# AINSWORTH WILLIAM HARRISON

## THE STAR-CHAMBER: AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE, VOLUME 2

**William Ainsworth**

# The Star-Chamber: An Historical Romance, Volume 2

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I
## Poison

The execution of Lady Lake's criminal and vindictive project would not have been long deferred, after the defeat she had sustained from Lord Roos, but for her husband's determined opposition. This may appear surprising in a man so completely under his wife's governance as was Sir Thomas; but the more he reflected upon the possible consequences of the scheme, the more averse to it he became; and finding all arguments unavailing to dissuade his lady from her purpose, he at last summoned up resolution enough positively to interdict it.

But the project was only deferred, and not abandoned. The forged confession was kept in readiness by Lady Lake for production on the first favourable opportunity.

Not less disinclined to the measure than her father was Lady Roos, though the contrary had been represented to Sir Thomas by his lady; but accustomed to yield blind obedience to her

mother's wishes, she had been easily worked upon to acquiesce in the scheme, especially as the fabricated confession did not appear to hurt her husband, for whom (though she did not dare to exhibit it) she maintained a deep and unchanging affection. So utterly heart-broken was she by the prolonged and painful struggle she had undergone, that she was now almost indifferent to its issue.

For some time her health had given way under the severe shocks she had endured; but all at once more dangerous symptoms began to manifest themselves, and she became so greatly indisposed that she could not leave her room. Extremely distressing in its effects, the attack resembled fever. Inextinguishable thirst tormented her; burning pains; throbbing in the temples; and violent fluttering of the heart. No alleviation of her sufferings could be obtained from the remedies administered by Luke Hatton, who was in constant attendance upon her; nor will this be wondered at, since we are in the secret of his dark doings. On the contrary, the fever increased in intensity; and at the end of four days of unremitting agony,—witnessed with cynical indifference by the causer of the mischief,—it was evident that her case was desperate.

From the first Lady Lake had been greatly alarmed, for with all her faults she was an affectionate mother, though she had a strange way of showing her affection; and she was unremitting in her attentions to the sufferer, scarcely ever quitting her bedside. After a few days, however, thus spent in nursing her daughter, she herself succumbed to a like malady. The same devouring

internal fire scorched her up, and raged within her veins; the same unappeasable thirst tormented her; and unable longer to fulfil her task, she confided it to Sarah Swarton, and withdrew to another chamber, communicating by a side door, masked by drapery, with that of Lady Roos.

Devoted to her mistress, Sarah Swarton would have sacrificed her life to restore her to health; and she cared not though the fever might be infectious. The gentleness and resignation of the ill-fated lady, which failed to move Luke Hatton, melted her to tears; and it was with infinite grief that she saw her, day by day, sinking slowly but surely into the grave. To Lady Roos, the presence of Sarah Swarton was an inexpressible comfort. The handmaiden was far superior to her station, with a pleasing countenance, and prepossessing manner, and possessed of the soft voice so soothing to the ear of pain. But the chief comfort derived by Lady Roos from the society of Sarah Swarton, was the power of unbosoming herself to her respecting her husband, and of pouring her sorrows into a sympathising ear. Lord Roos had never been near his wife since her seizure—nor, that she could learn, had made any inquiries about her; but notwithstanding his heartless conduct, her great desire was to behold him once more before she died, and to breathe some last words into his ear; and she urged the wish so strongly upon her confidante, that the latter promised, if possible, to procure its accomplishment.

A week had now nearly elapsed—the fatal term appointed by Luke Hatton—and it could be no longer doubted that, if the last

gratification sought by Lady Roos were to be afforded her, it must not be delayed.

The poor sufferer was wasted to a skeleton; her cheeks hollow; eyes sunk in deep cavities, though the orbs were unnaturally bright; and her frame so debilitated, that she could scarcely raise herself from the pillow.

Sarah Swarton accordingly resolved to set out upon her errand; but before doing so, she sought an interview with Lady Lake, for the purpose of revealing certain fearful suspicions she had begun to entertain of Luke Hatton. She would have done this before, but there was almost insuperable difficulty in obtaining a few words in private of her ladyship. The apothecary was continually passing from room to room, hovering nigh the couches of his patients, as if afraid of leaving them for a moment, and he seemed to regard Sarah herself with distrust. But he had now gone forth, and she resolved to take advantage of his absence to make her communication.

# CHAPTER II
# Counter-Poison

The physical tortures endured by Lady Lake were exceeded by her mental anguish. While the poison raged within her veins, the desire of vengeance inflamed her breast; and her fear was lest she should expire without gratifying it. Bitterly did she now upbraid herself for having delayed her vindictive project. More than once she consulted Luke Hatton as he stood beside her couch, with the habitual sneer upon his lips, watching the progress of his own infernal work, as to the possibility of renovating her strength, if only for an hour, in order that she might strike the blow. But he shook his head, and bade her wait. Wait, however, she would not, and she became at length so impatient, that he agreed to make the experiment, telling her he would prepare a draught which should stimulate her into new life for a short time, but he would not answer for the after consequences. This was enough. She eagerly grasped at the offer. Revenge must be had, cost what it would. And it was to prepare the potion which was to effect her brief cure that Luke Hatton had quitted her chamber, and left the coast clear for Sarah Swarton.

Startled by the abrupt entrance and looks of the handmaiden, Lady Lake anxiously inquired if all was well with her daughter.

"As well as it, seems ever likely to be with her, my lady,"

replied Sarah Swarton. "She is somewhat easier now. But has your ladyship courage to listen to what I have to tell you?"

"Have I ever shown want of courage, Sarah, that you should put such a question?" rejoined Lady Lake, sharply.

"But this is something frightful, my lady."

"Then do not hesitate to disclose it."

"Has your ladyship never thought it a strange illness by which you and my Lady Roos have been seized?" said Sarah, coming close up to her, and speaking in a low, hurried tone, as if afraid of being overheard, or interrupted.

"Why should I think it strange, Sarah?" returned Lady Lake, regarding her fixedly. "It is a dreadful and infectious fever which I have taken from my daughter; and that is the reason why Sir Thomas, and all others, except Luke Hatton and yourself, are forbidden to come near us. What we should have done without you, Sarah, I know not, for Luke Hatton tells me the rest of the household shun us as they would a pestilence. I trust you will escape the disorder, and if I am spared your devotion shall be adequately requited. As to Luke Hatton, he seems to have no fear of it."

"He has no reason to be afraid," replied Sarah, significantly. "This is no fever, my lady."

"How!" cried Lady Lake. "Would you set up your ignorance against the skill and science of Luke Hatton? Or do you mean to insinuate—"

"I insinuate nothing, my lady," interrupted Sarah; "but I

beseech you to bear with fortitude the disclosure I am about to make to you. In a word, my lady, I am as certain as I am of standing here, that poison has been administered both to you and to my Lady Roos."

At this terrible communication, a mortal sickness came over Lady Lake.

Thick damps gathered upon her brow, and she fixed her haggard eyes upon Sarah.

"Poisoned!" she muttered; "poisoned! If so, there is but one person who can have done it—but one—except yourself, Sarah!"

"If I had committed the crime, should I have come hither to warn you, my lady?" rejoined Sarah.

"Then it must be Luke Hatton."

"Ay," replied Sarah, looking round anxiously. "It is he. When he did not think I noticed him, I chanced to see him pour a few drops from a phial into the drink he prepares for your ladyship and my Lady Roos; and my suspicions being aroused by his manner as much as by the circumstance, I watched him narrowly, and found that this proceeding was repeated with every draught; with this difference merely, that the dose was increased in strength by one additional drop; the potion administered to your ladyship being some degrees less powerful than that given to my dear lady, and no doubt being intended to be slower in its effects. That it was poison, I am certain, since I have tested it upon myself, by sipping a small quantity of the liquid; and I had reason to repent my rashness, for I soon perceived I had the same

symptoms of illness as those which distress your ladyship."

"Why did you not caution me sooner, Sarah?" said Lady Lake, horror-stricken by this narration.

"I could not do so, my lady," she replied. "It was only yesterday that I arrived at a positive certainty in the matter, and after my imprudence in tasting the drink, I was very ill—indeed I am scarcely well yet; and, to tell truth, I was afraid of Luke Hatton, as I am sure he would make away with me, without a moment's hesitation, if he fancied I had discovered his secret. Oh, I hope he will not come back and find me here."

"Who can have prompted him to the deed?" muttered Lady Lake. "But why ask, since I know my enemies, and therefore know his employers! Not a moment must be lost, Sarah. Let Sir Thomas Lake be summoned to me immediately. If he be at Theobalds, at Greenwich, or Windsor, let messengers be sent after him, praying him to use all possible dispatch in coming to me. I cannot yet decide what I will do, but it shall be something terrible. Oh, that I could once more confront the guilty pair! And I will do it—I will do it! Revenge will give me strength."

"I cannot undertake to bring the Countess hither, my lady," said Sarah. "But I may now venture to inform you that I am charged with a message from my dear lady to her cruel husband, with which I am persuaded he will comply, and come to her."

"Lure him hither, and speedily, by any means you can, Sarah," rejoined Lady Lake. "Before you go, help to raise me from my couch, and place me in that chair. It is well," she cried, as

her wishes were complied with. "I do not feel so feeble as I expected. I was sure revenge would give me strength. Now give me my black velvet robe, and my coif. Even in this extremity I would only appear as beseems me. And hark ye, Sarah, open that drawer, and take out the weapon you will find within it. Do as I bid you quickly, wench. I may need it."

"Here it is, my lady," replied Sarah, taking out a dagger, and giving it to Lady Lake, who immediately concealed it in the folds of her robe.

