AINSWORTH WILLIAM HARRISON

THE STAR-CHAMBER: AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE, VOLUME 1

William Ainsworth

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
The Three Cranes in the Vintry

Adjoining the Vintry Wharf, and at the corner of a narrow lane communicating with Thames Street, there stood, in the early part of the Seventeenth Century, a tavern called the Three Cranes. This old and renowned place of entertainment had then been in existence more than two hundred years, though under other designations. In the reign of Richard II., when it was first established, it was styled the Painted Tavern, from the circumstance of its outer walls being fancifully coloured and adorned with Bacchanalian devices. But these decorations went out of fashion in time, and the tavern, somewhat changing its external features, though preserving all its internal comforts and accommodation, assumed the name of the Three Crowns, under which title it continued until the accession of Elizabeth, when it became (by a slight modification) the Three Cranes; and so remained in the days of her successor, and, indeed, long

afterwards.

Not that the last-adopted denomination had any reference, as might be supposed, to the three huge wooden instruments on the wharf, employed with ropes and pulleys to unload the lighters and other vessels that brought up butts and hogsheads of wine from the larger craft below Bridge, and constantly thronged the banks; though, no doubt, they indirectly suggested it. The Three Cranes depicted on the large signboard, suspended in front of the tavern, were long-necked, long-beaked birds, each with a golden fish in its bill.

But under whatever designation it might be known—Crown or Crane—the tavern had always maintained a high reputation for excellence of wine: and this is the less surprising when we take into account its close proximity to the vast vaults and cellars of the Vintry, where the choicest produce of Gascony, Bordeaux, and other wine-growing districts, was deposited; some of which we may reasonably conclude would find its way to its tables. Good wine, it may be incidentally remarked, was cheap enough when the Three Cranes was first opened, the delicate juice of the Gascoign grape being then vended, at fourpence the gallon, and Rhenish at sixpence! Prices, however, had risen considerably at the period of which we propose to treat; but the tavern was as well-reputed and well-frequented as ever: even more so, for it had considerably advanced in estimation since it came into the hands of a certain enterprising French skipper, Prosper Bonaventure by name, who intrusted its management to his active and pretty little

wife Dameris, while he himself prosecuted his trading voyages between the Garonne and the Thames. And very well Madame Bonaventure fulfilled the duties of hostess, as will be seen.

Now, as the skipper was a very sharp fellow, and perfectly understood his business—practically anticipating the Transatlantic axiom of buying at the cheapest market and selling at the dearest—he soon contrived to grow rich. He did more: he pleased his customers at the Three Cranes. Taking care to select his wines judiciously, and having good opportunities, he managed to obtain possession of some delicious vintages, which, could not be matched elsewhere; and, with this nectar at his command, the fortune of his house was made. All the town gallants flocked to the Three Cranes to dine at the admirable French ordinary newly established there, and crush a flask or so of the exquisite Bordeaux, about which, and its delicate flavour and bouquet, all the connoisseurs in claret were raving. From, mid-day, therefore, till late in the afternoon, there were nearly as many gay barges and wherries as lighters lying off the Vintry Wharf; and sometimes, when accommodation was wanting, the little craft were moored along the shore all the way from Queenhithe to the Steelyard; at which latter place the Catherine Wheel was almost as much noted for racy Rhenish and high-dried neat's tongues, as our tavern was for fine Bordeaux and well-seasoned pâtés.

Not the least, however, of the attractions of the Three Cranes, was the hostess herself. A lively little brunette was Madame

Bonaventure, still young, or, at all events, very far from being old; with extremely fine teeth, which she was fond of displaying, and a remarkably neat ankle, which she felt no inclination to hide beneath the sweep of her round circling farthingale. Her figure was quite that of a miniature Venus; and as, like most of her country-women, she understood the art of dress to admiration, she set off her person to the best advantage; always attiring herself in a style, and in colours, that suited her, and never indulging in an unwarrantable extravagance of ruff, or absurd and unbecoming length of peaked boddice. As to the stuffs she wore, they were certainly above her station, for no Court dame could boast of richer silks than those in which the pretty Dameris appeared on fête days; and this was accounted for by reason that the good skipper seldom returned from a trip to France without bringing his wife a piece of silk, brocade, or velvet from Lyons; or some little matter from Paris, such as a ruff, cuff, partlet, bandlet, or fillet. Thus the last French mode might be seen at the Three Crowns, displayed by the hostess, as well as the last French *entremet* at its table; since, among other important accessories to the well-doing of the house, Madame Bonaventure kept a *chef de cuisine*—one of her compatriots—of such superlative skill, that in later times he must infallibly have been distinguished as a *cordon bleu*.

But not having yet completed our description of the charming Bordelaise we must add that she possessed a rich southern complexion, fine sparkling black eyes, shaded by long dark eye-

lashes, and over-arched by jetty brows, and that her raven hair was combed back and gathered in a large roll over her smooth forehead, which had the five points of beauty complete. Over this she wore a prettily-conceived coif, with a frontlet. A well-starched, well-plaited ruff encompassed her throat. Her upper lip was darkened, but in the slightest degree, by down like the softest silk; and this peculiarity (a peculiarity it would be in an Englishwoman, though frequently observable in the beauties of the South of France) lent additional piquancy and zest to her charms in the eyes of her numerous adorers. Her ankles we have said were trim; and it may be added that they were oftener displayed in an embroidered French velvet shoe than in one of Spanish leather; while in walking out she increased her stature "by the altitude of a chopine."

Captain Bonaventure was by no means jealous; and even if he had been, it would have mattered little, since he was so constantly away. Fancying, therefore, she had some of the privileges of a widow, our lively Dameris flirted a good deal with the gayest and handsomest of the galliards frequenting her house. But she knew where to stop; no licence or indecorum was ever permitted at the Three Cranes; and that is saying a great deal in favour of the hostess, when the dissolute character of the age is taken into consideration. Besides this, Cyprien, a stout well-favoured young Gascon, who filled the posts of drawer and chamberlain, together with two or three other trencher-scrapers, who served at table, and waited on the guests, were generally sufficient to clear

the house of any troublesome roysterers. Thus the reputation of the Three Cranes was unblemished, in spite of the liveliness and coquetry of its mistress; and in spite, also, of the malicious tongues of rival tavern-keepers, which were loud against it. A pretty woman is sure to have enemies and calumniators, and Madame Bonaventure had more than enow; but she thought very little about them.

There was one point, however, on which it behoved her to be careful: and extremely careful she was,—not leaving a single loop-hole for censure or attack. This was the question of religion. On first taking the house, Madame Bonaventure gave it out that she and the skipper were Huguenots, descended from families who had suffered much persecution during the time of the League, for staunch adherence to their faith; and the statement was generally credited, though there were some who professed to doubt it. Certain it was, our hostess did not wear any cross, beads, or other outward symbol of Papacy. And though this might count for little, it was never discovered that she attended mass in secret. Her movements were watched, but without anything coming to light that had reference to religious observances of any kind. Those who tried to trace her, found that her visits were mostly paid to Paris Garden, the Rose, and the Globe (where our immortal bard's plays were then being performed), or some other place of amusement; and if she did go on the river at times, it was merely upon a party of pleasure, accompanied by gay gallants in velvet cloaks and silken doublets, and by light-

hearted dames like herself, and not by notorious plotters or sour priests. Still, as many Bordeaux merchants frequented the house, as well as traders from the Hanse towns, and other foreigners, it was looked upon by the suspicious as a hotbed of Romish heresy and treason. Moreover, these maligners affirmed that English recusants, as well as seminary priests from abroad, had been harboured there, and clandestinely spirited away from the pursuit of justice by the skipper; but the charges were never substantiated, and could, therefore, only proceed from envy and malice. Whatever Madame Bonaventure's religious opinions might be, she kept her own council so well that no one ever found them out.

But evil days were at hand. Hitherto, all had been smiling and prosperous. The prospect now began to darken.

Within the last twelve months a strange and unlooked for interference had taken place with our hostess's profits, which she had viewed, at first, without much anxiety, because she did not clearly comprehend its scope; but latterly, as its formidable character became revealed, it began to fill her with uneasiness. The calamity, as she naturally enough regarded it, arose in the following manner. The present was an age of monopolies and patents, granted by a crown ever eager to obtain money under any pretext, however unjustifiable and iniquitous, provided it was plausibly coloured; and these vexatious privileges were purchased by greedy and unscrupulous persons for the purpose of turning them into instruments of extortion and wrong. Though

various branches of trade and industry groaned under the oppression inflicted upon them, there were no means of redress. The patentees enjoyed perfect immunity, grinding them down as they pleased, farming out whole districts, and dividing the spoil. Their miserable victims dared scarcely murmur; having ever the terrible court of Star-Chamber before them, which their persecutors could command, and which punished libellers —as they would be accounted, if they gave utterance to their wrongs, and charged their oppressors with mis-doing,—with fine, branding, and the pillory. Many were handled in this sort, and held up *in terrorem* to the others. Hence it came to pass, that the Star-Chamber, from the fearful nature of its machinery; its extraordinary powers; the notorious corruption and venality of its officers; the peculiarity of its practice, which always favoured the plaintiff; and the severity with which it punished any libelling or slanderous words uttered against the king's representative (as the patentees were considered), or any conspiracy or false accusation brought against them; it came to pass, we say, that this terrible court became as much dreaded in Protestant England as the Inquisition in Catholic Spain. The punishments inflicted by the Star-Chamber were, as we learn from a legal authority, and a counsel in the court, "fine, imprisonment, loss of ears, or nailing to the pillory, slitting the nose, branding the forehead, whipping of late days, wearing of papers in public places, or any punishment but death." And John Chamberlain, Esq., writing to Sir Dudley Carlton, about the same period, observes, that "The

world is now much terrified with the Star-Chamber, there being not so little an offence against any proclamation, but is liable and subject to the censure of that court. And for proclamations and patents, they are become so ordinary that there is no end; every day bringing forth some new project or other. As, within these two days, here is one come forth for tobacco, wholly engrossed by Sir Thomas Roe and his partners, which, if they can keep and maintain against the general clamour, will be a great commodity; unless, peradventure, indignation, rather than all other reasons, may bring that filthy weed out of use." [What, would be the effect of such a patent now-a-days? Would it, at all, restrict the use of the "filthy weed?"] "In truth," proceeds Chamberlain, "the world doth even groan under the burthen of these perpetual patents, which are become so frequent, that whereas at the king's coming in there were complaints of some eight or nine monopolies then in being, they are now said to be multiplied to as many scores."

