taught me?'

Dorothy stooped, and he kissed her on both cheeks, with the tears in his eyes.

'Thou shalt dine at my table,' he said, 'an' thy mistress will permit thee, as I doubt not she will when I ask her, until—thou, art weary of our dull company. Hear me, cousin Dorothy: an' thou wilt go with us to mass next Sunday, thou shalt sit on one side of me and thy mistress on the other, and all the castle shall see thee there, and shall know that thou art our dear cousin, mistress Dorothy Vaughan, and shall do thee honour.'

'I thank you, my lord, with all my heart,' said Dorothy, with troubled look, 'but—may I then speak without offence to your lordship, where my heart knoweth nought but honour, love, and obedience?'

'Speak what thou wilt, so it be what thou would'st,' answered the marquis.

'Then pardon me, my lord, that which would have made my mother sad, and would make my good master Herbert sorry that he brought me hither. He would fear I had forsaken the church of my fathers.'

'And returned to the church of thy grandfathers—eh, mistress Dorothy? And wherefore, then, should that weigh so much with thee, so long as thou wert no traitor to our blessed Lord?'

'But should I be no traitor, sir, an' I served him not with my best?'

'Thou hast nothing better than thy heart to give him, and nothing worse will serve his turn; and that we two have offered where I would have thee offer thine—and I trust, Herbert, the offering hath not lain unaccepted.'

'I trust not, my lord,' responded Herbert.

'But, my lord,' said Dorothy, with hot cheek and trembling voice, 'if I brought it him upon a dish which I believed to be of brass, when I had one of silver in the house, would it avail with him that your lordship knew the dish to be no brass, but the finest of gold? I should be unworthy of your lordship's favour, if, to be replaced in the honour of men, I did that which needed the pardon of God.'

'I told thee so, sir!' cried lord Herbert, who had been listening with radiant countenance.

'Thou art a good girl, Dorothy,' said the marquis. 'Verily I spoke but to try thee, and I thank God thou hast stood the trial, and answered aright. Now am I sure of thee; and I will no more doubt thee—not if I wake in the night and find thee standing over me with a drawn dagger like Judith. An' my worthy Bayly had been at home, perchance this had not happened; but forgive me, Dorothy, for the gout is the sting of the devil's own tail, and driveth men mad. Verily, it seemeth now as if I could never have behaved to thee as I have done. Why, one might say the foolish fat old man was jealous of the handsome young puritan! The wheel will come round, Dorothy. One day thou wilt marry him.'

'Never, my lord,' exclaimed Dorothy with vehemence.

'And when thou dost,' the marquis went on, 'all I beg of thee is, that on thy wedding day thou whisper thy bridegroom: "My lord of Worcester told me so;" and therewith thou shalt have my blessing, whether I be down here in Raglan, or up the great stair with little Molly.'

Dorothy was silent. The marquis held out his hand. She kissed it, left the room, and flew to the top of the keep.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE HOROSCOPE.

Ere the next day was over, it was understood throughout the castle that lord Herbert was constructing a horoscope—not that there were many in the place who understood what a horoscope really was, or had any knowledge of the modes of that astrology in whose results they firmly believed; yet Kaltoff having been seen carrying several mysterious−looking instruments to the top of the library tower, the word was presently in everybody's mouth. Nor were the lovers of marvel likely to be disappointed, for no sooner was the sun down than there was lord Herbert, his head in an outlandish Persian hat, visible over the parapet from the stone−court, while from some of the higher windows in the grass−court might be seen through a battlement his long flowing gown of a golden tint, wrought with hieroglyphics in blue. Now he would stand for a while gazing up into the heavens, now would be shifting and adjusting this or that instrument, then peering along or through it, and then re−arranging it, or kneeling and drawing lines, now circular, now straight, upon a sheet of paper spread flat on the roof of the tower. There he still was when the household retired to rest, and there, in the grey dawn, his wife, waking up and peeping from her window, saw him still, against the cold sky, pacing the roof with bent head and thoughtful demeanour. In the morning he was gone, and no one but lady Margaret saw him during the whole of the following day. Nor indeed could any but herself or Caspar have found him, for the tale Tom Fool told the rustics of a magically concealed armoury had been suggested by a rumour current in the house, believed by all without any proof, and yet not the less a fact, that lord Herbert had a chamber of which none of the domestics knew door or window, or even the locality. That recourse should have been had to spells and incantations for its concealment, however, as was also commonly accepted, would have seemed trouble unnecessary to any one who knew the mechanical means his lordship had employed for the purpose. The touch of a pin on a certain spot in one of the bookcases in the library, admitted him to a wooden stair which, with the aid of Caspar, he had constructed in an ancient disused chimney, and which led down to a small chamber in the roof of a sort of porch built over the stair from the stone−court to the stables. There was no other access to it, and the place had never been used, nor had any window but one which they had constructed in the roof so cunningly as to attract no notice. All the household supposed the hidden chamber, whose existence was unquestioned, to be in the great tower, somewhere near the workshop.

