

**AMELIA BARR**

THE LION'S

WHELP

Amelia Barr

**The Lion's Whelp**

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**Amelia E. Barr**  
**The Lion's Whelp / A Story of Cromwell's Time**

**BOOK I**  
**The Hour and The Man**

"Unknown to Cromwell as to me,  
Was Cromwell's measure or degree.

\* \* \* \* \*

He works, plots, fights, in rude affairs,  
With 'squires, lords, kings, his craft compares,  
Till late he learned, through doubt and fear,  
Broad England harbored not his peer."

– *Emerson.*

## CHAPTER I

### SWAFFHAM AND DE WICK

"Sway the tide of battle which way it will, human existence is held together by its old, and only tenure of earnest thoughts, and quiet affections."

During the seventeenth century Swaffham Manor House was one of the most picturesque dwellings in Cambridgeshire. It was so old that it had a sort of personality. It was Swaffham. For as the Yorkshireman, in speaking of his beloved rivers, disdains the article "the" and calls them with proud familiarity, Aire, Ure, Ribble, so to the men of the country between Huntingdon and Cambridge, this ancient dwelling was never the Manor House; it was the synonym of its builders, and was called by their name – Swaffham. For it was the history of the Swaffham family in stone and timber, and no one could enter its large, low rooms without feeling saturated and informed with the spiritual and physical aura of the men and women who had for centuries lived and died under its roof.

The central tower – built of the white stone of the neighbourhood – was the fortress which Tonbert Swaffham erected A.D. 870, to defend his lands from an invasion of the Danes; and five generations of Tonbert's descendants dwelt in that tower, before William of Normandy took possession of the crown of England. The Swaffham of that date became a friend of the Conqueror; the Manor was enriched by his gifts; and the Manor House – enlarged and beautified by various holders – had the singular fortune to be identified with the stirring events of every dynasty.

In the middle of the seventeenth century it still retained this character. Puritan councils of offense and defense had been held in its great hall, and parliamentary soldiers drilled in its meadows. For Captain Israel Swaffham was the friend of General Cromwell, and at the time this story opens was with Cromwell in Scotland. Nothing of good in the old race was lacking in Captain Israel. He was a soldier going forth on a holy errand, hurrying to serve God on the battle-field; faithful, as a man must be who could say after a hard day's fighting,

"Tired! No. It is not for me to let my right hand grow tired, if God's work be half-done."

A great fighter, he had no parliamentary talent, and no respect for parliaments. He believed England's religious and civil liberties were to be saved by the sword, and the sword in the hand of his great leader, Oliver Cromwell; and when the King's fast-and-loose proposals had been discussed by the men of Cambridgeshire, in Swaffham, he had closed the argument with this passionate declaration:

"There is no longer disputing with such a double mind as the mind of Charles Stuart. The very oath of God would not bind him. Out, instantly, all of you who can!"

His three sons rose at his words and the rest of the council followed, for all felt that the work was but half done – there was to be a Second Civil War. Then home was again deserted for the battle-field, and Captain Swaffham's wife and daughter were once more left alone in the old Manor House.

Mrs. Swaffham was the child of a Puritan minister, and she had strong Puritan principles; but these were subject to passing invasions of feeling not in accord with them. There were hours when she had pitied the late King, excused his inexcusable treacheries, and regretted the pomps and ceremonies of royal state. She had even a feeling that England, unkinged, had lost prestige and was like a dethroned nation. In such hours she fretted over her absent husband and sons, and said words hard for her daughter Jane to listen to with any sympathy or patience.

For Jane Swaffham was of a different spirit. She had a soul of the highest mettle; and she had listened to those English mystics, who came out of the steel ranks of triumphant Puritanism, until she had caught their spirit and been filled through and through with their faith. The Swaffhams were a tall race; but Jane was a woman of small stature and slender frame, and her hair, though abundant, wanted the rich brown hue that was the heritage of the Swaffham beauties. No one spoke of Jane as a beauty; the memory of her sister Amity – who had married Lord Armingford – and of her aunt,

Cicely Compton, both women of rare loveliness, qualified Jane's claim to this family distinction. And yet she had a fresh, bright face, a face like a sweet single rose of the wood; one could see straight to her heart through it – a loving, cheerful daughter of righteousness; not perfect by any means; subject to little bursts of temper, and to opinions so positive they had the air of bigotry; but with all her faults holding that excellent oneness of mind, which has no doubts and no second thoughts.

This was the maiden who was sitting, one sunny afternoon, at the open window of the household parlour in Swaffham. The lazy wind brought her delicious puffs of sweetbrier scent, and in the rich fields beyond the garden she could hear the voices of the reapers calling to each other as they bound the wheat. On the hearthstone, her mother's wheel hummed in a fitful way, now rapidly, now slowly, anon stopping altogether. Jane was quite idle. A tray full of ripe lavender spikes was at her side and a partly finished little bag of sheer muslin was in her hand, but the work was not progressing. When thoughts are happy, the needle flies, when they are troubled or perplexed, the hands drop down and it becomes an effort to draw the thread. Jane was thinking of her father and brothers, of the unhappy condition of England, and of the unrest in their own household. For she knew that her mother was worried about many things, and the fret that was bred in the kitchen and the farm offices – in spite of all her efforts – insinuated itself into the still order of the handsome room in which she was sitting. She felt her mother's silence to be unpleasantly eloquent. The fitful wheel complained. It was a relief when Mrs. Swaffham brought to audible conclusions, the voiceless tension in which they were sitting.

"My work is never out of hand, Jane," she said fretfully. "I am fairly downhearted to-day – so put to the push as I have been, with women in the kitchen and men in the fields."

"Dear mother, it may not be for long."

"It will be long enough to bring everything to wrack and ruin. The dairy is twenty-four shillings short this week."

"There are perhaps fewer cows in milk."

"The wool is short weight also; one of the gray horses is sick; the best thresher has gone soldiering, like the rest of the fools."

"Mother!"

"And Will Will-be-so has the rheumatism, and in spite of his Bible and his psalm-singing, has been to Dame Yodene for a charm."

"Why did he not come to you for flannel and a plaster?"

"Come to me! That goes without saying. I went out of my way to help him, and then he wished Master Israel was home, and said 'there was no rheumatics when he was round looking after his men.' I fired up, then, when he spoke that way – laying to my account the wettings he gets coming from the ale-house at nights; and then he muttered 'Women's ways – Will-be-so.'"

"Will is very provoking. I wish he would go to the wars."

"He likes the tap at Widow Tasburgh's, and the blacksmith's forge too well – let alone the women in the kitchen, who are all quarreling about him. And then there is this new girl, Susannah, who is more pretty than need be; her face gets her too much favour with the men and too little with the women. When Doctor Verity comes next, I must tell him to give a few words suitable at the Evening Service. They are a lazy, quarreling set, and every one of them does their work against the collar."

"Father told me he was led to believe he would not be long away. He said this campaign would be short and fierce, for General Cromwell looks on its necessity as the unpardonable sin in Charles Stuart."

"Short and fierce! Well, then, General Cromwell is well able to put fighting men up to that kind of thing."

"You are out with the General, mother, and all because you miss father so much."

"I am out with the war, Jane. What is the good of it? Charles Stuart alive, stands for his Prerogative just where Charles Stuart dead, did."

"The war is now an appeal to God. That is the good of it. You heard what Doctor Verity said of its necessity – and you agreed with him. Indeed, who could gainsay his words? He spoke as if he had heard God's command 'Up and be doing, and I will help you.'"

"Is God, then, the God of war? No, Jane. I will not believe it."

"God is the God of blessings, mother; but as the ploughshare breaks up the earth for the corn seed, so does the red ploughshare of war break up the heart of the nation for the blessing of freedom which shall follow it."

"I know not; I know not; but I am sure if there were no kings and queens in the world it would be little loss to God Almighty, or to any one else."

At this moment there was the sound of wheels and the tramp of horses, and Jane said, "It is Matilda de Wick. I know the roll of the carriage. Dear mother, keep a bright face in her presence. She will see everything, and draw conclusions from the smallest matter." Then Jane lifted her sewing, and the wheel began to hum, and the door opened swiftly and Matilda de Wick entered.

"I have just been at Ely," she said, "and if I live seven-and-fifty years longer in this sinful world, I shall not forget the visit." Then she laughed with a merry scorn, kissed Jane on the cheek, and laid off her hat, heavy with white plumes. "It is good-bye to my senses," she continued; "I am out of wisdom this afternoon – lend me your sobriety, Jane. I have been visiting Lady Heneage, and I have heard so much of the Cromwell's full cup that, in faith, I think it has gone to my head. Do I look sensible? I have no hope of my words, and I pray you excuse whatever I may say."

"I trust Lady Heneage is well," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"She had need to be well. Her house is as full as the ark. Mrs. Elizabeth Hampden is there, and daughter Flambord, and daughter Clayton, and all their children and retainers. It is their last gathering before they go away. Do you wish to know where they are going? To London, of course. When people carry themselves to such a height, no other city is big enough. But I ask pardon; I told you my words had lost their senses."

"Why do you go to see Lady Heneage if you like her not and surely you like her not, or you would not make a mock of her doings."

"I like to go where good fortune sits, Jane – and in these days no one can expect honour that deserves it. You know also that the last Heneage baby was named for me, and I got word that it was short-coated last Sunday; and so I went to see the little brat. It is a beauty, if it hold on to its good looks; and 'tis like to do so, for whatever Heneage gets, Heneage keeps."

"And they are going to London? Is it really so?" asked Jane.

"'Tis not very civil to doubt it. I dare be sworn it is as true as a thing can be, when the world is topsy-turvy. But that is not all of my news – I heard also that Jane Swaffham was going to London – a thing I would not believe without Jane's assurance."

"It is very uncertain," replied Mrs. Swaffham. "Jane has an invitation from Mary Cromwell, and if Doctor Verity comes here soon, he may find the time to take her to London with him. We know not assuredly, as yet."

"Jane must move mountains to go. The Cromwells are now living in the stately Cockpit. They will hold court there, and Jane Swaffham will be of it. 'Tis said all this honour for the Irish campaign."

"Then it is well deserved," answered Jane with some heat.

"Jane," said Mrs. Swaffham, "I can not abide any more quarreling to-day. If you and Matilda get on that subject, truth and justice will go to the wall. Monstrous lies are told about Ireland, and you both suck them down as if they were part of the Gospels." Then turning to Matilda she asked, "Why does the Heneage family go to London?"

"Indeed, madame, now that Mr. Cromwell has become Captain-General, and Commander-in-Chief, why should not all his old friends go to London? London has gone mad over the man; even that supreme concourse of rebels called Parliament rose up, bareheaded, to receive him when he last honoured them with a visit."

"Just what they ought to have done," said Jane. "Is there any corner of England not coupled gloriously with his name?"

"And Ireland?"

"Gloriously also."

"Pray, then, is it not extremely natural for his old friends to wish to see his glory?"

"I am sure of one thing," answered Jane. "Public honours please not General Cromwell. He would thank God to escape them."

"I do not say that the wish to see him honoured is universal," continued Matilda. "Father Sacy thinks there are a few thousand men still living in England who have not bowed the knee to this Baal."

"It is wicked to liken a good man to a devil, Matilda; and if mother will sit and listen to such words, I will not. And, look you, though Charles Stuart's men turn up their noses and the palms of their hands at General Cromwell, he stands too high for them to pull him down. Cromwell will work and fight the time appointed him – and after that he will rest in the Lord. For he is good, and just, and brave as a lion, and there is not a man or woman can say different – not a man or woman treading English ground to-day that can, in truth, say different! Always he performs God's will and pleasure."

"Or the devil's."

"He is a good man. I say it."

"And he knows it; and that is where his hypocrisy comes in – I –"

"Children! Children! can you find nothing more lovely to talk about? Matilda, you know that you are baiting Jane's temper only that you may see her lose it."

Then Matilda laughed, and stooping to her friend, kissed her and said, "Come, little Jane, I will ask your pardon. It is the curse of these days, that one must lie to one's own heart, or quarrel with the heart one loves. Kiss and be friends, Jane. I came to get your receipt for lavender conserves, and this is nothing to it."

"Jane was conserving, yesterday," answered Mrs. Swaffham, "and she has a new receipt from her sister Armingford for brewing a drink against sleeplessness. It is to be made from the blue flowers picked from the knaps."

"That is fortunate," said Matilda. "You know that my father has poor health, and his liking for study makes him ailing, of late. He sleeps not. I wish that I had a composing draught for him. Come, Jane, let us go to the still-room." She spoke with an unconscious air of authority, and Jane as unconsciously obeyed it, but there was a coldness in her manner which did not disappear until the royalist lady had talked with her for half-an-hour about the spices and the distilled waters that were to prevail against the Earl's sleeplessness.

When the electuary had been prepared, the girls became silent. They were as remarkably contrasted as were the tenets, religious and civil, for which they stood. But if mere physical ascendancy could have dominated Jane Swaffham, she was in its presence. Yet it was not Matilda, but Jane, who filled the cool, sweet place with a sense of power not to be disputed. Her pale hair was full of light and life; it seemed to shine in its waving order and crown-like coil. Her eyes had a steady glow in their depths that was invincible; her slight form was proudly poised; her whole manner resolute and a little cold, as of one who was putting down an offense only half-forgiven.

Matilda was conscious of Jane's influence, and she called all her own charms forth to rival it. Putting out of account her beautiful face and stately figure as not likely to affect Jane, she assumed the manner she had never known to fail – a manner half-serious and wholly affectionate and confidential. She knew that Swaffham was always a safe subject, and that a conversation set to that key went directly to Jane's heart. So, turning slowly round to observe everything, she said,

"How cool and sweet is this place, Jane!"

"It is, Matilda. I often think that one might receive angels among these pure scents."

"Oh, I vow it is the rosemary! Let me put my hands through it," and she hastily pulled off her white embroidered gloves, and passed her hands, shining with gems, through the deliciously fragrant green leaves.

"I have a passion for rosemary," she continued. "It always perfigures good fortune to me. Sometimes if I wake in the night I smell it – I smell miles of it – and then I know my angel has been to see me, and that some good thing will tread in her footsteps."

"I ever think of rosemary for burials," said Jane.

"And I for bridals, and for happiness; but it

"Grows for two ends, it matters not at all,  
Be it for bridal, or for burial."

"That is true," answered Jane. "I remember hearing my father say that when Queen Elizabeth made her joyful entry into London, every one carried rosemary posies; and that Her Grace kept in her hand, from the Fleet Bridge to Westminster, a branch of rosemary that had been given her by a poor old woman."

"That was a queen indeed! Had she reigned this day, there had been no Cromwell."

"Who can tell that? England had to come out of the Valley and Shadow of Popery, and it is the Lord General's sword that shall lead her into the full light – there is something round your neck, Matilda, that looks as if you were still in darkness."

Then Matilda laughed and put her hand to her throat, and slipped into her bosom a rosary of coral and gold beads. "It was my mother's," she said; "you know that she was of the Old Profession, and I wear it for her sake."

"It is said that Charles Stuart also wears one for his mother's sake."

"It is a good man that remembers a good mother; and the King is a good man."

"There is no king in England now, Matilda, and no question of one."

"There is a king, whether we will or no. The king never dies; the crown is the crown, though it hang on a hedge bush."

"That is frivolous nonsense, Matilda. The Parliament is king."

"Oh, the pious gang! This is a strange thing that has come to pass in our day, Jane – that an anointed king should be deposed and slain. Who ever heard the like?"

"Read your histories, Matilda. It is a common thing for tyrannical kings to have their executioners. Charles Stuart suffered lawfully and by consent of Parliament."