From the foregoing citation, from a private letter of the time, the state of public feeling may be gathered, and the alarm occasioned in all classes by these oppressions perfectly understood.

Amongst those who had obtained the largest share of spoil were two persons destined to occupy a prominent position in our history. They were Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell,—both names held in general dread and detestation, though no man ventured to speak ill of them openly, since they were as implacable in their animosities, as usurious and griping

in their demands; and many an ear had been lost, many a nose slit, many a back scourged at the cart's tail, because the unfortunate owners had stigmatized them according to their deserts. Thus they enjoyed a complete immunity of wrong; and, with the terrible court of Star-Chamber to defend them and to punish their enemies, they set all opposition at defiance.

Insatiable as unscrupulous, this avaricious pair were ever on the alert to devise new means of exaction and plunder, and amongst the latest and most productive of their inventions were three patents, which they had obtained through the instrumentality of Sir Edward Villiers (half-brother of the ruling favourite, the Marquess of Buckingham)—and for due consideration-money, of course,—for the licensing of ale-houses the inspection of inns and hostelries, and the exclusive manufacture of gold and silver thread. It is with the two former of these that we have now to deal; inasmuch as it was their mischievous operation that affected Madame Bonaventure so prejudicially; and this we shall more fully explain, as it will serve to show the working of a frightful system of extortion and injustice happily no longer in existence.

By the sweeping powers conferred upon them by their patents, the whole of the inns of the metropolis were brought under the control of the two extortioners, who levied such imposts as they pleased. The withdrawal of a license, or the total suppression of a tavern, on the plea of its being a riotous and disorderly house, immediately followed the refusal of any demand, however

excessive; and most persons preferred the remote possibility of ruin, with the chance of averting it by ready submission, to the positive certainty of losing both substance and liberty by resistance.

Fearful was the havoc occasioned by these licensed depredators, yet no one dared to check them—no one ventured to repine. They had the name of law to justify their proceedings, and all its authority to uphold them. Compromises were attempted in some instances, but they were found unavailing. Easily evaded by persons who never intended to be bound by them, they only added keenness to the original provocation, without offering a remedy for it. The two bloodsuckers, it was clear, would not desist from draining the life-current from the veins of their victims while a drop remained. And they were well served in their iniquitous task,—for the plain reason that they paid their agents, well. Partners they had none; none, at least, who cared to acknowledge themselves as such. But the subordinate officers of the law (and indeed some high in office, it was hinted), the sheriff's followers, bailiffs, tipstaves, and others, were all in their pay; besides a host of myrmidons,—base, sordid knaves, who scrupled not at false-swearing, cozenage, or any sort of rascality, even forgery of legal documents, if required.

No wonder poor Madame Bonaventure, finding she had got into the clutches of these harpies, began to tremble for the result.

CHAPTER II
Sir Giles Mompesson and his partner

Madame Bonaventure had already paid considerable sums to the two extortioners, but she resisted their last application; in consequence of which she received a monition from Sir Giles Mompesson, to the effect that, in a month's time, her license would be withdrawn, and her house shut up, unless, in the interim, she consented to make amends to himself and his co-patentee, Sir Francis Mitchell, by payment of the sum in question, together with a further sum, equal to it in amount, by way of forfeit; thus doubling the original demand.

Our pretty hostess, it would seem, had placed herself in an awkward predicament by her temerity. Sir Giles was not a man to threaten idly, as all who had incurred his displeasure experienced to their cost. His plan was to make himself feared; and he was inexorable, as fate itself, to a creditor. He ever exacted the full penalty of his bond. In this instance, according to his own notion, he had acted with great leniency; and certainly, judged by his customary mode of proceeding in such cases, he had shown some little indulgence. In this line of conduct he had been mainly influenced by his partner, who, not being insensible to the attractions of the fair hostess, hoped to win her favour by a show of consideration. But though Madame Bonaventure was

willing enough, for her own purposes, to encourage Sir Francis Mitchell's attentions (she detested him in her secret heart), she by no means relied upon him for security. A more powerful friend was held in reserve, whom she meant to produce at the last moment; and, consequently, she was not so ill at ease as she otherwise would have been, though by no means free from misgiving.

Sir Giles Mompesson was a terrible enemy, and seldom thwarted in his purpose. That she knew. But no man was more keenly alive to his own interest than he; and she persuaded herself he would find it to his advantage not to molest her: in which case she was safe. Of Sir Francis Mitchell she had less apprehension; for, though equally mischievous and malevolent with his partner, he was far feebler of purpose, and for the most part governed by him. Besides, she felt she had the amorous knight in her toils, and could easily manage him if he were alone.

So the case stood with respect to our pretty hostess; but, before proceeding further, it may be well to give a more complete description of the two birds of prey by whom she was threatened with beak and talon.

The master-spirit of the twain was undoubtedly Sir Giles Mompesson. Quick in conception of villainy, he was equally daring in execution. How he had risen to his present bad eminence no one precisely knew; because, with the craft and subtlety that distinguished him, he laid his schemes so deeply, and covered his proceedings with so thick a veil, that they had

been rarely detected. Report, however, spoke of him as a usurer of the vilest kind, who wrung exorbitant interest from needy borrowers,—who advanced money to expectant heirs, with the intention of plundering them of their inheritance,—and who resorted to every trick and malpractice permitted by the law to benefit himself at his neighbour's expense. These were bad enough, but even graver accusations were made against him. It was whispered that he had obtained fraudulent possession of deeds and family papers, which had enabled him to wrest estates from their rightful owners; and some did not scruple to add to these charges that he had forged documents to carry out his nefarious designs. Be this as it may, from comparative poverty he speedily rose to wealth; and, as his means increased, so his avaricious schemes were multiplied and extended. His earlier days were passed in complete obscurity, none but the neediest spendthrift or the most desperate gambler knowing where he dwelt, and every one who found him out in his wretched abode near the Marshalsea had reason to regret his visit. Now he was well enough known by many a courtly prodigal, and his large mansion near Fleet Bridge (it was said of him that he always chose the neigbourhood of a prison for his dwelling) was resorted to by the town gallants whose, necessities or extravagance compelled them to obtain supplies at exorbitant interest. Lavish in his expenditure on occasions, Sir Giles was habitually so greedy and penurious, that he begrudged every tester he expended. He wished to keep up a show of hospitality

without cost, and secretly pleased himself by thinking that he made his guests pay for his entertainments, and even for his establishment. His servants complained of being half-starved, though he was constantly at war with them for their wastefulness and riot. He made, however, a great display of attendants, inasmuch as he had a whole retinue of myrmidons at his beck and call; and these, as before observed, were well paid. They were the crows that followed the vultures, and picked the bones of the spoil when their ravening masters had been fully glutted.

In the court of Star-Chamber, as already remarked, Sir Giles Mompesson found an instrument in every way fitted to his purposes; and he worked it with terrible effect, as will be shown hereafter. With him it was at once a weapon to destroy, and a shield to protect. This court claimed "a superlative power not only to take causes from other courts and punish them there, but also to punish offences secondarily, when other courts have punished them." Taking advantage of this privilege, when a suit was commenced against him elsewhere, Sir Giles contrived to remove it to the Star-Chamber, where, being omnipotent with clerks and counsel, he was sure of success,—the complaints being so warily contrived, the examinations so adroitly framed, and the interrogatories so numerous and perplexing, that the defendant, or delinquent, as he was indifferently styled, was certain to be baffled and defeated. "The sentences of this court," it has been said by one intimately acquainted with its practice, and very favourably inclined to it, "strike to the root of men's

reputations, and many times of their estates;" and, again, it was a rule with it, that the prosecutor "was ever intended to be favoured." Knowing this as well as the high legal authority from whom we have quoted, Sir Giles ever placed himself in the favoured position, and, with the aid of this iniquitous tribunal, blasted many a fair reputation, and consigned many a victim of its injustice to the Fleet, there to rot till he paid him the utmost of his demands, or paid the debt of nature.

In an age less corrupt and venal than that under consideration, such a career could not have long continued without check. But in the time of James the First, from the neediness of the monarch himself, and the rapacity of his minions and courtiers and their satellites,—each striving to enrich himself, no matter how—a thousand abuses, both of right and justice, were tolerated or connived at, crime stalking abroad unpunished. The Star-Chamber itself served the king as, in a less degree, it served Sir Giles Mompesson, and others of the same stamp, as a means of increasing his revenue; half the fines mulcted from those who incurred its censure or its punishments being awarded to the crown. Thus nice inquiries were rarely made, unless a public example was needed, when the wrongdoer was compelled to disgorge his plunder. But this was never done till the pear was fully ripe. Sir Giles, however, had no apprehensions of any such result in his case. Like a sly fox, or rather like a crafty wolf, he was too confident in his own cunning and resources to fear being caught in such a trap.

His title was purchased, and he reaped his reward in the consequence it gave him. Sir Francis Mitchell acted likewise; and it was about this time that the connection between the worthy pair commenced. Hitherto they had been in opposition, and though very different in temperament and in modes of proceeding, they had one aim in common; and recognizing great merit in each other, coupled with a power of mutual assistance, they agreed to act in concert. Sir Francis was as cautious and timid as Sir Giles was daring and inflexible: the one being the best contriver of a scheme, and the other the fittest to carry it out. Sir Francis trembled at his own devices and their possible consequences: Sir Giles adopted his schemes, if promising, and laughed at the difficulties and dangers that beset them. The one was the head; the other the arm. Not that Sir Giles lacked the ability to weave as subtle a web of deceit as his partner; but each took his line. It saved time. The plan of licensing and inspecting taverns and hotels had originated with Sir Francis, and very profitable it proved. But Sir Giles carried it out much further than his partner had proposed, or thought prudent.

