

WALTER BESANT

FOR FAITH
AND FREEDOM

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For Faith and Freedom

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CHAPTER I. FAREWELL SUNDAY

The morning of Sunday, August 23, in the year of grace 1662, should have been black and gloomy with the artillery of rolling thunder, dreadful flashes of lightning, and driving hail and wind to strip the orchards and lay low the corn. For on that day was done a thing which filled the whole country with grief, and bore bitter fruit in after years, of revenge and rebellion. And, because it was the day before that formerly named after Bartholomew, the disciple, it hath been called the Black Bartholomew of England, thus being likened unto that famous day (approved by the Pope) when the French Protestants were treacherously massacred by their King. It should rather be called 'Farewell Sunday' or 'Exile Sunday,' for on that day two thousand godly ministers preached their last sermon in the churches where they had laboured worthily and with good fruit, some during the time of the Protector, and some even longer, because among them were a few who possessed their benefices even from the time of the late King Charles the First. And, since on that day two thousand ministers left their churches and their houses, and laid down their worldly wealth for conscience' sake, there were also, perhaps, as many wives who went with them, and, I dare say, three or four times as many innocent and helpless babes. And, further (it is said that the time was fixed by design and deliberate malice of our enemies), the ministers were called upon to make their choice only a week or two before the day of the collection of their tithes. In other words, they were sent forth to the world at the season when their purses were at the leanest; indeed, with most country clergymen, their purses shortly before the collection of tithes have become well-nigh empty. It was also unjust that their successors should be permitted to collect the tithes due to those who were ejected.

It is fitting to begin this history with the Black Bartholomew, because all the troubles and adventures which afterwards befell us were surely caused by that accursed day. One know not certainly, what other rubs might have been ordained for us by a wise Providence (always with the merciful design of keeping before our eyes the vanity of worldly things, the instability of fortune, the uncertainty of life, and the wisdom of looking for a hereafter which shall be lasting, stable, and satisfying to the soul). Still, it must be confessed, such trials as were appointed unto us were, in severity and continuance, far beyond those appointed to the ordinary sort, so that I cannot but feel at times uplifted (I hope not sinfully) at having been called upon to endure so much. Let me not, however, be proud. Had it not been for this day, for certain, our boys would not have been tempted to strike a blow – vain and useless as it proved – for the Protestant religion and for liberty of conscience: while perhaps I should now be forbidden to relate our sufferings, were it not for the glorious Revolution which has restored toleration, secured the Protestant ascendancy, and driven into banishment a Prince, concerning whom all honest men pray that he and his son (if he have, indeed, a son of his own) may never again have authority over this realm.

This Sunday, I say, should have wept tears of rain over the havoc which it witnessed; yet it was fine and clear, the sun riding in splendour, and a warm summer air blowing among the orchards and over the hills and around the village of Bradford Orcas, in the shire of Somerset. The wheat (for the season was late) stood gold-coloured in the fields, ready at last for the reaper; the light breeze bent down the ears so that they showed like waves over which the passing clouds make light and shade; the apples in the orchards were red and yellow, and nearly ripe for the press; in the gardens of the Manor House, hard by the church, the sunflowers and the hollyhocks were at their tallest and their best; the

yellow roses on the wall were still in clusters; the sweet-peas hung with tangles of vine and flower upon their stalks; the bachelors' buttons, the sweet mignonette, the nasturtium, the gillyflowers and stocks, the sweet-williams and the pansies, offered their late summer blossoms to the hot sun among the lavender, thyme, parsley, sage, feverfew, and vervain of my Lady's garden. Oh! I know how it all looked, though I was then as yet unborn. How many times have I stood in the churchyard and watched the same scene at the same sweet season! On a week-day one hears the thumping and the groaning of the mill below the church; there are the voices of the men at work – the yo-hoing of the boys who drive; and the lumbering of the carts. You can even hear the spinning-wheels at work in the cottages. On Sunday morning everything is still, save for the warbling of the winged tribe in the wood, the cooing of the doves in the cote, the clucking of the hens, the grunting of the pigs, and the droning of the bees. These things disturb not the meditations of one who is accustomed to them.

At eight o'clock in the morning, the Sexton, an ancient man and rheumatic, hobbled slowly through the village, key in hand, and opened the church-door. Then he went into the tower and rang the first bell. I suppose this bell is designed to hurry housewives with their morning work, and to admonish the men that they incline their hearts to a spiritual disposition. This done, the Sexton set open the doors of the pews, swept out the Squire's and the Rector's in the chancel, dusted the cushions of the pulpit (the reading-desk at this time was not used), opened the clasps of the great Bible, and swept down the aisle: as he had done Sunday after Sunday for fifty years. When he had thus made the church ready for the day's service, he went into the vestry, which had only been used since the establishment of the Commonwealth for the registers of birth, death, and marriage.

At one side of the vestry stood an ancient, black oak coffer, the sides curiously graven, and a great rusty key in the lock. The Sexton turned the key with difficulty, threw open the lid and looked in.

'Ay,' he said, chuckling, 'the old surplice and the old Book of Common Prayer. Ye have had a long rest; 'tis time for both to come out again. When the surplice is out, the book will stay no longer locked up. These two go in and out together. I mind me, now' – Here he sat down, and his thoughts wandered for a space; perhaps he saw himself once more a boy running in the fields, or a young man courting a maid. Presently he returned to the task before him, and drew forth an old and yellow roll which he shook out. It was the surplice which had once been white. 'Here you be,' he said. 'Put you away for a matter of twelve year and more and you bide your time; you know you will come back again; you are not in any hurry. Even the Sexton dies; but you die not, you bide your time. Everything comes again. The old woman shall give you a taste o' the suds and the hot iron. Thus we go up and thus we go down.' He put back the surplice and took out the great Book of Common Prayer – musty and damp after twelve years' imprisonment. 'Fie!' he said, 'thy leather is parting from the boards, and thy leaves they do stick together. Shalt have a pot of paste, and then lie in the sun before thou goest back to the desk. Whether 'tis Mass or Common Prayer, whether 'tis Independent or Presbyterian, folk mun still die and be buried – ay, and married and born – whatever they do say. Parson goes and Preacher comes; Preacher goes and Parson comes; but Sexton stays' – He chuckled again, put back the surplice and the book, and locked the coffer.

Then he slowly went down the church and came out of the porch, blinking in the sun, and shading his old eyes. He sat down upon the flat stones of the old cross, and presently nodded his head and dropped off asleep.

This was a strange indifference in the man. A great and truly notable thing was to be accomplished that day. But he cared nothing. Two thousand godly and learned men were to go forth into poverty for liberty of conscience – this man's own minister was one of them. He cared nothing. The King was sowing the seed from which should spring a rod to drive forth his successor from the kingdom. In the village the common sort were not moved. Nothing concerns the village folk but the weather and the market prices. As for the good Sexton, he was very old: he had seen the Church of England displaced by the Presbyterians and the Presbyterians by the Independents, and now these were again to be supplanted by the Church of England. He had been Sexton through all these changes.

He heeded them not; why, his father, Sexton before him, could remember when the Mass was said in the church, and the Virgin was worshipped, and the folk were driven like sheep to confession. All the time the people went on being born, and marrying, and dying. Creed doth not, truly, affect these things, nor the Sexton's work. Therefore, this old gaffer, having made sure that the surplice was in the place where it had lain undisturbed for a dozen years, and remembering that it must be washed and ironed for the following Sunday, sat down to bask in the sun, his mind at rest, and dropped off into a gentle sleep.

At ten o'clock the bell-ringers came tramping up the stone steps from the road, and the Sexton woke up. At ten they used to begin their chimes, but at the hour they ring for five minutes only, ending with the clash of all five bells together. At a quarter-past ten they chime again, for the service, which begins at half-past ten.

At the sound of these chimes the whole village begins to move slowly towards the church. First come the children, the bigger ones leading those who are little by the hand; the boys come next, but unwillingly, because the Sexton is diligent with his cane, and some of those who now go up the steps to the church will come down with smarting backs, the reward of those who play or laugh during the service. Then come the young men, who stand about the churchyard and whisper to each other. After them follow the elders and the married men, with the women and the girls. Five minutes before the half hour the ringers change the chime for a single bell. Then those who are outside gather in the porch and wait for the Quality.

When the single bell began, there came forth from the Rectory the Rector himself, Mr. Comfort Eykin, Doctor of Divinity, who was this day to deliver his soul and lay down his charge. He wore the black gown and Geneva bands, for the use of which he contended. At this time he was a young man of thirty – tall and thin. He stooped in the shoulders because he was continually reading; his face was grave and austere; his nose thin and aquiline; his eyes bright – never was any man with brighter eyes than my father; his hair, which he wore long, was brown and curly; his forehead high, rather than broad; his lips were firm. In these days, as my mother hath told me, and as I well believe, he was a man of singular comeliness, concerning which he cared nothing. Always from childhood upwards he had been grave in conversation and seriously inclined in mind. If I think of my father as a boy (no one ever seems to think that his father was once a boy), I am fain to compare him with Humphrey, save for certain bodily defects, my father having been like a Priest of the Altar for bodily perfection. That is to say, I am sure that, like Humphrey, he had no need of rod or ferule to make him learn his lessons, and, like that dear and fond friend of my childhood, he would willingly sit in a corner and read a book while the other boys played and went a-hunting or a-nesting. And very early in life he was smitten with the conviction of sin, and blessed with such an inward assurance of salvation as made him afterwards steadfast in all afflictions.

He was not a native of this country, having been born in New England. He came over, being then eighteen years of age, to study at Oxford, that university being purged of malignants (as they were then called), and, at the time, entirely in the hands of the godly. He was entered of Balliol College, of which Society he became a Fellow, and was greatly esteemed for his learning, wherein he excelled most of the scholars of his time. He knew and could read Hebrew, Chaldee, and the ancient Syriac, as well as Latin and Greek. Of modern languages he had acquired Arabic, by the help of which he read the book which is called the Koran of the False Prophet Mohammed: French and Italian he also knew and could read easily. As for his opinions, he was an Independent, and that not meekly or with hesitation, but with such zeal and vehemence that he considered all who differed from him as his private enemies – nay, the very enemies of God. For this reason, and because his personal habits were too austere for those who attained not to his spiritual height, he was more feared than loved. Yet his party looked upon him as one of their greatest and stoutest champions.

He left Oxford at the age of five or six and twenty, and accepted the living of Bradford Orcas, offered him by Sir Christopher Challis of that place. Here he had preached for six years, looking

forward to nothing else than to remain there, advancing in grace and wisdom, until the end of his days. So much was ordered, indeed, for him; but not quite as he had designed. Let no man say that he knoweth the future, or that he can shape out his destiny. You shall hear presently how Benjamin arrogantly resolved that his future should be what he chose; and what came of that impious resolution.

My father's face was always austere; this morning it was more serious and sterner than customary, because the day was to him the most important in his life, and he was about to pass from a condition of plenty (the Rectory of Bradford Orcas is not rich but it affords a sufficiency) to one of penury. Those who knew him, however, had no doubt of the course he was about to take. Even the rustics knew that their minister would never consent to wear a surplice or to read the Book of Common Prayer, or to keep holy days – you have seen how the Sexton opened the box and took out the surplice; yet my father had said nothing to him concerning his intentions.

In his hand he carried his Bible – his own copy, I have it still, the margins covered with notes in his writing – bound in black leather, worn by constant handling, with brass clasps. Upon his head he had a plain black silk cap, which he wore constantly in his study and at meals to keep off draughts. Indeed, I loved to see him with the silk cap rather than with his tall steeple hat, with neither ribbon nor ornament of any kind, in which he rode when he afterwards went about the country to break the law in exhorting and praying with his friends.

Beside him walked my mother, holding in her hand her boy, my brother Barnaby, then three years of age. As for me, I was not yet born. She had been weeping; her eyes were red and swollen with tears; but when she entered the church she wept no more, bravely listening to the words which condemned to poverty and hardship herself and her children, if any more should be born to her. Alas, poor soul! What had she done that this affliction should befall her? What had her innocent boy done? For upon her – not upon her husband – would fall the heavy burden of poverty, and on her children the loss. Yet never by a single word of complaint did she make her husband sorry that he had obeyed the voice of conscience, even when there was nothing left in the house, not so much as the widow's cruse of oil. Alas, poor mother, once so free from care! what sorrow and anxiety wert thou destined to endure for the tender conscience of thy husband!

At the same time – namely, at the ringing of the single bell – there came forth from the Manor House hard by the church, his Honour, Sir Christopher, with his family. The worthy knight was then about fifty years of age, tall and handsome still – in his later years there was something of a heavenly sweetness in his face, created, I doubt not, by a long life of pious thoughts and worthy deeds. His hair was streaked with grey, but not yet white; he wore a beard of the kind called stiletto, which was even then an ancient fashion, and he was dressed more soberly than is common with gentlemen of his rank, having no feather in his hat, but a simple ribbon round it, and though his ruffles were of lace and the kerchief round his neck was lace, the colour of his coat was plain brown. He leaned upon a gold-headed cane on account of an old wound (it was inflicted by a Cavalier's musket-ball when he was a Captain in the army of Lord Essex). The wound left him somewhat lame, yet not so lame but that he could very well walk about his fields and could ride his horse, and even hunt with the otter-hounds. By his side walked Madam, his wife. After him came his son, Humphrey, newly married, and with Humphrey his wife; and last came his son-in-law, the Reverend Philip Boscorel, M.A., late Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, also newly married, with his wife, Sir Christopher's daughter, Patience. Mr. Boscorel, like my father, was at that time thirty years of age. Like him, too, his face was comely and his features fine; yet they lacked the fire and the earnestness which marked my father. And in his silken cassock, his small white bands, his lace ruffles, and his dainty walk, it seemed as if Mr. Boscorel thought himself above the common run of mankind and of superior clay. 'Tis sometimes the way with scholars and those who survey the world from the eminence of a library.

Sir Christopher's face was full of concern, because he loved the young man who was this day to throw away his livelihood; and although he was ready himself to worship after the manner prescribed by law, his opinions were rather Independent than Episcopalian. As for Mr. Boscorel, who

was about to succeed to the ejected minister, his face wore no look of triumph, which would have been ungenerous. He was observed, indeed, after he had silently gone through the Service of the day with the help of the Common Prayer-book, to listen diligently unto the preacher.

The people, I have already said, knew already what was about to happen. Perhaps some of them (but I think not) possessed a copy of the old Prayer-book. This, they knew, was to be restored, with the surplice, and the observance of Holy days, Feasts, and Fasts, and the kneeling at the administration of the Holy Communion. Our people are craftsmen as much as they are rustics; every week the master-clothiers' men drive their packhorses into the village laden with wool, and return with yarn; they are not, therefore, so brutish and sluggish as most country folk; yet they made no outward show of caring whether Prelacy or Independency was to have the sway. Perhaps the abstruse doctrines which my father loved to discuss were too high for them; perhaps his austerity was too strict for them, so that he was not beloved by them. Perhaps, even, they would have cared little if they had heard that Bishop Bonner himself was coming back. Religion, to country folk, means, mostly, the going to church on Sunday morning. That done, man's service of Prayer and Praise to his Creator is also done. If the form be changed the church remains, and the churchyard; one shepherd followeth another, but the flock is always the same. Revolutions overthrow kings, and send great heads to the block; but the village heedeth not unless civil war pass that way. To country folk, what difference? The sky and the fields are unchanged. Under Queen Mary they are Papists; under Queen Elizabeth they are Protestants. They have the Prayer-book under King James and King Charles; under Oliver they have had the Presbyterian and Independent; now they have the Book of Common Prayer and the surplice again. Yet they remain the same people, and tell the same stories, and, so far as I know, believe the same things – viz., that Christ Jesus saves the soul of every man who truly believes in Him. Why, if it were not for his immortal soul – concerning which he takes but little thought – the rustic might be likened unto the patient beast whom he harnesseth to his plough and to his muck-cart. He changeth no more; he works as hard; he is as long-enduring; his eyes and his thoughts are as much bound by the hedge, the lane, and the field; he thinks and invents and advances no more. Were it not, I say, for the Church, he would take as little heed of anything as his ox or his ass; his village would become his country; his squire would become his king; the nearest village would become the camp of an enemy; and he would fall into the condition of the Ancient Briton when Julius Cæsar found every tribe fighting against every other.

I talk as a fool. For sometimes there falls upon the torpid soul of the rustic a spark which causes a mighty flame to blaze up and burn fiercely within him. I have read how a simple monk, called Peter the Hermit, drew thousands of poor, illiterate, credulous persons from their homes, and led them, a mob armed with scythes and pikes, across Europe to the deserts of Asia Minor, where they miserably perished. I have read also of Jack Cade, and how he drew the multitudes after him, crying aloud for justice or death. And I myself have seen these sluggish spirits suddenly fired with a spirit which nothing could subdue. The sleeping soul I have seen suddenly starting into life; strength and swiftness have I seen suddenly put into sluggish limbs; light and fire have I seen gleaming suddenly in dull and heavy eyes. Oh! it was a miracle: but I have seen it. And having seen it, I cannot despise these lads of the plough, these honest boys of Somerset, nor can I endure to hear them laughed at or contemned.

Bradford Orcas, in the Hundred of Horethorne, Somerset, is a village so far from the great towns, that one would think a minister might have gone on praying and preaching after his own fashion without ever being discovered. But the arm of the Law is long.

The nearest town is Sherborne, in Dorsetshire, to which there is a bridle-path across the fields; it is the market-town for the villages round it. Bradford Orcas is an obscure little village, with no history and no antiquities. It stands in the south-eastern corner of the county, close to the western declivity of the Corton Hills, which here sweep round so as to form a valley, in which the village is built along the banks of a stream. The houses are for the most part of stone, with thatched roofs, as is the custom in our country; the slopes of the hills are covered with trees, and round the village

stand goodly orchards, the cider from which cannot be surpassed. As for the land, but little of it is arable; the greater part is a sandy loam or stone brash. The church, which in the superstitious days was dedicated to St. Nicolas, is built upon a hillock, a rising ground in the west of the village. This building of churches upon hillocks is a common custom in our parts, and seemeth laudable, because a church should stand where it can be seen by all the people, and by its presence remind them of Death and of the Judgment. The practice doth obtain, for example, at Sherborne, where there is a very noble church, and at Huish Episcopi, and at many other places in our county. Our church is fair and commodious, not too large for the congregation, having in the west a stone tower embattled, and consisting of a nave and chancel with a very fine roof of carved woodwork. There is an ancient yew-tree in the churchyard, from which in old times bows were cut; some of the bows yet hang in the great hall of the Manor House. Among the graves is an ancient stone cross, put up no man knows when, standing in a six-sided slab of stone, but the top was broken off at the time of the Reformation; two or three tombs are in the churchyard, and the rest is covered with mounds, beneath which lie the bones and dust of former generations.

Close to the churchyard, and at the north-east corner, is the Manor House, as large as the church itself, but not so ancient. It was built in the reign of Henry VII. A broad arched gateway leads into a court, wherein is the entrance to the house. Over the gateway is a kind of tower, but not detached from the house. In the wall of the tower is a panel, lozenge-shaped, in which are carved the arms of the Challis family. The house is stately, with many gables, and in each are casement windows set in richly-carved stone tracery. As for the rooms within the house, I will speak of them hereafter. At present I have the churchyard in my mind. There is no place upon the earth which more I love. To stand in the long grass among the graves; to gaze upon the wooded hills beyond, the orchards, the meadows, the old house, the venerable church, the yew-tree: to listen to the murmur of the stream below and the singing of the lark above; to feel the fresh breeze upon my cheek – oh! I do this daily. It makes me feel young once more; it brings back the days when I stood here with the boys, and when Sir Christopher would lean over the wall and discourse with us gravely and sweetly upon the love of God and the fleeting joys of earth (which yet, he said, we should accept and be happy withal in thankfulness), and the happiness unspeakable that awaiteth the Lord's Saints. Or, if my thoughts continue in the past, the graveyard brings back the presence and the voice of Mr. Boscorel.

'In such a spot as this,' he would say, speaking softly and slowly, 'the pastorals of Virgil or Theocritus might have been written. Here would the shepherds hold their contests. Certainly they could find no place, even in sunny Sicily or at Mantua itself, where (save for three months in the year) the air is more delightful. Here they need not to avoid the burning heat of a sun which gently warms, but never burns; here they would find the shade of the grove pleasant in the soft summer season. Innocent lambs instead of kids (which are tasteless) play in our meadows; the cider which we drink is, I take it, more pleasing to the palate than was their wine flavoured with turpentine. And our viols, violins, and spinets are instruments more delightful than the oaten pipe, or the cithara itself.' Then would he wave his hand, and quote some poet in praise of a country life —

There is no man but may make his paradise,
And it is nothing but his love and dotage
Upon the world's foul joys that keeps him out on't.
For he that lives retired in mind and spirit
Is still in Paradise.

