

**GEORGE
MACDONALD**

ST. GEORGE
AND ST.
MICHAEL

George MacDonald

St. George and St. Michael

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George MacDonald

St. George and St. Michael

START OF VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

DOROTHY AND RICHARD

It was the middle of autumn, and had rained all day. Through the lozenge-panes of the wide oriel window the world appeared in the slowly gathering dusk not a little dismal. The drops that clung trickling to the dim glass added rain and gloom to the landscape beyond, whither the eye passed, as if vaguely seeking that help in the distance, which the dripping hollyhocks and sodden sunflowers bordering the little lawn, or the honeysuckle covering the wide porch, from which the slow rain dropped ceaselessly upon the pebble-paving below, could not give—steepy slopes, hedge-divided into small fields, some green and dotted with red cattle, others crowded with shocks of bedraggled and drooping corn, which looked suffering and patient.

The room to which the window having this prospect belonged was large and low, with a dark floor of uncarpeted oak. It opened immediately upon the porch, and although a good fire of logs blazed on the hearth, was chilly to the sense of the old man, who, with his feet on the skin of a fallow-deer, sat gazing sadly into the flames, which shone rosy through the thin hands spread out before them. At the opposite corner of the great low-arched chimney sat a lady past the prime of life, but still beautiful, though the beauty was all but merged in the loveliness that rises from the heart to the face of such as have taken the greatest step in life—that is, as the old proverb says, the step out of doors. She was plainly yet rather richly dressed, in garments of an old-fashioned and well-preserved look. Her hair was cut short above her forehead, and frizzed out in bunches of little curls on each side. On her head was a covering of dark stuff, like a nun's veil, which fell behind and on her shoulders. Close round her neck was a string of amber beads, that gave a soft harmonious light to her complexion. Her dark eyes looked as if they found repose there, so quietly did they rest on the face of the old man, who was plainly a clergyman. It was a small, pale, thin, delicately and symmetrically formed face, yet not the less a strong one, with endurance on the somewhat sad brow, and force in the closed lips, while a good conscience looked clear out of the grey eyes.

They had been talking about the fast-gathering tide of opinion which, driven on by the wind of words, had already begun to beat so furiously against the moles and ramparts of Church and kingdom. The execution of lord Strafford was news that had not yet begun to 'hiss the speaker.'

'It is indeed an evil time,' said the old man. 'The world has seldom seen its like.'

'But tell me, master Herbert,' said the lady, 'why comes it in this our day? For our sins or for the sins of our fathers?'

'Be it far from me to presume to set forth the ways of Providence!' returned her guest. 'I meddle not, like some that should be wiser, with the calling of the prophet. It is enough for me to know that ever and again the pride of man will gather to "a mighty and a fearful head," and, like a swollen mill-pond overfed of rains, burst the banks that confine it, whether they be the laws of the land or the ordinances of the church, usurping on the fruitful meadows, the hope of life for man and beast. Alas!' he went on, with a new suggestion from the image he had been using, 'if the beginning of strife be as the letting out of water, what shall be the end of that strife whose beginning is the letting out of blood?'

'Think you then, good sir, that thus it has always been? that such times of fierce ungodly tempest must ever follow upon seasons of peace and comfort?—even as your cousin of holy memory, in his verses concerning the church militant, writes:

"Thus also sin and darkness follow still
The church and sun, with all their power and skill."

'Truly it seems so. But I thank God the days of my pilgrimage are nearly numbered. To judge by the tokens the wise man gives us, the mourners are already going about my streets. The almond-tree flourisheth at least.'

He smiled as he spoke, laying his hand on his grey head.

'But think of those whom we must leave behind us, master Herbert. How will it fare with them?' said the lady in troubled tone, and glancing in the direction of the window.

In the window sat a girl, gazing from it with the look of a child who had uttered all her incantations, and could imagine no abatement in the steady rain-pour.

'We shall leave behind us strong hearts and sound heads too,' said Mr. Herbert. 'And I bethink me there will be none stronger or sounder than those of your young cousins, my late pupils, of whom I hear brave things from Oxford, and in whose affection my spirit constantly rejoices.'

'You will be glad to hear such good news of your relatives, Dorothy,' said the lady, addressing her daughter.

Even as she said the words, the setting sun broke through the mass of grey cloud, and poured over the earth a level flood of radiance, in which the red wheat glowed, and the drops that hung on every ear flashed like diamonds. The girl's hair caught it as she turned her face to answer her mother, and an aureole of brown-tinted gold gleamed for a moment about her head.

'I am glad that you are pleased, madam, but you know I have never seen them—or heard of them, except from master Herbert, who has, indeed, often spoke rare things of them.'

'Mistress Dorothy will still know the reason why,' said the clergyman, smiling, and the two resumed their conversation. But the girl rose, and, turning again to the window, stood for a moment rapt in the transfiguration passing upon the world. The vault of grey was utterly shattered, but, gathering glory from ruin, was hurrying in rosy masses away from under the loftier vault of blue. The ordered shocks upon twenty fields sent their long purple shadows across the flush; and the evening wind, like the sighing that follows departed tears, was shaking the jewels from their feathery tops. The sunflowers and hollyhocks no longer cowered under the tyranny of the rain, but bowed beneath the weight of the gems that adorned them. A flame burned as upon an altar on the top of every tree, and the very pools that lay on the distant road had their message of light to give to the hopeless earth. As she gazed, another hue than that of the sunset, yet rosy too, gradually flushed the face of the maiden. She turned suddenly from the window, and left the room, shaking a shower of diamonds from the honeysuckle as she passed out through the porch upon the gravel walk.

Possibly her elders found her departure a relief, for although they took no notice of it, their talk became more confidential, and was soon mingled with many names both of rank and note, with a familiarity which to a stranger might have seemed out of keeping with the humbler character of their surroundings.

But when Dorothy Vaughan had passed a corner of the house to another garden more ancient in aspect, and in some things quaint even to grotesqueness, she was in front of a portion of the house which indicated a far statelier past—closed and done with, like the rooms within those shuttered windows. The inhabited wing she had left looked like the dwelling of a yeoman farming his own land; nor did this appearance greatly belie the present position of the family. For generations it had been slowly descending in the scale of worldly account, and the small portion of the house occupied by the widow and daughter of sir Ringwood Vaughan was larger than their means could match with

correspondent outlay. Such, however, was the character of lady Vaughan, that, although she mingled little with the great families in the neighbourhood, she was so much respected, that she would have been a welcome visitor to most of them.

The reverend Mr. Matthew Herbert was a clergyman from the Welsh border, a man of some note and influence, who had been the personal friend both of his late relative George Herbert and of the famous Dr. Donne. Strongly attached to the English church, and recoiling with disgust from the practices of the puritans—as much, perhaps, from refinement of taste as abhorrence of schism—he had never yet fallen into such a passion for episcopacy as to feel any cordiality towards the schemes of the archbishop. To those who knew him his silence concerning it was a louder protest against the policy of Laud than the fiercest denunciations of the puritans. Once only had he been heard to utter himself unguardedly in respect of the primate, and that was amongst friends, and after the second glass permitted of his cousin George. 'Tut! laud me no Laud,' he said. 'A skipping bishop is worse than a skipping king.' Once also he had been overheard murmuring to himself by way of consolation, 'Bishops pass; the church remains.' He had been a great friend of the late sir Ringwood; and although the distance from his parish was too great to be travelled often, he seldom let a year go by without paying a visit to his friend's widow and daughter.

Turning her back on the cenotaph of their former greatness, Dorothy dived into a long pleached alley, careless of the drip from overhead, and hurrying through it came to a circular patch of thin grass, rounded by a lofty hedge of yew-trees, in the midst of which stood what had once been a sundial. It mattered little, however, that only the stump of a gnomon was left, seeing the hedge around it had grown to such a height in relation to the diameter of the circle, that it was only for a very brief hour or so in the middle of a summer's day, when, of all periods, the passage of Time seems least to concern humanity, that it could have served to measure his march. The spot had, indeed, a time-forsaken look, as if it lay buried in the bosom of the past, and the present had forgotten it.

Before emerging from the alley, she slackened her pace, half-stopped, and, stooping a little in her tucked-up skirt, threw a bird-like glance around the opener space; then stepping into it, she looked up to the little disc of sky, across which the clouds, their roses already withered, sailed dim and grey once more, while behind them the stars were beginning to recall their half-forgotten message from regions unknown to men. A moment, and she went up to the dial, stood there for another moment, and was on the point of turning to leave the spot, when, as if with one great bound, a youth stood between her and the entrance of the alley.

'Ah ha, mistress Dorothy, you do not escape me so!' he cried, spreading out his arms as if to turn back some runaway creature.

But mistress Dorothy was startled, and mistress Dorothy did not choose to be startled, and therefore mistress Dorothy was dignified, if not angry.

'I do not like such behaviour, Richard,' she said. 'It ill suits with the time. Why did you hide behind the hedge, and then leap forth so rudely?'

'I thought you saw me,' answered the youth. 'Pardon my heedlessness, Dorothy. I hope I have not startled you too much.'

As he spoke he stooped over the hand he had caught, and would have carried it to his lips, but the girl, half-pettishly, snatched it away, and, with a strange mixture of dignity, sadness, and annoyance in her tone, said—

'There has been something too much of this, Richard, and I begin to be ashamed of it.'

'Ashamed!' echoed the youth. 'Of what? There is nothing but me to be ashamed of, and what can I have done since yesterday?'

'No, Richard; I am not ashamed of you, but I am ashamed of—of—this way of meeting—and—and—'

'Surely that is strange, when we can no more remember the day in which we have not met than that in which we met first! No, dear Dorothy—'

'It is not our meeting, Richard; and if you would but think as honestly as you speak, you would not require to lay upon me the burden of explanation. It is this foolish way we have got into of late—kissing hands—and—and—always meeting by the old sun-dial, or in some other over-quiet spot. Why do you not come to the house? My mother would give you the same welcome as any time these last—how many years, Richard?'

'Are you quite sure of that, Dorothy?'

'Well—I did fancy she spoke with something more of ceremony the lasttime you met. But, consider, she has seen so much less of you of late. Yet I am sure she has all but a mother's love in her heart towards you. For your mother was dear to her as her own soul.'

'I would it were so, Dorothy! For then, perhaps, your mother would not shrink from being my mother too. When we are married, Dorothy—'

'Married!' exclaimed the girl. 'What of marrying, indeed!' And she turned sideways from him with an indignant motion. 'Richard,' she went on, after a marked and yet but momentary pause, for the youth had not had time to say a word, 'it has been very wrong in me to meet you after this fashion. I know it now, for see what such things lead to! If you knew it, you have done me wrong.'

'Dearest Dorothy!' exclaimed the youth, taking her hand again, of which this time she seemed hardly aware, 'did you not know from the very vanished first that I loved you with all my heart, and that to tell you so would have been to tell the sun that he shines warm at noon in midsummer? And I did think you had a little—something for me, Dorothy, your old playmate, that you did not give to every other acquaintance. Think of the houses we have built and the caves we have dug together—of our rabbits, and urchins, and pigeons, and peacocks!'

'We are children no longer,' returned Dorothy. 'To behave as if we were would be to keep our eyes shut after we are awake. I like you, Richard, you know; but why this—where is the use of all this—new sort of thing? Come up with me to the house, where master Herbert is now talking to my mother in the large parlour. The good man will be glad to see you.'

'I doubt it, Dorothy. He and my father, as I am given to understand, think so differently in respect of affairs now pending betwixt the parliament and the king, that—'

'It were more becoming, Richard, if the door of your lips opened to the king first, and let the parliament follow.'

'Well said!' returned the youth with a smile. 'But let it be my excuse that I speak as I am wont to hear.'

The girl's hand had lain quiet in that of the youth, but now it started from it like a scared bird. She stepped two paces back, and drew herself up.

'And you, Richard?' she said, interrogatively.

'What would you ask, Dorothy?' returned the youth, taking a step nearer, to which she responded by another backward ere she replied.

'I would know whom you choose to serve—whether God or Satan; whether you are of those who would set at nought the laws of the land—'

'Insist on their fulfilment, they say, by king as well as people,' interrupted Richard.

'They would tear their mother in pieces—'

'Their mother!' repeated Richard, bewildered.

'Their mother, the church,' explained Dorothy.

'Oh!' said Richard. 'Nay, they would but cast out of her the wolves in sheep's clothing that devour the lambs.'

The girl was silent. Anger glowed on her forehead and flashed from her grey eyes. She stood one moment, then turned to leave him, but half turned again to say scornfully—

'I must go at once to my mother! I knew not I had left her with such a wolf as master Herbert is like to prove!'

'Master Herbert is no bishop, Dorothy!'

'The bishops, then, are the wolves, master Heywood?' said the girl, with growing indignation.

'Dear Dorothy, I am but repeating what I hear. For my own part, I know little of these matters. And what are they to us if we love one another?'

'I tell you I am a child no longer,' flamed Dorothy.

'You were seventeen last St. George's Day, and I shall be nineteen next St. Michael's.'

'St. George for merry England!' cried Dorothy.

'St. Michael for the Truth!' cried Richard.

'So be it. Good-bye, then,' said the girl, going.

'What DO you mean, Dorothy?' said Richard; and she stood to hear, but with her back towards him, and, as it were, hovering midway in a pace. 'Did not St. Michael also slay his dragon? Why should the knights part company? Believe me, Dorothy, I care more for a smile from you than for all the bishops in the church, or all the presbyters out of it.'

'You take needless pains to prove yourself a foolish boy, Richard; and if I go not to my mother at once, I fear I shall learn to despise you—which I would not willingly.'

'Despise me! Do you take me for a coward then, Dorothy?'

'I say not that. I doubt not, for the matter of swords and pistols, you are much like other male creatures; but I protest I could never love a man who preferred my company to the service of his king.'

She glided into the alley and sped along its vaulted twilight, her white dress gleaming and clouding by fits as she went.

The youth stood for a moment petrified, then started to overtake her, but stood stock-still at the entrance of the alley, and followed her only with his eyes as she went.

When Dorothy reached the house, she did not run up to her room that she might weep unseen. She was still too much annoyed with Richard to regret having taken such leave of him. She only swallowed down a little balloonful of sobs, and went straight into the parlour, where her mother and Mr. Herbert still sat, and resumed her seat in the bay window. Her heightened colour, an occasional toss of her head backwards, like that with which a horse seeks ease from the bearing-rein, generally followed by a renewal of the attempt to swallow something of upward tendency, were the only signs of her discomposure, and none of them were observed by her mother or her guest. Could she have known, however, what feelings had already begun to rouse themselves in the mind of him whose boyishness was an offence to her, she would have found it more difficult to keep such composure.

Dorothy's was a face whose forms were already so decided that, should no softening influences from the central regions gain the ascendancy, beyond a doubt age must render it hard and unlovely. In all the roundness and freshness of girlhood, it was handsome rather than beautiful, beautiful rather than lovely. And yet it was strongly attractive, for it bore clear indication of a nature to be trusted. If her grey eyes were a little cold, they were honest eyes, with a rare look of steadfastness; and if her lips were a little too closely pressed, it was clearly from any cause rather than bad temper. Neither head, hands, nor feet were small, but they were fine in form and movement; and for the rest of her person, tall and strong as Richard was, Dorothy looked further advanced in the journey of life than he.

She needed hardly, however, have treated his indifference to the politics of the time with so much severity, seeing her own acquaintance with and interest in them dated from that same afternoon, during which, from lack of other employment, and the weariness of a long morning of slow, dismal rain, she had been listening to Mr. Herbert as he dwelt feelingly on the arrogance of puritan encroachment, and the grossness of presbyterian insolence both to kingly prerogative and episcopal authority, and drew a touching picture of the irritant thwartings and pitiful insults to which the gentle monarch was exposed in his attempts to support the dignity of his divine office, and to cast its protecting skirt over the defenceless church; and if it was with less sympathy that he spoke of the fears which haunted the captive metropolitan, Dorothy at least could detect no hidden sarcasm in the tone in which he expressed his hope that Laud's devotion to the beauty of holiness might not result in the dignity of martyrdom, as might well be feared by those who were assured that the whole

guilt of Strafford lay in his return to his duty, and his subsequent devotion to the interests of his royal master: to all this the girl had listened, and her still sufficiently uncertain knowledge of the affairs of the nation had, ere the talk was over, blossomed in a vague sense of partizanship. It was chiefly her desire after the communion of sympathy with Richard that had led her into the mistake of such a hasty disclosure of her new feelings.

But her following words had touched him—whether to fine issues or not remained yet poised on the knife-edge of the balancing will. His first emotion partook of anger. As soon as she was out of sight a spell seemed broken, and words came.

'A boy, indeed, mistress Dorothy!' he said. 'If ever it come to what certain persons prophesy, you may wish me in truth, and that for the sake of your precious bishops, the boy you call me now. Yes, you are right, mistress, though I would it had been another who told me so! Boy indeed I am—or have been—without a thought in my head but of her. The sound of my father's voice has been but as the wind of the winnowing fan. In me it has found but chaff. If you will have me take a side, though, you will find me so far worthy of you that I shall take the side that seems to me the right one, were all the fair Dorothies of the universe on the other. In very truth I should be somewhat sorry to find the king and the bishops in the right, lest my lady should flatter herself and despise me that I had chosen after her showing, forsooth! This is master Herbert's doing, for never before did I hear her speak after such fashion.'

While he thus spoke with himself, he stood, like the genius of the spot, a still dusky figure on the edge of the night, into which his dress of brown velvet, rich and sombre at once in the sunlight, all but merged. Nearly for the first time in his life he was experiencing the difficulty of making up his mind, not, however, upon any of the important questions, his inattention to which had exposed him to such sudden and unexpected severity, but merely as to whether he should seek her again in the company of her mother and Mr. Herbert, or return home. The result of his deliberation, springing partly, no doubt, from anger, but that of no very virulent type, was, that he turned his back on the alley, passed through a small opening in the yew hedge, crossed a neglected corner of woodland, by ways better known to him than to any one else, and came out upon the main road leading to the gates of his father's park.

CHAPTER II

RICHARD AND HIS FATHER

Richard Heywood, as to bodily fashion, was a tall and already powerful youth. The clear brown of his complexion spoke of plentiful sunshine and air. A merry sparkle in the depths of his hazel eyes relieved the shadows of rather notably heavy lids, themselves heavily overbrowed—with a suggestion of character which had not yet asserted itself to those who knew him best. Correspondingly, his nose, although of a Greek type, was more notable for substance than clearness of line or modelling; while his lips had a boyish fulness along with a definiteness of bow-like curve, which manly resolve had not yet begun to compress and straighten out. His chin was at least large enough not to contradict the promise of his face; his shoulders were square, and his chest and limbs well developed: altogether it was at present a fair tabernacle—of whatever sort the indwelling divinity might yet turn out, fashioning it further after his own nature.

His father and he were the only male descendants of an old Monmouthshire family, of neither Welsh nor Norman, but as pure Saxon blood as might be had within the clip of the ocean. Roger, the father, had once only or twice in his lifetime been heard boast, in humorous fashion, that although but a simple squire, he could, on this side the fog of tradition, which nearer or further shrouds all origin, count a longer descent than any of the titled families in the county, not excluding the earl of Worcester himself. His character also would have gone far to support any assertion he might have chosen to make as to the purity of his strain. A notable immobility of nature—his friends called it firmness, his enemies obstinacy; a seeming disregard of what others might think of him; a certain sternness of manner—an unreadiness, as it were, to open his door to the people about him; a searching regard with which he was wont to peruse the face of anyone holding talk with him, when he seemed always to give heed to the looks rather than the words of him who spoke; these peculiarities had combined to produce a certain awe of him in his inferiors, and a dislike, not unavowed, in his equals. With his superiors he came seldom in contact, and to them his behaviour was still more distant and unbending. But, although from these causes he was far from being a favourite in the county, he was a man of such known and acknowledged probity that, until of late, when party spirit ran high and drew almost everybody, whether of consequence or not, to one side or the other, there was nobody who would not have trusted Roger Heywood to the uttermost. Even now, foes as well as friends acknowledged that he was to be depended upon; while his own son looked up to him with a reverence that in some measure overshadowed his affection. Such a character as this had necessarily been slow in formation, and the opinions which had been modified by it and had reacted upon it, had been as unalterably as deliberately adopted. But affairs had approached a crisis between king and parliament before one of his friends knew that there were in his mind any opinions upon them in process of formation—so reserved and monosyllabic had been his share in any conversation upon topics which had for a long time been growing every hour of more and more absorbing interest to all men either of consequence, intelligence, property, or adventure. At last, however, it had become clear, to the great annoyance of not a few amongst his neighbours, that Heywood's leanings were to the parliament. But he had never yet sought to influence his son in regard to the great questions at issue.

His house was one of those ancient dwellings which have grown under the hands to fit the wants of successive generations, and look as if they had never been other than old; two-storied at most, and many-gabled, with marvellous accretions and projections, the haunts of yet more wonderful shadows. There, in a room he called his study, shabby and small, containing a library more notable for quality and selection than size, Richard the next morning sought and found him.

'Father!' he said, entering with some haste after the usual request for admission.

'I am here, my son,' answered Roger, without lifting his eyes from the small folio in which he was reading.

'I want to know, father, whether, when men differ, a man is bound to take a side.'

'Nay, Richard, but a man is bound NOT to take a side save upon reasons well considered and found good.'

'It may be, father, if you had seen fit to send me to Oxford, I should have been better able to judge now.'

'I had my reasons, son Richard. Readier, perhaps, you might have been, but fitter—no. Tell me what points you have in question.'