And they were as different in personal appearance, as in mental qualities and disposition. Mompesson was the dashing eagle; Mitchell the sorry kite. Sir Francis was weakly, emaciated in frame; much given to sensual indulgence; and his body conformed to his timorous organization. His shrunken shanks scarcely sufficed to support him; his back was bent; his eyes blear; his head bald; and his chin, which was continually wagging,

clothed with a scanty yellow beard, shaped like a stiletto, while his sandy moustachios were curled upward. He was dressed in the extremity of the fashion, and affected the air of a young court gallant. His doublet, hose, and mantle were ever of the gayest and most fanciful hues, and of the richest stuffs; he wore a diamond brooch in his beaver, and sashes, tied like garters, round his thin legs, which were utterly destitute of calf. Preposterously large roses covered his shoes; his ruff was a "treble-quadruple-dedalion;" his gloves richly embroidered; a large crimson satin purse hung from his girdle; and he was scented with powders and pulvilios. This withered coxcomb affected the mincing gait of a young man; and though rather an object of derision than admiration with the fair sex, persuaded himself they were all captivated by him. The vast sums he so unjustly acquired did not long remain in his possession, but were dispersed in ministering to his follies and depravity. Timorous he was by nature, as we have said, but cruel and unrelenting in proportion to his cowardice; and where an injury could be securely inflicted, or a prostrate foe struck with impunity, he never hesitated for a moment. Sir Giles himself was scarcely so malignant and implacable.

A strong contrast to this dastardly debauchee was offered by the bolder villain. Sir Giles Mompesson was a very handsome man, with a striking physiognomy, but dark and sinister in expression. His eyes were black, singularly piercing, and flashed with the fiercest fire when kindled by passion. A finely-formed

aquiline nose gave a hawk-like character to his face; his hair was coal-black (though he was no longer young), and hung in long ringlets over his neck and shoulders. He wore the handsomely cut beard and moustache subsequently depicted in the portraits of Vandyke, which suited the stern gravity of his countenance. Rich, though sober in his attire, he always affected a dark colour, being generally habited in a doublet of black quilted silk, Venetian hose, and a murrey-coloured velvet mantle. His conical hat was ornamented with a single black ostrich feather; and he carried a long rapier by his side, in the use of which he was singularly skilful; being one of Vincentio Saviolo's best pupils. Sir Giles was a little above the middle height, with a well proportioned athletic figure; and his strength and address were such, that there seemed good reason for his boast when he declared, as he often did, "that he feared no man living, in fair fight, no, nor any two men."

Sir Giles had none of the weaknesses of his partner. Temperate in his living, he had never been known to commit an excess at table; nor were the blandishments or lures of the fair sex ever successfully spread for him. If his arm was of iron, his heart seemed of adamant, utterly impenetrable by any gentle emotion. It was affirmed, and believed, that he had never shed a tear. His sole passion appeared to be the accumulation of wealth; unattended by the desire to spend it. He bestowed no gifts. He had no family, no kinsmen, whom he cared to acknowledge. He stood alone—a hard, grasping man: a bond-slave of Mammon.

When it pleased him, Sir Giles Mompesson could play the

courtier, and fawn and gloze like the rest. A consummate hypocrite, he easily assumed any part he might be called upon to enact; but the tone natural to him was one of insolent domination and bitter raillery. He sneered at all things human and divine; and there was mockery in his laughter, as well as venom in his jests. His manner, however, was not without a certain cold and grave dignity; and he clothed himself, like his purposes, in inscrutable reserve, on occasions requiring it. So ominous was his presence, that many persons got out of his way, fearing to come in contact with him, or give him offence; and the broad walk at Paul's was sometimes cleared as he took his way along it, followed by his band of tipstaves.

If this were the case with persons who had no immediate ground of apprehension from him, how much terror his sombre figure must have inspired, when presented, as it was, to Madame Bonaventure, with the aspect of a merciless creditor, armed with full power to enforce his claims, and resolved not to abate a jot of them, will be revealed to the reader in our next chapter.

CHAPTER III
The French ordinary

The month allowed by the notice expired, and Madame Bonaventure's day of reckoning arrived.

No arrangement had been attempted in the interim, though abundant opportunities of doing so were afforded her, as Sir Francis Mitchell visited the Three Cranes almost daily. She appeared to treat the matter very lightly, always putting it off when mentioned; and even towards the last seemed quite unconcerned, as if entertaining no fear of the result. Apparently, everything went on just as usual, and no one would have supposed, from Madame Bonaventure's manner, that she was aware of the possibility of a mine being sprung beneath her feet. Perhaps she fancied she had countermined her opponents, and so felt secure. Her indifference puzzled Sir Francis, who knew not whether to attribute it to insensibility or over-confidence. He was curious to see how she would conduct herself when the crisis came; and for that purpose repaired to the tavern, about dinner-time, on the appointed day.

The hostess received him very graciously; trifled and jested with him as was her custom, and looked all blandishments and smiles to him and everybody else, as if nothing could possibly happen to disturb her serenity. Sir Francis was more perplexed

than ever. With the levity and heedlessness of a Frenchwoman, she must have forgotten all about the claim. What if he should venture to remind her of it? Better not. The application would come soon enough. He was glad it devolved upon his partner, and not on himself, to proceed to extremities with so charming a person. He really could not do it. And yet all the while he chuckled internally as he thought of the terrible dilemma in which she would be speedily caught, and how completely it would place her at his mercy. She must come to terms then. And Sir Francis rubbed his skinny hands gleefully at the thought. On her part, Madame Bonaventure guessed what was passing in his breast, and secretly enjoyed the idea of checkmating him. With a captivating smile she left him to attend to her numerous guests.

And very numerous they were on that day. More so than usual. Sir Francis, who had brought a boat from Westminster, where he dwelt, experienced some difficulty in landing at the stairs, invested as they were with barges, wherries and watermen, all of whom had evidently brought customers to the Three Cranes. Besides these, there were two or three gilded pinnaces lying off the wharf, with oarsmen in rich liveries, evidently belonging to persons of rank.

The benches and little tables in front of the tavern were occupied by foreign merchants and traders, discussing their affairs over a stoop of Bordeaux. Others, similarly employed, sat at the open casements in the rooms above; each story projecting so much beyond the other that the old building, crowned with

its fanciful gables and heavy chimnies, looked top-heavy, and as if it would roll over into the Thames some day. Others, again, were seated over their wine in the pleasant little chamber built over the porch, which, advancing considerably beyond the door, afforded a delightful prospect, from its lantern-like windows, of the river, now sparkling with sunshine (it was a bright May day), and covered with craft, extending on the one hand to Baynard's Castle, and on the other to the most picturesque object to be found then, or since, in London—the ancient Bridge, with its towers, gateways, lofty superstructures, and narrow arches through which the current dashed swiftly; and, of course, commanding a complete view of the opposite bank, beginning with Saint Saviour's fine old church, Winchester House, the walks, gardens, and play-houses, and ending with the fine groves of timber skirting Lambeth Marshes. Others repaired to the smooth and well-kept bowling alley in the narrow court at the back of the house, where there was a mulberry tree two centuries older than the tavern itself—to recreate themselves with the healthful pastime there afforded, and indulge at the same time in a few whiffs of tobacco, which, notwithstanding the king's fulminations against it, had already made its way among the people.

The ordinary was held in the principal room in the house; which was well enough adapted for the purpose, being lofty and spacious, and lighted by an oriel window at the upper end. Over the high carved chimney-piece were the arms of the

Vintners' Company, with a Bacchus for the crest. The ceiling was moulded, and the wainscots of oak; against the latter several paintings were hung. One of these represented the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and another the triumphal entry of Henri IV. into rebellious Paris. Besides these, there were portraits of the reigning monarch, James the First; the Marquis of Buckingham, his favourite; and the youthful Louis XIII., king of France. A long table generally ran down the centre of the room; but on this occasion there was a raised cross-table at the upper end, with a traverse, or curtain, partially drawn before it, proclaiming the presence of important guests. Here the napery was finer, and the drinking-vessels handsomer, than those used at the lower board. A grand banquet seemed taking place. Long-necked flasks were placed in coolers, and the buffets were covered with flagons and glasses. The table groaned beneath the number and variety of dishes set upon it. In addition to the customary yeomen-waiters, there were a host of serving-men in rich and varied liveries, but these attended exclusively on their lords at the raised table, behind the traverse.

As Sir Francis was ushered into the eating-room, he was quite taken aback by the unusually magnificent display, and felt greatly surprised that no hint of the banquet had been given him, on his arrival, by the hostess. The feast had already commenced; and all the yeomen-waiters and trencher-scrapers were too busily occupied to attend to him. Cyprien, who marshalled the dishes at the lower table, did not deign to notice him, and was deaf to

his demand for a place. It seemed probable he would not obtain one at all; and he was about to retire, much disconcerted, when a young man somewhat plainly habited, and who seemed a stranger to all present, very good-naturedly made room for him. In this way he was squeezed in.

Sir Francis then cast a look round to ascertain who were present; but he was so inconveniently situated, and the crowd of serving-men was so great at the upper table, that he could only imperfectly distinguish those seated at it; besides which, most of the guests were hidden by the traverse. Such, however, as he could make out were richly attired in doublets of silk and satin, while their rich velvet mantles, plumed and jewelled caps, and long rapiers, were carried by their servants.

Two or three turned round to look at him as he sat down; and amongst these he remarked Sir Edward Villiers, whose presence was far from agreeable to him,—for though Sir Edward was secretly connected with him and Sir Giles, and took tithe of their spoliations, he disowned them in public, and would assuredly not countenance any open display of their rapacious proceedings.

Another personage whom he recognised, from his obesity, the peculiarity of his long flowing periwig, and his black velvet Parisian pourpoint, which contrasted forcibly with the glittering habiliments of his companions, was Doctor Mayerne-Turquet, the celebrated French professor of medicine, then so high in favour with James, that, having been loaded with honours and dignities, he had been recently named the King's

first physician. Doctor Mayerne's abilities were so distinguished, that his Protestant faith alone, prevented him from occupying the same eminent position in the court of France that he did in that of England. The doctor's presence at the banquet was unpropitious; it was natural he should befriend a countrywoman and a Huguenot like himself, and, possessing the royal ear, he might make such representations as he pleased to the King of what should occur. Sir Francis hoped he would be gone before Sir Giles appeared.