'But, child,' he would add, with a sigh, 'one may not always wish to be in Paradise. The world's joys lie elsewhere. Only, when youth is gone – then Paradise is best.'

The service began, after the manner of the Independents, with a long prayer, during which the people sat. Mr. Boscorel, as I have said, went through his own service in silence, the Book of

Common Prayer in his hand. After the prayer, the minister read a portion of Scripture, which he expounded at length and with great learning. Then the congregation sang that Psalm which begins —

Triumphing songs with glorious tongues
Let's offer unto Him.

This done, the Rector ascended the pulpit for the last time, gave out his text, turned his hour-glass, and began his sermon.

He took for his text those verses in St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, vi., 3-10, in which the Apostle speaks of his own ministry as if he was actually predicting the tribulation which was to fall upon these faithful preachers of a later time — 'In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings,' — could not the very words be applied to my father?

He read the text three times, so that everybody might fully understand the subject upon which he was to preach — namely, the faithfulness required of a minister of the gospel. I need not set down the arguments he used or the reasons he gave for his resolution not to conform with the Act of Uniformity. The rustics sat patiently listening, with no outward sign of assent or of sympathy. But their conduct afterwards proved abundantly to which side their minds inclined.

It behoves us all to listen with respect when scholars and wise men inquire into the reasons of things. Yet the preachings and expositions which such as my father bestowed upon their flocks did certainly awaken men's minds to consider by themselves the things which many think too high for them. It is a habit which may lead to the foundation of false and pernicious sects. And it certainly is not good that men should preach the doctrines of the Anabaptists, the Fifth Monarchy men, or the Quakers. Yet it is better that some should be deceived than that all should be slaves. I have been assured by one — I mean Humphrey — who hath travelled, that in those countries where the priest taketh upon himself the religion of the people, so that they think to be saved by attending mass, by fasting, confession, penance, and so forth, not only does religion itself become formal, mechanical, and inanimate, but in the very daily concerns and business of life men grow slothful and lack spirit. Their religion, which is the very heat of the body, the sustaining and vital force of all man's actions, is cold and dead. Therefore, all the virtues are cold also, and with them the courage and the spirit of the people. Thus it is that Italy hath fallen aside into so many small and divided kingdoms. And for this reason, Spain, in the opinion of those who know her best, is now falling rapidly into decay.

I am well assured, by those who can remember, that the intelligence of the village folk greatly increased during the period when they were encouraged to search the Scriptures for themselves. Many taught themselves to read, others had their children taught, in order that they might read or hear, daily, portions of the Scriptures. It is now thirty years since Authority resumed the rule; the village folk have again become, to outward seeming, sheep who obey without questioning. Yet it is observed that when they are within reach of a town — that is to say, of a meeting-house — they willingly flock to the service in the afternoon and evening.

It was with the following brave words that my father concluded his discourse: —

'Seeing, therefore, my brethren, how clear is the Word of God on these points; and considering that we must always obey God rather than man; and observing that here we plainly see the finger of God pointing to disobedience and its consequences, I am constrained to disobey. The consequence will be to me that I shall stand in this place no more: to you, that you will have a stranger in your church. I pray that he may be a godly person, able to divide the Word, learned and acceptable.

'As for me, I must go forth, perhaps from among you altogether. If persecutions arise, it may behove me and mine to seek again that land beyond the seas whither my fathers fled for the sake of religious liberty. Whatever happens, I must fain preach the gospel. It is laid upon me to preach. If I am silent, it will be as if Death itself had fallen upon me. My brethren, there have been times — and

those times may return – when the Elect have had to meet, secretly, on the sides of barren hills, and in the heart of the forest, to pray together and to hear the Word. I say that these times may return. If they do, you will find me willing, I hope and pray, to brave for you the worst that our enemies can devise. Perhaps, however, this tyranny may pass over. Already the Lord hath achieved one great deliverance for this ancient Realm. Perhaps another may be in His secret purposes when we have been chastened, as, for our many sins, we richly deserve. Whether in affliction or in prosperity, let us always say, "The Lord's name be praised!"

'Now, therefore, for the sand is running low and I may not weary the young and the impatient, let me conclude. Farewell, sweet Sabbaths! Farewell, the sweet expounding of the Word! Farewell, sweet pulpit! Farewell, sweet faces of the souls which I have yearned to present pure and washed clean before the Throne! My brethren, I go about, henceforth, as a dog which is muzzled; another man will fill this pulpit; our simple form of worship is gone; the Prayer-book and the surplice have come back again. Pray God we see not Confession, Penance, the Mass, the Inquisition, the enslavement of conscience, the stake, and the martyr's axe!'

Then he paused and bowed his head, and everybody thought that he had finished.

He had not. He raised it again, and threw out his arms and shouted aloud, while his eyes glowed like fire:

'*No!* I will not be silent. I WILL NOT. I am sent into the world to preach the gospel. I have no other business. I must proclaim the Word as I hope for everlasting life. Brethren, we shall meet again. In the woods and on the hills we shall find a Temple; there are houses where two or three may be gathered together, the Lord Himself being in their midst. Never doubt that I am ready, in season and out of season, whatever be the law, to preach the gospel of the Lord!'

He ended, and straightway descended the pulpit stair, and stalked out of the church, the people looking after him with awe and wonder. But Mr. Boscorel smiled and wagged his head, with a kind of pity.

CHAPTER II. IN THE VILLAGE

Thus did my father, by his own act and deed, strip himself of all his worldly wealth. Yet, having nothing, he ceased not to put his trust in the Lord, and continued to sit among his books, never asking whence came the food provided for him. I think, indeed, so wrapt was he in thought, that he knew not. As for procuring the daily food, my mother it was who found out the way.

Those who live in other parts of this kingdom do not know what a busy and populous county is that of Somerset. Apart from the shipping and the great trade with Ireland, Spain, and the West Indies carried on from the Port of Bristol, we have our great manufactures of cloth, in which we are surpassed by no country in the world. The town of Taunton alone can boast of eleven hundred looms always at work making Sagathies and Des Roys; there are many looms at Bristol, where they make for the most part Druggets and Cantaloons; and there are great numbers at that rich and populous town of Frome Selwood, where they manufacture the Spanish Medleys. Besides the cloth-workers, we have, in addition, our knitted-stockings trade, which is carried on mostly at Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet. Not only does this flourishing trade make the masters rich and prosperous (it is not uncommon to find a master with his twenty – ay, and his forty – thousand pounds), but it fills all the country with work, so that the towns are frequent, populous, and full of everything that men can want; and the very villages are not like those which may be seen in other parts, poor and squalid, but well-built and comfortable.

Every cottage has its spinning-wheel. The mother, when she is not doing the work of the house, sits at the wheel; the girls, when they have nothing else to do, are made to knit stockings. Every week the master-clothier sends round his men among the villages, their packhorses laden with wool; every week they return, their packs laden with yarn, ready for the loom.

There is no part of England where the people are more prosperous and more contented. Nowhere are there more towns, and all thriving; nowhere are the villages better built; nor can one find anywhere else more beautiful churches. Because the people make good wages they are independent in their manners; they have learned things supposed to be above the station of the humble; most of them in the towns, and many in the villages, are able to read. This enables them to search the Scriptures, and examine into doctrine by the light of their own reason, guided by grace. And to me, the daughter of a Nonconforming preacher, it does not seem wonderful that so many of them should have become stiff and sturdy Nonconformists. This was seen in the year 1685, and, again, three years later, when a greater than Monmouth landed on the western shores.

My mother, then, seeing no hope that her husband would earn, by any work of his own, the daily bread of the household, bravely followed the example of the women in the village. That is to say, she set up her spinning-wheel, and spent all the time that she could spare spinning the wool into yarn; while she taught her little boy first and afterwards her daughter – as soon as I was old enough to manage the needles – to knit stockings. What trade, indeed, could her husband follow save one – and that, by law, prohibited? He could not dig; he could not make anything; he knew not how to buy or sell; he could only study, write, and preach. Therefore, while he sat among his books in one room, she sat over her wheel in the other, working for the master-clothiers of Frome Selwood. It still makes my heart to swell with pity and with love when I think upon my mother, thus spending herself and being spent, working all day, huckstering with the rough pack-horsemen more accustomed to exchange rude jests with the rustics than to talk with gentlewomen. And this she continued to do year after year, cheerful and contented, so that her husband should never feel the pinch of poverty. Love makes us willing slaves.

My father, happily, was not a man whose mind was troubled about food. He paid no heed at all to what he ate, provided that it was sufficient for his needs; he would sup his broth of pork and turnips and bread, after thanks rendered, as if it were the finest dish in the world; and a piece of cold bacon with a hot cabbage would be a feast for him. The cider which he drank was brewed by my mother from her own apples; to him it was as good as if it had been Sherris or Rhenish. I say that he did not even know how his food was provided for him; his mind was at all times occupied with subjects so lofty that he knew not what was done under his very eyes. The hand of God, he said, doth still support His faithful. Doubtless we cannot look back upon those years without owning that we were so supported. But my mother was the Instrument; nay, my father sometimes even compared himself with satisfaction unto the Prophet Elijah, whom the ravens fed beside the brook Cherith, bringing him flesh and bread in the morning and flesh and bread in the evening. I suppose my father thought that his bacon and beans came to him in the same manner.

Yet we should sometimes have fared but poorly had it not been for the charity of our friends. Many a fat capon, green goose, side of bacon, and young grunter came to us from the Manor House, with tobacco, which my father loved, and wine to comfort his soul; yea, and clothes for us all, else had we gone barefoot and in rags. In this way was many an ejected Elijah at that time nourished and supported. Fresh meat we should never have tasted, any more than the humblest around us, had it not been for our good friends at the Manor House. Those who live in towns cannot understand how frugal and yet sufficient may be the fare of those who live in the country and have gardens and orchards. Cider was our drink, which we made ourselves; we had some sweet apple-trees, which gave us a stock of russets and pippins for winter use; we had bees (but we sold most of our honey at Sherborne market); our garden grew sallets and onions, beans and the like; skim milk we could have from the Manor House for the fetching; for breakfast we had bread and milk, for dinner bread and soft cheese, with a lettuce or an apple; and bread or bread and butter for supper. For my father there was always kept a piece of bacon or fat pork.

Our house was one of the cottages in the village: it is a stone house (often I sit down to look at it, and to remember those days of humility) with a thick thatch. It had two rooms below and two garrets above. One room was made into a study or library for my father, where also he slept upon a pallet. The other was kitchen, spinning room, parlour, all in one. The door opened upon the garden, and the floor was of stone, so that it was cold. But when Barnaby began to find the use of his hands he procured some boards, which he laid upon the stones, and so we had a wooden floor; and in winter across the door we hung a blanket or rug to keep off the wind.

The walls were whitewashed, and over all my mother had written texts of Scripture with charcoal, so that godly admonition was ever present to our eyes and minds. She also embroidered short texts upon our garments, and I have still the cradle in which I was laid, carved (but I do not know by whose hand) with a verse from the Word of God. My father used himself, and would have us employ, the words of the Bible even for the smaller occasions of daily use; nor would he allow that anything was lawful unless it was sanctioned by the Bible, holding that in the Word was everything necessary or lawful. Did Barnaby go shooting with Sir Christopher and bring home a rabbit? – Lo! David bade the children of Israel teach the use of the bow. Did my mother instruct and amuse me with riddles? – She had the warrant of Scripture for it in the example of Samson. Did she sing Psalms and spiritual songs to while away the time and make her work less irksome and please her little daughter? – In the congregation of Nehemiah there were two hundred forty-and-five singing men and singing women.

My father read and expounded the Bible to us twice a day – morning and evening. Besides the Bible we had few books which we could read. As for my mother, poor soul, she had no time to read. And as for me, when I grew older I borrowed books from the Manor House or Mr. Boscorel. And there were 'Old Mr. Dod's Sayings' and 'Plain Directions by Joseph Large' always on the shelf beside the Bible.

Now, while my father worked in his study and my brother Barnaby either sat over his lesson-book, his hands rammed into his hair, as if determined to lose nothing, not the least scrap of his portion (yet knowing full well that on the morrow there would be not a word left in his poor unlucky noddle, and once more the whip), my mother would sit at her wheel earning the daily bread. And, when I was little, she would tell me, speaking very softly, so as not to disturb the wrestling of her husband with a knotty argument, all the things which you have heard – how my father chose rather poverty than to worship at the altar of Baal; and how two thousand pious ministers, like-minded with himself, left their pulpits and went out into the cold for conscience' sake. So that I was easily led to think that there were no Christian martyrs and confessors more excellent and praiseworthy than these ejected ministers (which still I believe). Then would she tell me further of how they fared, and how the common people do still reverence them. There was the history of John Norman, of Bridgwater; Joseph Chadwick, of Wrenford; Felix Howe, of West Torrington; George Minton, and many others. She also instructed me very early in the history of the Protestant uprising over the best half of Europe, and showed me how, against fearful odds, and after burnings and tortures unspeakable, the good people of Germany, the Netherlands, and Great Britain won their freedom from the Pope, so that my heart glowed within me to think of the great goodness and mercy which caused me to be born in a Protestant country. And she instructed me, later, in the wickedness of King Charles, whom they now call a martyr, and in the plots of that King, and Laud his Archbishop, and how King and Archbishop were both overthrown and perished when the people arose and would bear no more. In fine, my mother made me, from the beginning, a Puritan. As I remember my mother always, she was pale of cheek and thin, her voice was gentle; yet with her very gentleness she would make the blood to run quick in the veins, and the heart to beat.

How have I seen the boys spring to their feet when she has talked with them of the great civil war and the Revolution! But always soft and gentle; her blue eyes never flashing; no wrath in her heart; but the truth, which often causeth righteous anger, always upon her tongue.

One day, I remember, when I was a little girl playing in the garden, Mr. Boscorel walked down the village in his great silken gown, which seemed always new, his lace ruffs, and his white bands, looking like a Bishop at least, and walking delicately, holding up his gown to keep it from the dust and mud. When he spoke it was in a soft voice and a mincing speech, not like our plain Somersetshire way. He stopped at our gate, and looked down the garden. It was a summer day, the doors and windows of the cottage were open; at our window sat my father bending over his books, in his rusty gown and black cap, thin and lank; at the door sat my mother at her wheel.

'Child,' said the Rector, 'take heed thou never forget in thine age the thing which thou seest daily in thy childhood.'

I knew not what he meant.

'Read and mark,' he said; 'yea, little Alice, learn by heart what the Wise Man hath said of the good woman: "She layeth her hands to the spindle ... she maketh fine linen and selleth it ... she eateth not the bread of idleness... Let her works praise her in the gates."'

CHAPTER III. THE BOYS

The family of Challis, of Bradford Orcas, is well known; here there has always been a Challis from time immemorial. They are said to have been on the land before the time of the Conqueror. But because they have never been a great family, like the Mohuns of Dunster, but only modest gentle-folk with some four or five hundred pounds a year, they have not suffered, like those great houses, from the civil wars, which, when they raged in the land, brought in their train so many attainders, sequestrations, beheadings, imprisonments, and fines. Whether the Barons fought, or whether Cavaliers and Roundheads, the Challises remained at Bradford Orcas.

Since the land is theirs and the village, it is reasonable that they should have done everything that has been done for the place. One of them built the church, but I know not when; another built the tower; another gave the peal of bells. He who reigned here in the time of Henry VII., built the Manor House; another built the mill; the monuments in the church are all put up to the memory of Challises dead and gone; there is one, a very stately tomb, which figures, to the life, Sir William Challis (who died in the time of Queen Elizabeth), carved in marble, and coloured, kneeling at a desk; opposite to him is his second wife, Grace, also kneeling. Behind the husband are three boys, on their knees, and behind the wife are three girls. Apart from this group is the effigy of Filipa, Sir Christopher's first wife, with four daughters kneeling behind her. I was always sorry for Filipa, thus separated and cut off from the society of her husband. There are brasses on the floor with figures of other Challises, and tablets in the wall, and the Challis coat-of-arms is everywhere, cut in lozenges, and painted in wood, and shining in the east window. It seemed to me, in my young days, that it was the grandest thing in the world to be a Challis.

In this family there was a laudable practice with the younger sons, that they stayed not at home, as is too often their custom, leading indolent lives without ambition or fortune, but they sallied forth and sought fortune in trade, or in the Law, or in the Church, or in foreign service – wherever fortune is to be honourably won – so that, though I daresay some have proved dead and dry branches, others have put forth flowers and fruit abundantly, forming new and vigorous trees sprung from the ancient root. Thus, some have become judges: and some bishops: and some great merchants: some have crossed the ocean and are now settled in the Plantations: some have attained rank and estates in the service of the Low Countries. Thus, Sir Christopher's brother Humphrey went to London and became a Levant merchant and adventurer, rising to great honour and becoming alderman. I doubt not that he would have been made Lord Mayor but for his untimely death. And as for his wealth, which was rumoured to be so great – but you shall hear of this in due time.

That goodly following of his household which you have seen enter the church on Farewell Sunday, was shortly afterwards broken into by death. There fell upon the village (I think it was in the year 1665) the scourge of a putrid fever, of which there died, besides numbers of the village folk, Madam herself – the honoured wife of Sir Christopher – Humphrey his son, and Madam Patience Boscorel, his daughter. There were left to Sir Christopher, therefore, only his daughter-in-law and his grandsons Robin and Benjamin. And in that year his household was increased by the arrival of his grand-nephew Humphrey. This child was the grandson of Sir Christopher's brother, the Turkey or Levant merchant of whom I have spoken. He was rich and prosperous: his ships sailed out every year laden with I know not what, and returned with figs, dates, spices, gums, silks, and all kinds of precious commodities from Eastern parts. It is, I have been told, a profitable trade, but subject to terrible dangers from Moorish pirates, who must be bravely fought and beaten off, otherwise ship and cargo will be taken, and captain and crew driven into slavery. Mr. Challis dwelt in Thames-street,

close to Tower-hill. It is said that he lived here in great splendour, as befits a rich merchant who is also an Alderman.

Now, in the year 1665, as is very well known, a great plague broke out in the city. There were living in the house in Thames-street the Alderman, his wife, his son, his son's wife, a daughter, and his grandson, little Humphrey. On the first outbreak of the pestilence they took counsel together and resolved that the child should be first sent away to be out of danger, and that they would follow if the plague spread.

This was done, and a sober man, one of their porters or warehousemen, carried the child with his nurse all the way from London to Bradford Orcas. Alas! Before the boy reached his great-uncle, the house in Thames-street was attacked by the plague, and everyone therein perished. Thus was poor little Humphrey deprived of his parents. I know not who were his guardians or trustees, or what steps, if any, were taken to inquire into the Alderman's estate; but when, next year, the Great Fire of London destroyed the house in Thames-street, with so many others, all the estate, whatever it had been, vanished, and could no more be traced. There must have been large moneys owing. It is certain that he had ventures in ships. It has been supposed that he owned many houses in the City, but they were destroyed and their very sites forgotten, and no deeds or papers, or any proof of ownership, were left. Moreover, there was nobody charged with inquiring into this orphan's affairs. Therefore, in the general confusion, nothing at all was saved out of what had been a goodly property, and the child Humphrey was left without a guinea in the world. Thus unstable is Fortune.

I know not whether Humphrey received a fall in his infancy, or whether he was born with his deformity, but the poor lad grew up with a crooked figure, one shoulder being higher than the other, and his legs short, so that he looked as if his arms were too long for him. We, who saw him thus every day, paid no heed, nor did he suffer from any of those cruel gibes and taunts which are often passed upon lads thus afflicted. As he was by nature or misfortune debarred from the rough sports which pleased his cousins, the boy gave himself up to reading and study, and to music. His manner of speech was soft and gentle; his voice was always sweet, and afterwards became strong as well, so that I have never heard a better singer. His face – ah! my brother Humphrey, what a lovely face was thine! All goodness, surely, was stamped upon that face. Never, never, did an unworthy thought defile that candid soul, or a bad action cast a cloud upon that brow!