'That I can hardly say, sir. I only know there are points at issue betwixt king and parliament which men appear to consider of mightiest consequence. Will you tell me, father, why you have never instructed me in these affairs of church and state? I trust it is not because you count me unworthy of your confidence.'

'Far from it, my son. My silence hath respect to thy hearing and to the judgment yet unawakened in thee. Who would lay in the arms of a child that which must crush him to the earth? Years did I take to meditate ere I resolved, and I know not yet if thou hast in thee the power of meditation.'

'At least, father, I could try to understand, if you would unfold your mind.'

'When you know what the matters at issue are, my son,—that is, when you are able to ask me questions worthy of answer, I shall be ready to answer thee, so far as my judgment will reach.'

'I thank you, father. In the meantime I am as one who knocks, and the door is not opened unto him.'

'Rather art thou as one who loiters on the door-step, and lifts up neither ring nor voice.'

'Surely, sir, I must first know the news.'

'Thou hast ears; keep them open. But at least you know, my son, that on the twelfth day of May last my lord of Strafford lost his head.'

'Who took it from him, sir? King or parliament?'

'Even that might be made a question; but I answer, the High Court of Parliament, my son.'

'Was the judgment a right one or a wrong, sir? Did he deserve the doom?'

'Ah, there you put a question indeed! Many men say RIGHT, and many men say WRONG. One man, I doubt me much, was wrong in the share HE bore therein.'

'Who was he, sir?'

'Nay, nay, I will not forestall thine own judgment. But, in good sooth, I might be more ready to speak my mind, were it not that I greatly doubt some of those who cry loudest for liberty. I fear that had they once the power, they would be the first to trample her under foot. Liberty with some men means MY liberty to do, and THINE to suffer. But all in good time, my son! The dawn is nigh.'

'You will tell me at least, father, what is the bone of contention?'

'My son, where there is contention, a bone shall not fail. It is but a leg-bone now; it will be a rib to-morrow, and by and by doubtless it will be the skull itself.'

'If you care for none of these things, sir, will not master Flowerdew have a hard name for you? I know not what it means, but it sounds of the gallows,' said Richard, looking rather doubtful as to how his father might take it.

'Possibly, my son, I care more for the contention than the bone, for while thieves quarrel honest men go their own ways. But what ignorance I have kept thee in, and yet left thee to bear the reproach of a puritan!' said the father, smiling grimly. 'Thou meanest master Flowerdew would call me a Gallio, and thou takest the Roman proconsul for a gallows-bird! Verily thou art not destined to prolong the renown of thy race for letters. I marvel what thy cousin Thomas would say to the darkness of thy ignorance.'

'See what comes of not sending me to Oxford, sir: I know not who is my cousin Thomas.'

'A man both of learning and wisdom, my son, though I fear me his diet is too strong for the stomach of this degenerate age, while the dressing of his dishes is, on the other hand, too cunningly

devised for their liking. But it is no marvel thou shouldest be ignorant of him, being as yet no reader of books. Neither is he a close kinsman, being of the Lincolnshire branch of the Heywoods.'

'Now I know whom you mean, sir; but I thought he was a writer of stage plays, and such things as on all sides I hear called foolish, and mummery.'

'There be among those who call themselves the godly, who will endure no mummery but of their own inventing. Cousin Thomas hath written a multitude of plays, but that he studied at Cambridge, and to good purpose, this book, which I was reading when you entered, bears good witness.'

'What is the book, father?'

'Stay, I will read thee a portion. The greater part is of learning rather than wisdom—the gathered opinions of the wise and good concerning things both high and strange; but I will read thee some verses bearing his own mind, which is indeed worthy to be set down with theirs.'

He read that wonderful poem ending the second Book of the Hierarchy, and having finished it looked at his son.

'I do not understand it, sir,' said Richard.

'I did not expect you would,' returned his father. 'Here, take the book, and read for thyself. If light should dawn upon the page, as thou readest, perhaps thou wilt understand what I now say—that I care but little for the bones concerning which king and parliament contend, but I do care that men—thou and I, my son—should be free to walk in any path whereon it may please God to draw us. Take the book, my son, and read again. But read no farther save with caution, for it dealeth with many things wherein old Thomas is too readily satisfied with hearsay for testimony.'

Richard took the small folio and carried it to his own chamber, where he read and partly understood the poem. But he was not ripe enough either in philosophy or religion for such meditations. Having executed his task, for as such he regarded it, he turned to look through the strange mixture of wisdom and credulity composing the volume. One tale after another, of witch, and demon, and magician, firmly believed and honestly recorded by his worthy relative, drew him on, until he sat forgetful of everything but the world of marvels before him—to none of which, however, did he accord a wider credence than sprung from the interest of the moment. He was roused by a noise of quarrel in the farmyard, towards which his window looked, and, laying aside reading, hastened out to learn the cause.

CHAPTER III THE WITCH

It was a bright Autumn morning. A dry wind had been blowing all night through the shocks, and already some of the farmers had begun to carry to their barns the sheaves which had stood hopelessly dripping the day before. Ere Richard reached the yard, he saw, over the top of the wall, the first load of wheat-sheaves from the harvest-field, standing at the door of the barn, and high-uplifted thereon the figure of Faithful Stopchase, one of the men, a well-known frequenter of puritan assemblies all the country round, who was holding forth, and that with much freedom, in tones that sounded very like vituperation, if not malediction, against some one invisible. He soon found that the object of his wrath was a certain Welshwoman, named Rees, by her neighbours considered objectionable on the ground of witchcraft, against whom this much could with truth be urged, that she was so far from thinking it disreputable, that she took no pains to repudiate the imputation of it. Her dress, had it been judged by eyes of our day, would have been against her, but it was only old-fashioned, not even antiquated: common in Queen Elizabeth's time, it lingered still in remote country places—a gown of dark stuff, made with a long waist and short skirt over a huge farthingale; a ruff which stuck up and out, high and far, from her throat; and a conical Welsh hat invading the heavens. Stopchase, having descried her in the yard, had taken the opportunity of breaking out upon her in language as far removed from that of conventional politeness as his puritanical principles would permit. Doubtless he considered it a rebuking of Satan, but forgot that, although one of the godly, he could hardly on that ground lay claim to larger privilege in the use of bad language than the archangel Michael. For the old woman, although too prudent to reply, she scorned to flee, and stood regarding him fixedly. Richard sought to interfere and check the torrent of abuse, but it had already gathered so much head, that the man seemed even unaware of his attempt. Presently, however, he began to quail in the midst of his storming. The green eyes of the old woman, fixed upon him, seemed to be slowly fascinating him. At length, in the very midst of a volley of scriptural epithets, he fell suddenly silent, turned from her, and, with the fork on which he had been leaning, began to pitch the sheaves into the barn. The moment he turned his back, Goody Rees turned hers, and walked slowly away.

She had scarcely reached the yard gate, however, before the cow-boy, a delighted spectator and auditor of the affair, had loosed the fierce watch-dog, which flew after her. Fortunately Richard saw what took place, but the animal, which was generally chained up, did not heed his recall, and the poor woman had already felt his teeth, when Richard got him by the throat. She looked pale and frightened, but kept her composure wonderfully, and when Richard, who was prejudiced in her favour from having once heard Dorothy speak friendlily to her, expressed his great annoyance that she should have been so insulted on his father's premises, received his apologies with dignity and good faith. He dragged the dog back, rechained him, and was in the act of administering sound and righteous chastisement to the cow-boy, when Stopchase staggered, tumbled off the cart, and falling upon his head, lay motionless. Richard hurried to him, and finding his neck twisted and his head bent to one side, concluded he was killed. The woman who had accompanied him from the field stood for a moment uttering loud cries, then, suddenly bethinking herself, sped after the witch. Richard was soon satisfied he could do nothing for him.

Presently the woman came running back, followed at a more leisurely pace by Goody Rees, whose countenance was grave, and, even to the twitch about her mouth, inscrutable. She walked up to where the man lay, looked at him for a moment or two as if considering his case, then sat down on the ground beside him, and requested Richard to move him so that his head should lie on her lap. This done, she laid hold of it, with a hand on each ear, and pulled at his neck, at the same time turning his head in the right direction. There came a snap, and the neck was straight. She then began to stroke it with gentle yet firm hand. In a few moments he began to breathe. As soon as she saw

his chest move, she called for a wisp of hay, and having shaped it a little, drew herself from under his head, substituting the hay. Then rising without a word she walked from the yard. Stopchase lay for a while, gradually coming to himself, then scrambled all at once to his feet, and staggered to his pitchfork, which lay where it had fallen. 'It is of the mercy of the Lord that I fell not upon the prongs of the pitchfork,' he said, as he slowly stooped and lifted it. He had no notion that he had lain more than a few seconds; and of the return of Goody Rees and her ministrations he knew nothing; while such an awe of herself and her influences had she left behind her, that neither the woman nor the cow-boy ventured to allude to her, and even Richard, influenced partly, no doubt, by late reading, was more inclined to think than speak about her. For the man himself, little knowing how close death had come to him, but inwardly reproached because of his passionate outbreak, he firmly believed that he had had a narrow escape from the net of the great fowler, whose decoy the old woman was, commissioned not only to cause his bodily death, but to work in him first such a frame of mind as should render his soul the lawful prey of the enemy.

CHAPTER IV A CHAPTER OF FOOLS

The same afternoon, as it happened, a little company of rustics, who had just issued from the low hatch-door of the village inn, stood for a moment under the sign of the Crown and Mitre, which swung huskily creaking from the bough of an ancient thorn tree, then passed on to the road, and took their way together.

'Hope you then,' said one of them, as continuing their previous conversation, 'that we shall escape unhurt? It is a parlous business. Not as one of us is afeard as I knows on. But the old earl, he do have a most unregenerate temper, and you had better look to 't, my masters.'

'I tell thee, master Upstill, it's not the old earl as I'm afeard on, but the young lord. For thou knows as well as ere a one it be not without cause that men do call him a wizard, for a wizard he be, and that of the worst sort.'

'We shall be out again afore sundown, shannot we?' said another. 'That I trust.'

'Up to the which hour the High Court of Parliament assembled will have power to protect its own—eh, John Croning?'

'Nay, that I cannot tell. It be a parlous job, and for mine own part, whether for the love I bear to the truth, or the hatred I cherish toward the scarlet Antichrist, with her seven tails—'

'Tush, tush, John! Seven heads, man, and ten horns. Those are the numbers master Flowerdew read.'

'Nay, I know not for your horns; but for the rest I say seven tails. Did not honest master Flowerdew set forth unto us last meeting that the scarlet woman sat upon seven hills—eh? Have with you there, master Sycamore!'

'Well, for the sake of sound argument, I grant you. But we ha' got to do with no heads nor no tails, neither—save and except as you may say the sting is in the tail; and then, or I greatly mistake, it's not seven times seven as will serve to count the stings, come of the tails what may.'

'Very true,' said another; 'it be the stings and not the tails we want news of. But think you his lordship will yield them up without gainsaying to us the messengers of the High Parliament now assembled?'

'For mine own part,' said John Croning, 'though I fear it come of the old Adam yet left in me, I do count it a sorrowful thing that the earl should be such a vile recusant. He never fails with a friendly word, or it may be a jest—a foolish jest—but honest, for any one gentle or simple he may meet. More than once has he boarded me in that fashion. What do you think he said to me, now, one day as I was a mowin' of the grass in the court, close by the white horse that spout up the water high as a house from his nose-drills? Says he to me—for he come down the grand staircase, and steps out and spies me at the work with my old scythe, and come across to me, and says he, "Why, Thomas," says he, not knowin' of my name, "Why, Thomas," says he, "you look like old Time himself a mowing of us all down," says he. "For sure, my lord," says I, "your lordship reads it aright, for all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field." He look humble at that, for, great man as he be, his earthly tabernacle, though more than sizeable, is but a frail one, and that he do know. And says he, "Where did you read that, Thomas?" "I am not a larned man, please your lordship," says I, "and I cannot honestly say I read it nowheres, but I heerd the words from a book your lordship have had news of: they do call it the Holy Bible. But they tell me that they of your lordship's persuasion like it not." "You are very much mistaken there, Thomas," says he. "I read my Bible most days, only not the English Bible, which is full of errors, but the Latin, which is all as God gave it," says he. And thereby I had not where to answer withal.'

'I fear you proved a poor champion of the truth, master Croning.'

'Confess now, Cast-down Upstill, had he not both sun and wind of me—standing, so to say, on his own hearth-stone? Had it not been so, I could have called hard names with the best of you, though that is by rights the gift of the preachers of the truth. See how the good master Flowerdew excelleth therein, sprinkling them abroad from the watering-pot of the gospel. Verily, when my mind is too feeble to grasp his argument, my memory lays fast hold upon the hard names, and while I hold by them, I have it all in a nutshell.'

Fortified occasionally by a pottle of ale, and keeping their spirits constantly stirred by much talking, they had been all day occupied in searching the Catholic houses of the neighbourhood for arms. What authority they had for it never came to be clearly understood. Plainly they believed themselves possessed of all that was needful, or such men would never have dared it. As it was, they prosecuted it with such a bold front, that not until they were gone did it occur to some, who had yielded what arms they possessed, to question whether they had done wisely in acknowledging such fellows as parliamentary officials without demanding their warrant. Their day's gleanings up to this point—of swords and pikes, guns and pistols, they had left in charge of the host of the inn whence they had just issued, and were now bent on crowning their day's triumph with a supreme act of daring—the renown of which they enlarged in their own imaginations, while undermining the courage needful for its performance, by enhancing its terrors as they went.

At length two lofty hexagonal towers appeared, and the consciousness that the final test of their resolution drew nigh took immediate form in a fluttering at the heart, which, however, gave no outward sign but that of silence; and indeed they were still too full of the importance of unaccustomed authority to fear any contempt for it on the part of others.

It happened that at this moment Raglan Castle was full of merry-making upon occasion of the marriage of one of lady Herbert's waiting-gentlewomen to an officer of the household; and in these festivities the earl of Worcester and all his guests were taking a part.

Among the numerous members of the household was one who, from being a turnspit, had risen, chiefly in virtue of an immovably lugubrious expression of countenance, to be the earl's fool. From this peculiarity his fellow-servants had given him the nickname of The Hangman; but the man himself had chosen the role of a puritan parson, as affording the best ground-work for the display of a humour suitable to the expression of countenance with which his mother had endowed him. That mother was Goody Rees, concerning whom, as already hinted, strange things were whispered. In the earlier part of his career the fool had not unfrequently found his mother's reputation a sufficient shelter from persecution; and indeed there might have been reason to suppose that it was for her son's sake she encouraged her own evil repute, a distinction involving considerable risk, seeing the time had not yet arrived when the disbelief in such powers was sufficiently advanced for the safety of those reported to possess them. In her turn, however, she ran a risk somewhat less than ordinary from the fact that her boy was a domestic in the family of one whose eldest son, the heir to the earldom, lay under a similar suspicion; for not a few of the household were far from satisfied that lord Herbert's known occupations in the Yellow Tower were not principally ostensible, and that he and his man had nothing to do with the black art, or some other of the many regions of occult science in which the ambition after unlawful power may hopefully exercise itself.

Upon occasion of a family fete, merriment was in those days carried further, on the part of both masters and servants, than in the greatly altered relations and conditions of the present day would be desirable, or, indeed, possible. In this instance, the fun broke out in the arranging of a mock marriage between Thomas Rees, commonly called Tom Fool, and a young girl who served under the cook. Half the jest lay in the contrast between the long face of the bridegroom, both congenitally and wilfully miserable, and that of the bride, broad as a harvest moon, and rosy almost to purple. The bridegroom never smiled, and spoke with his jaws rather than his lips; while the bride seldom uttered a syllable without grinning from ear to ear, and displaying a marvellous appointment of huge and brilliant teeth. Entering solemnly into the joke, Tom expressed himself willing to marry the girl, but represented,

as an insurmountable difficulty, that he had no clothes for the occasion. Thereupon the earl, drawing from his pocket his bunch of keys, directed him to go and take what he liked from his wardrobe. Now the earl was a man of large circumference, and the fool as lank in person as in countenance.

Tom took the keys and was some time gone, during which many conjectures were hazarded as to the style in which he would choose to appear. When he re-entered the great hall, where the company was assembled, the roar of laughter which followed his appearance made the glass of its great cupola ring again. For not merely was he dressed in the earl's beaver hat and satin cloak, splendid with plush and gold and silver lace, but he had indued a corresponding suit of his clothes as well, even to his silk stockings, garters, and roses, and with the help of many pillows and other such farcing, so filled the garments which otherwise had hung upon him like a shawl from a peg, and made of himself such a 'sweet creature of bombast' that, with ludicrous unlikeness of countenance, he bore in figure no distant resemblance to the earl himself.

Meantime lady Elizabeth had been busy with the scullery-maid, whom she had attired in a splendid brocade of her grandmother's, with all suitable belongings of ruff, high collar, and lace wings, such as Queen Elizabeth is represented with in Oliver's portrait. Upon her appearance, a few minutes after Tom's, the laughter broke out afresh, in redoubled peals, and the merriment was at its height, when the warder of one of the gates entered and whispered in his master's ear the arrival of the bumpkins, and their mission announced, he informed his lordship, with all the importance and dignity they knew how to assume. The earl burst into a fresh laugh. But presently it quavered a little and ceased, while over the amusement still beaming on his countenance gathered a slight shade of anxiety, for who could tell what tempest such a mere whirling of straws might not forerun?

A few words of the warder's had reached Tom where he stood a little aside, his solemn countenance radiating disapproval of the tumultuous folly around him. He took three strides towards the earl.

'Wherein lieth the new jest?' he asked, with dignity.

'A set of country louts, my lord,' answered the earl, 'are at the gate, affirming the right of search in this your lordship's house of Raglan.'

'For what?'

'Arms, my lord.'

'And wherefore? On what ground?'

'On the ground that your lordship is a vile recusant—a papist, and therefore a traitor, no doubt, although they use not the word,' said the earl.

'I shall be round with them,' said Tom, embracing the assumed proportions in front of him, and turning to the door.

Ere the earl had time to conceive his intent, he had hurried from the hall, followed by fresh shouts of laughter. For he had forgotten to stuff himself behind, and, when the company caught sight of his back as he strode out, the tenuity of the foundation for such a 'huge hill of flesh' was absurd as Falstaff's ha'p'orth of bread to the 'intolerable deal of sack.'

But the next moment the earl had caught the intended joke, and although a trifle concerned about the affair, was of too mirth-loving a nature to interfere with Tom's project, the result of which would doubtless be highly satisfactory—at least to those not primarily concerned. He instantly called for silence, and explained to the assembly what he believed to be Tom Fool's intent, and as there was nothing to be seen from the hall, the windows of which were at a great height from the floor, and Tom's scheme would be fatally imperilled by the visible presence of spectators, from some at least of whom gravity of demeanour could not be expected, gave hasty instructions to several of his sons and daughters to disperse the company to upper windows having a view of one or the other court, for no one could tell where the fool's humour might find its principal arena. The next moment, in the plain dress of rough brownish cloth, which he always wore except upon state occasions, he followed the fool to the gate, where he found him talking through the wicket-grating to the rustics,

who, having passed drawbridge and portcullises, of which neither the former had been raised nor the latter lowered for many years, now stood on the other side of the gate demanding admittance. In the parley, Tom Fool was imitating his master's voice and every one of the peculiarities of his speech to perfection, addressing them with extreme courtesy, as if he took them for gentlemen of no ordinary consideration,—a point in his conception of his part which he never forgot throughout the whole business. To the dismay of his master he was even more than admitting, almost boasting, that there was an enormous quantity of weapons in the castle—sufficient at least to arm ten thousand horsemen!—a prodigious statement, for, at the uttermost, there was not more than the tenth part of that amount—still a somewhat larger provision no doubt than the intruders had expected to find! The pseudo-earl went on to say that the armoury consisted of one strong room only, the door of which was so cunningly concealed and secured that no one but himself knew where it was, or if found could open it. But such he said was his respect to the will of the most august parliament, that he would himself conduct them to the said armoury, and deliver over upon the spot into their safe custody the whole mass of weapons to carry away with them. And thereupon he proceeded to open the gate.

By this time the door of the neighbouring guard-room was crowded with the heads of eager listeners, but the presence of the earl kept them quiet, and at a sign from him they drew back ere the men entered. The earl himself took a position where he would be covered by the opening wicket.

Tom received them into bodily presence with the notification that, having suspected their object, he had sent all his people out of the way, in order to avoid the least danger of a broil. Bowing to them with the utmost politeness as they entered, he requested them to step forward into the court while he closed the wicket behind them, but took the opportunity of whispering to one of the men just inside the door of the guardhouse, who, the moment Tom had led the rustics away, approached the earl, and told him what he had said.

'What can the rascal mean?' said the earl to himself; but he told the man to carry the fool's message exactly as he had received it, and quietly followed Tom and his companions, some of whom, conceiving fresh importance from the overstrained politeness with which they had been received, were now attempting a transformation of their usual lounging gait into a martial stride, with the result of a foolish strut, very unlike the dignified progress of the sham earl, whose weak back roused in them no suspicion, and who had taken care they should not see his face. Across the paved court, and through the hall to the inner court, Tom led them, and the earl followed.