"Now go," pursued the lady; "I am fully prepared. Let not a moment be lost in what you have to do. Do not give any alarm. But bid two of the trustiest of the household hold themselves in readiness without, and if I strike upon the bell to rush in upon the instant. Or if Luke Hatton should come forth, let him be detained. You understand?"

"Perfectly, my lady," replied Sarah, "and I make no doubt they will obey. I am sure it has only been Luke Hatton who, by his false representations, has kept them away, and I will remove the impression he has produced."

"Do not explain more than is needful at present," said Lady Lake. "We know not precisely how this plot may have been laid, and must take its authors by surprise. You were once more intimate than I liked with that Spanish knave, Diego. Breathe not a word to him, or all will be repeated to his master."

"Rest assured I will be careful, my lady. I have seen nothing whatever of Diego of late, and care not if I never behold him

again. But what is to happen to my dear lady?"

"Leave her to me," replied Lady Lake. "I hope yet to be able to save her. Ha! here comes the villain. Away with you, Sarah, and see that my orders are obeyed."

The handmaiden did not require the command to be repeated, but hastily quitted the room, casting a terrified look at the apothecary, who entered it at the same moment.

Luke Hatton appeared greatly surprised on finding Lady Lake risen from her couch, and could not help exclaiming, as he quickly advanced towards her—"You up, my lady! This is very imprudent, and may defeat my plans."

"No doubt you think so," rejoined Lady Lake; "but knowing you would oppose my inclination, I got Sarah to lift me from the couch, and tire me during your absence. Have you prepared the mixture?"

"I have, my lady," he replied, producing a small phial.

"Give it me," she cried, taking it from him.

After examining the pale yellow fluid it contained for a moment, she took out the glass stopper, and, smelling at it, perceived it to be a very subtle and volatile spirit.

"Is this poison?" she demanded, fixing her eyes keenly upon Luke Hatton.

"On the contrary, my lady," he replied, without expressing any astonishment at the question, "it would be an antidote to almost any poison. It is the rarest cordial that can be prepared, and the secret of its composition is only known to myself. When I said

your ladyship would incur great risk in taking it, I meant that the reaction from so powerful a stimulant would be highly dangerous. But you declared you did not heed the consequences."

"Nor do I," she rejoined. "Yet I would see it tasted."

"Your mind shall be made easy on that score in a moment, my lady," said Luke Hatton.

And taking a small wine-glass that stood by, he rinsed it with water and carefully wiped it; after which he poured a few drops of the liquid into it and swallowed them.

During this proceeding Lady Lake's gaze never quitted him for a second. Apparently satisfied with the test, she bade him return the phial to her.

"You had better let me pour it out for you, my lady," he replied, cleansing the glass as before. "The quantity must be exactly observed. Twenty drops, and no more."

"My hand is as steady as your own, and I can count the drops as accurately," she rejoined, taking the phial from him. "Twenty, you say?"

"Twenty, my lady," rejoined Hatton, evidently displeased; "but perhaps you had better confine yourself to fifteen, or even ten. 'T will be safer."

"You think the larger dose might give me too much strength—ha! What say you to fifty, or a hundred?"

"It must not be, my lady—it must not be. You will destroy yourself. It is my duty to prevent you. I must insist upon your giving me back the phial, unless you will consent to obey my

orders."

"But I tell you, man, I will have a hundred drops of the cordial," she cried pertinaciously.

"And I say you shall not, my lady," he rejoined, unable in his anger to maintain the semblance of respect he had hitherto preserved, and endeavouring to obtain forcible possession of the phial.

But she was too quick for him. And as he stretched out his hand for the purpose, the dagger gleamed before his eyes.

"Back, miscreant!" she cried; "your over-eagerness has betrayed you. I now fully believe what I have hitherto doubted, that this is a counter-poison, and that I may safely use it. It is time to unmask you, and to let you know that your villanies are discovered. I am aware of the malignant practices you have resorted to, and that my daughter and myself would have been destroyed by your poisonous preparations. But I now feel some security in the antidote I have obtained; and if I do perish I have the satisfaction of knowing that I shall not die unavenged, but that certain punishment awaits you and your employers."

On this she poured out half the contents of the phial into the glass, saying as she drank it, "I reserve the other half for Lady Roos."

Luke Hatton, who appeared thunder-stricken, made no further effort to prevent her, but turned to fly. Lady Lake, however, upon whom the restorative effect of the cordial was almost magical, ordered him to stay, telling him if he went forth he would be

arrested, on hearing which he sullenly obeyed her.

"You have not deceived me as to the efficacy of the potion," said the lady; "it has given me new life, and with returning vigour I can view all things as I viewed them heretofore. Now mark what I have to say, villain. You have placed me and my daughter in fearful jeopardy; but it is in your power to make reparation for the injury; and as I hold you to be a mere instrument in the matter, I am willing to spare the life you have forfeited, on condition of your making a full confession in writing of your attempt, to be 'used by me against your employers. Are you willing to do this, or shall I strike upon the bell, and have you bound hand and foot, and conveyed to the Gatehouse?"

"I will write that I was employed by the Countess of Exeter to poison you and my Lady Roos," replied Luke Hatton, stubbornly; "but I will do nothing more."

"That will suffice," replied Lady Lake, after a moment's reflection.

"And when I have done it, I shall be free to go?" he asked.

"You shall be free to go," she replied.

There were writing materials on an adjoining table, and, without another word, Luke Hatton sat down, and with great expedition drew up a statement which he signed, and handed to Lady Lake; asking if that was what she required?

A smile lighted up her ghastly features as she perused it.

"It will do," she said. "And now answer me one question, and you are free. Will this cordial have the same effect on my

daughter as on me?"

"Precisely the same. It will cure her. But you must proceed more cautiously. Were she to take the quantity you have taken, it would kill her. Am I now at liberty to depart?"

"You are," replied Lady Lake.

So saying, she struck the bell, and immediately afterwards the door was opened; not, however, by the attendants, but by Sir Thomas Lake.

As the Secretary of State perceived that the apothecary avoided him, and would have passed forth quickly, he sternly and authoritatively commanded him to stay, exclaiming, "You stir not hence, till you have accounted to me for my daughter, who, I understand, is dying from your pernicious treatment. What ho, there! Keep strict watch without; and suffer not this man to pass forth!"

# CHAPTER III
## Showing that "our pleasant vices are made the whips to scourge us."

We must now request the reader to visit the noble mansion in the Strand, erected by Thomas Cecil, then Earl of Exeter, and bearing-his name; in a chamber of which Lord Roos and the Countess of Exeter will be found alone together—alone for the last time.

Very different was the deportment of the guilty pair towards each other from what it used to be. The glances they exchanged were no longer those of passionate love, but of undissembled hatred. Bitter reproaches had been uttered on one side, angry menaces on the other. Ever since the fatal order had been wrested from the Countess, her peace of mind had been entirely destroyed, and she had become a prey to all the horrors of remorse. Perceiving the change in her sentiments towards him, Lord Roos strove, by the arts which had hitherto proved so successful, to win back the place he had lost in her affections; but failing in doing so, and irritated by her reproaches, and still more by her coldness, he gave vent to his displeasure in terms that speedily produced a decided quarrel between them; and though reconciled in appearance, they never again were to each other what they had been.

As this was to be their final meeting, they had agreed not to embitter it with unavailing reproaches and recriminations. Lord Roos acquainted the Countess that he had decided upon travelling into Italy and Spain, and remaining abroad for a lengthened period; and the announcement of his intention was received by her without an objection. Perhaps he hoped that when put to this trial she might relent. If so, he was disappointed. She even urged him not to delay his departure, and concluded her speech with these words—

"Something tells me we shall meet no more in this world. But we are certain to meet hereafter at the Judgment Seat. How shall we regard each other then?"

"Trouble me not with the question," rejoined Lord Roos gloomily; "I have not come here to listen to sermons, and will brook no more reproaches."

"I do not mean to reproach you, William," she returned meekly; "but the thought of our dire offence rises perpetually before me. Would we could undo what we have done!"

"I tell you it is too late," rejoined Lord Roos harshly.

At this moment Diego suddenly presented himself, and apologizing for the abruptness of his entrance, accounted for it by saying that Sarah Swarton besought a word with his Lordship. She brought a message, he added, from Lady Roos, who was much worse, and not finding his Lordship at his own residence had ventured to follow him to Exeter House to deliver it.

"I will come to her anon," said Lord Roos carelessly.

"No, no; admit her at once, Diego," cried the Countess; "I would hear what she has to say." And the next moment Sarah Swarton being ushered into the room, she rushed up to her and eagerly demanded, "How fares it with your lady? Is there any hope for her?"

"None whatever," replied Sarah, shaking her head sadly. "She is past all chance of recovery."

"Then Heaven pardon me!" ejaculated the Countess, clasping her hands together, and falling upon her knees.

Sarah Swarton gazed at her in astonishment; while Lord Roos, rushing towards her, commanded her to rise.

"Take heed what you say and do, Countess," he whispered. "You will excite this woman's suspicions."

"Why should your ladyship implore Heaven's pardon because my poor dear lady is near her end?" inquired Sarah.

"I sue for it because I have caused her much affliction," replied the Countess.

"Your message, Sarah—your message?" interposed Lord Roos. "What have you to say to me?"

"My lady desires to see you once more before she expires, my lord," replied Sarah. "She would take leave of you; and—and—she has something to impart to you. You will not refuse her last request?"

"He will not—he will not, I am sure," cried the Countess, seeing him look irresolute.

"I did not expect to be seconded by you, my lady," observed

Sarah, in increasing surprise.

