

THE
REGICIDE'S DAUGHTER:

A Tale of Two Worlds.

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CHAPTER I.

IN the first year of the restoration of Charles the Second, and while the exultation of the Royalists was at its height, and their long-suppressed fury against the more prominent supporters of the shattered Commonwealth was as yet unabated, there stood in the city of London, and in the well-known vicinity of the Temple Gardens, a fine old-fashioned house, whose narrow windows, innumerable gables, and tall, clustering chimneys, gave evidence of its having been built in the quaint but somewhat cumbersome style that distinguished the architecture of the Elizabethan age.

This house, although situated in a narrow and thickly settled street, was not only of a loftier and more antiquated appearance than the houses alongside, but also continued, in a measure, to assert its ancient supremacy, by remaining detached from all others, or rather, by condescending to connect with them only by means of two long, flanking brick

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walls, some twelve feet in height, sturdily buttressed, and surmounted by a stout coping of stone.

It was at the door of this aristocratic mansion that, early one morning, towards the close of the month of April, and in the year already mentioned, a well-dressed young man, with a pleasing but somewhat excited expression of countenance, was seen to knock, at intervals which his growing impatience made shorter at each succeeding application.

Finding, after waiting a considerable time, that there was no reply to his summons, he turned and descended the broad flight of stone steps; but was still lingering with his hand upon the iron balustrade, as if debating in his own mind whether he should, or should not, make one more attempt to gain admission, when he heard himself hailed by a portly-looking man, a draper, who was standing in the door-way of his shop on the opposite side of the street. Hoping that the object of the call was to give him some information relative to the individual whose house was so hermetically closed, the young man immediately crossed over to the draper and accosted him.

"Mr. Layton, I believe?" said he, casting his eye towards the sign over the window.

"Ay! ay! Layton is my name, sure enough," said the other, smiling; "but I do not think you would have known it if my flag was not nailed to the mast-head there. Come in, come in; you may

as well take a comfortable seat here as stand hammering away at a door that will certainly not admit you for at least two hours to come. Sit down, sit down; I have seen your face before, somewhere; but where, I cannot call to mind. Ah! I know now—at least I think I do—are you not the son of old Mr. Richard Heriot, the jeweller?"

The young man bowed, and said that he was.

"I thought so. I am seldom mistaken in a face I have once seen. And now, if I may be so bold, may I inquire what it is that takes you to see Mr. Basil Leigh so early in the morning?"

"A little business matter," said the young man, carelessly. "My father likes promptness in his dealings."

"And Mr. Leigh has been very fertile in promises, and very barren in performance, eh? Is it not so?"

"Fertile in promises, he certainly has been; and, as for his performance," added the young man, wincing perceptibly, "I must confess, it is far from our liking."

"Humph!" said the draper.

"He is a young gentleman of fortune," remarked Heriot, looking doubtfully at Layton, in the manner of one propounding a question.

"Is he?" responded the cautious draper. "I don't know; but if—mark you, I say if—that is the case, you are safe enough."

"He has large estates in the colonies, and ships trading from Bristol to Maryland and Virginia," continued Heriot.

"That sounds like wealth, at all events," said the draper, slowly. "And, with a fortune here, estates in the colonies, and argosies on the high seas, a gentleman may be able to spend a great deal of money, and yet not find the bottom of his purse."

"It seems to me, Mr. Layton," returned Heriot, eying his companion attentively, "that you do not believe the condition of Mr. Leigh to be so good as I have heard it reported."

"Whatever my doubts may be," responded the old man, "I am always open to conviction. Indeed, I hope your informant is right; for, in that case, my own books will show a matter of a hundred pounds less to the account of profit and loss than I feared."

The young jeweller cast a quick glance at the closed shutters of the house opposite, and then stood for a minute or two in deep thought. At length, he said, hurriedly, "Mr. Layton, can I speak a few words with you in private?"

"Certainly, certainly!" replied the draper. "Come back with me." And, leading the way to the rear of the shop, he entered a small counting-room beyond.

At a large desk, within this sanctum, there was a tall, thin, precise-looking young man, perched on a

high stool, and bending with an abstracted air over a somewhat bulky volume.

The young jeweller, on perceiving the little room already occupied, hesitated to enter; but the unquiet look which his features had assumed gradually relaxed, as he heard the draper accost, with great good-humour, his subordinate.

"Good morning, Mr. Williams," said he; "you are early at your accounts. A good sign, sir, a very good sign. Despatch is the life of business. I am sorry to say, I must disturb you for a little while. Will you do me the favour to take a turn or two around the shop, while I speak over some matters with this gentleman?"

"Of a verity, yea, and I will," replied the clerk, sniffing: and, taking up a square of blotting-paper, he very tenderly laid it over the page on which he had been writing, closed the ponderous book carefully, clasped gingerly betwixt his fingers and thumb an inky-looking rag that hung from the corner of the desk, wiped his pen slowly thereon, and, then thrusting the quill behind his ear, slid noiselessly from his seat and disappeared.

"Methodical and exact, to a nicety," exclaimed Layton, looking after his clerk admiringly. "Never was there such a man, Mr. Heriot! His books are like print, like print, sir. A fine, neat, womanly hand; the letters all fair and of an even size; no blots, nor blemishes, nor flourishes, nor whirligigs;

but every word full, plain, and distinct. But, odso! I forgot." And, approaching the door, he cautiously turned the key. "Now, sir," he added, as he drew his chair near to that of the young jeweller. "Now, sir, you can speak freely."

"The truth is, Mr. Layton," said Heriot, bending towards his companion, and lowering his voice as he spoke, "the truth is, my father has become, of late, quite suspicious of your neighbour over the way."

"Very likely, very likely: we are all apt to get suspicious when our bills are not paid. He owes me—let me see."