The twilight was falling. The hall was empty of life, and filled with a sombre dusk, echoing to every step as they passed through it. They did not see the flash of eyes and glimmer of smiles from the minstrel's gallery, and the solitude, size, and gloom had, even on their dull natures, a palpable influence. The whole castle seemed deserted as they followed the false earl across the second court—with the true one stealing after them like a knave—little imagining that bright eyes were watching them from the curtains of every window like stars from the clear spaces and cloudy edges of heaven. To the north-west corner of the court he led them, and through a sculptured doorway up the straight wide ascent of stone called the grand staircase. At the top he turned to the right, along a dim corridor, from which he entered a suite of bedrooms and dressing-rooms, over whose black floors he led the trampling hob-nailed shoes without pity either for their polish or the labour of the housemaids in restoring it.

In this way he reached the stair in the bell-tower, ascending which he brought them into a narrow dark passage ending again in a downward stair, at the foot of which they found themselves in the long picture-gallery, having entered it in the recess of one of its large windows. At the other end of the gallery he crossed into the dining-room, then through an ante-chamber entered the drawing-room, where the ladies, apprised of their approach, kept still behind curtains and high chairs, until they had passed through, on their way to cross the archway of the main entrance, and through the library gain the region of household economy and cookery. Thither I will not drag my reader after them. Indeed the earl, who had been dogging them like a Fate, ever emerging on their track but never

beheld, had already begun to pay his part of the penalty of the joke in fatigue, for he was not only unwieldy in person, but far from robust, being very subject to gout. He owed his good spirits to a noble nature, and not to animal well-being. When they crossed from the picture-gallery to the dining-room, he went down the stair between, and into the oak-parlour adjoining the great hall. There he threw himself into an easy chair which always stood for him in the great bay window, looking over the moat to the huge keep of the castle, and commanding through its western light the stone bridge which crossed it. There he lay back at his ease, and, instructed by the message Tom had committed to the serjeant of the guard, waited the result.

As for his double, he went stalking on in front of his victims, never turning to show his face; he knew they would follow, were it but for the fear of being left alone. Close behind him they kept, scarce daring to whisper from growing awe of the vast place. The fumes of the beer had by this time evaporated, and the heavy obscurity which pervaded the whole building enhanced their growing apprehensions. On and on the fool led them, up and down, going and returning, but ever in new tracks, for the marvellous old place was interminably burrowed with connecting passages and communications of every sort—some of them the merest ducts which had to be all but crept through, and which would have certainly arrested the progress of the earl had he followed so far: no one about the place understood its "crenkles" so well as Tom. For the greater part of an hour he led them thus, until, having been on their legs the whole day, they were thoroughly wearied as well as awe-struck. At length, in a gloomy chamber, where one could not see the face of another, the pseudo-earl turned full upon them, and said in his most solemn tones:—

'Arrived thus far, my masters, it is borne in upon me with rebuke, that before undertaking to guide you to the armoury, I should have acquainted you with the strange fact that at times I am myself unable to find the place of which we are in search; and I begin to fear it is so now, and that we are at this moment the sport of a certain member of my family of whom it may be your worships have heard things not more strange than true. Against his machinations I am powerless. All that is left us is to go to him and entreat him to unsay his spells.'

A confused murmur of objections arose.

'Then your worships will remain here while I go to the Yellow Tower, and come to you again?' said the mock earl, making as if he would leave them.

But they crowded round him with earnest refusals to be abandoned; for in their very souls they felt the fact that they were upon enchanted ground—and in the dark.

'Then follow me,' he said, and conducted them into the open air of the inner court, almost opposite the archway in its buildings leading to the stone bridge, whose gothic structure bestrid the moat of the keep.

For Raglan Castle had this peculiarity, that its keep was surrounded by a moat of its own, separating it from the rest of the castle, so that, save by bridge, no one within any more than without the walls could reach it. On to the bridge Tom led the way, followed by his dupes—now full in the view of the earl where he sat in his parlour window. When they had reached the centre of it, however, and glancing up at the awful bulk of stone towering above them, its walls strangely dented and furrowed, so as to such as they, might well suggest frightful means to wicked ends, they stood stock-still, refusing to go a step further; while their chief speaker, Upstill, emboldened by anger, fear, and the meek behaviour of the supposed earl, broke out in a torrent of arrogance, wherein his intention was to brandish the terrors of the High Parliament over the heads of his lordship of Worcester and all recusants. He had not got far, however, before a shrill whistle pierced the air, and the next instant arose a chaos of horrible, appalling, and harrowing noises, 'such a roaring,' in the words of their own report of the matter to the reverend master Flowerdew, 'as if the mouth of hell had been wide open, and all the devils conjured up'—doubtless they meant by the arts of the wizard whose dwelling was that same tower of fearful fame before which they now stood. The skin-contracting chill of terror uplifted their hair. The mystery that enveloped the origin of the sounds gave them an unearthliness

which froze the very fountains of their life, and rendered them incapable even of motion. They stared at each other with a ghastly observance, which descried no comfort, only like images of horror. 'Man's hand is not able to taste' how long they might have thus stood, nor 'his tongue to conceive' what the consequences might have been, had not a more healthy terror presently supervened. Across the tumult of sounds, like a fiercer flash through the flames of a furnace, shot a hideous, long-drawn yell, and the same instant came a man running at full speed through the archway from the court, casting terror-stricken glances behind him, and shouting with a voice half-choked to a shriek—

'Look to yourselves, my masters; the lions are got loose!'

All the world knew that ever since King James had set the fashion by taking so much pleasure in the lions at the Tower, strange beasts had been kept in the castle of Raglan.

The new terror broke the spell of the old, and the parliamentary commissioners fled. But which was the way from the castle? Which the path to the lions' den? In an agony of horrible dread, they rushed hither and thither about the court, where now the white horse, as steady as marble, should be when first they crossed it, was, to their excited vision, prancing wildly about the great basin from whose charmed circle he could not break, foaming, at the mouth, and casting huge water-jets from his nostrils into the perturbed air; while from the surface of the moat a great column of water shot up nearly as high as the citadel, whose return into the moat was like a tempest, and with all the elemental tumult was mingled the howling of wild beasts. The doors of the hall and the gates to the bowling green being shut, the poor wretches could not find their way out of the court, but ran from door to door like madmen, only to find all closed against them. From every window around the court—from the apartments of the waiting gentlewomen, from the picture-gallery, from the officers' rooms, eager and merry eyes looked down on the spot, themselves unseen and unsuspected, for all voices were hushed, and for anything the bumpkins heard or saw they might have been in a place deserted of men, and possessed only by evil spirits, whose pranks were now tormenting them. At last Upstill, who had fallen on the bridge at his first start, and had ever since been rushing about with a limp and a leap alternated, managed to open the door of the hall, and its eastern door having been left open, shot across and into the outer court, where he made for the gate, followed at varied distance by the rest of the routed commissioners of search, as each had discovered the way his forerunner fled. With trembling hands Upstill raised the latch of the wicket, and to his delight found it unlocked. He darted through, passed the twin portcullises, and was presently thundering over the drawbridge, which, trembling under his heavy steps, seemed on the point of rising to heave him back into the jaws of the lion, or, worse still, the clutches of the enchanter. Not one looked behind him, not even when, having passed through the white stone gate, also purposely left open for their escape, and rattled down the multitude of steps that told how deep was the moat they had just crossed, where the last of them nearly broke his neck by rolling almost from top to bottom, they reached the outermost, the brick gate, and so left the awful region of enchantment and feline fury commingled. Not until the castle was out of sight, and their leader had sunk senseless on the turf by the roadside, did they dare a backward look. The moment he came to himself they started again for home, at what poor speed they could make, and reached the Crown and Mitre in sad plight, where, however, they found some compensation in the pleasure of setting forth their adventures—with the heroic manner in which, although vanquished by the irresistible force of enchantment, they had yet brought off their forces without the loss of a single man. Their story spread over the country, enlarged and embellished at every fresh stage in its progress.

When the tale reached mother Rees, it filled her with fresh awe of the great magician, the renowned lord Herbert. She little thought the whole affair was a jest of her own son's. Firmly believing in all kinds of magic and witchcraft, but as innocent of conscious dealing with the powers of ill as the whitest-winged angel betwixt earth's garret and heaven's threshold, she owed her evil repute amongst her neighbours to a rare therapeutic faculty, accompanied by a keen sympathetic instinct, which greatly sharpened her powers of observation in the quest after what was amiss; while her

touch was so delicate, so informed with present mind, and came therefore into such rapport with any living organism, the secret of whose suffering it sought to discover, that sprained muscles, dislocated joints, and broken bones seemed at its soft approach to re-arrange their disturbed parts, and yield to the power of her composing will as to a re-ordering harmony. Add to this, that she understood more of the virtues of some herbs than any doctor in the parish, which, in the condition of general practice at the time, is not perhaps to say much, and that she firmly believed in the might of certain charms, and occasionally used them—and I have given reason enough why, while regarded by all with disapprobation—she should be by many both courted and feared. For her own part she had a leaning to the puritans, chiefly from respect to the memory of a good-hearted, weak, but intellectually gifted, and, therefore, admired husband; but the ridicule of her yet more gifted son had a good deal shaken this predilection, so that she now spent what powers of discrimination and choice she possessed solely upon persons, heedless of principles in themselves, and regarding them only in their vital results. Hence, it was a matter of absolute indifference to her which of the parties now dividing the country was in the right, or which should lose, which win, provided no personal evil befel the men or women for whom she cherished a preference. Like many another, she was hardly aware of the jurisdiction of conscience, save in respect of immediate personal relations.

CHAPTER V

ANIMADVERSIONS

From the time when the conversation recorded had in some measure dispelled the fog between them, Roger and Richard Heywood drew rapidly nearer to each other. The father had been but waiting until his son should begin to ask him questions, for watchfulness of himself and others had taught him how useless information is to those who have not first desired it, how poor in influence, how soon forgotten; and now that the fitting condition had presented itself, he was ready: with less of reserve than in the relation between them was common amongst the puritans, he began to pour his very soul into that of his son. All his influence went with that party which, holding that the natural flow of the reformation of the church from popery had stagnated in episcopacy, consisted chiefly of those who, in demanding the overthrow of that form of church government, sought to substitute for it what they called presbyterianism; but Mr. Heywood belonged to another division of it which, although less influential at present, was destined to come by and by to the front, in the strength of the conviction that to stop with presbyterianism was merely to change the name of the swamp—a party whose distinctive and animating spirit was the love of freedom, which indeed, degenerating into a passion among its inferior members, broke out, upon occasion, in the wildest vagaries of speech and doctrine, but on the other hand justified itself in its leaders, chief amongst whom were Milton and Cromwell, inasmuch as they accorded to the consciences of others the freedom they demanded for their own—the love of liberty with them not meaning merely the love of enjoying freedom, but that respect for the thing itself which renders a man incapable of violating it in another.

Roger Heywood was, in fact, already a pupil of Milton, whose anonymous pamphlet of 'Reformation touching Church Discipline' had already reached him, and opened with him the way for all his following works.

Richard, with whom my story has really to do, but for the understanding of whom it is necessary that the character and mental position of his father should in some measure be set forth, proved an apt pupil, and was soon possessed with such a passion for justice and liberty, as embodied in the political doctrines now presented for his acceptance, that it was impossible for him to understand how any honest man could be of a different mind. No youth, indeed, of simple and noble nature, as yet unmarred by any dominant phase of selfishness, could have failed to catch fire from the enthusiasm of such a father, an enthusiasm glowing yet restrained, wherein party spirit had a less share than principle—which, in relation to such a time, is to say much. Richard's heart swelled within him at the vistas of grandeur opened by his father's words, and swelled yet higher when he read to him passages from the pamphlet to which I have referred. It seemed to him, as to most young people under mental excitement, that he had but to tell the facts of the case to draw all men to his side, enlisting them in the army destined to sweep every form of tyranny, and especially spiritual usurpation and arrogance, from the face of the earth.

Being one who took everybody at the spoken word, Richard never thought of seeking Dorothy again at their former place of meeting. Nor, in the new enthusiasm born in him, did his thoughts for a good many days turn to her so often, or dwell so much upon her, as to cause any keen sense of their separation. The flood of new thoughts and feelings had transported him beyond the ignorant present. In truth, also, he was a little angry with Dorothy for showing a foolish preference for the church party, so plainly in the wrong was it! And what could SHE know about the question by his indifference to which she had been so scandalised, but to which he had been indifferent only until rightly informed thereon! If he had ever given her just cause to think him childish, certainly she should never apply the word to him again! If he could but see her, he would soon convince her—indeed he MUST see her—for the truth was not his to keep, but to share! It was his duty to acquaint her with the fact that the parliament was the army of God, fighting the great red dragon, one of whose seven heads was

prelacy, the horn upon it the king, and Laud its crown. He wanted a stroll—he would take the path through the woods and the shrubbery to the old sun-dial. She would not be there, of course, but he would walk up the pleached alley and call at the house.

Reasoning thus within himself one day, he rose and went. But, as he approached the wood, Dorothy's great mastiff, which she had reared from a pup with her own hand, came leaping out to welcome him, and he was prepared to find her not far off.

When he entered the yew-circle, there she stood leaning on the dial, as if, like old Time, she too had gone to sleep there, and was dreaming ancient dreams over again. She did not move at the first sounds of his approach; and when at length, as he stood silent by her side, she lifted her head, but without looking at him, he saw the traces of tears on her cheeks. The heart of the youth smote him.

'Weeping, Dorothy?' he said.

'Yes,' she answered simply.

'I trust I am not the cause of your trouble, Dorothy?'

'You!' returned the girl quickly, and the colour rushed to her pale cheeks. 'No, indeed. How should you trouble me? My mother is ill.'

Considering his age, Richard was not much given to vanity, and it was something better that prevented him from feeling pleased at being thus exonerated: she looked so sweet and sad that the love which new interests had placed in abeyance returned in full tide. Even when a child, he had scarcely ever seen her in tears; it was to him a new aspect of her being.

'Dear Dorothy!' he said, 'I am very much grieved to learn this of your beautiful mother.'

'She IS beautiful,' responded the girl, and her voice was softer than he had ever heard it before; 'but she will die, and I shall be left alone.'

'No, Dorothy! that you shall never be,' exclaimed Richard, with a confidence bordering on presumption.

'Master Herbert is with her now,' resumed Dorothy, heedless of his words.

'You do not mean her life is even now in danger?' said Richard, in a tone of sudden awe.

'I hope not, but, indeed, I cannot tell. I left master Herbert comforting her with the assurance that she was taken away from the evil to come. "And I trust, madam," the dear old man went on to say, "that my departure will not long be delayed, for darkness will cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Those were his very words.'

'Nay, nay!' said Richard, hastily; 'the good man is deceived; the people that sit in darkness shall see a great light.'

The girl looked at him with strange interrogation.

'Do not be angry, sweet Dorothy,' Richard went on. 'Old men may mistake as well as youths. As for the realm of England, the sun of righteousness will speedily arise thereon, for the dawn draws nigh; and master Herbert may be just as far deceived concerning your mother's condition, for she has been but sickly for a long time, and yet has survived many winters.'

Dorothy looked at him still, and was silent. At length she spoke, and her words came slowly and with weight.

'And what prophet's mantle, if I may make so bold, has fallen upon Richard Heywood, that the word in his mouth should outweigh that of an aged servant of the church? Can it be that the great light of which he speaks is Richard Heywood himself?'

'As master Herbert is a good man and a servant of God,' said Richard, coldly, stung by her sarcasm, but not choosing to reply to it, 'his word weighs mightily; but as a servant of the church his word is no weightier than my father's, who is also a minister of the true tabernacle, that wherein all who are kings over themselves are priests unto God—though truly he pretends to no prophecy beyond the understanding of the signs of the times.'

Dorothy saw that a wonderful change, such as had been incredible upon any but the witness of her own eyes and ears, had passed on her old playmate. He was in truth a boy no longer. Their relative

position was no more what she had been of late accustomed to consider it. But with the change a gulf had begun to yawn between them.

'Alas, Richard!' she said, mistaking what he meant by the signs of the times, 'those who arrogate the gift of the Holy Ghost, while their sole inspiration is the presumption of their own hearts and an overweening contempt of authority, may well mistake signs of their own causing for signs from heaven. I but repeat the very words of good master Herbert.'

'I thought such swelling words hardly sounded like your own, Dorothy. But tell me, why should the persuasion of man or woman hang upon the words of a fellow-mortal? Is not the gift of the Spirit free to each who asks it? And are we not told that each must be fully persuaded in his own mind?'

'Nay, Richard, now I have thee! Hang you not by the word of your father, who is one, and despise the authority of the true church, which is many?'

'The true church were indeed an authority, but where shall we find it? Anyhow, the true church is one thing, and prelatical episcopacy another. But I have yet to learn what authority even the true church could have over a man's conscience.'

'You need to be reminded, Richard, that the Lord of the church gave power to his apostles to bind or loose.'

'I do not need to be so reminded, Dorothy, but I do not need to be shown first that that power was over men's consciences; and second, that it was transmitted to others by the apostles waiving the question as to the doubtful ordination of English prelates.'

Fire flashed from Dorothy's eyes.

'Richard Heywood,' she said, 'the demon of spiritual pride has already entered into you, and blown you up with a self-sufficiency which I never saw in you before, or I would never, never have accompanied with you, as I am now ashamed to think I have done so long, even to the danger of my soul's health.'

'In that case I may comfort myself, mistress Dorothy Vaughan,' said Richard, 'that you will no longer count me a boy! But do you then no longer desire that I should take one part OR the other and show myself a man? Am I man enough yet for the woman thou art, Dorothy?—But, Dorothy,' he added, with sudden change of tone, for she had in anger turned to leave him, 'I love you dearly, and I am truly sorry if I have spoken so as to offend you. I came hither eager to share with you the great things I have learned since you left me with just contempt a fortnight ago.'

'Then it is I whose foolish words have cast you into the seat of the scorner! Alas! alas! my poor Richard! Never, never more, while you thus rebel against authority and revile sacred things, will I hold counsel with you.'

And again she turned to go.

'Dorothy!' cried the youth, turning pale with agony to find on the brink of what an abyss of loss his zeal had set him, 'wilt thou, then, never speak to me more, and I love thee as the daylight?'

'Never more till thou repent and turn. I will but give thee one piece of counsel, and then leave thee—if for ever, that rests with thee. There has lately appeared, like the frog out of the mouth of the dragon, a certain tractate or treatise, small in bulk, but large with the wind of evil doctrine. Doubtless it will reach your father's house ere long, if it be not, as is more likely, already there, for it is the vile work of one they call a puritan, though where even the writer can vainly imagine the purity of such work to lie, let the pamphlet itself raise the question. Read the evil thing—or, I will not say read it, but glance the eye over it. It is styled "Animadversions upon—" Truly, I cannot recall the long-drawn title. It is filled, even as a toad with poison, so full of evil and scurrilous sayings against good men, rating and abusing them as the very off-scouring of the earth, that you cannot yet be so far gone in evil as not to be reclaimed by seeing whither such men and their inspiration would lead you. Farewell, Richard.'

With the words, and without a look, Dorothy, who had been standing sideways in act to go, swept up the pleached alley, her step so stately and her head so high that Richard, slowly as she walked

away, dared not follow her, but stood 'like one forbid.' When she had vanished, and the light shone in full at the far end, he gave a great sigh and turned away, and the old dial was forsaken.

The scrap of title Dorothy had given was enough to enable Richard to recognise the pamphlet as one a copy of which his father had received only a few days before, and over the reading of which they had again and again laughed unrestrainedly. As he walked home he sought in vain to recall anything in it deserving of such reprobation as Dorothy had branded it withal. Had it been written on the other side no search would have been necessary, for party spirit (from which how could such a youth be free, when the greatest men of his time were deeply tainted?), while it blinds the eyes in one direction, makes them doubly keen in another. As it was, the abuse in the pamphlet referred to, appeared to him only warrantable indignation; and, the arrogance of an imperfect love leading him to utter desertion of his newly-adopted principles, he scorned as presumptuous that exercise of her own judgment on the part of Dorothy which had led to their separation, bitterly resenting the change in his playmate, who, now an angry woman, had decreed his degradation from the commonest privileges of friendship, until such time as he should abjure his convictions, become a renegade to the truth, and abandon the hope of resulting freedom which the strife of parties held out—an act of tyranny the reflection upon which raised such a swelling in his throat as he had never felt but once before, when a favourite foal got staked in trying to clear a fence. Having neither friend nor sister to whom to confess that he was in trouble—have confided it he could not in any case, seeing it involved blame of the woman his love for whom now first, when on the point of losing her for ever, threatened to overmaster him—he wandered to the stables, which he found empty of men and nearly so of horses, half-involuntarily sought the stall of the mare his father had given him on his last birthday, laid his head on the neck bent round to greet him, and sighed a sore response to her soft, low, tremulous whinny.

As he stood thus, overcome by the bitter sense of wrong from the one he loved best in the world, something darkened the stable-door, and a voice he knew reached his ear. Mistaking the head she saw across an empty stall for that of one of the farm-servants, Goody Rees was calling aloud to know if he wanted a charm for the toothache.

Richard looked up.

'And what may your charm be, mistress Rees?' he asked.

'Aha! is it thou, young master?' returned the woman. 'Thou wilt marvel to see me about the place so soon again, but verily desired to know how that godly man, Faithful Stopchase, found himself after his fall.'

'Nay, mistress Rees, make no apology for coming amongst thy friends. I warrant thee against further rudeness of man or beast. I have taken them to task, and truly I will break his head who wags tongue against thee. As for Stopchase, he does well enough in all except owing thee thanks which he declines to pay. But for thy charm, good mistress Rees, what is it—tell me?'

She took a step inside the door, sent her small eyes peering first into every corner her sight could reach, and then said:

'Are we alone—we two, master Richard?'