In this place he kept his books of alchemy and magic, and some of his stranger instruments. It would have been hard for himself even to say what he did or did not believe of such things. In certain moods, especially when under the influence of some fact he had just discovered without being able to account for it, he was ready to believe everything; in others, especially when he had just succeeded, right or wrong, in explaining anything to his own satisfaction, he doubted them all considerably. His imagination leaned lovingly towards them; his intellect required proofs which he had not yet found.

Hither then he had retired—to work out the sequences of the horoscopes he had that night constructed. He was far less doubtful of astrology than of magic. It would have been difficult, I suspect, to find at that time a man who did not more or less believe in the former, and the influence of his mechanical pursuits upon lord Herbert's mind had not in any way interfered with his capacity for such belief. In the present case, however, he trusted for success rather to his knowledge of human nature than to his questioning of the stars.

Before this, the second day, was over, it was everywhere whispered that he was occupied in discovering the hidden way by which entrance and exit had been found through the defences of the castle; and the next day it was known by everybody that he had been successful—as who could doubt he must, with such powers at his command?

For a time curiosity got the better of fear, and there was not a soul in the place, except one bedridden old woman, who did not that day accept lord Herbert's general invitation, and pass over the Gothic bridge to see the opening from the opposite side of the moat. To seal the conviction that the discovery had indeed been made, permission was given to any one who chose to apply to it the test of his own person, but of this only Shafto the groom availed himself. It was enough, however: he disappeared, and while the group which saw him enter the

opening was yet anxiously waiting his return by the way he had gone, having re−entered by the western gate he came upon them from behind, to the no small consternation of those of weaker nerves, and so settled the matter for ever.

As soon as curiosity was satisfied, lord Herbert gave orders which, in the course of a few days, rendered the drain as impassable to manor dog as the walls of the keep itself.

In the middle of the previous night, Marquis had returned, and announced himself by scratching and whining for admittance at the door of Dorothy's room. She let him in, but not until the morning discovered that he had a handkerchief tied round his neck, and in it a letter addressed to herself. Curious, perhaps something more than curious, to open it, she yet carried it straight to lord Herbert.

'Canst not break the seal, Dorothy, that thou bringest it to me? I will not read it first, lest thou repent,' said his lordship.

'Will you open it then, madam?' she said, turning to lady Margaret.

'What my lord will not, why should I?' rejoined her mistress.

Dorothy opened the letter without more ado, crimsoned, read it to the end, and handed it again to lord Herbert.

'Pray read, my lord,' she said.

He took it, and read. It ran thus—

'Mistress Dorothy, I think, and yet I know not, but I think thou wilt be pleased to learn that my Wound hath not proved mortal, though it hath brought me low, yea, very nigh to Death's Door. Think not I feared to enter. But it grieveth me to the Heart to ride another than my own Mare to the Wars, and it will pleasure thee to know that without my Lady I shall be but Half the Man I was. But do thou the Like again when thou mayest, for thou but didst thy Duty according to thy Lights; and according to what else should any one do? Mistaken as thou art, I love thee as mine own Soul. As to the Ring I left for thee, with a safe Messenger, concerning whom I say Nothing, for thou wilt con her no Thanks for the doing of aught to pleasure me, I restored it not because it was thine, for thy mother gave it me, but because, if for Lack of my Mare I should fall in some Battle of those that are to follow, then would the Ring pass to a Hand whose Heart knew nought of her who gave it me. I am what thou knowest not, yet thine old Play−fellow Richard.—When thou hearest of me in the Wars, as perchance thou mayest, then curse me not, but sigh an thou wilt, and say, he also would in his Blindness do the Thing that lay at his Door. God be with thee, mistress Dorothy. Beat not thy Dog for bringing thee this.

'RICHARD HEYWOOD.'

Lord Herbert gave the letter to his wife, and paced up and down the room while she read. Dorothy stood silent, with glowing face and downcast eyes. When lady Margaret had finished it she handed it to her, and turned to her husband with the words,—

'What sayest thou, Ned? Is it not a brave epistle?'

'There is matter for thought therein,' he answered. 'Wilt show me the ring whereof he writes, cousin?'

'I never had it, my lord.'

'Whom thinkest thou then he calleth his safe messenger? Not thy dog—plainly, for the ring had been sent thee before.'

'My lord, I cannot even conjecture,' answered Dorothy.

'There is matter herein that asketh attention. My lady, and cousin Dorothy, not a word of all this until I shall have considered what it may import!—Beat not thy dog, Dorothy: that were other than he deserveth at thy hand. But he is a dangerous go−between, so prithee let him be at once chained up.'