Going to the desk, the draper threw open the book at the index, and ran his finger down the names.

"Long, Luttrell, Latchett, Locke. Ah, here it is! Leigh—page forty-seven. One hundred and thirty-five pounds, seventeen shillings, and sixpence halfpenny. A snug little sum to be placed in jeopardy, is it not, eh? But, then," he added quickly, "you say he has merchandizing ships, and a plantation in the colonies. May I ask you who told you so?"

"Himself."

"Oh!" said Layton, his countenance elongating, "only himself! I would much rather it had come from some one else. I am afraid, Mr. Heriot," he continued slowly, and, dropping his words from him

as if one by one, "I am afraid, Mr. Heriot, we shall both have to wait a considerable time before our bills are paid."

"I do not care about my bill," said Heriot, coolly. "That does not amount to much."

"Mine is large enough for both," sighed the draper. "I hope he will pay it, at all events, some of these days." Looking at the young man in a half inquiring manner, he added, "His character is good, I think?"

Instead of making any direct answer, the jeweller appeared to change the subject entirely, by saying carelessly,

"I suppose you have heard that I was robbed last night?"

The astonished draper bounded from his seat, as if a petard had exploded.

"Robbed!" he exclaimed. "Why, no! Bless me! Robbed! Where?"

"On Black Heath. I had been to take a diamond necklace home to Lady Elizabeth Carew; for which she paid me partly in notes and partly in gold; but I had not got more than halfway across the Heath, on my way home, when a couple of horsemen, whom I had seen hovering for some time at a distance, dashed suddenly from different points towards me; and, while one very respectfully held fast the reins of my horse, the other, with equal politeness, informed me, that it being, in his opi-

nion, peculiarly unsafe for a young gentleman of quiet habits to enter London with so large a sum of money in his possession; he had concluded, in the tenderness of his nature, to relieve me of the burden and the danger together."

"How very kind!" said Layton, sarcastically. "Of course, none but a dear friend would have acted in so generous and considerate a manner. Well, sir! What did you do?"

"What could I do? At first, I offered him my purse, hoping that would be sufficient to satisfy him. But the rider at my elbow, balancing it very contemptuously upon his finger, replied that, though it might answer as a provocative, it certainly could not be expected to appease so inordinate an appetite as he was known to have."

"What do you want?" said I.

"Five hundred pounds, if you please," said he, courteously. "Three hundred done up into a neat packet, protected by a covering of strong white paper; the remainder in gold, in a brown linen bag, tied with a broad band of red tape."

"How exceedingly particular! Was he correct?" inquired Layton, eagerly.

"So accurate," said Heriot, "that I began to think that, perhaps, after all, the money did not really belong to me. So I paid it over, though not without considerable persuasion."

"Persuasion! What kind of persuasion."

"The most imperative in the world, sir. One barrel of a pistol at my horse's ear, and one at my own head!"

"Humph! A forcible inducement, I admit," returned the draper, slowly. "But still I cannot perceive what connection the story of your robbery can have with Mr. Basil Leigh."

The young jeweller drew his chair closer to that of Layton; and, after looking round hastily to see that there was no other person within hearing, laid his hand upon the shoulder of the draper, and, applying his mouth close to his companion's ear, said, in a low whisper—

"He was one of them!"

"One of what? the robbers? Did you say one of the robbers?" exclaimed the draper, in the same low undertone. "Mercy on me! who would have thought it? I knew the gentleman was a little wildish; but that, you know, is common to all young blood; and I think still there must be some mistake."

"I am afraid not," said the young man, shaking his head. "For, while he was in the act of taking the money from my hand, his mask twisted a little on one side, and I caught a glimpse of his face. Besides, the voice was familiar to me: and even if the mask had not swerved, I could almost have sworn the voice was that of Mr. Basil Leigh."

"Well, that does seem suspicious," replied Lay-

ton, with a thoughtful air; "but you must be very careful, my young friend, lest you should accuse the gentleman wrongfully. The law bears with a heavy hand upon those who jeopardize the character or endanger the liberty of another, upon suspicion merely."

"I know that, sir; and it was for the purpose of freeing myself from any doubt in the matter, before I laid my information, that determined me to call upon him this morning, especially as I am furnished with an excellent excuse in the little account he owes us."

"A very prudent forethought," said Layton. "At what hour did you say you were attacked?"

"It must have been about six in the evening; certainly not later than half-past."

"My dear sir," said Layton, shaking his head doubtfully, and looking very grave, "you may well suppose I entertain no great respect for a gentleman who buys my goods, and, in return for my confidence, sends me back a saucy message when the account is presented. But, though I am indisposed to shield him from a just accusation, as an honest man, I should be sorry to see him attacked as a criminal when I had good reason to suppose him innocent. Now, either you are wrong as to the hour"—

"That is not possible," interrupted Heriot, quickly, "for I took particular pains to ascertain the time

immediately I reached the White Horse Inn; that stands, as you probably know, at the edge of the Heath, and within half a mile of the spot where I was robbed."

"Then, if you are not in error as to the hour, you certainly must be mistaken as to the man; for I have reason to know that Mr. Leigh was at home a few minutes after six last evening."

"It is impossible," said Heriot.

Layton smiled; but, instead of making an immediate reply, he unlocked the door and called out—

"Mr. Williams! A word with you, if you please! A very correct young man, Mr. Heriot; correct to a minute. Let us hear what he says. Mr. Williams, can you tell me at what hour you presented my account to Mr. Leigh last evening?"

"Yes, truly, I can. It was fifteen minutes after six."

"How do you know that was the time?"

"I compared my watch with the clock I saw on his mantel-piece. It is not for me to disparage the clock; but it was thirty seconds too fast."

"Did you make any excuse for calling so late?"