'There's a cat in the next stall, mistress: if she can hear, she can't speak.'

'Don't be too sure of that, master Richard. Be there no one else?'

'Not a body; soul there may be—who knows?'

'I know there is none. I will tell thee my charm, or what else I may that thou would wish to know; for he is a true gentleman who will help a woman because she is a woman, be she as old and ugly as Goody Rees herself. Hearken, my pretty sir: it is the tooth of a corpse, drawn after he hath lain a se'en-night in the mould: wilt buy, my master? Or did not I see thee now asking comfort from thy horse for the—'

She paused a moment, peered narrowly at him from under lowered eyebrows, and went on:

'—heartache, eh, master Richard? Old eyes can see through velvet doublets.'

'All the world knows yours can see farther than other people's,' returned Richard. 'Heaven knows whence they have their sharpness. But suppose it were a heartache now, have you got e'er a charm to cure that?'

'The best of all charms, my young master, is a kiss from the maiden; and what would thou give me for the spell that should set her by thy side at the old dial, under a warm harvest moon, all the long hours 'twixt midnight and the crowing of the black cock—eh, my master? What wilt thou give me?'

'Not a brass farthing, if she came not of her own good will,' murmured Richard, turning towards his mare. 'But come, mistress Rees, you know you couldn't do it, even if you were the black witch the neighbours would have you—though I, for my part, will not hear a word against you—never since you set my poor old dog upon his legs again—though to be sure he will die one of these days, and that no one can help—dogs have such short lives, poor fools!'

'Thou knows not what old mother Rees can do. Tell me, young master, did she ever say and not do—eh, now?'

'You said you would cure my dog, and you did,' answered Richard.

'And I say now, if thou will, I will set thee and her together by the old dial to-morrow night, and it shall be a warm and moonlit night on purpose for ye, an ye will.'

'It were to no good purpose, mistress Rees, for we parted this day—and that for ever, I much fear me,' said Richard with a deep sigh, but getting some little comfort even out of a witch's sympathy.

'Tut, tut, tut! Lovers' quarrels! Who knows not what they mean? Crying and kissing—crying and kissing—that's what they mean. Come now—what did thou and she quarrel about?'

The old woman, if not a witch, at least looked very like one, with her two hands resting on the wide round ledge of her farthingale, her head thrown back, and from under her peaked hat that pointed away behind, her two greenish eyes peering with a half-coaxing, yet sharp and probing gaze into those of the youth.

But how could he make a confidante of one like her? What could she understand of such questions as had raised the wall of partition betwixt him and Dorothy? Unwilling to offend her, however, he hesitated to give her offer a plain refusal, and turning away in silence, affected to have caught sight of something suspicious about his mare's near hock.

'I see, I see!' said the old woman grimly, but not ill-naturedly, and nodded her head, so that her hat described great arcs across the sky; 'thou art ashamed to confess that thou lovest thy father's whims more than thy lady's favours. Well, well! Such lovers are hardly for my trouble!'

But here came the voice of Mr. Heywood, calling his groom. She started, glanced around her as if seeking a covert, then peered from the door, and glided noiselessly out.

CHAPTER VI PREPARATIONS

Great was the merriment in Raglan Castle over the discomfiture of the bumpkins, and many were the compliments Tom received in parlour, nursery, kitchen, guard-room, everywhere, on the success of his hastily-formed scheme for the chastisement of their presumption. The household had looked for a merry time on the occasion of the wedding, but had not expected such a full cup of delight as had been pressed out for them betwixt the self-importance of the overweening yokels and the inventive faculties of Tom Fool. All the evening, one standing in any open spot of the castle might have heard, now on the one, now on the other side, renewed bursts of merriment ripple the air; but as the still autumn night crept on, the intervals between grew longer and longer, until at length all sounds ceased, and silence took up her ancient reign, broken only by the occasional stamp of a horse or howl of a watch-dog.

But the earl, who, from simplicity of nature and peace of conscience combined, was perhaps better fitted for the enjoyment of the joke, in a time when such ludifications were not yet considered unsuitable to the dignity of the highest position, than any other member of his household, had, through it all, showed a countenance in which, although eyes, lips, and voice shared in the laughter, there yet lurked a thoughtful doubt concerning the result. For he knew that, in some shape or other, and that certainly not the true one, the affair would be spread over the country, where now prejudice against the Catholics was strong and dangerous in proportion to the unreason of those who cherished it. Now, also, it was becoming pretty plain that except the king yielded every prerogative, and became the puppet which the mingled pride and apprehension of the Parliament would have him, their differences must ere long be referred to the arbitration of the sword, in which case there was no shadow of doubt in the mind of the earl as to the part befitting a peer of the realm. The king was a protestant, but no less the king; and not this man, but his parents, had sinned in forsaking the church—of which sin their offspring had now to bear the penalty, reaping the whirlwind sprung from the stormy seeds by them sown. For what were the puritans but the lawfully-begotten children of the so called reformation, whose spirit they inherited, and in whose footsteps they so closely followed? In the midst of such reflections, dawned slowly in the mind of the devout old man the enchanting hope that perhaps he might be made the messenger of God to lead back to the true fold the wandering feet of his king. But, fail or speed in any result, so long as his castle held together, it should stand for the king. Faithful catholic as he was, the brave old man was English to the backbone.

And there was no time to lose. This visit of search, let it have originated how it might, and be as despicable in itself as it was ludicrous in its result, showed but too clearly how strong the current of popular feeling was setting against all the mounds of social distinction, and not kingly prerogative alone. What preparations might be needful, must be prudent.

That same night, then, long after the rest of the household had retired, three men took advantage of a fine half-moon to make a circuit of the castle, first along the counterscarp of the moat, and next along all accessible portions of the walls and battlements. They halted often, and, with much observation of the defences, held earnest talk together, sometimes eagerly contending rather than disputing, but far more often mutually suggesting and agreeing. At length one of them, whom the others called Caspar, retired, and the earl was left with his son Edward, lord Herbert, the only person in the castle who had gone to neither window nor door to delight himself with the discomfiture of the parliamentary commissioners.

They entered the long picture gallery, faintly lighted from its large windows to the court, but chiefly from the oriel which formed the northern end of it, where they now sat down, the earl being, for the second time that night, weary. Behind them was a long dim line of portraits, broken only by the great chimney-piece supported by human figures, all of carved stone, and before them, nearly

as dim, was the moon-massed landscape—a lovely view of the woodland, pasture, and red tilth to the northward of the castle.

They sat silent for a while, and the younger said:

'I fear you are fatigued, my lord. It is late for you to be out of bed; nature is mortal.'

'Thou sayest well; nature is mortal, my son. But therein lies the comfort—it cannot last. It were hard to say whether of the two houses stands the more in need of the hand of the maker.'

'Were it not for villanous saltpetre, my lord, the castle would hold out well enough.'

'And were it not for villanous gout, which is a traitor within it, I see not why this other should not hold out as long. Be sure, Herbert, I shall not render the keep for the taking of the outworks.'

'I fear,' said his son, wishing to change the subject, 'this part where we now are is the most liable to hurt from artillery.'

'Yes, but the ground in front is not such as they would readiest plant it upon,' said the earl. 'Do not let us forecast evil, only prepare for it.'

'We shall do our best, my lord—with your lordship's good counsel to guide us.'

'You shall lack nothing, Herbert, that either counsel or purse of mine may reach unto.'

'I thank your lordship, for much depends upon both. And so I fear will his majesty find—if it comes to the worst.'

A brief pause followed.

'Thinkest thou not, Herbert,' said the earl, slowly and thoughtfully, 'it ill suits that a subject should have and to spare, and his liege go begging?'

'My father is pleased to say so.'

'I am but evil pleased to say so. Bethink thee, son—what man can be pleased to part with his money? And while my king is poor, I must be rich for him. Thou wilt not accuse me, Herbert, after I am gone to the rest, that I wasted thy substance, lad?'

'So long as you still keep wherewithal to give, I shall be content, my lord.'

'Well, time will show. I but tell thee what runneth in my mind, for thou and I, Herbert, have bosomed no secrets. I will to bed. We must go the round again to-morrow—with the sun to hold as a candle.'

The next day the same party made a similar circuit three times—in the morning, at noon, and in the evening—that the full light might uncover what the shadows had hid, and that the shadows might show what a perpendicular light could not reveal. There is all the difference as to discovery whether a thing is lying under the shadow of another, or casting one of its own.

After this came a review of the outer fortifications—if, indeed, they were worthy of the name—enclosing the gardens, the old tilting yard, now used as a bowling-green, the home-farmyard, and other such outlying portions under the stewardship of sir Ralph Blackstone and the governorship of Charles Somerset, the earl's youngest son. It was here that the most was wanted; and the next few days were chiefly spent in surveying these works, and drawing plans for their extension, strengthening, and connection—especially about the stables, armourer's shop, and smithy, where the building of new defences was almost immediately set on foot.

A thorough examination of the machinery of the various portcullises and drawbridges followed; next an overhauling of the bolts, chains, and other defences of the gates. Then came an inspection of the ordnance, from cannons down to drakes, through a gradation of names as uncouth to our ears, and as unknown to the artillery descended from them, as many of the Christian names of the puritans are to their descendants of the present day. At length, to conclude the inspection, lord Herbert and the master of the armoury held consultation with the head armourer, and the mighty accumulation of weapons of all sorts was passed under the most rigid scrutiny; many of them were sent to the forge, and others carried to the ground-floor of the keep.

Presently, things began to look busy in a quiet way about the place. Men were at work blasting the rocks in a quarry not far off, whence laden carts went creeping to the castle; but this was oftener

in the night. Some of them drove into the paved court, for here and there a buttress was wanted inside, and of the battlements not a few were weather-beaten and out of repair. These the earl would have let alone, on the ground that they were no longer more than ornamental, and therefore had better be repaired AFTER the siege, if such should befall, for the big guns would knock them about like cards; but Caspar reminded him that every time the ball from a cannon, culvering, or saker missed the parapet, it remained a sufficient bar to the bullet that might equally avail to carry off the defenceless gunner. The earl, however, although he yielded, maintained that the flying of the wall when struck was a more than counterbalancing danger.

The stock of provisions began to increase. The dry larder, which lay under the court, between the kitchen and buttery, was by degrees filled with gammons and fitches of bacon, well dried and smoked. Wheat, barley, oats, and pease were stored in the granary, and potatoes in a pit dug in the orchard.

Strange faces in the guard-room caused wonderings and questions amongst the women. The stables began to fill with horses, and 'more man' to go about the farmyard and outhouses.

CHAPTER VII REFLECTIONS

Left alone with Lady, his mare, Richard could not help brooding—rather than pondering—over what the old woman had said. Not that for a moment he contemplated as a possibility the acceptance of the witch's offer. To come himself into any such close relations with her as that would imply, was in repulsiveness second only to the idea of subjecting Dorothy to her influences. For something to occupy his hands, that his mind might be restless at will, he gave his mare a careful currying, then an extra feed of oats, and then a gallop; after which it was time to go to bed.

I doubt if anything but the consciousness of crime will keep healthy youth awake, and as such consciousness is generally far from it, youth seldom counts the watches of the night. Richard soon fell fast asleep, and dreamed that his patron saint—alas for his protestantism!—appeared to him, handed him a lance headed with a single flashing diamond, and told him to go and therewith kill the dragon. But just as he was asking the way to the dragon's den, that he might perform his behest, the saint vanished, and feeling the lance melting away in his grasp, he gradually woke to find it gone.

After a long talk with his father in the study, he was left to his own resources for the remainder of the day; and as it passed and the night drew on, the offer of the witch kept growing upon his imagination, and his longing to see Dorothy became stronger and stronger, until at last it was almost too intense to be borne. He had never before known such a possession, and was more than half inclined to attribute it to the arts of mother Rees.

His father was busy in his study below, writing letters—an employment which now occupied much of his time; and Richard sat alone in a chamber in the upper part of one of the many gables of the house, which he had occupied longer than he could remember. Its one small projecting lozenge-paned window looked towards Dorothy's home. Some years ago he had been able to see her window, from it through a gap in the trees, by favour of which, indeed, they had indulged in a system of communications by means of coloured flags—so satisfactory that Dorothy not only pressed into the service all the old frocks she could find, but got into trouble by cutting up one almost new for the enlargement of the somewhat limited scope of their telegraphy. In this window he now sat, sending his soul through the darkness, milky with the clouded light of half an old moon, towards the ancient sundial, where Time stood so still that sometimes Richard had known an hour there pass in a moment.

Never until now had he felt enmity in space: it had been hitherto rather as a bridge to bear him to Dorothy than a gulf to divide him from her presence; but now, through the interpenetrative power of feeling, their alienation had affected all around as well as within him, and space appeared as a solid enemy, and darkness as an unfriendly enchantress, each doing what it could to separate betwixt him and the being to whom his soul was drawn as—no, there was no AS for such drawing. No opposition of mere circumstances could have created the feeling; it was the sense of an inward separation taking form outwardly. For Richard was now but too well convinced that he had no power of persuasion equal to the task of making Dorothy see things as he saw them. The dividing influence of imperfect opposing goods is potent as that of warring good and evil, with this important difference, that the former is but for a season, and will one day bind as strongly as it parted, while the latter is essential, absolute, impassible, eternal.

To Dorothy, Richard seemed guilty of overweening arrogance and its attendant, presumption; she could not see the form ethereal to which he bowed. To Richard, Dorothy appeared the dupe of superstition; he could not see the god that dwelt within the idol. To Dorothy, Richard seemed to be one who gave the holy name of truth to nothing but the offspring of his own vain fancy. To Richard, Dorothy appeared one who so little loved the truth that she was ready to accept anything presented to her as such, by those who themselves loved the word more than the spirit, and the chrysalis of safety better than the wings of power. But it is only for a time that any good can to the good appear evil,

and at this very moment, Nature, who in her blindness is stronger to bind than the farthest-seeing intellect to loose, was urging him into her presence; and the heart of Dorothy, notwithstanding her initiative in the separation, was leaning as lovingly, as sadly after the youth she had left alone with the defaced sun-dial, the symbol of Time's weariness. Had they, however, been permitted to meet as they would, the natural result of ever-renewed dissension would have been a thorough separation in heart, no heavenly twilights of loneliness giving time for the love which grows like the grass to recover from the scorching heat of intellectual jar and friction.

The waning moon at length peered warily from behind a bank of cloud, and her dim light melting through the darkness filled the night with a dream of the day. Richard was no more of a poet or dreamer of dreams than is any honest youth so long as love holds the bandage of custom away from his eyes. The poets are they who all their life long contrive to see over or through the bandage; but they would, I doubt, have but few readers, had not nature decreed that all youths and maidens shall, for a period, be it long or short, become aware that they too are of the race of the singers—shall, in the journey of their life, at least pass through the zone of song: some of them recognise it as the region of truth, and continue to believe in it still when it seems to have vanished from around them; others scoff as it disappears, and curse themselves for dupes. Through this zone Richard was now passing. Hence the moon wore to him a sorrowful face, and he felt a vague sympathy in her regard, that of one who was herself in trouble, half the light of her lord's countenance withdrawn. For science had not for him interfered with the shows of things by a partial revelation of their realities. He had not learned that the face of the moon is the face of a corpse-world; that the sadness upon it is the sadness of utter loss; that her light has in it no dissolved smile, is but the reflex from a lifeless mirror; that of all the orbs we know best she can have least to do with lovers' longings and losses, she alone having no love left in her—the cold cinder of a quenched world. Not an out-burnt cinder, though! she needs but to be cast again into the furnace of the sun.

As it was, Richard had gazed at her hardly for a minute when he found the tears running down his face, and starting up, ashamed of the unmanly weakness, hardly knew what he was doing before he found himself in the open air. From the hall clock came the first stroke of twelve as he closed the door behind him. It was the hour at which mother Rees had offered him a meeting with Dorothy; but it was assuredly with no expectation of seeing her that he turned his steps towards her dwelling.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ADVENTURE

When he reached the spot at which he usually turned off by a gap in the hedge to NEEDLE his way through the unpathed wood, he yielded to the impulses of memory and habit, and sought the yew-circle, where for some moments he stood by the dumb, disfeatured stone, which seemed to slumber in the moonlight, a monument slowly vanishing from above a vanished grave. Indeed it might well have been the grave of buried Time, for what fitter monument could he have than a mutilated sun-dial, what better enclosure than such a hedge of yews, and more suitable light than that of the dying moon? Or was it but that the heart of the youth, receiving these things as into a concave mirror, reprojected them into space, all shadowy with its own ghostliness and gloom? Close by the dial, like the dark way into regions where time is not, yawned the mouth of the pleached alley. Beyond that was her window, on which the moon must now be shining. He entered the alley, and walked softly towards the house. Suddenly, down the dark tunnel came rushing upon him Dorothy's mastiff, with a noise as of twenty soft feet, and a growl as if his throat had been full of teeth—changing to a boisterous welcome when he discovered who the stranger was. Fearful of disturbing the household, Richard soon quieted the dog, which was in the habit of obeying him almost as readily as his mistress, and, fearful of disturbing sleepers or watchers, approached the house like a thief. To gain a sight of Dorothy's window he had to pass that of the parlour, and then the porch, which he did on the grass, that his steps might be noiseless. But here the dog started from his heel, and bounded into the porch, leading after him the eyes of Richard, who thereupon saw what would have else remained undiscovered—two figures, namely, standing in its deep shadow. Judging it his part, as a friend of the family, to see who, at so late an hour, and so near the house, seemed thus to avoid discovery, Richard drew nearer, and the next moment saw that the door was open behind them, and that they were Dorothy and a young man.

'The gates will be shut,' said Dorothy.

'It is no matter; old Eccles will open to me at any hour,' was the answer.

'Still it were well you went without delay,' said Dorothy; and her voice trembled a little, for she had caught sight of Richard.

Now not only are anger and stupidity near of kin, but when a man whose mental movements are naturally deliberate, is suddenly spurred, he is in great danger of acting like a fool, and Richard did act like a fool. He strode up to the entrance of the porch, and said,

'Do you not hear the lady, sir? She tells you to go.'

A voice as cool and self-possessed as the other was hasty and perturbed, replied,

'I am much in the wrong, sir, if the lady do not turn the command upon yourself. Until you have obeyed it, she may perhaps see reason for withdrawing it in respect of me.'

Richard stepped into the porch, but Dorothy glided between them, and gently pushed him out.

'Richard Heywood!' she said.

'Whew!' interjected the stranger, softly.

'You can claim no right,' she went on, 'to be here at this hour. Pray go; you will disturb my mother.'

'Who is this man, then, whose right seems acknowledged?' asked Richard, in ill-suppressed fury.

'When you address me like a gentleman, such as I used to believe you—'

'May I presume to ask when you ceased to regard me as a gentleman, mistress Dorothy?'

'As soon as I found that you had learned to despise law and religion,' answered the girl. 'Such a one will hardly succeed in acting the part of a gentleman, even had he the blood of the Somersets in his veins.'

'I thank you, mistress Dorothy,' said the stranger, 'and will profit by the plain hint. Once more tell me to go, and I will obey.'

'He must go first,' returned Dorothy.

Richard had been standing as if stunned, but now with an effort recovered himself.

'I will wait for you,' he said, and turned away.

'For whom, sir?' asked Dorothy, indignantly.

'You have refused me the gentleman's name,' answered Richard: 'perhaps I may have the good fortune to persuade himself to be more obliging.'

'I shall not keep you waiting long,' said the young man significantly, as Richard walked away.

To do Richard justice, and greatly he needs it, I must make the remark that such had been the intimacy betwixt him and Dorothy, that he might well imagine himself acquainted with all the friends of her house. But the intimacy had been confined to the children; the heads of the two houses, although good neighbours, had not been drawn towards each other, and their mutual respect had not ripened into friendship. Hence many of the family and social relations of each were unknown to the other; and indeed both families led such a retired life that the children knew little of their own relatives even, and seldom spoke of any.

Lady Scudamore, the mother of the stranger, was first cousin to lady Vaughan. They had been very intimate as girls, but had not met for years—hardly since the former married sir John, the son of one of King James's carpet-knights. Hearing of her cousin's illness, she had come to visit her at last, under the escort of her son. Taken with his new cousin, the youth had lingered and lingered; and in fact Dorothy had been unable to get rid of him before an hour strange for leave-taking in such a quiet and yet hospitable neighbourhood.

Richard took his stand on the side of the public road opposite the gate; but just ere Scudamore came, which was hardly a minute after, a cloud crept over the moon, and, as he happened to stand in a line with the bole of a tree, Scudamore did not catch sight of him. When he turned to walk along the road, Richard thought he avoided him, and, making a great stride or two after him, called aloud—

'Stop, sir, stop. You forget your appointments over easily, I think.'

'Oh, you ARE there!' said the youth, turning.

'I am glad you acknowledge my presence,' said Richard, not the better pleased with his new acquaintance that his speech and behaviour had an easy tone of superiority, which, if indefinably felt by the home-bred lad, was not therefore to be willingly accorded. His easy carriage, his light step, his still shoulders and lithe spine, indicated both birth and training.

'Just the night for a serenade,' he went on, heedless of Richard's remark, '—bright, but not too bright; cloudy, but not too cloudy.'

'Sir!' said Richard, amazed at his coolness.

'Oh, you want to quarrel with me!' returned the youth. 'But it takes two to fight as well as to kiss, and I will not make one to-night. I know who you are well enough, and have no quarrel with you, except indeed it be true—as indeed it must, for Dorothy tells me so—that you have turned roundhead as well as your father.'

'What right have you to speak so familiarly of mistress Dorothy?' said Richard.