But there was yet a third person, who gave the usurious knight more uneasiness than the other two. This was a handsome young man, with fair hair and delicate features, whose slight elegant figure was arrayed in a crimson-satin doublet, slashed with white, and hose of the same colours and fabric. The young nobleman in question, whose handsome features and prematurely-wasted frame bore the impress of cynicism and debauchery, was Lord Roos, then recently entrapped into marriage with the daughter of Sir Thomas Lake, Secretary of State: a marriage productive of the usual consequences of such imprudent arrangements—neglect on the one side, unhappiness on the other. Lord Roos was Sir Francis's sworn enemy. Like many other such gay moths, he had been severely singed by fluttering into the dazzling lights held up to him, when he wanted money, by the two usurers; and he had often vowed revenge against them for the manner in which they had fleeced him. Sir Francis did not usually give any great heed to his threats, being too much accustomed to reproaches

and menaces from his victims to feel alarm or compunction; but just now the case was different, and he could not help fearing the vindictive young lord might seize the opportunity of serving him an ill turn,—if, indeed, he had not come there expressly for the purpose, which seemed probable, from the fierce and disdainful glances he cast at him.

An angry murmur pervaded the upper table on Sir Francis's appearance; and something was said which, though he could not gather its precise import did not sound agreeably to his ears. He felt he had unwittingly brought his head near a hornet's nest, and might esteem himself lucky if he escaped without stinging. However, there was no retreating now; for though his fear counselled flight, very shame restrained him.

The repast was varied and abundant, consisting of all kinds of fricassees, collops and rashers, boiled salmon from the Thames, trout and pike from the same river, boiled pea-chickens, and turkey-poults, and florentines of puff paste, calves-foot pies, and set custards. Between each guest a boiled salad was placed, which was nothing more than what we should term a dish of vegetables, except that the vegetables were somewhat differently prepared; cinnamon, ginger, and sugar being added to the pulped carrots, besides a handful of currants, vinegar, and butter. A similar plan was adopted with the salads of burrage, chicory, marigold leaves, bugloss, asparagus, rocket, and alexanders, and many other plants discontinued in modern cookery, but then much esteemed; oil and vinegar being used with some, and spices with all; while each

dish was garnished with slices of hard-boiled eggs. A jowl of sturgeon was carried to the upper table, where there was also a baked swan, and a roasted bustard, flanked by two stately venison pasties. This was only the first service; and two others followed, consisting of a fawn, with a pudding inside it, a grand salad, hot olive pies, baked neats' tongues, fried calves' tongues, baked Italian puddings, a farced leg of lamb in the French fashion, orangeado pie, buttered crabs, anchovies, and a plentiful supply of little made dishes, and *quelquechoses*, scattered over the table. With such a profusion of good things, it may appear surprising that Sir Francis should find very little to eat; but the attendants all seemed in league against him, and whenever he set his eye upon a dish, it was sure to be placed out of reach. Sir Francis was a great epicure, and the Thames salmon looked delicious; but he would have failed in obtaining a slice of it, if his neighbour (the young man who had made room for him) had not given him the well-filled trencher intended for himself. In the same way he secured the wing of a boiled capon, larded with preserved lemons, the sauce of which was exquisite, as he well knew, from experience. Cyprien, however, took care he should get none of the turkey poults, or the florentines, but whipped off both dishes from under his very nose; and a like fate would have attended a lumbar pie but for the interference of his good-natured neighbour, who again came to his aid, and rescued it from the clutches of the saucy Gascon, just as it was being borne away.

CHAPTER IV
A Star-Chamber victim

His hunger being somewhat stayed, Sir Francis now found leisure to consider the young man who had so greatly befriended him, and, as a means of promoting conversation between them, began by filling his glass from a flask of excellent Bordeaux, of which, in spite of Cyprien's efforts to prevent him, he had contrived to gain possession. The young man acknowledged his courtesy with a smile, praised the wine, and expressed his astonishment at the wonderful variety and excellence of the repast, for which he said he was quite unprepared. It was not Sir Francis's way to feel or express much interest in strangers, and he disliked young men, especially when they were handsome, as was the case with his new acquaintance; but there was something in the youth that riveted his attention.

From the plainness of his attire, and a certain not unpleasing rusticity of air, Sir Francis comprehended at once that he was fresh from the country; but he also felt satisfied, from his bearing and deportment, that he was a gentleman: a term not quite so vaguely applied then, as it is now-a-days. The youth had a fine frank countenance, remarkable for manly beauty and intelligence, and a figure perfectly proportioned and athletic. Sir Francis set him down as well skilled in all exercises; vaulting,

leaping, riding, and tossing the pike; nor was he mistaken. He also concluded him to be fond of country sports; and he was right in the supposition. He further imagined the young man had come to town to better his fortune, and seek a place at Court; and he was not far wrong in the notion. As the wily knight scanned the handsome features of his companion, his clean-made limbs, and symmetrical figure, he thought that success must infallibly attend the production of such a fair youth at a Court where personal advantages were the first consideration.

"A likely gallant," he reflected, "to take the fancy of the king; and if I aid him with means to purchase rich attire, and procure him a presentation, he may not prove ungrateful. But of that I shall take good security. I know what gratitude is. He must be introduced to my Lady Suffolk. She will know how to treat him. In the first place, he must cast his country slough. That ill-made doublet of green cloth must be exchanged for one of velvet slashed in the Venetian style like mine own, with hose stuffed and bombasted according to the mode. A silk stocking will bring out the nice proportions of his leg; though, as I am a true gentleman, the youth has so well formed a limb that even his own villainous yarn coverings cannot disfigure it. His hair is of a good brown colour, which the king affects much, and seems to curl naturally; but it wants trimming to the mode, for he is rough as a young colt fresh from pasture; and though he hath not much beard on his chin or upper lip, yet what he hath becomes him well, and will become him better, when properly clipped and

twisted. Altogether he is as goodly a youth as one would desire to see. What if he should supplant Buckingham, as Buckingham supplanted Somerset? Let the proud Marquis look to himself! We may work his overthrow yet. And now to question him."

After replenishing his glass, Sir Francis addressed himself in his blandest accents, and with his most insidious manner, to his youthful neighbour:—

"For a stranger to town, as I conclude you to be, young Sir," he said, "you have made rather a lucky hit in coming hither to-day, since you have not only got a better dinner than I (a constant frequenter of this French ordinary) ever saw served here—(though the attendance is abominable, as you must have remarked—that rascally Cyprien deserves the bastinado,); but your civility and good manners have introduced you to one, who may, without presumption, affirm that he hath the will, and, it may be, the ability to serve you; if you will only point out to him the way."

"Nay, worthy Sir, you are too kind," the young man modestly replied; "I have done nothing to merit your good opinion, though I am happy to have gained it. I rejoice that accident has so far befriended me as to bring me here on this festive occasion; and I rejoice yet more that it has brought me acquainted with a worthy gentleman like yourself, to whom my rustic manners prove not to be displeasing. I have too few friends to neglect any that chance may offer; and as I must carve my own way in the world, and fight for a position in it, I gladly accept any hand that may be

stretched out to help me in the struggle."

"Just as I would have it," Sir Francis thought, "The very man I took him for. As I am a true gentleman, mine shall not be wanting, my good youth," he added aloud, with apparent cordiality, and affecting to regard the other with great interest; "and when I learn the particular direction in which you intend to shape your course, I shall be the better able to advise and guide you. There are many ways to fortune."

"Mine should be the shortest if I had any choice," the young man rejoined with a smile.

"Right, quite right," the crafty knight returned. "All men would take that road if they could find it. But with some the shortest road would not be the safest. In your case I think it might be different. You have a sufficiently good mien, and a sufficiently good figure, to serve you in lieu of other advantages."

"Your fair speech would put me in conceit with myself, worthy Sir," the young man rejoined with a well-pleased air; "were I not too conscious of my own demerits, not to impute what you say of me to good nature, or to flattery."

"There you wrong me, my good young friend—on my credit, you do. Were I to resort to adulation, I must strain the points of compliment to find phrases that should come up to my opinion of your good looks; and as to my friendly disposition towards you, I have already said that your attentions have won it, so that mere good nature does not prompt my words. I speak of you, as I think. May I, without appearing too inquisitive, ask from what

part of the country you come?"

"I am from Norfolk, worthy Sir," the young man answered, "where my life has been spent among a set of men wild and uncouth, and fond of the chase as the Sherwood archers we read of in the ballads. I am the son of a broken gentleman; the lord of a ruined house; with one old servant left me out of fifty kept by my father, and with scarce a hundred acres that I can still call my own, out of the thousands swept away from me. Still I hunt in my father's woods; kill my father's deer; and fish in my father's lakes; since no one molests me. And I keep up the little church near the old tumble-down hall, in which are the tombs of my ancestors, and where my father lies buried; and the tenantry come there yet on Sundays, though I am no longer their master; and my father's old chaplain, Sir Oliver, still preaches there, though my father's son can no longer maintain him."

"A sad change, truly," Sir Francis said, in a tone of sympathy, and with a look of well-feigned concern; "and attributable, I much fear, to riot and profusion on the part of your father, who so beggared his son."

"Not so, Sir," the young man gravely replied; "my father was a most honourable man, and would have injured no one, much less the son on whom he doated. Neither was he profuse; but lived bountifully and well, as a country gentleman, with a large estate, should live. The cause of his ruin was that he came within the clutches of that devouring monster, which, like the insatiate dragon of Rhodes, has swallowed up the substance of

so many families, that our land is threatened with desolation. My father was ruined by that court, which, with a mockery of justice, robs men of their name, their fame, their lands, and goods; which perverts the course of law, and saps the principles of equity; which favours the knave, and oppresses the honest man; which promotes and supports extortion and plunder; which reverses righteous judgments, and asserts its own unrighteous supremacy, which, by means of its commissioners, spreads its hundred arms over the whole realm, to pillage and destroy—so that no one, however distant, can keep out of its reach, or escape its supervision; and which, if it be not uprooted, will, in the end, overthrow the kingdom. Need I say my father was ruined by the Star-Chamber?"