"Yea, I did,—said collections were short, and a good deal of money to pay to-day."

"What was Mr. Leigh's answer?"

The precise young man hesitated, and looked at the stranger as if he thought the reply was not proper for him to hear.

"Oh, give me word for word. I shall not get angry again. What did he answer?"

"Tell Layton, that if he has the impertinence to send me his bill at such an hour again, I will teach him good manners with a horsewhip."

"A very gentlemanly message."

"Are you so certain of the time at which you saw Mr. Leigh, that you would swear to it?"

"Yea, verily, I would; although it is a profane practice, and my conscience is tender."

"Thank you, Williams,—that is all."

As soon as the puritanical clerk had retired and the key was again turned in the lock, Heriot said,

"Well! This is, indeed, strange! I thought I knew the man without the possibility of error. It could not have been him, after all."

"I would see Leigh, for all that," said Layton. "There is nothing like being perfectly satisfied. Though rake and spendthrift as he is, I have still too high an opinion of him to suppose that he would think, for a moment, of taking to the road. What of the other man at the horse's head? Did you recognise him?"

"No; he had covered his face both with a crape and mask; and the distance was too far, in the twilight, for me to discover any familiar marks about his person."

"Was he tall or short?"

"Somewhere about your height, I should say;"

and Heriot was going on to add other particulars; but, observing Layton start and look confounded, he added, laughing, "I beg your pardon. I forgot that honest people do not like to be compared with knaves; but, indeed, the comparison ends altogether with the height, for he was a good deal stouter than you are; and his hair was, I think, long and black, while yours is short and grizzled."

"I am very much obliged to the rascal for being so unlike me in all other particulars," said Layton, drawing a deep breath of relief. "Zounds, sir! these knights of St. Nicholas personate so many respectable people now-a-days, that, from the minister in the pulpit to the most puritanical of the Puritans, there is not one who can say, with confidence, that, like Caesar's wife, he is above suspicion."

"I am very sorry, sir," began Heriot, apologetically.

"Oh, not at all!" said the draper. "The man's height was no fault of yours. Confound the knave! I wish he had been a little taller or shorter; and, then, to think of his being stout, too! Why, one would have supposed that living in continual fear of the gallows—the Tyburn Tree, as the rogues poetically call it—would have thinned him down to a lath. What a comfortable conscience the fellow must have!"

"It would be almost marvellous," returned Heriot, with a vexed look, "if there were two persons in

existence so much alike. I thought I could have sworn to Leigh; but your information has thrown me off the track entirely."

"Why, it is very plain," said Layton, with the air of a mathematician working out a problem, "that if Mr. Basil Leigh was at his own house at a quarter past six, last evening, he could not have been a good eight miles from here. I have heard, indeed, of persons who were said to have been gifted with ubiquity, and who were reported as having been seen at different places, far apart, at one and the same moment of time; and, setting aside common sense, if the law is satisfied that an individual has been seen at a specified hour at a certain place, it is dogmatic in its disbelief of the same man being at another and a distant spot during the same particular period of time. I am, therefore, inclined to think you must give up our delinquent friend over yonder."

"I think so, too, sir."

"And, hark, in your ear, my young friend, I know something of the world; for, though Mrs. Layton would be offended if anybody called me old, I have certainly had some experience of the world and the world's ways. Let me advise you not to say a single word more about Mr. Basil Leigh in connection with this affair. Libels are ugly things; and even the truth, in evidence, will not always prevent a man from being mulcted in

swinging damages. Besides, there is another important consideration, and that is, when a lawyer once gets his hand into your purse, he generally manages, by adroit introversion, to find the bottom of it."

This was presenting matters in a light which Heriot had not considered; and he was now getting quite as uneasy at the consequences of his imprudent charge as he had been positive before in making the accusation.

"I am sure, sir," said he, "I should be sorry to wrong any gentleman knowingly; and if I have cast any reflections upon the honesty of Mr. Leigh, it was from being misled by the singular similarity, both in features and voice, between himself and the man who robbed me. I suppose, however, from your having been so kind as to offer me your counsel, I need not ask you not to betray any thing which I have told you in confidence."

"I would scorn it, sir," replied the draper, impressively. "I am too much of a man of honour to betray a trust of a nature so delicate. You may, therefore, rely on the most perfect secrecy on my part; and if you have disclosed your suspicions to another"—

"Only to my father, sir," interrupted Heriot.

"Then, go home to your father, and tell him, at once, what you have heard. He is an old man, and, I believe, a very cautious one; and I am confident

he will not think the less of the advice I have given, because it was bestowed unasked."

"If you were in my place, then, you would not see Mr. Leigh?"

"On the contrary, I think you have a perfect right to do so; especially as he owes you money. Yes, yes; see him by all means; but, first of all, go home and consult with your father. Understand me, too, in regard to this robbery: it does not follow, because you have been thrown upon a wrong scent in this instance, that you should give up the pursuit of the knaves entirely."

With many expressions of gratefulness for the interest which Layton had taken in the matter, the young jeweller soon after took his leave; and the methodical clerk re-entered the counting-room and took his accustomed perch at the desk.

By some singular pre-occupation of mind, Williams did not at once open his ledger and proceed with his usual diligence in transferring entries, but sat for several minutes with both elbows resting on the desk, and his cheeks clasped by his hands. It was not a little strange, too, that he kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on the face of his employer.

Of this impertinence, Layton appeared to be for some time unconscious; and when, at length, he became aware of the intentness with which he was regarded, the good-natured man did not resent the result; but, delicately forbearing any remark, merely

exchanged a shrewd look of caution with his very worthy and precise subordinate—and then said,—carelessly,

"I will thank you for Leigh's account, Williams. I think, perhaps, I had better go over and have it settled myself."