'I will not beat him, my lord, and I will chain him up,' answered Dorothy, laughing.

Having then announced the discovery of the hidden passage, and given orders concerning it, lord Herbert retired yet again to his secret chamber, and that night was once more seen of many consulting the stars from the top of the library tower.

The following morning another rumour was abroad—to the effect that his lordship was now occupied in questioning the stars as to who in the castle had aided the young roundhead in making his escape.

In the evening, soon after supper, there came a gentle tap to the door of lady Margaret's parlour. At that time she was understood to be disengaged, and willing to see any of the household. Harry happened to be with her, and she sent him to the door to see who it was.

'It is Tom Fool,' he said, returning. 'He begs speech of you, madam—with a face as long as the baker's shovel,

and a mouth as wide as an oven−door.'

With their Irish stepmother the children took far greater freedoms than would have been permitted them by the jealous care of their own mother over their manners.

Lady Margaret smiled: this was probably the first fruit of her husband's astrological investigations.

'Tell him he may enter, and do thou leave him alone with me, Harry,' she said.

Allowing for exaggeration, Harry had truly reported Tom's appearance. He was trembling from head to foot, and very white.

'What aileth thee, Tom, that thou lookest as thou had seen a hobgoblin?' said lady Margaret.

'Please you, my lady,' answered Tom, 'I am in mortal terror of my lord Herbert.'

'Then hast thou been doing amiss, Tom? for no well−doer ever yet was afeard of my lord. Comest thou because thou wouldst confess the truth?'

'Ah, my lady,' faltered Tom.

'Come, then; I will lead thee to my lord.'

'No, no, an't please you, my lady!' cried Tom, trembling yet more. 'I will confess to you, my lady, and then do you confess to my lord, so that he may forgive me.'

'Well, I will venture so far for thee, Tom,' returned her ladyship; 'that is, if thou be honest, and tell me all.'

Thus encouraged, Tom cleansed his stuffed bosom, telling all the part he had borne in Richard's escape, even to the disclosure of the watchword to his mother.

Is there not this peculiarity about the fear of the supernatural, even let it be of the lowest and most slavish kind, that under it men speak the truth, believing that alone can shelter them?

Lady Margaret dismissed him with hopes of forgiveness, and going straight to her husband in his secret chamber, amused him largely with her vivid representation, amounting indeed to no sparing mimicry of Tom's looks and words as he made his confession.

Here was much gained, but Tom had cast no ray of light upon the matter of Dorothy's imprisonment. The next day lord Herbert sent for him to his workshop, where he was then alone. He appeared in a state of abject terror.

'Now, Tom,' said his lordship, 'hast thou made a clean breast of it?'

'Yes, my lord,' answered Tom; 'there is but one thing more.'

'What is that? Out with it.'

'As I went back to my chamber, at the top of the stair leading down from my lord's dining parlour to the hall, commonly called my lord's stair,' said Tom, who delighted in the pseudo−circumstantial, 'I stopped to recover my breath, of the which I was sorely bereft, and kneeling on the seat of the little window that commands the archway to the keep, I saw the prisoner—'

'How knewest thou the prisoner ere it was yet daybreak, and that in the darkest corner of all the court?'

'I knew him by the way my bones shook at the white sleeves of his shirt, my lord,' said Tom, who was too far gone in fear to make the joke of pretending courage.

'Hardly evidence, Tom. But go on.'

'And with him I saw mistress Dorothy—'

'Hold there, Tom!' cried lord Herbert. 'Wherefore didst not impart this last night to my lady?'

'Because my lady loveth mistress Dorothy, and I dreaded she would therefore refuse to believe me.'

'What a heap of cunning goes to the making of a downright fool!' said lord Herbert to himself, but so as Tom could not fail to hear him. 'And what saw'st thou pass between them?' he asked.

'Only a whispering with their heads together,' answered Tom.

'And what heard'st thou?'

'Nothing, my lord.'

'And what followed?'

'The roundhead left her, and went through the archway. She stood a moment and then followed him. But I, fearful of her coming up the stair and finding me, gat me quickly to my own place.'

'Oh, Tom, Tom! I am ashamed of thee. What! Afraid of a woman? Verily, thy heart is of wax.'

'That can hardly be, my lord, for I find it still on the wane.'

'An' thy wit were no better than thy courage, thou hadst never had enough to play the fool with.'

'No, my lord; I should have had to turn philosopher.'

'A fair hit, Tom! But tell me, why wast thou afeard of mistress Dorothy?'

'It might have come to a quarrel in some sort, my lord; and there is one thing I have remarked in my wanderings through this valley of Baca' said Tom, speaking through his nose, and lengthening his face beyond even its own nature, 'namely, that he who quarrels with a woman goes ever to the wall.'