'It occurs to me,' replied Scudamore, airily, 'that I had better ask you by what right you haunt her house at midnight. But I would not willingly cross you in cold blood. I wish you good a night, and better luck next time you go courting.'

The moon swam from behind a cloud, and her over ripe and fading light seemed to the eyes of Richard to gather upon the figure before him and there revive. The youth had on a doublet of some reddish colour, ill brought out by the moonlight, but its silver lace and the rapier hilt inlaid with silver shone the keener against it. A short cloak hung from his left shoulder, trimmed also with silver lace, and a little cataract of silver fringe fell from the edges of his short trousers into the wide tops of his boots, which were adorned with ruffles. He wore a large collar of lace, and cuffs of the same were

folded back from his bare hands. A broad-brimmed beaver hat, its silver band fastened with a jewel holding a plume of willowy feathers, completed his attire, which he wore with just the slightest of a jaunty air. It was hardly the dress for a walk at midnight, but he had come in his mother's carriage, and had to go home without it.

Alas now for Richard's share in the freedom to which he had of late imagined himself devoted! No sooner had the words last spoken entered his ears than he was but a driven slave ready to rush into any quarrel with the man who spoke them. Ere he had gone three paces he had stepped in front of him.

'Whatever rights mistress Dorothy may have given you,' he said, 'she had none to transfer in respect of my father. What do you mean by calling him a roundhead?'

'Why, is he not one?' asked the youth, simply, keeping his ground, in spite of the unpleasant proximity of Richard's person. 'I am sorry to have wronged him, but I mistook him for a ringleader of the same name. I heartily beg your pardon.'

'You did not mistake,' said Richard stupidly.

'Then I did him no wrong,' rejoined the youth, and once more would have gone his way.

But Richard, angrier than ever at finding he had given him such an easy advantage, moved with his movement, and kept rudely in front of him, provoking a quarrel—in clownish fashion, it must be confessed.

'By heaven,' said Scudamore, 'if Dorothy had not begged me not to fight with you—,' and as he spoke he slipped suddenly past his antagonist, and walked swiftly away. Richard plunged after him, and seized him roughly by the shoulder. Instantaneously he wheeled on the very foot whence he was taking the next stride, and as he turned his rapier gleamed in the moonlight. The same moment it left his hand, he scarce knew how, and flew across the hedge. Richard, who was unarmed, had seized the blade, and, almost by one and the same movement of his wrist, wrenched the hilt from the grasp of his adversary, and flung the thing from him. Then closing with the cavalier, slighter and less skilled in such encounters, the roundhead almost instantly threw him upon the turf that bordered the road.

'Take that for drawing on an unarmed man,' he said.

No reply came. The youth lay stunned.

Then compassion woke in the heart of the angry Richard, and he hastened to his help. Ere he reached him, however, he made an attempt to rise, but only to stagger and fall again.

'Curse you for a roundhead!' he cried; 'you've twisted some of my tackle. I can't stand.'

'I'm sorry,' returned Richard, 'but why did you bare bilbo on a naked man? A right malignant you are!'

'Did I?' returned Scudamore. 'You laid hands on me so suddenly! I ask your pardon.'

Accepting the offered aid of Richard, he rose; but his right knee was so much hurt that he could not walk a step without great pain. Full of regret for the suffering he had caused, Richard lifted him in his arms, and seated him on a low wall of earth, which was all that here inclosed lady Vaughan's shrubbery; then, breaking through the hedge on the opposite side of the way, presently returned with the rapier, and handed it to him. Scudamore accepted it courteously, with difficulty replaced it in its sheath, rose, and once more attempted to walk, but gave a groan, and would have fallen had not Richard caught him.

'The devil is in it!' he cried, with more annoyance than anger. 'If I am not in my place at my lord's breakfast to-morrow, there will be questioning. That I had leave to accompany my mother makes the mischief. If I had stole away, it would be another matter. It will be hard to bear rebuke, and no frolic.'

'Come home with me,' said Richard. 'My father will do his best to atone for the wrong done by his son.'

'Set foot across the threshold of a roundhead fanatic! In the way of hospitality! Not if the choice lay betwixt that and my coffin!' cried the cavalier.

'Then let me carry you back to lady Vaughan's,' said Richard, with a torturing pang of jealousy, which only his sense of right, now thoroughly roused, enabled him to defy.

'I dare not. I should terrify my mother, and perhaps kill my cousin.'

'Your mother! your cousin!' cried Richard.

'Yes,' returned Scudamore; 'my mother is there, on a visit to her cousin lady Vaughan.'

'Alas, I am more to blame than I knew!' said Richard.

'No,' Scudamore went on, heedless of Richard's lamentation. 'I must crawl back to Raglan as I may. If I get there before the morning, I shall be able to show reason why I should not wait upon my lord at his breakfast.'

'You belong to the earl's household, then?' said Richard.

'Yes; and I fear I shall be grey-headed before I belong to anything else. He makes much of the ancient customs of the country: I would he would follow them. In the good old times I should have been a squire at least by now, if, indeed, I had not earned my spurs; but his lordship will never be content without me to hand him his buttered egg at breakfast, and fill his cup at dinner with his favourite claret. And so I am neither more nor less than a page, which rhymes with my age better than suits it. But the earl has a will of his own. He is a master worth serving though. And there is my lady Elizabeth and my lady Mary—not to mention my lord Herbert!—But,' he concluded, rubbing his injured knee with both hands, 'why do I prate of them to a roundhead?'

'Why indeed?' returned Richard. 'Are they not, the earl and all his people, traitors, and that of the worst? Are they not the enemies of the truth—worshippers of idols, bowing the knee to a woman, and kissing the very toes of an old man so in love with ignorance, that he tortures the philosopher who tells him the truth about the world and its motions?'

'Go on, master Roundhead! I can chastise you, and that you know. This cursed knee—'

'I will stand unarmed within your thrust, and never budge a foot,' said Richard. 'But no,' he added, 'I dare not, lest I should further injure one I have wronged already. Let there be a truce between us.'

'I am no papist,' returned Scudamore. 'I speak only as one of the earl's household—true men all. For them I cast the word in your teeth, you roundhead traitor! For myself I am of the English church.'

'It is but the wolf and the wolf's cub,' said Richard. 'Prelatical episcopacy is but the old harlot veiled, or rather, forsooth, her bloody scarlet blackened in the sulphur fumes of her coming desolation.'

'Curse on, roundhead,' sighed the youth; 'I must crawl home.'

Once more he rose and made an effort to walk. But it was of no use: walk he could not.

'I must wait till the morning,' he said, 'when some Christian waggoner may be passing. Leave me in peace.'

'Nay, I am no such boor!' said Richard. 'Do you think you could ride?'

'I could try.'

'I will bring you the best mare in Gwent. But tell me your name, that I may know with whom I have the honour of a feud.'

'My name is Rowland Scudamore,' answered the youth. 'Yours I know already, and roundhead as you are, you have some smatch of honour in you.'

With an air of condescension he held out his hand, which his adversary, oppressed with a sense of the injury he had done him, did not refuse.

Richard hurried home, and to the stable, where he saddled his mare. But his father, who was still in his study, heard the sound of her hoofs in the paved yard, and met him as he led her out on the road, with an inquiry as to his destination at such an hour. Richard told him that he had had a quarrel with a certain young fellow of the name of Scudamore, a page of the earl of Worcester, whom he had met at lady Vaughan's: and recounted the result.

'Was your quarrel a just one, my son?'

'No sir. I was in the wrong.'

'Then you are so far in the right now. And you are going to help him home?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Have you confessed yourself in the wrong?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then go, my son, but beware of private quarrel in such a season of strife. This youth and thyself may meet some day in mortal conflict on the battle-field; and for my part—I know not how it may be with another—in such a case I would rather slay my friend than my enemy.'

Enlightened by the inward experience of the moment, Richard was able to understand and respond to the feeling. How different a sudden action flashed off the surface of a man's nature may be from that which, had time been given, would have unfolded itself from its depths!

Bare-headed, Roger Heywood walked beside his son as he led the mare to the spot where Scudamore perforce awaited his return. They found him stretched on the roadside, plucking handfuls of grass, and digging up the turf with his fingers, thus, and thus alone, betraying that he suffered. Mr. Heywood at first refrained from any offer of hospitality, believing he would be more inclined to accept it after he had proved the difficulty of riding, in which case a previous refusal might stand in the way. But although a slight groan escaped as they lifted him to the saddle, he gathered up the reins at once, and sat erect while they shortened the stirrup-leathers. Lady seemed to know what was required of her, and stood as still as a vaulting horse until Richard took the bridle to lead her away.

'I see!' said Scudamore; 'you can't trust me with your horse!'

'Not so, sir,' answered Mr. Heywood. 'We cannot trust the horse with you. It is quite impossible for you to ride so far alone. If you will go, you must submit to the attendance of my son, on which I am sorry to think you have so good a claim. But will you not yet change your mind and be our guest—for the night at least? We will send a messenger to the castle at earliest dawn.'

Scudamore declined the invitation, but with perfect courtesy, for there was that about Roger Heywood which rendered it impossible for any man who was himself a gentleman, whatever his judgment of him might be, to show him disrespect. And the moment the mare began to move, he felt no further inclination to object to Richard's company at her head, for he perceived that, should she prove in the least troublesome, it would be impossible for him to keep his seat. He did not suffer so much, however, as to lose all his good spirits, or fail in his part of a conversation composed chiefly of what we now call chaff, both of them for a time avoiding all such topics as might lead to dispute, the one from a sense of wrong already done, the other from a vague feeling that he was under the protection of the foregone injury.

'Have you known my cousin Dorothy long?' asked Scudamore.

'Longer than I can remember,' answered Richard.

'Then you must be more like brother and sister than lovers.'

'That, I fear, is her feeling,' replied Richard, honestly.

'You need not think of me as a rival,' said Scudamore. 'I never saw the young woman in my life before, and although anything of yours, being a roundhead's, is fair game—'

'Your humble servant, sir Cavalier!' interjected Richard. 'Pray use your pleasure.'

'I tell you plainly,' Scudamore went on, without heeding the interruption, 'though I admire my cousin, as I do any young woman, if she be but a shade beyond the passable—'

'The ape! The coxcomb!' said Richard to himself.

'I am not, therefore, dying for her love; and I give you this one honest warning that, though I would rather see mistress Dorothy in her winding-sheet than dame to a roundhead, I should be—yes, I MAY be a more dangerous rival in respect of your mare, than of any lady YOU are likely to set eyes upon.'

'What do you mean?' said Richard gruffly.

'I mean that, the king having at length resolved to be more of a monarch and less of a saint—'

'A saint!' echoed Richard, but the echo was rather a loud one, for it startled his mare and shook her rider.

'Don't shout like that!' cried the cavalier, with an oath. 'Saint or sinner, I care not. He is my king, and I am his soldier. But with this knee you have given me, I shall be fitter for garrison than field-duty—damn it.'

'You do not mean that his majesty has declared open war against the parliament?' exclaimed Richard.

'Faithless puritan, I do,' answered Scudamore. 'His majesty has at length—with reluctance, I am sorry to hear—taken up arms against his rebellious subjects. Land will be cheap by-and-by.'

'Many such rumours have reached us,' returned Richard, quietly. 'The king spares no threats; but for blows—well!'

'Insolent fanatic!' shouted Vaughan, 'I tell you his majesty is on his way from Scotland with an army of savages; and London has declared for the king.'

Richard and his mare simultaneously quickened their pace.

'Then it is time you were in bed, Mr Scudamore, for my mare and I will be wanted,' he cried. 'God be praised! I thank you for the good news. It makes me young again to hear it.'

'What the devil do you mean by jerking this cursed knee of mine so?' shouted Scudamore. 'Faith, you were young enough in all conscience already, you fool! You want to keep me in bed, as well as send me there! Well out of the way, you think! But I give you honest warning to look after your mare, for I vow I have fallen in love with her. She's worth three, at least, of your mistress Dorothies.'

'You talk like a Dutch boor,' said Richard.

'Saith an English lout,' retorted Scudamore. 'But, all things being lawful in love and war, not to mention hate and rebellion, this mare, if I am blessed with a chance, shall be—well, shall be translated.'

'You mean from Redware to Raglan.'

'Where she shall be entertained in a manner worthy of her, which is saying no little, if all her paces and points be equal to her walk and her crest.'

'I trust you will be more pitiful to my poor Lady,' said Richard, quietly. 'If all they say be true, Raglan stables are no place for a mare of her breeding.'

'What do you mean, roundhead?'

'Folk say your stables at Raglan are like other some Raglan matters—of the infernal sort.'

Scudamore was silent for a moment.

'Whether the stables be under the pavement or over the leads,' he returned at last, 'there are not a few in them as good as she—of which I hope to satisfy my Lady some day,' he added, patting the mare's neck.

'Wert thou not hurt already, I would pitch thee out of the saddle,' said Richard.

'Were I not hurt in the knee, thou couldst not,' said Scudamore.

'I need not lay hand upon thee. Wert thou as sound in limb as thou art in wind, thou wouldst feel thyself on the road ere thou knewest thou hadst taken leave of the saddle—did I but give the mare the sign she knows.'

'By God's grace,' said the cavalier, 'she shall be mine, and teach me the trick of it.'

Richard answered only with a grim laugh, and again, but more gently this time, quickened the mare's pace. Little more had passed between them when the six-sided towers of Raglan rose on their view.

Richard had, from childhood, been familiar with their aspect, especially that of the huge one called the Yellow Tower, but he had never yet been within the walls that encircled them. At any time during his life, almost up to the present hour, he might have entered without question, for the gates were seldom closed and never locked, the portcullises, sheathed in the wall above, hung moveless in their rusty chains, and the drawbridges spanned the moat from scarp to counterscarp, as if from the

first their beams had rested there in solid masonry. And still, during the day, there was little sign of change, beyond an indefinable presence of busier life, even in the hush of the hot autumnal noon. But at night the drawbridges rose and the portcullises descended—each with its own peculiar creak, and jar, and scrape, setting the young rooks cawing in reply from every pinnacle and tree-top—never later than the last moment when the warder could see anything larger than a cat on the brow of the road this side the village. For who could tell when, or with what force at their command, the parliament might claim possession? And now another of the frequent reports had arrived, that the king had at length resorted to arms. It was altogether necessary for such as occupied a stronghold, unless willing to yield it to the first who demanded entrance, to keep watch and ward.

Admitted at the great brick gate, the outermost of all, and turning aside from the steps leading up to the white stone gate and main entrance beyond, with its drawbridge and double portcullis, Richard, by his companion's directions, led his mare to the left, and, rounding the moat of the citadel, sought the western gate of the castle, which seemed to shelter itself under the great bulk of the Yellow Tower, the cannon upon more than one of whose bastions closely commanded it, and made up for its inferiority in defence of its own.

Scudamore had scarcely called, ere the warder, who had been waked by the sound of the horse's feet, began to set the machinery of the portcullis in motion.

'What! wounded already, master Scudamore!' he cried, as they rode under the archway.

'Yes, Eccles,' answered Scudamore, '—wounded and taken prisoner, and brought home for ransom!'

As they spoke, Richard made use of his eyes, with a vague notion that some knowledge of the place might one day or other be of service, but it was little he could see. The moon was almost down, and her low light, prolific of shadows, shone straight in through the lifted portcullis, but in the gateway where they stood, there was nothing for her to show but the groined vault, the massy walls, and the huge iron-studded gate beyond.

'Curse you for a roundhead!' cried Scudamore, in the wrath engendered of a fierce twinge, as Heywood sought to help his lamed leg over the saddle.

'Dismount on this side then,' said Richard, regardless of the insult.

But the warder had caught the word.

'Roundhead!' he exclaimed.

Scudamore did not answer until he found himself safe on his feet, and by that time he had recovered his good manners.

'This is young Mr. Heywood of Redware,' he said, and moved towards the wicket, leaning on Richard's arm.

But the old warder stepped in front, and stood between them and the gate.

'Not a damned roundhead of the pack shall set foot across this door-sill, so long as I hold the gate,' he cried, with a fierce gesture of the right arm. And therewith he set his back to the wicket.

'Tut, tut, Eccles!' returned Scudamore impatiently. 'Good words are worth much, and cost little.'

'If the old dog bark, he gives counsel,' rejoined Eccles, immovable.

Heywood was amused, and stood silent, waiting the result. He had no particular wish to enter, and yet would have liked to see what could be seen of the court.

'Where the doorkeeper is a churl, what will folk say of the master of the house?' said Scudamore.

'They may say as they list; it will neither hurt him nor me,' said Eccles.

'Make haste, my good fellow, and let us through,' pleaded Scudamore. 'By Saint George! but my leg is in great pain. I fear the knee-cap is broken, in which case I shall not trouble thee much for a week of months.'

As he spoke, he stood leaning on Richard's arm, and behind them stood Lady, still as a horse of bronze.

'I will but drop the portcullis,' said the warder, 'and then I will carry thee to thy room in my arms. But not a cursed roundhead shall enter here, I swear.'

'Let us through at once,' said Scudamore, trying the imperative.

'Not if the earl himself gave the order,' persisted the man.

'Ho! ho! what is that you say? Let the gentlemen through,' cried a voice from somewhere.

The warder opened the wicket immediately, stepped inside, and held it open while they entered, nor uttered another word. But as soon as Richard had got Scudamore clear of the threshold, to which he lent not a helping finger, he stepped quietly out again, closed the wicket behind him, and taking Lady by the bridle, led her back over the bridge towards the bowling-green.

Scudamore had just time to whisper to Heywood, 'It is my master, the earl himself,' when the voice came again.

'What! wounded, Rowland? How is this? And who have you there?'

But that moment Richard heard the sound of his mare's hoofs on the bridge, and leaving Scudamore to answer for them both, bounded back to the wicket, darted through, and called her by name. Instantly she stood stock still, notwithstanding a vicious kick in the ribs from Eccles, not unseen of Heywood. Enraged at the fellow's insolence, he dealt him a sudden blow that stretched him at the mare's feet, vaulted into the saddle, and had reached the outer gate before he had recovered himself. The sleepy porter had just let him through, when the warder's signal to let no one out reached him. Richard turned with a laugh.

'When next you catch a roundhead,' he said, 'keep him;' and giving Lady the rein, galloped off, leaving the porter staring after him through the bars like a half-roused wild beast.

Not doubting the rumour of open hostilities, the warder's design had been to secure the mare, and pretend she had run away, for a good horse was now more precious than ever.

The earl's study was over the gate, and as he suffered much from gout and slept ill, he not unfrequently sought refuge in the night-watches with his friends Chaucer, Gower, and Shakspeare.

Richard drew rein at the last point whence the castle would have been visible in the daytime. All he saw was a moving light. The walls whence it shone were one day to be as the shell around the kernel of his destiny.

CHAPTER IX LOVE AND WAR

When Richard reached home and recounted the escape he had had, an imprecation, the first he had ever heard him utter, broke from his father's lips. With the indiscrimination of party spirit, he looked upon the warder's insolence and attempted robbery as the spirit and behaviour of his master, the earl being in fact as little capable of such conduct as Mr. Heywood himself.

Immediately after their early breakfast the next morning, he led his son to a chamber in the roof, of the very existence of which he had been ignorant, and there discovered to him good store of such armour of both kinds as was then in use, which for some years past he had been quietly collecting in view of the time—which, in the light of the last rumour, seemed to have at length arrived—when strength would have to decide the antagonism of opposed claims. Probably also it was in view of this time, seen from afar in silent approach, that, from the very moment when he took his education into his own hands, he had paid thorough attention to Richard's bodily as well as mental accomplishment, encouraging him in all manly sports, such as wrestling, boxing, and riding to hounds, with the more martial training of sword-exercises, with and without the target, and shooting with the carbine and the new-fashioned flint-lock pistols.

The rest of the morning Richard spent in choosing a headpiece, and mail plates for breast, back, neck, shoulders, arms, and thighs. The next thing was to set the village tailor at work upon a coat of that thick strong leather, dressed soft and pliant, which they called buff, to wear under his armour. After that came the proper equipment of Lady, and that of the twenty men whom his father expected to provide from amongst his own tenants, and for whom he had already a full provision of clothing and armour; they had to be determined on, conferred with, and fitted, one by one, so as to avoid drawing attention to the proceeding. Hence both Mr. Heywood and Richard had enough to do, and the more that Faithful Stopchase, on whom was their chief dependence, had not yet recovered sufficiently from the effects of his fall to be equal to the same exertion as formerly—of which he was the more impatient that he firmly believed he had been a special object of Satanic assault, because of the present value of his counsels, and the coming weight of his deeds on the side of the well-affected. Thus occupied, the weeks passed into months.

During this time Richard called again and again upon Dorothy, ostensibly to inquire after her mother. Only once, however, did she appear, when she gave him to understand she was so fully occupied, that, although obliged by his attention, he must not expect to see her again.

'But I will be honest, Richard,' she added, 'and let you know plainly that, were it otherwise in respect of my mother, I yet should not see you, for you and I have parted company, and are already so far asunder on different roads that I must bid you farewell at once while yet we can hear each other speak.'

There was no anger, only a cold sadness in her tone and manner, while her bearing was stately as towards one with whom she had never had intimacy. Even her sadness seemed to Richard to have respect to the hopeless condition of her mother's health, and not at all to the changed relation between him and her.

'I trust, at least, mistress Dorothy,' he said, with some bitterness, 'you will grant me the justice that what I do, I do with a good conscience. After all that has been betwixt us I ask for no more.'

'What more could the best of men ask for?'

'I, who am far from making any claim to rank with such—'

'I am glad to know it,' interjected Dorothy.