"A most astonishing difference!" answered Matilda, drawing on her gloves impatiently, "to be murdered with consent of Parliament! that is lawful; without consent of Parliament, that is very wicked indeed. But even as a man you might pity him."

"Pity him! Not I! He has his just reward. He bound himself for his enemies with cords of his own spinning. But you will not see the truth, Matilda – "

"So then, it is useless wasting good Puritan breath on me. Dear Jane, can we never escape this subject? Here, in this sweet room, why do we talk of tragedies?"

Jane was closing the still-room door as this question was asked, and she took her friend by the arm and said, "Come, and I will show you a room in which another weak, wicked king prefigured the calamity that came to his successor in our day." Then she opened a door in the same tower, and they were in a chamber that was, even on this warm harvest day, cold and dark. For the narrow loophole window had not been changed, as in the still-room, for wide lattices; and the place was mouldy and empty and pervaded by an old, unhappy atmosphere.

"What a wretched room! It will give me an ague," said Matilda.

"It was to this room King John came, soon after his barons had compelled him to sign the Great Charter of Liberties. And John was only an earlier Charles Stuart – just as tyrannical – just as false

– and his barons were his parliament. He lay on the floor where you are now standing, and in his passion bit and gnawed the green rushes with which it was strewed, and cursed the men who he said had 'made themselves twenty-four over-kings.' So you see that it is not a new thing for Englishmen to war against their kings."

"Poor kings!"

"They should behave themselves better."

"Let us go away. I am shivering." Then as they turned from the desolate place, she said with an attempt at indifference, "When did you hear from Cymlin? And pray in what place must I remember him now?"

"I know not particularly. Wherever the Captain-General is, there Cymlin Swaffham is like to be."

"At Ely, they were talking of Cromwell as near to Edinburgh."

"Then we shall hear tidings of him soon. He goes not anywhere for nothing."

"Why do you not ask after Stephen's fortune – good or bad?"

"I did not at the moment think of Stephen. When Cromwell is in the mind 'tis impossible to find him fit company. It is he, and he only."

"Yet if ever Stephen de Wick gets a glimpse of home, it is not home to him until he has been at Swaffham."

Jane made no answer, and they walked silently to the door where Matilda's carriage was waiting. Mrs. Swaffham joined them as Matilda was about to leave, and the girl said, "I had come near to forgetting something I wished to tell you. One of those men called Quakers was preaching his new religion at Squire Oliver Leder's last night. There was much disputing about him to-day."

"I wonder then," said Mrs. Swaffham, "that we were not asked. I have desired to hear some of these men. It is said they are mighty in the Scriptures, and that they preach peace, which – God knows – is the doctrine England now needs."

"Many were there. I heard of the Flittons and Mossleys and the Traffords and others. But pray what is the good of preaching 'peace' when Cromwell is going up and down the land with a drawn sword. It is true also that these Quakers themselves always bring quarreling and persecution with them."

"That is not their fault," said Jane. "The preacher can only give the Word, and if people will quarrel about it and rend it to and fro, that is not the preacher's fault. But, indeed, all testify that these people called Quakers quake at nothing, and are stiff and unbendable in their own way."

"So are the Independents, and the Anabaptists, and the Presbyterians, and the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Root and Branch Men, and –"

"The Papists, and the Episcopalians," added Jane.

"Faith! No one can deny it."

"What said Lady Heneage of the preacher?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"She thought he ought to be put in the stocks; and her sister Isabel said that he was a good man, and had the root of the matter in him. Madame Flitton was of the same opinion, though she did not feel at liberty to approve entirely. Others considered him full of temper and very forward, and the argument was hot, and quite Christian-like. I heard that he was to preach again at Deeping Den. Now I must make what haste I can; my father will be angry at my delay. Good-bye! faithful till we meet again."

"She says 'faithful,' yet knows not how to be faithful."

Mrs. Swaffham did not answer Jane's remark. She was thinking of the Quaker sermon at Oliver Leder's, and wondering why they had not been asked to hear it. "We ought to have been asked," she said to Jane as they turned into the house. "Leaving out Swaffham was bad treatment, and when I say bad, I mean bad. Did Matilda take the electuary for her father?"

"She was very little in earnest, and had forgotten it but for my reminding."

"She is much changed."

"It would be strange indeed if she was not changed. Before these troubles she was a girl living at her mother's knee, petted by her father, and the idol of her brothers. Two of her brothers fell fighting by the side of Prince Rupert, her mother wept herself into the grave for them, her father is still nursing the wound he got at Naseby, and her only brother, Stephen, is with Charles Stuart, wherever he may be. If such troubles did not change a girl, she would be hewn from the very rock of selfishness. Matilda is far from that. She loves with a whole heart, and will go all lengths to prove it. We do not know the new Matilda yet."

Jane would have made this remark still more positively, if she could have seen her friend as soon as Swaffham was left behind. She sat erect, lost in thought, and her eyes had a look in them full of anxiety and sorrow. The sadness of an immense disillusion was over her. But she belonged to that imperial race who never lose heart in any trouble. To the very last she must hope; to the very last believe even against hope and against reason. Her life had gone to ruin, but she trusted that some miracle would restore it. Not for long could any mood of despair subdue her; infallibly she must shake it away. For there was no egotism in her grief, she could suffer cheerfully with others; it was her isolation that hurt her. All her old friends had departed. The grave had some; others had taken different ways, or battle and exile had scattered them. By the side of her sick father she stood alone, feeling that even Jane – her familiar friend – doubted her, no longer took her at her word, called in question what she said, and held herself so far aloof that she could not reach her heart. Oppressed by such considerations, she felt like a child that suddenly realises it has lost its way and is left alone in a wilderness.

Nothing in her surroundings offered her any help. The road was flat and dreary; a wide level intersected with deep drains and "droves" – a poor, rough, moist land, whose horizon was only broken by the towers of Ely, vast and gray in the distance. Large iron gates admitted her to de Wick park, and she entered an avenue bordered with ash trees, veiled in mist, and spreading out on either hand into a green chase full of tame deer. The House – pieced on to the broad walls of an Augustine monastery – was overshadowed by ash trees. It was a quadrangular building of various dates, the gray walls rising from trim gardens with box-edged flower plots and clipped yew hedges. There was a large fish pond teeming with perch, and pike, and eels; and black colonies of rooks filled the surrounding trees, and perched on the roof of the mansion. An old-world sleepy air, lonely and apart and full of melancholy, pervaded the place.

But all these things were part and parcel of the word Home. Matilda regarded them not in particular, they only affected her unconsciously as the damp air or the gathering shadows of the evening did. The door stood open, and she passed without delay into the wide entrance hall. It was chill with the drifting fog, and dark with the coming night shadows; but there was a good fire of ash logs at the upper end, and she stood a few minutes before it, feeling a certain exhilaration in its pleasant warmth and leaping flame. Then she went leisurely up the broad stairway. It was of old oak with curiously carved balusters, surmounted by grotesque animal forms; but she did not notice these ugly creations as she climbed with graceful lassitude the dark steps, letting her silk robe trail and rustle behind her. Her hat, with its moist drooping feathers, was in her hand; her hair hung limply about her brow and face; she was the very picture of a beauty that had suffered the touch of adverse nature, and the depression of unsympathetic humanity.

But the moment she entered her own room she had the sense of covert and refreshment. Its dark splendour of oak and damask was brought out by the glow and flame of firelight and candle-light; and her maid came forward with that air of affectionate service, which in Matilda's present mood seemed of all things most grateful and pleasant. She put off her sense of alienation and unhappiness with her damp clothing, and as the comfort of renewal came to her outwardly, the inner woman also regained her authority; and the girl conscious of this potent personality, erected herself in its strength and individuality. She surveyed her freshly clad form in its gown of blue lutestring; she turned right

and left to admire a fresh arrangement of her hair; she put around her neck, without pretense of secrecy or apology, the rosary of coral and gold; and admired the tint and shimmer of its beauty on her white throat. Then she asked —

"Was any stranger with the Earl at dinner, Delia?"

"My lady, he dined with Father Sacy alone."

"And pray what did they eat for dinner?"

"There was a sucking pig roasted with juniper wood and rosemary branches, and a jugged hare, and a pullet, and some clotted cream and a raspberry tart. All very good, my lady; will you please to eat something?"

"Yes. I will have some jugged hare, and some clotted cream, and a raspberry tart – and a glass of Spanish wine, Delia, and a pitcher of new milk. Have them served as soon as possible."

"In what room, my lady?"

"In what room is the Earl, my father, now sitting?"

"In the morning room."

"Then serve it in the morning room."

She took one comfortable glance at herself, and in the pleasure of its assurance went downstairs. Her step was now firm and rapid, yet she paused a moment at the door of the room she wished to enter, and called up smiles to her face and a sort of cheerful bravado to her manner ere she lifted the steel hasp that admitted her. In a moment her quick eyes took a survey of its occupants. They were only two men – Earl de Wick, and his chaplain, Father Sacy. Both were reading; the Earl, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*; the Chaplain, the Evening Service in the Book of Common Prayer. Neither of them noticed her entrance, and she went straight to her father's side, and covering the open page with her hand, said in a merry tone —

"Here is a noble knight dwelling in Arcadia, while the great Captain-General Cromwell – "

"The devil!"

"Is going up and down and to and fro in the land, seeking whom he may devour. I have been at Ely and at Swaffham, gathering what news I can, and I assure you, sir, there is none to our comfort."

"What have you heard? Anything about the Scots?"

"Cromwell is in Scotland. What do you expect from that news?"

"That Leslie will be his match."

"Then you will be disappointed. 'There is a tide in the affairs of men,' and this tide of Cromwell and the Commonwealth is going to sweep all royalty and all nobility into the deep sea."

"Well, then, I may as well return to my *Arcadia* and learn how to be rustical. We nobles may play at Canute if we like – but – but – "

"It is useless, while this man's star flames in the firmament. I hear that the Parliament rose bareheaded to receive him when he last entered the House. If he were king, they could have done no more. They have also given to him and his family a royal lodging in the Cockpit, and already the women are removed thither. If he conquers the Scotch army, what more can they offer him but the crown?"

"Those unlucky Stuarts! They will swallow up all England's chivalry. Oh, for one campaign with Queen Elizabeth at its head! She would send old Oliver with his Commonwealth to the bottomless pit, and order him to tell the devil that Elizabeth Tudor sent him there."

"The Stuarts are of God's anointing; and there are bad kings, and unlucky kings in all royal houses. I stood to-day where King John lay cursing and biting the rushes on the floor, because his barons had made themselves his over-kings."

"John's barons had some light," said the Earl. "They hated John for the reason England now hates the Stuarts. He perjured himself neck deep; he brought in foreign troops to subjugate Englishmen; he sinned in all things as Charles Stuart has sinned."

"Sir, are you not going too far?" asked the Chaplain, lifting his eyes from his book.

"I thought you were at your prayers, father. No, by all that is truthful, I am right! In the Great Charter, the barons specially denounce King John as '*regem perjurum ac baronibus rebellem.*' The same thing might fairly be said of Charles Stuart. Yet while a Stuart is King of England, it is the de Wicks' duty to stand by him. But I would to God I had lived when Elizabeth held the sceptre! No Cromwell had smitten it out of her hand, as Cromwell smote it from the hand of Charles on Naseby's field."

"That is supposition, my Lord."

"It is something more, father. Elizabeth had to deal with a fiercer race than Charles had, but she knew how to manage it. Look at the pictures of the de Wicks in her time. They are the pictures of men who would stand for their rights against 'prerogative' of any kind, yet the great Queen made them obey her lightest word. How did she do it? I will tell you – she scorned to lie to them, and she was brave as a lion. If she had wanted the Five Members in the Tower of London, they would have gone to the Tower of London; her crown for it! It was my great-grandfather who held her bridle reins when she reviewed her troops going to meet the Spaniards of the Armada. No hesitating, no tampering, no doubts, no fears moved her. She spoke one clear word to them, and she threw herself unreservedly upon their love and loyalty. 'Let tyrants fear!' she cried. 'I have placed my chief strength in the loyal hearts of my subjects, and I am come amongst you resolved to live or die amongst you all – to lay down for God, and my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a King of England, too; and I think foul scorn that Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm!' This was Elizabeth's honest temper, and if Charles Stuart in throwing himself upon his nobles and his country had been true to them, he would never have gone to the scaffold. This I say boldly, and I mean what I say."

"Sir, many would mistake your words, and think you less than loyal."

"Father, I have proved my loyalty with my children and my blood; but among my own people and at my own hearth, I may say that I would I had better reason for my loyalty. I am true to my king, but above all else, I love my country. I love her beyond all words, though I am grateful to one great Englishman for finding me words that I have dipped in my heart's blood; words that I uttered on the battle-field joyfully, when I thought they were my last words —

"' – this blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England,  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land!'"

"If to this degree you love England, father, how would you like to see this beggarly Cromwell upon her throne? How would you teach your head to bow to this upstart majesty?"

"Matilda, to the devil we may give his due, and there is naught of 'beggary' in Cromwell or in his family. They have entertained kings, and sat with nobles as equals, and as for the man himself, he is a gentleman by birth and breeding. I say it, for I have known him his life long, and if you add every crime to his name, I will still maintain that he has sinned with a clear conscience. He stood by Charles Stuart, and strove to save him until he found that Charles Stuart stood by no man, and could be trusted by no man."

"My lord, you are very just to the man Cromwell. Some would not thank you for it."

"If we cannot be just, father, we may doubt the fairness of our cause, perhaps also of our motives. 'Tis impossible to consider this man's life since he walked to the front of the Parliamentary army and not wonder at it."

"He is but the man of the hour, events have made him."

"Not so! His success is in him, 'tis the breed of his own heart and brain. Well, then, this Scotch campaign is the now or never of our effort. If it fail, we may have a Cromwell dynasty."

"'Tis an impossible event. The man has slain the king of England and throttled the Church of Christ. Even this holy Book in my hand has his condemnation – these gracious prayers and collects, whose music is ready made for every joy and sorrow – this noble Creed which we ought to sing upon our knees, for nothing made of English words was ever put together like it – yet you know how Cromwell's Root and Branch men have slandered it."

"Alas, father! one kind of Christian generally slanders all other kinds. The worshipers of the heathen gods were at least tolerant. A pagan gentleman who had faith in his own image of Bona Dea could still be friendly to an acquaintance who believed in Jupiter. But we are not even civil to our neighbours unless they think about our God just as we do."

"What say you if, for once, we part without Cromwell between our good-wills and our good-nights? Father, I have seen to-day a fan of ostrich feathers; 'tis with Gaius the packman, who will be here in the morning. Also, I want some housewifery stores, and some embroidery silks, and ballads, and a book of poems written by one Mr. John Milton, who keeps a school in London."

"I know the man. We will have none of his poems."

"But, father, I may have the other things?"

"You will take no nay-say."

"Then a good-night, sir!"

"Not yet. I will have my pay for 'the other things.' You shall sing to me. Your lute lies there. Come – 'It is early in the morning.'" She was singing the first line as she went for her lute, and de Wick closed his eyes and lay smiling while the old, old ditty filled the room with its sweetness —

"It is early in the morning,  
At the very break of day,  
My Love and I go roaming,  
All in the woods so gay.  
The dew like pearl drops bathes our feet,  
The sweet dewdrops of May

"In the sweetest place of any,  
'Mid the grasses thick and high  
Caring nothing for the dewdrops,  
That around us thickly lie.  
Bathed in glittering May-dew,  
Sit we there, my Love and I!