"Would that I, too, might see her and obtain her forgiveness!" exclaimed the Countess, without heeding the remark.

"An idle wish, and not to be indulged," said Lord Roos.

A sudden idea appeared to strike Sarah, and she cried, "Your ladyship's desire may possibly be gratified. My poor lady desires to part in peace with all the world, even with those who have injured her. I will communicate your wishes to her, and it may be she will consent to see you."

"You shall have a reward well worthy of the service if you accomplish it," said the Countess. "Hasten to her with all speed, my Lord, and I will follow in my litter, ready to attend Sarah's summons."

"I like not the plan," rejoined Lord Roos. "You are wrong to go. Why need you see her?"

"Why?" she answered, regarding him fixedly. "Because it may be some little consolation to me afterwards."

"Then go alone," said Lord Roos savagely. "I will not accompany you."

"I do not ask you to accompany me, but to precede me," she replied.

"Now, mark me, my Lord," she added in a low, firm tone, "and be assured I do not advance more than I will perform. If you refuse your wife's dying request, I will go back with Sarah and confess all to her."

Lord Roos looked as if he could have annihilated her, and

muttered a terrible imprecation on her head.

"Threaten me—ay, and execute your threats hereafter if you will," continued the Countess in the same low decided tone, "but go you *shall* now."

Her manner was so irresistible that Lord Roos was compelled to obey, and he quitted the room without a word more, followed by Diego and Sarah Swarton, the latter of whom signed to the Countess that she might depend upon the fulfilment of her wishes.

They had not been gone many minutes before Lady Exeter entered her litter, and wholly unattended by page or serving-man, except those in charge of the conveyance, caused herself to be conveyed to Sir Thomas Lake's lodgings in Whitehall.

# CHAPTER IV
# How the forged Confession was produced

Summoning up all his firmness for the interview with his lady, Lord Roos entered her chamber, attended by Sarah Swarton, and beheld her propped up by pillows, bearing evident marks in her countenance of the severe sufferings she had endured. She was emaciated in frame, and almost livid in complexion; hollow-cheeked and hollow-eyed; but still with a look of unaltered affection for him.

Having fulfilled her mission, Sarah left them alone together.

He took the thin fingers extended towards him, and pressed them to his lips, but scarcely dared to raise his eyes towards his wife, so much was he shocked by her appearance. It was with difficulty she gave utterance to the words she addressed to him.

"I thank you for coming to me, my Lord," she said; "but you will not regret your kindness. We are quite alone, are we not? My eyes are so dim that I cannot distinguish any object at the other end of the room—but I can see you plainly enough, my dear Lord."

"We are alone, Elizabeth," replied Lord Roos, in a voice of some emotion, after glancing around.

"Then I may speak freely," she continued. "What I predicted

has occurred. You did not do well, my dear Lord, to take that phial from me and place it in other hands. Nay, start not! I know I am poisoned: I have known it from the first. But I have made no effort to save myself, for I was aware it was your will I should die."

"O, Elizabeth!" murmured her husband.

"I was aware of it," she repeated; "and as I have never voluntarily disobeyed you, I would not now thwart your purpose, even though I myself must be the sacrifice. It was to tell you this that I have sent for you. It was to forgive—to bless you."

And as she spoke she threw her arms round his neck, and he felt his cheek wet with her tears.

"This is more than I can bear," cried Lord Roos, in a voice suffocated by emotion. "I thought I had firmness for anything; but it deserts me entirely now. You are an angel of goodness, Elizabeth; as I am a demon of darkness. I do not deserve your forgiveness."

"You will deserve it, if you will comply with the request I am about to make to you," she rejoined, looking at him beseechingly.

"Whatever it be it shall be granted, if in my power," he rejoined earnestly. "I would redeem your life, if I could, at the price of my own. You have exorcised the evil spirit from me, Elizabeth."

"Then I shall die happy," she replied, with a smile of ineffable delight.

"But the request! What is it you would have me perform?" he

asked.

"I would have you spare my mother," she replied. "I know she has been dealt with in the same way as myself; but I also know there is yet time to save her."

"It shall be done," said Lord Roos, emphatically. "Where is she?"

"In the adjoining chamber."

"Is Luke Hatton in attendance upon her?"

"In constant attendance," she rejoined. "That man has obeyed you well, my Lord. But take heed of him: he is a dangerous weapon, and may injure the hand that employs him. Strike gently upon that bell. He will attend the summons."

Lord Roos complied; when, to his astonishment and dismay, the curtains shrouding the entrance to the adjoining room were drawn aside, and Lady Lake stalked from behind them. Never before had she surveyed her son-in-law with such a glance of triumph as she threw upon him now.

"You were mistaken you see, Elizabeth," said Lord Roos to his lady.

"Your mother needs no aid. She is perfectly well."

"Ay, well enough to confound you and all your wicked purposes, my Lord," cried Lady Lake. "You have not accomplished my destruction, as you perceive; nor shall you accomplish your wife's destruction, though you have well-nigh succeeded. Let it chafe you to madness to learn that I possess an antidote, which I have myself approved, and which will kill the

poison circling in her veins, and give her new life."

"An antidote!" exclaimed Lord Roos. "So far from galling me to madness, the intelligence fills me with delight beyond expression. Give it me, Madam, that I may administer it at once; and heaven grant its results may be such as you predict!"

"Administered by you, my Lord, it would be poison," said Lady Lake, bitterly. "But you may stand by and witness its beneficial effects. They will be instantaneous."

"As you will, Madam, so you do not delay the application," cried Lord Roos.

"Drink of this, my child," said Lady Lake, after she had poured some drops of the cordial into a glass.

"I will take it from no hand but my husband's," murmured Lady Roos.

"How?" exclaimed her mother, frowning.

"Give it me, I say, Madam," cried Lord Roos. "Is this a time for hesitation, when you see her life hangs upon a thread, which you yourself may sever?"

And taking the glass from her, he held it to his wife's lips; tenderly supporting her while she swallowed its contents.

It was not long before the effects of the cordial were manifest. The deathly hue of the skin changed to a more healthful colour, and the pulsations of the heart became stronger and more equal; and though the debility could not be so speedily repaired, it was apparent that the work of restoration had commenced, and might be completed if the same treatment were pursued.

"Now I owe my life to you, my dear Lord," said Lady Roos, regarding her husband with grateful fondness.

"To him!" exclaimed her mother. "You owe him nothing but a heavy debt of vengeance, which we will endeavour to pay, and with interest. But keep calm, my child, and do not trouble yourself; whatever may occur. Your speedy restoration will depend much on that."

"You do not adopt the means to make me calm, mother," replied Lady Roos.

But Lady Lake was too much bent upon the immediate and full gratification of her long-deferred vengeance to heed her. Clapping her hands together, the signal was answered by Sir Thomas Lake, who came forth from the adjoining room with Luke Hatton. At the same time, and as if it had been so contrived that all the guilty parties should be confronted together, the outer door of the chamber was opened, and the Countess of Exeter was ushered in by Sarah Swarton.

On seeing in whose presence she stood, the Countess would have precipitately retreated; but it was too late. The door was closed by Sarah.

"Soh! my turn is come at last," cried Lady Lake, gazing from one to the other with a smile of gratified vengeance. "I hold you all in my toils. You, my Lord," addressing her son-in-law, "have treated a wife, who has ever shown you the most devoted affection, with neglect and cruelty, and, not content with such barbarous treatment, have conspired against her life, and against

my life."

"Take heed how you bring any charge against him, mother," cried Lady Roos, raising herself in her couch. "Take heed, I say. Let your vengeance fall upon her head," pointing to the Countess —"but not upon him."

"I am willing to make atonement for the wrongs I have done you, Lady Roos," said the Countess, "and have come hither to say so, and to implore your forgiveness."

"You fancied she was dying," rejoined Lady Lake—"dying from the effects of the poison administered to her and to me by Luke Hatton, according to your order; but you are mistaken, Countess. We have found an antidote, and shall yet live to requite you."

"It is more satisfaction to me to be told this, Madam, than it would be to find that Luke Hatton had succeeded in his design, which I would have prevented if I could," said Lady Exeter.

"You will gain little credit for that assertion, Countess," remarked Sir Thomas Lake, "since it is contradicted by an order which I hold in my hand, signed by yourself, and given to the miscreant in question."

"O Heavens!" ejaculated the Countess.

"Do you deny this signature?" asked Sir Thomas, showing her the paper.

Lady Exeter made no answer.

"Learn further to your confusion, Countess," pursued Lady Lake, "that the wretch, Luke Hatton, has made a full confession

of his offence, wherein he declares that he was incited by you, and by you alone, on the offer of a large reward, to put my daughter and myself to death by slow poison."

"By me alone!—incited by me!" cried Lady Exeter; "why, I opposed him. It is impossible he can have confessed thus. Hast thou done so, villain?"

"I have," replied Luke Hatton, sullenly.

"Then thou hast avouched a lie—a lie that will damn thee," said Lady Exeter. "Lord Roos knows it to be false, and can exculpate me. Speak, my Lord, I charge you, and say how it occurred."

But the young nobleman remained silent.

"Not a word—not a word in my favour," the Countess exclaimed, in a voice of anguish. "Nay, then I am indeed lost!"

"You are lost past redemption," cried Lady Lake with an outburst of fierce exultation, and a look as if she would have trampled her beneath her feet. "You have forfeited honour, station, life. Guilty of disloyalty to your proud and noble husband, you have sought to remove by violent deaths those who stood between you and your lover. Happily your dreadful purpose has been defeated; but this avowal of your criminality with Lord Roos, signed by yourself and witnessed by his lordship and his Spanish servant,—this shall be laid within an hour before the Earl of Exeter."