As for Robin, Sir Christopher's grandson, I think he was always what he is still, namely, one of a joyous heart and a cheerful countenance. As a boy, he laughed continually, would sing more willingly than read, would play rather than work, loved to course and shoot and ride better than to learn Latin grammar, and would readily off coat and fight with any who invited him. Yet not a fool or a clown, but always a gentleman in manners, and one who read such things as behove a country gentleman, and scrupulous as to the point of honour. Such as he is still such he was always. And of a comely presence, with a rosy cheek and bright eyes, and the strength of a young David, as well as his ruddy and goodly countenance. The name of David, I am told, means 'darling.' Therefore ought my Robin to have been named David. There were two other boys – Barnaby, my brother, who was six years older than myself, and, therefore, always to me a great boy; and Benjamin, the son of the Rev. Mr. Boscorel – the Rector. Barnaby grew up so broad and strong that at twelve he would have passed easily for seventeen; his square shoulders, deep chest, and big limbs made him like a bull for strength. Yet he was shorter than most, and looked shorter than he was by reason of his great breadth. He was always exercising his strength; he would toss the hay with the haymakers, and carry the corn for the reapers, and thresh with the flail, and guide the plough. He loved to climb great trees, and fell to them with an axe. Everybody in the village admired his wonderful strength. Unfortunately, he loved not books, and could never learn anything, so that when, by dint of great application and many repetitions, he had learned a little piece of a Latin verb, he straightway forgot it in the night, and so, next day, there was another flogging. But that he heeded little. He was five years older than Robin, and taught him all his woodcraft – where to find pheasants' eggs, how to catch squirrels, how to trap

weasels and stoats, how to hunt the otter, how to make a goldfinch whistle and a raven talk – never was there such a master of that wisdom which doth not advance a man in the world.

Now, before Barnaby's birth, his mother, after the manner of Hannah, gave him solemnly unto the Lord all the days of his life, and, after his birth, her husband, after the manner of Elkanah, said: 'Do what seemeth thee good; only the Lord establish his word.' He was, therefore, to become a minister, like his father before him. Alas! poor Barnaby could not even learn the Latin verbs, and his heart, it was found, as he grew older, was wholly set upon the things of this world. Wherefore, my mother prayed for him daily while she sat at her work, that his heart might be turned, and that he might get understanding.

As for the fourth of the boys, Benjamin Boscorel, he was about two years younger than Barnaby, a boy who, for want of a mother, and because his father was careless of him, grew up rough and coarse in manners and in speech, and boastful of his powers. To hear Ben talk you would think that all the boys of his school (the grammar school of Sherborne) were heroes; that the Latin taught was of a quality superior to that which Robin and Humphrey learnt of my father; and that when he himself went out into the world, the superiority of his parts would be immediately perceived and acknowledged.

Those who watch boys at play together – girls more early learn to govern themselves and to conceal their thoughts, if not their tempers – may, after a manner, predict the future character of every one. There is the man who wants all for himself, and still wants more, and will take all and yield nothing, save on compulsion, and cares not a straw about his neighbour – such was Benjamin, as a boy. There is the man who gives all generously – such was Robin. There is, again, the man whose mind is raised above the petty cares of the multitude, and dwells apart, occupied with great thoughts – such was Humphrey. Lastly, there is the man who can act but cannot think; who is born to be led; who is full of courage and of strength, and leaves all to his commander, captain, or master – such was Barnaby.

As I think of these lads it seems as if the kind of man into which each would grow must have been stamped upon their foreheads. Perhaps to the elders this prognostic was easy to read.

They suffered me to play with them or to watch them at play. When the boys went off to the woods I went with them. I watched them set their traps – I ran when they ran. And then, as now, I loved Robin and Humphrey. But I could not endure – no; not even the touch of him – Benjamin, with the loud laugh and the braggart voice, who laughed at me because I was a girl and could not fight. The time came when he did not laugh at me because I was a girl. And oh! to think – only to think – of the time that came after that!

CHAPTER IV. SIR CHRISTOPHER

At the mere remembrance of Sir Christopher, I am fain to lay down my pen and to weep, as for one whose goodness was unsurpassed, and whose end was undeserved. Good works, I know, are rags, and men cannot deserve the mercy of God by any merits of their own; but a good man – a man whose heart is full of justice, mercy, virtue, and truth – is so rare a creature, that when there is found such a one, his salvation seems assured. Is it not wonderful that there are among us so many good Christians, but so few good men? I am, indeed, in private duty bound to acknowledge Sir Christopher's goodness to me and to mine. He was, as I have said, the mainstay of our household. Had we depended wholly on my mother's work, we should sometimes have fared miserably indeed. Nay, he did more. Though a Justice of the Peace, he invited my father every Sunday evening to the Manor House for spiritual conversation, not only for his own profit, but knowing that to expound was to my father the breath of his nostrils, so that if he could not expound he must die. In person, Sir Christopher was tall; after the fashion (which I love) of the days when he was a young man he wore his own hair, which, being now white and long, became his venerable face much better than any wig – white, black, or brown. He was generally dressed, as became his station of simple country gentleman, in a plush coat with silver buttons, and for the most part he wore boots, being of an active habit and always walking about his fields or in his gardens among his flowers and his fruit-trees. He was so good a sportsman that with his rod, his gun, and his hawk he provided his table with everything except beef, mutton, and pork. In religion he inclined to Independency, being above all things an upholder of private judgment; in politics, he denied the Divine right, and openly said that a Challis might be a King as well as a Stuart; he abhorred the Pope and all his works; and though he was now for a Monarchy, he would have the King's own power limited by the Parliament. In his manners he was grave and dignified; not austere, but one who loved a cheerful companion. He rode once a week, on market day, to Sherborne, where he dined with his brother Justices, hearing and discussing the news, though news comes but slowly from London to these parts – it was fourteen days after the landing of the King in the year 1660 that the bells of Sherborne Minster rang for that event. Sometimes a copy of the *London Gazette* came down by the Exeter coach, or some of the company had lately passed a night where the coach stopped, and conversed with travellers from London and heard the news. For the rest of the week, his Honour was at home. For the most part he sat in the hall. In the middle stands the great oak table where all the household sit at meals together. There was little difference between the dishes served above and those below the salt, save that those above had each a glass of strong ale or of wine after dinner and supper. One side of the hall was hung with arras worked with representations of herbs, beasts and birds. On the other side was the great chimney, where in the winter a noble fire was kept up all day long. On either side of it hung fox skins, otter skins, pole-cat skins, with fishing-rods, stags' heads, horns and other trophies of the chase. At the end was a screen covered with old coats of mail, helmets, bucklers, lances, pikes, pistols, guns with match-locks, and a trophy of swords arranged in form of a star. Below the cornice hung a row of leathern jerkins, black and dusty, which had formerly been worn in place of armour by the common sort. In the oriel window was a sloping desk, having on one side the Bible and on the other Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs.' Below was a shelf with other books, such as Vincent Wing's Almanack, King Charles's 'Golden Rules,' 'Glanville on Apparitions,' the 'Complete Justice,' and the 'Book of Farriery.' There was also in the hall a great side-board, covered with Turkey work, pewter, brass, and fine linen. In the cupboard below was his Honour's plate, reported to be worth a great deal of money.

Sir Christopher sat in a high chair, curiously carved, with arms and a triangular seat. It had belonged to the family for many generations. Within reach of the chair was the tobacco-jar, his pipe,

and his favourite book – namely, 'The Gentleman's Academie: or the Book of St. Albans, being a Work on Hunting, Hawking, and Armorie,' by Dame Juliana Berners, who wrote it two hundred and fifty years ago. Sir Christopher loved especially to read aloud that chapter in which it is proved that the distinction between gentleman and churl began soon after the Creation, when Cain proved himself a churl, and Seth was created Gentleman and Esquire or Armiger by Adam, his father. This distinction was renewed after the Flood by Noah himself, a gentleman by lineal descent from Seth. In the case of his sons, Ham was the churl, and the other two were the gentlemen. I have sometimes thought that, according to this author, all of us who are descended from Shem or Japhet should be gentlemen, in which case there would be no churl in Great Britain at all. But certainly there are many; so that, to my poor thinking, Dame Juliana Berners must be wrong.

There is, in addition to the great hall, the best parlour. But as this was never wanted, the door of it was never opened except at cleaning time. Then, to be sure, one saw a room furnished very grand, with chairs in Turkey work, and hung round with family portraits. The men were clad in armour, as if they had all been soldiers or commanders; the women were mostly dressed as shepherdesses, with crooks in their hands and flowing robes. In the garden was a long bowling green, where in summer Sir Christopher took great pleasure in that ancient game: below the garden was a broad fishpond, made by damming the stream: above and below the pond there were trout, and in the pond were carp and jack. A part of the garden was laid out for flowers, a part for the still-room, and a part for fruit. I have never seen anywhere a better ordered garden for the still-room. Everything grew therein that the housewife wants: sweet cicely, rosemary, burnet, sweet basil, chives, dill, clary, angelica, lipwort, tarragon, thyme and mint; there were, as Lord Bacon, in his 'Essay on Gardens,' would have, 'whole alleys of them to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.' There were thick hedges to keep off the east wind in spring, so that one would enjoy the sun when that cold wind was blowing. But in Somerset that wind hath not the bitterness that it possesses along the eastern shores of the land.

Every morning Sir Christopher sat in his Justice's chair under the helmets and the coats of armour. Sometimes gipsies would be brought before him, charged with stealing poultry or poisoning pigs; or a rogue and vagabond would stray into the parish; these gentry were very speedily whipped out of it. As for our own people, there is nowhere a more quiet and orderly village; quarrels there are with the clothiers' men, who will still try to beat down the value of the women's work, and bickerings sometimes between the women themselves. Sir Christopher was judge for all. Truly he was a patriarch like unto Abraham, and a father to his people. Never was sick man suffered to want for medicines and succour; never was aged man suffered to lack food and fire; did any youth show leanings towards sloth, profligacy, or drunkenness, he was straightway admonished, and that right soundly, so that his back and shoulders would remind him for many days of his sin. By evildoers Sir Christopher was feared as much as he was beloved by all good men and true. This also is proper to one in high station and authority.

In the evening he amused himself in playing backgammon with the boys, or chess with his son-in-law, Mr. Boscorel: but the latter with less pleasure, because he was generally defeated in the game. He greatly delighted in the conversation and society of that learned and ingenious gentleman, though on matters of religion and of politics his son-in-law belonged to the opposite way of thinking.

I do not know why Mr. Boscorel took upon himself holy orders. God forbid that I should speak ill of any in authority, and especially of one who was kind and charitable to all, and refused to become a persecutor of those who desired freedom of conscience and of speech. But if the chief duty of a minister of the Gospel is to preach, then was Mr. Boscorel little better than a dog who cannot bark. He did not preach; that is to say, he could not, like my father, mount the pulpit, Bible in hand, and teach, admonish, argue, and convince without a written word. He read every Sunday morning a brief discourse, which might, perhaps, have instructed Oxford scholars, but would not be understood by the common people. As for arguments on religion, spiritual conversation, or personal experience of grace, he would never suffer such talk in his presence, because it argued private judgment and caused,

he said, the growth of spiritual pride. And of those hot Gospellers whose zeal brings them to prison and the pillory, he spoke with contempt. His conversation, I must acknowledge, was full of delight and instruction, if the things which one learned of him were not vanities. He had travelled in Italy and in France, and he loved to talk of poetry, architecture, statuary, medals and coins, antiquities and so forth – things harmless and, perhaps, laudable in themselves, but for a preacher of the Gospel who ought to think of nothing but his sacred calling they are surely superfluities. Or he would talk of the manners and customs of strange countries, and especially of the Pope. This person, whom I have been taught to look upon as from the very nature of his pretensions the most wicked of living men, Mr. Boscorel regarded with as much toleration as he bestowed upon an Independent. Then he would tell us of London and the manners of the great; of the King, whom he had seen, and the Court, seeming to wink at things which one ought to hold in abhorrence. He even told us of the playhouse, which, according to my father, is the most subtle engine ever invented by the Devil for the destruction of souls. Yet Mr. Boscorel sighed to think that he could no longer visit that place of amusement. He loved also music, and played movingly upon the violoncello; and he could make pictures with pen, pencil, or brush. I have some of his paintings still, especially a picture which he drew of Humphrey playing the fiddle, his great eyes looking upwards as if the music was drawing his soul to Heaven. I know not why he painted a halo about his face. Mr. Boscorel also loved poetry, and quoted Shakspeare and Ben Jonson more readily than the Word of God.

In person he was of a goodly countenance, having clear-cut features: a straight nose, rather long; soft eyes, and a gentle voice. He was dainty in his apparel, loving fine clean linen and laced neckerchiefs, but was not a gross feeder; he drank but little wine, but would discourse upon fine wines, such as the Tokay of Hungary, Commandery wine from Cyprus, and the like, and he seemed better pleased to watch the colour of the wine in the glass, and to breathe its perfume, than to drink it. Above all things he hated coarse speech and rude manners. He spoke of men as if he stood on an eminence watching them, and always with pity, as if he belonged to a nobler creation. How could such a man have such a son?

CHAPTER V. THE RUNAWAY

Everybody hath heard, and old people still remember, how one Act after the other was passed for the suppression of the Nonconformists, whom the Church of England tried to extirpate, but could not. Had these laws been truly carried into effect, there would have been great suffering among the Dissenters; but, in order to enforce them, every man's hand would have been turned against his neighbour, and this – thank God! – is not possible in Somerset. For example, the Act of Uniformity provided not only for the ejection of the Nonconforming ministers (which was duly carried out), but also enacted that none of them should take scholars without the license of the Bishop. Yet many of the ejected ministers maintained themselves in this way openly, without the Bishop's license. They were not molested, though they might be threatened by some hot Episcopalian; nor were the Bishops anxious to set the country afire by attempting to enforce this law. One must not take from an honest neighbour, whatever an unjust law may command, his only way of living.

Again, the Act passed two years later punished all persons with fine and imprisonment who attended conventicles. Yet the conventicles continued to be held over the whole country, because it was impossible for the Justices to fine and imprison men with whom they sat at dinner every market-day, with whom they took their punch and tobacco, and whom they knew to be honest and God-fearing folk. Again, how could they fine and imprison their own flesh and blood? Why, in every family there were some who loved the meeting-house better than the steeple-house. Laws have little power when they are against the conscience of the people.

Thirdly, there was an Act prohibiting ministers from residing within five miles of the village or town where they had preached. This was a most cruel and barbarous Act, because it sent the poor ministers away from the help of their friends. Yet how was it regarded? My father, for his part, continued to live at Bradford Orcas without let or hindrance, and so, no doubt, did many more.

Again, another Act was passed giving authority to Justices of the Peace to break open doors and to take in custody persons found assembling for worship. I have heard of disturbances at Taunton, where the Magistrates carried things with a high hand; but I think the people who met to worship after their own fashion were little disturbed. Among the Churchmen were some, no doubt, who remembered the snubs and rubs they had themselves experienced, and the memory may have made them revengeful. All the persecution, it is certain, was not on the side of the Church. There was, for instance, the case of Dr. Walter Raleigh, Dean of Wells, who was clapped into a noisome prison where the plague had broken out. He did not die of that disease, but was done to death in the jail, barbarously, by one David Barrett, shoemaker, who was never punished for the murder, but was afterwards made Constable of the City. There was also the case of the Rev. Dr. Piers, whom I have myself seen, for he lived to a good old age. He was a Prebendary of Wells, and being driven forth, was compelled to turn farmer, and to work with his own hands – digging, hoeing, ploughing, reaping, and threshing – when he should have been in his study. Every week this reverend and learned Doctor of Divinity was to be seen at Ilminster Market, standing beside the pillars with his cart, among the farmers and their wives, selling his apples, cheese, and cabbages.

I say that no doubt many remembered these things. Yet the affection of the people went forth to the Nonconformists and the ejected ministers, as was afterwards but too well proved. I have been speaking of things which happened before my recollection. It was in the year 1665, four years after the Ejection, that I was born. My father would have named me Grace Abounding, but my mother called me Alice, after her own name. I was thus six years younger than my brother Barnaby, and two years younger than Robin and Humphrey.

The first thing that I can recollect is a kind of picture, preserved, so to speak, in my head. At the open door is a woman spinning at the wheel. She is a woman with a pale, grave face; she works diligently, and for the most part in silence; if she speaks, it is to encourage or to admonish a little girl who plays in the garden outside. Her lips move as she works, because she communes with her thoughts all day long. From time to time she turns her head and looks with anxiety into the other room, where sits her husband at his table.

Before him stand three boys. They are Barnaby, Robin, and Humphrey. They are learning Latin. The room is piled with books on shelves and books on the floor. In the corner is a pallet, which is the master's bed by night. I hear the voices of the boys who repeat their lessons, and the admonishing of their master. I can see through the open door the boys themselves. One, a stout and broad lad, is my brother Barnaby: he hangs his head and forgets his lesson, and causes his father to punish him every day. He receives admonition with patience; yet profiteth nothing. The next is Humphrey; he is already a lad of grave and modest carriage, who loves his book and learns diligently. The third is Robin, whose parts are good, were his application equal to his intelligence. He is impatient, and longs for the time when he may close his book and go to play again.

Poor Barnaby! at the sight of a Latin Grammar he would feel sick. He would willingly have taken a flogging every day – to be sure, that generally happened to him – in order to escape his lessons and be off to the fields and woods.

It was the sight of his rueful face – yet never sad except at lessons – which made my mother sigh when she saw him dull but patient over his book. Had he stayed at home I know not what could have been done with him, seeing that to become a preacher of the Gospel was beyond even the power of prayer (the Lord having clearly expressed His will in this matter). He would have had to clap on a leathern apron, and become a wheelwright or blacksmith; nothing better than an honest trade was possible for him.

But (whether happily or not) a strange whim seized the boy when he was fourteen years of age. He would go to sea. How he came to think of the sea I know not; he had never seen the sea; there were no sailors in the village; there was no talk of the sea. Perhaps Humphrey, who read many books, told him of the great doings of our sailors on the Spanish Main and elsewhere. Perhaps some of the clothiers' men, who are a roving and unsettled crew, had been sailors – some, I know, had been soldiers under Oliver. However, this matters not, Barnaby must needs become a sailor.

When first he broke this resolution, which he did secretly, to my mother, she began to weep and lament, because everybody knows how dreadful is the life of a sailor, and how full of dangers. She begged him to put the thought out of his head, and to apply himself again to his books.

'Mother,' he said, 'it is no use. What comes in at one ear goes out at the other. Nothing sticks: I shall never be a scholar.'

'Then, my son, learn an honest trade.'

'What? Become the village cobbler – or the blacksmith? Go hat in hand to his Honour, when my father should have been a Bishop, and my mother is a gentlewoman? That will I not. I will go and be a sailor. All sailors are gentlemen. I shall rise and become first mate, and then second captain, and lastly, captain in command. Who knows? I may go and fight the Spaniard, if I am lucky.'

'Oh, my son, canst thou not stay at home and go to church, and consider the condition of thine immortal soul? Of sailors it is well known that their language is made up of profane oaths, and that they are all profligates and drunkards. Consider, my son' – my mother laid her hand upon his arm – 'what were Heaven to me, if I have not my dear children with me as well as my husband? How could I praise the Lord if I were thinking of my son who was not with me, but – ah! Heaven forbid the thought!'

Barnaby made no reply. What could he say in answer to my mother's tears? Yet I think she must have understood very well that her son, having got this resolution into his head, would never give it up.

'Oh!' she said, 'when thou wast a little baby in my arms, Barnaby – who art now so big and strong' – she looked at him with the wonder and admiration that women feel when their sons grow big and stout – 'I prayed that God would accept thee as an offering for His service. Thou art vowed unto the Lord, my son, as much as Samuel. Do you think he complained of his lessons? What would have happened, think you, to Samuel if he had taken off his ephod and declared that he would serve no longer at the altar, but must take spear and shield, and go to fight the Amalekite?'

Said Barnaby, in reply, speaking from an unregenerate heart, 'Mother, had I been Samuel, to wear an ephod and to learn the Latin syntax every day, I should have done that. Ay! I would have done it, even if I knew that at the first skirmish an arrow would pierce my heart.'

It was after a great flogging, on account of the passive voice or some wrestling with the syntax, that Barnaby plucked up courage to tell his father what he wished to do.

'With my consent,' said my father, sternly, 'thou shalt never become a sailor. As soon would I send thee to become a buffoon in a playhouse. Never dare to speak of it again.'

Barnaby hung his head and said nothing.

Then my mother, who knew his obstinate disposition, took him to Sir Christopher, who chid him roundly, telling him that there was work for him on land, else he would have been born beside the coast, where the lads take naturally to the sea: that being, as he was, only an ignorant boy, and landborn, he could not know the dangers which he would encounter: that some ships are cast away on desert islands, where the survivors remain in misery until they die, and some on lands where savages devour them, and some are dragged down by calamities and other dreadful monsters, and some are burned at sea, their crews having to choose miserably between burning and drowning, and some are taken by the enemy, and the sailors clapped into dungeons and tortured by the Accursed Inquisition.