'—am yet capable of hoping that an eye at once keener and kinder than yours may see conscience at the very root of the actions which you, Dorothy, will doubtless most condemn.'

Was this the boy she had despised for indifference?

'Was it conscience drove you to sprain my cousin Rowland's knee?' she asked.

Richard was silent for a moment. The sting was too cruel.

'Pray hesitate not to say so, if such be your conviction,' added Dorothy.

'No,' replied Richard, recovering himself. 'I trust it is not such a serious matter as you say; but any how it was not conscience but jealousy and anger that drove me to that wrong.'

'Did you see the action such at the time?'

'No, surely; else I would not have been guilty of that for which I am truly sorry now.'

'Then, perhaps, the day will come when, looking back on what you do now, you will regard it with the like disapprobation.—God grant it may!' she added, with a deep sigh.

'That can hardly be, mistress Dorothy. I am, in the matters to which you refer, under the influence of no passion, no jealousy, no self-seeking, no—'

'Perhaps a deeper search might discover in you each and all of the bosom-sins you so stoutly abjure,' interrupted Dorothy. 'But it is needless for you to defend yourself to me; I am not your judge.'

'So much the better for me!' returned Richard; 'I should else have an unjust as well as severe one. I, on my part, hope the day may come when you will find something to repent of in such harshness towards an old friend whom you choose to think in the wrong.'

'Richard Heywood, God is my witness it is no choice of mine. I have no choice: what else is there to think? I know well enough what you and your father are about. But there is nothing save my own conscience and my mother's love I would not part with to be able to believe you honourably right in your own eyes—not in mine—God forbid! That can never be—not until fair is foul and foul is fair.'

So saying, she held out her hand.

'God be between thee and me, Dorothy!' said Richard, with solemnity, as he took it in his.

He spoke with a voice that seemed to him far away and not his own. Until now he had never realized the idea of a final separation between him and Dorothy; and even now, he could hardly believe she was in earnest, but felt, rather, like a child whose nurse threatens to forsake him on the dark road, and who begins to weep only from the pitiful imagination of the thing, and not any actual fear of her carrying the threat into execution. The idea of retaining her love by ceasing to act on his convictions—the very possibility of it—had never crossed the horizon of his thoughts. Had it come to him as the merest intellectual notion, he would have perceived at once, of such a loyal stock did he come, and so loyal had he himself been to truth all his days, that to act upon her convictions instead of his own would have been to widen a gulf at least measurable, to one infinite and impassable.

She withdrew the hand which had solemnly pressed his, and left the room. For a moment he stood gazing after her. Even in that moment, the vague fear that she would not come again grew to a plain conviction, and forcibly repressing the misery that rose in bodily presence from his heart to his throat, he left the house, hurried down the pleached alley to the old sun-dial, threw himself on the grass under the yews, and wept and longed for war.

But war was not to be just yet. Autumn withered and sank into winter. The rain came down on the stubble, and the red cattle waded through red mire to and from their pasture; the skies grew pale above, and the earth grew bare beneath; the winds grew sharp and seemed unfriendly; the brooks ran foaming to the rivers, and the rivers ran roaring to the ocean. Then the earth dried a little, and the frost came, and swelled and hardened it; the snow fell and lay, vanished and came again. But even out of the depth of winter, quivered airs and hints of spring, until at last the mighty weakling was born. And all this time rumour beat the alarum of war, and men were growing harder and more determined on both sides—some from self-opinion, some from party spirit, some from prejudice, antipathy, animosity, some from sense of duty, mingled more and less with the alloys of impulse and advantage. But he who was most earnest on the one side was least aware that he who was most earnest on the other was honest as himself. To confess uprightness in one of the opposite party, seemed to most men to involve treachery to their own; or if they were driven to the confession, it was too often followed with an attempt at discrediting the noblest of human qualities.

The hearts of the two young people fared very much as the earth under the altered skies of winter, and behaved much as the divided nation. A sense of wrong endured kept both from feeling at first the full sorrow of their separation; and by the time that the tide of memory had flowed back and covered the rock of offence, they had got a little used to the dulness of a day from which its brightest hour had been blotted. Dorothy learned very soon to think of Richard as a prodigal brother beyond seas, and when they chanced to meet, which was but seldom, he was to her as a sad ghost in a dream. To Richard, on the other hand, she looked a lovely but scarce worshipful celestial, with merely might enough to hold his heart, swelling with a sense of wrong, in her hand, and squeeze it very hard. His consolation was that he suffered for the truth's sake, for to decline action upon such insight as he had had, was a thing as impossible as to alter the relations between the parts of a sphere. Dorothy longed for peace, and the return of the wandering chickens of the church to the shelter of her wings, to be led by her about the paled yard of obedience, picking up the barley of righteousness; Richard longed for the trumpet-blast of Liberty to call her sons together—to a war whose battles should never cease until men were free to worship God after the light he had lighted within them, and the dragon of priestly authority should breathe out his last fiery breath, no more to drive the feebler brethren to seek refuge in the house of hypocrisy.

At home Dorothy was under few influences except those of her mother, and, through his letters, of Mr. Matthew Herbert. Upon the former a lovely spiritual repose had long since descended. Her anxieties were only for her daughter, her hopes only for the world beyond the grave. The latter was a man of peace, who, having found in the ordinances of his church everything to aid and nothing to retard his spiritual development, had no conception of the nature of the puritanical opposition to its government and rites. Through neither could Dorothy come to any true idea of the questions which agitated the politics of both church and state. To her, the king was a kind of demigod, and every priest a fountain of truth. Her religion was the sedate and dutiful acceptance of obedient innocence, a thing of small account indeed where it is rooted only in sentiment and customary preference, but of inestimable value in such cases as hers, where action followed upon acceptance.

Richard, again, was under the quickening masterdom of a well-stored, active mind, a strong will, a judgment that sought to keep its balance even, and whose descended scale never rebounded, a conscience which, through all the mists of human judgment, eyed ever the blotted glimmer of some light beyond; and all these elements of power were gathered in his own father, in whom the customary sternness of the puritan parent had at length blossomed in confidence, a phase of love which, to such a mind as Richard's, was even more enchanting than tenderness. To be trusted by such a father, to feel his mind and soul present with him, acknowledging him a fit associate in great hopes and noble aims, was surely and ought to be, whatever the sentimentalist may say, some comfort for any sorrow a youth is capable of, such being in general only too lightly remediable. I wonder if any mere youth ever suffered, from a disappointment in love, half the sense of cureless pain which, with one protracted pang, gnaws at the heart of the avaricious old man who has dropt a sovereign into his draw-well.

But the relation of Dorothy and Richard, although ordinary in outward appearance, was of no common kind; and while these two thus fell apart from each other in their outer life, each judging the other insensible to the call of highest rectitude, neither of them knew how much his or her heart was confident of the other's integrity. In respect of them, the lovely simile, in *Christabel*, of the parted cliffs, may be carried a little farther, for, under the dreary sea flowing between them, the rock was one still. Such a faith may sometimes, perhaps often does, lie in the heart like a seed buried beyond the reach of the sun, thoroughly alive though giving no sign: to grow too soon might be to die. Things had indeed gone farther with Dorothy and Richard, but the lobes of their loves had never been fairly exposed to the sun and wind ere the swollen clods of winter again covered them.

Once, in the cold noon of a lovely day of frost, when the lightest step crackled with the breaking of multitudinous crystals, when the trees were fringed with furry white, and the old spider-webs glimmered like filigrane of fairy silver, they met on a lonely country-road. The sun shone red through

depths of half-frozen vapour, and tinged the whiteness of death with a faint warmth of feeling and hope. Along the rough lane Richard walked reading what looked like a letter, but was a copy his father had procured of a poem still only in manuscript—the *Lycidas* of Milton. In the glow to which the alternating hot and cold winds of enthusiasm and bereavement had fanned the fiery particle within him, Richard was not only able to understand and enjoy the thought of which the poem was built, but was borne aloft on its sad yet hopeful melodies as upon wings of an upsoaring seraph. The flow of his feeling suddenly broken by an almost fierce desire to share with Dorothy the tenderness of the magic music of the stately monody, and then, ere the answering waves of her emotion had subsided, to whisper to her that the marvellous spell came from the heart of the same wonderful man from whose brain had issued, like Pallas from Jove's, —what?—*Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence against Smectymnus*, the pamphlet which had so roused all the abhorrence her nature was capable of—he lifted his head and saw her but a few paces from him. Dorothy caught a glimpse of a countenance radiant with feeling, and eyes flashing through a watery film of delight; her own eyes fell; she said, 'Good morning, Richard!' and passed him without deflecting an inch. The bird of song folded its wings and called in its shining; the sun lost half his red beams; the sprinkled seed pearls vanished, and ashes covered the earth; he folded the paper, laid it in the breast of his doublet, and walked home through the glittering meadows with a fresh hurt in his heart.

Dorothy's time and thoughts were all but occupied with the nursing of her mother, who, contrary to the expectation of her friends, outlived the winter, and revived as the spring drew on. She read much to her. Some of the best books had drifted into the house and settled there, but, although English printing was now nearly two centuries old, they were not many. We must not therefore imagine, however, that the two ladies were ill supplied with spiritual pabulum. There are few houses of the present day in which, though there be ten times as many books, there is so much strong food; if there was any lack, it was rather of diluents. Amongst those she read were Queen Elizabeth's Homilies, Hooker's *Politie*, Donne's Sermons, and George Herbert's *Temple*, to the dying lady only less dear than her New Testament.

But even with this last, it was only through sympathy with her mother that Dorothy could come into any contact. The gems of the mind, which alone could catch and reflect such light, lay as yet under the soil, and much ploughing and breaking of the clods was needful ere they could come largely to the surface. But happily for Dorothy, there were amongst the books a few of those precious little quartos of Shakspeare, the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, and the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*, then much read, if we may judge from the fact that, although it was not published till after the death of Sidney, the eighth edition of it had now been nearly ten years in lady Vaughan's possession.

Then there was in the drawing-room an old spinnet, sadly out of tune, on which she would yet, in spite of the occasional jar and shudder of respondent nerves, now and then play at a sitting all the little music she had learned, and with whose help she had sometimes even tried to find out an air for words that had taken her fancy.

Also, she had the house to look after, the live stock to see to, her dog to play with and teach, a few sad thoughts and memories to discipline, a call now and then from a neighbour, or a longer visit from some old friend of her mother's to receive, and the few cottagers on all that was left of the estate of Wyfern to care for; so that her time was tolerably filled up, and she felt little need of anything more to occupy at least her hours and days.

Meanwhile, through all nature's changes, through calm and tempest, rain and snow, through dull refusing winter, and the first passing visits of open-handed spring, the hearts of men were awaiting the outburst of the thunder, the blue peaks of whose cloud-built cells had long been visible on the horizon of the future. Every now and then they would start and listen, and ask each other was it the first growl of the storm, or but the rumbling of the wheels of the government. To the dwellers in Raglan Castle it seemed at least a stormy sign—of which the news reached them in the dull November weather—that the parliament had set a guard upon Worcester House in the Strand, and searched it

for persons suspected of high treason—lord Herbert, doubtless, first of all, the direction and strength of whose political drift, suspicious from the first because of his religious persuasion, could hardly be any longer doubtful to the most liberal of its members.

The news of the terrible insurrection of the catholics in Ireland followed.

Richard kept his armour bright, his mare in good fettle, himself and his men in thorough exercise, read and talked with his father, and waited, sometimes with patience, sometimes without.

At length, in the early spring, the king withdrew to York, and a body-guard of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood gathered around him. Richard renewed the flints of his carbine and pistols.

In April, the king, refused entrance into the town of Hull, proclaimed the governor a traitor. The parliament declared the proclamation a breach of its privileges. Richard got new girths.

The summer passed in various disputes. Towards its close the governor of Portsmouth declined to act upon a commission to organize the new levies of the parliament, and administered instead thereof an oath of allegiance to the garrison and inhabitants. Thereupon the place was besieged by Essex; the king proclaimed him a traitor, and the parliament retorted by declaring the royal proclamation a libel. Richard had his mare new-shod.

On a certain day in August, the royal standard, with the motto, 'Give to Caesar his due,' was set up at Nottingham. Richard mounted his mare, and taking leave of his father, led Stopchase and nineteen men more, all fairly mounted, to offer his services to the parliament, as represented by the earl of Essex.

CHAPTER X

DOROTHY'S REFUGE

With the decay of summer, lady Vaughan began again to sink, and became at length so weak that Dorothy rarely left her room. The departure of Richard Heywood to join the rebels affected her deeply. The report of the utter rout of the parliamentary forces at Edgehill, lighted up her face for the last time with a glimmer of earthly gladness, which the very different news that followed speedily extinguished; and after that she declined more rapidly. Mrs. Rees told Dorothy that she would yield to the first frost. But she lingered many weeks. One morning she signed to her daughter to come nearer that she might speak to her.

'Dorothy,' she whispered, 'I wish much to see good Mr. Herbert. Prithce send for him. I know it is an evil time for him to travel, being an old man and feeble, but he will do his endeavour to come to me, I know, if but for my husband's sake, whom he loved like a brother. I cannot die in peace without first taking counsel with him how best to provide for the safety of my little ewe-lamb until these storms are overblown. Alas! alas! I did look to Richard Heywood—'

She could say no more.

'Do not take thought about the morrow for me any more than you would for yourself, madam,' said Dorothy. 'You know master Herbert says the one is as the other.'

She kissed her mother's hand as she spoke, then hastened from the room, and despatched a messenger to Llangattock.

Before the worthy man arrived, lady Vaughan was speechless. By signs and looks, definite enough, and more eloquent than words, she committed Dorothy to his protection, and died.

Dorothy behaved with much calmness. She would not, in her mother's absence, act so as would have grieved her presence. Little passed between her and Mr. Herbert until the funeral was over. Then they talked of the future. Her guardian wished much to leave everything in charge of the old bailiff, and take her with him to Llangattock; but he hesitated a little because of the bad state of the roads in winter, much because of their danger in the troubled condition of affairs, and most of all because of the uncertain, indeed perilous position of the Episcopalian clergy, who might soon find themselves without a roof to shelter them. Fearing nothing for himself, he must yet, in arranging for Dorothy, contemplate the worst of threatening possibilities; and one thing was pretty certain, that matters must grow far worse before they could even begin to mend.

But they had more time for deliberation given them than they would willingly have taken. Mr. Herbert had caught cold while reading the funeral service, and was compelled to delay his return. The cold settled into a sort of low fever, and for many weeks he lay helpless. During this time the sudden affair at Brentford took place, after which the king, having lost by it far more than he had gained, withdrew to Oxford, anxious to re-open the treaty which the battle had closed.

The country was now in a sad state. Whichever party was uppermost in any district, sought to ruin all of the opposite faction. Robbery and plunder became common, and that not only on the track of armies or the route of smaller bodies of soldiers, for bands of mere marauders, taking up the cry of the faction that happened in any neighbourhood to have the ascendancy, plundered houses, robbed travellers, and were guilty of all sorts of violence. Hence it had become as perilous to stay at home in an unfortified house as to travel; and many were the terrors which during the winter tried the courage of the girl, and checked the recovery of the old man. At length one morning, after a midnight alarm, Mr. Herbert thus addressed Dorothy, as she waited upon him with his breakfast:

'It fears me much, my dear Dorothy, that the time will be long ere any but fortified places will be safe abodes. It is a question in my mind whether it would not be better to seek refuge for you—. But stay; let me suggest my proposal, rather than startle you with it in sudden form complete. You are related to the Somersets, are you not?'

'Yes—distantly.'

'Is the relationship recognized by them?'

'I cannot tell, sir. I do not even distinctly know what the relationship is. And assuredly, sir, you mean not to propose that I should seek safety from bodily peril with a household which is, to say the least, so unfriendly to the doctrines you and my blessed mother have always taught me! You cannot, or indeed, must you not have forgotten that they are papists?'

Dorothy had been educated in such a fear of the catholics, and such a profound disapproval of those of their doctrines rejected by the reformers of the church of England, as was only surpassed in intensity by her absolute abhorrence of the assumptions and negations of the puritans. These indeed roused in her a certain sense of disgust which she had never felt in respect of what were considered by her teachers the most erroneous doctrines of the catholics. But Mr. Herbert, although his prejudices were nearly as strong, and his opinions, if not more indigenous at least far better acclimatised than hers, had yet reaped this advantage of a longer life, that he was better able to atone his dislike of certain opinions with personal regard for those who held them, and therefore did not, like Dorothy, recoil from the idea of obligation to one of a different creed—provided always that creed was catholicism and not puritanism. For to the church of England, the catholics, in the presence of her more rampant foes, appeared harmless enough now.

He believed that the honourable feelings of lord Worcester and his family would be hostile to any attempt to proselytize his ward. But as far as she was herself concerned, he trusted more to the strength of her prejudices than the rectitude of her convictions, honest as the girl was, to prevent her from being over-influenced by the change of spiritual atmosphere; for in proportion to the simplicity of her goodness must be her capacity for recognizing the goodness of others, catholics or not, and for being wrought upon by the virtue that went out from them. His hope was, that England would have again become the abode of peace, long ere any risk to her spiritual well-being should have been incurred by this mode of securing her bodily safety and comfort.

But there was another fact, in the absence of which he would have had far more hesitation in seeking for his ewe-lamb the protection of sheep, the guardians of whose spiritual fold had but too often proved wolves in sheep-dogs' clothing: within the last few days the news had reached him that an old friend named Bayly, a true man, a priest of the English church and a doctor of divinity, had taken up his abode in Raglan castle as one of the household—chaplain indeed, as report would have it, though that was hard of belief, save indeed it were for the sake of the protestants within its walls. However that might be, there was a true shepherd to whose care to entrust his lamb; and it was mainly on the strength of this consideration that he had concluded to make his proposal to Dorothy—namely, that she should seek shelter within the walls of Raglan castle until the storm should be so far over-blown, as to admit either of her going to Llangattock or returning to her own home. He now discussed the matter with her in full, and, notwithstanding her very natural repugnance to the scheme, such was Dorothy's confidence in her friend that she was easily persuaded of its wisdom. What the more inclined her to yield was, that Mr. Heywood had written her a letter, hardly the less unwelcome for the kindness of its tone, in which he offered her the shelter and hospitality of Redware 'until better days.'

'Better days!' exclaimed Dorothy with contempt. 'If such days as he would count better should ever arrive, his house is the last place where I would have them find me!'

She wrote a polite but cold refusal, and rejoiced in the hope that he would soon hear of her having sought and found refuge in Raglan with the friends of the king.

Meanwhile Mr. Herbert had opened communication with Dr. Bayly, had satisfied himself that he was still a true son of the church, and had solicited his friendly mediation towards the receiving of mistress Dorothy Vaughan into the family of the marquis of Worcester, to the dignity of which title the earl had now been raised—the parliament, to be sure, declining to acknowledge the patent conferred by his majesty, but that was of no consequence in the estimation of those chiefly concerned.

On a certain spring morning, then, the snow still lying in the hollows of the hills, Thomas Bayly came to Wyfern to see his old friend Matthew Herbert. He was a courteous little man, with a courtesy librating on a knife-edge of deflection towards obsequiousness on the one hand and condescension on the other, for neither of which, however, was his friend Herbert an object. His eye was keen, and his forehead good, but his carriage inclined to the pompous, and his speech to the formal, ornate, and prolix. The shape of his mouth was honest, but the closure of the lips indicated self-importance. The greeting between them was simple and genuine, and ere they parted, Bayly had promised to do his best in representing the matter to the marquis, his daughter-in-law, lady Margaret, the wife of lord Herbert, and his daughter, lady Anne, who, although the most rigid catholic in the house, was already the doctor's special friend.

It would have been greatly unlike the marquis or any of his family to refuse such a prayer. Had not their house been for centuries the abode of hospitality, the embodiment of shelter? On the mere representation of Dr. Bayly, and the fact of the relationship, which, although distant, was well enough known, within two days mistress Dorothy Vaughan received an invitation to enter the family of the marquis, as one of the gentlewomen of lady Margaret's suite. It was of course gratefully accepted, and as soon as Mr. Herbert thought himself sufficiently recovered to encounter the fatigues of travelling, he urged on the somewhat laggard preparations of Dorothy, that he might himself see her safely housed on his way to Llangattock, whither he was most anxious to return.

It was a lovely spring morning when they set out together on horseback for Raglan. The sun looked down like a young father upon his earth-mothered children, peeping out of their beds to greet him after the long winter night. The rooks were too busy to caw, dibbling deep in the soft red earth with their great beaks. The red cattle, flaked with white, spotted the clear fresh green of the meadows. The bare trees had a kind of glory about them, like old men waiting for their youth, which might come suddenly. A few slow clouds were drifting across the pale sky. A gentle wind was blowing over the wet fields, but when a cloud swept before the sun, it blew cold. The roads were bad, but their horses were used to such, and picked their way with the easy carefulness of experience. The winter might yet return for a season, but this day was of the spring and its promises. Earth and air, field and sky were full of peace. But the heart of England was troubled—troubled with passions both good and evil—with righteous indignation and unholy scorn, with the love of liberty and the joy of license, with ambition and aspiration.

No honest heart could yield long to the comforting of the fair world, knowing that some of her fairest fields would soon be crimsoned afresh with the blood of her children. But Dorothy's sadness was not all for her country in general. Had she put the question honestly to her heart, she must have confessed that even the loss of her mother had less to do with a certain weight upon it, which the loveliness of the spring day seemed to render heavier, than the rarely absent feeling rather than thought, that the playmate of her childhood, and the offered lover of her youth, had thrown himself with all the energy of dawning manhood into the quarrel of the lawless and self-glorifying. Nor was she altogether free from a sense of blame in the matter. Had she been less imperative in her mood and bearing, more ready to give than to require sympathy,—but ah! she could not change the past, and the present was calling upon her.