"Hush! hush! my good young Sir," Sir Francis cried, having vainly endeavoured to interrupt his companion's angry denunciation. "Pray heaven your words have reached no other ears than mine! To speak of the Star-Chamber as you have spoken is worse than treason. Many a man has lost his ears, and been branded on the brow, for half you have uttered."

"Is free speech denied in this free country?" the young man cried in astonishment. "Must one suffer grievous wrong, and not complain?"

"Certes, you must not contemn the Star-Chamber, or you will incur its censure," Sir Francis replied in a low tone. "No court in England is so jealous of its prerogatives, nor so severe in punishment of its maligners. It will not have its proceedings

canvassed, or its judgments questioned."

"For the plain reason, that it knows they will not bear investigation or discussion. Such is the practice of all arbitrary and despotic rule. But will Englishmen submit to such tyranny?"

"Again, let me counsel you to put a bridle on your tongue, young Sir. Such matters are not to be talked of at public tables —scarcely in private. It is well you have addressed yourself to one who will not betray you. The Star-Chamber hath its spies everywhere. Meddle not with it, as you value liberty. Light provocation arouses its anger; and once aroused, its wrath is all-consuming."

CHAPTER V
Jocelyn Mounchensey

Notwithstanding the risk incurred, the young man, whose feelings were evidently deeply interested, seemed disposed to pursue the dangerous theme; but perceiving one of their opposite neighbours glancing at them, Sir Francis checked him; and filling his glass essayed to change the conversation, by inquiring how long he had been in town, and where he lodged?

"I only arrived in London yesterday," was the reply; "yet I have been here long enough to make me loth to return to the woods and moors of Norfolk. As to my lodging, it is without the city walls, near St. Botolph's Church, and within a bow shot of Aldgate: a pleasant situation enough, looking towards the Spital Fields and the open country. I would fain have got me others in the Strand, or near Charing Cross, if my scanty means would have allowed me. Chance, as I have said, brought me here to-day. Strolling forth early to view the sights of town, I crossed London Bridge, the magnificence of which amazed me; and, proceeding along the Bankside, entered Paris Garden, of which I had heard much, and where I was greatly pleased, both with the mastiffs kept there, and the formidable animals they have to encounter; and, methought, I should like to bait mine enemies with those savage dogs, instead of the bear. Returning to the

opposite shore in a wherry, the waterman landed me at this wharf, and so highly commended the Three Cranes, as affording the best French ordinary and the best French wine in London, that seeing many gentlefolk flocking towards it, which seemed to confirm his statement, I came in with them, and have reason to be satisfied with my entertainment, never having dined so sumptuously before, and, certes, never having tasted wine so delicious."

"Let me fill your glass again. As I am a true gentleman, it will not hurt you; a singular merit of pure Bordeaux being that you may drink it with impunity; and the like cannot be said of your sophisticated sack. We will crush another flask. Ho! drawer—Cyprien, I say! More wine—and of the best Bordeaux. The best, I say."

And for a wonder the order was obeyed, and the flask set before him.

"You have been at the Bankside you say, young Sir? On my credit, you must cross the river again and visit the theatres—the Globe or the Rose. Our great actor, Dick Burbadge, plays Othello to-day, and, I warrant me, he will delight you. A little man is Dick, but he hath a mighty soul. There is none other like him, whether it be Nat Field or Ned Alleyn. Our famous Shakespeare is fortunate, I trow, in having him to play his great characters. You must see Burbadge, likewise, in the mad Prince of Denmark,—the part was written for him, and fits him exactly. See him also in gentle and love-sick Romeo, in tyrannous and

murderous Macbeth, and in crookback Richard; in all of which, though different, our Dick is equally good. He hath some other parts of almost equal merit,—as Malevole, in the 'Malcontent;' Frankford, in the 'Woman Killed with Kindness;' Brachiano, in Webster's 'White Devil;' and Vendice, in Cyril Tournour's 'Revenger's Tragedy.'"

"I know not what may be the nature of that last-named play," the young man rather sternly remarked; "but if the character of Vendice at all bears out its name, it would suit me. I am an avenger."

"Forbear your wrongs awhile, I pray you, and drown your resentment in a cup of wine. As I am a true gentleman! a better bottle than the first! Nay, taste it. On my credit, it is perfect nectar. I pledge you in a brimmer; wishing Success may attend you, and Confusion await your Enemies! May you speedily regain your Rights!"

"I drink that toast most heartily, worthy Sir," the young man exclaimed, raising his beaded flagon on high. "Confusion to my Enemies—Restoration to my Rights!"

And he drained the goblet to its last drop.

"By this time he must be in a fit mood for my purpose," Sir Francis thought, as he watched him narrowly. "Harkye, my good young friend," he said, lowering his tone, "I would not be overheard in what I have to say. You were speaking just now of the shortest way to fortune. I will point it out to you. To him, who is bold enough to take it, and who hath the requisites for the

venture, the shortest way is to be found at Court. Where think you most of those gallants, of whom you may catch a glimpse through the traverse, derive their revenues?—As I am a true gentleman!—from the royal coffers. Not many years ago, with all of them; not many months ago, with some; those brilliant and titled coxcombs were adventurers like yourself, having barely a Jacobus in their purses, and scarce credit for board and lodging with their respective landladies. Now you see how nobly they feast, and how richly they bedeck themselves. On my credit! the like good fortune may attend you; and haply, when I dine at an ordinary a year hence, I may perceive you at the upper table, with a curtain before you to keep off the meaner company, and your serving-man at your back, holding your velvet mantle and cap, like the best of your fellow nobles."

"Heaven grant it may be so!" the young man exclaimed, with a sigh. "You hold a dazzling picture before me; but I have little expectation of realizing it."

"It will be your own fault if you do not," the tempter rejoined. "You are equally well-favoured with the handsomest of them; and it was by good looks alone that the whole party rose to their present eminence. Why not pursue the same course; with the same certainty of success? You have courage enough to undertake it, I presume?"

"If courage alone were wanting, I have that," the young man replied;—"but I am wholly unknown in town. How then shall I accomplish an introduction at Court, when I know not even its

humblest attendant?"

"I have already said you were lucky in meeting with me," Sir Francis replied; "and I find you were luckier than I supposed, when I told you so; for I knew not then towards what bent your desires tended, nor in what way I could help you; but now, finding out the boldness of your flight, and the high game you aim at, I am able to offer you effectual assistance, and give you an earnest of a prosperous issue. Through my means you shall be presented to the king, and in such sort that the presentation shall not be idly made. It will rest then with yourself to play your cards dexterously, and to follow up a winning game. Doubtless, you will have many adversaries, who will trip up your heels if they can, and throw every obstacle in your way; but if you possess the strong arm I fancy you do, and daring to second it, you have nothing to fear. As I am a true gentleman! you shall have good counsel, and a friend in secret to back you."

"To whom am I indebted for this most gracious and unlooked-for offer?" the young man asked, his breast heaving, and his eye flashing with excitement.

"To one you may perchance have heard of," the knight answered, "as the subject of some misrepresentation; how justly applied, you yourself will be able to determine from my present conduct. I am Sir Francis Mitchell."

At the mention of this name the young man started, and a deep angry flush overspread his face and brow.

Perceiving the effect produced, the wily knight hastened to

remove it.

"My name, I see, awakens unpleasant associations in your breast," he said; "and your look shows you have been influenced by the calumnies of my enemies. I do not blame you. Men can only be judged of by report; and those I have had dealings with have reported ill enough of me. But they have spoken falsely. I have done no more than any other person would do. I have obtained the best interest I could for my money; and my losses have been almost equal to my gains. Folks are ready enough to tell all they can against you; but slow to mention aught they conceive to be in your favour. They stigmatize me as a usurer; but they forget to add, I am ever the friend of those in need. They use me, and abuse me. That is the way of the world. Wherefore, then, should I complain? I am no worse off than my neighbours. And the proof that I can be disinterested is the way in which I have acted towards you, a perfect stranger, and who have no other recommendation to my good offices than your gracious mien and gentle manners."

"I cannot accept your proffered aid, Sir Francis," the young man replied, in an altered tone, and with great sternness. "And you will understand why I cannot, when I announce myself to you as Jocelyn Mounchensey."

It was now the knight's turn to start, change colour, and tremble.

CHAPTER VI
Provocation

A momentary pause ensued, during which Mounchensey regarded the knight so fiercely, that the latter began to entertain apprehensions for his personal safety, and meditated a precipitate retreat. Yet he did not dare to move, lest the action should bring upon him the hurt he wished to avoid. Thus he remained, like a bird fascinated by the rattlesnake, until the young man, whose power of speech seemed taken from him by passion, went on, in a tone of deep and concentrated rage, that communicated a hissing sound to his words.

"Yes, I am Jocelyn Mounchensey," he said, "the son of him whom your arts and those of your partner in iniquity, Sir Giles Mompesson, brought to destruction; the son of him whom you despoiled of a good name and large estates, and cast into a loathsome prison, to languish and to die: I am the son of that murdered man. I am he whom you have robbed of his inheritance; whose proud escutcheon you have tarnished; whose family you have reduced to beggary and utter ruin."

"But Sir Jocelyn, my worthy friend," the knight faltered, "have patience, I pray of you. If you consider yourself aggrieved, I am willing to make reparation—ample reparation. You know what were my intentions towards you, before I had the slightest notion

who you might be. (If I had but been aware of it, he thought, I would have taken care to keep at a respectful distance from him.) I will do more than I promised. I will lend you any sums of money you may require; and on your personal security. Your bare word shall suffice. No bonds—no written obligations of any kind. Does that sound like usury? As I am a true gentleman! I am most unfairly judged. I am not the extortioner men describe me. You shall find me your friend," he added in a low earnest tone. "I will re-establish your fortune; give you a new title, higher and prouder than that which you have lost; and, if you will follow my counsel, you shall supplant the haughty favourite himself. You shall stand where Buckingham now stands. Hear reason, good Sir Jocelyn. Hear reason, I entreat you."