"My brain turns round. I am bewildered with all these frightful accusations," exclaimed the Countess distractedly. "I have made

no confession,—have signed none."

"Methought you said I had witnessed it, Madam?" cried Lord Roos, almost as much bewildered as Lady Exeter.

"Will you deny your own handwriting, my Lord?" rejoined Lady Lake; "or will the Countess? Behold the confession, subscribed by the one, and witnessed by the other."

"It is a forgery!" shrieked the Countess. "You have charged me with witchcraft; but you practise it yourself."

"If I did not know it to be false, I could have sworn the hand was yours, Countess," cried Lord Roos; "and my own signature is equally skilfully simulated."

"False or not," cried Lady Lake, "it shall be laid before Lord Exeter as I have said—with all the details—ay, and before the King."

"Before the King!" repeated Lord Roos, as he drew near Lady Exeter, and whispered in her ear—"Countess, our sole safety is in immediate flight. Circumstances are so strong against us, that we shall never be able to disprove this forgery."

"Then save yourself in the way you propose, my Lord," she rejoined, with scorn. "For me, I shall remain, and brave it out."

The young nobleman made a movement towards the door.

"You cannot go forth without my order, my Lord," cried Sir Thomas Lake.

"It is guarded."

"Perdition!" exclaimed Lord Roos.

Again Lady Lake looked from one to the other with a smile

of triumph. But it was presently checked by a look from her daughter, who made a sign to her to approach her.

"What would you, my child?—more of the cordial?" demanded Lady Lake.

"No, mother," she replied, in a tone so low as to be inaudible to the others. "Nor will I suffer another drop to pass my lips unless my husband be allowed to depart without molestation."

"Would you interfere with my vengeance?" said Lady Lake.

"Ay, mother, I will interfere with it effectually unless you comply," rejoined Lady Roos, firmly. "I will acquaint the Countess with the true nature of that confession. As it is, she has awakened by her conduct some feelings of pity in my breast."

"You will ruin all by your weakness," said Lady Lake.

"Let Lord Roos go free, and let there be a truce between you and the Countess for three days, and I am content."

"I do not like to give such a promise," said Lady Lake. "It will be hard to keep it."

"It may be harder to lose all your vengeance," rejoined Lady Roos, in a tone that showed she would not be opposed.

Compelled to succumb, Lady Lake moved towards Sir Thomas, and a few words having passed between them in private, the Secretary of State thus addressed his noble son-in-law—

"My Lord," he said in a grave tone, "at the instance of my daughter, though much against my own inclination, and that of my wife, I will no longer oppose your departure. I understand you are about to travel, and I therefore recommend you to set forth

without delay, for if you be found in London, or in England, after three days, during which time, at the desire also of our daughter—and equally against our own wishes—we consent to keep truce with my lady of Exeter; if, I say, you are found after that time, I will not answer for the consequences to yourself. Thus warned, my Lord, you are at liberty to depart."

"I will take advantage of your offer, Sir Thomas, and attend to your hint," replied Lord Roos. And turning upon his heel, he marched towards the door, whither he was accompanied by Sir Thomas Lake, who called to the attendants outside to let him go free.

"Not one word of farewell to me! not one look!" exclaimed his wife, sinking back upon the pillow.

"Nor for me—and I shall see him no more," murmured the Countess, compressing her beautiful lips. "But it is better thus."

While this was passing, Luke Hatton had contrived to approach the Countess, and now said in a low tone—"If your ladyship will trust to me, and make it worth my while, I will deliver you from the peril in which you are placed by this confession. Shall I come to Exeter House to-night?"

She consented.

"At what hour?"

"At midnight," she returned. "I loathe thee, yet have no alternative but to trust thee. Am I free to depart likewise?" she added aloud to Sir Thomas.

"The door is open for you, Countess," rejoined the Secretary

of State, with mock ceremoniousness. "After three days, you understand, war is renewed between us."

"War to the death," subjoined Lady Lake.

"Be it so," replied the Countess. "I shall not desert my post."

And assuming the dignified deportment for which she was remarkable, she went forth with a slow and majestic step.

Luke Hatton would have followed her, but Sir Thomas detained him.

"Am I a prisoner?" he said, uneasily, and glancing at Lady Lake. "Her ladyship promised me instant liberation."

"And the promise shall be fulfilled as soon as I am satisfied my daughter is out of danger," returned Sir Thomas.

"I am easy, then," said the apothecary. "I will answer for her speedy recovery."

# CHAPTER V
# A visit to Sir Giles Mompesson's habitation near the fleet

Allowing an interval of three or four months to elapse between the events last recorded, and those about to be narrated, we shall now conduct the reader to a large, gloomy habitation near Fleet Bridge. At first view, this structure, with its stone walls, corner turrets, ponderous door, and barred windows, might be taken as part and parcel of the ancient prison existing in this locality. Such, however, was not the fact. The little river Fleet, whose muddy current was at that time open to view, flowed between the two buildings; and the grim and frowning mansion we propose to describe stood on the western bank, exactly opposite the gateway of the prison.

Now, as no one had a stronger interest in the Fleet Prison than the owner of that gloomy house, inasmuch as he had lodged more persons within it than any one ever did before him, it would almost seem that he had selected his abode for the purpose of watching over the safe custody of the numerous victims of his rapacity and tyranny. This was the general surmise; and, it must be owned, there was ample warranty for it in his conduct.

A loop-hole in the turret at the north-east angle of the house commanded the courts of the prison, and here Sir Giles

Mompesson would frequently station himself to note what was going forward within the jail, and examine the looks and deportment of those kept by him in durance. Many a glance of hatred and defiance was thrown from these sombre courts at the narrow aperture at which he was known to place himself; but such regards only excited Sir Giles's derision: many an imploring gesture was made to him; but these entreaties for compassion were equally disregarded. Being a particular friend of the Warden of the Fleet, and the jailers obeying him as they would have done their principal, he entered the prison when he pleased, and visited any ward he chose, at any hour of day or night; and though the unfortunate prisoners complained of the annoyance, —and especially those to whom his presence was obnoxious,— no redress could be obtained. He always appeared when least expected, and seemed to take a malicious pleasure in troubling those most anxious to avoid him.

Nor was Sir Giles the only visitant to the prison. Clement Lanyere was as frequently to be seen within its courts and wards as his master, and a similar understanding appeared to exist between him and the jailers. Hence, he was nearly as much an object of dread and dislike as Sir Giles himself, and few saw the masked and shrouded figure of the spy approach them without misgiving.

From the strange and unwarrantable influence exercised by Sir Giles and the promoter in the prison, they came at length to be considered as part of it; and matters were as frequently

referred to them by the subordinate officers as to the warden. It was even supposed by some of the prisoners that a secret means of communication must exist between Sir Giles's habitation and the jail; but as both he and Lanyere possessed keys of the wicket, such a contrivance was obviously unnecessary, and would have been dangerous, as it must have been found out at some time by those interested in the discovery.

It has been shown, however, that, in one way or other, Sir Giles had nearly as much to do with the management of the Fleet Prison as those to whom its governance was ostensibly committed, and that he could, if he thought proper, aggravate the sufferings of its unfortunate occupants without incurring any responsibility for his treatment of them. He looked upon the Star-Chamber and the Fleet as the means by which he could plunder society and stifle the cry of the oppressed; and it was his business to see that both machines were kept in good order, and worked well.

But to return to his habitation. Its internal appearance corresponded with its forbidding exterior. The apartments were large, but cold and comfortless, and, with two or three exceptions, scantily furnished. Sumptuously decorated, these exceptional rooms presented a striking contrast to the rest of the house; but they were never opened, except on the occasion of some grand entertainment—a circumstance of rare occurrence. There was a large hall of entrance, where Sir Giles's myrmidons were wont to assemble, with a great table in the midst of it, on

which no victuals were ever placed—at least at the extortioner's expense—and a great fire-place, where no fire ever burnt. From this a broad stone staircase mounted to the upper part of the house, and communicated by means of dusky corridors and narrow passages with the various apartments. A turnpike staircase connected the turret to which Sir Giles used to resort to reconnoitre the Fleet Prison, with the lower part of the habitation, and similar corkscrew stairs existed in the other angles of the structure. When stationed at the loophole, little recked Sir Giles of the mighty cathedral that frowned upon him like the offended eye of heaven. His gaze was seldom raised towards Saint Paul's, or if it were, he had no perception of the beauty or majesty of the ancient cathedral. The object of interest was immediately below him. The sternest realities of life were what he dealt with. He had no taste for the sublime or the beautiful.

Sir Giles had just paid an inquisitorial visit, such as we have described, to the prison, and was returning homewards over Fleet Bridge, when he encountered Sir Francis Mitchell, who was coming in quest of him, and they proceeded to his habitation together. Nothing beyond a slight greeting passed between them in the street, for Sir Giles was ever jealous of his slightest word being overheard; but he could see from his partner's manner that something had occurred to annoy and irritate him greatly. Sir Giles was in no respect changed since the reader last beheld him. Habited in the same suit of sables, he still wore the same mantle,

and the same plumed hat, and had the same long rapier by his side. His deportment, too, was as commanding as before, and his aspect as stern and menacing.

Sir Francis, however, had not escaped the consequences naturally to be expected from the punishment inflicted upon him by the apprentices, being so rheumatic that he could scarcely walk, while a violent cough, with which he was occasionally seized, and which took its date from the disastrous day referred to, and had never left him since, threatened to shake his feeble frame in pieces; this, added to the exasperation under which he was evidently labouring, was almost too much for him. Three months seemed to have placed as many years upon his head; or, at all events, to have taken a vast deal out of his constitution. But, notwithstanding his increased infirmities, and utter unfitness for the part he attempted to play, he still affected a youthful air, and still aped all the extravagances and absurdities in dress and manner of the gayest and youngest court coxcomb. He was still attired in silks and satins of the gaudiest hues, still carefully trimmed as to hair and beard, still redolent of perfumes.