'One thing perplexes me, Tom: if thou sawest mistress Dorothy in the court with the roundhead, how came she thereafter, thinkest thou, locked up in his chamber?'

'It behoves that she went into it again, my lord.'

'How knowest thou she had been there before?'

'Nay, I know not, my lord. I know nothing of the matter.'

'Why say'st it then? Take heed to thy words, Tom. Who then, thinkest thou, did lock the door upon her?'

'I know not, my lord, and dare hardly say what I think. But let your lordship's wisdom determine whether it might not be one of those demons whereof the house hath been full ever since that night when I saw them rise from the water of the moat—that even now surrounds us, my lord!—and rush into the fountain court.'

'Meddle thou not, even in thy thoughts, with things that are beyond thee,' said lord Herbert. 'By what signs knewest thou mistress Dorothy in the dark as she stood talking to the roundhead?'

'There was light enough to know woman from man, my lord.'

'And were there then that night no women in the castle but mistress Dorothy?'

'Why, who else could it have been, my lord?'

'Why not thine own mother, Tom—rode thither on her broomstick to deliver her darling?'

Tom gaped with fresh terror at the awful suggestion.

'Now, hear me, Thomas Rees,' his lordship went on.

'Yes, my lord,' answered Tom.

'An' ever it come to my knowledge that thou say thou then saw mistress Dorothy, when all thou sawest was, as thou knowest, a woman who might have been thine own mother talking to the roundhead, as thou callest a man who might indeed have been Caspar Kaltoff in his shirt sleeves, I will set every devil at my command upon thy back and thy belly, thy sides and thy soles. Be warned, and not only speak the truth, as thou hast for a whole half−hour been trying hard to do, but learn to distinguish between thy fancies and God's facts; for verily thou art a greater fool than I took thee for, and that was no small one. Get thee gone, and send me hither mistress Watson.'

Tom crawled away, and presently mistress Watson appeared, looking offended, possibly at being called to the workshop, and a little frightened.

'I cannot but think thee somewhat remiss in thy ministrations to a sick man, mistress Watson,' he said, 'to leave him so long to himself. Had he been a king's officer now, wouldst thou not have shown him more favour?'

'That indeed may be, my lord,' returned mistress Watson with dignity. 'But an' the young fellow had been very sick, he had not made his escape.'

'And left the blame thereof with thee. Besides, that he did for his escape he may have done in the strength of the fever that followeth on such a wound.'

'My lord, I gave him a potion, wherefrom he should have slept until I sought him again.'

'Was he or thou to blame that he did not feel the obligation? When a man instead of sleeping runneth away, the potion was ill mingled, I doubt, mistress Watson—drove him crazy perchance.'

'She who waked him when he ought to have slept hath to bear the blame, not I, my lord.'

'Thou shouldst, I say, have kept better watch. But tell me whom meanest thou by that same SHE?'

'She who was found in his chamber, my lord,' said mistress Watson, compressing her lips, as if, come what might, she would stand on the foundation of the truth.

'Ah?—By the way, I would gladly understand how it came to be known throughout the castle that thou didst find her there? I have the assurance of my lady, my lord marquis, and my lord Charles, that never did one of them utter word so to slander an orphan as thou hast now done in my hearing. Who then can it be but her who is at the head of the meinie of this house, who hath misdemeaned herself thus to the spreading amongst those under her of evil reports and surmises affecting her lord's cousin, mistress Dorothy Vaughan?'

'You wrong me grievously, my lord,' cried mistress Watson, red with the wrath of injury and undeserved reproof.

'Thou hast thyself to thank for it then, for thou hast this night said in mine own ears that mistress Dorothy

waked thy prisoner, importing that she thereafter set him free, when thou knowest that she denies the same, and is therein believed by my lord marquis and all his house.'

'Therein I believe her not, my lord; but I swear by all the saints and angels, that to none but your lordship have I ever said the word; neither have I ever opened my lips against her, lest I should take from her the chance of betterment.'

'I will be more just to thee than thou hast been to my cousin, mistress Watson, for I will believe thee that thou didst only harbour evil in thy heart, not send it from the doors of thy lips to enter into other bosoms. Was it thou then that did lock the door upon her?'

'God forbid, my lord!'

'Thinkest thou. it was the roundhead?'

'No, surely, my lord, for where would be the need?'

'Lest she should issue and give the alarm.'

Mistress Watson smiled an acid smile.

'Then the doer of that evil deed,' pursued lord Herbert, 'must be now in the castle, and from this moment every power I possess in earth, air, or sea, shall be taxed to the uttermost for the discovery of that evil person. Let this vow of mine be known, mistress Watson, as a thing thou hast heard me say, not commission thee to report. Prithee take heed to what I desire of thee, for I am not altogether powerless to enforce that I would.'