"As we pluck the whitethorn blossom,  
As we whisper words of love,  
Prattling close beside the brooklet,  
Sings the lark, and coos the dove.  
Our feet are bathed in May-dew,  
And our hearts are bathed in love."

Happily, tenderly, fell the musical syllables to the tinkling lute, and as she drew to a close, still singing, she passed smiling out of the room; leaving the door open however, so that they heard her voice growing sweetly softer and softer, and further and further away, until it left nothing but the delightful echo in their hearts —

"Our feet are bathed in May-dew  
And our hearts are bathed in love."



## CHAPTER II

### DOCTOR JOHN VERITY

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

"The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle."

As Matilda went singing up the darksome stairway, the moon rose in the clear skies and flooded the place with a pallid, fugitive light. In that unearthly glow she looked like some spiritual being. It gave to her pale silk robe a heavenly radiance. It fell upon her white hands touching the lute, and upon her slightly raised face, revealing the rapt expression of one who is singing with the heart as well as with the lips. The clock struck nine as she reached the topmost step, and she raised her voice to drown the chiming bell; and so, in a sweet crescendo of melody, passed out of sight and out of hearing.

About the same time, Mrs. Swaffham and Jane stood together on the eastern terrace of the Manor House, silently admiring the moonlight over the level land. But in a few moments Jane began in a low voice to recite the first verse of the one hundred and third Psalm; her mother took the second verse, they clasped hands, and as they slowly paced the grassy walk they went with antiphonal gladness through the noble thanksgiving together. The ninety-first Psalm followed it, and then Mrs. Swaffham said —

"Now, Jane, let us go to bed and try to sleep. I haven't been worth a rush to-day for want of my last night's sleep. There's a deal to do to-morrow, and it won't be done unless I am at the bottom of everything. My soul, too, is wondrous heavy to-night. I keep asking it 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' and I get no answer from it."

"You must add counsel to inquiry, mother. Finish the verse — 'Trust thou in God, and thou shalt yet praise Him, who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God.' You see, you are to answer yourself."

"I didn't think of that, Jane. A sad heart is poor company, isn't it?"

"There is an old saying, mother, — 'A merry heart goes all the day.'"

"But who knows how much the merry heart may have to carry? There is another saying still older, Jane, that is a good deal better than that. It is God's grand charter of help, and you'll find it, dear, in Romans eighth and twenty-eighth. I can tell you, my heart would have failed me many and many a time, it would indeed, but for that verse."

"Are you troubled about my father and brothers?"

"Oh, Jane, that is the sword point at my heart. Any hour it may pierce me. Cromwell went to Scotland, and what for but to fight? and my men-folk have not charmed lives."

"But their lives are hid with Christ in God; nothing can hurt them, that is not of His sending."

"Yes! Yes! But I am a wife and a mother, and you know not yet what that means, Jane. All day I have been saying — no matter what my hands were doing — let this cup pass me, Lord. If your father fell! — if John, or Cymlin, or Tonbert were left on the battle-field! Oh, Jane! Jane!" and the terror that had haunted her all day and shown itself in an irrepressible fretfulness, now sought relief in tears and sobbing. Jane kissed and comforted the sorrowful woman. She led her up-stairs, and helped her into the sanctuary of sleep by many brave and hopeful words; and it so happened that she finally uttered a promise that had once been given to the anxious wife and mother, as a sacred secret token of help and deliverance. And when she heard the gracious words dropping from Jane's lips she said — "That is sufficient. Once, when I was in great fear for your father, the Lord gave me that assurance; now He sends it by you. I am satisfied. I will lay me down and sleep; the words will sing in my heart all night long," and she said them softly as Jane kissed her — "From the beginning of our journey, the Lord delivered us from every enemy."

Then Jane went to her own room. It was a large, low room on the morning side of the house, and it was an illustration of the girl – a place of wide, free spaces, and no furniture in it that was for mere ornament – a small tent bed draped with white dimity, a dressing-table equally plain and spotless, a stand on which lay her Bible, a large oak chair of unknown age, and two or three chairs of the simplest form made of plaited rushes and willow wands. Some pots of sweet basil and geranium were in the casements, and the place was permeated with a peace and perfume that is indescribable.

To this sweet retreat Jane went with eager steps. She closed the door, slipped the iron bolt into its place, and then lit a rush candle. The light was dim, but sufficient. In it she disrobed herself, and loosened the long braids of pale brown hair; then she put out the candle and let the moonlight flood the room, make whiter the white draperies, and add the last ravishing touch of something heavenly, and something apart from the sphere of our unrest and sorrow.

For some time she sat voiceless, motionless. Was she dreaming of happiness, or learning to suffer? Neither, consciously; she was "waiting" on the Eternal, waiting for that desire God Himself forms in the soul – that secret voice that draws down mercies and spiritual favours which no one knoweth but they who receive them. And Jane was well aware that it was only in the serene depth of a quiescent will she could rise above the meanness of fear and the selfishness of hope, and present that acceptable prayer which would be omnipotent with God: – omnipotent, because so wonderfully aided by all those strange things and secret decrees and unrevealed transactions which are beyond the stars; but which all combine in ministry with the praying soul.

That night, however, she could not escape the tremor and tumult of her own heart, and the sorrowful apprehension of her mother. Peace was far from her. She sat almost breathless, she rose and walked softly to and fro, she stood with uplifted thoughts in the moonlit window – nothing brought her clarity and peace of mind. And when at length she fell into the sleep of pure weariness, it was haunted by dreams full of turmoil and foreshadowings of calamity. She awoke weary and unrefreshed, and with a sigh opened a casement and looked at the outer world again. How good it seemed! In what gray, wild place of sorrow and suffering had she been wandering? She did not know its moors and bogs, and the noise of its black, rolling waters. How different were the green terraces of Swaffham! the sweet beds of late lilies and autumn flowers! the rows of tall hollyhocks dripping in the morning mist! A penetrating scent of marjoram and lavender was in the air, a sense, too, of ended summer, in spite of the lilies and the stately hollyhocks. She came down with a smile, but her mother's face was wan and tired.

"I hoped I should have had a good dream last night, Jane," she said sadly, "but I dreamt nothing to the purpose. I wonder when we shall have a letter. I do not feel able to do anything to-day. I'm not all here. My mind runs on things far away from Swaffham. I am going to let some of the work take its own way for a week. In all conscience, we should have news by that time."

So the anxious days went by for a week, and there was still no word. Then Jane went over to de Wick, hoping that the Earl might have news from his son, which would at least break the voiceless tension of their fears. But the Earl was in the same state – restless, perplexed, wistfully eager concerning the situation of the opposing armies. In their mutual sorrowful conjectures they forgot their political antipathies, and a loving apprehension drew them together; they could not say unkind things, and Jane was even regretful for her cool attitude towards Matilda on her last visit to Swaffham. They drew close to each other, they talked in low voices of the absent, they clasped hands as they walked together through the lonely park in the autumn afternoon. They also agreed that whoever had news first should send a swift messenger to the other, no matter what the tidings should be. When they parted, Jane kissed her friend, a token of love she had not given her for a long time, and Matilda was so affected by this return of sympathy that she covered her face with her hands and wept. "Oh, Jane!" she said, "I have been so lonely!"

And as Jane answered her with affectionate assurances, there came into her heart a sudden anticipation of intelligence. Without consideration, with no purpose of mere encouragement, she said

confidently – "There is some one on the way. I seem to hear them coming." So they parted, and Jane brought home with her a hope which would not be put down. Her face was so bright and her voice so confident that her mother felt the influence of her spirit, and anon shared it. The night was too damp and chill for their usual bedtime walk on the terrace, but they sat together on the hearth, knitting and talking until the evening was far spent. Then Mrs. Swaffham dropped her work upon her lap, and she and Jane began their private evening exercise:

"Then said he unto me, thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel's sake; lovest thou that people better than He that made them?"

"And I said, No, Lord, but of very grief have I spoken; for my reins pain me every hour, while I labour to comprehend the way of the most High, and to seek out part of His judgment.

"And he said unto me, thou canst not. And I said wherefore, Lord, whereunto was I born then? or why was not my mother's womb my grave, that I might not have seen the travail of Jacob, and the wearisome toil of the stock of Israel?"

"And he said unto me, number me the things that are not yet come; gather me together the drops that are scattered abroad; make me the flowers green again that are withered.

"Open me the places that are closed, and bring me forth the winds that in them are shut up; show me the image of a voice; and then I will declare to thee the thing that thou labourest to know.

"And I said, O Lord that bearest rule; who may know these things, but he that hath not his dwelling with men?"

"As for me I am unwise; how may I speak of these things whereof thou askest me?"

"Then he said unto me, like as thou canst do none of these things that I have spoken of, even so canst thou not find out my judgment; or in the end, the love that I have promised unto my people."

And when the short antiphony was finished, they kissed each other a hopeful "good-night," being made strong in this – that they had put self out of their supplication, and been only "troubled in mind for Israel's sake."

All were in deep sleep when the blast of a trumpet and the trampling of a heavily-shod horse on the stones of the courtyard awakened them. Jane's quick ear detected at once the tone of triumph in the summons. She ran to her mother's room, and found her at an open window. She was calling aloud to the messenger, "Is it you, Doctor Verity?" and the answer came swift and strong, ere the question was fairly asked —

"It is I, John Verity, with the blessing of God, and good tidings."

"Get your horse to stable, Doctor, and we will be down to welcome you." The next moment the house was astir from one end to the other – bells were ringing, lights moving hither and thither, men and women running downstairs, and at the open door Mrs. Swaffham and Jane waiting for the messenger, their eager faces and shining eyes full of hope and expectation.

He kept them waiting until he had seen his weary horse attended to, then hurrying across the courtyard he clasped the hands held out in welcome, and with a blessing on his lips came into the lighted room. It was joy and strength to look at him. His bulk was like that of the elder gods; his head like an antique marble, his hazel eyes beaming, joyous, and full of that light which comes "from within." A man of large mind as well as of large stature, with a simple, good heart, that could never grow old; strong and courageous, yet tender as a girl; one who in the battle of life would always go to the front.

So it was good even to see him, and how much better to hear him say —

"Israel Swaffham is well, and God hath given us a great victory."

"And John?"

"I left him following after the enemy. We have smitten them hip and thigh; we – "

"And Cymlin?"

"He was guarding the prisoners. We have ten thousand of them, and – "

"And Tonbert?"

"Nothing has hurt him. He was in a strait for one five minutes; but I cried to him – 'Set thy teeth, and fight for thy life, Tonbert;' and he came safely away with the colours in his hands, when he had slain two of the rogues who wanted them."

"Now then, we shall have peace, Doctor?"

"No use, Martha, in crying peace! peace! when peace is wickedness. Our Protestant liberty was won by men willing to go to the stake for it; our civil liberty can only be won by men willing to go to the battle-field for it. But here come the beef and bread, and I am a hungry man. Let me eat and drink. And you women, bless the Lord and forget not all His benefits."

It was not long before he took a pipe from his pocket, lit it, and drew his chair to the hearthstone. "Now we will talk," he said. "When did you hear of us last?"

"About the tenth of August. You were then in camp near Edinburgh," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"To be sure – having a paper war with the Kirk and David Leslie. It was little to Cromwell's liking, and no more to David Leslie's; both of them would rather defiance of battle than Declarations from the General Assembly. They came to nothing, and as the weather was bad and our provisions short, and our men falling sick beyond imagination, we retreated to Dunbar to fortify and recruit. Then the cunning Scots got behind us and blocked up our way. We were in a bad case, Martha, between Leslie and the black North Sea – in a trap, and no less. For the first time our good Cromwell faced defeat, yes, annihilation. Did he lose heart? Not a bit of it. He sent word south to get men ready to meet Leslie, whatever became of us; and then he watched and waited and prayed. Such prayer! Martha. I saw him lifting up his sword to heaven – I heard him speaking to God – pressing forward and upward – bent on prevailing – taking heaven by assault. About three o'clock on the morning of the battle I went to him. It was yet dark, but the men were at arms, and Cromwell was going from troop to troop encouraging them. I said to him, 'Brother Oliver, you have got an answer?' And he smiled joyfully and said:

"It is in my heart, John. When the devil had said all he had to say, then God spoke. Indeed I have great consolations. I know, and am sure, that because of our weakness, because of our strait, the Lord will deliver us. But tell the men that whoever has a heart for prayer, must pray now; and then quit themselves like men – there is ONE watching and helping them."

"You women would not understand the setting of the battle. It is enough that it began at four in the morning, and that by nine o'clock there was no longer a Scotch army – three thousand of it were slain in the battle, many more killed in pursuit. We had all their baggage and artillery, besides fifteen thousand stand of arms and two hundred colours to hang up in Westminster Hall – and not twenty Englishmen killed. The Scots came forward shouting, '*The Covenant! The Covenant!*' and Cromwell thundered back, 'THE LORD OF HOSTS!' His voice seemed to fill the field. It was heard above the clash of the swords, and the shouting of the captains – and it was caught by thousands of other voices – above the bellowing of the cannon. It was an invocation, it was a shout of triumph, and indeed THE LORD OF HOSTS was above *The Covenant*."

"Oh, if I could have seen Cromwell at that onset! just for a moment!" exclaimed Jane.

"At the onset! Yes! It is something never to forget. He leaps to his horse, rides to the head of his troop, and gallops it to the very front of the battle. I saw him at Dunbar, his Ironsides in buff and rusty steel shouting after him – sons of Anak most of them – God's soldiers, not men's; and led by one whose swoop and stroke in battle no one ever saw equaled. All through the fight he was a pillar of fire to us; and just when it was hottest the sun rose upon the sea, and Cromwell took it for a sign of present victory, and shouted to his army, 'Now let God arise, and His enemies shall be scattered.'"

"I can see him! I can hear him!" cried Jane.

"And at that moment, the Scots broke and fled, and the field was ours. Then he called a halt, and to steady his men and fire them afresh for the pursuit, he sang with us the one hundred and seventeenth Psalm. And one troop after another caught the words, and for two miles men leaning upon their swords were singing, 'O praise the Lord all ye nations: praise Him all ye people. For His

merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord! I tell you there was joyful clamour enough on Dunbar's swampy field to make the sky ring about it."

"And what of Israel Swaffham? He did his part? I know that," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"He led his own troop of the solid fen men of Cambridgeshire. I saw their blue banner waving wherever Tonbert carried it."

"And John?"

"Was with Lambert's Yorkshiremen. No one could resist them. Cymlin rode with Cromwell. Cymlin was never behindhand yet."

"I thank God for my men. I give them gladly to His Cause."

Jane's face was radiant, and tears of enthusiasm filled her eyes. She kissed the doctor proudly, and ran to send a messenger to de Wick with the tidings of Dunbar. When she returned she sat down by his side, and leaning her head against his arm, began to question him:

"Dr. John, at Marston Moor Leslie fought *with* Cromwell, was with him in that glorious charge, where he got the name of Ironside. Why then was he fighting against Cromwell at Dunbar?"

"The Scotch have had many minds in this war, Jane. Just now they are determined to make Presbyterianism dominant in England, and give us the young man, Charles Stuart, for our king. And Englishmen will not have either King or Presbytery. As far as that goes, most of them would rather take the Book of Common Prayer than touch the Scotch Covenant. And as for the young man, Charles Stuart, he is false as hell from his beard to his boots; false to the Scots, false to the English, true to no one."

"And you, Doctor, how do you feel?"

"My little girl, I was born an Independent. I have preached and suffered for liberty of conscience; if I could deny it, I would deny my baptism. I'll do neither – not while my name is John Verity."