Not without exhibiting considerable impatience, Sir Giles was obliged to regulate his pace by the slow and tottering steps of his companion, and was more than once brought to a halt as the lungs of the latter were convulsively torn by his cough, but at last they reached the house, and entered the great hall, where the myrmidons were assembled—all of whom rose on their appearance, and saluted them. There was Captain Bludder,

with his braggart air, attended by some half-dozen Alsatian bullies; Lupo Vulp, with his crafty looks; and the tipstaves—all, in short, were present, excepting Clement Lanyere, and Sir Giles knew how to account for his absence. To the inquiries of Captain Bludder and his associates, whether they were likely to be required on any business that day, Sir Giles gave a doubtful answer, and placing some pieces of money in the Alsatian's hand, bade him repair, with his followers, to the "Rose Tavern," in Hanging Sword Court, and crush a flask or two of wine, and then return for orders—an injunction with which the captain willingly complied. To the tipstaves Sir Giles made no observation, and bidding Lupo Vulp hold himself in readiness for a summons, he passed on with his partner to an inner apartment. On Sir Francis gaining it, he sank into a chair, and was again seized with a fit of coughing that threatened him with annihilation. When it ceased, he made an effort to commence the conversation, and Sir Giles, who had been pacing to and fro impatiently within the chamber, stopped to listen to him.

"You will wonder what business has brought me hither to-day, Sir Giles," he said; "and I will keep you no longer in suspense. I have been insulted, Sir Giles—grievously insulted."

"By whom?" demanded the extortioner.

"By Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey," replied Sir Francis, shaking with passion. "I have received a degrading insult from him to-day, which ought to be washed out with his blood."

"What hath he done to you?" inquired the other.

"I will tell you, Sir Giles. I chanced to see him in the court-yard of the palace of Whitehall, and there being several gallants nigh at hand, who I thought would take my part—ough! ough! what a plaguey cough I have gotten, to be sure; but 't is all owing to those cursed 'prentices—a murrain seize 'em! Your patience, sweet Sir Giles, I am coming to the point—ough! ough! there it takes me again. Well, as I was saying, thinking the gallants with whom I was conversing would back me, and perceiving Mounchensey approach us, I thought I might venture"—

"Venture!" repeated Sir Giles, scornfully. "Let not such a disgraceful word pass your lips."

"I mean, I thought I might take occasion to affront him. Whereupon I cocked my hat fiercely, as I have seen you and Captain Bludder do, Sir Giles."

"Couple me not with the Alsatian, I pray of you, Sir Francis," observed the extortioner, sharply.

"Your pardon, Sir Giles—your pardon! But as I was saying, I regarded him with a scowl, and tapped the hilt of my sword. And what think you the ruffianly fellow did? I almost blush at the bare relation of it. Firstly, he plucked off my hat, telling me I ought to stand bareheaded in the presence of gentlemen. Next, he tweaked my nose, and as I turned round to avoid him, he applied his foot—yes, his foot—to the back of my trunk-hose; and well was it that the hose were stoutly wadded and quilted. Fire and fury! Sir Giles, I cannot brook the indignity. And what was worse, the shameless gallants, who ought to have lent me aid, were ready

to split their sides with laughter, and declared I had only gotten my due. When I could find utterance for very choler, I told the villain you would requite him, and he answered he would serve you in the same fashion, whenever you crossed his path."

"Ha! said he so?" cried Sir Giles, half drawing his sword, while his eyes flashed fire. "We shall see whether he will make good his words. Yet no! Revenge must not be accomplished in that way. I have already told you I am willing to let him pursue his present career undisturbed for a time, in order to make his fall the greater. I hold him in my hand, and can crush him when I please."

"Then do not defer your purpose, Sir Giles," said Sir Francis; "or I must take my own means of setting myself right with him. I cannot consent to sit down calmly under the provocation I have endured."

"And what will be the momentary gratification afforded by his death—if such you meditate," returned Sir Giles, "in comparison with hurling him down from the point he has gained, stripping him of all his honours, and of such wealth as he may have acquired, and plunging him into the Fleet Prison, where he will die by inches, and where you yourself may feast your eyes on his slow agonies? That is true revenge; and you are but a novice in the art of vengeance if you think your plan equal to mine. It is for this—and this only—that I have spared him so long. I have suffered him to puff himself up with pride and insolence, till he is ready to burst. But his day of reckoning is at hand, and then

he shall pay off the long arrears he owes us."

"Well, Sir Giles, I am willing to leave the matter with you," said Sir Francis; "but it is hard to be publicly insulted, and have injurious epithets applied to you, and not obtain immediate redress."

"I grant you it is so," rejoined Sir Giles; "but you well know you are no match for him at the sword."

"If I am not, others are—Clement Lanyere, for instance," cried Sir Francis. "He has more than once arranged a quarrel for me."

"And were it an ordinary case, I would advise that the arrangement of this quarrel should be left to Lanyere," said Sir Giles; "or I myself would undertake it for you. But that were only half revenge. No; the work must be done completely; and the triumph you will gain in the end will amply compensate you for the delay."

"Be it so, then," replied Sir Francis. "But before I quit the subject, I may remark, that one thing perplexes me in the sudden rise of this upstart, and that is that he encounters no opposition from Buckingham. Even the King, I am told, has expressed his surprise that the jealous Marquis should view one who may turn out a rival with so much apparent complacency."

"It is because Buckingham has no fear of him," replied Sir Giles. "He knows he has but to say the word, and the puppet brought forward by De Gondomar—for it is by him that Mounchensey is supported—will be instantly removed; but as he

also knows, that another would be set up, he is content to let him occupy the place for a time."

"Certes, if Mounchensey had more knowledge of the world he would distrust him," said Sir Francis, "because in my opinion Buckingham overacts his part, and shows him too much attention. He invites him, as I am given to understand, to all his masques, banquets, and revels at York House, and even condescends to flatter him. Such conduct would awaken suspicion in any one save the object of it."

"I have told you Buckingham's motive, and therefore his conduct will no longer surprise you. Have you heard of the wager between De Gondomar and the Marquis, in consequence of which a trial of skill is to be made in the Tilt-yard to-morrow? Mounchensey is to run against Buckingham, and I leave you to guess what the result will be. I myself am to be among the jousters."

"You!" exclaimed Sir Francis.

"Even I," replied Sir Giles, with a smile of gratified vanity. "Now, mark me, Sir Francis. I have a surprise for you. It is not enough for me to hurl this aspiring youth from his proud position, and cover him with disgrace—it is not enough to immure him in the Fleet; but I will deprive him of his choicest treasure—of the object of his devoted affections."

"Ay, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Francis.

"By my directions Clement Lanyere has kept constant watch over him, and has discovered that the young man's heart is

fixed upon a maiden of great beauty, named Aveline Calveley, daughter of the crazy Puritan who threatened the King's life some three or four months ago at Theobalds."

"I mind me of the circumstance," observed Sir Francis.

"This maiden lives in great seclusion with an elderly dame, but I have found out her retreat. I have said that Sir Jocelyn is enamoured of her, and she is by no means insensible to his passion. But a bar exists to their happiness. Almost with his last breath, a promise was extorted from his daughter by Hugh Calveley, that if her hand should be claimed within a year by one to whom he had engaged her, but with whose name even she was wholly unacquainted, she would unhesitatingly give it to him."

"And will the claim be made?"

"It will."

"And think you she will fulfil her promise?"

"I am sure of it. A dying father's commands are sacred with one like her."

"Have you seen her, Sir Giles? Is she so very beautiful as represented?"

"I have not yet seen her; but she will be here anon. And you can then judge for yourself."

"She here!" exclaimed Sir Francis. "By what magic will you bring her hither?"

"By a spell that cannot fail in effect," replied Sir Giles, with a grim smile. "I have summoned her in her father's name. I have sent for her to tell her that her hand will be claimed."

"By whom?" inquired Sir Francis.

"That is my secret," replied Sir Giles.

At this juncture there was a tap at the door, and Sir Giles, telling the person without to enter, it was opened by Clement Lanyere, wrapped in his long mantle, and with his countenance hidden by his mask.

"They are here," he said.

"The damsel and the elderly female?" cried Sir Giles.

And receiving a response in the affirmative from the promoter, he bade him usher them in at once.

The next moment Aveline, attended by a decent-looking woman, somewhat stricken in years, entered the room. They were followed by Clement Lanyere. The maiden was attired in deep mourning, and though looking very pale, her surpassing beauty produced a strong impression upon Sir Francis Mitchell, who instantly arose on seeing her, and made her a profound, and, as he considered, courtly salutation.

Without bestowing any attention on him, Aveline addressed herself to Sir Giles, whose look filled her with terror.

"Why have you sent for me, Sir?" she demanded.

"I have sent for you, Aveline Calveley, to remind you of the promise made by you to your dying father," he rejoined.

"Ah!" she exclaimed; "then my forebodings of ill are realized."

"I know you consider that promise binding," pursued Sir Giles; "and it is only necessary for me to announce to you that, in

a week from this time, your hand will be claimed in marriage."

"Alas! alas!" she cried, in accents of despair. "But who will claim it?—and how can the claim be substantiated?" she added, recovering herself in some degree.