At length the towers of Raglan appeared, and a pang of apprehension shot through her bosom. She was approaching the unknown. Like one on the verge of a second-sight, her history seemed for a moment about to reveal itself—where it lay, like a bird in its egg, within those massive walls, warded by those huge ascending towers. Brought up in a retirement that some would have counted loneliness, and although used to all gentle and refined ways, yet familiar with homeliness and simplicity of mode and ministration, she could not help feeling awed at the prospect of entering such a zone of rank and stateliness and observance as the household of the marquis, who lived like a prince in expenditure, attendance, and ceremony. She knew little of the fashions of the day, and, like many modest young people, was afraid she might be guilty of some solecism which would make her appear ill-bred, or

at least awkward. Since her mother left her, she had become aware of a timidity to which she had hitherto been a stranger. 'Ah!' she said to herself, 'if only my mother were with me!'

At length they reached the brick gate, were admitted within the outer wall, and following the course taken by Scudamore and Heywood, skirted the moat which enringed the huge blind citadel or keep, and arrived at the western gate. The portcullis rose to admit them, and they rode into the echoes of the vaulted gateway. Turning to congratulate Dorothy on their safe arrival, Mr. Herbert saw that she was pale and agitated.

'What ails my child?' he said in a low voice, for the warder was near.

'I feel as if entering a prison,' she replied, with a shiver.

'Is thy God the God of the grange and not of the castle?' returned the old man.

'But, sir,' said Dorothy, 'I have been accustomed to a liberty such as few have enjoyed, and these walls and towers—'

'Heed not the look of things,' interrupted her guardian. 'Believe in the Will that with a thought can turn the shadow of death into the morning, give gladness for weeping, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

CHAPTER XI

RAGLAN CASTLE

While he yet spoke, their horses, of their own accord, passed through the gate which Eccles had thrown wide to admit them, and carried them into the Fountain court. Here, indeed, was a change of aspect! All that Dorothy had hitherto contemplated was the side of the fortress which faced the world—frowning and defiant, although here and there on the point of breaking into a half smile, for the grim, suspicious, altogether repellent look of the old feudal castle had been gradually vanishing in the additions and alterations of more civilised times. But now they were in the heart of the building, and saw the face which the house of strength turned upon its own people. The spring sunshine filled half the court; over the rest lay the shadow of the huge keep, towering massive above the three-storied line of building which formed the side next it. Here was the true face of the Janus-building, full of eyes and mouths; for many bright windows looked down into the court, in some of which shone the smiling faces of children and ladies peeping out to see the visitors, whose arrival had been announced by the creaking chains of the portcullis; and by the doors issued and entered, here a lady in rich attire, there a gentlemen half in armour, and here again a serving man or maid. Nearly in the centre of the quadrangle, just outside the shadow of the keep, stood the giant horse, rearing in white marble, almost dazzling in the sunshine, from whose nostrils spouted the jets of water which gave its name to the court. Opposite the gate by which they entered was the little chapel, with its triple lancet windows, over which lay the picture-gallery with its large oriel lights. Far above their roof, ascended from behind that of the great hall, with its fine lantern window seated on the ridge. From the other court beyond the hall, that upon which the main entrance opened, came the sounds of heavy feet in intermittent but measured tread, the clanking of arms, and a returning voice of loud command: the troops of the garrison were being exercised on the slabs of the pitched court.

From each of the many doors opening into the court they had entered, a path, paved with coloured tiles, led straight through the finest of turf to the marble fountain in the centre, into whose shadowed basin the falling water seemed to carry captive as into a prison the sunlight it caught above. Its music as it fell made a lovely but strange and sad contrast with the martial sounds from beyond.

It was but a moment they had to note these things; eyes and ears gathered them all at once. Two of the warder's men already held their horses, while two other men, responsive to the warder's whistle, came running from the hall and helped them to dismount. Hardly had they reached the ground ere a man-servant came, who led the way to the left towards a porch of carved stone on the same side of the court. The door stood open, revealing a flight of stairs, rather steep, but wide and stately, going right up between two straight walls. At the top stood lady Margaret's gentleman usher, Mr. Harcourt by name, who received them with much courtesy, and conducting them to a small room on the left of the landing, went to announce their arrival to lady Margaret, to whose private parlour this was the antechamber. Returning in a moment, he led them into her presence.

She received them with a frankness which almost belied the stateliness of her demeanour. Through the haze of that reserve which a consciousness of dignity, whether true or false, so often generates, the genial courtesy of her Irish nature, for she was an O'Brien, daughter of the earl of Thomond, shone clear, and justified her Celtic origin.

'Welcome, cousin!' she said, holding out her hand while yet distant half the length of the room, across which, upborne on slow firm foot, she advanced with even, stately motion, 'And you also, reverend sir,' she went on, turning to Mr. Herbert. 'I am told we are indebted to you for this welcome addition to our family—how welcome none can tell but ladies shut up like ourselves.'

Dorothy was already almost at her ease, and the old clergyman soon found lady Margaret so sensible and as well as courteous—prejudiced yet further in her favour, it must be confessed, by the pleasant pretence she made of claiming cousinship on the ground of the identity of her husband's title

with his surname—that, ere he left the castle, liberal as he had believed himself, he was nevertheless astonished to find how much of friendship had in that brief space been engendered in his bosom towards a catholic lady whom he had never before seen.

Since the time of Elizabeth, when the fear and repugnance of the nation had been so greatly and justly excited by the apparent probability of a marriage betwixt their queen and the detested Philip of Spain, a considerable alteration had been gradually wrought in the feelings of a large portion of it in respect of their catholic countrymen—a fact which gave strength to the position of the puritans in asserting the essential identity of episcopalian with catholic politics. Almost forty years had elapsed since the Gunpowder Plot; the queen was a catholic; the episcopalian party was itself at length endangered by the extension and development of the very principles on which they had themselves broken away from the church of Rome; and the catholics were friendly to the government of the king, under which their condition was one of comfort if not influence, while under that of the parliament they had every reason to anticipate a revival of persecution. Not a few of them doubtless cherished the hope that this revelation of the true spirit of dissent would result in driving the king and his party back into the bosom of the church.

The king, on the other hand, while only too glad to receive what aid he might from the loyal families of the old religion, yet saw that much caution was necessary lest he should alienate the most earnest of his protestant friends by giving ground for the suspicion that he was inclined to purchase their co-operation by a return to the creed of his Scottish grandmother, Mary Stuart, and his English great-great-grand-mother, Margaret Tudor.

On the part of the clergy there had been for some time a considerable tendency, chiefly from the influence of Laud, to cultivate the same spirit which actuated the larger portion of the catholic priesthood; and although this had never led to retrograde movement in regard to their politics, the fact that both were accounted by a third party, and that far the most dangerous to either of the other two, as in spirit and object one and the same, naturally tended to produce a more indulgent regard of each other than had hitherto prevailed. And hence, in part, it was that it had become possible for episcopalian Dr. Bayly to be an inmate of Raglan Castle, and for good, protestant Matthew Herbert to seek refuge for his ward with good catholic lady Margaret.

Eager to return to the duties of his parish, through his illness so long neglected, Mr. Herbert declined her ladyship's invitation to dinner, which, she assured him, consulting a watch that she wore in a ring on her little finger, must be all but ready, seeing it was now a quarter to eleven, and took his leave, accompanied by Dorothy's servant to bring back the horse—if indeed they should be fortunate enough to escape the requisition of both horses by one party or the other. At present, however, the king's affairs continued rather on the ascendant, and the name of the marquis in that country was as yet a tower of strength. Dorothy's horse was included in the hospitality shown his mistress, and taken to the stables—under the mid-day shadow of the Library Tower.

As soon as the parson was gone, lady Margaret touched a small silver bell which hung in a stand on the table beside her.

'Conduct mistress Dorothy Vaughan to her room, wait upon her there, and then attend her hither,' she said to the maid who answered it. 'I would request a little not unneedful haste, cousin,' she went on, 'for my lord of Worcester is very precise in all matters of household order, and likes ill to see any one enter the dining-room after he is seated. It is his desire that you should dine at his table to-day. After this I must place you with the rest of my ladies, who dine in the housekeeper's room.'

'As you think proper, madam,' returned Dorothy, a little disappointed, but a little relieved also.

'The bell will ring presently,' said lady Margaret, 'and a quarter of an hour thereafter we shall all be seated.'

She was herself already dressed—in a pale-blue satin, with full skirt and close-fitting, long-peaked boddice, fastened in front by several double clasps set with rubies; her shoulders were bare,

and her sleeves looped up with large round star-like studs, set with diamonds, so that her arms also were bare to the elbows. Round her neck was a short string of large pearls.

'You take no long time to attire yourself, cousin,' said her ladyship, kindly, when Dorothy returned.

'Little time was needed, madam,' answered Dorothy; 'for me there is but one colour. I fear I shall show but a dull bird amidst the gay plumage of Raglan. But I could have better adorned myself had not I heard the bell ere I had begun, and feared to lose your ladyship's company, and in very deed make my first appearance before my lord as a transgressor of the laws of his household.'

'You did well, cousin Dorothy; for everything goes by law and order here. All is reason and rhyme too in this house. My lord's father, although one of the best and kindest of men, is, as I said, somewhat precise, and will, as he says himself, be king in his own kingdom—thinking doubtless of one who is not such. I should not talk thus with you, cousin, were you like some young ladies I know; but there is that about you which pleases me greatly, and which I take to indicate discretion. When first I came to the house, not having been accustomed to so severe a punctuality, I gave my lord no little annoyance; for, oftener than once or twice, I walked into his dining-room not only after grace had been said, but after the first course had been sent down to the hall-tables. My lord took his revenge in calling me the wild Irishwoman.'

Here she laughed very sweetly.

'The only one,' she resumed, 'who does here as he will, is my husband. Even lord Charles, who is governor of the castle, must be in his place to the moment; but for my husband—'

The bell rang a second time. Lady Margaret rose, and taking Dorothy's arm, led her from the room into a long dim-lighted corridor. Arrived at the end of it, where a second passage met it at right angles, she stopped at a door facing them.

'I think we shall find my lord of Worcester here,' she said in a whisper, as she knocked and waited a response. 'He is not here,' she said. 'He expects me to call on him as I pass. We must make haste.'

The second passage, in which were several curves and sharp turns, led them to a large room, nearly square, in which were two tables covered for about thirty. By the door and along the sides of the room were a good many gentlemen, some of them very plainly dressed, and others in gayer attire, amongst whom Dorothy, as they passed through, recognised her cousin Scudamore. Whether he saw and knew her she could not tell. Crossing a small antechamber they entered the drawing-room, where stood and sat talking a number of ladies and gentlemen, to some of whom lady Margaret spoke and presented her cousin, greeting others with a familiar nod or smile, and yet others with a stately courtesy. Then she said,

'Ladies, I will lead the way to the dining-room. My lord marquis would the less willingly have us late that something detains himself.'

Those who dined in the marquis's room followed her. Scarcely had she reached the upper end of the table when the marquis entered, followed by all his gentlemen, some of whom withdrew, their service over for the time, while others proceeded to wait upon him and his family, with any of the nobility who happened to be his guests at the first table.

'I am the laggard to-day, my lady,' he said, cheerily, as he bore his heavy person up the room towards her. 'Ah!' he went on, as lady Margaret stepped forward to meet him, leading Dorothy by the hand, 'who is this sober young damsel under my wild Irishwoman's wing? Our young cousin Vaughan, doubtless, whose praises my worthy Dr. Bayly has been sounding in my ears?'

He held out his hand to Dorothy, and bade her welcome to Raglan.

The marquis was a man of noble countenance, of the type we are ready to imagine peculiar to the great men of the time of queen Elizabeth. To this his unwieldy person did not correspond, although his movements were still far from being despoiled of that charm which naturally belonged to all that was his. Nor did his presence owe anything to his dress, which was of that long-haired coarse

woollen stuff they called frieze, worn, probably, by not another nobleman in the country, and regarded as fitter for a yeoman. His eyes, though he was yet but sixty-five or so, were already hazy, and his voice was husky and a little broken—results of the constantly poor health and frequent suffering he had had for many years; but he carried it all 'with'—to quote the prince of courtesy, sir Philip Sydney—'with a right old man's grace, that will seem livelier than his age will afford him.'

The moment he entered, the sewer in the antechamber at the other end of the room had given a signal to one waiting at the head of the stair leading down to the hall, and his lordship was hardly seated, ere—although the kitchen was at the corner of the pitched court diagonally opposite—he bore the first dish into the room, followed by his assistants, laden each with another.

Lady Margaret made Dorothy sit down by her. A place on her other side was vacant.

'Where is this truant husband of thine, my lady?' asked the marquis, as soon as Dr. Bayly had said grace. 'Know you whether he eats at all, or when, or where? It is now three days since he has filled his place at thy side, yet is he in the castle. Thou knowest, my lady, I deal not with him, who is so soon to sit in this chair, as with another, but I like it not. Know you what occupies him to day?'

'I do not, my lord,' answered lady Margaret. 'I have had but one glimpse of him since the morning, and if he looks now as he looked then, I fear your lordship would be minded rather to drive him from your table than welcome him to a seat beside you.'

As she spoke, lady Margaret caught a glimpse of a peculiar expression on Scudamore's face, where he stood behind his master's chair.

'Your page, my lord,' she said, 'seems to know something of him: if it pleased you to put him to the question—'

'Hey, Scudamore!' said the marquis without turning his head; 'what have you seen of my lord Herbert?'

'As much as could be seen of him, my lord,' answered Scudamore. 'He was new from the powder-mill, and his face and hands were as he had been blown three times up the hall chimney.'

'I would thou didst pay more heed to what is fitting, thou monkey, and knewest either place or time for thy foolish jests! It will be long ere thou soil one of thy white fingers for king or country,' said the marquis, neither angrily nor merrily. 'Get another flask of claret,' he added, 'and keep thy wit for thy mates, boy.'

Dorothy cast one involuntary glance at her cousin. His face was red as fire, but, as it seemed to her, more with suppressed amusement than shame. She had not been much longer in the castle before she learned that, in the opinion of the household, the marquis did his best, or worst rather, to ruin young Scudamore by indulgence. The judgment, however, was partly the product of jealousy, although doubtless the marquis had in his case a little too much relaxed the bonds of discipline. The youth was bright and ready, and had as yet been found trustworthy; his wit was tolerable, and a certain gay naivete of speech and manner set off to the best advantage what there was of it; but his laughter was sometimes mischievous, and on the present occasion Dorothy could not rid herself of the suspicion that he was laughing in his sleeve at his master, which caused her to redden in her turn. Scudamore saw it, and had his own fancies concerning the phenomenon.

CHAPTER XII

THE TWO MARQUISES

Dinner over, lady Margaret led Dorothy back to her parlour, and there proceeded to discover what accomplishments and capabilities she might possess. Finding she could embroider, play a little on the spinnet, sing a song, and read aloud both intelligibly and pleasantly, she came to the conclusion that the country-bred girl was an acquisition destined to grow greatly in value, should the day ever arrive—which heaven forbid!—when they would have to settle down to the monotony of a protracted siege. Remarking, at length, that she looked weary, she sent her away to be mistress of her time till supper, at half-past five.

Weary in truth with her journey, but still more weary from the multitude and variety of objects, the talk, and the constant demand of the general strangeness upon her attention and one form or other of suitable response, Dorothy sought her chamber. But she scarcely remembered how to reach it. She knew it lay a floor higher, and easily found the stair up which she had followed her attendant, for it rose from the landing of the straight ascent by which she had entered the house. She could hardly go wrong either as to the passage at the top of it, leading back over the room she had just left below, but she could not tell which was her own door. Fearing to open the wrong one, she passed it and went on to the end of the corridor, which was very dimly lighted. There she came to an open door, through which she saw a small chamber, evidently not meant for habitation. She entered. A little light came in through a crossed loophole, sufficient to show her the bare walls, with the plaster sticking out between the stones, the huge beams above, and in the middle of the floor, opposite the loop-hole, a great arblast or cross-bow, with its strange machinery. She had never seen one before, but she knew enough to guess at once what it was. Through the loophole came a sweet breath of spring air, and she saw trees bending in the wind, heard their faint far-off rustle, and saw the green fields shining in the sun.

Partly from having been so much with Richard, her only playmate, who was of an ingenious and practical turn, a certain degree of interest in mechanical forms and modes had been developed in Dorothy, sufficient at least to render her unable to encounter such an implement without feeling a strong impulse to satisfy herself concerning its mechanism, its motion, and its action. Approaching it cautiously and curiously, as if it were a live thing, which might start up and fly from, or perhaps at her, for what she knew, she gazed at it for a few moments with eyes full of unuttered questions, then ventured to lay gentle hold upon what looked like a handle. To her dismay, a wheezy bang followed, which seemed to shake the tower. Whether she had discharged an arrow, or an iron bolt, or a stone, or indeed anything at all, she could not tell, for she had not got so far in her observations as to perceive even that the bow was bent. Her heart gave a scared flutter, and she started back, not merely terrified, but ashamed also that she should initiate her life in the castle with meddling and mischief, when a low gentle laugh behind her startled her yet more, and looking round with her heart in her throat, she perceived in the half-light of the place a man by the wall behind the arblast watching her. Her first impulse was to run, and the door was open; but she thought she owed an apology ere she retreated. What sort of person he was she could not tell, for there was not light enough to show a feature of his face.

'I ask your pardon,' she said; 'I fear I have done mischief.'

'Not the least,' returned the man, in a gentle voice, with a tone of amusement in it.

'I had never seen a great cross-bow,' Dorothy went on, anxious to excuse her meddling. 'I thought this must be one, but I was so stupid as not to perceive it was bent, and that that was the— the handle—or do you call it the trigger?—by which you let it go.'

The man, who had at first taken her for one of the maids, had by this time discovered from her tone and speech that she was a lady.

'It is a clumsy old-fashioned thing,' he returned, 'but I shall not remove it until I can put something better in its place; and it would be a troublesome affair to get even a demiculverin up here, not to mention the bad neighbour it would be to the ladies' chambers. I was just making a small experiment with it on the force of springs. I believe I shall yet prove that much may be done with springs—more perhaps, and certainly at far less expense, than with gunpowder, which costs greatly, is very troublesome to make, occupies much space, and is always like an unstable, half-treacherous friend within the gates—to say nothing of the expense of cannon—ten times that of an engine of timber and springs. See what a strong chain your shot has broken! Shall I show you how the thing works?'

He spoke in a gentle, even rapid voice, a little hesitating now and then, more, through the greater part of this long utterance, as if he were thinking to himself than addressing another. Neither his tone nor manner were those of an underling, but Dorothy's startled nerves had communicated their tremor to her modesty, and with a gentle 'No, sir, I thank you; I must be gone,' she hurried away.

Daring now a little more for fear of worse, the first door she tried proved that of her own room, and it was with a considerable sense of relief, as well as with weariness and tremor, that she nestled herself into the high window-seat, and looked out into the quadrangle. The shadow of the citadel had gone to pay its afternoon visit to the other court, and that of the gateway was thrown upon the chapel, partly shrouding the white horse, whose watery music was now silent, but allowing one red ray, which entered by the iron grating above the solid gates, to fall on his head, and warm its cold whiteness with a tinge of delicate pink. The court was more still and silent than in the morning; only now and then would a figure pass from one door to another, along the side of the buildings, or by one of the tiled paths dividing the turf. A large peacock was slowly crossing the shadowed grass with a stately strut and rhythmic thrust of his green neck. The moment he came out into the sunlight, he spread his wheeled fan aloft, and slowly pirouetting, if the word can be allowed where two legs are needful, in the very acme of vanity, turned on all sides the quivering splendour of its hundred eyes, where blue and green burst in the ecstasy of their union into a vapour of gold, that the circle of the universe might see. And truly the bird's vanity had not misled his judgment: it was a sight to make the hearts of the angels throb out a dainty phrase or two more in the song of their thanksgiving. Some pigeons, white, and blue-grey, with a lovely mingling and interplay of metallic lustres on their feathery throats, but with none of that almost grotesque obtrusion of over-driven individuality of kind, in which the graciousness of common beauty is now sacrificed to the whim of the fashion the vulgar fancier initiates, picked up the crumbs under the windows of lady Margaret's nursery, or flew hither and thither among the roofs with wapping and whiffling wing.

But still from the next court came many and various mingling noises. The sounds of drill had long ceased, but those of clanking hammers were heard the more clearly, now one, now two, now several together. The smaller, clearer one was that of the armourer, the others those of the great smithy, where the horse-shoes were made, the horses shod, the smaller pieces of ordnance repaired, locks and chains mended, bolts forged, and, in brief, every piece of metal about the castle, from the cook's skillet to the winches and chains of the drawbridges, set right, renewed, or replaced. The forges were far from where she sat, outside the farthest of the two courts, across which, and the great hall dividing them, the clink, clink, the clank, and the ringing clang, softened by distance and interposition, came musical to her ear. The armourer's hammer was the keener, the quicker, the less intermittent, and yet had the most variations of time and note, as he shifted the piece on his anvil, or changed breastplate for gorget, or greave for pauldron—or it might be sword for pike-head or halbert. Mingled with it came now and then the creak and squeak of the wooden wheel at the draw-well near the hall-door in the farther court, and the muffled splash of the bucket as it struck the water deep in the shaft. She even thought she could hear the drops dripping back from it as it slowly ascended, but that was fancy. Everywhere arose the auricular vapour, as it were, of action, undefined and indefinable, the hum of the human hive, compounded of all confluent noises—the chatter of the servants' hall and the

nursery, the stamping of horses, the ringing of harness, the ripping of the chains of kenneled dogs, the hollow stamping of heavy boots, the lowing of cattle, with sounds besides so strange to the ears of Dorothy that they set her puzzling in vain to account for them; not to mention the chaff of the guard-rooms by the gates, and the scolding and clatter of the kitchen. This last, indeed, was audible only when the doors were open, for the walls of the kitchen, whether it was that the builders of it counted cookery second only to life, or that this had been judged, from the nature of the ground outside, the corner of all the enclosure most likely to be attacked, were far thicker than those of any of the other towers, with the one exception of the keep itself.