Then Jane lifted his big hand and kissed it, and answered, "I thought so!"

"And if England wants a king," he continued, "she can make one; she has good men enough to choose from."

"Some say that Cromwell will make himself king."

"Some people know no more of Cromwell than a mite knows of a cheesemonger. Nevertheless, Cromwell is the Captain of England. He has expressed her heart, he has done her will."

"Yet he is not without faults," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"I don't see his faults, Martha. I see only him. Great men may have greater faults than little men can find room for; and Cromwell is beloved of God, and therefore not always explainable to men."

"He has dared to do many things which even his own party do not approve."

"Jane, they who care will dare, though it call flame upon them. And Cromwell loves to lead on the verge of the impossible, for it is then he can invoke the aid of the Omnipotent."

"I thought the Scotch were a very good, religious people."

"God made them to be good, but He knew they wouldn't be; so He also made Oliver Cromwell."

"Are you going further, Doctor?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"No, Martha. I mean to stay here until the General's messenger joins me. He sent a letter to London by the young Lord Cluny Neville, and he took the direct road there, so we parted very early in the day; but he calls here for me on his return, and we shall go back together, if so God wills, to Edinburgh. And now, Jane Swaffham, if thou be a discreet young woman, be careful of the young Lord Cluny Neville."

"Why am I warned, Doctor?"

"Because he is one of those men who take women captive with his beauty – a very gracious youth – a great lover of the General, and much loved by him."

"I never heard you speak of Lord Cluny Neville before."

"Because I did not know him before. He came into our camp at Musselburgh and offered Cromwell his sword. The two men looked at each other steadily for a full minute, and in that minute Cromwell loved the young man. He saw down into his heart, and trusted him. Later, he told me that he reminded him of his own son, Oliver, who, as you know, was killed in battle just before Naseby. He has set his heart on the youth, and shows him great favour. Some are jealous of the boy, and make a grumble that he is so much trusted."

"How can they be so foolish? I wonder the General suffers them. Surely he can have some one to love near him," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"Well, Martha, it was part of the Apostle's wisdom to suffer fools gladly. My brother Oliver can do it; and there is nothing wiser or more difficult. I cannot do it. I would rough them! rough them! till they learnt their folly, and left it."

"If this young Lord is taking a letter to Madame Cromwell, then why did not Israel write to me?"

"Oh, the unreasonableness of women! Can a man write when he is in the saddle pursuing the enemy? Israel and Lambert left immediately with seven regiments for Edinburgh. He sent you words full of love and comfort; so did your sons; what would you have, woman?"

"The General wrote to the Generaless."

"He wrote on the battle-field, the cries of the wounded and dying in his ears, all horror and confusion around him. He was giving orders about the arms and the artillery, and about the movement of the troops as he wrote. But he knew his wife and children were waiting in sore anxiety for news – and not expecting good news – and 'twas a miracle how he did write at all. No one else could have brought heart and hands to a pen."

"I think Israel might have written."

"I'll be bound you do! It's woman-like."

"What do you think of the young Charles Stuart?" asked Jane. "It is said he has taken the Covenant, and is turned pious."

"I think worse of him than of his father. He is an unprincipled malignant – a brazen villain, changing and chopping about without faith in God or man. Englishmen will have none of him – and the Scots can't force him on them."

"Dunbar settled that; eh, Doctor?"

"I should say that Dunbar has done the job for all the Presbyterian tribe."

"But oh, the suffering, Doctor!" said Mrs. Swaffham. "Think of that."

"I do, Martha. But God's will be done. Let them suffer. In spite of Cromwell's entreaties and reasonings, they had taken in the Stuart to force him upon us as king – a king who at this very moment, has a popish army fighting for him in Ireland; who has Prince Rupert – red with the blood of Englishmen – at the head of ships stolen from us on a malignant account; who has French and Irish ships constantly ravaging our coasts, and who is every day issuing commissions to raise armies in the very heart of England to fight Englishmen. Treachery like this concerns all good people. Shall such a matchless, astonishing traitor indeed reign over us? If we were willing for it, we should be worthy of ten thousand deaths – could ten thousand deaths be endured. Now let me go to rest. I am weary and sleepy, and have won the right to sleep. Give me a verse to sleep on."

Mrs. Swaffham answered at once, as if she had been pondering the words, "He lifted up his face to heaven, and praised the king of heaven. And said, from Thee cometh victory, from Thee cometh wisdom, and Thine is the glory, and I am Thy servant."

"Thank you, Martha; you have spoken well for me;" and with a smile he turned his beaming eyes on Jane, and she said confidently —

"Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee."

"Amen, Jane! And as you have given me a word of Jesus, the son of Sirach, so will I give you both one, and you may ponder it in your hearts – 'Many kings have sat down upon the ground, and one that was never thought of, hath worn the crown.'"

Then Mrs. Swaffham put her hand on the Doctor's arm to stay him, and she asked, "Do you remember the flag the women of Huntingdon and Ely gave to General Cromwell just before Naseby?"

"I do. It was a great lion – the lion of England guarding the Cross of England. And your Israel made the speech. I am not likely to forget it."

"Then you also remember that as Israel was speaking, the east wind rose, and stretched wide-out the silk folds, so that the big tawny lion watching the red cross was blown straight above the General's bare head. And there was a murmur of wonder, and then a great shout, and Israel pointing to the flag and the man below it, cried out —

"Behold your Captain! Cromwell 'is a lion's whelp – from the prey thou art gone up, my son – and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

"I was standing with Mrs. Cromwell and the girls," said Jane; "and at the shout he turned to them, and little Frances ran to him and he gave the flagstaff into your hand, Doctor, and then stooped and tied the child's tippet. Then Mary and I went closer, and to us he was just the same Mr. Cromwell that I knew years ago, when I sat on his knee, and put my arms round his neck, and he kissed me as tenderly as if I was one of his own little girls. But for all that, something of power and majesty clothed him like a garment, and the people generally feared to touch the hem of it."

"*A lion's whelp!*" he said proudly, "and while England's lion has such whelps, she may make and unmake kings as is best for her." Then he lit his candle and went stamping down the flagged passage that led to his room. The men and women of the house were waiting there for a word, and with the open door in one hand and the candle in the other, he bade them good-morning with the notable verse Jane had given him for his own comfort. And as he did so, he suddenly remembered that these words had been written thousands of years ago for *his* encouragement; and he was filled with wonder at the thought, and he called out, "Men and women, all of you, listen once again to the word of the Lord —

"Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for you."

In the meantime Mrs. Swaffham and Jane were going slowly up-stairs. "We can have two or three hours sleep, Jane," said Mrs. Swaffham; and Jane answered, "Yes" like one who either heard not, or cared not. Her mother understood. She said softly, "He was thinking of Cromwell when he said 'one that was never thought of' – about the crown I mean, Jane?"

"Yes, mother —*Oliver Rex!*"

"It might be."

"It ought to be. He has conquered England, Ireland, Scotland: – William of Normandy had not a third of his right."

"I wish I could forget the man; for I must lose myself for an hour or two, or I shall be good for nothing when daylight comes. You, too, Jane, go and sleep."

She said, "Yes, mother." But sleep was a thousand miles away from Jane Swaffham.

## CHAPTER III

### WOVEN OF LOVE AND GLORY

"Because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

"See that thou lovest what is lovely."

For the next three days there was a busy time at Swaffham. All the neighbours were summoned to hear the news, and a sermon from Dr. Verity; and he did not spare the rod in the way of his calling. There were some wealthy young men present, and he let them know that they ought not to be present; furthermore, he told them how many miles it was to Duty and to Scotland.

"This is not a time," he said, "for men to be on their farms or in their shops getting a little money. '*Thou Shalt*' is written on life in characters just as terrible as '*Thou Shalt Not*.' It is not enough that you do not help the enemy; you *Shall* shut your shop, you *Shall* leave your oxen untied; you *Shall* take your musket, and never once think in your heart 'Who is going to pay me for this business?' You *Shall* go forth to serve God and to save England. If you, Squire Acton, would out, and you, Fermor, and you, Calthorpe, and Charmington and Garnier, you would draw men after you; for many will follow if the candle be once lighted. By the mouth of John Verity, a servant of the Lord, you have this day got another call. Look inward and think over it. You say you love God; you say you love England; what is love worth that hath a tongue but no hands? I told you these things before, and if you did not hear me, you ought to have heard me. Stand up and face the world, and say plainly, 'I will go,' or else, 'I will not go.' You are Englishmen, you are obliged to own that name, and in the freedom or slavery, the glory or disgrace of England, you will be forced to share. You pray for England. Very well, that is your duty; but it is serving God very much at your ease. God wants your hands as well as your prayers."

"Against whom?" asked Garnier.

"Against this young Charles Stuart. He is a bolder liar than his father; he sticks at no perjury that answers his purpose. If you let him put shackles on you again, it will be a deed to make the devil blush – if he has any blushing faculty in him."

Then Acton rose and said, "Dr. Verity, I will go," and Calthorpe and Fermor followed, and the Doctor told them to meet him at Swaffham Market Cross the following day. "And I will say this thing to you," he added, "you are like to have the good fortune of the man hired at the eleventh hour; you will get the full penny for the last stroke.

"And now," he continued, "I have a few words for you, women. In times when everything seems on the perish, a deal depends on you. God knows there are troubles enough for us all, but some women are never weary of hunting for more. It is a poor business. Give it up. You know that you often make wretched days for yourselves, and every one you come across, about little things not worth minding. I have heard men that have been in tropic countries say 'they hardly ever saw the lions and serpents they feared,' but that the flies and the insects and the heat made their lives miserable enough. That is the way in most women's lives; they hear about sieges and battles and awful death, but such things don't often come to their door-step. If they do, my experience is that women behave themselves nobly; they lift up their hearts and meet their fate like men and Christians.

"I am bound to say, the main part of women's troubles comes from little things – from very little things. I've known a broken pitcher, or a slice of burned bread, or a smoky fire do the black business for a whole day. No matter what comes, women, keep a cheerful temper. Cheerfulness is the very coin of happiness. The devil loves a woman with a snappy, nagging temper; she does lots of

business for him, without his helping her. I don't think any of you here will take his arles-penny, or work for his 'well done.' Besides, all women want to be loved; but I can tell you, every one feels bitter and hard to those *who prevent happiness*. It is easier to forgive a person for doing us a great wrong than for deliberately spoiling our comfort because some trifling thing has put them out. A woman who will do that is a selfish creature, and she ought to live by herself."

The short service was followed by an excellent dinner, and the richly dressed men and women, full of eager questions and innocent mirth, filled the Swaffham parlours, and made a fair picture of hospitality sobered by great interests and great events. Some of the guests lingered for two and three days, but Dr. Verity would not be delayed. The next morning he enrolled sixty men, and then he was resolved to ride with them as far as York. "And if Neville comes, send him quickly after me," he said. "He thought he might be four days, but I will give him seven, and then wonder if he keeps tryst. There will be many things in London to delay him."

In fact Neville was so long delayed, that Mrs. Swaffham was certain he had been sent back to Scotland at once on Mrs. Cromwell's order, and that he would probably be with the Lord General before Dr. Verity. After a week or more had passed, all expectation of his visit died out, and Jane began to wonder why Matilda had not been to see her.

"No wonder at all," replied Mrs. Swaffham. "She showed her good sense in keeping away until the victory had been talked out. You would have been on the verge of quarreling all the time you were together, and the kindness between de Wick and Swaffham is a deal older than the oldest Stuart – it is generations old – and it is not worth while killing it for either Stuart or Cromwell."

As she was speaking there was a slight stir in the passage, and Jane smiled at her mother. It was only an illustration of the old law – they had been talking of Matilda, because she was approaching them, and had sent her thoughts in advance. She came in without her usual spirit. She was dressed in black with not even a flower to relieve its sombreness; she had been weeping, and her face was without colour or animation.

Jane went to meet her friend, kissed her, and removed her hat. Then Matilda went to Mrs. Swaffham and laid her head against her breast, and said, "I have a bad headache. I have a bad heartache. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"It was bad news for you, dearie," said the motherly woman; "you may be sure I thought of you."

"I know you did. It was terrible news. Father has walked the floor night and day ever since."

"I hope that no one you love was hurt?"

"Stephen is well, as far as we know. He sent one of his troopers with the news – George Copping, a Huntingdon man. I dare say you know him?"

"I know who he is."

"I never saw my father so distracted. And it is always 'give, give, give.' George took away our last silver, and I am sure nearly all our money. Father has sent away all the men-servants, but such as are necessary to work the land; four of them went back with George to the army. Poor old Anice! She has one son with Cromwell, and the other has now gone to the King. As she cooks, her tears fall. I have had to send Delia away – only Anice and Audrey are left to care for us, and father says they are more than he can afford. Though his wound has reopened since he heard of the Dunbar disaster, he would have gone north himself with George and the men –"

"Oh, my dear Matilda, do not suffer him to do that. You know much depends upon his keeping quiet at de Wick."

"You need not remind me of that, Jane. I know that we are only Cromwell's tenants, and subject to his will. We may be sent away at any hour, if General Cromwell says so."

"Not without proper process of law, Matilda. Cromwell is not the law."

"The King is my father's friend, yet if he move an inch for the King's help, he will lose everything."

"And he will break his word, which is the greatest loss of all," said Jane. "I know, dear, you would not wish him to do that."

"Is a promise given under stress to be kept, Jane? I doubt it."

"It is a stress bound all round by kindness. I heard my father speak of it. When the de Wick estate was under the Parliament's consideration, Cromwell was much disturbed. Your two brothers had just been killed in battle, your mother was very ill, your father suffering from a severe wound, and it was the Lord General who wrote your father a letter which should be graven upon the hearts of every de Wick. In it he promised that for their old friendship's sake, and for the sake of the fight over the Bedford Level – in which fight de Wick stood boldly with Cromwell – that he would stand between de Wick and all bills of forfeiture. He said also that he would not hold your father accountable for the acts of his son Stephen, if he personally restrained himself from all designs and acts injurious to the Commonwealth. My father said it was such a noble letter as one brother might have written to another."

"I have heard enough of it. I do not think much of a kindness cribbed and tethered by this and that condition. It has made my father nothing but Cromwell's servant. I am ashamed of it."

"Dr. Verity has been here," said Jane, trying to change the subject.

"Pray, who does not know that? He never comes but he takes some one away for Cromwell. I thought I could have counted on Acton and Fermor remaining at home."

"He thinks the war nearly over, Matilda."

"It is not. Even if King Charles were killed, there would then be King James to fight. The war may last for a century. And if this is the world, I would I were out of it. Dear, shall I ever be happy again?"

"Yes indeed, Matilda. You will yet be very happy, and forget this sorrowful time."

"Not while my life lasts, Jane. Trust me, I shall never forget it."

"Let us stop talking of it. At any rate we can do that. Tell me about your lovers, Matilda. How many have you at this present?"

"The war has taken them all but young Godschall, and he and I are no longer friends. When he was at de Wick last, we said so much we have not spoken a word since."

"I am sorry for it."

"'Tis a common occurrence, many women endure it."

"And what has come to George St. Amand? He was once very much your servant."

"Poor George!"

"Why do you say 'poor George'?"

"Because we are told that all titles are to be cancelled and abolished, and George St. Amand is dumb unless he can salt every sentence he utters with what 'my Lord, my father' thinks or says."

"And there was also among your servants, one Philip Heneage."

"Philip has gone to the enemy. I do not know, and I will not know, and I scorn to know, anything more about him. He should be hanged, and cheap at that."