"I will hear nothing further," Jocelyn rejoined. "Were you to talk till Doomsday, you could not alter my feelings towards you a jot. My chief errand in coming to London was to call you and Sir Giles Mompesson to strict account."

"And we will answer any charges you may bring against us readily—most readily, Sir Jocelyn. All was done in fairness—according to law. The Star-Chamber will uphold us."

"Tut! you think to terrify me with that bugbear; but I am not so easily frightened. We have met for the first time by chance, but our next meeting shall be by appointment."

"When and where you please, Sir Jocelyn," the knight replied; but recollect the duello is forbidden, and, though I would not willingly disappoint you in your desire to cut my throat, I

should be sorry to think you might be hanged for it afterwards. Come, Sir Jocelyn, lay aside this idle passion, and look to your true interests, which lie not in quarrelling with me, but in our reconciliation. I can help you effectually, as I have shown; and, as I am a true gentleman, I *will* help you. Give me your hand, and let us be friends!"

"Never!" Jocelyn exclaimed, withdrawing from him, "never shall the hand of a Mounchensey grasp yours in friendship! I would sooner mine rotted off! I am your mortal foe. My father's death has to be avenged."

"Provoke him not, my good young Sir," interposed an elderly man, next him, in a long furred gown, with hanging sleeves, and a flat cap on his head, who had heard what was now passing. "You know not the mischief he may do you."

"I laugh at his malice, and defy him," Jocelyn cried—"he shall not sit one moment longer beside me. Out, knave! out!" he added, seizing Sir Francis by the wing of his doublet, and forcibly thrusting him from his seat. "You are not fit company for honest men. Ho! varlets, to the door with him! Throw him into the kennel."

"You shall rue this, villain!—you shall rue it bitterly," Sir Francis cried, shaking his clenched hands at him. "Your father perished like a dog in the Fleet, and you shall perish there likewise. You have put yourself wholly in my power, and I will make a fearful example of you. You have dared to utter scandalous and contemptuous language against the great and high

court of Star-Chamber, before the decrees of which, all men bow; impugning its justice and denying its authority; and you shall feel the full weight of its displeasure. I call upon these worthy gentlemen to testify against you."

"We have heard nothing, and can testify nothing," several voices cried.

"But you, Sir, who were next him, you must have heard him?" Sir Francis said, addressing the elderly man in the furred gown.

"Not I!" rejoined the person appealed to; "I gave no heed to what was said."

"But I did, Sir Francis," squeaked a little whey-faced man, in a large ruff and tight-laced yellow doublet, from the opposite side of the table; "I heard him most audaciously vilipend the high court of Star-Chamber and its councils; and I will bear testimony against him when called upon."

"Your name, good Sir, your name?" Sir Francis demanded, taking out his tablets.

"Set me down as Thopas Trednock, tailor, at the sign of the Pressing Iron, in Cornhill," the whey-faced man replied, in his shrill tones, amid the derisive laughter of the assemblage.

"Thopas Trednock, tailor—good!" the knight repeated, as he wrote the name down. "You will be an excellent witness, Master Trednock. Fare you well for the present, *Master* Jocelyn Mounchensey, for I now mind well your father was degraded from the honour of knighthood. As I am a true gentleman! you may be sure of committal to the Fleet."

As may be supposed, the scuffle which had taken place, attracted the attention of those in its immediate vicinity; and when the cause of it became known, as it presently did throughout both tables, great indignation was expressed against Sir Francis, who was censured on all hands, jeered and flouted, as he moved to the door. So great was the clamour, and so opprobrious were the epithets and terms applied to him, that the knight was eager to make his escape; but he met Cyprien in his way; and the droll young Gascon, holding a dish-cover in one hand, by way of buckler, and a long carving-knife in the other, in place of a sword, opposed his egress.

"Let me pass, knave," Sir Francis cried in alarm.

"By your leave, no," returned Cyprien, encouraged by the laughter and plaudits of the company. "You have come hither uninvited, and must stay till you have permission to depart. Having partaken of the banquet, you must, perforce, tarry for the rerebanquet. The sweets and cates have yet to come, Sir Francis."

"What mean you, sirrah?" the knight demanded, in increased trepidation.

"Your presence is necessary at a little entertainment I have provided to follow the dinner, sweet Sir Francis," Madame Bonaventure cried, advancing towards him; "and as you have a principal part in it, I can by no means spare you."

"No one can spare you, sweet Sir Francis," several voices chimed in, derisively. "You must remain with us a little longer."

"But I will not stay. I will not be detained. There is some

conspiracy a-foot against me. I will indict you all for it, if you hinder me in going forth," the knight vociferated, in accents of mingled rage and terror. "Stop me at your peril, thou saucy Gascon knave."

"*Cornes du diable*!—no more a knave than yourself, *gros usurier*!" Cyprien cried.

"*Laissez-lui,* Cyprien," Madame Bonaventure interposed;—"the courteous knight will yield to my entreaties, and stay of his own free will."

"I have business that calls me hence. I must go," Sir Francis said, endeavouring to push by them.

"Let the door be closed," an authoritative voice cried from the head of the table.

The order was instantly obeyed. Two serving-men stationed themselves before the place of exit, and Sir Francis found himself a prisoner.

The roof rang with the laughter and gibes of the guests.

"This is a frolic, gentleman, I perceive. You are resolved to make me your sport—ha! ha!" Sir Francis said, trying to disguise his uneasiness under an appearance of levity—"But you will not carry the jest too far. You will not maltreat me. My partner, Sir Giles Mompesson, will be here anon, and will requite any outrage committed upon me."

"Sir Giles is impatiently expected by us," a spruce coxcomb near him replied. "Madame Bonaventure had prepared us for his coming. We will give him the welcome he deserves."

"Ah! traitress! then it was all planned," Sir Francis thought; —"and, blind owl that I am, I have fallen into the snare."

But the poor knight was nearly at his wit's end with fright, when he saw Lord Roos quit his place at the upper table and approach him.

CHAPTER VII
How Lord Roos obtained Sir Francis Mitchell's signature

"What, my prince of usurers!" exclaimed Lord Roos, in a mocking tone; "my worthy money-lender, who never takes more than cent. per cent., and art ill content with less; who never exacts more than the penalty of thy bond,—unless more may be got; who never drives a hard bargain with a needy man—by thine own account; who never persecutes a debtor—as the prisons shall vouch for thee; who art just in all thy transactions—as every man who hath had dealings with thee will affirm; and who knows not how to lie, to cheat, to cozen—as some usurers do."

"You are pleasant, my lord," Sir Francis replied.

"I mean to be so," Lord Roos said; "for I esteem thee for thy rare qualities. I know not thy peer for cunning and knavery. Thy mischievous schemes are so well-conceived that they prove thee to have an absolute genius for villany. Scruples thou hast none; and considerations and feelings which might move men less obdurate than thyself, have no influence over thee. To ruin a man is with thee mere pastime; and groans of the oppressed are music in thine ears."

"Aha! a good jest. You were always merry with me, my lord."

"Yes, when I borrowed money from thee—but not when I had

to repay it twice over. I laughed not then; but was foolish enough to threaten to take thy life. My anger is past now. But we must drink together—a rousing toast."

"At your lordship's pleasure," Sir Francis replied.

"Cyprien! a flask of wine, and thy largest goblet," Lord Roos cried. "'Tis well! Now pour the whole into the flagon. Do me reason in this cup, Sir Francis?"

"What! in this mighty cup, my lord?" the knight replied. "Nay, 'tis too much, I swear. If I become drunken, the sin will lie at your door."

"Off with it! without more ado. And let the toast be what thou practisest—'Pillage and Extortion!'"

"I cannot drink that toast, my lord. 'Twill choke me."

"'Sdeath! villain, but thou *shalt*, or thou shalt never taste wine more. Down with it, man! And now your signature to this paper?"

"My signature!" Sir Francis cried, reeling from the effect of the wine he had swallowed. "Nay, my good lord; I can sign nothing that I have not read. What is it?"

"A blank sheet," Lord Roos rejoined. "I will fill it up afterwards."

"Then, my lord, I refuse—that is, I decline—that is, I had rather not, if your lordship pleases."

"But my lordship pleases otherwise. Give him pen and ink, and set him near the table."

This was done; and Sir Francis regarded the paper with swimming eyes.

"Now, your name,—written near the bottom of the sheet," Lord Roos cried.

"'Tis done under com—compulsion; and I pro—protest against it."

"Sign, I say," the young nobleman exclaimed, rapping the table peremptorily.

On this, Sir Francis wrote his name in the place indicated.

"Enough!" Lord Roos cried, snatching up the paper. "This is all I want. Now set him on the table, that his partner may have him in full view when he arrives. 'Twill give him a foretaste of what he may himself expect."

"What mean you, ruff—ruffians? 'Tis an indignity to which I shall not submit," cried Sir Francis, who was now, however, too far gone to offer any resistance.

A leathern girdle was found, with which he was fastened to the chair, so as to prevent him slipping from it; and in this state he was hoisted upon the table, and set with his face to the door; looking the very picture of inebriety, with his head drooping on one side, his arms dangling uselessly down, and his thin legs stretched idly out. After making some incoherent objections to this treatment, he became altogether silent, and seemed to fall asleep. His elevation was received with shouts of laughter from the whole company.

The incident had not taken place many minutes, and a round had scarcely been drunk by the guests, when a loud and peremptory summons was heard at the door. The noise roused

even the poor drunkard in the chair, who, lifting up his head, stared about him with vacant eyes.

"Let the door be opened," the same authoritative voice exclaimed, which had before ordered its closure.

The mandate was obeyed; and, amidst profound silence, which suddenly succeeded the clashing of glasses, and expressions of hilarity, Sir Giles Mompesson entered, with his body-guard of myrmidons behind him.