As she sat listening to these multitudinous exhalations of life around her, yet with a feeling of loneliness and a dim sense of captivity, from the consciousness that huge surrounding walls rose between her and the green fields, of which, from earliest memory, she had been as free as the birds and beetles, a white rabbit, escaped from the arms of its owner, little Mary Somerset, lady Margaret's only child, a merry but delicate girl not yet three years old, suddenly darted like a flash of snow across the shadowy green, followed in hot haste a moment after by a fine-looking boy of thirteen and two younger girls, after whom toddled tiny Mary. Dorothy sat watching the pursuit, accompanied with sweet outcry and frolic laughter, when in a moment the sounds of their merriment changed to shrieks of terror, and she saw a huge mastiff come bounding she knew not whence, and rush straight at the rabbit, fierce and fast. When the little creature saw him, struck with terror it stopped dead, cowered on the sward, and was stock still. But Henry Somerset, who was but a few paces from it, reached it before the dog, and caught it up in his arms. The rush of the dog threw him down, and they rolled over and over, Henry holding fast the poor rabbit.

By this time Dorothy was half-way down the stair: the moment she caught sight of the dog she had flown to the rescue. When she issued from the porch at the foot of the grand staircase, Henry was up again, and running for the house with the rabbit yet safe in his arms, pursued by the mastiff. Evidently the dog had not harmed him—but he might get angry. The next moment she saw, to her joy and dismay both at once, that it was her own dog.

'Marquis! Marquis!' she cried, calling him by his name.

He abandoned the pursuit at once, and went bounding to her. She took him by the back of the neck, and the displeasure manifest upon the countenance of his mistress made him cower at her feet, and wince from the open hand that threatened him. The same instant a lattice window over the gateway was flung open, and a voice said—

'Here I am. Who called me?'

Dorothy looked up. The children had vanished with their rescued darling. There was not a creature in the court but herself, and there was the marquis, leaning half out of the window, and looking about.

'Who called me?' he repeated—angrily, Dorothy thought.

All at once the meaning of it flashed upon her, and she was confounded—ready to sink with annoyance. But she was not one to hesitate when a thing HAD to be done. Keeping her hold of the dog's neck, for his collar was gone, she dragged him half-way towards the gate, then turning up to the marquis a face like a peony, replied—

'I am the culprit, my lord.'

'By St. George! you are a brave damsel, and there is no culpa that I know of, except on the part of that intruding cur.'

'And the cur's mistress, my lord. But, indeed, he is no cur, but a true mastiff.'

'What! is the animal thy property, fair cousin? He is more than I bargained for.'

'He is mine, my lord, but I left him chained when I set out from Wyfern this morning. That he got loose I confess I am not astonished, neither that he tracked me hither, for he has the eyes of a gaze-hound, and the nose of a bloodhound; but it amazes me to find him in the castle.'

'That must be inquired into,' said the marquis.

'I am very sorry he has carried himself so ill, my lord. He has put me to great shame. But he hath more in him than mere brute, and understands when I beg you to pardon him. He misbehaved himself on purpose to be taken to me, for at home no one ever dares punish him but myself.'

The marquis laughed.

'If you are so completely his mistress then, why did you call on me for help?'

'Pardon me, my lord; I did not so.'

'Why, I heard thee call me two or three times!'

'Alas, my lord! I called him Marquis when he was a pup. Everybody about Redware knows Marquis.'

The animal cocked his ears and started each time his name was uttered, and yet seemed to understand well enough that ALL the talk was about him and his misdeeds.

'Ah! ha!' said his lordship, with a twinkle in his eye, 'that begets complications. Two marquises in Raglan? Two kings in England! The thing cannot be. What is to be done?'

'I must take him back, my lord! I cannot send him, for he would not go. I dread they will not be able to hold him chained; in which evil case I fear me I shall have to go, my lord, and take the perils of the time as they come.'

'Not of necessity so, cousin, while you can choose between us;—although I freely grant that a marquis with four legs is to be preferred before a marquis with only two.—But what if you changed his name?'

'I fear it could not be done, my lord. He has been Marquis all his life.'

'And I have been marquis only six months! Clearly he hath the better right—. But there would be constant mistakes between us, for I cannot bring myself to lay aside the honour his majesty hath conferred upon me, "which would be worn now in its newest gloss, not cast aside so soon," as master Shakspeare says. Besides, it would be a slight to his majesty, and that must not be thought of—not for all the dogs in parliament or out of it. No—it would breed factions in the castle too. No; one of us two must die.'

'Then, indeed, I must go,' said Dorothy, her voice trembling as she spoke; for although the words of the marquis were merry, she yet feared for her friend.

'Tut! tut! let the older marquis die: he has enjoyed the title; I have not. Give him to Tom Fool: he will drown him in the moat. He shall be buried with honour—under his rival's favourite apple-tree in the orchard. What more could dog desire?'

'No, my lord,' answered Dorothy. 'Will you allow me to take my leave? I fl only knew where to find my horse!'

'What! would you saddle him yourself, cousin Vaughan?'

'As well as e'er a knave in your lordship's stables. I am very sorry to displease you, but to my dog's death I cannot and will not consent. Pardon me, my lord.'

The last words brought with them a stifled sob, for she scarcely doubted any more that he was in earnest.

'It is assuredly not gratifying to a marquis of the king's making to have one of a damsel's dubbing take the precedence of him. I fear you are a roundhead and hold by the parliament. But no—that cannot be, for you are willing to forsake your new cousin for your old dog. Nay, alas! it is your old cousin for your young dog. Puritan! puritan! Well, it cannot be helped. But what! you would ride home alone! Evil men are swarming, child. This sultry weather brings them out like flies.'

'I shall not be alone, my lord. Marquis will take good care of me.'

'Indeed, my lord marquis will pledge himself to nothing outside his own walls.'

'I meant the dog, my lord.'

'Ah! you see how awkward it is. However, as you will not choose between us—and to tell the truth, I am not yet quite prepared to die—we must needs encounter what is inevitable. I will send

for one of the keepers to take him to the smithy, and get him a proper collar—one he can't slip like that he left at home—and a chain.'

'I must go with him myself, my lord. They will never manage him else.'

'What a demon you have brought into my peaceable house! Go with him, by all means. And mind you choose him a kennel yourself.—You do not desire him in your chamber, do you, mistress?'

Dorothy secretly thought it would be the best place for him, but she was only too glad to have his life spared.

'No, my lord, I thank you,' she said. '—I thank your lordship with all my heart.'

The marquis disappeared from the window. Presently young Scudamore came into the court from the staircase by the gate, and crossed to the hall—in a few minutes returning with the keeper. The man would have taken the dog by the neck to lead him away, but a certain form of canine curse, not loud but deep, and a warning word from Dorothy, made him withdraw his hand.

'Take care, Mr. Keeper,' she said, 'he is dangerous. I will go with him myself, if thou wilt show me whither.'

'As it please you, mistress,' answered the keeper, and led the way across the court.

'Have you not a word to throw at a poor cousin, mistress Dorothy?' said Rowland, when the man was a pace or two in advance.

'No, Mr. Scudamore,' answered Dorothy; 'not until we have first spoken in my lord Worcester's or my lady Margaret's presence.'

Scudamore fell behind, followed her a little way, and somewhere vanished.

Dorothy followed the keeper across the hall, the size of which, its height especially, and the splendour of its windows of stained glass, almost awed her; then across the next court to the foot of the Library Tower forming the south-east corner of it, near the two towers flanking the main entrance. Here a stair led down, through the wall, to a lower level outside, where were the carpenters' and all other workshops, the forges, the stables, and the farmyard buildings.

As it happened, when Dorothy entered the smithy, there was her own little horse being shod, and Marquis and he interchanged a whine and a whinny of salutation, while the men stared at the bright apparition of a young lady in their dingy regions. Having heard her business, the head-smith abandoned everything else to alter an iron collar, of which there were several lying about, to fit the mastiff, the presence of whose mistress proved entirely necessary. Dorothy had indeed to put it on him with her own hands, for at the sound of the chain attached to it he began to grow furious, growling fiercely. When the chain had been made fast with a staple driven into a strong kennel-post, and his mistress proceeded to take her leave of him, his growling changed to the most piteous whining; but when she actually left him there, he flew into a rage of indignant affection. After trying the strength of his chain, however, by three or four bounds, each so furious as to lay him sprawling on his back, he yielded to the inevitable, and sullenly crept into his kennel, while Dorothy walked back to the room which had already begun to seem to her a cell.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MAGICIAN'S VAULT

Dorothy went straight to lady Margaret's parlour, and made her humble apology for the trouble and alarm her dog had occasioned. Lady Margaret assured her that the children were nothing the worse, not having been even much terrified, for the dog had not gone a hair's-breadth beyond rough play. Poor bunny was the only one concerned who had not yet recovered his equanimity. He did not seem positively hurt, she said, but as he would not eat the lovely clover under his nose where he lay in Molly's crib, it was clear that the circulation of his animal spirits had been too rudely checked. Thereupon Dorothy begged to be taken to the nursery, for, being familiar with all sorts of tame animals, she knew rabbits well. As she stood with the little creature in her arms, gently stroking its soft whiteness, the children gathered round her, and she bent herself to initiate a friendship with them, while doing her best to comfort and restore their favourite. Success in the latter object she found the readiest way to the former. Under the sweet galvanism of her stroking hand the rabbit was presently so much better that when she offered him a blade of the neglected clover, the equilateral triangle of his queer mouth was immediately set in motion, the trefoil vanished, and when he was once more placed in the crib he went on with his meal as if nothing had happened. The children were in ecstasies, and cousin Dorothy was from that moment popular and on the way to be something better.

When supper time came, lady Margaret took her again to the dining-room, where there was much laughter over the story of the two marquises, lord Worcester driving the joke in twenty different directions, but so kindly that Dorothy, instead of being disconcerted or even discomposed thereby, found herself emboldened to take a share in the merriment. When the company rose, lady Margaret once more led her to her own room, where, working at her embroidery frame, she chatted with her pleasantly for some time. Dorothy would have been glad if she had set her work also, for she could ill brook doing nothing. Notwithstanding her quietness of demeanour, amounting at times to an appearance of immobility, her nature was really an active one, and it was hard for her to sit with her hands in her lap. Lady Margaret at length perceived her discomfort.

'I fear, my child, I am wearying you,' she said.

'It is only that I want something to do, madam,' said Dorothy.

'I have nothing at hand for you to-night,' returned lady Margaret. 'Suppose we go and find my lord;—I mean my own lord Herbert. I have not seen him since we broke fast together, and you have not seen him at all. I am afraid he must think of leaving home again soon, he seems so anxious to get something or other finished.'

As she spoke, she pushed aside her frame, and telling Dorothy to go and fetch herself a cloak, went into the next room, whence she presently returned, wrapped in a hooded mantle. As soon as Dorothy came, she led her along the corridor to a small lobby whence a stair descended to the court, issuing close by the gate.

'I shall never learn my way about,' said Dorothy. 'If it were only the staircases, they are more than my memory will hold.'

Lady Margaret gave a merry little laugh.

'Harry set himself to count them the other day,' she said. 'I do not remember how many he made out altogether, but I know he said there were at least thirty stone ones.'

Dorothy's answer was an exclamation.

But she was not in the mood to dwell upon the mere arithmetic of vastness. Invaded by the vision of the mighty structure, its aspect rendered yet more imposing by the time which now suited with it, she forgot lady Margaret's presence, and stood still to gaze.

The twilight had deepened half-way into night. There was no moon, and in the dusk the huge masses of building rose full of mystery and awe. Above the rest, the great towers on all sides seemed

by indwelling might to soar into the regions of air. The pile stood there, the epitome of the story of an ancient race, the precipitate from its vanished life—a hard core that had gathered in the vaporous mass of history—the all of solid that remained to witness of the past.

She came again to herself with a start. Lady Margaret had stood quietly waiting for her mood to change. Dorothy apologised, but her mistress only smiled and said,

'I am in no haste, child. I like to see another impressed as I was when first I stood just where you stand now. Come, then, I will show you something different.'

She led the way along the southern side of the court until they came to the end of the chapel, opposite which an archway pierced the line of building, and revealed the mighty bulk of the citadel, the only portion of the castle, except the kitchen-tower, continuing impregnable to enlarged means of assault: gunpowder itself, as yet far from perfect in composition and make, and conditioned by clumsy, uncertain, and ill-adjustable artillery, was nearly powerless against walls more than ten feet in thickness.

I have already mentioned that one peculiarity of Raglan was a distinct moat surrounding its keep. Immediately from the outer end of the archway, a Gothic bridge of stone led across this thirty-foot moat to a narrow walk which encompassed the tower. The walk was itself encompassed and divided from the moat by a wall with six turrets at equal distances, surmounted by battlements. At one time the sole entrance to the tower had been by a drawbridge dropping across the walk to the end of the stone bridge, from an arched door in the wall, whose threshold was some ten or twelve feet from the ground; but another entrance had since been made on the level of the walk, and by it the two ladies now entered. Passing the foot of a great stone staircase, they came to the door of what had, before the opening of the lower entrance, been a vaulted cellar, probably at one time a dungeon, at a later period a place of storage, but now put to a very different use, and wearing a stranger aspect than it could ever have borne at any past period of its story—a look indeed of mystery inexplicable.

When Dorothy entered she found herself in a large place, the form of which she could ill distinguish in the dull light proceeding from the chinks about the closed doors of a huge furnace. The air was filled with gurglings and strange low groanings, as of some creature in dire pain. Dorothy had as good nerves as ever woman, yet she could not help some fright as she stood alone by the door and stared into the gloomy twilight into which her companion had advanced. As her eyes became used to the ruddy dusk, she could see better, but everywhere they lighted on shapes inexplicable, whose forms to the first questioning thought suggested instruments of torture; but cruel as some of them looked, they were almost too strange, contorted, fantastical for such. Still, the wood-cuts in a certain book she had been familiar with in childhood, commonly called Fox's Book of Martyrs, kept haunting her mind's eye—and were they not Papists into whose hands she had fallen? she said to herself, amused at the vagaries of her own involuntary suggestions.

Among the rest, one thing specially caught her attention, both from its size and its complicated strangeness. It was a huge wheel standing near the wall, supported between two strong uprights—some twelve or fifteen feet in diameter, with about fifty spokes, from every one of which hung a large weight. Its grotesque and threatening character was greatly increased by the mingling of its one substance with its many shadows on the wall behind it. So intent was she upon it that she started when lady Margaret spoke.

'Why, mistress Dorothy!' she said, 'you look as if you had wandered into St. Anthony's cave! Here is my lord Herbert to welcome his cousin.'

Beside her stood a man rather under the middle stature, but as his back was to the furnace this was about all Dorothy could discover of his appearance, save that he was in the garb of a workman, with bare head and arms, and held in his hand a long iron rod ending in a hook.

'Welcome, indeed, cousin Vaughan!' he said heartily, but without offering his hand, which in truth, although an honest, skilful, and well-fashioned hand, was at the present moment far from fit for a lady's touch.

There was something in his voice not altogether strange to Dorothy, but she could not tell of whom or what it reminded her.

'Are you come to take another lesson on the cross-bow?' he asked with a smile.

Then she knew he was the same she had met in the looped chamber beside the arblast. An occasional slight halt, not impediment, in his speech, was what had remained on her memory. Did he always dwell only in the dusky borders of the light?

Dorothy uttered a little 'Oh!' of surprise, but immediately recovering herself, said,

'I am sorry I did not know it was you, my lord. I might by this time have been capable of discharging bolt or arrow with good aim in defence of the castle.'

'It is not yet too late, I hope,' returned the workman-lord. 'I confess I was disappointed to find your curiosity went no further. I hoped I had at last found a lady capable of some interest in pursuits like mine. For my lady Margaret here, she cares not a straw for anything I do, and would rather have me keep my hands clean than discover the mechanism of the primum mobile!

'Yes, in truth, Ned,' said his wife, 'I would rather have thee with fair hands in my sweet parlour, than toiling and moiling in this dirty dungeon, with no companion but that horrible fire-engine of thine, grunting and roaring all night long.'

'Why, what do you make of Caspar Kaltoff, my lady?'

'I make not much of him.'

'You misjudge his goodfellowship then.'

'Truly, I think not well of him: he always hath secrets with thee, and I like it not.'

'That they are secrets is thine own fault, Peggy. How can I teach thee my secrets if thou wilt not open thine ears to hear them?'

'I would your lordship would teach me!' said Dorothy. 'I might not be an apt pupil, but I should be both an eager and a humble one.'

'By St. Patrick! mistress Dorothy, but you go straight to steal my husband's heart from me. "Humble," forsooth! and "eager" too! Nay! nay! If I have no part in his brain, I can the less yield his heart.'

'What would be gladly learned would be gladly taught, cousin,' said lordHerbert.

'There! there!' exclaimed lady Margaret; 'I knew it would be so. You discharge your poor dull apprentice the moment you find a clever one!'

'And why not? I never was able to teach thee anything.'

'Ah, Ned, there you are unkind indeed!' said lady Margaret, with something in her voice that suggested the water-springs were swelling.

'My shamrock of four!' said her husband in the tenderest tone, 'I but jested with thee. How shouldst thou be my pupil in anything I can teach? I am yours in all that is noble and good. I did not mean to vex you, sweet heart.'

'Tis gone again, Ned,' she answered, smiling. 'Give cousin Dorothy her first lesson.'

'It shall be that, then, to which I sought in vain to make thee listen this very morning—a certain great saying of my lord of Verulam, mistress Dorothy. I had learnt it by heart that I might repeat it word for word to my lady, but she would none of it.'

'May I not hear it, madam?' said Dorothy.

'We will both hear it, Herbert, if you will pardon your foolish wife and admit her to grace.' And as she spoke she laid her hand on his sooty arm.

He answered her only with a smile, but such a one as sufficed.

'Listen then, ladies both,' he said. 'My lord of Verulam, having quoted the words of Solomon, "The glory of God is to conceal a thing, but the glory of the king is to find it out," adds thus, of his own thought concerning them,—"as if," says my lord, "according to the innocent play of children, the divine majesty took delight to hide his works, to the end to have them found out, and as if kings

could not obtain a greater honour than to be God's playfellows in that game, considering the great commandment of wits and means, whereby nothing needeth to be hidden from them."

'That was very well for my lord of—what did'st thou call him, Ned?'

'Francis Bacon, lord Verulam,' returned Herbert, with a queer smile.

'Very well for my lord of Veryflam!' resumed lady Margaret, with a mock, yet bewitching affectation of innocence and ignorance; 'but tell me had he?—nay, I am sure he had not a wild Irishwoman sitting breaking her heart in her bower all day long for his company. He could never else have had the heart to say it.—Mistress Dorothy,' she went on, 'take the counsel of a forsaken wife, and lay it to thy heart: never marry a man who loves lathes and pipes and wheels and water and fire, and I know not what. But do come in ere bed-time, Herbert, and I will sing thee the sweetest of English ditties, and make thee such a sack-posset as never could be made out of old Ireland any more than the song.'

But her husband that moment sprang from her side, and shouting 'Caspar! Caspar!' bounded to the furnace, reached up with his iron rod into the darkness over his head, caught something with the hooked end of it, and pulled hard. A man who from somewhere in the gloomy place had responded like a greyhound to his master's call, did the like on the other side. Instantly followed a fierce, protracted, sustained hiss, and in a moment the place was filled with a white cloud, whence issued still the hideous hiss, changing at length to a roar. Lady Margaret turned in terror, ran out of the keep, and fled across the bridge and through the archway before she slackened her pace. Dorothy followed, but more composedly, led by duty, not driven by terror, and indeed reluctantly forsaking a spot where was so much she did not understand.

They had fled from the infant roar of the 'first stock-father' of steam-engines, whose cradle was that feudal keep, eight centuries old.

That night Dorothy lay down weary enough. It seemed a month since she had been in her own bed at Wyfern, so many new and strange things had crowded into her house, hitherto so still. Every now and then the darkness heaved and rippled with some noise of the night. The stamping of horses, and the ringing of their halter chains, seemed very near her. She thought she heard the howl of Marquis from afar, and said to herself, 'The poor fellow cannot sleep! I must get my lord to let me have him in my chamber.' Then she listened a while to the sweet flow of the water from the mouth of the white horse, which in general went on all night long. Suddenly came an awful sound—like a howl also, but such as never left the throat of dog. Again and again at intervals it came, with others like it but not the same, torturing the dark with a dismal fear. Dorothy had never heard the cry of a wild beast, but the suggestion that these might be such cries, and the recollection that she had heard such beasts were in Raglan Castle, came together to her mind. She was so weary, however, that worse noises than these could hardly have kept her awake; not even her weariness could prevent them from following her into her dreams.

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