"You will learn at the time I have appointed," replied Sir Giles. "And now, having given you notice to prepare for the fulfilment of an engagement solemnly contracted by your father, and as solemnly agreed to by yourself, I will no longer detain you."

Aveline gazed at him with wonder and terror, and would have sought for some further explanation; but perceiving from the inflexible expression of his countenance that any appeal would be useless, she quitted the room with her companion.

"I would give half I possess to make that maiden mine," cried Sir Francis, intoxicated with admiration of her beauty.

"Humph!" exclaimed Sir Giles. "More difficult matters have been accomplished. Half your possessions, say you? She is not worth so much. Assign to me your share of the Mounchensey estates and she shall be yours."

"I will do it, Sir Giles—I will do it," cried the old usurer, eagerly; "but you must prove to me first that you can make good your words."

"Pshaw! Have I ever deceived you, man? But rest easy. You shall be fully satisfied."

"Then call in Lupo Vulp, and let him prepare the assignment at once," cried Sir Francis. "I shall have a rare prize; and shall effectually revenge myself on this detested Mounchensey."

# CHAPTER VI
# Of the Wager between the Conde de Gondomar and the Marquis of Buckingham

At a banquet given at Whitehall, attended by all the principal lords and ladies of the court, a wager was laid between the Conde de Gondomar and the Marquis of Buckingham, the decision of which was referred to the King.

The circumstance occurred in this way. The discourse happened to turn upon jousting, and the magnificent favourite, who was held unrivalled in all martial exercises and chivalrous sports, and who, confident in his own skill, vauntingly declared that he had never met his match in the tilt-yard; whereupon the Spanish Ambassador, willing to lower his pride, immediately rejoined, that he could, upon the instant, produce a better man-at-arms than he; and so certain was he of being able to make good his words, that he was willing to stake a thousand doubloons to a hundred on the issue of a trial.

To this Buckingham haughtily replied, that he at once accepted the Ambassador's challenge; but in regard to the terms of the wager, they must be somewhat modified, as he could not accept them as proposed; but he was willing to hazard on the

result of the encounter all the gems, with which at the moment his habiliments were covered, against the single diamond clasp worn by De Gondomar; and if the offer suited his Excellency, he had nothing to do but appoint the day, and bring forward the man.

De Gondomar replied, that nothing could please him better than the Marquis's modification of the wager, and the proposal was quite consistent with the acknowledged magnificence of his Lordship's notions; yet he begged to make one further alteration, which was, that in the event of the knight he should nominate being adjudged by his Majesty to be the best jouster, the rich prize might be delivered to him.

Buckingham assented, and the terms of the wager being now fully settled, it only remained to fix the day for the trial, and this was referred to the King, who appointed the following Thursday —thus allowing, as the banquet took place on a Friday, nearly a week for preparation.

James, also, good-naturedly complied with the Ambassador's request, and agreed to act as judge on the occasion; and he laughingly remarked to Buckingham—"Ye are demented, Steenie, to risk a' those precious stanes with which ye are bedecked on the skill with which ye can yield a frail lance. We may say unto you now in the words of the poet—

'Pendebant ter ti gemmata monilia collo;'

but wha shall say frae whose round throat those gemmed collars and glittering ouches will hang a week hence, if ye be worsted? Think of that, my dear dog."

"Your Majesty need be under no apprehension," replied Buckingham. "I shall win and wear his Excellency's diamond clasp. And now, perhaps, the Count will make us acquainted with the name and title of my puissant adversary, on whose address he so much relies. Our relative chances of success will then be more apparent. If, however, any motives for secrecy exist, I will not press the inquiry, but leave the disclosure to a more convenient season."

"*Nunc est narrandi tempus*," rejoined the King. "No time like the present. We are anxious to ken wha the hero may be."

"I will not keep your Majesty a moment in suspense," said De Gondomar. "The young knight whom I design to select as the Marquis's opponent, and whom I am sure will feel grateful for having such means of honourable distinction afforded him, is present at the banquet."

"Here!" exclaimed James, looking round. "To whom do you refer, Count? It cannot be Sir Gilbert Gerrard, or Sir Henry Rich; for—without saying aught in disparagement of their prowess—neither of them is a match for Buckingham! Ah! save us! We hae it. Ye mean Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey."

And as the Ambassador acknowledged that his Majesty was right, all eyes were turned towards the young knight, who, though as much surprised as any one else, could not help feeling greatly elated.

"Aweel, Count," said James, evidently pleased, "ye might hae made a waur choice—that we are free to confess. We begin to

tremble for your braw jewels, Steenie."

"They are safer than I expected," replied Buckingham, disdainfully. But though he thus laughed it off, it was evident he was displeased, and he muttered to his confidential friend, Lord Mordaunt,—"I see through it all: this is a concerted scheme to bring this aspiring galliard forward; but he shall receive a lesson for his presumption he shall not easily forget, while, at the same time, those who make use of him for their own purposes shall be taught the risk they incur in daring to oppose me. The present opportunity shall not be neglected."

Having formed this resolution, Buckingham, to all appearance, entirely recovered his gaiety, and pressed the King to give importance to the trial by allowing it to take place in the royal tilt-yard at Whitehall, and to extend the number of jousters to fourteen—seven on one side, and seven on the other. The request was readily granted by the monarch, who appeared to take a stronger interest in the match than Buckingham altogether liked, and confirmed him in his determination of ridding himself for ever of the obstacle in his path presented by Mounchensey. The number of jousters being agreed upon, it was next decided that the party with whom Buckingham was to range should be headed by the Duke of Lennox; while Mounchensey's party was to be under the command of Prince Charles; and though the disposition was too flattering to his adversary to be altogether agreeable to the haughty favourite, he could not raise any reasonable objection to it, and was therefore obliged to submit

with the best grace he could.

The two parties were then distributed in the following order by the King:—On the side of the Duke of Lennox, besides Buckingham himself, were the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, and the Lords Clifford and Mordaunt; and while the King was hesitating as to the seventh, Sir Giles Mompesson was suggested by the Marquis, and James, willing to oblige his favourite, adopted the proposition. On the side of Prince Charles were ranked the Marquis of Hamilton, the Earls of Montgomery, Rutland, and Dorset, Lord Walden, and, of course, Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. These preliminaries being fully adjusted, other topics were started, and the carouse, which had been in some degree interrupted, was renewed, and continued, with the entertainments that succeeded it, till past midnight.

Not a little elated by the high compliment paid to his prowess by the Spanish Ambassador, and burning to break a lance with Buckingham, Sir Jocelyn resolved to distinguish himself at the trial. Good luck, of late, had invariably attended him. Within the last few weeks, he had been appointed one of the Gentlemen of his Majesty's Bed-chamber; and this was looked upon as the stepping-stone to some more exalted post. Supported by the influence of De Gondomar, and upheld by his own personal merits, which by this time, in spite of all hostility towards him, had begun to be appreciated; with the King himself most favourably inclined towards him, and Prince Charles amicably disposed; with many of the courtiers proffering him service,

who were anxious to throw off their forced allegiance to the overweening favourite, and substitute another in his stead: with all these advantages, it is not to be wondered at, that in a short space of time he should have established a firm footing on that smooth and treacherous surface, the pavement of a palace, and have already become an object of envy and jealousy to many, and of admiration to a few.

Possessing the faculty of adapting himself to circumstances, Sir Jocelyn conducted himself with rare discretion; and while avoiding giving offence, never suffered a liberty to be taken with himself; and having on the onset established a character for courage, he was little afterwards molested. It was creditable to him, that in a court where morality was at so low an ebb as that of James I., he should have remained uncorrupted; and that not all the allurements of the numerous beauties by whom he was surrounded, and who exerted their blandishments to ensnare him, could tempt him for a moment's disloyalty to the object of his affections. It was creditable, that at the frequent orgies he was compelled to attend, where sobriety was derided, and revelry pushed to its furthest limits, he was never on any occasion carried beyond the bounds of discretion. It was still more creditable to him, that in such venal and corrupt days he maintained his integrity perfectly unsullied. Thus severely tested, the true worth of his character was proved, and he came from the ordeal without a blemish.

The many excellent qualities that distinguished the newly-

made knight and gentleman of the bed-chamber, combined with his remarkable personal advantages and conciliatory manner, considerably improved by the polish he had recently acquired, drew, as we have intimated, the attention of the second personage in the kingdom towards him. Struck by his manner, and by the sentiments he expressed, Prince Charles took frequent opportunities of conversing with him, and might have conceived a regard for him but for the jealous interference of Buckingham, who, unable to brook a rival either with the King or Prince, secretly endeavoured to set both against him. Such, however, was Sir Jocelyn's consistency of character, such his solidity of judgment and firmness, and such the respect he inspired, that he seemed likely to triumph over all the insidious snares planned for him. Things were in this state when the trial of skill in jousting was proposed by De Gondomar. The wily Ambassador might have—and probably had—some secret motive in making the proposal; but whatever it was, it was unknown to his *protégé*.

# CHAPTER VII
# A Cloud in the Horizon

But it must not be imagined that Sir Jocelyn's whole time was passed in attendance on the court. Not a day flew by that he did not pay a visit to Aveline. She had taken a little cottage, where she dwelt in perfect seclusion, with one female attendant, old Dame Sherborne,—the same who had accompanied her on her compulsory visit to Sir Giles Mompesson,—and her father's faithful old servant, Anthony Rocke. To this retreat, situated in the then rural neighbourhood adjoining Holborn, Sir Jocelyn, as we have said, daily repaired, and the moments so spent were the most delicious of his life. The feelings of regard entertained for him from the first by Aveline, had by this time ripened into love; yet, mindful of her solemn promise to her father, she checked her growing affection as much as lay in her power, and would not, at first, permit any words of tenderness to be uttered by him. As weeks, however, and even months, ran on, and no one appeared to claim her hand, she began to indulge the hope that the year of probation would expire without molestation, and insensibly, and almost before she was aware of it, Sir Jocelyn had become complete master of her heart. In these interviews, he told her all that occurred to him at court—acquainted her of his hopes of aggrandisement—and induced her to listen to his expectations of

a brilliant future, to be shared by them together.