Mistress Watson left the workshop in humbled mood. To her spiritual benefit lord Herbert had succeeded in punishing her for her cruelty to Dorothy; and she was not the less willing to mind his injunction as to the mode of mentioning his intent, that it would serve to the quenching of any suspicion that she had come under his disapproval.

And now lord Herbert, depending more upon his wits than his learning, found himself a good deal in the dark. Confident that neither Richard, Tom Fool, nor mistress Watson had locked the door of the turret chamber after Dorothy's entrance, he gave one moment to the examination of the lock, and was satisfied that an enemy had done it. He then started his thoughts on another track, tending towards the same point: how was it that the roundhead, who had been carried insensible to the turret−chamber, had been able, ere yet more than a film of grey thinned the darkness, without alarming a single sleeper, to find his way from a part of the house where there were no stairs near, and many rooms, all occupied? Clearly by the help of her, whoever she was, whom Tom Fool had seen with him by the hall door. She had guided him down my lord's stair, and thus avoided the risk of crossing the paved court to the hall door within sight of the warders of the main entrance. To her indubitably the young roundhead had committed the ring for Dorothy. Here then was one secret agent in the affair: was it likely there had been two? If not, this woman was one and the same with the person who turned the key upon Dorothy. She probably had been approaching the snare while the traitress talked with the prisoner. What did her presence so soon again in the vicinity of the turret−chamber indicate? Possibly that her own chamber was near it. The next step then was to learn from the housekeeper who slept in the neighbourhood of the turret−chamber, and then to narrow the ground of search by inquiring which, if any of them, slept alone.

He found there were two who occupied each a chamber by herself; one of them was Amanda, the other mistress Watson.

Now therefore he knew distinctly in what direction first he must point his tentatives. Before he went farther, however, he drew from Dorothy an accurate description of the ring to which Richard's letter alluded, and immediately set about making one after it, from stage to stage of its progress bringing it to her for examination and criticism, until, before the day was over, he had completed a model sufficiently like to pass for the same.

The greater portion of the next day he spent in getting into perfect condition a certain mechanical toy which he had constructed many years before, and familiarising himself with its working. This done, he found himself ready for his final venture, to give greater solemnity to which he ordered the alarum−bell to be rung, and the herald of the castle to call aloud, first from the bell−tower in the grass−court, next from the roof of the hall−porch in the stone− court, communicating with the minstrels' gallery, that on the following day, after dinner, so soon as they should hear the sound of the alarum−bell, every soul in the castle, to the infant in arms, all of whatever condition, save old mother Prescot, who was bed−ridden, should appear in the great hall, that lord Herbert might perceive which amongst them had insulted the lord and the rule of the house by the locking of one of its doors to the imprisonment and wrong of his lordship's cousin, mistress Dorothy Vaughan. Three strokes of the great bell

opened and closed the announcement, and a great hush of expectancy, not unmingled with fear, fell upon the place.

There was one in the household, however, who at first objected to the whole proceeding. That was sir Toby Mathews, the catholic chaplain. He went to the marquis and represented that, if there was to be any exercise whatever of unlawful power, the obligations of the sacred office with which he was invested would not permit him to be present or connive thereat. The marquis merrily insisted that it was a case of exorcism; that the devil was in the castle, and out he must go; that if Satan assisted in the detection of the guilty and the purging of the innocent, then was he divided against himself, and what could be better for the church or the world? But for his own part he had no hand in it, and if sir Toby had anything to say against it, he must go to his son. This he did at once; but lord Herbert speedily satisfied him, pledging himself that there should be nothing done by aid from beneath, and making solemn assertion that if ever he had employed any of the evil powers to work out his designs, it had been as their master and not their accomplice.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE EXORCISM.

It was the custom in Raglan to close the gates at eleven o'clock every morning, and then begin to lay the tables for dinner; nor were they opened again until the meal was over, and all had dispersed to their various duties. Upon this occasion directions were given that the gates should remain closed until the issue of further orders.

There was little talk in the hall during dinner that day, and not much in the marquis's dining−room.

In the midst of the meal at the housekeeper's table, mistress Amanda was taken suddenly ill, and nearly fell from her chair. A spoonful of one of mistress Watson's strong waters revived her, but she was compelled to leave the room.

When the remains of the dinner had been cleared away, the tables lifted from the trestles, and all removed, solemn preparations began to be made in the hall. The dais was covered with crimson cloth, and chairs were arranged on each side against the wall for the lords and ladies of the family, while in the wide space between was set the marquis's chair of state. Immediately below the dais, chairs were placed by the walls for the ladies and officers of the household. The minstrels' gallery was hung with crimson; long ladders were brought, and the windows, the great bay window and all save the painted one, were hung with thick cloth of the same colour, so that a dull red light filled the huge place. The floor was then strewn with fresh rushes, and candles were placed and lighted in sconces on the walls, and in two large candlesticks, one on each side of the marquis's chair. So numerous were the hands employed in these preparations, that about one o'clock the alarum−bell gave three great tolls, and then silence fell.