Before Jane could answer, Mrs. Swaffham, who had left the room, returned to it. She had a hot wine posset in her hand and a fresh Queen's cake. "Come, my dearie, and eat and drink," she said. "Keep your stomach in a good temper, and I'll be bound it will help you to bear heart-trouble, of all kinds, wonderfully."

Matilda took the posset and cake gratefully, and said, "I heard Dr. Verity gave the women who had come to meet him one of his little rages. I hope they liked it."

"He only told us the truth," said Jane. "Yes, we liked it."

"Well," said Matilda, "I am not one that wants all England for myself, but I think I could spare Dr. John Verity, and feel the better of it. May the Scots make much of him!"

"He is one of the best of men, Matilda."

"Yes, to you, whom he counts as one of the covenanted. To me, he is very hard, and I cannot forget that he was chief in silencing Father Sacy."

"A few years ago Father Sacy got Dr. Verity imprisoned for preaching the Word of God. He was two years in a dreadful cell, and his wife and child died while –"

"And pray what does the Word of God say about doing good to those who injure you? Dear Jane, never heed my words. I have a privilege to be ill-natured – the privilege of the losing and the sorrowful."

Thus, in spite of all Jane's efforts, they still found themselves on dangerous or debatable ground. All topics were roads leading thither, and they finally abandoned every kind of tactic and spoke as their hearts prompted them. Then, though some hard things were said, many very kind things were also said, and Matilda rose to go home comforted and helped – for, after all, the tongue is servant to the heart. As she was tying her hat, a maid called Mrs. Swaffham from the room, and Matilda lingered, waiting for her return. She stood with Jane at the window. Their hands were clasped in each other's, but they were silent, and both girls appeared to be looking at the beds full of late flowers – beautiful, pensive flowers, having a positive air of melancholy, as if they felt the sadness of the autumn sunset. But it was not likely that either of them saw the flowers; certainly, Matilda's first words gave no intimation that she did.

"Heigh-ho!" she said, "why should we worry? Everything comes round in time to its proper place, and then it will be, as old Anice expects – the hooks will find the eyes that fit them."

As she spoke, Mrs. Swaffham hastily entered the room, and with her was Lord Cluny Neville. Both girls turned from the window and caught his eyes at the same moment. He was, as Dr. Verity said, a man destined to captivate, not only by his noble bearing and handsome face, but also by such an indescribable charm of manner as opened the door of every heart to him. He carried his morion in his left hand, and in his dress of dark cloth and bright steel looked the very picture of a Puritan paladin. Bowing to both girls, he presented Jane with a letter from her friend Mary Cromwell, and also with a small parcel which contained some beautiful ribbons. The pretty gift made a pleasant introduction to a conversation full of gay inquiries and interesting items of social information. Matilda took little part in it. She watched the young soldier with eyes full of interest, and did not refuse his escort to her carriage; but as she departed, she gave Jane one look which left her with an unhappy question in her heart, not only for that night, but to be recalled long after as premonitory and prophetic.

During the preparations for the evening meal, and while Neville was in his chamber removing his armour and refreshing his clothing, Jane also found time to put on a pretty evening gown. It was of pale brown lustrous, a little lighter and brighter in colour than her own hair, and with its stomacher and collar of white lace it added greatly to the beauty of her appearance. Something had happened to Jane; she was in a delicious anticipation, and she could not keep the handsome stranger out of her consideration. There was a brilliant light in her eyes, and a brilliant colour on her cheeks, and a happy smile on her lovely bow-shaped mouth.

When she heard Neville's steady, swift step coming towards her, she trembled. Why? She did not ask herself, and her soul did not tell her. It indeed warned her, either of joy or of sorrow, for surely its tremor intimated that the newcomer was to be no mere visitor of passage, no neutral guest; that perhaps, indeed, he might have entered her home as a fate, or at least as a messenger of destiny. For who can tell, when a stranger walks into any life, what his message may be? Bringers of great tragedies have crossed thresholds with a smile, and many an unknown enemy has been bidden to the hearth with a welcome.

Jane was in no mood for such reflections. This young soldier, bearing a gift in his hand, had bespoke for himself at his first glance and word the girl's favour. She knew nothing of love, and Dr. Verity's warning had not made her afraid of it. Indeed, there was in her heart a pleasant daring, the touch of unseen danger was exhilarating; she felt that she was on that kind of dangerous ground which calls out all a woman's watchfulness and all her weapons. One of the latter was the possibility of

captivating, instead of being captivated. It was a natural instinct, never felt before, but which sprang, full-grown, from Jane's heart as soon as suggested. The desire for conquest! Who has not felt its pushing, irresistible impulse? She accused herself of having given away to Neville's influence without any effort to resist it. That thought in itself arrested her sympathies. Why did she do it? Might she not just as well have brought his right to question? Would she have succumbed so readily to the influence of some beautiful woman? This self-examination made her blush and utter an exclamation of chagrin.

Neville entered gayly in the midst of it. He had removed his steel corselet, and the pliant dark cloth in which he was dressed gave additional grace to his figure and movements. A falling band of Flemish lace was round his throat, and his fine linen showed beneath the loose sleeves of his coat in a band of the same material. His breeches had a bow of ribbon at the knee, and his low shoes of morocco leather a rosette of the same. It was now evident that his hair was very black, and that his eyebrows made dark, bold curves above his sunbrowned cheeks and flashing black eyes – eyes, that in the enthusiasm of feeling or speaking became living furnaces filled with flame. A solar man, sensitive, radiating; one who would move both men and women, whether they would or not.

It was a wonderful evening to both Jane and Mrs. Swaffham. Neville told over again the story of Dunbar, and told it in a picturesque way that would have been impossible to Dr. Verity. Taking whatever he could find that was suitable, he built for them the Lammermuir hills, on which the Scots' army lay; described the swamp at their base; the dark stream – forty feet deep – that ran through it, and the narrow strip by the wild North Sea, where Cromwell's army stood at bay. He made them feel the damp and chill of the gray, desolate place; he made them see the men standing at arms all through the misty night; he made them hear the solemn tones of prayer breaking the silence, and then they understood how the great Cromwell, moving from group to group, saturated and inspired every man with the energy of his own faith and courage. Then he showed them the mighty onslaught, and the ever-conquering General leading it! Through Neville, they heard his voice flinging the battle-cry of the Puritan host in the very teeth of the enemy. They saw him, when the foe fled, leaning upon his bloody sword, pouring out a triumphal Psalm of gratitude so strenuously and so melodiously, that men forgot to pursue, that they might sing. It was a magnificent drama, though there was only one actor to present it.

And when the recital was over and they sat silent, being too much moved to find words for their feeling, he dropped his voice and said, "There is something else. I should like to tell you it, yet I fear that you will not believe me. 'Twas a strange thing, and beyond nature."

"Tell us," said Jane, almost in a whisper. "We should like to hear, should we not, mother?"

Mrs. Swaffham bowed her head, and the young man continued: "It was in the afternoon of the day preceding the battle. The Captain-General had just come back from Dunbar, and his face was full of satisfaction. There was even then on it the light and assurance of victory, and he called the men round him and pointed out the false step the Scots were taking. 'The Lord hath delivered them into our hands!' he said. And as he spoke, the fog was driven before the wind and the rain; and in the midst of it he mounted his horse to ride about the field. And as he stood a moment, looking towards the ships and the sea, *this man, this Cromwell*, grew, and grew, and grew, until in the sight of all of us, he was a gigantic soldier towering over the army and the plain. I speak the truth. I see yet that prodigious, wraithlike figure, with its solemn face bathed in the storms of battle. And not I alone saw this vision, many others saw it also; and we watched it with awe and amazement, until it blended with the drifting fogs and disappeared."

"Indeed, I doubt it not," said Mrs. Swaffham. "I have seen, I have heard, things in Swaffham that could only be seen and heard by the spiritual senses."

Jane did not speak; she glanced at the young man, wondering at his rapt face, its solemn pallor and mystic exaltation, and feeling his voice vibrate through all her senses, though at the last he had spoken half-audibly, as people do in extremes of life or feeling.

It is in moments such as these, that Love grows as Neville saw the wraith of Cromwell grow – even in a moment's gaze. Jane forgot her intention of captivating, and yet none the less she accomplished her purpose. Her sensitive face, its sweet freshness and clear candour, charmed by its mere responsiveness; and not accustomed to resist or to control his feelings, Neville showed plainly the impression he had received. For when they parted for the night he held her hand with a gentle pressure, and quick glancing, sweetly smiling, he flashed into her eyes admiration and interest not to be misunderstood.

And Jane's heart was a crystal rock, only waiting the touch of a wand. Had she felt the mystic contact? Her fine eyes were dropped, but there was a faint, bewitching smile around her lovely mouth, and there was something bewildering and something bewildered in her very silence and simplicity.

Neville was charmed. His heart was so light, so happy, that he heard it singing as he held the little maiden's hand. He went into his chamber with the light step of one to whom some great joy has come, and, full of its vague anticipation, sat down a moment to realise what had happened. "I have caught love from her in a glance," he said. "What a dainty little creature! What a little darling she is! Shy and quiet as a bird, and yet I'll warrant me she hath wit and courage to furnish six feet of flesh and blood, instead of four. Is she fair? Is she handsome? I forgot to look with certainty. She hath the finest eyes I ever saw my own in – a face like a wild flower – a small hand, I saw that in particular – and feet like the maiden in the fairy tale – exquisite feet, prettily shod. Neat and sweet and full of soul! Little Jane! Little darling! A man were happy enough if he won your love. And what a rich heart she must have! She has made Love grow in me. She has created it from her own store."

Then he moved his chair to the hearth and looked around. It was a large room, full of the wavering shadows of the blazing logs and the long taper. "What an ancient place!" he sighed. "'Tis a bed fine enough and big enough for a monarch. Generations have slept on it. Those pillows must be full of dreams. If all the souls that have slept in this room were to be gathered together, how great a company they would be! If I could see them, I would enlist all for my hero – they should swear to be Cromwell's men! In solemn faith the room is full of *presence*." Then he rose, turned his face bravely to the shadowy place, and bending his head said, "Wraiths of the dead, I salute you. Suffer me to sleep in peace in your company."

He did not sit down again, but having cast over himself the shield and balm of prayer, he soon fell into the sound sleep of weary youth. The sun was high when he awoke, and he was ashamed of his apparent indolence and would scarce delay long enough to eat a hasty breakfast. Then his horse was waiting, and he stood at the threshold with Mrs. Swaffham's hand in his. There were tears in her eyes as she blessed him and bade him "God-speed," and gave him her last messages to her husband and sons.

"Fare you well," he answered, and "God be with you! I hope to be sent this way again, and that soon. Will you give me welcome, madame?"

"You will be welcome as sunshine," answered Mrs. Swaffham.

Then he looked at Jane, and she said, "God speed you on your journey. You have words for my father and brothers, but if you find the right time, say also to General Cromwell that Jane Swaffham remembers him constantly in her prayers, and give him these words for his strength and comfort – "They shall be able to do nothing against thee, saith the Lord: My hands shall cover thee.""

He bowed his head, and then looked steadily at her; and in that momentary communion realised that he had lost himself, and found himself again, in the being of another – that he had come in contact with something and found his spirit had touched a kindred spirit. Yet he said only, "Good-bye, till we meet again."

As he mounted, Mrs. Swaffham asked him if he went by York, and he answered, "Yes, I know perfectly that road, and I must not miss my way, for I am a laggard already."

"That is right," she said. "The way that is best to go is the way that best you know."

He did not hear the advice, for the moment his horse felt the foot in the stirrup he was off, and hard to hold with bit and bridle. They watched him down the avenue, the sun glinting on his steel armour and morion and the wind tossing behind his left shoulder the colours of the Commonwealth.

When he was quite out of sight, they turned into the house with a sigh, and Mrs. Swaffham said, "Now, I must have the house put in order. If I were you, Jane, I would go to de Wick this afternoon. Matilda is full of trouble. I cannot feel indifferent to her."

"She says the kingfishers have left de Wick waters. They have bred there for centuries, and the Earl is much distressed at their departure."

"No wonder. Many people think they bring good fortune. I would not say different. There are more messengers of good and evil than we know of. If I get things in order, I will also go to de Wick. Reginald de Wick and I were friends when we could hardly say the word – that was in King James' reign. Dear me! How the time flies!"

Then Jane went to her room and began to fold away the pretty things she had worn the previous night. She smoothed every crease in her silk gown, and fingered the lace orderly, and folded away her stockings of clocked silk and her bronzed morocco shoes with their shining silver buckles. And as she did so, her heart sat so lightly on its temporal perch that she was singing and did not know it until her mother opened the door, and like one astonished, asked, "What are you singing, Jane?"

"Why, mother! Nothing but some verses by good George Wither."

Then the mother shut the door again. If George Wither had written what Jane was singing, she was sure the words were wise and profitable; for Wither was the poet of the Puritans, and his "*Hallelujah*" all to the families of the Commonwealth, that the "*Christian Year*" has been to our own times. So Jane finished without further interruption, but with rather less spirit her song – "*For Lovers being constrained to be absent from each other.*"

"Dearest fret not, sigh not so,  
For it is not time nor place  
That can much divide us two;  
Though it part us for a space."

And she did not know that, at the very same moment, Cluny Neville was solacing the loneliness of his ride by the same writer's "*Hymn for Victory*" giving to its Hebraic fervour a melodious vigour of interpretation admirably emphasised by the Gregorian simplicity of the tune to which was sung —

"It was alone Thy Providence,  
Which made us masters of the field.  
Thou art our castle of defense,  
Our fort, our bulwark, and our shield.  
And had not Thou our Captain been,  
To lead us on and off again;  
This happy day, we had not seen,  
But in the bed of death had lain."

## CHAPTER IV SO SWEET A DREAM

"To judge events, or actions, without connecting them with their causes, is manifestly unjust and untruthful. Such judgments may make inflexible justice to appear tyranny; righteous retribution to wear the guise of cruelty; and virtue itself to have the likeness of vice."

"All love is sweet,  
Given or returned. Common as light is love,  
And its familiar voice wearies not ever."

Peace was now confidently predicted, but hope outruns events, and the winter slowly settled down over the level dreariness of the land without any apparent change in the national situation. People grew tired of expecting, and turned almost sullenly to the daily duties of life. For in the North, the winter weather would certainly bring the winter truce, and they must bear the inaction and suspense as well as they were able.

In de Wick, the situation was pitifully forlorn and desolate. The great trees around it stood with dripping leaves motionless in the thick fog; the long grasses lay withered and brown; the livid waters of the lake were no longer enlivened by the scream of the kingfishers, and about the house were silence and desolation. Matilda would gladly have escaped its depressing atmosphere for a little while every day, but she could not, for the roads leading from it were almost quagmires unless steadied by frost, and it was only rarely on such occasions that the horses could be spared to take her as far as Swaffham. These visits were eagerly expected by both girls, and yet were usually regretted; for Matilda could not help saying many hard things, and Jane could not conscientiously quite pass them over. Much was excused for the sake of her sorrow and loss and visible poverty, but even these excuses had limitations and every interview brought with it many sharp words not quite washed out by reconciling tears and promised forgetfulness.