Many more things did Sir Christopher set forth, showing the miserable life and the wretched end of the sailor. But Barnaby never changed countenance, and though my mother bade him note this and mark that, and take heed unto his Honour's words, his face showed no melting. 'Twas always an obstinate lad; nay it was his obstinacy alone which kept him from his learning. Otherwise he might perhaps have become as great a scholar as Humphrey.

'Sir,' he said, when Sir Christopher had no other word to say, 'with submission, I would still choose to be a sailor, if I could.'

In the end he obtained his wish. That is to say, since no one would help him towards it, he helped himself. And this, I think, is the only way in which men do ever get what they want.

It happened one evening that there passed through the village a man with a pipe and tabor, on which he played so movingly that all the people turned out to listen. For my own part I was with my mother, yet I ran to the garden-gate and leaned my head over, drawn by the sound of the music. Presently the boys and girls began to take hands together and to dance. I dare not say that to dance is sinful, because David danced. But it was so regarded by my father, so that when he passed by them, on his way home from taking the air, and actually saw his own son Barnaby in the middle of the dancers, footing it merrily with them all, joyfully leading one girl up and the other down at *John come and kiss me now*, he was seized with a mighty wrath, and, catching his son sharply by the ear, led him out of the throng and so home. For that evening Barnaby went supperless to bed, with the promise of such a flogging in the morning as would cause him to remember for the rest of his life the sinfulness of dancing. Never had I seen my father so angry. I trembled before his wrathful eyes. But Barnaby faced him with steady looks, making answer none, yet not showing the least repentance or fear. I thought it was because a flogging had no terrors for him. The event proved that I was wrong; that was not the reason: he had resolved to run away, and when we awoke in the morning he was gone. He had crept down-stairs in the night; he had taken half a loaf of bread and a great cantle of soft cheese, and had gone away. He had not gone for fear of the rod: he had run away with design to go to sea. Perhaps he had gone to Bristol; perhaps to Plymouth; perhaps to Lyme. My mother wept,

and my father sighed; and for ten years more we neither saw nor heard anything of Barnaby, not even whether he was dead or living.

CHAPTER VI.

BENJAMIN, LORD CHANCELLOR

Summer follows winter and winter summer, in due course, turning children into young men and maidens, changing school into work, and play into love, and love into marriage, and so onwards to the churchyard, where we all presently lie, hopeful of Heaven's mercy, whether Mr. Boscorel did stand beside our open grave in his white surplice, or my father in his black gown.

Barnaby was gone; the other three grew tall, and would still be talking of the lives before them. Girls do never look forward to the future with the eagerness and joy of boys. To the dullest boy it seems a fine thing to be master of his own actions, even if that liberty lead to whipping-post, pillory, or gallows. To boys of ambition and imagination the gifts of Fortune show like the splendid visions of a prophet. They think that earthly fame will satisfy the soul. Perhaps women see these glories and their true worth with clearer eye as not desiring them. And truly it seems a small thing, after a life spent in arduous toil, and with one foot already in the grave, to obtain fortune, rank, or title.

Benjamin and Humphrey were lads of ambition. To both, but in fields which lay far apart, the best life seemed to be that which is spent among men on the ant-hill where all are driving or being driven, loading each other with burdens intolerable, or with wealth or with honours, and then dying and being forgotten in a moment – which we call London. In the kindly country one stands apart and sees the vanity of human wishes. Teat the ambition of Humphrey, it must be confessed, was noble, because it was not for his own advancement, but for the good of mankind.

'I shall stay at home,' said Robin. 'You two may go if you please. Perhaps you will like the noise of London, where a man cannot hear himself speak, they say, for the roaring of the crowd, the ringing of the bells, and the rumbling of the carts. As for me, what is good enough for my grandfather will be surely good enough for me.'

It should, indeed, be good enough for anybody to spend his days after the manner of Sir Christopher, administering justice for the villagers, with the weekly ordinary at Sherborne for company, the green fields and his garden for pleasure and for exercise, and the welfare of his soul for prayer. Robin, besides, loved to go forth with hawk and gun; to snare the wild creatures; to hunt the otter and the fox; to bait the badger, and trap the stoat and weasel; to course the hares. But cities and crowds, even if they should be shouting in his honour, did never draw him, even after he had seen them. Nor was he ever tempted to believe any manner of life more full of delight and more consistent with the end of man's creation than the rural life, the air of the fields, the following of the plough for the men, and the spinning-wheel for the women.

'I shall be a lawyer,' said Benjamin, puffing out his cheeks and squaring his shoulders. 'Very well, then, I say I shall be a great lawyer. What? None of your pettifogging tribe for me: I shall step to the front, and stay there. What? Someone must have the prizes and the promotion. There are always places falling vacant and honours to be given away: they shall be given to me. Why not to me as well as another?'

'Well,' said Robin, 'you are strong enough to take them, willy-nilly.'

'I am strong enough,' he replied, with conviction. 'First, I shall be called to the Outer Bar, where I shall plead in stuff – I saw them at Exeter last 'Sizes. Next, I shall be summoned to become King's Counsel, when I shall flaunt it in silk. Who but I?' Then he seemed to grow actually three inches taller, so great is the power of imagination. He was already six feet in height, his shoulders broad, and his face red and fiery, so that now he looked very big and tall. 'Then my Inn will make me a Bencher, and I shall sit at the high table in term-time. And the attorneys shall run after me and fight with each other for my services in Court, so that in every great case I shall be heard thundering before the jury, and making the witnesses perjure themselves with terror – for which they will be afterwards flogged.

I shall belong to the King's party – none of your canting Whigs for me. When the high treason cases come on, I shall be the counsel for the Crown. That is the high road to advancement.'

'This is very well, so far,' said Robin, laughing. 'Ben is too modest, however. He does not get on fast enough.'

'All in good time,' Ben replied. 'I mean to get on as fast as anybody. But I shall follow the beaten road. First, favour with attorneys and those who have suits in the Courts; then the ear of the Judge. I know not how one gets the ear of the Judge' – he looked despondent for a moment, then he held up his head again – 'but I shall find out. Others have found out – why not I? What? I am no fool, am I?'

'Certainly not, Ben. But as yet we stick at King's Counsel.'

'After the ear of the Judge, the favour of the Crown. What do I care who is King? It is the King who hath preferment and place and honours in his gift. Where these are given away, there shall I be found. Next am I made Serjeant-at-Law. Then I am saluted as 'Brother' by the Judges on the Bench, while all the others burst with envy. After that I shall myself be called to the Bench. I am already "my Lord" – why do you laugh, Robin? – and a Knight: Sir Benjamin Boscorel – Sir Benjamin.' Here he puffed out his cheeks again, and swung his shoulders like a very great person indeed.

'Proceed, Sir Benjamin,' said Humphrey, gravely, while Robin laughed.

'When I am a Judge, I promise you I will rate the barristers and storm at the witnesses and admonish the Jury until there shall be no other question in their minds but to find out first what is my will in the case, and then to govern themselves accordingly. I will be myself Judge and jury and all. Oh! I have seen the Judge at last Exeter 'Sizes. He made all to shake in their shoes. I shall not stop there. Chief Baron I shall be, perhaps – but on that point I have not yet made up my mind – and then Lord Chancellor.' He paused to take breath, and looked around him, grandeur and authority upon his brow. 'Lord Chancellor,' he repeated, 'on the Woolsack!'

'You will then,' said Robin, 'be raised to the peerage – first Lord Boscorel; or perhaps, if your Lordship will so honour this poor village, Lord Bradford Orcas' —

'Earl of Sherborne I have chosen for title,' said Benjamin. 'And while I am climbing up the ladder, where wilt thou be, Humphrey? Grovelling in the mud with the poor devils who cannot rise?'

'Nay, I shall have a small ladder of my own, Ben. I find great comfort in the thought that when your Lordship is roaring and bawling with the gout – your noble toe being like a ball of fire, and your illustrious foot swathed in flannel – I shall be called upon to drive away the pain, and you will honour me with the title not only of humble cousin, but also of rescuer and preserver. Will it not be honour enough to cure the Right Honourable the Earl of Sherborne (first of the name), the Lord Chancellor, of his gout, and to restore him to the duties of his great office, so that once more he shall be the dread of evildoers and of all who have to appear before him? As yet, my Lord, your extremities, I perceive, are free from that disease – the result, too often, of that excess in wine which besets the great.'

Here Robin laughed again, and so did Benjamin. Nobody could use finer language than Humphrey, if he pleased.

'A fine ambition!' said Ben. 'To wear a black velvet coat and a great wig; to carry a gold-headed cane; all day long to listen while the patient tells of his gripes and pains; to mix boluses, and to compound nauseous draughts!'

'Well,' Humphrey laughed, 'if you are Lord Chancellor, Ben, you will, I hope, give us good laws, and so make the nation happy and prosperous. While you are doing this, I will be keeping you in health for the good of the country. I say that this is a fine ambition.'

'And Robin, here, will sit in the great chair, and have the rogues haled before him, and order the Head-borough to bring out his cat-o'-nine-tails. In the winter evenings, he will play backgammon, and in the summer, bowls. Then a posset, and to bed. And never any change from year to year. A fine life, truly!'

'Truly, I think it is a very fine life,' said Robin; 'while you make the laws, I will take care that they are obeyed. What better service is there than to cause good laws to be obeyed? Make good laws, my Lord Chancellor, and be thankful that you will have faithful, law-abiding men to carry them out.'

Thus they talked. Presently the time came when the lads must leave the village and go forth to prepare for such course as should be allotted to them, whether it led to greatness or to obscurity.

Benjamin went first, being sixteen years of age and a great fellow, as I have said, broad-shouldered and lusty, with a red face, a strong voice, and a loud laugh. In no respect did he resemble his father, who was delicate in manner and in speech. He was to be entered at Gray's Inn, where, under some counsel learned in the law, he was to read until such time as he should be called.

He came to bid me farewell, which at first, until he frightened me with the things he said, I took kindly of him.

'Child,' he said, 'I am going to London, and, I suppose, I shall not come back to this village for a long time. Nay, were it not for thee, I should not wish to come back at all.'

'Why for me, Ben?'

'Because' – here his red face became redder, and he stammered a little, but not much, for he was ever a lad of confidence – 'because, child, thou art not yet turned twelve, which is young to be hearing of such a thing. Yet a body may as well make things safe. And as for Humphrey or Robin interfering, I will break their heads with my cudgel if they do. Remember that, then.' He shook his finger at me, threatening.

'In what business should they interfere?' I asked.

'Kiss me, Alice' – here he tried to lay his arm round my neck, but I ran away. 'Oh! if thou art skittish, I care not: all in good time. Very well, then; let us make things safe. Alice, when I come back thou wilt be seventeen or eighteen, which is an age when girls should marry' —

'I have nothing to do with marrying, Ben.'

'Not yet. If I mistake not, child, thou wilt then be as beautiful as a rose in June.'

'I want no foolish talk, Ben. Let me go.'

'Then I shall be twenty-one years of age, practising in the courts. I shall go the Western Circuit, in order to see thee often – partly to keep an eye upon thee and partly to warn off other men. Because, child, it is my purpose to marry thee myself. Think upon that, now.'

At this I laughed.

'Laugh if you please, my dear; I shall marry thee as soon as the way is open to the Bench and the Woolsack. What? I can see a long way ahead. I will tell thee what I see. There is a monstrous great crowd of people in the street staring at a glass coach. "Who is the lovely lady?" they ask. "The lovely lady" – that is you, Alice; none other – "with the diamonds at her neck and the gold chain, in the glass coach?" says one who knows her liveries: "'tis the lady of the great Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Sherborne." And the women fall green with envy of her happiness and great good fortune and her splendour. Courage, child: I go to prepare the way. Oh! thou knowest not the grand things that I shall pour into thy lap when I am a judge.'

This was the first time that any man spoke to me of love. But Benjamin was always masterful, and had no respect for such a nice point as the wooing of a maiden – which, methinks, should be gentle and respectful, not as if a woman was like a savage to be tempted by a string of beads, or so foolish as to desire with her husband such gauds as diamonds, or gold chains, or a glass coach. Nor doth a woman like to be treated as if she was to be carried off by force like the Sabine women of old.

The Rector rode to London with his son. It is a long journey, over rough ways; but it pleased him once more to see that great city, where there are pictures and statues and books to gladden the hearts of such as love these things. And on the way home he sojourned for a few days at his old college of All Souls, where were still left one or two of his old friends. Then he rode back to his village. 'There are but two places in this country,' he said, 'or perhaps three, at most, where a gentleman and a scholar, or one who loveth the fine arts, would choose to live. These are London and Oxford, and

perhaps the Sister University upon the Granta. Well, I have once more been privileged to witness the humours of the Court and the town: I have once more been permitted to sniff the air of a great library. Let us be thankful.' He showed his thankfulness with a sigh which was almost a groan.

It was three years before we saw Benjamin again. Then he returned, but not for long. Like his father, he loved London better than the country, but for other reasons. Certainly, he cared nothing for those arts which so much delighted the Rector, and the air of a coffee-house pleased him more than the perfume of books in a library. When he left us he was a rustic; when he came back he was already what they call a fopling: that is to say, when he went to pay his respects to Sir Christopher, his grandfather, he wore a very fine cravat of Flanders lace, with silken hose, and lace and ribbons at his wrist. He was also scented with bergamot, and wore a peruke, which, while he talked, he combed and curled, to keep the curls of this monstrous head-dress in place. Gentlemen must, I suppose, wear this invention, and one of the learned professions must show the extent of the learning by the splendours of his full-bottomed wig. Yet I think that a young man looks most comely while he wears his own hair. He had cocked his hat, on which were bows of riband, and he wore a sword. He spoke also in a mincing London manner, having now forsworn the honest broad speech of Somerset; and (but not in the presence of his elders) he used strange oaths and ejaculations.

'Behold him!' said his father, by no means displeased at his son's foppery, because he ever loved the city fashions, and thought that a young man did well to dress and to comport himself after the way of the world. 'Behold him! Thus he sits in the coffee-house; thus he shows himself in the pit. Youth is the time for finery and for folly. Alas! would that we could bring back that time! What saith John Dryden – glorious John – of Sir Fopling? —

"'His various modes from various fathers follow:
One taught the toss, and one the new French wallow;
His sword-knot this, his cravat that, designed,
And this the yard-long snake he twirls behind.
From one the sacred periwig he gained,
Which wind ne'er blew, nor touch of hat profaned."

'Well, Ben,' said Sir Christopher, 'if the mode can help thee to the Bench why not follow the mode?'

'It will not hinder, Sir,' Ben replied. 'A man who hath his fortune to make does well to be seen everywhere, and to be dressed like other men of his time.'

One must do Benjamin the justice to acknowledge that though, like the young gentlemen his friends and companions, his dress was foppish, and his talk was of the pleasures of the town, he suffered nothing to stand in the way of his advancement. He was resolved upon being a great lawyer, and, therefore, if he spent the evening in drinking, singing, and making merry, he was reading in chambers or else attending the Courts all the day, and neglected nothing that would make him master of his profession. And, though of learning he had little, his natural parts were so good, and his resolution was so strong, that I doubt not he would have achieved his ambition had it not been for the circumstances which afterwards cut short his career. His course of life, by his own boastful confession, was profligate; his friends were drinkers and revellers; his favourite haunt was the tavern, where they all drank punch and sang ungodly songs, and smoked tobacco; and of religion he seemed to have no care whatever.

I was afraid that he would return to the nauseous subject which he had opened three years before. Therefore I continued with my mother, and would give him no chance to speak with me. But he found me, and caught me returning home one evening.

'Alice,' he said, 'I feared that I might have to go away without a word alone with thee.'

'I want no words alone, Benjamin. Let me pass!' For he stood before me in the way.

'Not so fast, pretty!' – he caught me by the wrist, and, being a young man so strong and determined, he held me as by a vice. 'Not so fast, Mistress Alice. First, my dear, let me tell thee that my purpose still holds – nay' – here he swore a most dreadful, impious oath – 'I am more resolved than ever. There is not a woman, even in London, that is to be compared with thee, child. What? Compared with thee? Why, they are like the twinkling stars compared with the glorious Queen of Night. What did I say? – that at nineteen thou wouldst be a miracle of beauty? Nay, that time hath come already! I love thee, child! I love thee, I say, ten times as much as ever I loved thee before!'

He gasped, and then breathed hard; but still he held me fast.

'Idle compliments cost a man nothing, Benjamin. Say what you meant to say and let me go. If you hold me any longer I will cry out and bring your father to learn the reason.'

'Well,' he said, 'I will not keep thee. I have said what I wanted to say. My time hath not yet arrived. I am shortly to be called, and shall then begin to practise. When I come back here again, 'twill be with a ring in one hand, and in the other the prospect of the Woolsack. Think upon that while I am gone. "Your Ladyship" is finer than plain "Madam," and the Court is more delightful than a village green among the pigs and ducks. Think upon it well: thou art a lucky girl; a plain village girl to be promoted to a coronet! However, I have no fears for thee; thou wilt adorn the highest fortune. Thou wilt be worthy of the great place whither I shall lead thee. What? Is Sir George Jeffreys a better man than I? Is he of better family? Had he better interest? Is he a bolder man? Not so. Yet was Sir George a Common Serjeant at twenty-three, and Recorder at thirty; Chief Justice of Chester at thirty-two. What he hath done I can do. Moreover, Sir George hath done me the honour to admit me to his company, and will advance me. This he hath promised, both in his cups and when he is sober. Think it over, child: a ring in one hand and a title in the other.'

So Benjamin went away again. I was afraid when I thought of him and his promise, because I knew him of old; and his eyes were as full of determination as when he would fight a lad of his own age and go on fighting till the other had had enough. Yet he could not marry me against my will. His own father would protect me, to say nothing of mine.

I should have told him then – as I had told him before – that I would never marry him. Then, perhaps, he would have been shaken in his purpose. The very thought of marrying him filled me with terror unspeakable. I was afraid of him not only because he was so masterful – nay, women like a man to be strong of will – but because he had no religion in him and lived like an Atheist, if such a wretch there be; at all events, with unconcern about his soul; and because his life was profligate, his tastes were gross, and he was a drinker of much wine. Even at the Manor House I had seen him at supper drinking until his cheeks were puffed out and his voice grew thick. What kind of happiness would there be for a wife whose husband has to be carried home by his varlets, too heavy with drink to stand or to speak?

Alas! there is one thing which girls, happily, do never apprehend. They cannot understand how it is possible for a man to become so possessed with the idea of their charms (which they hold themselves as of small account, knowing how fleeting they are, and of what small value) that he will go through fire and water for that woman; yea, and break all the commandments, heedless of his immortal soul, rather than suffer another man to take her – and that, even though he knows that the poor creature loves him not, or loves another man. If maidens knew this, I think that they would go in fear and trembling lest they should be coveted by some wild beast in human shape, and prove the death of the gallant gentleman whom they would choose for their lover. Or they would make for themselves convents and hide in them, so great would be their fear. But it is idle to speak of this, because, say what one will, girls can never understand the power and the vehemence of love, when once it hath seized and doth thoroughly possess a man.

CHAPTER VII. MEDICINÆ DOCTOR

Humphrey did not, like Benjamin, brag of the things he would do when he should go forth to the world. Nevertheless, he thought much about his future, and frequently he discoursed with me about the life that he fain would lead. A young man, I think, wants someone with whom he may speak freely concerning the thoughts which fill his soul. We who belong to the sex which receives but does not create or invent, which profits by man's good work, and suffers from the evil which he too often does, have no such thoughts and ambitions.

'I cannot,' he would say, 'take upon me holy orders, as Mr. Boscorel would have me, promising, in my cousin Robin's name, this living after his death, because, though I am in truth a mere pauper and dependent, there are in me none of those prickings of the spirit which I could interpret into a Divine call for the ministry; next, because I cannot in conscience swear to obey the Thirty-nine Articles while I still hold that the Nonconformist way of worship is more consonant with the Word of God. And, again, I am of opinion that the Law of Moses, which forbade any but a well-formed man from serving at the altar, hath in it something eternal. It denotes that as no cripple may serve at the earthly altar, so in heaven, of which the altar is an emblem, all those who dwell therein shall be perfect in body as in soul. What, then, is such a one as myself, who hath some learning and no fortune, to do? Sir Christopher, my benefactor, will maintain me at Oxford until I have taken a degree. This is more than I could have expected. Therefore, I am resolved to take a degree in medicine. It is the only profession fit for a mis-shapen creature. They will not laugh at me when I alleviate their pains.'

'Could anyone laugh at you, Humphrey?'