The severe shock Aveline had sustained in the death of her father had gradually worn away, and, if not free from occasional depression, she was still enabled to take a more cheerful view of things. Never had she seen Sir Jocelyn so full of ardour as on the day after the banquet, when he came to communicate the intelligence of the jousts, and that he was selected to essay his skill against that of Buckingham. The news, however, did not produce upon her the effect he expected. Not only she could not share his delight, but she was seized with anticipations of coming ill, in connection with this event, for which she could not account. Nor could all that Jocelyn said remove her misgivings; and, in consequence, their meeting was sadder than usual.

On the next day, these forebodings of impending calamity were most unexpectedly realised. A mysterious personage, wrapped in a long black cloak, and wearing a mask, entered her dwelling without standing upon the ceremony of tapping at the door. His presence occasioned her much alarm, and it was not diminished when he told her, in a stern, and peremptory tone, that she must accompany him to Sir Giles Mompesson's habitation. Refusing to give any explanation of the cause of this strange summons, he said she would do well to comply with it,—that, indeed, resistance would be idle as Sir Giles was prepared to enforce his orders; and that he himself would he responsible for her safety. Compelled to be satisfied with these assurances, Aveline yielded to the apparent necessity of the case, and set

forth with him, attended by Dame Sherbourne. With what passed during her interview with the extortioner the reader is already acquainted. She had anticipated something dreadful; but the reality almost exceeded her anticipations. So overpowered was she by the painful intelligence, that it was with difficulty she reached home, and the rest of the day was occupied with anxious reflection. Evening as usual brought her lover. She met him at the door, where he tied his horse, and they entered the little dwelling together. The shades of night were coming on apace, and in consequence of the gloom he did not remark the traces of distress on her countenance, but went on with the theme uppermost in his mind.

"I know you have ever avoided shows and triumphs," he said; "but I wish I could induce you to make an exception in favour of this tilting-match, and consent to be present at it. The thought that you were looking on would nerve my arm, and make me certain of success."

"Even if I would, I cannot comply with your request," she replied, in an agitated tone. "Prepare yourself, Jocelyn. I have bad news for you."

He started; and the vision of delight, in which he had been indulging, vanished at once.

"The worst news you could have to tell me, would be that the claim had been made," he observed. "I trust it is not that?"

"It is better to know the worst at once. I have received undoubted information that the claim *will* be made."

A cry of anguish escaped Sir Jocelyn, as if a severe blow had been dealt him—and he could scarcely articulate the inquiry, "By whom?"

"That I know not," she rejoined. "But the ill tidings have been communicated to me by Sir Giles Mompesson."

"Sir Giles Mompesson!" exclaimed Sir Jocelyn, scarcely able to credit what he heard. "Your father would never have surrendered you to him. It is impossible he could have made any compact with such a villain."

"I do not say that he did; and if he had done so, I would die a thousand deaths, and incur all the penalties attached to the sin of disobedience, rather than fulfil it. Sir Giles is merely the mouth-piece of another, who will not disclose himself till he appears to exact fulfilment of the fatal pledge."

"But, be it whomsoever it may, the claim never can be granted," cried Sir Jocelyn, in a voice of agony. "You will not consent to be bound by such a contract. You will not thus sacrifice yourself. It is out of all reason. Your father's promise cannot bind you. He had no right to destroy his child. Will you listen to my council, Aveline?" he continued, vehemently. "You have received this warning, and though it is not likely to have been given with any very friendly design, still you may take advantage of it, and avoid by flight the danger to which you are exposed."

"Impossible," she answered. "I could not reconcile such a course to my conscience, or to my reverence for my father's

memory."

"There is still another course open to you," he pursued, "if you choose to adopt it; and that is, to take a stop which shall make the fulfilment of this promise impossible."

"I understand you," she replied; "but that is equally out of the question. Often and often have I thought over this matter, and with much uneasiness; but I cannot relieve myself of the obligation imposed upon me."

"O Aveline!" cried Sir Jocelyn. "If you allow yourself, by any fancied scruples, to be forced into a marriage repugnant to your feelings, you will condemn both yourself and me to misery."

"I know it—I feel it; and yet there is no escape," she cried, "Were I to act on your suggestions, and fly from this threatened danger, or remove it altogether by a marriage with you—were I to disobey my father, I should never know a moment's peace."

There was a brief pause, interrupted only by her sobs. At length Sir Jocelyn exclaimed quickly,

"Perhaps, we may be unnecessarily alarming ourselves, and this may only be a trick of Sir Giles Mompesson. He may have heard of the promise you have made to your father, and may try to frighten you. But whoever is put forward must substantiate his claim."

As those words were uttered, there was a slight noise in the apartment, and looking up, they beheld the dusky figure of Clement Lanyere, masked and cloaked, as was his wont, standing beside them.

"You here?" cried Sir Jocelyn, in astonishment.

"Ay," replied the promoter; "I am come to tell you that this is no idle fear,—that the claim *will* be made, and *will* be substantiated."

"Ah!" exclaimed Aveline, in a tone of anguish.

"You will not seek to evade it, I know, young mistress," replied the promoter; "and therefore, as you have truly said, there is no escape."

"Only let me know the claimant's name," cried Sir Jocelyn, "and I will engage he shall never fulfill his design."

"O no; this must not be—you must not resort to violence," said Aveline. "I will never consent to owe my deliverance to such means."

"You shall have all the information you require after the jousts on Thursday," said Lanyere; "and let the thought strengthen your arm in the strife, for if you fail, Aveline Calveley will have no protector in the hour of need."

With this, he departed as suddenly and mysteriously as he had come.

# CHAPTER VIII
# Whitehall

The Tilt-yard at Whitehall, where the jousting was appointed to take place, was situated on the westerly side of the large area in front of the old Banqueting House (destroyed by fire soon after the date of this history, and replaced by the stately structure planned by Inigo Jones, still existing), and formed part of a long range of buildings appertaining to the palace, and running parallel with it in a northerly direction from Westminster, devoted to purposes of exercise and recreation, and including the Tennis-court, the Bowling-alley, the Manage, and the Cock-pit.

A succession of brick walls, of various heights, and surmounted by roofs of various forms and sizes, marked the position of these buildings, in reference to Saint James's Park, which they skirted on the side next to King Street. They were mainly, if not entirely erected, in 1532 by Henry VIII., when, after his acquisition from Wolsey, by forfeiture, of Whitehall, he obtained by exchange from the Abbot and Convent of Westminister all their uninclosed land contiguous to his newly-acquired palace, and immediately fenced it round, and converted it into a park.

To a monarch so fond of robust sports and manly exercises of all kinds as our bluff Harry, a tilt-yard was indispensable; and

he erected one on a grand scale, and made it a place of constant resort. Causing a space of one hundred and fifty yards in length and fifty in width to be inclosed and encircled by lofty walls, he fixed against the inner side large scaffolds, containing two tiers of seats, partitioned from each other like boxes in a theatre, for the accommodation of spectators. At the southern extremity of the inclosure he reared a magnificent gallery, which he set apart for his consort and the ladies in attendance upon her. This was decorated with velvet, and hung with curtains of cloth of gold. On grand occasions, when all the court was present, the whole of the seats on the scaffolds, previously described, were filled with bright-eyed beauties, whose looks and plaudits stimulated to deeds of high emprise the knights, who styled themselves their "servants," and besought "favours" from them in the shape of a scarf, a veil, a sleeve, a bracelet, a ringlet, or a knot of ribands. At such times Henry himself would enter the lists; and, in his earlier days, and before he became too unwieldy for active exertion, no ruder antagonist with the lance or sword could be found than he. Men indeed, existed in his days, very different in hardihood of frame and personal strength from the silken sybarites, enervated by constant riot and dissipation, who aped the deeds of arms of their grandfathers in the time of James the First.

But the tilt-yard was by no means neglected by Elizabeth. This lion-hearted queen encouraged a taste for chivalrous displays, and took almost as much delight in such exhibitions as her stalwart sire. During her long reign no festivity was thought

complete unless jousting was performed. The name of the gallant Sir Philip Sidney need only be mentioned, to show that she possessed at least one perfect "mirror of chivalry" amongst her courtiers; but her chief favourites, Essex and Leicester, were both distinguished for knightly prowess. Many a lance was splintered by them in her honour. When the French Embassy arrived in London to treat of a marriage between Elizabeth and the Duc d'Anjou, and when a grand temporary banqueting-house, three hundred and thirty feet long, and covered with canvas, was improvised for the occasion, a magnificent tournament was given in the tilt-yard in honour of the distinguished visitors. Old Holinshed tells us, that—"the gallery or place at the end of the tilt-yard, adjoining to her Majesty's house at Whitehall, where, as her person should be placed, was called, and not without cause, the Castle or Fortress of Perfect Beauty, for as much as her highness should be there included." And he also gives a curious description of the framework used by the besiegers of the fortress. "They had provided," he says, "a frame of wood, which was covered with canvas, and painted outwardly in such excellent order, as if it had been very natural earth or mould, and carried the name of a rolling-trench, which went on wheels which way soever the persons within did drive it. Upon the top thereof were placed two cannons of wood, so passing well coloured, as they seemed to be, indeed, two fair field pieces of ordnance; and by them were placed two men for gunners, clothed in crimson sarcenet, with their baskets of earth for defence of their bodies