Even the atmosphere of Swaffham, though grateful and cheering, was exasperating to the poor royalist lady. There was such cheerfulness in its comfortable rooms, such plenty of all the necessaries of life, such busy service of men and maids, such active, kindly hospitality to herself, and such pleasant companionship between Jane and her mother, that Matilda could not help a little envious contrasting, a little backward thought of the days when her own home had been the light of its neighbourhood, and her father and mother had entertained in splendid fashion nobles and beauties and famous men whose names were familiar as household words to all England. In those happy days the rooms had shone with a hundred lights; her handsome mother had moved as a queen in them, and her father and brothers had made the place joyful with all the masculine stir of hunting and hawking, the racket of balls in the bowling-alley and tennis court, the excitement of the race, the laughter and love-making of the ballroom. All these, and far sweeter and dearer things, had been cast into the gulf of civil war, and Matilda spent her days counting the cost of such sacrifices – a terrible sum total which she always reckoned with one reflection: "if only mother had been left! I could bear all the rest."

One day, near Christmas, the roads were hard and clean and the sky blue above them, and in spite of the cold Matilda resolved to walk over to Swaffham. She had an abundance of rich clothing, but as she went through it, she saw that its very splendour was only another sign of her poverty, for neither her own nor her mother's wardrobe contained the plain, scant skirt suitable for walking; – plenty of carriage robes, and dinner and dancing dresses; plenty of gold and silver tissues, and satin and velvet, and rich lace, but she would have given the richest of the costumes for a short cloth skirt and coat, such as Jane trod the miry ways in with comfort and cleanliness. However, she made the wisest choice possible, and when she stood before her father drawing on her white gloves and saying

all manner of cheerful words, no one could have desired any change in her apparel. She held the train of her black velvet skirt over her left arm; her shoulders were covered with a tippet of minever, her large hat of black beaver was drooping with plumes. In her cheeks there was a faint rose colour, and her large brown eyes were full of feeling. She looked like some lovely princess exiled from her state and condition, but retaining, nevertheless, all the personal insignia of her royal birth.

As she left her father she kissed him affectionately, and then curtseyed to the Chaplain, who did not notice her attention, being happily and profitably lost in a volume by good Dr. Thomas Fuller, who was that moment saying to him, in one of his garrison sermons, "A Commonwealth and a King are no more contrary than the trunk of a tree and the top branch thereof; there is a republic included in every monarchy."

Matilda walked rapidly, and the clear cold air blew hope and cheerfulness into her heart. "Perhaps, after all, the King might come to his own – Cromwell had not reaped all that was anticipated from Dunbar victory, he was still obliged to remain in Scotland and watch the King; and if the King's position needed this watch, there must still be strength and hope in it. I will take what the Swaffhams say with a large allowance," she thought; and then she suddenly remembered that they had had no news from the royalist camp, and knew nothing on which any good likelihood could be built.

"It is very cruel of Stephen," she sighed; "if I were with the King I would get word to my father and sister of the King's condition – but it is either drawing the sword or shaking the dice, and while they gamble away the hours and the gold pieces, father and I fret life away in waiting and watching for the news that never comes."

The sight of Swaffham restored her. There was something so hearty and sincere in the very aspect of the house. As she went through the garden she saw a monthly rose in bloom, and she plucked it; and with the fair sweet flower in her hand entered the Swaffham parlour. No wonder she had missed Jane at the large casement where she usually sat at her work! Jane was sitting at the table serving Lord Cluny Neville, who was eating and drinking and leaning towards her with a face full of light and pleasure. Mrs. Swaffham sat on the hearth; it was Jane who was pouring out the Spanish wine and cutting the game pasty, and into Jane's face the young Lord was gazing with eyes whose expression there was no mistaking.

Matilda saw the whole picture in a glance, and she set her mood to match it. Dropping her gown, she let the open door frame her beauty for a moment. She was conscious that she was lovely, and she saw the swift lifting of Neville's eyelids, and the look of surprised delight which came into his eyes. She was resolved to be charming, and she succeeded. She let Jane help her to remove her hat and tippet. She let Mrs. Swaffham make much of her, and when she said,

"Draw to table, my dear, and have a mouthful, for walking is hungry work, as well as pleasant," Matilda laughed and answered,

"Indeed, madame, I cannot tell wherein the pleasure of walking lies; I have sought it till I am weary, and cannot find it. However, I confess I am hungry with the search."

Then she sat down by Neville, and he cut her a slice of the pasty, and Jane filled her wine-glass, and Neville touched his own against it, and wished her health and happiness. And by an unspoken agreement they said not a word about the war, but eat their meal to such cheerful thoughts and conversation as made the meat and drink wholesome and joyful. Then they sang some madrigals, and as the shades of evening gathered, Neville began to tell them wild, weird stories of the Border-Land; and Jane had her traditions of Swaffham, and Matilda of de Wick, and they sat in the twilight pleasantly afraid of the phantoms they had themselves conjured up, drawing close together and speaking with a little awe, and finding even the short silences that fell upon them very eloquent and satisfying.

There was then no question of Matilda returning that night to de Wick, and very soon Mrs. Swaffham joined them, and the servants began to build up the fire and spread the table for the evening meal.

"Time wears on," she said. "I thought I would take a nap of ten minutes, but instead of shutting my eyes in a dog sleep, I dropped oft till candle-lighting. Why are you all looking so yonderly? I hope Lord Neville has not been a Job's postman; for as far as I can see, Satan does just as barefaced cruelties now as he did thousands of years ago."

"We have been talking of fairies, and the gray ghost of Raby, and the armoured giant that keeps Swaffham portal, and Matilda has told us many awesome things about Lady Sophia de Wick, whose ring no one can wear and escape doom."

"Peace to her spirit," ejaculated Mrs. Swaffham, and Jane added thoughtfully,

"If to such a spirit, peace would be any blessing."

"I would not talk of the dead if I were you; they may be nearer than you think. And there are wick men and women in plenty to praise and to ban. Lord Neville has told us nothing at all, yet, about General Cromwell. I would like to know what is going on. Whatever has he been doing since Dunbar?" – and Mrs. Swaffham made these remarks and asked these questions with just a little touch of impatient irritability.

"The first thing he did when he reached Edinburgh," answered Neville, "was to order the head of Montrose to be taken down from the Tolbooth and honourably buried. Some of the army grumbled at this order, and the Scotch whigs preached and raved about it, and even Dr. Verity, it is said, spoke sharply to Cromwell on the matter. And 'tis also said that Cromwell answered with some passion, 'I will abide by my order, notwithstanding the anger of the foolish. We all have infirmities; and I tell you, if we had among our ranks more such faithful hearts and brave spirits, they would be a fence around us; for indeed there lives not a man who can say worse of Montrose than that he loved Charles Stuart, and was faithful to him unto death.'"

"This is the noblest thing I have heard of Oliver Cromwell," said Matilda, "and my father will rejoice to hear it. How Montrose loved Charles Stuart I will tell you, for my brother Stephen was with him when he heard first of the murder of his King. He bowed his head upon his sword and wept, and when his heart had found some relief in tears, he stood up and called the King in a mighty voice, – indeed Stephen told me it was heard beyond all probability, – and with a great oath he vowed that he would sing his obsequies with trumpets, and write his epitaph with swords, in blood and death." As Matilda finished her story, her voice had a tone of triumph, and she stood up, and raised her eyes, and then made such a sad, reverent obeisance as she might have done had the dead been alive and present. No one liked to impugn a ceremony so pathetic and so hopeless; and a constrained silence followed, which was broken by Jane asking,

"Where did Charles Stuart go after Dunbar?"

"He went northward to Perth. For a little while he held with Argyle and the Kirk, but the Covenanters drove him too hard. They told him he must purify his Court from all ungodly followers, and so made him dismiss twenty-two English Cavaliers not godly – that is, not Calvinistic – enough. Then Charles, not willing to endure their pious tyranny, ran away to the Highlands behind Perth, and though he was caught and persuaded to return, he did so only on condition that his friends should be with him and fight for him."

"Why should the Scots object to that?" asked Mrs. Swaffham.

"Because," answered Neville, "these men were mostly Englishmen and Episcopalians; and the Whigs and Covenanters hated them as being too often reckless and wicked men, full of cavalier sauciness. In return, Charles Stuart hated the Whigs and Covenanters, made a mockery of them, and, it is said, did not disguise his amusement and satisfaction at the defeat of the godly army at Dunbar."

"And how did these godly men regard Cromwell?" asked Matilda with undisguised scorn.

"They troubled us a little in the West," said Neville, "and Cromwell marched the army to Glasgow, and on the next Sabbath day the preachers railed at him from every pulpit in that city. One of them met the Lord General on the street, and attacked him with threats and evil prophecies. I would have shut his lips with a blow, but Cromwell said to me, 'Let him alone; he is one fool, and

you are another;' and the very next day he made friends with this preacher, and I met them coming down the High Street together in very sober and pleasant discourse. After beating these Whigs well at Hamilton, we went into winter quarters at Edinburgh; and Cromwell is now staying at Lord Moray's house in the Canongate."<sup>1</sup>

"He ought to have taken his rest in Holyrood Palace," said Jane.

"I am glad he did not," replied Neville. "'Tis enough to fight the living Stuart; why should he run into mortal danger by invading the home of that unlucky family? A man sleeps in his dwelling-place, – and when he sleeps he is at the mercy of the dead."

"Not so," said Jane. "The good man is at the mercy of God, and if he sleeps, his angel wakes and watches. 'I will lay me down in peace and take my rest: for it is Thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety.'"

Neville looked steadily at her as she spoke with such a glad confidence; and Jane's face grew rosy under his gaze, while Neville's smile widened slowly, until his whole countenance shone with pleasure.

They spoke next of the Parliament and the Council; and Mrs. Swaffham said, "For all she could find out, they had been at their usual work, – good and bad."

"And generally bad," ejaculated Matilda.

"That is not true," said Jane. "Think only of this: they have commanded the laws of England to be written in English. This order alone justifies them with the people. Also, they have received foreign ambassadors with dignity, and taught Holland, France and Spain by the voice of Blake's cannon that England is not to be trifled with; and in Ireland they are carrying on, through Ireton and Ludlow, the good work Cromwell began there."

"Good work, indeed!" cried Matilda.

"Yes, it was good work, grand work, the best work Cromwell ever did," answered Neville positively; "a most righteous dealing with assassins, who had slain one hundred thousand Protestants – men, women and children – while they dwelt in peace among them, thinking no evil<sup>2</sup> and looking for no injury. When men mad with religious hatred take fire and sword, when they torture the helpless with hunger and thirst and freezing cold, in the name of the merciful Jesus, then there is no punishment too great for them."

"The number slain was not as great as you say," interrupted Matilda. "I have heard it was only ten thousand."

"I care not for the number of thousands," said Neville in a voice trembling with passion; "men were put to death with all the horrors religious fanaticism could invent; women and children outraged, starved, burned or drowned with relentless fury. There were months of such persecution before help could be got there."

"Very well, Lord Neville," said Matilda in great anger, "Episcopalians and Calvinists should not have gone to Ireland. I bought a song from a packman the other day for a farthing, that just suits them —

"People who hold such positive opinions  
Should stay at home in Protestant dominions.'

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<sup>1</sup> This house is still standing.

<sup>2</sup> See Knight's History of England, Vol. 3, p. 464; Clarendon (royalist historian) says 50,000; Paxton Hood, Life of Cromwell, p. 141, says as high as 200,000; Church (American edition) from 50,000 to 200,000 with mutilations and torture; Imgard, the Catholic historian, in Vol. X, p. 177, admits the atrocity of the massacre. Many other authorities, notably Hickson's "Ireland in the 17th Century," which contains the depositions before Parliament relating to the massacre. These documents, printed for the first time in 1884, will cause simple wonder that a terrible massacre on a large scale could ever be questioned, nor in the 17th century was it ever questioned, nor in the face of these documents can it ever be questioned, except by those who put their personal prejudice or interest before the truth.

I am sure Cromwell has made a name to be hated and feared in Ireland for generations."

"England has far more cause to hate and ban the name of O'Neal for generations; but England does not bluster; she rights her wrong, and then forgives it. She is too magnanimous to hate for generations any race because one generation did wrong. Nowhere was Cromwell more just and merciful than in Ireland. There have been English sieges – for instance Colchester – far more cruel than that of Drogheda; and at Drogheda it was mostly rebel Englishmen that were slain, Englishmen fighting in Ireland against the Commonwealth. Cromwell, even at Drogheda, offered mercy to all who would surrender and so spare blood. He was throughout as merciful as he could be, as the Irish themselves permitted him to be. I shake hands with Cromwell in Ireland and I clasp a clean, merciful hand!"

And as he said these words, Jane stretched out her hand to Neville; and Matilda cried, hysterically, "Throne of God! It is wicked to say such things! Give me my hat and tippet, Jane, I will listen no longer to Lord Neville! He is worse than you are."

"My lady, forgive me; but truth is truth, and must not be withheld when the occasion calls for it."

At this point Mrs. Swaffham, who had left the room, returned to it; and seeing Matilda's angry distress, she at once understood its cause.

"It is Ireland, of course," she cried. "Children, children, why will you quarrel about those savages? They are not in your concern except to pray for." Then turning to Neville she asked, "My Lord, why is it necessary to speak of Ireland? It breeds quarrels to name it; well is it called Ire-land, the land of ire, and anger, and quarreling. I forbid the word in this house. If the Irish are assassins for God's sake, may God forgive them!"

"There is nothing impossible to God, madame," said Neville. "But men find some limitations; and when effects are so much talked of and condemned, it is the part of Eternal Justice – though only from a mortal's mouth – to balance the deeds with the deeds that called them forth. And none can deny that Phelim O'Neal's atrocities called into righteous existence Oliver Cromwell's retributions." And at these words Matilda threw herself on the sofa in a passion of tears.

Neville fell on his knees at her side. "Say you pardon me," he urged; "I have wounded myself worse than you. Your tears drop like fire on my heart; I promise you they do."

With a slight frown on her face Jane stood looking at the two. She despised that abnegation of self-control which turned conversation and argument into disputing, and anger, and tears; and after a moment's thought, she went to her friend's side and asked Neville to rise. "There is no need to humble oneself for the truth," she said softly; "and Matilda knows that. She is now fretted with anxiety, and must not be judged by her words." Then she took Neville's place and soothed and reasoned with the weeping girl, as best she knew how; and Mrs. Swaffham brought the Bible for the evening prayer, and the words of the comforting Psalm stayed all other words; and when they ceased there was peace.

But Jane was grieved in her very heart. The evening promising so much had been spoiled; for love in such an unhappy atmosphere could find no opportunities. Yet in the short tremulous "good-night" which followed, Jane both remembered and foresaw; remembered the sweet glances and the refluent waves of sweet smiles which through all shadowings had drawn Love deep into her heart; and foresaw, beyond all obstacles and peradventures, what possible joy might be waiting in the future. And swift as thought the delicate love lines of her mouth grew bright with expectation, and the clasp of Neville's hand thrilled to her warm heart, and her soul blessed Love and Hope, and sheltered itself in the sunshine of their imperishable land.

Neville had asked to be called early, and before daybreak he came into the parlour ready for his journey. Some broiled beef, a manchet of white bread, and a black jack of spiced ale, stirred with a rosemary branch, was waiting for him; and Mrs. Swaffham and Jane sat at his side while he eat and drank. He spoke regretfully of his temper on the previous night, and left a message of apology for Lady Matilda de Wick, adding to it his sorrow, "not to be so favoured as to make his excuses in person."

"Matilda will sleep for three hours yet," said Mrs. Swaffham, "and I will be glad if she has that much comfort, for she frets her heart away when she is awake."

Then they stood up, for Neville's horse came clattering to the door. He clasped Jane's hand as it hung by her side, and they walked thus to the threshold. Snow was falling; the steps were white with it, and the east wind blew it gently in their faces. Mrs. Swaffham laughed and drew her shawl over her head, and Neville laughed also, and with a cheerful word, leaped to his saddle, his dark figure growing more and more phantom-like through the dim dawn and the white veil of the snow. At the gate he wheeled his horse, and, saluting them, vanished into the gray obscurity, which made all things as if they were not.