'Pray heaven, I frighten not the ladies at the first aspect of me.' He laughed, but not with merriment; for, indeed, a cripple or a hunchback cannot laugh mirthfully over his own misfortune. 'Some men speak scornfully of the profession,' he went on. 'The great French playwright, Monsieur Molière, doth make the physicians the butt and laughing-stock of all Paris. Yet consider. It is medicine which prolongs our days and relieves our pains. Before the science was studied, the wretch who caught a fever in the marshy forest lay down and died; an ague lasted all one's life; a sore throat putrefied and killed; a rheumatism threw a man upon the bed, from which he would never rise. The physician is man's chief friend. If our Sovereigns studied the welfare of humanity as deeply as the art of war, they would maintain, at vast expense, great colleges of learned men continually engaged in discovering the secrets of nature – the causes and the remedies of disease. What better use can a man make of his life than to discover one – only one – secret which will drive away part of the agony of disease? The Jews, more merciful than the Romans, stupefied their criminals after they were crucified; they died, indeed, but their sufferings were less. So the physician, though in the end all men must die, may help them to die without pain. Nay, I have even thought that we might devise means of causing the patient by some potent drug to fall into so deep a sleep that even the surgeon's knife shall not cause him to awaken.'

He, therefore, before he entered at Oxford, read with my father many learned books of the ancients on the science and practice of medicine, and studied botany with the help of such books as he could procure.

Some men have but one side to them – that is to say, the only active part of them is engaged in but one study; the rest is given up to rest or indolence. Thus Benjamin studied law diligently, but nothing else. Humphrey, for his part, read his Galen and his Celsus, but he neglected not the cultivation of those arts and accomplishments in which Mr. Boscorel was as ready a teacher as he was a ready scholar. He thus learned the history of painting, and sculpture, and architecture, and that of coins and medals, so that at eighteen Humphrey might already have set up as a virtuoso.

Nor was this all. Still, by the help of the Rector, he learned the use of the pencil and the brush, and could both draw prettily, or paint in water colours, whether the cottages or the church, the cows in the fields, or the woods and hills. I have many pictures of his painting which he gave me from time to time. And he could play sweetly, whether on the spinnet, or the violin, or the guitar, spending many hours every week with Mr. Boscorel playing duettos together; and willingly he would sing, having a rich and full voice, very delightful to hear. When I grew a great girl, and had advanced far enough, I was permitted to play with them. There was no end to the music which Mr. Boscorel possessed. First, he had a great store of English ditties such as country people love – as, 'Sing all a green willow,' 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,' or 'Once I loved a maiden fair.' There was nothing rough or rude in these songs, though I am informed that much wickedness is taught by the ribald songs that are sung in playhouses and coffee-rooms. And when we were not playing or singing, Mr. Boscorel would read us poetry – portions from Shakspeare or Ben Jonson, or out of Milton's 'Paradise Lost'; or from Herrick, who is surely the sweetest poet that ever lived, 'yet marred,' said Mr. Boscorel, 'by his coarseness and corruption.' Now, one day, after we had been thus reading – one winter afternoon, when the sun lay upon the meadows – Humphrey walked home with me, and on the way confessed, with many blushes, that he, too, had been writing verses. And with that he lugged a paper out of his pocket.

'They are for thine own eyes only,' he said. 'Truly, my dear, thou hast the finest eyes in the world. They are for no other eyes than thine,' he repeated. 'Not for Robin, mind, lest he laugh: poetry hath in it something sacred, so that even the writer of bad verses cannot bear to have them laughed at. When thou art a year or two older thou wilt understand that they were written for thy heart as well as for thine eyes. Yet, if thou like the verses, they may be seen by Mr. Boscorel, but in private; and if he laugh at them do not tell me. Yet, again, one would like to know what he said; wherefore, tell me, though his words be like a knife in my side.'

Thus he wavered between wishing to show them to his master in art, and fearing.

In the end, when I showed them to Mr. Boscorel, he said that, for a beginner, they were very well – very well, indeed; that the rhymes were correct, and the metre true; that years and practice would give greater firmness, and that the crafty interlacing of thought and passion, which was the characteristic of Italian verse, could only be learned by much reading of the Italian poets. More he said, speaking upon the slight subject of rhyme and poetry with as much seriousness and earnestness as if he were weighing and comparing texts of Scripture.

Then he gave me back the verses with a sigh.

'Child,' he said, 'to none of us is given what most we desire. For my part, I longed in his infancy that my son should grow up even as Humphrey, as quick to learn; with as true a taste; with as correct an ear; with a hand as skilful. But – you see, I complain not, though Benjamin loves the noisy tavern better than the quiet coffee-house where the wits resort. To him such things as verses, art, and music are foolishness. I say that I complain not; but I would to Heaven that Humphrey were my own, and that his shoulders were straight, poor lad! Thy father hath made him a Puritan: he is such as John Milton in his youth – and as beautiful in face as that stout Republican. I doubt not that we shall have from the hand of Humphrey, if he live and prosper, something fine, the nature of which, whether it is to be in painting, or in music, or in poetry, I know not. Take the verses, and take care that thou lose them not; and, child – remember – the poet is allowed to say what he pleases about a woman's eyes. Be not deceived into thinking – But no – no – there is no fear. Good-night, thou sweet and innocent saint.'

I knew not then what he meant; but these are the verses, and I truly think that they are very moving and religious. For if woman be truly the most beautiful work of the Creator (which all men aver), then it behoves her all the more still to point upwards. I read them with a pleasure and surprise that filled my whole soul, and inflamed my heart with pious joy: —

Around, above, and everywhere
The earth hath many a lovely thing;

The zephyrs soft, the flowers fair,
The babbling brook, the bubbling spring.

The grey of dawn, the azure sky,
The sunset glow, the evening gloom;
The warbling thrush, the skylark high,
The blossoming hedge, the garden's bloom.

The sun in state, the moon in pride,
The twinkling stars in order laid;
The winds that ever race and ride,
The shadows flying o'er the glade.

Oh! many a lovely thing hath earth,
To charm the eye and witch the soul;
Yet one there is of passing worth —
For that one thing I give the whole.

The crowning work, the last thing made,
Creation's masterpiece to be —
Bend o'er yon stream, and, there displayed,
This wondrous thing reflected see.

Behold a face for heaven designed;
See how those eyes thy soul betray —
Love – secret love – there sits enshrined,
And upwards still doth point the way.

When Humphrey went away, he did not, like Benjamin, come blustering and declaring that he would marry me, and that he would break the skull of any other man who dared make love to me – not at all; Humphrey, with tears in his eyes, told me that he was sorry I could not go to Oxford as well; that he was going to lose the sweetest companion in the world; and that he should always love me; and then he kissed me on the forehead, and so departed. Why should he not always love me? I knew very well that he loved me, and that I loved him. Although he was so young, being only seventeen when he was entered at Exeter College, I suppose there never was a young gentleman went to the University of Oxford with so many accomplishments, and so much learning. By my father's testimony he read Greek as if it were his mother tongue, and he wrote and conversed easily in Latin: and you have heard what arts and accomplishments he added to this solid learning. He was elected to a scholarship at his college, that of Exeter, and, after he took his degree as Bachelor of Medicine, he was made a Fellow of All Souls, where Mr. Boscorel himself had also been a Fellow. This election was not only a great distinction for him, but it gave him what a learned young man especially desires – the means of living and of pursuing his studies.

While he was at Oxford he wrote letters to Sir Christopher, to Mr. Boscorel, and to my father (to whom also he sent such new books and pamphlets as he thought would interest him). To me he sent sometimes drawings and sometimes books, but never verses.

Now (to make an end of Humphrey for the present), when he had obtained his fellowship, he asked for and obtained leave of absence and permission to study medicine in those great schools which far surpass, they say, our English schools of medicine. These are that of Montpellier; the yet

more famous school of Padua, in Italy; and that of Leyden, whither many Englishmen have resorted for study, notably Mr. Evelyn, whose book called 'Sylva' was in the Rector's library.

He carried on during the whole of this time a correspondence with Mr. Boscorel on the paintings, statues, and architecture to be seen wherever his travels carried him. These letters Mr. Boscorel read aloud, with a map spread before him, discoursing on the history of the place and the chief things to be seen there, before he began to read. Surely there never was a man so much taken up with the fine arts, especially as they were practised by the ancients.

There remains the last of the boys – Robin, Sir Christopher's grandson and heir. I should like this book to be all about Robin – yet one must needs speak of the others. I declare, that from the beginning, there never was a boy more happy, more jolly; never anyone more willing to be always making someone happy. He loved the open air, the wild creatures, the trees, the birds, everything that lives beneath the sky; yet not – like my poor brother Barnaby – a hater of books. He read all the books which told about creatures, or hunting, or country life; and all voyages and travels. A fresh-coloured, wholesome lad, not so grave as Humphrey, nor so rustic as Barnaby, who always seemed to carry with him the scent of woods and fields. He was to Sir Christopher, what Benjamin was to Jacob. Even my father loved him though he was so poor a scholar.

Those who stay at home have homely wits; that is well known: therefore Robin must follow Humphrey to Oxford. He went thither the year after his cousin. I never learned that he obtained a scholarship, or that he was considered one of the younger pillars of that learned and ancient University; or, indeed, that he took a degree at all.

After he left Oxford he must go to London, there to study Justice's Law and fit himself for the duties he would have to fulfil. Also his grandfather would have him acquire some knowledge of the Court and the City, and the ways of the great and the rich. This, too, he did; though he never learned to prefer those ways to the simple customs and habits of his Somerset village.

He, too, like the other two, bade me a tender farewell.

'Poor Alice!' he said, taking both my hands in his, 'what wilt thou do when I am gone?'

Indeed, since Humphrey went away, we had been daily companions; and at the thought of being thus left alone the tears were running down my cheeks.

'Why, Sweetheart,' he said, 'to think that I should ever make thee cry – I who desire nothing but to make thee always laugh and be happy! What wilt thou do? Go often to my mother. She loves thee as if thou wert her own daughter. Go and talk to her concerning me. It pleaseth the poor soul to be still talking of her son. And forget not my grandfather; play backgammon with him; fill his pipe for him; sing to the spinnet for him; talk to him about Humphrey and me. And forget not Mr. Boscorel, my uncle. The poor man looks as melancholy since Humphrey went away as a turtle robbed of her nest. I saw him yesterday opening one of his drawers full of medals, and he sighed over them fit to break his heart. He sighed for Humphrey, not for Ben. Well, child, what more? Take Lance' – 'twas his dog – 'for a run every day; make George Sparrow keep an eye upon the stream for otters; and – there are a thousand things, but I will write them down. Have patience with the dear old man when he will be still talking about me.'

'Patience, Robin,' I said. 'Why, we all love to talk about thee.'

'Do you all love to talk about me? Dost thou, too, Alice? Oh, my dear, my dear!' Here he took me in his arms and kissed me on the lips. 'Dost thou also love to talk about me? Why, my dear, I shall think of nothing but of thee. Because – oh, my dear! – I love thee with all my heart.'

Well, I was still so foolish that I understood nothing more than that we all loved him, and he loved us all.

'Alice, I will write letters to thee. I will put them in the packet for my mother. Thus thou wilt understand that I am always thinking of thee.'

He was as good as his word. But the letters were so full of the things he was doing and seeing, that it was quite clear that his mind had plenty of room for more than one object. To be sure, I should

have been foolish, indeed, had I desired that his letters should tell me that he was always thinking about me, when he should have been attending to his business.

After a year in London, his grandfather thought that he should travel. Therefore, he went abroad and joined Humphrey at Montpellier, and with him rode northwards to Leyden, where he sojourned while his cousin attended the lectures of that famous school.

CHAPTER VIII. A ROYAL PROGRESS

When all the boys were gone the time was quiet, indeed, for those who were left behind. My mother's wheel went spinning still, but I think that some kindness on the part of Mr. Boscorel as well as Sir Christopher caused her weekly tale of yarn to be of less importance. And as for me, not only would she never suffer me to sit at the spinning-wheel, but there was so much request of me (to replace the boys) that I was nearly all the day either with Sir Christopher, or with Madam, or with Mr. Boscorel.

Up to the year 1680, or thereabouts, I paid no more attention to political matters than any young woman with no knowledge may be supposed to give. Yet, of course, I was on the side of liberty, both civil and religious. How should that be otherwise, my father being such as he was, muzzled for all these years, the work of his life prevented and destroyed?

It was in that year, however, that I became a most zealous partisan and lover of the Protestant cause in the way that I am about to relate.

Everybody knows that there is no part of Great Britain (not even Scotland) where the Protestant religion hath supporters more stout and staunch than Somerset and Devonshire. I hope I shall not be accused of disloyalty to Queen Anne, under whom we now flourish and are happy, when I say that in the West of England we had grown – I know not how – to regard the late misguided Duke of Monmouth as the champion of the Protestant faith. When, therefore, the Duke came into the West of England in the year 1680, five years before his rebellion, he was everywhere received with acclamations and by crowds who gathered round him to witness their loyalty to the Protestant faith. They came also to gaze upon the gallant commander who had defeated both the French and the Dutch, and was said (but erroneously) to be as wise as he was brave, and as religious as he was beautiful to look upon. As for his wisdom, those who knew him best have since assured the world that he had little or none, his judgment being always swayed and determined for him by crafty and subtle persons seeking their own interests. And as for his religion, whatever may have been his profession, good works were wanting – as is now very well known. But at that time, and among our people, the wicked ways of Courts were only half understood. And there can be no doubt that, whether he was wise or religious, the show of affection with which the Duke was received upon this journey, turned his head and caused him to think that these people would rally round him if he called upon them. And I suppose that there is nothing which more delights a Prince than to believe that his friends are ready even to lay down their lives in his behalf.

At that time the country was greatly agitated by anxiety concerning the succession. Those who were nearest the throne knew that King Charles was secretly a Papist. We in the country had not learned that dismal circumstance; yet we knew the religion of the Duke of York. Thousands there were, like Sir Christopher himself, who now lamented the return of the King, considering the disgraces which had fallen upon the country. But what was done could not be undone. They, therefore, asked themselves if the nation would suffer an avowed Papist to ascend a Protestant throne. If not, what should be done? And here, as everybody knows, was opinion divided. For some declared that the Duke of Monmouth, had he his rights, was the lawful heir; and others maintained, on the King's own words, that he was never married to Mistress Lucy Waters. Therefore, they would have the Duke of York's daughter, a Protestant princess, married to William of Orange, proclaimed Queen. The Monmouth party were strong, however, and it was even said – Mr. Henry Clark, minister of Crewkerne, wrote a pamphlet to prove it – that a poor woman, Elizabeth Parcet by name, touched the Duke (he being ignorant of the thing) for King's Evil, and was straightway healed. Sir Christopher laughed at the story, saying that the King himself, whether he was descended from a Scottish Stuart

or from King Solomon himself, could no more cure that dreadful disease than the seventh son of a seventh son (as some foolish people believe), or the rubbing of the part affected by the hand of a man that had been hanged (as others do foolishly believe), which is the reason why on the gibbets the hanging corpses are always handleless.

It was noised abroad, beforehand, that the Duke was going to ride through the West Country in order to visit his friends. The progress (it was more like a Royal progress than the journey of a private nobleman) began with his visit to Mr. Thomas Thynne, of Longleat House. It is said that his chief reason for going to that house was to connect himself with the obligation of the tenant of Longleat to give the King and his suite a night's lodging when they visited that part of the country. Mr. Thynne, who entertained the Duke on this occasion, was the same who was afterwards murdered in London by Count Konigsmark. They called him 'Tom of Ten Thousand.' The poet Dryden hath written of this progress, in that poem wherein, under the fabled name of Absalom, he figures the Duke: —

He now begins his progress to ordain,
With chariots, horsemen, and a numerous train.
Fame runs before him as the morning star,
And shouts of joy salute him from afar.
Each house receives him as a guardian god,
And consecrates the place of his abode.

It was for his hospitable treatment of the Duke that Mr. Thynne was immediately afterwards deprived of the command of the Wiltshire Militia.

'Son-in-law,' said Sir Christopher, 'I would ride out to meet the Duke in respect to his Protestant professions. As for any pretensions he may have to the succession, I know nothing of them.'

'I will ride with you, Sir,' said the Rector, 'to meet the son of the King. And as for any Protestant professions, I know nothing of them. His Grace still remains, I believe, within the pale of the Church as by law established. Let us all ride out together.'

Seeing that my father also rode with them, it is certain that there were many and diverse reasons why so many thousands gathered together to welcome the Duke. Madam, Robin's mother, out of her kind heart, invited me to accompany her, and gave me a white frock to wear and blue ribbons to put into it.

We made, with our servants, a large party. We were also joined by many of the tenants, with their sons and wives, so that when we came to Ilchester, Sir Christopher was riding at the head of a great company of sixty or more, and very fine they looked, all provided with blue favours in honour of the Duke.

From Bradford Orcas to Ilchester is but six miles as the crow flies, but the ways (which are narrow and foul in winter) do so wind and turn about that they add two miles at least to the distance. Fortunately, the season was summer — namely, August — when the sun is hottest and the earth is dry, so that no one was bogged on the way.

We started betimes — namely, at six in the morning — because we knew not for certain at what time the Duke would arrive at Ilchester. When we came forth from the Manor House the farmers were already waiting for us, and so, after greetings from his Honour, they fell in and followed. We first took the narrow and rough lane which leads to the high road; but, when we reached it, we found it full of people riding, like ourselves, or trudging, staff in hand, all in the same direction. They were going to gaze upon the Protestant Duke, who, if he had his way, would restore freedom of conscience, and abolish the Acts against the Nonconformists. We rode through Marston Magna, but only the old people and the little children were left there; in the fields the ripe corn stood waiting to be cut; in the farmyards the beasts were standing idle; all the hinds were gone to Ilchester to see the Duke. And I began to fear lest when we got to Ilchester we should be too late. At Marston we left the main road

and entered upon a road (call it a track rather than a road) across the country, which is here flat and open. In winter it is miry and boggy, but it was now dry and hard. This path brought us again to the main road in two miles, or thereabouts, and here we were but a mile or so from Ilchester. Now, such a glorious sight as awaited us here I never expected to see. Once again, after five years, I was to see a welcome still more splendid; but nothing can ever efface from my memory that day. For first, the roads, as I have said, were thronged with rustics, and next, when we rode into the town we found it filled with gentlemen most richly dressed, and ladies so beautiful, and with such splendid attire that it dazzled my eyes to look upon them. It was a grand thing to see the gentlemen take off their hats and cry, 'Huzza for brave Sir Christopher!' Everybody knew his opinions, and on what side he had fought in the Civil War. The old man bent his head, and I think that he was pleased with this mark of honour.

The town which, though ancient, is now decayed and hath but few good houses in it, was made glorious with bright-coloured cloths, carpets, flags, and ribbons. There were bands of music; the bells of the church were ringing; the main street was like a fair with booths and stalls, and in the market-place there were benches set up with white canvas covering, where sat ladies in their fine dresses, some of them with naked necks, unseemly to behold. Yet it was pretty to see the long curls lying on their white shoulders. Some of them sat with half-closed eyes, which, I have since learned, is the fashion at Court. Mostly, they wore satin petticoats, and demi-gowns also of satin, furnished with a long train. Our place was beside the old Cross with its gilt ball and vane. The people who filled the streets came from Sherborne, from Bruton, from Shepton, from Glastonbury, from Langport, and from Somerton, and from all the villages round. It was computed that there were twenty thousand of them. Two thousand at least rode out to meet the Duke, and followed after him when he rode through the town. And, oh! the shouting as he drew near, the clashing of the bells, the beating of the drums, the blowing of the horns, the firing of the guns, as if the more noise they made the greater would be the Duke.

Since that day I have not wondered at the power which a Prince hath of drawing men after him, even to the death. Never was heir to the Crown received with such joy and welcome as was this young man, who had no title to the Crown and was base born. Yet, because he was a brave young man, and comely above all other young men, gracious of speech, and ready with a laugh and a joke, and because he was the son of the King, and the reputed champion of the Protestant faith, the people could not shout too loud for him.

The Duke was at this time in the prime of manhood, being thirty-five years of age. 'At that age,' Mr. Boscorel used to say, 'one would desire to remain if the body of clay were immortal. For then the volatile humours of youth have been dissipated. The time of follies has passed; love is regarded with the sober eyes of experience; knowledge has been acquired; skill of eye and hand has been gained, if one is so happy as to be a follower of art and music; wisdom hath been reached, if wisdom is ever to be attained. But wisdom,' he would add, 'is a quality generally lacking at every period of life.'

'When last I saw the Duke,' he told us while we waited, 'was fifteen years ago, in St. James's Park. He was walking with the King, his father, who had his arm about his son's shoulders, and regarded him fondly. At that time he was, indeed, a very David for beauty. I suppose that he hath not kept that singular loveliness which made him the darling of the Court. That, indeed, were not a thing to be desired or expected. He is now the hero of Maestricht, and the Chancellor of Cambridge University.'