Almost noiselessly, and with faces more than grave, the people of the castle in their Sunday clothes began at once to come trooping in,—amongst the rest Tom Fool, the very picture of dismay. Mrs. Prescot had refused to be left behind, partly from terror, partly from curiosity, and supine on a hand−barrow was borne in, and laid upon two of the table−trestles. Order and what arrangement was needful were enforced amongst them by Mr. Cook, one of the ushers. In came the garrison also, with clank and clang, and took their places with countenances expressive neither of hardihood nor merriment, but a grave expectancy.

Mostly by the other door came the ladies and officers, amongst them Dorothy, and seated themselves below the dais. When it seemed at length that all were present, the two doors were closed, and silence reigned.

A few minutes more and the ladies and gentlemen of the family, in full dress, entered by the door at the back of the dais, and were shown to their places by Mr. Moyle, the first usher. Next came the marquis, leaning on lord Charles, and walking worse than usual. He too was, wonderful to tell, in full dress, and, notwithstanding his corpulency and lameness, looked every inch a marquis and the head of the house. He placed himself in the great chair, and sat upright, looking serenely around on the multitude of pale expectant faces, while lord Charles took his station erect at his left hand. A moment yet, and by the same door, last of all, entered lord Herbert, alone, in his garb of astrologer. He came before his father, bowed to him profoundly, and taking his place by his right hand, a little in front of the chair, cast a keen eye around the assembly. His look was grave, even troubled, and indeed somewhat anxious.

'Are all present?' he asked, and was answered only by silence. He then waved his right hand three times towards heaven, each time throwing open his palm outwards and upwards. At the close of the third wafture, a roar as of thunder broke and rolled about the place, making the huge hall tremble, and the windows rattle and shake fearfully. Some thought it was thunder, others thought it more like the consecutive discharge of great guns. It grew darker, and through the dim stained window many saw a dense black smoke rising from the stone−court, at sight of which they trembled yet more, for what could it be but the chariot upon which Modo, or Mahu, or whatever the demon might be called, rode up from the infernal lake? Again lord Herbert waved his arm three times, and again the thunder broke and rolled vibrating about the place. A third time he gave the sign, and once more, but now close over their heads, the thunder broke, and in the midst of its echoes, high in the oak roof appeared a little cloud of smoke. It seemed to catch the eye of lord Herbert. He made one step forward, and held out his hand towards it, with the gesture of a falconer presenting his wrist to a bird.

'Ha! art thou here?' he said.

And to the eyes of all, a creature like a bat was plainly visible, perched upon his forefinger, and waving up and down its filmy wings. He looked at it for a moment, bent his head to it, seemed to whisper, and then addressed it aloud.

'Go,' he said, 'alight upon the head of him or of her who hath wrought the evil thou knowest in this house. For it was of thine own kind, and would have smirched a fair brow.'

As he spoke he cast the creature aloft. A smothered cry came from some of the women, and Tom Fool gave a great sob and held his breath tight. Once round the wide space the bat flew, midway between floor and roof, and returning perched again upon lord Herbert's hand.

'Ha!' said his lordship, stooping his head over it, 'what meanest thou? Is not the evil−doer in presence? What?—Nay, but it cannot be? Not within the walls?—Ha! "Not in the HALL" thou sayest!'

He lifted his head, turned to his father, and said,

'Your lordship's commands have been disregarded. One of your people is absent.'

The marquis turned to lord Charles.

'Call me the ushers of the hall, my lord,' he said.

In a moment the two officers were before him.

'Search and see, and bring me word who is absent,' said the marquis.

The two gentlemen went down into the crowd, one from each side of the dais.

A minute or two passed, and then Mr. Cook came back and said,—

'My lord, I cannot find Caspar Kaltoff.'

'Caspar! Art not there, Caspar?' cried lord Herbert.

'Here I am, my lord,' answered the voice of Caspar from somewhere in the hall.

'I beg your lordship's pardon,' said Mr. Cook. 'I failed to find him.'

'It matters not, master usher. Look again,' said lord Herbert.

At the moment, Caspar, the sole attendant spirit, that day at least, upon his lord's commands, stood in one of the deep windows behind the crimson cloth, more than twenty feet above the heads of the assembly. The windows were connected by a narrow gallery in the thickness of the wall, communicating also with the minstrels' gallery, by means of which, and a ladder against the porch, Caspar could come and go unseen.

As lord Herbert spoke, Mr. Moyle came up on the dais, and brought his report that mistress Amanda Fuller was not with the rest of the ladies.

Lord Herbert turned to his wife.