"The storm will grow worse, I fear," said Jane as they turned into the house.

"More like than not," answered Mrs. Swaffham; "but he is a dauntless youth, and nothing but good will come to him. Where goes he to-day?"

"As far as he can go. He is in haste to reach Edinburgh, for there is fresh news of rebels from Ireland landing on the Scotch coast. He showed me this report in a copy of the news-letter called *The Scottish Dove*."

"A badly named news-letter, Jane; the Scotch are never for peace."

"It is intended for a peace paper, mother."

"They are confused in their minds concerning peace. What did it say?"

"That ten ships were leaving Bristol to bring men from Ireland to help Charles Stuart against Cromwell. The *Dove* asserts, 'the Scotch are ready for speedy action, if God permit, and if advance money be forthcoming;'" and Jane laughed scornfully at the saving clause.

"He did not say much of the Cromwells. I'll warrant, they will forget you in their rising state."

"Far away from it. Mary and Frances sent me many good words, and they are very persuasive with me to come to London and share their state."

"You cannot go just yet, Jane. Your father is opposed to it, until General Cromwell returns there. Then, if it so please God, we shall all go – at least for a season."

"But when will Cromwell return there?"

"God has set a time for all events, Jane. We must wait for it. What think you of Matilda?"

"That she is in trouble greater than we know. She shuts in her words, but I think that something is about to happen."

"Anything may happen with Cromwell in Scotland, and the Parliament carrying things with such a high hand. But see, Jane, we must be after our own concerns. Servants, men and women, are getting beyond all belief; they do such barefaced things as never was. The week's butter is gone already, and when I spoke to Debby, she wiped her saucy mouth and, like the fox in the fable, 'thanked God she wasn't a thief.'"

Then the mother and daughter separated, and Jane went to her friend's room. She was languidly brushing out her long black hair, and Jane tried to kiss a smile into her melancholy face. And as she lifted her head, she had a momentary glance at a beautiful miniature lying upon the dressing-table. The face was that of a youth with flowing locks and a falling collar of lace; but Jane was too honourable to let her eyes rest consciously upon what was evidently hid from her. For in that same moment, Matilda moved her ribbons and kerchief in a hurried way, contriving in so doing, to cover the picture. Then she assumed her usual manner and asked,

"Is Lord Neville still angry at me? I suppose if I had remained with him, he would have eaten me by this time."

"He was very sorry for his show of temper, and would fain have made some apologies to you."

"Then he has gone? Well, it is not worth my while saying I am sorry for it."

"He set off early this morning."

"And so gave me the slip."

"Oh, no! He had important news for General Cromwell, and would push on at his utmost."

"Yet staying awhile at every decent Puritan dwelling, and making love to their sweet daughters."

"Do not be ill-natured, Matilda. He had letters from my father and brothers, and also from Mary and Frances Cromwell to deliver, or he had not stopped at Swaffham."

"Oh, Jane, Jane! I pray your pardon! It must be easy now to forgive me, I keep you so well in practice. In truth, I am a wretched girl, this morning. I have been dreaming of calamities, and my speech is too small for my heart. And this young lord with his adoration of Cromwell and his familiar talk of 'the ladies Mary and Frances' angered me, for I thought of the days when the Lord General was plain 'Mr. Cromwell,' and we were, both of us, in love with young Harry Cromwell."

"Was I in love with Harry Cromwell? If so, I have forgotten it."

"You were in love with Harry Cromwell – or you thought so – and so was I. Do you remember his teaching us how to skate? What spirits we all had then! How handsome he was! How strong! How good-natured! I hear now that he is all for Dorothy Osborne, and has had some Irish hounds sent her, and seal rings, and I know not what other tokens. And Mistress Dorothy is a royalist – that is one good thing about her. Very soon this lucky Cromwell family will coax you to London to see all their glory, and I shall be left in de Wick with no better company than a clock; for my father speaks to me about once an hour, and the Chaplain not at all, unless to reprove me."

"But you shall come to London also."

"Do you think so ill of me as to believe I would leave my father in the loneliness of de Wick? And you know if he went to London he would be watched day and night, and though he were white as innocence about the King, some one would make him as black as Satan."

"Look now, Matilda, I will myself see Cromwell as soon as he is in London. I will say to him, 'My dear Lord and General, I have a favour to ask;' and he will kiss me and answer, 'What is it, little Jane?' and I will tell him that I want my friend, Matilda de Wick, and that she will not leave her father alone; and that will go right down into his tender heart, to the very soul of him, and he will say – perhaps with tears in his eyes – 'She is a good girl, and I loved her father, and he stood by me once against the elder Charles Stuart and the Star Chamber. Yes he did, and I will leave de Wick in charge of his own honour, and I will give his daughter my name to shield them both. I will, surely.' Such words as this, good Cromwell will say. I know it."

"Oh, Jane, dear Jane, if I had to give a reason for loving you, what could I say for myself? If you can indeed do this thing for me, how glad I shall be!" And she stood up and kissed her friend, and in a little while they went downstairs together, and Matilda had some boiled milk and bread and a slice of venison. Then she asked Mrs. Swaffham to let her have a coach to go home in.

"For it is so near Christmas," she said, "that snow, or no snow, I must go to de Wick. Audrey was making the Nativity Pie when I left home, and it is that we may remember my brave dead brothers and my sweet mother as we eat it. Then we shall talk of them and of the happy Christmas days gone by, and afterwards go away and pray for their remembrance and blessedness."

"My dear," said Mrs. Swaffham solemnly, "the dead are with God. There is no need to pray for them."

"It comforts my heart to ask God that they may remember me. I think surely He will do so. He must know how we feel at Christmas. He must hear our sad talk of them, and see our tears, and He has not forbid us anywhere in the Bible to come to Him about our dead, any more than about our living. Father Sacy says I may confidently go to Him; that He will be pleased that I still remember. And as I do not forget them, they will not forget me. In God's very presence they may pray for me."

Mrs. Swaffham kissed her for answer, and they sent her away with such confidence of goodwill and coming happiness that the girl almost believed days might be hers in the future as full of joy as days in the past had been.

"She has a true heart," said Mrs. Swaffham as they watched the coach disappear; and Jane answered,

"Yes, she has a true heart; and when we go to London the de Wicks must go also. Mother, I think she has yet a tender fancy for Harry Cromwell – it might be." But Mrs. Swaffham shook her head, and Jane remembered the miniature, and all day long at intervals wondered whose the pictured face was. And the snow fell faster and thicker for many days, and all the narrow ways and lanes were strangled with it. Mrs. Swaffham constantly spoke of Neville, and wondered if it were possible for him to make his way north, until one night, more than a week after his visit, she suddenly said,

"Jane, I have a strong belief that Lord Neville has reached Edinburgh;" and Jane smiled brightly back as she answered, "I have the same assurance, mother." And this pulse of prescience, this flash and flow of thought and feeling was no marvel at all to their faithful souls.

"I did not fear for him, he is not a man to miss his mark," said Mrs. Swaffham.

"And we must remember this, also, mother, that God takes hands with good men."

"To be sure, Jane, it is all right; and now I must look after the house a little." So saying she went away softly repeating a verse from her favourite Psalm, thus suffusing with serene and sacred glow the plainest duties of her daily life.

After this visit, it was cold winter weather, and Cluny Neville came no more until the pale windy spring was over the land. And this visit was so short that Mrs. Swaffham, who had gone to Ely, did not see him at all. For he merely rested while a fresh horse was prepared for him, eating a little bread and meat almost from Jane's hand as he waited. Yet in that half-hour's stress and hurry, Love overleaped a space that had not been taken without it; for as he stood with one hand on his saddle, ready to leap into it, Jane trembling and pale at his side, he saw unshed tears in her eyes and felt the unspoken love on her lips, and as he clasped her hand his heart sprang to his tongue, and he said with a passionate tenderness,

"Farewell, Jane! Darling Jane!" – then, afraid of his own temerity, he was away ere he could see the wonder and joy called into her face by the sweet familiar words.

When he came again, it was harvest time; the reapers were in the wheat-fields, and as he neared Swaffham he saw Jane standing among the bound sheaves, serving the men and women with meat and drink. For though the day was nearly over, the full moon had risen, and the labourers were going to finish their work by its light. He tied his horse at the gate and went to her side, and oh, how fair and sweet he found her! Never had she looked, never had any woman looked in his eyes, so enthralling. In her simple dress with its snow-white lawn bodice and apron, surrounded by the reapers whom she was serving, she looked like some rural goddess, though Neville thought rather of some Judean damsel in the fields of Bethlehem. Her little white hood had fallen backwards, and the twilight and the moonlight upon her gathered tresses made of them a kind of glory. The charm of the quiet moon was over all; there was no noise, indeed rather a pastoral melancholy with a gentle ripple of talk threading it about ploughing and sowing and rural affairs.

In a short time the men and women scattered to their work, and Cluny, turning his bright face to Jane's, took both her hands in his and said with eager delight,

"Dear Jane! Darling Jane! Oh, how I love you!"

The words came without intent. He caught his breath with fear when he realised his presumption, for Jane stood silent and trembling, and he did not at first understand that it was for joy which she hardly comprehended and did not at once know how to express. But the heart is a ready scholar when love teaches, and as they slowly passed through the fields of yellow fulness, finding their happy way among the standing sheaves, Jane heard and understood that heavenly tale which Cluny knew so well how to tell her. The moon's face, warm and passionate, shed her tender influence over them, and their hearts grew great and loving in it. For this one hour the bewitching moonlight of *The Midsummer Night's Dream* was theirs, and they did well to linger in it, and to fill their souls with its wondrous radiance. None just as heavenly would ever shine for them again; never again, oh, surely never again, would they thread the warm, sweet harvest fields, and feel so little below the angels!

Not until they reached Swaffham did they remember that they two were not the whole round world. But words of care and wonder and eager inquiry about war, and rumour of war, soon broke the heavenly trance of feeling in which they had found an hour of Paradise. Mrs. Swaffham was exceedingly anxious. The country was full of frightsome expectations. Reports of Charles Stuart's invasion of England were hourly growing more positive. Armed men were constantly passing northward, and no one could accurately tell what forces they would have to meet. It was said that Charles had not only the Highland Clans, but also Irish, French and Italian mercenaries; and that foreign troops had received commissions to sack English towns and villages, in order to place a popish king upon the throne. For there were not any doubts as to Charles Stuart's religious predilections. His taking of the Covenant was known to be a farce, at which he privately laughed, and the most lenient judged him a Protestant, lined through and through with Popery.

So the blissful truce was over, and Jane and Cluny were part of the weary, warring, working world again. Cluny knew nothing which could allay fear. He had just come from London, and he said – "The city is almost in panic; many are even suspecting the fidelity of Cromwell, and asking why he has permitted Charles Stuart to escape his army. And yet Cromwell sent by me a letter urging Parliament to get such forces as they had in readiness to give the enemy some check until he should be able to reach up to him. And still he added, as the last words, that trust in the Lord which is his constant battle-cry. How can England fear with such a General to lead her army?"

"And what of the General's family?" asked Mrs. Swaffham, "are they not afraid?"

"They are concerned and anxious, but not fearful. Indeed, the old Lady Cromwell astonished me beyond words. She smiled at the panic in the city, and said 'It is the beginning of triumph.' And when madame, the General's wife, spoke sharply, being in a heart-pain of loving care, she answered her daughter-in-law with sweet forbearance in words I cannot forget: 'Elizabeth, I know from a sure word the ground of my confidence. I have seen, I have heard. Rest on my assurance, and until triumph comes, retire to Him who is a sure hiding-place.' And the light on her aged face was wonderful; she was like one waiting for a great joy, restless at times, and going to the windows of her room as if impatient for its arrival. I count it a mercy and a privilege to have seen her faith in God, and in her great son. It is the substance of the thing we hope for, the evidence of what we shall all yet see," he cried in a tone of exaltation. "And now give me a strong, fresh horse; I will ride all night! Oh, that I were at great Cromwell's side! Charles Stuart has entered England, but Cromwell's dash and sweep after him will be something for men and angels to see! Not for my life would I miss it."

"Where do you expect to find Cromwell?"

"I left him at Queensferry in Fife, cutting off the enemy's victual. This would force the Stuart either to fight or go southward, for he has completely exhausted the North, and it seems he has taken the south road. But it is incredible that this move is either unexpected or unwelcome to our General. Once before, he put himself between England and the Scots, and 'how God succoured,' that is not well to be forgotten. Those were his words, and you will notice, that it is 'how God succoured,' not how Cromwell succeeded. With him it is always, The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle;" and Cluny's voice rose and his words rang out sharply to the clatter of the horse's hoofs on the stone pavement.

Then he turned to Jane. "Darling Jane! My Jane!" and kissing her, he said boldly to Mrs. Swaffham, "I ask your favour, madame. Jane has this hour promised to be my wife."

"Jane has then been very forward," answered Mrs. Swaffham with annoyance, "and both of you very selfish and thoughtless. While your mother England's heart is at her lips, in this dread extremity, you two must needs talk of love and marrying. I am grieved. And Jane's father has not been spoken to, and he is first of all. I can say neither yea nor nay in the matter."

"But you will surely speak for us. Give me a kind word, madame, ere I go." And she could not resist the youth's beauty and sweet nature, nor yet the thought in her heart that it might perhaps be his last request. If he should be slain in battle, and she had refused the kind word, what excuse would

quiet her self-reproach? Then she looked kindly at him, and the thought of the young prince David going out to meet the uncircumcised Philistine who had defied the armies of the living God, came into her heart; and she drew down his face to hers and kissed and blessed him, saying, as Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Then he leaped into the saddle, and the horse caught his impatience and shared his martial passion, and with a loud neigh went flying over the land. Silently the two women watched the dark figure grow more and more indistinct in the soft, mysterious moonshine, until at length it was a mere shadow that blended with the indistinctness of the horizon.

"Thank you, dear mother," said Jane softly, and the mother answered, "In these times who dare say good-bye in anger? But let me tell you, Jane, you cannot now think of yourself first. England is at the sword's point; your father and brothers are living on a battle-field; your lover is only one of thousands fighting for the truth and the right, and his life is England's before it is yours. God and country must be served first, eh, my dear?"

"Yes, mother. First and best of all."

"When Neville has done his duty, he will come for you. He can no more bear to live without you than without his eyes. I see that."

Before Jane could reply, they heard the men and women coming from the harvesting. They were singing as they trailed homeward, their harsh, drawling voices in the night's silence sounding tired and pathetic and bare of melody. Jane slipped away to the music in her own heart, closing within herself that Love whose growth had been sweet and silent as the birth of roses.

## CHAPTER V SHEATHED SWORDS

"The peaceful cities  
Lulled in their ease and undisturbed before are all on fire.  
The thick battalions move in dreadful form  
As lowering clouds advance before a storm;  
Thick smoke obscures the field, and scarce are seen,  
The neighing coursers and the shouting men;  
In distance of their darts they stop their course,  
Then man to man they rush, and horse to horse.  
The face of heaven their flying javelins hide  
And deaths unseen are dealt on every side.  
... the fields are strewed  
With fallen bodies, and are drunk with blood."