And then all hats were pulled off, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the men shouted, and you would have thought the bells would have pulled the old tower down with the vehemence of their ringing; for the Duke was riding into the town.

He was no longer a beautiful boy, but a man at whose aspect every heart was softened. His enemies, in his presence, could not blame him; his friends, at sight of him, could not praise him, of such singular beauty was he possessed. Softness, gentleness, kindness, and goodwill reigned in

his large soft eyes: graciousness sat upon his lips, and all his face seemed to smile as he rode slowly between the lane formed by the crowd on either hand.

What said the Poet Dryden in that same poem of his from which I have already quoted? —

Early in foreign fields he won renown
With Kings and States allied to Israel's crown;
In peace the thoughts of war he could remove,
And seemed as he were only born for love.

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please;
His motions all accompanied with grace,
And Paradise was opened in his face.

Now I have to tell of what happened to me — the most insignificant person in the whole crowd. It chanced that as the Duke came near the spot beside the Cross where we were standing, the press in front obliged him to stop. He looked about him while he waited, smiling still and bowing to the people. Presently his eyes fell upon me, and he whispered a gentleman who rode beside him, yet a little in the rear. This gentleman laughed and dismounted. What was my confusion when he advanced towards me and spoke to me!

'Madam,' he said, calling me 'Madam!' 'His Grace would say one word to you, with permission of your friends.'

'Go with this gentleman, child,' said Sir Christopher, laughing. Everybody laughs — I know not why — when a girl is led out to be kissed.

'Fair White Rose of Somerset,' said his Grace — 'twas the most musical voice in the world, and the softest. 'Fair White Rose' — he repeated the words — 'let me be assured of the welcome of Ilchester by a kiss from your sweet lips, which I will return in token of my gratitude.'

All the people who heard these words shouted as if they would burst themselves asunder. And the gentleman who had led me forth lifted me so that my foot rested on the Duke's boot, while his Grace laid his arm tenderly round my waist, and kissed me twice.

'Sweet child,' he said, 'what is thy name?'

'By your Grace's leave,' I said, the words being very strange, 'my name is Alice. I am the daughter of Dr. Comfort Eykin, an ejected minister. I have come with Sir Christopher Challis, who stands yonder.'

'Sir Christopher!' said the Duke, as if surprised. 'Let me shake hands with Sir Christopher. I take it kindly, Sir Christopher, that you have so far honoured me.' So he gave the old man, who stepped forward bareheaded, his hand, still holding me by the waist. 'I pray that we may meet again, Sir Christopher, and that before long.' Then he drew a gold ring, set with an emerald, from his forefinger, and placed it upon mine, 'God grant it bring thee luck, sweet child,' he said, and kissed me again, and then suffered me to be lifted down. And you may be sure that it was with red cheeks that I took my place among my friends. Yet Sir Christopher was pleased at the notice taken of him by the Duke, and my father was not displeased at the part I had been made to play.

When the Duke had ridden through the town, many of the people followed after, as far as White Lackington, which is close to Ilminster. So many were they that they took down a great piece of the park paling to admit them all; and there, under a Spanish chestnut-tree, the Duke drank to the health of all the people.

At Ilminster, whither he rode a few days later; at Chard, a Ford Abbey, at Colyton, and at Exeter — wherever he went he was received with the same shouts and acclamations. It is no wonder

therefore, that he should believe, a few years later, that those people would follow him when he drew the sword for the Protestant religion.

One thing is certain – that in the West of England, from the progress of Monmouth to the Rebellion, there was uneasiness, with an anxious looking forward to troubled times. The people of Taunton kept as a day of holiday and thanksgiving the anniversary of the raising of Charles's siege. When the Mayor, in 1683, tried to stop the celebration, they nearly stoned him to death. After this, Sir George Jeffreys, afterwards Lord Jeffreys, who took the spring circuit in 1684, was called upon to report on the loyalty of the West Country. He reported that the gentry were loyal and well disposed. But he knew not the mind of the weavers and spinners of the country.

It was this progress; the sight of the Duke's sweet face; his flattery of me, and his soft words, and the ring he gave me, which made me from that moment such a partisan of his cause as only a woman can be. Women cannot fight, but they can encourage those who do; and they can not only ardently desire, but they can despise and condemn those who think otherwise. I cannot say that it was I who persuaded our boys five years later to join the Duke; but I can truly say that I did and said all that a woman can; that I rejoiced when they did so; and that I should never have forgiven Robin had he joined the forces of the Papist King.

CHAPTER IX. WITH THE ELDERS

So we went home again, all well pleased, and I holding the Duke's ring tight, I promise you. It was a most beautiful ring when I came to look at it; a great emerald was in the midst of it, with little pearls and emeralds set alternately around it. Never was such a grand gift to so humble a person. I tied it to a black ribbon, and put it in the box which held my clothes. But sometimes I could not forbear the pleasure of wearing it round my neck secretly; not for the joy of possessing the ring, so much as for remembering the lovely face and the gracious words of the giver.

At that time I was in my sixteenth year, but well-grown for my age. Like my father, I was above the common stature and taller than most. We continued for more than four years longer to live without the company of the boys, which caused me to be much in the society of my elders, and as much at the Manor House and the Rectory as at home. At the former place, Sir Christopher loved to have me with him all day long, if my mother would suffer it; when he walked abroad, I must walk with him; when he walked in his garden I must be at his side. When he awoke after his afternoon sleep, he liked to see me sitting ready to talk to him. I must play to him and sing to him; or I must bring out the backgammon board; or I must read the last letters from Robin and Humphrey. Life is dull for an old man whose friends are mostly dead, unless he have the company of the young. So David, in his old age, took to himself a young wife. I have sometimes thought that he would have done better to have comforted his heart with the play and prattle of his grandchildren – of whom, I suppose, there must have been many families.

Now, as I was so much with his Honour, I had much talk with him upon things on which wise and ancient men do not often converse with girls, and I was often present when he discoursed with my father or with his son-in-law, the Rector, on high and serious matters. It was a time of great anxiety and uncertainty. There were great Pope burnings in the country; and when some were put in pillory for riot at these bonfires not a hand was lifted against them. They had one at Sherborne on November 17, the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation day, instead of November 5, Guy Faux Day. Boys went about the streets asking for halfpence and singing —

Up with the ladder,
And down with the rope;
Give us a penny
To burn the old Pope.

There were riots in Taunton, where the High Church party burned the pulpit of a meeting-house; people went about openly saying that the Roundheads would soon come back again. From Robin we heard of the Popish plot, and the flight of the Duke of York, and afterwards of Monmouth's disgrace and exile. At all the market towns where men gathered together they talked of these things, and many whispered together: a thing which Sir Christopher loved not, because it spoke of conspiracies and secret plots, whereas he was all for bold declaration of conscience.

In short, it was an anxious time, and everybody understood that serious things would happen should the King die. There were not wanting, besides, omens of coming ills – if you accept such things as omens or warnings. To Taunton (afterwards the town most affected by the Rebellion) a plain warning was vouchsafed by the rumbling and thundering and shaking of the earth itself, so that dishes were knocked down and cups broken, and plaster shaken off the walls of houses. And once (this did I myself see with my own eyes) the sun rose with four other suns for companions – a most terrifying sight, though Mr. Boscorel, who spoke learnedly on omens, had an explanation of this miracle, which

he said was due to natural causes alone. And at Ile Brewers there was a monstrous birth of two girls with but one body from the breast downwards; their names were Aquila and Priscilla; but I believe they lived but a short time.

I needs must tell of Mr. Boscorel, because he was a man the like of whom I have never since beheld. I believe there can be few men such as he was, who could so readily exchange the world of heat and argument for the calm and dispassionate air of art and music. Even religion (if I may venture to say so) seemed of less importance to him than painting and sculpture. I have said that he taught me to play upon the spinnet. Now that Humphrey was gone, he desired my company every day, in order, he pretended, that I might grow perfect in my performance, but in reality because he was lonely at the Rectory, and found pleasure in my company. We played together – he upon the violoncello and I upon the spinnet – such music as he chose. It was sometimes grave and solemn music, such as Lulli's 'Miserere' or his 'De Profundis'; sometimes it was some part of a Roman Catholic Mass: then was my soul uplifted and wafted heavenwards by the chords, which seemed prayer and praise fit for the angels to harp before the throne. Sometimes it was music which spoke of human passions, when I would be, in like manner, carried out of myself. My master would watch not only my execution, commenting or correcting, but he would also watch the effect of the music upon my mind.

'We are ourselves,' he said, 'like unto the instruments upon which we play. For as one kind of instrument, as the drum, produces but one note; and another, as the cymbals, but a clashing which is in itself discordant, but made effective in a band; so others are, like the most delicate and sensitive violins – those of Cremona – capable of producing the finest music that the soul of man hath ever devised. It is by such music, child, that some of us mount unto heaven. As for me, indeed, I daily feel more and more that music leadeth the soul upward, and that, as regards the disputations on the Word of God, the letter indeed killeth, but the spirit which music helpeth us to feel – the spirit, I say, giveth life.' He sighed, and drew his bow gently across the first string of his violoncello. 'Tis a time of angry argument. The Word of God is thrown from one to the other as a pebble is shot from a sling. It wearies me. In this room, among these books of music, my soul finds rest, and the spiritual part of me is lifted heavenwards. Humphrey and you, my dear, alone can comprehend this saying. Thou hast a mind like his, to feel and understand what music means. Listen!' Here he executed a piece of music at which the tears rose to my eyes. 'That is from the Romish Mass which we are taught ignorantly to despise. My child, I am, indeed, no Catholic, and I hold that ours is the purer Church; yet, in losing the Mass, we have lost the great music with which the Catholics sustain their souls. Some of our anthems, truly, are good; but what is a single anthem, finished in ten minutes, compared with a grand Mass which lasts three hours?'

Then he had portfolios filled with engravings, which he would bring forth and contemplate with a kind of rapture, discoursing upon the engraver's art and its difficulties, so that I should not, as is the case with ignorant persons, suppose that these things were produced without much training and skill. He had also boxes full of coins, medals, and transparent gems carved most delicately with heathen gods and goddesses, shepherds and swains, after the ancient fashion, unclothed and unashamed. On these things he would gaze with admiration which he tried to teach me, but could not succeed, because I cannot believe that we may without blame look upon such figures. Nevertheless, they were most beautiful, the hands and faces and the very hair so delicately and exquisitely carved that you could hardly believe it possible. And he talked solemnly and scholarly of these gauds, as if they were things which peculiarly deserved the attention of wise and learned men. Nay, he would be even lifted out of himself in considering them.

'Child,' he said, 'we know not, and we cannot even guess, the wonders of art that in heaven we shall learn to accomplish' – as if carving and painting were the occupation of angels! – 'or the miracles of beauty and of dexterity that we shall be able to design and execute. Here, the hand is clumsy and the brain is dull; we cannot rise above ourselves; we are blind to the beauty with which the Lord hath filled the earth for the solace of human creatures. Nay; we are not even tender with the

beauty that we see and love. We suffer maidens sweet as the dreams of poets to waste their beauty unpraised and unsung. I am old, child, or I would praise thee in immortal verse. Much I fear that thou wilt grow old without the praise of sweet numbers. Well; there is no doubt more lasting beauty of face and figure hereafter to joy the souls of the elect. And thou wilt make his happiness for one man on earth. Pray Heaven, sweet child, that he look also to thine!

He would say such things with so grand an air, speaking as if his words should command respect, and with so kindly an eye and a soft smile, while he gently stroked the side of his nose, which was long, that I was always carried away with the authority of it, and not till after I left him did I begin to perceive that my father would certainly never allow that the elect should occupy themselves with the frivolous pursuits of painting and the fine arts, but only with the playing of their harps and the singing of praises. It was this consideration which caused him to consent that his daughter should learn the spinnet. I did not tell him (God forgive me for the deceit, if there was any!) that we sometimes played music written for the Mass; nor did I repeat what Mr. Boscorel said concerning art and the flinging about of the Word of God, because my father was wholly occupied in controversy, and his principal, if not his only, weapon was the Word of God.

Another pleasure which we had was to follow Humphrey in his travels by the aid of his letters and a 'Mappa Mundi,' or atlas, which the Rector possessed. Then I remember when we heard that the boys were about to ride together through France, from Montpellier to Leyden in Holland, we had on the table the great map of France. There were many drawings, coats-of-arms, and other pretty things on the map.

'It is now,' said Mr. Boscorel, finding out the place he wanted, and keeping his forefinger upon it, 'nearly thirty years since I made the grand tour, being then governor to the young Lord Silchester, who afterwards died of the Plague in London. Else had I been now a Bishop, who am forgotten in this little place. The boys will ride, I take it, by the same road which we took: first, because it is the high road and the safest; next, because it is the best provided with inns and resting places; and, lastly, because it passes through the best part of his Most Christian Majesty's dominions, and carries the traveller through his finest and most stately cities. From Montpellier they will ride – follow my finger, child! – to Nismes. Before the Revocation it was a great place for those of the Reformed Religion, and a populous town. Here they will not fail to visit the Roman temple which still stands. It is not, indeed, such a noble monument as one may see in Rome; but it is in good preservation, and a fair example of the later style. They will also visit the great amphitheatre, which should be cleared of the mean houses which are now built up within it, and so exposed in all its vastness to the admiration of the world. After seeing these things they will direct their way across a desolate piece of country to Avignon, passing on the way the ancient Roman aqueduct called the Pont de Gard. At Avignon they will admire the many churches and the walls, and will not fail to visit the palace of the Popes during the Great Schism. Thence they will ride northwards, unless they wish first to see the Roman remains at Arles. Thence will they proceed up the Valley of the Rhone, through many stately towns, till they come to Lyons, where, doubtless, they will sojourn for a few days. Next, they will journey through the rich country of Burgundy, and from the ancient town of Dijon will reach Paris through the city of Fontainebleau. On the way they will see many noble houses and castles, with rich towns and splendid churches. In no country are there more splendid churches, built in the Gothic style, which we have now forgotten. Some of them, alas! have been defaced in the wars (so-called of Religion), where, as happened also to us, the delicate carved work, the scrolls and flowers and statues were destroyed, and the painted windows broken. Alas! that men should refuse to suffer Art to become the minister and handmaid of Religion! Yet in the first and most glorious temple, in which the glory of the Lord was visibly present, there were carved and graven lilies, with lions, oxen, chariots, cherubim, palm-trees and pomegranates.'

He closed his atlas and sat down.

'Child,' he said, meditating, 'for a scholar, in his youth, there is no pleasure comparable with the pleasure of travelling in strange countries, among the monuments of ancient days. My own son did never, to my sorrow, desire the pleasant paths of learning, and did never show any love for the arts, in which I have always taken so great delight. He desireth rather the companionship of men; he loveth to drink and sing; and he nourisheth a huge ambition. 'Tis best that we are not all alike. Humphrey should have been my son. Forget not, my child, that he hath desired to be remembered to thee in every letter which he hath written.'

If the Rector spoke much of Humphrey, Madam made amends by talking continually of Robin, and of the great things that he would do when he returned home. Justice of the Peace, that he would certainly be made; Captain first and afterwards Colonel in the Somerset Militia, that also should he be; Knight of the Shire, if he were ambitious – but that I knew he would never be; High Sheriff of the County, if his slender means permitted – for the estate was not worth more than five or six hundred pounds a year. Perhaps he would marry an heiress: it would be greatly to the advantage of the family if an heiress were to come into it with broad acres of her own; but she was not a woman who would seek to control her son in the matter of his affections, and if he chose a girl with no fortune to her back, if she was a good girl and pious, Madam would never say him nay. And he would soon return. The boy had been at Oxford and next in London, learning law, such as Justices require. He was now with Humphrey at the University of Leyden, doubtless learning more law.

'My dear,' said Madam, 'we want him home. His grandfather groweth old, though still, thank God! in the full possession of his faculties. Yet a young man's presence is needed. I trust and pray that he will return as he went, innocent, in spite of the many temptations of the wicked city. And, oh! child – what if he should have lost his heart to some designing city hussy!'

He came – as you shall hear immediately – Robin came home. Would to God that he had waited, if only for a single month! Had he not come all our afflictions would have been spared us! Had he not come that good old man, Sir Christopher – but it is vain to imagine what might have been. We are in the hands of the Lord; nothing that happens to us is permitted but by Him, and for some wise purpose was Sir Christopher in his old age – alas! why should I anticipate what I have to narrate?

CHAPTER X. LE ROY EST MORT

In February of the year 1685, King Charles II. died.

Sir Christopher himself brought us the news from Sherborne, whither he had gone, as was his wont, to the weekly ordinary. He clattered up the lane on his cob, and halted at our gate.

'Call thy father, child. Give you good day, Madam Eykin. Will your husband leave his books and come forth for a moment? Tell him I have news.'

My father rose and obeyed. His gown was in rags; his feet were clad in cloth shoon, which I worked for him; his cheek was wasted; but his eye was keen. He was lean and tall; his hair was as white as Sir Christopher's, though he was full twenty years younger.

'Friend and gossip,' said Sir Christopher, 'the King is dead.'

'Is Charles Stuart dead?' my father replied. 'He cumbered the earth too long. For five-and-twenty years hath he persecuted the saints. Also he hath burnt incense after the abomination of the heathen. Let his lot be as the lot of Ahaz.'

'Nay; he is buried by this time. His brother the Duke of York hath been proclaimed King.'

'James the Papist. It is as though Manasseh should succeed to Ahaz. And after him Jehoiakim.'

'Yet the bells will ring and we shall pray for the King; and wise men, friend Eykin, will do well to keep silence.'

'There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence. It may be that the time is at hand when a godly man must stretch forth his hand to tear down the Scarlet Woman, though she slay him in the attempt.'

'It may be so, my friend; yet stretch not forth thine hand until thou art well assured of the Divine Command. The King is dead. Now will my son-in-law ring out the bells for the new King, and we shall pray for him, as we prayed for his brother. It is our duty to pray for all in authority, though to the prayers of a whole nation there seemeth, so far as human reason can perceive, no answer.'

'I for one will pray no more for a King who is a Papist. Rather will I pray daily for his overthrow.'

'King Charles is said to have received a priest before he died. Yet it is worse that the King should be an open than a secret Catholic. Let us be patient, my friend, and await the time.'

So he rode up the village, and presently the bells were set a-ringing, and they clashed as joyously, echoing around the Corton Hills, as if the accession of King James II. was the only thing wanted to make the nation prosperous, happy, and religious.

My father stood at the gate after Sir Christopher left him. The wind was cold, and the twilight was falling, and his cassock was thin, but he remained there motionless, until my mother went out and drew him back to the house by the arm. He went into his own room, but he read no more that day.

In the evening he came forth and sat with us, and while I sat sewing, my mother spinning by the light of the fire, he discoursed, which was unusual with him, upon things and peoples and the best form of government, which he held to be a Commonwealth, with a strong man for President. But he was to hold his power from the people, and was to lay it down frequently, lest he should in his turn be tempted to become a King. And if he were to fall away from righteousness, or to live in open sin, or to be a merry-maker, or to suffer his country to fall from a high place among the nations, he was to be displaced, and be forced to retire. As for the man Charles, now dead, he would become, my father said, an example to all future ages, and a warning of what may happen when the doctrine of Divine Right is generally accepted and acted upon; the King himself being not so much blamed by him as the practice of hereditary rule which caused him to be seated upon the throne, when his true place, my father said, was among the lacqueys and varlets of the palace. 'His brother James,' he added, 'hath now an opportunity such as is given to few – for he may become another Josiah. But I think he will

neglect that opportunity,' he concluded; 'yea, even if Hilkiah, the priest, were to bring him a message from Huldah, the prophetess; for he doth belong to a family which, by the Divine displeasure, can never perceive the truth. Let us now read the Word, and wrestle with the Lord in prayer.'

Next we heard that loyal addresses were poured in from all quarters congratulating the King, and promising most submissive obedience. One would have thought that the people were rejoiced at the succession of a Roman Catholic; it was said that the King had promised liberty of conscience unto all; that he claimed that liberty for himself, and that he went to Mass daily and openly.

But many there were who foresaw trouble. Unfortunately, one of them was Sir Christopher, who spoke his mind at all times too fiercely for his safety. Mr. Boscorel, also, was of opinion that civil war would speedily ensue.