"Don't go, sir," replied the clerk, twisting his lank face into a lugubrious look of alarm, singularly at variance with a certain merry twinkle of the eyes. "Don't go, sir! I am afraid he will horsewhip you."

"No fooling, Tom!" broke out Layton, sternly. "Give me the bill. I must speak to Leigh at once. He will have occasion to walk warily."

Ostentatiously displaying the neatly-folded paper in his hand, Layton put on his hat and crossed the street. When he had mounted the broad flight of steps, he knocked at the door, once or twice, vigorously; but, not content, seemingly, with this mode of obtaining admission, he looked about him for a minute very cautiously; and then, drawing from his pocket a small, round, ivory tube, about half the thickness of the little finger, and while, to all appearance, listening for the approach of footsteps from within, he inserted the tube into an orifice of the door, and, applying his mouth, blew through it. The low, shrill sound of a distant whistle followed, and almost before he could detach the tube from its place, the door was flung open, and, as soon as he had entered, was as suddenly closed behind him.

CHAPTER II.

IF the reader will now take advantage of the privilege we have the power of extending, and, preceding that worthy gentleman, Mr. John Layton, by some fifteen minutes, cross the hall and ascend an angular flight of stairs, he will find, upon the first landing, four doors disposed in the form of a semicircle.

Entering the left-hand one, a fair bed-chamber is disclosed to view, with all the luxurious accessories that are so often deemed indispensable to the wants of a gentleman. One thing, however, in particular, he will mark as peculiar to the room, and that is, the absence of that handsome but cumbrous piece of furniture, a bedstead. It is there, however, and very tastefully disposed of in the form of a couch, within an arched recess, shut out from view entirely by the rich dove-coloured folds of a silken curtain.

If you will quietly withdraw the curtain, and, without disturbing the sleeper, curiously scrutinize the rear of the recess, you will find it divided into panelled compartments; one of which, upon the touch of a secret spring, will fly open and disclose a snug little closet beyond. This closet, too, has its advantages, for it opens upon a narrow, private

stair; at the bottom of which is a very convenient little passage, that, after sundry turnings and windings, terminates in a door equally unpretending. Passing through this, another series of ascending steps will meet the view, and, when you have surmounted them, you will find yourself, quite unexpectedly, of course, in a lady's boudoir—part of a small house overlooking the Temple Gardens, and at a very considerable distance from the antiquated mansion in which your explorations commenced.

But we have not yet shown you all the curiosities of that domicile: so, if you have ventured with us as far as the dainty little bower of Mademoiselle d'Ocquetonville, and peered for a moment from thence upon the smoky vegetation of Temple Gardens, newly springing, though it is—let us now cautiously retrace our steps, and, heedfully closing the doors behind us, ascend once more into the little closet.

Your first exclamation is, "What a pretty *bijou* of a room!" And you are right; for on the walls are quite a number of exquisite little cabinet pictures, which the subdued light from above shows off to the very best advantage. Every thing is small, you see, in unison with the size of the room. Neat India chairs, only three; more would crowd it—a narrow lounge, covered with rose-coloured silk damask; some prettily-bound books upon hanging shelves of rosewood; a curious little expanding

table of the same costly material; a richly-gilt oval mirror, carved in the quaintest manner imaginable; a small case, upon the top of which is a silver plate, marked "*Liqueurs*," together with quite a collection of those diminutive articles of taste and fancy which usually adorn the apartments of the wealthy.

You were therefore perfectly correct in your first exclamation, when you called it a pretty "*bijou*" of a room; and equally natural in your second remark—

"What an odd collection of things they have heaped in the corner yonder! And how very muddy some of them are!"

That odd collection of things, to which you are pointing, certainly appear to have no business here, for we perceive among them a pair of riding boots, very much splashed, and the mud not yet dry upon them; an ample cloak, the skirts of which, besides bearing similar evidences of travel, are flecked with foam, a strong proof that the horse over whose flanks that cloak hung, must have been ridden at a speed somewhat greater than is usually thought desirable, even if the bloody rowels of a pair of gilt spurs, flung carelessly alongside, did not testify conclusively to the fact. But there is one other little article, peering out from the folds of the cloak, which, perhaps, you have overlooked. It is a black velvet mask!

Now, to some minds, that bundle of things would

be productive of singular associations; but we, of course, suspect nothing. Having thus led you, dear reader, through some interesting portions of a very desirable mansion, and having made, by the way, certain discoveries which perhaps it would be unwise to pour into the ear of scandal, let us now return to our earlier acquaintance, Mr. Layton, and see how he progresses in the collection of his bill.

As soon as that respectable gentleman found himself within the hall, and the door closed behind him, he appeared to be deeply impressed with the fact that it was not usual with doors to open and shut of themselves, and therefore looked quickly about him for the physical agent that had operated in giving him admittance. The search was a brief one, for at his side stood the dapper figure of a keen-eyed lad, in the neat embroidered dress of a page.

"Ah, Spot, my boy! Is that you? Where is your master? Sound asleep, I suppose?"

"As a dormouse in the dead of winter! St. Clement's bells couldn't wake him."

"Ah, Spot! Spot!" said the draper, shaking his head with grave seriousness, "I am afraid we keep very, very late hours in this house."

"A mistake, sir!" said the boy, drawing himself up with an air of importance. "Master and myself make it a point to retire early. We do, upon my honour."

"There, that will do," said the draper; "and now

listen to me. As Mr. Leigh keeps such regular hours, it is high time you should wake him from his slumbers."

"What for?" said the boy.

"Spot!" said the draper, "I thought you had been admonished, long ago, not to ask impertinent questions. Do as I bid you!"

"Why, bless you, Mr. Layton, it is more than I dare. He gets into such a passion when he is waked of a sudden, that some of these days I am afraid he will blow my brains out with those shining pistols he carries to bed with him."