It will be well now to recall the positions which Charles Stuart and Cromwell, with their armies, occupied. The royalist defeat at Dunbar occurred on September the third, A.D. 1650, and Charles, after it, sought shelter in the fortress of Stirling Castle, where he remained until he went to Perth. Here, on January the first, 1651, he was crowned King of Scotland, and then he assumed the command of Captain-General of the Scotch forces, having under him the Duke of Hamilton and David Leslie. At this time the Scotch army had become purely royal and malignant, the Kirk having done its part had retired, leaving the King to manage his own affairs. During the winter, which was long and severe, Charles and his army could do nothing; but when fine weather came and they understood that Cromwell would march to Perth, the Scotch army went southward, fortifying itself on the famous Torwood Hill, between Stirling and Falkirk.

This long winter had been one of great suffering to General Cromwell. After making himself master of the whole country south of Forth and Clyde, he had a severe illness, and lay often at the point of death. In the month of May two physicians were sent by Parliament from London to Edinburgh to attend him, but ere they arrived, the Lord Himself had been his physician and said unto him, Live! He took the field in June, throwing the main part of his army into Fife, in order to cut off the enemy's victual. This move forced the hand of Charles Stuart. His army was in mutiny for want of provisions, the North country was already drained, he durst not risk a battle – but the road into England was clear.

Cromwell himself had gone northward to Perth, and on the second of August he took possession of that city; but while entering it was told that Charles Stuart, with fourteen thousand men, had suddenly left Stirling and was marching towards England. Cromwell was neither surprised nor alarmed; perhaps, indeed, he had deliberately opened the way for this move by going northward to Perth, and leaving the road to England open. At any rate, when Charles reached the border he found Harrison with a strong body of horse waiting for him, while Fleetwood with his Yorkshiremen lay heavy on his left flank, and Lambert with all the English cavalry was jogging on, pressing close the rear of his army. For in Lambert's ears was ringing night and day Cromwell's charge to him, —

"Use utmost diligence! With the rest of the horse and men I am hastening up, and by the Lord's help, I shall be in good time."

Charles had taken the western road by Carlisle, and it was thought he would make for London. He went at a flying speed past York, Nottingham, Coventry, until he reached the borders of Shropshire, summoning every town he passed, but hardly waiting for the thundering negatives that answered his challenge; for the swift, steady tramp of Cromwell's pursuit was daily drawing nearer and

nearer. Reaching Shrewsbury, he found the gates shut against him, and his men were so disheartened that the King with cap in hand entreated them "yet a little longer to stick to him." For all his hopes and promises had failed, there had been no rising in his favour, no surrender of walled towns, and the roads between Shrewsbury and London were bristling with gathering militia. So Charles turned westward to Worcester, a city reported to be loyal, where he was received with every show of honour and affection. Here he set up his standard on the ill-omened twenty-second of August, the very day nine years previous, on which his father had planted his unfortunate standard at Nottingham.

Meanwhile Cromwell was following Charles with a steady swiftness that had something fateful in it. He had taken Perth on the second of August; he left it with ten thousand men on the third; he was on the border by the eighth; he was at Warwick on the twenty-fourth, where he was immediately joined by Harrison, Fleetwood and Lambert. Such swiftness and precision must have been prearranged, either by Cromwell or by Destiny. It was to be the last battle of the Civil War, and Cromwell knew it, for he had beyond the lot of mortals that wondrous insight, that prescience, which, like the scabbard of the sword Excalibur, was more than the blade itself – the hilt armed with eyes. There was in his soul, even at Perth, the assurance of Victory, and as he passed through the towns and villages of England, men would not be restrained. They threw down the sickle and the spade in the field, the hammer in the forge, the plane at the bench, and catching hold of the stirrups of the riders, ran with them to the halting-place. Cromwell had no need to beg Englishmen yet a little longer to stick to him. His form of rugged grandeur, the majesty and fierceness of his face, and his air of invincible strength and purpose, said to all, *This is the Pathfinder of your English Freedom! Follow Him!* The man was a magnet, and drew men to him; he looked at them, and they fell into his ranks; he rode singing of Victory at their head, and women knelt on the streets and by the roadside to pray for the success of those going up "*For the help of the Lord, and for England.*" This battle call, ringing from men at full spur, was taken up even by the old crones and little children, and their shrill trebles were added to the mighty shouting of strong men, whose heroic hands were already tightly closed upon their sword-hilts. So, with his ten thousand troops augmented to thirty thousand, he reached Warwick, and making his headquarters at the pretty village of Keynton near by, he gave his men time to draw breath, and called a council of war.

Cromwell was now on the very ground where the first battle of the Civil War had been fought. Nine years previous the Puritan camp had lain at Keynton with the banner of Charles the First waving in their sight from the top of Edgehill. Outside the village there was a large farmhouse, its red tiled roof showing through the laden orchard trees; and the woman dwelling there gladly welcomed Cromwell to rest and comfort.

"All my sons are with General Harrison," she said; "and I have not seen their faces for two years."

"Nevertheless, mistress," said Cromwell, "they shall keep Harvest Home with you, and go out to fight no more, for the end of the war is near at hand." He spoke with the fervour of a prophet, but she had not faith to believe, and she answered —

"My Lord Cromwell, our Sword and our Saviour, their names are Thanet, James, and John, and Dickson, and Will. Surely you have heard of them, dead or alive?"

His keen eyes lost their fire and were instantly full of sadness as he answered, "Oh, woman, why did you doubt? If they have fallen in battle, truly they are well. Judge not otherwise. Your blood and your sons' blood has not run to waste."

Two hours after this conversation, Cluny Neville lifted the latch of the farm gate. He had heard reliably of Cromwell's pursuit of Charles at Newcastle, and turning back southward, had followed him as closely as the difficulty of getting horses in the wake of the army permitted. He was weary and hungry, but he was at last near the chief he adored. He gave himself a moment of anticipation at the door of the room, and then he opened it. Cromwell was sitting at the upper end of a long table. A rough map of the country around Worcester lay before him, and Harrison, Lambert, Israel Swaffham,

and Lord Evesham were his companions. There were two tallow candles on the table, and their light shone on the face of Cromwell. At that moment it was full of melancholy. He seemed to be listening to the noble fanaticism of Harrison, who was talking fervidly of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ and the reign of the saints on earth; but he saw in an instant the entrance of Neville, and with an almost imperceptible movement commanded his approach.

Neville laid the letters of which he was the bearer before Cromwell, and his large hand immediately covered them. "Is all well?" he asked – and reading the answer in the youth's face, added, "I thank God! What then of the city?"

"Its panic is beyond describing," answered Neville. "Parliament is beside itself; even Bradshaw is in great fear; there are surmises as to your good faith, my lord, and the rumours and counter-rumours are past all believing. London is manifestly with the Commonwealth, and every man in it is looking to you and to the army for protection. Some, indeed, I met who had lost heart, and who thought it better that Charles Stuart should come back than that England should become a graveyard fighting him."

"Such men are suckled slaves," said Lambert. "I would hang them without word or warrant for it."

"Yea," said Cromwell; "for Freedom is dead in them. That's their fault, it will not reach us. Thousands of Englishmen have died to crown our England with Freedom; for Freedom is not Freedom unless England be free." Here he rose to his feet, and the last rays of the setting sun fell across the rapture and stern seriousness of his face across his shining mail and his majestic soldierly figure. His eyes blazed with spiritual exaltation, and flamed with human anger, as in a voice, sharp and untunable, but ringing with passionate fervour, he cried —

"I say to you, and truly I mean it, if England's Red Cross fly not above free men, let it fall! Let it fall o'er land and sea forever! The natural milk of Freedom, the wine and honey of Freedom, which John Eliot and John Pym and John Hampden gave us to eat and to drink, broke our shackles and made us strong to rise in the face of forsworn kings and red-shod priests, devising our slavery. It did indeed! And I tell you, for I know it, that with this milk of Freedom England will yet feed all the nations of the world. She will! Only be faithful, and here and now, God shall so witness for us that all men must acknowledge it. For I do know that Charles Stuart, and the men with him, shall be before us like dust on a turning wheel. We shall have a victory like that of Saul over Nahash, and I know not of any victory like to it, since the world began — *Two of them – not left together*. Amen! But give me leave to say this: In the hour of victory it were well for us to remember the mercy that was in Saul's heart, 'because that day, the Lord had wrought salvation in Israel.' From here there are two courses open to us, a right one, and a wrong one. What say you, Lambert?"

"London is the heart of the nation, and just now it is a faint heart. I say it were well to turn our noses to London, and to let the rogues know we are coming."

"What is your thought, Harrison?"

"Worcester is well defended," he answered musingly. "It has Wales behind it. We cannot fight Charles Stuart till we compass the city, and to do that, we must be on both sides of the river. Then Charles could choose on which side he would fight, and we could not come suddenly to help each other."

"What way look you, Israel?"

"The way of the enemy. I see that he is here. What hinders that we fight him?"

"Fight him," said lord Evesham, "better now, than later."

"Fight him! That, I tell you, is my mind also," said Cromwell striking the table with his clinched hand. "Some may judge otherwise, but I think while we hold Charles Stuart safe, London is safe also."

"Surely," said Lambert, "it may be more expedient to secure Charles Stuart, but —"

"Expedient, expedient!" interrupted Cromwell. "Who can make a conscience out of expediency? Expediency says, *it may be*; Conscience says, *it is*. If Worcester were ten times as strong,

I would not hesitate. God has chosen this battle-field for us, as He chose Dunbar; and because the place is strong, and because it is on both sides the river, we will draw closer and closer our crescent of steel round it. We will fight against it on both sides of the river, and we will expect that miracle of deliverance which will surely come, for we never yet found God failing, when we trusted in Him. In these parts we struck our first blows for Freedom, and here, at point and edge, we will strike our last, and then sheathe our swords. I give my word to you for this, and I will fully answer it. But there must be no slackness. The work is to be thorough, and not to do over again. The nation wishes it so, I know it. The plain truth is – we will march straight on Worcester; we will cut off Charles Stuart from all hope of London; we will fight him from both sides of the river, and bring this matter of the Stuarts to an end; for they are the great troublers of Israel."

The man and the time and the place had met, and there was no doubting it. His words burned this assurance into the hearts of all who heard him, and when he struck his sword-hilt to emphasise them, they answered with the same movement, unconscious and simultaneous.

In some remarkable way, this tremendous national crisis had become known in every corner of the land. If the great angel who guides and guards the destinies of England had sent out a legion of messengers to cry it from every church tower, there could not have been any more conscious intimation of the final struggle. And the very vagueness and mystery of the conviction intensified its importance, for generally the information came as the wind blows, no one knew whence – only that the billows of war, though low and far off, were heard, only that a sense of presence and movement not visible thrilled and informed men and women and brought them nearer to their inner selves than they had ever been before. Indeed, there were many whose spiritual senses were opened by intense longing and fearing, and they heard voices and saw portents and visions in the air above, yea, even on the streets around them.

At Swaffham and de Wick this fateful feeling was aggravated by keen personal interests. To Mrs. Swaffham and Jane the coming battle might mean widowhood and orphanage; sons and brothers might be among those appointed to die for Freedom's sake. To de Wick it might mean the extinction of the family, root and branch, the loss to the lonely Earl and his daughter of the one love on which their future could build any hope. They could not bear audibly to surmise these things, but they feared them; and not even Jane had yet reached that far-seeing faith, which, for a noble end, levels life and death. As the days went on they ceased their usual employments; Jane went to the village, or even to Ely in search of news, or perhaps half-way to de Wick met Matilda on the same errand. Mutual fears drew them together; they talked and wept and encouraged each other, and always parted with the one whispered word – "*To-morrow.*"

At length there came a day when the unnatural tension grew to its cruel ripeness. The soft gray autumn morning was sensitive through every pulse of Nature, and as the day wore on a strange still gloom hung far and wide over the country. The very breath of calamity was in it. Puritan and Royalist alike went to the open churches to pray; tradesmen left their wares and stood talking and watching the highways; women wandered about their homes weeping and praying inaudibly, or they let their anxieties fret them like a lash. The next morning the west wind blew the sorrow in the air, far-off to sea; but left an instantaneous, penetrating sense of something being "all over." Whatever deed had been done, England would soon ring with it.

On the third afternoon, there came rumours of a great Parliamentary victory, rumours that Charles Stuart had been slain in battle, suppositions and surmises innumerable and contradictory. Jane went as quickly as possible to de Wick, for if indeed there had been a Royalist defeat, Stephen de Wick might have reached home and life was hardly to be borne, unless some certainty relieved the tension cutting like a tight thong her heart and brain.

The neglect and desolation of de Wick Park had in it something unusual: it was that strange air of sorrow, new and unaccepted, which insists on recognition. It hurried Jane's steps; she felt sure she was either going to meet trouble or that trouble was following after her. When she reached the

house, there were two horses tied, and even two horses were a strange sight, now, at that door where once there had been all day long the noise and hurry of sportsmen, and of coming and going guests. She entered the hall and saw a man in his stockinged feet softly descending the stairs. She knew his name and his occupation, and her heart stood still with fear. The next moment Delia came forward, and Jane said,

"I am glad to see you back, Delia. Is Lady Matilda well? Is any one ill? O Delia, what is the matter? Why are you crying? And why is Jabez Clay here?"

"The priest is dead. Clay has been measuring him."

"Dead!"

"Yes, ma'am. He dropped dead when he heard of the fight – and the King's death."

"Then you have news?"

"The worst news that could come. No one has seen the King since the battle – all is lost – Audrey's Ben is back skin-whole, but he says –"

"Is that you, Jane Swaffham?" cried Matilda, running down-stairs. "Come here, come here, come here!" and seizing her by the arm, she compelled Jane to ascend at her side. As for Matilda, she was like a woman distraught. Grief and anger burned white in her face, her eyes blazed, her speech was shrill, her manner like one possessed. Jane made no resistance to such impetuous, imperative passion, and she was hurried up the steps and along the corridor until Matilda suddenly stopped and threw open the door of a darkened room.

"Go in, Mistress Swaffham," she cried, "and look your last on one of Cromwell's victims." And Jane shook herself free, and stood a moment regarding the placid face of the dead priest. He was wrapped in his winding sheet, the Book of Common Prayer lay on his breast, and his hands were clasped over it.

"Oh, God be merciful!" said Jane, and Matilda answered, "Yes, for men know nothing of mercy. Come, there is more yet."

Then she opened the door next to the death chamber, and Jane saw lying on a great canopied bed the dying Earl. His last breaths were coming in painful sobs, but he opened his eyes and looked mournfully at Jane for a few moments. Then the physician sitting by his side motioned authoritatively to the two girls to leave the room.

"He is dying. You see that. He may live till morning – no longer," said Matilda; "he is only waiting to see Stephen, and Stephen will never come. Ben said he was with the King's horse, and the King is slain, and all is red ruin and sorrow without end. When you rise to-morrow morning, you can tell yourself Matilda de Wick is motherless, fatherless, brotherless, friendless, and homeless; and I dare say you will add piously, 'It is the Lord's doing'; but it is not the Lord's doing, it is Oliver Cromwell's work. I would walk every step of the way to London if I might see him hung when I got there!"

"Indeed, Matilda, you are cruel to say such things. You are neither friendless nor homeless."

"Indeed, I am in both cases. I will have no friends that are partners in Cromwell's crimes, and if Stephen be dead, de Wick goes only in the male line, and there is not a male left to our name. Cromwell and his Parliament may as well take house and lands; they have slain all who can hold them – all, Reginald, Roland, Stephen, my Uncle Robert, my cousins Rufus and Edward! What wonder that Julian Sacy's heart broke, and that my father only waits at the door of Death to say good-bye to Stephen."

"What can I do for you, dear? Oh, what can I do?"

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