'The King's friends,' he said, 'may for a time buy the support of the Nonconformists, and make a show of religious liberty. Thus may they govern for a while. But it is not in the nature of the Roman Catholic priest to countenance religious liberty, or ever to sit down contented with less than all the pie. They must for ever scheme and intrigue for more power. Religious liberty? It means to them the eternal damnation of those who hold themselves free to think for themselves. They would be less than human if they did not try to save the souls of the people by docking their freedom. They must make this country even as Spain or Italy. Is it to be believed that they will suffer the Church to retain her revenues, or the universities to remain out of their control? Nay, will they allow the grammar schools to be in the hands of Protestants? Never! The next generation will be wholly Catholic, unless the present generation send King and priests packing.'

These were treasonable words, but they were uttered in the hall of the Manor House with no other persons present than Sir Christopher and the Rector himself.

'Seeing these things, son-in-law,' said Sir Christopher, 'what becomes of Right Divine? Where is the duty of Non-Resistance?'

'The doctrine of Right Divine,' said Mr. Boscorel, rubbing his nose, 'includes the Divine institution of a Monarchy, which, I confess, is manifestly untenable, because the Lord granted a King to the people only because they clamoured for one. Also, had the institution been of Divine foundation, the Jews would never have been allowed to live under the rule of Judges, Tetrarchs, and Roman Governors.'

'You have not always spoken so plainly,' said Sir Christopher.

'Nay; why be always proclaiming to the world your thoughts and opinions? Besides, even if the doctrine of Non-Resistance were sound, there may be cases in which just laws may be justly set aside. I say not that this is one, as yet. But if there were danger of the ancient superstitions being thrust upon us to the destruction of our souls, I say not that we should meekly sit down. Nay; if a starving man take a loaf of bread, there being no other way possible to save his life, one would not, therefore, hold him a thief. Yet the law remains.'

'Shall the blood which hath been poured out for the cause of liberty prove to be shed in vain?' asked Sir Christopher.

'Why, Sir,' said the Rector, 'the same question might be asked in France, where the Protestants fought longer and against greater odds than we in this country. Yet the blood of those martyrs hath been shed, so far as man can see, in vain; the Church of Rome is there the conqueror indeed. It is laid upon the Protestants, even upon us, who hold that we are a true branch of the ancient Apostolic Church, to defend ourselves continually against an enemy who is always at unity, always guided by one man, always knows what he wants, and is always working to get it. We, on the other hand, do not know our own minds, and must for ever be quarrelling among ourselves. Nevertheless, the heart of the country is Protestant; and sooner or later the case of conscience may arise whether – the law remaining unchanged – we may not blamelessly break the law.'

That case of conscience was not yet ripe for consideration. There needed first many things – including the martyrdom of saints and innocent men and poor, ignorant rustics – before the country

roused herself once more to seize her liberties. Then as to that poor doctrine of Divine Right, they all made a mouthful of it, except only a small and harmless band of Nonjurors.

At the outset, whatever the opinions of the people – who could have been made to rise as one man – the gentry remained loyal. Above all things, they dreaded another civil war.

'We must fain accept the King's professions,' said the Rector. 'If we have misgivings, let us disguise them. Let us rather nourish the hope that they are honestly meant; and let us wait. England will not become another Spain in a single day. Let us wait. The stake is not yet set up in Smithfield, and the Inquisition is not yet established in the country.'

It was in this temper that the King's accession found Sir Christopher. Afterwards, he was accused of having harboured designs against the King from the beginning. That, indeed, was not the case. He had no thought of entering into any such enterprise. Yet he never doubted that in the end there would be an uprising against the rule of the priests. Nor did he doubt that the King would be pushed on by his advisers to one pretension after another for the advancement of his own prerogative and the displacement of the Protestant Church. Nay, he openly predicted that there would be such attempts; and he maintained – such was his wisdom! – that, in the long run, the Protestant faith would be established upon a surer foundation than ever. But as for conspiring or being cognisant of any conspiracy, that was untrue. Why, he was at this time seventy-five years of age – a time when such men as Sir Christopher have continually before their eyes Death and the Judgment.

As for my father, perhaps I am wrong, but in the daily prayers of night and morning, and in the grace before meat, he seemed to find a freer utterance, and to wrestle more vehemently than was his wont on the subject of the Scarlet Woman, offering himself as a willing martyr and confessor, if by the shedding of his blood the great day of her final overthrow might be advanced; yet always humble, not daring to think of himself as anything but an instrument to do the will of his Master. In the end, his death truly helped, with others, to bring a Protestant King to the Throne of these isles. And since we knew him to be so deep a scholar, always reading and learning, and in no sense a man of activity, the thing which he presently did amazed us all. Yet we ought to have known that one who is under the Divine command to preach the Word of God, and hath been silenced by man for more than twenty years, so that the strength of his manhood hath run to waste and is lost – it is a most terrible and grievous thing for a man to be condemned to idleness! – may become like unto one of those burning mountains of which we sometimes read in books of voyages. In him, as in them, the inner fires rage and burn, growing ever stronger and fiercer, until presently they rend asunder the sides of the mountain and burst forth, pouring down liquid fire over the unhappy valleys beneath, with showers of red-hot ashes to destroy and cover up the smiling homesteads and the fertile meadows.

It is true that my father chafed continually at the inaction forced upon him, but his impatience was never so strong as at this time, namely, after the accession of King James. It drove him from his books and out into the fields and lanes, where he walked to and fro waving his long arms, and sometimes crying aloud and shouting in the woods, as if compelled to cry out in order to quench some raging fever or heat of his mind.

About this time, too, I remember, they began to talk of the exiles in Holland. The Duke of Monmouth was there with the Earl of Argyle, and with them a company of firebrands eager to get back to England and their property.

I am certain now that my father (and perhaps through his information, Sir Christopher also) was kept acquainted with the plots and designs that were carried on in the Low Countries. Nay, I am also certain that his informant was none other than Humphrey, who was still in Leyden. I have seen a letter from him, written, as I now understand, in a kind of allegory or parable, in which one thing was said and another meant. Thus, he pretends to speak of Dutch gardening: – 'The gardeners,' he says, 'take infinite pains that their secrets shall not be learned or disclosed. I know, however, that a certain blue tulip much desired by many gardeners in England, will be taken across the water this year, and I hope that by next year the precious bulb may be fully planted in English soil. The preparation of the

soil necessary for the favourable reception of the bulb is well known to you, and you will understand how to mix your soil and to add manure and so forth. I myself expect to finish what I have to do in a few weeks, when I shall cross to London, and so ride westwards, and hope to pay my respects to my revered tutor in the month of June next. It may be that I shall come with the tulip, but that is not certain. Many messages have been received offering large sums of money for the bulb, so that it is hoped that the Dutch gardeners will let it go.

'From H. C.'

The tulip, in a word, was the Duke of Monmouth, and the Dutch gardeners were the Scotch and English exiles then in Holland, and the English gardeners were the Duke's friends, and H. C. was Humphrey Challis.

I think that Sir Christopher must have known of this correspondence, because I now remember that my father would sit with him for many hours looking at a map of England, conversing long and earnestly, and making notes in a book. These notes he made in the Arabic character, which no one but himself could read. I therefore suppose that he was estimating the number of Nonconformists who might be disposed to aid in such an enterprise as Humphrey's 'gardeners' were contemplating.

Robin, who certainly was no conspirator, also wrote a letter from Leyden about this time saying that something was expected, nobody knew what; but that the exiles were meeting constantly, as if something was brewing.

It was about the first week of June that the news came to us of Lord Argyle's landing. This was the beginning. After that, as you will hear, the news came thick and fast; every day something fresh, and something to quicken the most sluggish pulse. To me, at least, it seemed as if the breath of God Himself was poured out upon the country, and that the people were everywhere resolved to banish the accursed thing from their midst. Alas! I was but a simple country maid and I was deceived! The accursed thing was to be driven forth, but not yet. The country party hated the Pope, but they dreaded civil war; and, indeed, there is hardly any excuse for that most dreadful scourge except the salvation of the soul and the safeguarding of liberties. They would gladly welcome a rising, but it must be general and universal. They had for five-and-twenty years been taught the wickedness of rebellion, and now there was no way to secure the Protestant Faith except by rebellion. Unhappily, the rebellion began before the country gentlemen were ready to begin.

CHAPTER XI. BEFORE THE STORM

Before the storm breaks there sometimes falls upon the earth a brief time when the sun shines in splendour from a clear sky, the air is balmy and delightful, the birds sing in the coppice, and the innocent lambs leap in the meadows. Then, suddenly, dark clouds gather from the north; the wind blows cold; in a minute the sky is black; the lightnings flash, the thunders roll, the wind roars, the hail beats down and strips the orchard of its promise, and silences the birds cowering in the branches, and drives the trembling sheep to take shelter in the hedges. This was to be my case. You shall understand how for a single day – it was no more – I was the happiest girl in all the world.

I may now without any shame confess that I have always loved Robin from my earliest childhood. That was no great wonder seeing what manner of boy he was, and how he was always kind and thoughtful for me. We were at first only brother and sister together, which is natural and reasonable when children grow up together; nor can I tell when or how we ceased to be brother and sister, save that it may have been when Robin kissed me so tenderly at parting, and told me that he should always love me. I do not think that brothers do generally protest love and promise continual affection. Barnaby certainly never declared his love for me, nor did he ever promise to love me all his life. Perhaps, had he remained longer, he might have become as tender as he was good-hearted; but I think that tenderness towards a sister is not in the nature of a boy. I loved Robin, and I loved Humphrey, both as if they were brothers; but one of them ceased to be my brother, while the other, in consequence, remained my brother always.

A girl may be ignorant of the world as I was, and of lovers and their ways as I was, and yet she cannot grow from a child to a woman without knowing that when a young man, who hath promised to love her always, speaks of her in every letter, he means more than common brotherly love. Nor can any woman be indifferent to a man who thus regards her; nor can she think upon love without the desire of being herself loved. Truly, I had always before my eyes the spectacle of that holy love which consecrates every part of life. I mean, in the case of my mother, whose waking and sleeping thoughts were all for her husband, who worked continually and cheerfully with her hands that he might be enabled to study without other work, and gave up her whole life, without grudging – even reckoning it her happiness and her privilege – in order to provide food and shelter for him. It was enough reward for her that he should sometimes lay his hand lovingly upon her head, or turn his eyes with affection to meet hers.

It was in the night of June 12, as I lay in bed, not yet asleep, though it was already past nine o'clock, that I heard the trampling of hoofs crossing the stream and passing our cottage. Had I known who were riding those horses there would have been but little sleep for me that night. But I knew not, and did not suspect, and so, supposing that it was only one of the farmers belated, I closed my eyes, and presently slept until the morning.

About five o'clock, or a little before that time, I awoke, the sun having already arisen, and being now well up above the hills. I therefore arose softly, leaving my mother asleep still, and, having dressed quickly, and prayed a little, I crept down the stairs. In the house there was such a stillness that I could even hear the regular breathing of my father as he slept upon his pallet among his books; it was chill and damp (as is the custom in the early morning) in the room where he lived and worked. Yet, when I threw open door and shutter and looked outside, the air was full of warmth and refreshment; as for the birds, they had long since left their nests, and now were busy looking for their breakfast; the larks were singing overhead, and the bees already humming and droning. Who would lie abed when he could get up and enjoy the beauty of the morning? When I had breathed a while, with pleasure and satisfaction, the soft air, which was laden with the scent of flowers and of hay, I went indoors

again and swept and dusted the room. Then I opened the cupboard, and considered the provision for breakfast. For my father there would be a slice of cold bacon with a good crust of home-made bread (better bread or sweeter was nowhere to be had) and a cup of cider, warming to the spirits and good, for one who is no longer young, against any rawness of the morning air. For my mother and myself there would be, as soon as our neighbours' cows were milked, a cup of warm milk and bread soaked in it. 'Tis a breakfast good for a grown person as well as for a child, and it costs us nothing but the trouble of going to take it.

When I had swept the room and laid everything in its place I went into the garden, hoe in hand, to weed the beds and trim the borders. The garden was not very big, it is true, but it produced many things useful for us; notably onions and sallet, besides many herbs good for the house, for it was a fertile strip of ground and planted in every part of it. Now, such was the beauty of the morning and the softness of the air that I presently forgot the work about which I had come into the garden, and sat down in the shade upon a bench, suffering my thoughts to wander hither and thither. Much have I always pitied those poor folk in towns who can never escape from the noise and clatter of tongues and sit somewhere in the sunshine or the shade, while the cattle low in the meadows and the summer air makes the leaves to rustle, and thus alone suffer their thoughts to wander here and there. Every morning when I arose was this spectacle of Nature's gladness presented to my eyes, but not every morning could my spirit (which sometimes crawls, as if fearing the light of day and the face of the sun) rise to meet and greet it, and to feel it calling aloud for a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. For, indeed, this is a beautiful world, if we could always (which we cannot for the earthliness of our natures) suffer its loveliness to sink into our hearts. I know not what I thought this morning; but I remember, while I considered the birds, which neither reap nor sow, nor take any thought of tomorrow, yet are daily fed by Heaven, that the words were whispered in mine ear: 'Are ye not much better than they?' And this, without doubt, prepared my heart for what should follow.

While I sat thinking of I know not what, there came footsteps – quick footsteps – along the road; and I knew those footsteps, and sprang to my feet, and ran to the garden-gate, crying, 'Robin! – it is Robin!'

Yes; it was Robin.

He seized me by both hands, looking in my face curiously and eagerly.

'Alice!' he said, drawing a deep breath, 'Oh! but what hath happened to thee?'

'What should happen, Robin?'

'Oh! Thou art changed, Alice! I left thee almost a child, and now – now – I thought to catch thee in my arms – a sweet rustic nymph – and now – fain must I go upon my knees to a goddess.'

'Robin!' Who, indeed, would have expected such language from Robin!

'Alice,' he said, still gazing upon me with a kind of wonder which made me blush, 'do you remember when we parted four years ago – the words we said? As for me, I have never forgotten them. I was to think of thee always; I was to love thee always. Truly I may say that there is never a day but thou hast been in my mind. But not like this' – He continued to look upon me as upon some strange creature, so that I began to be frightened and turned away.

'Nay, Alice, forgive me. I am one who is dazzled by the splendour of the sun. Forgive me; I cannot speak. I thought of a village beauty, rosy-cheeked, sweet and wholesome as an August quarander, and I find' —

'Robin – not a goddess.'

'Well, then, a woman tall and stately, and more beautiful than words can say.'

'Nay, Robin, you do but flatter. That is not like the old Robin I remember and' – I should have added 'loved,' but the word stuck.

'I swear, sweet saint – if I may swear – nay, then I do affirm, that I do not flatter. Hear me tell a plain tale. I have travelled far since last I saw thee; I have seen the great ladies of the Court both

of St. James's and of the Louvre; I have seen the famous beauties of Provence, and the black-eyed witches of Italy; but nowhere have I seen a woman half so fair.'

'Robin – you must not! Nay, Robin – you shame me!'

Then he knelt at my feet and seized my hand and kissed it. Oh, the foolishness of a man in love! And yet it pleases us. No woman is worth it. No woman can understand it; nor can she comprehend the power and might of man's love, nor why he singles out her alone from all the rest and fills his heart wholly with her, so that all other women are henceforward as his sisters. It is wonderful; it is most wonderful. Yet it pleases us. Nay, we cannot choose but thank God for it with all our heart and with all our soul.

I would not, if I could, set down all the things which Robin said. First, because the words of love are sacred; next, because I would not that other women should know the extravagance of his praise. It was in broken words, because love can never be eloquent.

As for me, what could I do, what could I say? For I had loved him from my very childhood, and now all my heart went out from me and became his. I was all his. I was his slave to command. That is the quality of earthly love by which it most closely resembles the heavenly love, so that just as the godly man is wholly devoted to the will of the Lord in all things great and small, resigned to His chastisements, and always anxious to live and die in His service, so in earthly love one must be wholly devoted to the person whom one loves.

And Robin was come home again, and I was lying in his arms, and he was kissing me and calling me all the sweet and tender things that he could invent, and laughing and sighing together as if too happy to be quiet. Oh! sweetest moments of my life! Why did they pass so quickly? Oh! sacrament of love, which can be taken only once, and yet changes the whole of life and fills it with memory which is wholly sweet! In all other earthly things there is something of bitterness. In this holy joy of pure and sacred love there is no bitterness – no; not any. It leaves behind nothing of reproach or of repentance, of shame or of sorrow. It is altogether holy.

Now, when my boy had somewhat recovered from his first rapture, and I had assured him very earnestly that I was not, indeed, an angel, but a most sinful woman, daily offending in my inner thoughts (an assurance which he received, indeed, with an appearance of disbelief and scorn), I was able to consider his appearance, which was now very fine, though always, as I learned when I saw him among other gentlemen, with some soberness, as became one whose upbringing inclined him to plainness of dress as well as of speech and manner. He wore a long wig of brown hair, which might have been his own but for its length; his hat was laced and cocked, which gave him a gallant and martial appearance; his neckcloth was long and of fine lace; beside him in my russet gown I must have looked truly plain and rustic; but Robin was pleased not to think so, and love is a great magician to cheat the eyes.

He was home again; he told me he should travel no more (yet you shall hear how far he afterwards travelled against his will); his only desire now was to stay at home and live as his grandfather had lived, in his native village; he had nothing to pray for but the continuance of my love – of which, indeed, there was no doubt possible.

It was now close upon six o'clock, and I begged him to go away for the present, and if my father and Sir Christopher should agree, and if it should seem to his Honour a fit and proper thing that Robin should marry a girl so penniless as myself, why – then – we might meet again after breakfast, or after dinner; or, indeed, at any other time, and so discourse more upon the matter. So he left me, being very reluctant to go; and I, forgetting my garden and what I had come forth to do, returned to the house.

You must understand that all these things passed in the garden, divided from the lane by a thick hedge, and that passers-by – but there were none – could not, very well, have seen what was done, though they might have heard what was said. But if my father had looked out of his window he could have seen, and if my mother had come downstairs she also might have seen through the window, or through the open door. This I thought not upon, nor was there anything to hide – though

one would not willingly suffer anyone, even one's own mother, to see and listen at such a moment. Yet mother has since told me that she saw Robin on his knees kissing my hands; but she withdrew, and would not look again.

When I stepped within the door she was at work with her wheel, and looked up with a smile upon her lips, but tears were lying in her eyes. Had I known what she had seen I should have been ashamed.

'Daughter,' she said softly, 'thy cheek is burning red. Hast thou, perchance, been too long in the sun?'

'No, mother, the sun is not too hot.'

'Daughter,' she went on, still smiling through her tears, 'thine eyes are bright and glowing. Hast thou a touch of fever by ill chance?'

'No, mother, I have no fever.'

'Child, thy lips are trembling and thy hands are shaking. My dear, my dear, what is it? Tell thy mother all.'

She held out her arms to me, and I threw myself at her feet, and buried my head in her lap as if I had been again a child.

'Mother! mother!' I cried, 'Robin hath come home again, and he says he loves me, and nothing will do but he must marry me.'

'My dear,' she said, kissing and fondling me, 'Robin hath always been a good lad, and I doubt not that he hath returned unspotted from the world; but, nay, do not let us be too sure. For, first, his Honour must consent, and then Madam; and thy father must be asked – and he would never, for any worldly honour – no, never – suffer thee to marry an ungodly man. As for thy lack of fortune, I know not if that will not also stand in the way; and as for family, thy father, though he was born in New England, cometh of a good stock, and I myself am a gentlewoman, and on both sides we bear an ancient coat-of-arms. And as for thyself, my dear, thou art – I thank God for it! – of a sweet temper and an obedient disposition. From the earliest thou hast never given thy mother any uneasiness, and I think thy heart hath been mercifully disposed towards goodness from thy childhood upwards. It is a special grace in this our long poverty and oppression; and it consoles me partly for the loss of my son Barnaby.' Here she was silent for a space, and her eyes filled and brimmed over. 'Daughter,' she said earnestly, 'thou art comely in the eyes of men; that have I known for long. It is partly for thy sweet looks that Sir Christopher loves thee; Mr. Boscorel plays music with thee partly because his eyes love to behold the beauty of woman. Nay, I mean no reproach, because it is the nature of men to love all things beautiful, whether it be the plumage of a bird or the shape of a woman's head. Yes; thou art beautiful, my dear. Beauty passes, but love remains. Thy husband will perchance never cease to think thee lovely if he still proves daily thy goodness and the loveliness of thy heart. My dear, thou hast long comforted thy mother; now shalt thou go, with the blessing of the Lord, to be the solace and the joy of thy husband.'

CHAPTER XII. HUMPHREY

Presently my father came in, the Bible in his hand. By his countenance it was plain that he had been already engaged in meditation, and that his mind was charged as with a message.