"You must wake him, nevertheless," said the draper; "but as there does appear to be some little risk in the matter, I suppose I must back you in it; so, lead the way, my little friend, and do not be alarmed in the least. I have a charm that never fails to still a tempest of that kind."

"Better wait till he wakes of himself," persisted the boy.

"Not a minute, not a minute; you know well enough, you little rascal, he will always see me, whether it be night or day."

"I may tell him you made me do it?"

"And with good reason," said Layton; "for if you do not put yourself in motion at once, I shall certainly give you as sound a beating as ever you had in your life. So pass on!"

"That makes my mind easy," replied the boy,

quickly ascending the stairs; "but you had better look out for yourself. He's a capital shot, I tell you."

"Open the door!" said Layton sternly. "You have the trick of it, or I would have come by myself. There, never mind—you can go now. I will run all the danger."

But before he passed into the apartment, Layton watched the boy descend the stairs, and then the draper, closing and bolting the door after him, advanced to cross the chamber, and, with one quick sweep of his arm, drew back the silken curtain from before the recess.

The slumber of Leigh was certainly not near so profound as his juvenile attendant would have led the draper to suppose, for at the metallic sound of the rings sliding rapidly along the brass rod by which the curtains were suspended, he sprang bolt upright in his bed, and seizing, almost as if by instinct, a pair of pistols, presented them directly at the person of the intruder. Layton burst into a loud laugh.

"What! dog bite dog, Basil!" said he. "Come! come! put down the barkers. I owed you a fright for the one I have had myself, this morning."

"Let me tell you, Jack Layton," began Leigh, with a fierce burst of anger. But the other immediately cast his eyes towards the door, and putting his finger to his lip, said, in a low tone—

"Hush ! There is no need of getting into a passion. I should not have disturbed you, if I had not felt there was a necessity for it ; so jump up at once, ease yourself in this silken wrapper, and thrust your feet in those daintily embroidered slippers—some of Mademoiselle's delicate handiwork, I suppose," he continued, with a sneer by way of parenthesis ; "and now, if you are sufficiently calmed down, lend me your ear."

"Not blown—eh ?" exclaimed Leigh, in a quick, nervous manner, as he sprang out of bed and alertly obeyed the other's bidding.

Layton coolly drew a chair alongside the couch, and, composedly settling himself down in it, said, in his usual business way—

"I do not know what you mean by the term 'blown,' Mr. Leigh ; it is a word I have never had occasion to look for in my vocabulary." And then, assuming a look of severity, he added, "You must know, sir, that my clerk, Mr. Williams, called on you with an account of long standing, at a quarter after six o'clock last evening."

"Did he ?" said Mr. Basil Leigh.

"Yes, sir ! At a quarter after six o'clock precisely. Mr. Williams is a very exact young man, and, wishing to be particular, compared his watch, of whose accuracy there is no doubt, with a handsome clock upon your mantel-piece in the parlor, and found the latter thirty seconds too fast."

"Thirty seconds too fast !" said Mr. Leigh.

"He asked you for a settlement of my bill—a bill, sir, that has been standing unpaid a long while—a very long while."

"So long that it may now be numbered among the ancient of days," responded Mr. Leigh.

"He alleged, as a reason for calling so late, that we had moneys to pay to-day."

"I do not recollect that," said Mr. Leigh ; "but then, you know," he added, with a shrug, "the excuse is so common."

"And you sent him back with a message to me"—

"That I could not pay it then, but hoped to be in funds shortly. Ah, very likely. I tell all such pestilent fellows so ; it is a pet answer of mine—'shortly' is so indefinite, and may mean to-morrow, or five years hence !"

"No, sir ! Had you made any thing like so mild a reply, I should have been satisfied, perhaps, to wait ; but your answer was"—

"I hope it will bear repeating ; for, upon my honour, I have quite forgotten it !"

"But I have not, Mr. Leigh ; for you said—'Tell Layton, if he has the impertinence to send me a bill at such an hour again, I will teach him good manners with a horsewhip !'"

"Foh ! I am happy to say, I never sent any such message."

"It is no use to deny it, sir ! Mr. Williams

will swear to the words, and so he told young Heriot, the jeweller's son, this morning."

"The mischief he did!" exclaimed Leigh, springing to his feet, and looking at his companion with a sudden flash of intelligence. "Ah! Now I understand! Phew! This is close cutting, Jack! Why, how came it about?"

"It is very fortunate, Mr. Leigh," continued the draper, in the same strain as before—"I say it is very fortunate that honest John Layton lives opposite your house; a tradesman, sir, of the most irreproachable character; and that he possesses, in Mr. Williams, a young gentleman whose correct deportment and immaculate veracity are the envy and admiration of the whole neighbourhood."

"Enough of the husk," said Leigh impatiently; "now for the kernel."

"Such a good young man—so exact—so tenderly conscientious"—

"Is this firstly or secondly?"

"Oh, fie, Mr. Leigh! How can you speak so irreverently; you who have this morning so narrowly escaped the indignity of a visit from a young gentleman who suspects you of being by no means better than you ought to be!"

"Did Heriot attempt to gain admittance here this morning? Suspects me? Was that his object?"

"Oh, no! He came to collect a little bill."

"Oh!" said Mr. Leigh, apparently much relieved.

"And to ascertain, at the same time, whether you are as good-looking as the scoundrel who robbed him last night!"

"Did he say that?" exclaimed Leigh, anxiously. "Or is it one of your usual flights of fancy?"

"Neither fancy nor imagination about it, Basil," replied Layton, changing his tone. "If a careless horseman will suffer a slip of his mask to betray his features, he may reasonably expect the losing party not to rest content with a simple recognition!"