'My lady,' he said, 'mistress Amanda is of your people: knowest thou wherefore she cometh not?'

'I know not, my lord, but I will send and see,' replied lady Margaret.—'My lady Broughton, wilt thou go and inquire wherefore the damsel disregardeth my lord of Worcester's commands?'

She had chosen the gentlest−hearted of her women to go on the message.

Lady Broughton came back pale and trembling—indeed there was much pallor and trembling that day in Raglan—with the report that she could not find her. A shudder ran through the whole body of the hall. Plainly the impression was that she had been FETCHED. The thunder and the smoke had not been for nothing: the devil had claimed and carried off his own! On the dais the impression was somewhat different; but all were one in this, that every eye was fixed on lord Herbert, every thought hanging on his pleasure.

For a whole minute he stood, apparently lost in meditation. The bat still rested on his hand, but his wings were still.

He had intended causing it to settle on Amanda's head, but now he must alter his plan. Nor was he sorry to do so, for it had involved no small risk of failure, the toy requiring most delicate adjustment, and its management a circumspection and nicety that occasioned him no little anxiety. It had indeed been arranged that Amanda should sit right under the window next the dais, so that he might have the assistance of Caspar from above; but if by any chance the mechanical bat should alight upon the head of another, mistress Doughty or lady Broughton instead of Amanda—what then? He was not sorry to find himself rescued from this jeopardy, and scarcely more than a minute had elapsed ere he had devised a plan by which to turn the check to the advantage of all—even that of Amanda herself, towards whom, while he felt bound to bring her to shame should she prove guilty, he was yet willing to remember mercy; while, should she be innocent, no harm would now result from his mistaken

suspicion. He turned and whispered to his father.

'I will back thee, lad. Do as thou wilt,' returned the marquis, gravely nodding his head.

'Ushers of the hall,' cried lord Herbert, 'close and lock both its doors. Lock also the door to the minstrels' gallery, and, with my lord's leave, that to my lord's stair. My lord Charles, go thou prithee, and with chalk draw me a pentacle upon the threshold of each of the four; and do thou, sir Toby Mathews, make the holy sign thereabove upon the lintel and the doorposts. For the door to the pitched court, however, leave that until I am gone forth and it is closed behind me, and then do thereunto the same as to the others, after which let all sit in silence. Move not, neither speak, for any sound of fear or smell of horror. For the gift that is in him from his mother, Thomas Rees shall accompany me. Go to the door, and wait until I come.'

Having thus spoken he raised the bat towards his face, and, approaching his lips, seemed once more to be talking to it in whispers. The menials and the garrison had no doubt but he talked to his familiar spirit. Of their superiors, mistress Watson at least was of the same conviction. Then he bent his ear towards it as if he were listening, and it began to flutter its wings, at which sir Toby's faith in him began to waver. A moment more and he cast the creature from him. It flew aloft, traversed the whole length of the roof, and vanished.

It had in fact, as its master willed, alighted in the farthest corner of the roof, a little dark recess. Then, bowing low to his father, the magician stepped down from the dais, and walked through a lane of awe−struck domestics and soldiery to the door, where Tom stood waiting his approach. The fool was in a strange flutter of feelings, a conflict of pride and terror, the latter of which would, but for the former, have unnerved him quite; for not only was he doubtful of the magician's intent with regard to himself, but the hall seemed now the only place of security, and all outside it given over to goblins or worse.

The moment they crossed the threshold, the door was closed behind them, the holy sign was signed over the one, and the pentacle drawn upon the other.

All eyes were turned upon the marquis. He sat motionless. Motionless, too, as if they had been carved in stone like the leopard and wyvern over their heads, sat all the lords and ladies, embodying in themselves the words of the motto there graven, Mulaxe Vel Timere Sperno. Motionless sat the ladies beneath the dais, but their faces were troubled and pale, for Amanda was one of them, and their imaginations were busy with what might now be befalling her. Dorothy sat in much distress, for although she could lay no evil intent to her own charge, she was yet the cause of the whole fearful business. As for Scudamore, though he too was white of blee, he said to himself, and honestly, that the devil might fly away with her and welcome for what he cared. One woman in the crowd fainted and fell, but uttered never a moan. The very children were hushed by the dread that pervaded the air, and the smell of sulphur, which from a suspicion grew to a plain presence, increased not a little the high−wrought awe.

After about half an hour, during which expectation of something frightful had been growing with every moment, three great knocks came to the porch door. Mr. Moyle opened it, and in walked lord Herbert as he had issued, with Tom Fool, in whom the importance had now at length banished almost every sign of dread, at his heels. He reascended the dais, bowed once more to his father, spoke a few words to him in a tone too low to be overheard, and then turning to the assembly, said with solemn voice and stern countenance:

'The air is clear. The sin of Raglan is purged. Every one to his place.'