Habited in black, as was his custom, with a velvet mantle on his shoulder, and a long rapier by his side, he came forward with a measured step and assured demeanour. Though he must necessarily have been surprised by the assemblage he found —so much more numerous and splendid than he could have anticipated—he betrayed no signs whatever of embarrassment. Nor, though his quick eye instantly detected Sir Francis, and he guessed at once why the poor knight had been so scandalously treated, did he exhibit any signs of displeasure, or take the slightest notice of the circumstance; reserving this point for consideration, when his first business should be settled. An additional frown might have darkened his countenance; but it was so stern and sombre, without it, that no perceptible change could be discerned; unless it might be in the lightning glances he cast around, as if seeking some one he might call to account presently for the insult. But no one seemed willing to reply to the challenge. Though bold enough before he came, and boastful of what they would do, they all looked awed by his presence, and averted their

gaze from him. There was, indeed, something so formidable in the man, that to shun a quarrel with him was more a matter of prudence than an act of cowardice; and on the present occasion, no one liked to be first to provoke him; trusting to his neighbour to commence the attack, or awaiting the general outbreak.

There was one exception, however, and that was Jocelyn Mounchensey, who, so far from desiring to shun Sir Giles's searching regards, courted them; and as the knight's eagle eye ranged round the table and fell upon him, the young man (notwithstanding the efforts of his pacific neighbour in the furred cloak to restrain him) suddenly rose up, and throwing all the scorn and defiance he could muster into his countenance, returned Mompesson's glance with one equally fierce and menacing.

A bitter smile curled Sir Giles's lip at this reply to his challenge, and he regarded the young man fixedly, as if to grave his features upon his memory. Perhaps they brought Mounchensey's father to mind, for Sir Giles withdrew his gaze for a moment to reflect, and then looked again at Jocelyn with fresh curiosity. If he had any doubts as to whom he beheld, they were removed by Sir Francis, who managed to hiccup forth—

"'Tis he, Sir Giles—'tis Jocelyn Mounchensey."

"I thought as much," Sir Giles muttered. "A moment, young man," he cried, waving his hand imperiously to his antagonist. "Your turn will come presently."

And without bestowing further notice on Jocelyn, who resisted

all his neighbour's entreaties to him to sit down, Sir Giles advanced towards the middle chamber, where he paused, and took off his cap, having hitherto remained covered.

In this position, he looked like a grand inquisitor attended by his familiars.

CHAPTER VIII
Of Lupo Vulp, Captain Bludder, Clement Lanyere, and Sir Giles's other Myrmidons

Close behind Sir Giles, and a little in advance of the rest of the myrmidons, stood Lupo Vulp, the scrivener.

Lupo Vulp was the confidential adviser of our two extortioners, to whom they referred all their nefarious projects. He it was who prepared their bonds and contracts, and placed out their ill-gotten gains at exorbitant usance. Lupo Vulp was in all respects worthy of his employers, being just as wily and unscrupulous as they were, while, at the same time, he was rather better versed in legal tricks and stratagems, so that he could give them apt counsel in any emergency. A countenance more replete with cunning and knavery than that of Lupo Vulp, it would be difficult to discover. A sardonic smile hovered perpetually about his mouth, which was garnished with ranges of the keenest and whitest teeth. His features were sharp; his eyes small, set wide apart, of a light gray colour, and with all the slyness of a fox lurking within their furtive glances. Indeed, his general resemblance to that astute animal must have struck a physiognomist. His head was shaped like that of a fox, and his

hair and beard were of a reddish-tawny hue. His manner was stealthy, cowering, suspicious, as if he feared a blow from every hand. Yet Lupo Vulp could show his teeth and snap on occasions. He was attired in a close-fitting doublet of russety-brown, round yellow hose, and long stockings of the same hue. A short brown mantle and a fox-skin cap completed his costume.

The leader of the troop was Captain Bludder, a huge Alsatian bully, with fiercely-twisted moustachios, and fiery-red beard cut like a spade. He wore a steeple-crowned hat with a brooch in it, a buff jerkin and boots, and a sword and buckler dangled from his waist. Besides these, he had a couple of petronels stuck in his girdle. The captain drank like a fish, and swaggered and swore like twenty troopers.

The rear of the band was formed by the tipstaves—stout fellows with hooks at the end of their poles, intended to capture a fugitive, or hale him along when caught. With these were some others armed with brown-bills. No uniformity prevailed in the accoutrements of the party, each man arraying himself as he listed. Some wore old leather jerkins and steel skirts; some, peascod doublets of Elizabeth's time, and trunk-hose that had covered many a limb besides their own; others, slops and galligaskins; while the poorer sort were robed in rusty gowns of tuft-mockado or taffeta, once guarded with velvet or lined with skins, but now tattered and threadbare. Their caps and bonnets were as varied as their apparel,—some being high-crowned, some trencher-shaped, and some few wide in the leaf

and looped at the side. Moreover, there was every variety of villainous aspect; the savage scowl of the desperado, the cunning leer of the trickster, and the sordid look of the mean knave. Several of them betrayed, by the marks of infamy branded on their faces, or by the loss of ears, that they had passed through the hands of the public executioner.

Amongst these there was one with a visage more frightfully mutilated than those of his comrades; the nose having been slit, and subsequently sewed together again, but so clumsily that the severed parts had only imperfectly united, communicating a strange, distorted, and forbidding look to the physiognomy. Clement Lanyere, the owner of this gashed and ghastly face, who was also reft of his ears, and branded on the cheek, had suffered infamy and degradation, owing to the licence he had given his tongue in respect to the Star-Chamber. Prosecuted in that court by Sir Giles Mompesson, as a notorious libeller and scandaller of the judges and first personages of the realm, he was found guilty, and sentenced accordingly. The court showed little leniency to such offenders; but it was a matter of grace that his clamorous tongue was not torn out likewise, in addition to the punishment actually inflicted. A heavy fine and imprisonment accompanied the corporal penalties. Thus utterly ruined and degraded, and a mark for the finger of scorn to point at, Clement Lanyere, whose prospects had once been fair enough, as his features had been prepossessing, became soured and malevolent, embittered against the world, and at war with society. He turned promoter,

or, in modern parlance, informer; lodging complaints, seeking out causes for prosecutions, and bringing people into trouble in order to obtain part of the forfeits they incurred for his pains. Strange to say, he attached himself to Sir Giles Mompesson,—the cause of all his misfortunes,—and became one of the most active and useful of his followers. It was thought no good could come of this alliance, and that the promoter only bided his time to turn upon his master, against whom it was only natural he should nourish secret vengeance. But, if it were so, Sir Giles seemed to entertain no apprehensions of him, probably thinking he could crush him whenever he pleased. Either way the event was long deferred. Clement Lanyere, to all appearance, continued to serve his master zealously and well; and Sir Giles gave no sign whatever of distrust, but, on the contrary, treated him with increased confidence. The promoter was attired wholly in black—cloak, cap, doublet, and hose were of sable. And as, owing to the emoluments springing from his vile calling, his means were far greater than those of his comrades; so his habiliments were better. When wrapped in his mantle, with his mutilated countenance covered with a mask which he generally wore, the informer might have passed for a cavalier; so tall and well formed was his figure, and so bold his deportment. The dangerous service he was employed upon, which exposed him to insult and injury, required him to be well armed; and he took care to be so.

Two or three of Sir Giles's myrmidons, having been selected

for particular description, the designations of some others must suffice—such as Staring Hugh, a rascal of unmatched effrontery; the Gib Cat and Cutting Dick, dissolute rogues from the Pickt-hatch in Turnbull Street, near Clerkenwell; old Tom Wootton, once a notorious harbourer of "masterless men," at his house at Smart's Quay, but now a sheriffs officer; and, perhaps, it ought to be mentioned, that there were some half-dozen swash-bucklers and sharpers from Alsatia, under the command of Captain Bludder, who was held responsible for their good conduct.

Such was Sir Giles's body-guard.

On his entrance, it may be remarked, the curtain in front of the raised table was more closely drawn, so as completely to conceal the guests. But their importance might be inferred from the serving-men, in rich liveries, standing before the traverse.

Profound silence reigned throughout the assemblage.

Having uncovered, as before mentioned, and made a formal reverence to the company, Sir Giles spoke as follows:—

"I crave your pardon, worthy Sirs," he said, in a distinct and resolute voice, "for this intrusion, and regret to be the means of marring your festivity. I came hither wholly unprepared to find such an assemblage. Yet, though I would willingly have chosen a more fitting opportunity for my visit, and would postpone, if I could, to another occasion, the unpleasant duty I have to fulfil; the matter is urgent, and will not admit of delay. You will hold me excused, therefore, if I proceed with it, regardless of your presence; and I am well assured no let or interruption will be

offered me, seeing I act with the royal licence and authority, of which I am the unworthy representative."

"Truly, your conduct requires explanation," Jocelyn Mounchensey cried, in a mocking tone. "If I had not been here in London, I should have judged, from your appearance, and that of your attendants, that a band of desperate marauders had broken in upon us, and that we must draw our swords to defend our lives, and save the house from pillage. But after what you have said, I conclude you to be the sheriff, come with your followers to execute some writ of attachment; and therefore, however annoying the presence of such a functionary may be, —however ill-timed may be your visit, and unmannerly your deportment,—we are bound not to molest you."

Provocation like this was rarely addressed to Sir Giles; and the choler occasioned by it was increased by the laughter and cheers of the company. Nevertheless he constrained his anger, replying in a stern, scornful tone—

"I would not counsel you to molest me, young man. The mistake you have committed in regard to myself may be pardoned in one of your evident inexperience; who, fresh from the boorish society of the country, finds himself, for the first time, amongst well-bred gentlemen. Of all here present you are probably the sole person ignorant that I am Sir Giles Mompesson. But it is scarcely likely that they should be aware, as I chance to be, that the clownish insolent who has dared to wag his tongue against me, is the son of a Star-Chamber delinquent."

CHAPTER IX
The Letters-Patent

A slight reaction in Sir Giles's favour was produced by his speech, but Jocelyn quite regained his position with the company when he exclaimed—

"My father was misjudged. His prosecutor was a villain, and his sentence iniquitous."

"You have uttered your own condemnation, Jocelyn Mounchensey," Sir Giles cried, with a savage laugh. "Know, to your confusion, that the High Court of Star-Chamber is so tender of upholding the honour of its sentences, that it ever punishes such as speak against them with the greatest severity. You have uttered your scandals openly."