"Oh, fool! fool! fool!" cried Leigh, pacing the floor in agitation, and striking his brow with the palm of his hand. "Why, why did I not silence him at once?"

"Beware of that!" exclaimed Layton, with impressive earnestness. "In filching a purse on the highway, a man merely levies tribute from the superfluity of another to supply his own necessities. But, the life-blood of the murdered cries out from the ground where it is spilled, and will not cease until the deed is avenged. I have seen men with blood upon their souls before now, and the mark of the curse of Cain was as vividly stamped upon their haggard features, as is the brand of the executioner upon the back of the galley-slave."

"You are squeamish, Jack Layton," said Leigh, with a sneer.

"It may be so," replied the draper, "I have my own code of morality; and by that I am willing to

abide. I take the road, sometimes, in pleasant company, and, knowing the penalty, am ready to meet it whenever my time comes. But I will not shed human blood."

"The penalty is the same," said Leigh, sullenly.

"Then let those who made it so take the consequences. But let us have no more of this. The danger from Heriot is not so great as you imagine. We have already so managed matters that he has gone away doubting the evidence of his own senses. He will, however, return here shortly, with the view of scrutinizing you a little more closely; but, as you are now on your guard, you can meet him with a bold front."

"Pay him his bill, and show him out, I suppose."

"By no means. For you to have money at all, just now, might be a fair ground of suspicion. Plead your inability, and ask a little time. Besides, to pay a man in his own coin, is adding insult to injury."

"Very pleasant counsel; and, as it happens to suit me, I shall adopt it."

"Ah, Basil," said Layton, reproachfully, "in more delicate matters than this, my counsel might save you much trouble, and no little danger in the end."

While the draper was speaking, the sliding-panel moved slowly and noiselessly aside, leaving an aperture of a few lines in breadth.

"What do you mean, Jack?" said Leigh.

"It has been laid down as an axiom, Basil, by gentlemen well versed in our profession, that the fewer there are to share its secrets, the less dangerous it becomes; and they also assert, as a rule without any exception whatever, that it is better to have a dozen male accomplices than one female bosom friend."

"No more of this, Jack," said Leigh, in a raised voice: "in all other things, you shall command me; but, on this subject, my mind is made up."

"As you will," returned Layton, stiffly, and rising at the same time.

"Let me show you to the door," said Leigh, crossing the room a little in advance of his companion. When they reached the stair-landing, Leigh halted, and extended his hand.

"Jack," said he, "you misunderstood me just now; and I designed it intentionally. I said my mind was made up—and so it is—to dismiss Louise. I have other and fairer game in view."

"Take care!"

"Oh! never fear; for a marvel, my intentions are perfectly honest. If I succeed, I shall reform my present life altogether; and if I am thwarted"—

"What then?" said Layton, finding his companion had paused.

"Nothing," replied Leigh, turning away; but the draper saw that his lips were firmly compressed, and his brow dark.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE to the east of Temple Bar, or, to indicate the precise spot still more closely, about midway between the latter and St. Dunstan's Church, there stood, at the period of our story, among a motley collection of other buildings, with its elaborately ornamented gable facing the street, a low, queer-looking, little, old house.

Partly supported by heavily-carved brackets, the upper story of this house projected over the lower so far as to permit a pair of bow-windows to emerge from the face of the latter, and yet afford to pedestrians a sufficient shelter from the inclemencies of the weather.

Behind these bow-windows were displayed a considerable quantity of jewelry and goldsmiths' work. Civic chains, necklaces of diamonds and pearls, bracelets, brooches and rings, occupied the front; while the rear was filled with massive vases, curiously carved goblets and drinking-cups, candelabra, and heavy pieces of plate, interspersed with statuettes, and other rare and valuable articles, wrought of gold and inlaid with precious stones.

The period immediately succeeding the Restora-

tion of Charles the Second was one of extraordinary luxury, especially as regards dress and ornament; and perhaps the greater from the reaction which had so recently taken place. The nation, having suddenly flung off the plain garb, and with it the severe morals of Puritanism, would not content itself with assuming its old English habits; but, in the joy of its deliverance, rushed to the opposite extreme, and eagerly copied from returned Royalists, not only the rich and expensive but certainly picturesque modes of dress then prevalent in France, but also French manners, and, alas! French vices. One partial result, however, of the change, was to infuse new life and spirit into many trades which had long been in a decaying condition from lack of patronage, and by none was the revivifying influence more felt than by that of the goldsmiths.

Many sensible persons, living at a distance from London, who had heard of Master Heriot, the famous goldsmith, and of his immense wealth, pictured to themselves a portly man, soberly apparelled with a round, ruddy face, a double chin, and a shining bald head; a lover of the good things of this life, and a constant guest at public dinners and civic feasts. When they turned from the contemplation of the man himself, and thought of the appearance of his establishment, they imagined an imposing structure, large and high-towering, with broad windows, wherein the glittering wares were

arrayed to the best advantage; and capacious show-rooms, well lighted, and set off with tall mirrors and gilded columns. Had these sensible people been told that their mental pictures were altogether incorrect; that the wealthy Heriot was a little, withered old man, who dressed in a suit of dingy black; that he had a sharp, gaunt, hungry-looking face, a hooked nose, small, dark, eager eyes; thin, gray hair, and an adust complexion; and that all those valuable articles, of which they had heard so much, were crammed, rather than arranged, within the low, smoky room of a crazy-looking tenement; not more than one in a dozen would have credited the veracity of his informant. Such, nevertheless, was the simple truth. In that dingy shop, like a gray spider in his web, Heriot had crouched for a period of thirty years; and though, during the civil wars, the business was not prosperous in the way of sales, it was yet infinitely more profitable to him in that of purchases; and though, during the Commonwealth, his trade seemed to flourish still less, the large quantity of plate and jewels seized by Cromwell's commissioners, as forfeited, either by royalty itself or by fugitive Royalists, afforded continual opportunities of accumulating a fortune which so eager and unscrupulous a man as Heriot did not hesitate to seize.