Had not Tom Fool, who had remained by the door, led the way from the hall, it might have been doubtful when any one would venture to stir; but, with many a deep−drawn breath and sigh of relief, they trooped slowly out after him, until the body of the hall was empty. In their hearts keen curiosity and vague terror contended like fire and water.

From that hour, while Raglan stood, the face of Amanda Serafina was no more seen within its walls. At midnight shrieks and loud wailings were heard, but if they came from Amanda, they were her last signs.

I shall not, however, hide the proceedings of lord Herbert without the hall any more than he did himself when he reached the oak parlour with the members of his own family, in which Dorothy seemed now included. He had taken Tom Fool both because he knew the castle so well, and might therefore be useful in searching for Amanda, and because he believed he might depend, if not on his discretion, yet on his dread, for secrecy. They had scarcely left the hall before they were joined by Caspar, who, while his master and the fool went in one direction, set off in another, and after a long search in vain, at length found her in an empty stall in the subterranean stable, as if, in the agony of her terror at the awful noises and the impending discovery, she had sought refuge in the

companionship of the innocent animals. She was crouching, the very image of fear, under the manger, gave no cry when he entered, but seemed to gather a little courage when she found that the approaching steps were those of a human being.

'Mistress Amanda Fuller,' said his lordship with awful severity, 'thou hast in thy possession a jewel which is not thine own.'

'A jewel, my lord?' faltered Amanda, betaking herself by the force of inborn propensity and habit, even when hopeless of success in concealment, to the falsehood she carried with her like an atmosphere; 'I know not what your lordship means. Of what sort is the jewel?'

'One very like this,' returned lord Herbert, producing the false ring.

'Why, there you have it, my lord!'

'Traitress to thy king and thy lord, out of thine own mouth have I convicted thee. This is not the ring. See!'

As he spoke he squeezed it betwixt his finger and thumb to a shapeless mass, and threw it from him—then continued:

'Thou art she who did show the rebel his way from the prison into which her lord had cast him.'

'He took me by the throat, my lord,' gasped Amanda, 'and put me in mortal terror.'

'Thou slanderest him,' returned lord Herbert. 'The roundhead is a gentleman, and would not, to save his life, have harmed thee, even had he known what a worthless thing thou art. I will grant that he put thee in fear. But wherefore gavest thou no alarm when he was gone?'

'He made me swear that I would not betray him.'

'Let it be so. Why didst thou not reveal the way he took?'

'I knew it not.'

'Yet thou wentest after him when he left thee. And wherefore didst thou not deliver the ring he gave thee for mistress Dorothy?'

'I feared she would betray me, that I had held talk with the prisoner.'

'Let that too pass as less wicked than cowardly. But wherefore didst thou lock the door upon her when thou sawest her go into the roundhead's prison? Thou knewest that therefrom she must bear the blame of having set him free, with other blame, and worse for a maiden to endure?'

'It was a sudden temptation, my lord, which I knew not how to resist, and was carried away thereby. Have pity upon me, dear my lord,' moaned Amanda.

'I will believe thee there also, for I fear me thou hast had so little practice in the art of resisting temptation, that thou mightst well yield to one that urged thee towards such mere essential evil. But how was it that, after thou hadst had leisure to reflect, thou didst spread abroad the report that she was found there, and that to the hurt not only of her loyal fame, but of her maidenly honour, understanding well that no one was there but herself, and that he alone who could bear testimony to her innocence and thy guilt was parted from her by everything that could divide them except hatred? Was the temptation to that also too sudden for thy resistance?'

At length Amanda was speechless. She hung her head, for the first time in her life ashamed of herself.

'Go before to thy chamber. I follow thee.'

She rose to obey, but she could scarcely walk, and he ordered the men to assist her. Arrived in her room she delivered up the ring, and at lord Herbert's command proceeded to gather together her few possessions. That done, they led her away to the rude chamber in the watch tower, where stood the arblast, and there, seated on her chest, they left her with the assurance that if she cried out or gave any alarm, it would be to the publishing of her own shame.

At the dead of night Caspar and Tom, with four picked men from the guard, came to lead her away. Worn out by that time, and with nothing to sustain her from within, she fancied they were going to kill her, and giving way utterly, cried and shrieked aloud. Obdurate however, as gentle, they gave no ear to her petitions, but bore her through the western gate, and so to the brick gate in the rampart, placed her in a carriage behind six horses, and set out with her for Caerleon, where her mother lived in obscurity. At her door they set her down, and leaving the carriage at Usk, returned to Raglan one by one in the night, mounted on the horses. By the warders who admitted them they were supposed to be returned from distinct missions on the king's business.

Many were the speculations in the castle as to the fate of mistress Amanda Serafina Fuller, but the common belief continued to be that she had been carried off by Satan, body and soul.

END OF VOL. II.