by them. And also there stood on the top of the trench an ensign-bearer, in the same suit with the gunners, displaying his ensign, and within the said trench was cunningly conveyed divers kinds of most excellent music against the Castle of Beauty. These things thus all in readiness, the challengers approached, and came down the stable toward the tilt-yard." The challengers were the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Fulke Greville; and the defenders were very numerous, and amongst them was the doughty Sir Harry Lee, who, as the "unknown knight," broke "six staves right valiantly." All the speeches made by the challengers and defenders are reported by Holinshed, who thus winds up his description of the first day's triumph:—"These speeches being ended, both they and the rest marched about the tilt-yard, and so going back to the nether end thereof, prepared themselves to run, every one in his turn, each defendant six courses against the former challengers, who performed their parts so valiantly on both sides, that their prowess hath demerited perpetual memory, and worthily won honour, both to themselves and their native country, as fame hath the same reported." And of the second day he thus writes:—"Then went they to the tourney, where they did very nobly, as the shivering of the swords might very well testify; and after that to the barriers, where they lashed it out lustily, and fought courageously, as if the Greeks and Trojans had dealt their deadly dole. No party was spared, no estate excepted, but each knight endeavoured to win the golden fleece, that expected either fame or the favour of his mistress,

which sport continued all the same day." These pageantries were of frequent occurrence, and the pages of the picturesque old chronicler above-cited abound with descriptions of them. Yet, in spite of the efforts of Elizabeth to maintain its splendour undiminished, the star of chivalry was rapidly declining, to disappear for ever in the reign of her successor.

The glitter of burnished steel, the clash of arms, the rude encounter, and all other circumstances attendant upon the arena of martial sport, that had given so much delight to his predecessors, afforded little pleasure to James; as how should they, to a prince whose constitutional timidity was so great that he shuddered at the sight of a drawn sword, and abhorred the mimic representations of warfare! Neither were the rigorous principles of honour on which chivalry was based, nor the obligations they imposed, better suited to him. Too faithless by nature to adopt the laws of a Court of Honour, he derided the institution as obsolete. Nevertheless, as trials of skill and strength in the tilt-yard were still in fashion, he was compelled, though against his inclination, to witness them, and in some degree to promote them. The day of his accession to the throne—the 24th March—was always celebrated by tilting and running at the ring, and similar displays were invariably made in honour of any important visitor to the court.

Even in this reign something of a revival of the ancient ardour for knightly pastimes took place during the brief career of Prince Henry, who, if he had lived to fulfil the promise of his youth,

would have occupied a glorious page in his country's annals, and have saved it, in all probability, from its subsequent convulsions and intestine strife. Inuring himself betimes to the weight of armour, this young prince became exceedingly expert in the use of all weapons—could toss the pike, couch the lance, and wield the sword, the battle-axe, or the mace, better than any one of his years. The tilt-yard and the tennis-court were his constant places of resort, and he was ever engaged in robust exercises—too much so, indeed, for a somewhat feeble constitution. Prince Henry indulged the dream of winning back Calais from France, and would no doubt have attempted the achievement if he had lived.

Of a more reflective cast of mind than his elder brother, and with tastes less martial, Prince Charles still sedulously cultivated all the accomplishments, proper to a cavalier. A perfect horseman, and well skilled in all the practices of the tilt-yard—he was a model of courtesy and grace; but he had not Prince Henry's feverish and consuming passion for martial sports, nor did he, like him, make their pursuit the sole business of life. Still, the pure flame of chivalry burnt within his breast, and he fully recognised its high and ennobling principles, and accepted the obligations they imposed. And in this respect, as in most others, he differed essentially from his august father.

The tilt-yard, and the various buildings adjoining it, already enumerated, were approached by two fine gates, likewise erected by Henry VIII., one of which, of extraordinary beauty,

denominated the Cock-pit Gate, was designed by the celebrated painter, Hans Holbein. From an authority we learn that it was "built of square stone, with small squares of flint boulder, very neatly set; and that it had also battlements, and four lofty towers, the whole being enriched with bustos, roses, and portcullises." The other gate, scarcely less beautiful, and styled the Westminster Gate, was adorned with statues and medallions, and the badges of the royal house of Tudor carved in stone.

Viewed from the summit of one of the tall turrets of the Holbein Gate, the appearance of the palace of Whitehall, at the period of our history, was exceedingly picturesque and striking —perhaps more so than at any previous or subsequent epoch, since the various structures of which it was composed were just old enough to have acquired a time-honoured character, while they were still in tolerable preservation.

Let us glance at it, then, from this point, and first turn towards the great Banqueting House, which presents to us a noble and lengthened façade, and contains within a magnificent and lofty hall, occupying nearly its full extent, besides several other apartments of regal size and splendour. In this building, in former days, with a retinue as princely as that of the King himself, Wolsey so often and so sumptuously entertained his royal master, that he at last provoked his anger by his ostentation, and was bereft of his superb abode. Satisfied with our examination of the Banqueting House, we will suffer our gaze to fall upon the broad court beyond it, and upon the numerous irregular

but picturesque and beautiful structures by which that court—quadrangle it cannot be called, for no uniformity is observed in the disposition of the buildings—is surrounded. Here the eye is attracted by a confused mass of roofs, some flat, turreted and embattled, some pointed, with fantastical gables and stacks of tall chimneys—others with cupolas and tall clock-towers—others with crocketed pinnacles, and almost all with large gilt vanes. A large palace is a city in miniature; and so is it with Whitehall. It has two other courts besides the one we are surveying; equally crowded round with buildings, equally wanting in uniformity, but equally picturesque. On the east it extends to Scotland Yard, and on the west to the open space in front of Westminster Hall. The state apartments face the river, and their large windows look upon the stream.

Quitting the exalted position we have hitherto assumed, and viewing Whitehall from some bark on the Thames, we shall find that it has a stern and sombre look, being castellated, in part, with towers like those over Traitor's Gate, commanding the stairs that approach it from the river. The Privy Gardens are beautifully laid out in broad terrace walks, with dainty parterres, each having a statue in the midst, while there is a fountain in the centre of the inclosure. In addition to the gardens, and separated from them by an avenue of tall trees, is a spacious bowling-green. Again changing our position, we discover, on the south of the gardens, and connected with the state apartments, a long ambulatory, called the Stone Gallery. Then returning to

our first post of observation, and taking a bird's-eye view of the whole, after examining it in detail, as before mentioned, we come to the conclusion, that, though irregular in the extreme, and with no pretension whatever to plan in its arrangement, the Palace of Whitehall is eminently picturesque, and imposing from its vast extent. If taken in connection with Westminster Hall, the Parliament House, and the ancient Abbey—with the two towering gateways, on one of which we, ourselves, are perched—with the various structures appertaining to it, and skirting Saint James's Park, and with the noble gothic cross at Charing, we are fain to acknowledge, that it constitutes a very striking picture.

# CHAPTER IX
# Prince Charles

There is now great stir within the palace, and its principal court is full of horsemen, some of them apparelled in steel, and with their steeds covered with rich trappings, and all attended by pages and yeomen in resplendent liveries. Besides these, there are trumpeters in crimson cassocks, mounted on goodly horses, and having their clarions adorned with silken pennons, on which the royal arms are broidered. Then there are kettle-drummers and other musicians, likewise richly arrayed and well mounted, and the various pages, grooms, and officers belonging to the Prince of Wales, standing around his charger, which is caparisoned with white and gold.

Distinguishable even amidst this brilliant and knightly throng is Sir Jocelyn Mounchensey. Mounted upon a fiery Spanish barb, presented to him by the Conde de Gondomar, he is fully equipped for the jousts. The trappings of his steed are black and white velvet, edged with silver, and the plumes upon his helmet are of the same colours, mingled. He is conversing with the Spanish Ambassador, who, like all the rest, is superbly attired, though not in armour, and is followed by a crowd of lacqueys in jerkins and hose of black satin, guarded with silver.

An unusual degree of bustle proclaims the approach of some

personage of extraordinary importance.

This is soon made known to be the Marquis of Buckingham. His arrival is announced by loud flourishes from the six mounted trumpeters by whom he is preceded. Their horses are caparisoned with orange-coloured taffeta, while they themselves are habited in gaberdines of the same stuff. After the trumpeters come four gentlemen ushers, and four pages, mounted on his spare horses, and habited in orange-coloured doublets and hose, with yellow plumes in their caps. To them succeed the grooms in mandilions, or loose sleeveless jackets, leading the Marquis's charger, which is to run in the lists—a beautiful dark bay jennet—trapped with green velvet, sewn with pearls, and pounced with gold. Next comes Buckingham himself, in a magnificent suit of armour, engraved and damaskeened with gold, with an aigret of orange feathers nodding on his casque. Thus apparelled, it is impossible to imagine a nobler or more chivalrous figure than he presents. Though completely cased in steel, his magnificent person seems to have lost none of its freedom of movement, and he bears himself with as much grace and ease as if clad in his customary habiliments of silk and velvet. For the moment he rides a sorrel horse, whose spirit is too great to allow him to be safely depended upon in the lists, but who now serves by his fire and impetuosity to display to advantage his rider's perfect management. Buckingham is followed by thirty yeomen, apparelled like the pages, and twenty gentlemen in short cloaks and Venetian hose. He acknowledges the presence of

his antagonist and the Spanish Ambassador, with a courteous salutation addressed to each, and then riding forward, takes up a position beside the Duke of Lennox, who, mounted and fully equipped, and having his five companions-at-arms with him, is awaiting the coming forth of Prince Charles.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.