Thus he went on, year after year, adding to his means more by what he bought than what he sold,

until the return of Charles, when the demand, which Heriot had so long anticipated, commenced and changed the current of his business to sales instead of purchases.

But the gradual accretion of so much wealth wrought, with the course of time, its not unusual effect. Practising at first a commendable system of economy, Heriot degenerated by degrees into habits of a far more miserly character; and now, that he could rapidly dispose of his heaped-up treasures, he clung to every piece of plate and jewel with the greatest pertinacity; and, even when parting with them at enormous prices, he transferred them into the hands of their new owner with such a visibly painful reluctance as excited the wonder of the buyer, and not unfrequently elicited the respectful remonstrance of his own son.

How such a little, lean, dried-up specimen of humanity could ever have been the father of so handsome and noble-looking a young man as Francis Heriot, with his fine, frank, open countenance; and how Heriot, in that low den, and in despite of the contaminating influences of his parent, could have so preserved that freshness of feeling, and those high-toned and generous qualities for which he was remarkable, must remain a mystery through all time. But so it was; and perhaps Heriot was the more attached to his son for the possession of those very qualities of which he himself was so singularly

deficient; and, perhaps, Francis Heriot saw in that earnest affection the redeeming trait in his father's character; for, notwithstanding occasional differences of opinion, each loved the other dearly.

But, in spite of the warm attachment existing between Heriot and his son, there were times when the latter regarded his father with a feeling approaching to awe. Under business losses, the elder Heriot was especially excitable; and after he heard of the recent robbery, his irascibility of temper was only subdued to some degree of calmness by the assurances of the young man, that he had recognised, in the person of Leigh, the individual who had robbed him.

It was, therefore, with a mind very ill at ease that Francis Heriot, after his interview with Layton, slowly retraced his steps homeward. Confounded by his singular mistake, and doubting still in spite of the positive testimony he had heard, he repeated to himself, over and over again, what had been told him both by Layton and Williams, in the hope of finding some discrepancy in their statements; but they tallied so exactly, and there was such an air of seeming honesty about Layton himself, that, at length, the young jeweller gave up, in despair, all his efforts to penetrate the mystery.

Thus, musing, he continued his way through the quiet by-streets leading to the main thoroughfare. But immediately his ear caught the noise and bustle

of the latter, his thoughtful air vanished, and, as he emerged into the Strand, he became thoroughly aroused to the rush and hurry of the busy life about him.

While he was standing, for a moment, on the side-walk, waiting an opportunity to cross, a young girl, closely veiled, glided past, and seeing a momentary opening in the crush of vehicles, sought to take advantage of it. Suddenly, becoming bewildered by the confusion about her, she shrank back, and in endeavouring to retreat her foot slipped, and she would have fallen beneath the wheels of a richly-decorated but cumbrous-looking carriage, had not Heriot, foreseeing the danger, rushed forward and caught her in his arms. This was not done, however, without the accident creating considerable excitement. The gorgeously-dressed coachman uttered a loud cry and reined in his horses; two liveried servants sprang instantly from the rear of the carriage; and, at the same moment, the head of a handsome man, with a somewhat bold and dissipated look, was thrust from the window of the vehicle.

As soon as the latter caught a glimpse of the pale face of the young girl, his countenance became suddenly animated, and, springing instantly from the carriage, he hastened towards the covered archway where the young jeweller had just safely deposited his charge.

But, however pleasurable the sensations of the gentleman might have been, it was very evident that the feeling with which the young girl regarded him was one of extreme repugnance; for, as the stranger approached, she clung closer to Heriot, and, looking up in his face with an imploring air, said, hurriedly—

"Do not let him come! Take me away. Oh, please take me away!"

"It is the Duke of Buckingham!" said Heriot, with some surprise. "Do you know him?"

"Too well—too well! He haunts me—he persecutes me!"

The tone of her voice seemed to awaken a new train of thought in the mind of Heriot; for, fixing his eyes upon her, he said quickly—

"We have met before?"

"Last night," she answered, averting her face.

"They were two of his followers by whom I was beset."

"I am afraid, dear lady," said Heriot, shaking his head, but smiling at the same time as if to reassure her, "I am afraid, dear lady, that you can put but little faith in any offer of protection I might make, since you fled from me yesterday evening as fearfully as you were flying from the men who pursued you previously."

"Ah, sir!" said she, "do not think wrong of me for that."

"Nor do I," said Heriot. "But, before I engage to defend you from the duke, will you assure me that he has no claims upon you?"

"Claims! He? Oh, sir! how could you suppose so?"

She turned her tearful eyes so reproachfully upon Heriot, that he felt he had wronged her even by the question.

"Rely on me," he whispered. "You may rely on me. Hush! not a word. He is coming hither."

"Ha! Mr. Heriot," said the duke, with his blandest smile, "you have done a bold and gallant act, and I give you my thanks. Fair lady," he added, bowing respectfully, "I regret exceedingly it should be my unhappy fate to bring lilies to cheeks where I would fain plant roses. Will you be merciful, and pardon me? You are faint and weak still, I see; permit me to make a poor amends by conveying you home in my carriage."

"I thank you! No!" she replied, shrinking back with a quick, sharp shudder. "I am quite—quite well; and if not, this—this good gentleman has kindly offered his services to assist me."

"But you are not strong enough to walk," persisted the duke, "and I entreat you to remember I owe you some recompense for the carelessness of my coachman."

"If your grace really wishes to serve me," she replied, rallying all her firmness, "the best recom-

pense you can offer, is that I may be allowed to depart under the safe conduct of this gentleman."