Alas! to think of the many great discourses that he pronounced (being as a dog who must be muzzled should he leave the farm-yard) to us women alone. If they were written down the world would lift up its hands with wonder, and ask if a prophet indeed had been vouchsafed to this unhappy country. The Roman Church will have that the time of Saints did not end with the last of the Apostles; that may be, and yet a Saint has no more power after death than remains in his written words and in the memory of his life. Shall we not, however, grant that there may still be Prophets, who see and apprehend the meaning of words and of things more fully than others even as spiritually minded as themselves? Now, I say, considering what was immediately to befall us, the passage which my father read and expounded that morning was in a manner truly prophetic. It was the vision of the Basket of Summer Fruit which was vouchsafed to the Prophet Amos. He read to us that terrible chapter – everybody knows it, though it hath but fourteen verses.

'I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation... I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'

He then applied the chapter to these times, saying that the Scriptures and the prophecies apply not only to the Israel of the time when Amos or any other prophet lived, but to the people of God in all ages, yet so that sometimes one prophet seems to deliver the message that befits the time and sometimes another. All these things prophesied by Amos had come to pass in this country of Great Britain; so that there was, and had now been for twenty-five years, a grievous famine and a sore thirst for the words of the Lord. He continued to explain and to enlarge upon this topic for nearly an hour, when he concluded with a fervent prayer that the famine would pass away and the sealed springs be open again for the children of grace to drink and be refreshed.

This done, he took his breakfast in silence, as was his wont, loving not to be disturbed by any earthly matters when his mind was full of his morning discourse. When he had eaten the bread and meat and taken the cup of cider, he arose and went back to his own room, and shut the door. We should have no more speech of him until dinner-time.

'I will speak with him, my dear,' said my mother. 'But not yet. Let us wait till we hear from Sir Christopher.'

'I would that my father had read us a passage of encouragement and promise on this morning of all mornings,' I said.

My mother turned over the leaves of the Bible. 'I will read you a verse of encouragement,' she said. 'It is the word of God as much as the Book of the Prophet Amos.' So she found and read for my comfort words which had a new meaning to me: —

'My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

And again, these that follow: —

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned.'

In these gracious, nay, these enraptured words, doth the Bible speak of love; and though I am not so ignorant as not to know that it is the love of the Church for Christ, yet I am persuaded by my own spiritual experience – whatever Doctors of Divinity may argue – that the earthly love of husband and wife may be spoken of in these very words as being the type of that other and higher love. And in this matter I know that my mother would also confirm my judgment.

It might have been between nine and ten that Humphrey came. Surely he was changed more than Robin: for the great white periwig which he wore (being now a physician) falling upon his shoulders did partly hide the deformity of his wry shape, and the black velvet coat did also become him mightily. As for his face, that was not changed at all. It had been grave and serious in youth; it was now more grave and more serious in manhood. He stood in the doorway, not seeing me – I was making a pudding for dinner, with my sleeves rolled up and my arms white with flour.

'Mistress Eykin,' he said, 'are old friends passed out of mind?'

'Why,' my mother left her wheel and gave him her hand, 'tis Humphrey! I knew that we should see thee this morning, Humphrey. Is thy health good, my son, and is all well with thee?'

'All is well, madam, and my health is good. How is my master – thy husband?'

'He is always well, and – but thou knowest what manner of life he leads. Of late he hath been much disquieted; he is restless – his mind runs much upon the prophecies of war and pestilence. It is the news from London and the return of the Mass which keeps him uneasy. Go in and see him, Humphrey. He will willingly suffer thee to disturb him, though we must not go near him in his hours of study.'

'Presently; but where is my old playfellow – where is Alice?'

'She is behind you, Humphrey.'

He turned, and his pale face flushed when he saw me.

'Alice?' he cried. 'Is this truly Alice? Nay, she is changed indeed! I knew not – I could not expect – nay, how could one expect' —

'There is no change,' said my mother, sharply. 'Alice was a child, and is now a woman; that is all.'

'Humphrey expects,' I said, 'that we should all stop still while Time went on. You were to become a Bachelor of Medicine, sir, and a Fellow of All Souls' College, and to travel in Italy and France, and to come back in a velvet coat, and a long sword, and a periwig over your shoulders; and I was to be a little girl still.'

Humphrey shook his head.

'It is not only that,' he said; 'though I confess that one did not make due allowance for the flight of Time. It is that the sweet-faced child has become' —

'No, Humphrey,' I said, 'I want no compliments. Go now, sir, and speak with my father. Afterwards you shall tell me all that you have been doing.'

He obeyed, and opened my father's door.

'Humphrey!' My father sprang to his feet. 'Welcome, my pupil! Thou bringest good news? Nay; I have received thy letters: I read the good news in thy face – I see it in thine eyes. Welcome home!'

'Sir, I have, indeed, great news,' said Humphrey.

Then the door was closed.

He stayed there for half an hour and more; and we heard from within earnest talk – my father's voice sometimes uplifted, loud and angry, but Humphrey's always low, as if he did not wish us to overhear them. So, not to seem unto each other as if we were listening, mother and I talked of other things, such as the lightness of the pudding, and the quantity of suet which should be put into it, and the time it should boil in the pot, and other things, as women can whose hearts are full, yet they must needs be talking.

'Father hath much to say to Humphrey,' I said, after a time; 'he doth not use to like such interruption.'

'Humphrey's conversation is no interruption, my dear. They think the same thoughts and talk the same language. Your father may teach and admonish us, but he can only converse with a scholar such as himself. It is not the least evil of our oppression that he hath been cut off from the society of learned men, in which he used to take so much delight. If Humphrey remains here a little while you shall see your father lose the eager and anxious look which hath of late possessed him. He will talk to Humphrey, and will clear his mind. Then he will be contented again for a while, or, at least, resigned.'

Presently Humphrey came forth. His face was grave and serious. My father came out of the room after him.

'Let us talk more,' he said; 'let us resume our talk. Join me on the hillside, where none can hear us. It is, indeed, the Vision of the Basket of Summer Fruit that we read this morning.' His face was working with some inward excitement, and his eyes were full of a strange light as of a glad conqueror, or of one – forbid the thought! – who was taking a dire revenge. He strode down the garden and out into the lanes.

'Thus,' said my mother, 'will he walk out, and sometimes remain in the woods, walking, preaching to the winds, and swinging his arms the whole day long. Art thou a physician, and canst thou heal him, Humphrey?'

'If the cause be removed, the disease will be cured. Perhaps before long the cause will be removed.'

'The cause – oh! the cause – what is the cause but the tyranny of the Law? He who was ordered by Heaven itself to preach hath been, perforce, silent for five-and-twenty years. His very life hath been taken from him. And you talk of removing the cause!'

'Madam, if the Law suffer him once more to preach freely, would that satisfy him – and you?'

My mother shook her head. 'The Law,' she said, 'now we have a Papist on the throne is far more likely to lead my husband to the stake than to set him free.'

'That shall we shortly see,' said Humphrey.

My mother bent her head over her wheel as one who wishes to talk no more upon the subject. She loved not to speak concerning her husband to any except to me.

I went out into the garden with Humphrey. I was foolish. I laughed at nothing. I talked nonsense. Oh! I was so happy that if a pipe and tabor had been heard in the village I should have danced to the music, like poor Barnaby the night before he ran away. I regarded not the grave and serious face of my companion.

'You are merry, Alice,' said Humphrey.

'It is because you are come back again – you and Robin. Oh! the time has been long and dull – and now you have come back we shall all be happy again. Yes; my father will cease to fret and rage; he will talk Latin and Greek with you; Sir Christopher will be happy only in looking upon you; Madam will have her son home again; and Mr. Boscorel will bring out all the old music for you. Humphrey, it is a happy day that brings you home again.'

'It may be a happy day also for me,' he said; 'but there is much to be done. When the business we have in hand is accomplished' —

'What business, Humphrey?' For he spoke so gravely that it startled me.

'Tis business of which thy father knows, child. Nay; let us not talk of it. I think and hope that it is as good as accomplished now before it is well taken in hand. It is not of that business that I would speak. Alice, thou art so beautiful and so tall' —

'Nay, Humphrey. I must not be flattered.'

'And I so crooked.'

'Humphrey, I will not hear this talk. You, so great a scholar, thus to speak of yourself!'

'Let me speak of myself, my dear. Hear me for a moment.' I declare that I had not the least thought of what he was going to say, my mind being wholly occupied with the idea of Robin.

'I am a physician, as you doubtless know. I am Medicinæ Doctor of Oxford, of Padua, Montpellier, and Leyden. I know all – I may fairly say, and without boasting – that may be learned by one of my age from schools of medicine and from books on the science and practice of healing. I believe, in short, that I am as good a physician as can be found within these seas. I am minded, as soon as tranquillity is restored, to set up as a physician in London, where I have already many friends, and am assured of some support. I think, humbly speaking, that reasonable success awaits me. Alice – you know that I have loved you all my life – will you marry me, crooked as I am? Oh! you cannot but know that I have loved you all my life. Oh! child,' he stretched forth his hands, and in his eyes there was a world of longing and of sadness which moved my heart. 'My dear, the crooked in body have no friends among men; they cannot join in their rough sports, nor drink with them, nor fight with them. They have no chance of happiness but in love, my dear. My dear, give me that chance. I love thee! Oh! my dear, give me that chance?'

Never had I seen Humphrey so moved before. I felt guilty and ashamed in the presence of this passion of which I was the most unworthy cause.

'Oh! Humphrey, stop – for Heaven's sake stop! – because I am but this very morning promised to Robin, who loves me, too – and I love Robin, Humphrey.' He sank back, pale and disordered, and I thought that he would swoon, but he recovered. 'Humphrey, never doubt that I love you, too. But oh! I love Robin, and Robin loves me.'

'Yes, dear – yes, child – yes, Alice,' he said in broken accents. 'I understand. Everything is for Robin – everything for Robin. Why, I might have guessed it! For Robin, the straight and comely figure; for Robin, the strength; for Robin, the inheritance; for Robin, happy love. For me, a crooked body; for me, a feeble frame; for me, the loss of fortune; for me, contempt and poverty; for me, the loss of love – all for Robin – all for Robin!'

'Humphrey, surely thou wouldst not envy or be jealous of Robin!' Never had I seen him thus moved, or heard him thus speak.

He made no answer for a while. Then he said, slowly and painfully: —

'Alice, I am ashamed. Why should not Robin have all? Who am I that I should have anything? Forgive me, child. I have lived in a paradise which fools create for themselves. I have suffered myself to dream that what I ardently desired was possible and even probable. Forgive me. Let me be as before – your brother. Will you forgive me, dear?'

'Oh, Humphrey! there is nothing for me to forgive.'

'Nay, there is much for me to repent of. Forget it then, if there is nothing to forgive.'

'I have forgotten it already, Humphrey.'

'So' – he turned upon me his grave, sweet face (to think of it makes me yearn with tenderness and pity) – 'so, farewell, fond dream! Do not think, my dear, that I envy Robin. 'Twas a sweet dream! Yet, I pray that Heaven in wrath may forget me if ever I suffer this passion of envy to hurt my cousin Robin or thyself!'

So saying, he burst from me with distraction in his face. Poor Humphrey! Alas! when I look back and consider this day, there is a doubt which haunts me. Always had I loved Robin: that is most true. But I had always loved Humphrey: that is most true. What if it had been Humphrey instead of Robin who had arisen in the early morning to find his sweetheart in the garden when the dew was yet upon the grass?

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE DAY

In times of great sorrow the godly person ought to look forward to the never-ending joy and happiness that will follow this short life. Yet we still look backwards to the happy time that is past and can never come again. And then, how happy does it seem to have been in comparison with present affliction!

It pleased Heaven after many trials to restore my earthly happiness – at least, in its principal part, which is earthly love. Some losses – grievous and lamentable – there were which could not be restored. Yet for a long time I had no other comfort (apart from that hope which I trust was never suffered to leave me) than the recollection of one single day in its course, too short, from dewy morn till dusky eve. I began that day with the sweetest joy that a girl can ever experience – namely, the return of her lover and the happiness of learning that he loves her more than ever, with the knowledge that her heart hath gone forth from her and is wholly his. To such a girl the woods and fields become the very garden of Eden; the breath of the wind is as the voice of the Lord blessing another Eve; the very showers are the tears of gladness and gratitude; the birds sing hymns of praise; the leaves of the trees whisper words of love; the brook prattles of kisses; the flowers offer incense; the royal course of the sun in splendour, the glories of the sunrise and sunset, the twinkling stars of night, the shadows of the flying clouds, the pageant of the summer day – these are all prepared for that one happy girl and for her happy lover! Oh, Divine Gift of Love! which thus gives the whole world with its fruits in season to each pair in turn! Nay, doth it not create them anew? What was Adam without Eve? And Eve was created for no other purpose than to be a companion to the man.

I say, then, that the day when Robin took me in his arms and kissed me – not as he had done when we parted and I was still a child, but with the fervent kiss of a lover – was the happiest day in all my life. I say that I have never forgotten that day, but, by recalling any point of it, I remember all: how he held my hand and how he made me confess that I loved him; how we kissed and parted, to meet again. As for poor Humphrey, I hardly gave him so much as a thought of pity. Then, how we wandered along the brook hand in hand!

'Never to part again, my dear,' said the fond lover. 'Here will we live, and here we will die. Let Benjamin become, if he please, Lord Chancellor, and Humphrey a great physician: they will have to live among men in towns, where every other man is a rogue. We shall live in this sweet country place, where the people may be rude but they are not knaves. Why, in that great city of London, where the merchants congregate upon the Exchange and look so full of dignity and wisdom, each man is thinking all the time that, if he fail to overreach his neighbour, that neighbour will overreach him. Who would live such a life when he can pass it in the fields with such a companion as my Alice?'

The pleasures of London had only increased his thirst for the country life. Surely, never was seen a swain more truly rustic in all his thoughts! The fine ladies at the playhouse, with their painted faces, made him, he told me, think of one who wore a russet frock in Somersetshire, and did not paint her sweet face – this was the way he talked. The plays they acted could never even be read, much less witnessed, by that dear girl – so full of wickedness they were. At the assemblies the ladies were jealous of each other, and put on scornful looks when one seemed preferred; at the taverns the men drank and bellowed songs and quarrelled; in the streets they fought and took the wall and swaggered; there was nothing but fighting among the baser sort, with horrid imprecations; at the coffee-houses the politicians argued and quarrelled. Nay, in the very churches the sermons were political arguments, and while the clergyman read his discourse the gallants ogled the ladies. All this and more he told me.

To hear my boy, one would think there was nothing in London but what was wicked and odious. No doubt it is a wicked place; where many men live together, those who are wicked easily find each

other out, and are encouraged in their wickedness. Yet there must be many honest and God-fearing persons, otherwise the Judgment of Heaven would again fall upon that city as it did in the time of the Plague and in the Great Fire.

'My pretty Puritan,' said Robin, 'I am now come away from that place, and I hope never to see it again. Oh! native hills, I salute you! Oh! woods and meadows, I have returned, to wander again in your delightful shade.' Then, which was unusual in my boy, and would have better become Mr. Boscorel or Humphrey, he began to repeat verses. I knew not that he had ever learned any: —

As I range these spacious fields,
Feast on all that Nature yields;
Everything inspires delight,
Charms my smell, my taste, my sight;
Every rural sound I hear
Soothes my soul and tunes my ear.

I do not know where Robin found these verses, but as he repeated them, waving his arm around, I thought that Humphrey himself never made sweeter lines.

He then told me how Humphrey would certainly become the most learned physician of the time, and that he was already master of a polite and dignified manner which would procure him the patronage of the great and the confidence of all. It was pleasant to hear him praise his cousin without jealousy or envy. To be sure, he knew not then – though afterwards I told him – that Humphrey was his rival. Even had he known this, such was the candour of my Robin and the integrity of his soul that he would have praised him even more loudly.

One must not repeat more of the kind and lovely things that the dear boy said while we strolled together by the brook-side.

While thus abroad we walked – 'twas in the forenoon, after Humphrey's visit – Sir Christopher, his grandfather, dressed in his best coat and his gold-laced hat, which he commonly kept for church, and accompanied by Madam, walked from the Manor House through the village till they came to our cottage. Then, with great ceremony, they entered, Sir Christopher bowing low and Madam dropping a deep courtesy to my mother, who sat humbly at her wheel.

'Madam,' said Sir Christopher, 'we would, with your permission, say a few words with the learned Dr. Eykin and yourself.'

My father, who had now returned and was in his room, came forth when he was called. His face had recovered something of its serenity, but his eyes were still troubled. Madam sat down, but Sir Christopher and my father stood.

'Sir,' said his Honour, 'I will proceed straight to the point. My grandson desires to marry your daughter Alice. Robin is a good lad – not a scholar if you will – for his religion, the root of the matter is in him; for the goodness of his heart I will answer; for his habit of life, he hath, so far as we can learn, acquired no vile vices of the city – he doth neither drink nor gamble, nor waste his health and strength in riotous living; and for his means they are my own. All that I have will be his. 'Tis no great estate, but 'twill serve him as it hath served me. Sir, the boy's mother and I have come to ask your daughter in marriage. We know her worth, and we are right well satisfied that our boy hath made so good and wise a choice.'

'They were marrying and giving in marriage when the Flood came; they will be marrying and giving in marriage in the Great Day of the Lord,' said my father.

'Yes, gossip; but that is no reason why they should not now be marrying and giving in marriage.'

'You ask my consent?' said my father. 'This surprises me. The child is too young: she is not yet of marriageable age' —

'Husband, she is nigh upon her twentieth birthday!'

'I thought she had been but twelve or thereabouts! My consent? Why, Sir Christopher, in the eyes of the world this is great condescension on your part to take a penniless girl. I looked, I suppose, to the marriage of my daughter some time – perhaps to a farmer – yet – yet, we are told that a virtuous woman hath a price far above rubies; and that it is she who buildeth up the house, and we are nowhere told that she must bring her husband a purse of gold. Sir Christopher, it would be the blackest ingratitude in us to deny you, even if this thing were (which I say not) against the mind of our daughter.'

'It is not – it is not,' said my mother.

'Wherefore, seeing that the young man is a good man as youths go, though in the matter of the Latin syntax he hath yet much to learn; and that his heart is disposed towards religion, I am right glad that he should take our girl to wife.'

'Bravely said!' cried Sir Christopher. 'Hands upon it, man! And we will have a merry wedding. But to-day I bid you both to come and feast with us. We will have holiday and rejoicing.'

'Yes,' said my father, 'we will feast; though to-morrow comes the Deluge.' I know now what he meant, but at that time we knew not, and it seemed to his Honour a poor way of rejoicing at the return of the boys and the betrothal of his daughter thus to be foretelling woes. 'The Vision of the Plumb-line is before mine eyes,' my father went on. 'Is the land able to bear all this? We talk of feasting and of marriages. Yet a few days, or perhaps already – But we will rejoice together, my old friend and benefactor, we will rejoice together.' With these strange words he turned and went back to his room, and after some tears with my mother, Madam went home and Sir Christopher with her. But in honour to the day he kept on his best coat.

Robin suffered me to go home, but only that I might put on my best frock (I had but two) and make my hair straight, which had been blown into curls, as was the way with my hair. And then, learning from my mother with the utmost satisfaction what had passed, he led me by the hand, as if I were already his bride, and so to the Manor House, where first Sir Christopher saluted me with great kindness, calling me his dear granddaughter, and saying that next to Robin's safe return he asked for nothing more than to see me Robin's wife. And Madam kissed me, with tears in her eyes, and said that she could desire nothing better for her son, and that she was sure I should do my best endeavours to make the boy happy. Then Humphrey, as quietly as if he had not also asked me to be his wife, kissed my hand, and wished me joy; and Mr. Boscorel also kissed me, and declared that Robin ought to be the happiest dog on earth. And so we sat down to our feast.

The conversation at dinner was graver than the occasion demanded. For though our travellers continually answered questions about the foreign lands and peoples they had seen, yet the subject returned always to the condition of the country, and to what would happen.

After dinner we sat in the garden, and the gentlemen began to talk of Right Divine and of Non-Resistance, and here it seemed to me as if Mr. Boscorel was looking on as from an eminence apart. For when he had once stated the texts and arguments upon which the High Church party do mostly rely, he retired and made no further objections, listening in silence while my father held forth upon the duty of rising against wicked princes. At last, however, being challenged to reply by Humphrey, Mr. Boscorel thus made answer:

'The doctrine that subjects may or may not rebel against their Sovereign is one which I regard with interest so long as it remains a question of logic and argument only. Unfortunately, the times are such that we may be called upon to make a practical application of it: in which case there may follow once more civil war, with hard knocks on both sides, and much loss of things temporal. Wherefore to my learned brother's arguments, which I admit to be plausible, I will, for the present, offer no reply, except to pray Heaven that the occasion may not arise of converting a disputed doctrine into a rule of conduct.'

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