"Imprudent young man, you have, indeed, placed yourself in fearful jeopardy," a gentleman near him observed to Jocelyn. "Escape, if you can. You are lost, if you remain here."

But instead of following the friendly advice, Jocelyn would have assaulted Sir Giles, if he had not been forcibly withheld by the gentleman.

The knight was not slow to follow up the advantage he had gained.

"Stand forward, Clement Lanyere," he exclaimed, authoritatively.

The promoter instantly advanced.

"Look at this man," Sir Giles continued, addressing Jocelyn; "and you will perceive how those who malign the Star-Chamber are treated. This disfigured countenance was once as free from seam or scar as your own; and yet, for an offence lighter than yours, it hath been stamped, as you see, with indelible infamy. Answer, Clement Lanyere,—and answer according to your conscience,—Was the sentence just of the high and honourable court by which you were tried?"

"It was just," the promoter replied, a deep flush dyeing his ghastly visage.

"And lenient?"

"Most lenient. For it left my foul tongue the power of speech it now enjoys."

"By whom were you prosecuted in the Star-Chamber?"

"By him I now serve."

"That is, by myself. Do you bear me malice for what I did?"

"I have never said so. On the contrary, Sir Giles, I have always declared I owe you a deep debt."

"Which you strive to pay?"

"Which I *will* pay."

"You hear what this man says, Mounchensey?" Sir Giles cried. "You have been guilty of the same offence as he. Why should you not be similarly punished?"

"If I were so punished, I would stab my prosecutor to the heart," Jocelyn replied.

At this rejoinder, Lanyere, who had hitherto kept his eyes on the ground, suddenly raised them, with a look of singular expression at the speaker.

"Humph!" Sir Giles ejaculated. "I must proceed to extremities with him, I find. Keep strict watch upon him, Lanyere; and follow him if he goes forth. Trace him to his lair. Now to business. Give me the letters-patent, Lupo," he added, turning to the scrivener, as Lanyere retired. "These Letters-Patent," continued Sir Giles, taking two parchment scrolls with large seals pendent from them from Lupo Vulp, and displaying them to the assemblage, "these Royal Letters," he repeated in his steady, stern tones, and glancing round with a look of half-defiance, "passed under the great seal, and bearing the king's sign-manual, as ye see, gentlemen, constitute the authority on which I act. They accord to me and my co-patentee, Sir Francis Mitchell, absolute and uncontrolled power and discretion in granting and refusing licenses to all tavern-keepers and hostel-keepers throughout London. They give us full power to enter and inspect all taverns and hostels, at any time that may seem fit to us; to prevent any unlawful games being used therein; and to see that good order and rule be maintained. They also render it compulsory upon all ale-house-keepers, tavern-keepers, and inn-keepers throughout London, to enter into their own recognizances with us against the non-observance of our rules and regulations for their governance and maintenance, and to find two sureties: and in case of the forfeiture of such recognizances by any act of the parties, coming

within the scope of our authority, it is provided that one moiety of the sum forfeited be paid to the Crown, and the other moiety to us. Lend me your ears yet further, I pray ye, gentlemen. These Royal Letters empower us to inflict certain fines and penalties upon all such as offend against our authority, or resist our claims; and they enable us to apprehend and commit to prison such offenders without further warrant than the letters themselves contain. In brief, gentlemen," he continued in a peremptory tone, as if insisting upon attention, "you will observe, that the absolute control of all houses of entertainment, where exciseable liquors are vended, is delegated to us by his most gracious Majesty, King James. To which end ample powers have been given us by his Majesty, who has armed us with the strong arm of the law. Will it please ye to inspect the letters, gentlemen?" holding them forth. "You will find that his Majesty hath thus written;—'*In cujus rei testimonium has Literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste Meipso, apud Westm. 10 die Maij, Anno Regni nostri*,' &c. Then follows the royal signature. None of ye, I presume, will question its authenticity?"

A deep silence succeeded, in the midst of which Jocelyn Mounchensey broke forth:—

"I, for one, question it," he cried. "I will never believe that a king, who, like our gracious sovereign, has the welfare of his subjects at heart, would sanction the oppression and injustice which those warrants, if entrusted to unscrupulous hands, must inevitably accomplish. I therefore mistrust the genuineness of

the signature. If not forged, it has been obtained by fraud or misrepresentation."

Some murmurs of applause followed this bold speech; but the gentleman who had previously counselled the young man again interposed, and whispered these words in his ear:—

"Your rash vehemence will undo you, if you take not heed. Beyond question, Sir Giles hath the king's sanction for what he does, and to censure him as you have done is to censure the Crown, which is next to treason. Be ruled by me, my good young Sir, and meddle no more in the matter."

Sir Giles, who had some difficulty in controlling his choler, now spoke:—

"You have cast an imputation upon me, Jocelyn Mounchensey," he cried with concentrated fury, "which you shall be compelled to retract as publicly as you have made it. To insult an officer of the Crown, in the discharge of his duty, is to insult the Crown itself, as you will find. In the King's name, I command you to hold your peace, or, in the King's name, I will instantly arrest you; and I forbid any one to give you aid. I will not be troubled thus. Appointed by his Majesty to a certain office, I exercise it as much for the benefit of the Royal Exchequer, as for my own personal advantage. I have his Majesty's full approval of what I do, and I need nothing more. I am accountable to no man —save the King," addressing this menace as much to the rest of the company as to Jocelyn. "But I came not here to render explanation, but to act. What, ho! Madame Bonaventure! Where

are ye, Madame? Oh! you are here!"

"*Bon jour*, sweet Sir Giles," the landlady said, making him a profound obeisance. "What is your pleasure with me, Sir? And to what am I to attribute the honour of this visit?"

"Tut! Madame. You know well enough what brings me hither, and thus attended," he replied. "I come in pursuance of a notice, served upon you a month ago. You will not deny having received it, since the officer who placed it in your hands is here present." And he indicated Clement Lanyere.

"*Au contraire*, Sir Giles," Madame Bonaventure replied. "I readily admit the receipt of a written message from you, which, though scarcely intelligible to my poor comprehension, did not seem as agreeably worded as a *billet-doux. Mais, ma foi*! I attached little importance to it. I did not suppose it possible—nor do I suppose it possible now"—with a captivating smile, which was totally lost upon Sir Giles—"that you could adopt such rigorous measures against me."

"My measures may appear rigorous, Madame," Sir Giles coldly replied; "but I am warranted in taking them. Nay, I am compelled to take them. Not having made the satisfaction required by the notice, you have deprived yourself of the protection I was willing to afford you. I am now merely your judge. The penalties incurred by your neglect are these: Your licence was suspended a month ago; the notice expressly stating that it would be withdrawn, unless certain conditions were fulfilled. Consequently, as ever since that time you have been

vending exciseable liquors without lawful permission, you have incurred a fine of one hundred marks a day, making a total of three thousand marks now due and owing from you, partly to his Majesty, and partly to his Majesty's representatives. This sum I now demand."

"Ah! Dieu! three thousand marks!" Madame Bonaventure screamed. "What robbery is this!—what barbarity! 'T is ruin—utter ruin! I may as well close my house altogether, and return to my own fair country. As I am an honest woman, Sir Giles, I cannot pay it. So it is quite useless on your part to make any such demand."

"You profess inability to pay, Madame," Sir Giles rejoined. "I cannot believe you; having some knowledge of your means. Nevertheless, I will acquaint you with a rule of law applicable to the contingency you put. '*Quod non habet in cere, luet in corpore*' is a decree of the Star-Chamber; meaning, for I do not expect you to understand Latin, that he who cannot pay in purse shall pay in person. Aware of the alternative, you will make your choice. And you may thank me that I have not adjudged you at once—as I have the power—to three months within the Wood Street Compter."

"Ah, Sir Giles! what an atrocious idea. You are worse than a savage to talk of such a loathsome prison to me. Ah! mon Dieu! what is to happen to me! would I were back again in my lovely Bordeaux!"

"You will have an opportunity of revisiting that fine city,

Madame; for you will no longer be able to carry on your calling here."

"Ciel! Sir Giles! what mean you?"

"I mean, Madame, that you are disabled from keeping any tavern for the space of three years."

Madame Bonaventure clasped her hands together, and screamed aloud.

"In pity, Sir Giles!—In pity!" she cried.

The inexorable knight shook his head. The low murmurs of indignation among the company which had been gradually gathering force during the foregoing dialogue, now became clamorous. "A most scandalous proceeding!" exclaimed one. "Deprive us of our best French ordinary!" cried another. "Infamous extortioner!" shouted a third. "We'll not permit such injustice. Let us take the law into our own hands, and settle the question!" shouted a fourth. "Ay, down with the knight!" added a fifth.

But Sir Giles continued perfectly unmoved by the tempest raging around, and laughed to scorn these menaces, contenting himself with signing to Captain Bludder to be in readiness.

"A truce to this, gentlemen;" he at length thundered forth; "the King's warrant must be respected."

Again Madame Bonaventure besought his pity, but in vain. She took hold of his arm, and feigned to kneel to him; but he shook her coldly off.

"You are a very charming woman, no doubt, Madame," he

said sarcastically; "and some men might find you irresistible; but I am not made of such yielding stuff, and you may spare yourself further trouble, for all your powers of persuasion will fail with me. I renew my demand—and for the last time. Do not compel me to resort to extremities with you. It would grieve me," he added with a bitter smile, "to drag so pretty a woman through the public streets, like a common debtor, to the Compter."

"Grace! grace! Sir Giles," cried Madame Bonaventure. Then seeing him remain inflexible, she added, in an altered tone, "I will never submit with life to such an indignity—never!"

"We'll all protect you, Madame," cried the assemblage with one voice—"Let him lay hands upon you, and he shall see."

Sir Giles glanced at his myrmidons. They stepped quickly towards him in a body. At the same time Jocelyn Mounchensey, whom no efforts of the friendly gentleman could now restrain, sprang forward, and, drawing his sword, was just in time to place himself before Madame Bonaventure, as she drew hastily back.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.