"Ah! cruel lady, to meet devotion with resentment," said the duke, throwing a reproachful tenderness into his voice, that brought for an instant the indignant blood to her cheeks.

"My lord," she began.

"So fair a temple," said he, interrupting her, "should shrine a kindlier spirit; and what have I done," he added, with well feigned accents of sorrow, "to bring down upon me so grave a trouble as your displeasure?"

"Ask your own heart, my lord."

"It does but echo back my love!" responded the duke, earnestly. Then turning to the young jeweller, he said in a voice of mixed entreaty and command, "Mr. Heriot, I am sure you will cheerfully surrender the charge of this young lady into my hands."

Heriot felt his fair companion grasp his arm convulsively, as he replied firmly, but with deep respect—

"I do not know, my lord duke, how I can do so with a clear conscience, unless"—

"Conscience!" broke in the duke, sharply; "does a peddling citizen talk of conscience?"

"Ay, your grace!" said Heriot, with a quiet response of manner that augured ill for Buckingham's success. "If conscience has fled the court, it still lingers in the city."

"Insolent!" said the duke. "You shall be punished for this. The Tower has strong walls and stern warders."

Turning angrily away, he moved with a quick step towards his servants who were standing at each side of the open door of the carriage, and was soon in rapid communication with them.

The moment the duke's back was towards her, the young girl withdrew her hand from the arm of Heriot, and said quickly—

"Do not think ill of me, I must fly!"

"But whither?"

"To a secure refuge. Ask me no more. I am very, very grateful, and it seems wrong in me to leave you in your present danger, but"—

"Fear not for me," said Heriot, cheerfully, "Promise me we shall meet again."

"I do—I will. Oh pray, pray do not detain me."

"One minute. Only one minute. Your name, dare I ask that?"

"Esther—call me Esther Holmes." And darting suddenly away, she turned the corner of a neighbouring street, took the first narrow alley that offered, and disappeared.

"Now, Mr. Heriot," said the duke, approaching with his followers, "you must either—Where is the lady?" he exclaimed, furiously. "Answer me! Where is the lady?"

"She is gone," said Heriot, coolly.

"Gone! Where? Speak, I command you!" said the duke, imperiously.

"If I knew, I would not tell you, my lord," replied Heriot, in a quiet, determined manner; "but as I really do not know, I am saved a trial of my firmness. The lady was a free agent, and I had no right to detain her."

"Away, sirrahs! and follow her," said the duke, turning sharply to his attendants. "See that you bring me a good report of your diligence. Go different ways. Set spies to work. Do not spare money; she must be found; do you hear? She must be found! Heriot!" he added, with suppressed anger, as he advanced and confronted the young jeweller. "Heriot, unless you make amends for this, you had better never have been born."

"What amends can I make, my lord?"

"Find me the girl! That only will satisfy me. I shall look for you to-morrow, with the tidings. Mark you; at noon to-morrow."

"Your grace must recollect," said Heriot, "I am no servant of yours. What I do, is of my own free-will. What I choose not to do, you, my lord, have no right to command; and I, certainly, shall not perform."

"Very well, Mr. Heriot, we shall see," said the duke, with a singular smile. "My people will have orders to admit you. Remember, at noon to-morrow. *Au revoir*, Mr. Heriot!" and with a low

mocking bow, Buckingham returned to his carriage, which was soon after lost to the sight of Heriot, among the numerous wagons, tumbrils, and vehicles of every description, with which the street was thronged.

CHAPTER IV.

FRANCIS HERIOT stood for several minutes on the same spot where the duke had parted from him. Events seemed to thicken around the young jeweller, and the peril to himself, arising from the last occurrence, was only equalled by its mystery.

Who was this fair unknown? That she was pure, innocent, guileless, and utterly unprotected, he had every reason to believe. That she was involved in a network of difficulties, wrought by Buckingham, for some not very clearly defined purpose, was also evident enough. But who, or what were they, for whose safety she seemed even more anxious than for her own? And how was it that the fate of these unknown persons was involved in hers? Was there only one life besides that of the young girl's thus jeopardized; and if so, whose was it? Was it a man's or a woman's? Could it be possible she was already married? Heriot felt uneasy as the thought arose; but he dismissed it almost immediately, by the after reflection, that in such a case, her husband

would have stood forward as her protector. Who then was she? His heart acknowledged she was very beautiful; and that her air and manners, even in the midst of her trouble, were those of one who had mingled in good society. From her dress, Heriot could divine but little. It was of good texture, and its scrupulous neatness bespoke something of the Puritan; and though she had none of the prim, precise, and formal ways of that sect, Heriot instinctively felt that in some way or other she was connected with the oppressed religionists. The question then struck him, whether she might not have relatives in hiding; and this idea, coupled with the knowledge of her evident anxiety to keep secret the place of her abode, seemed to offer the most probable solution of the mystery.

Deeply interested in the clew thus furnished, Heriot next ran over, mentally, the names of those sectaries whom he knew to be proscribed; but there was not one, he remembered, whose name was any thing like Holmes. This, however, did not much surprise him; for he called to mind how the young girl had hesitated before she answered his question—or rather, how after quickly replying Esther, she paused for a second, and then said, “Call me Esther Holmes.” Esther, then, was doubtless correct; while the surname had been assumed for some hidden reason. That reason he had already surmised. Finding all his efforts to work out the problem

failed to carry him any further, he endeavored to console himself with Esther's assurance that they would meet again; and dismissing, as far as he was able, the chaos of conjecture from his mind, once more took his way homeward.

As he expected, he found his father awaiting his return, with the utmost impatience; and he was scarcely prepared for the explosion which followed the recital of his interview with the draper.

Restraining himself with difficulty during the time his son was speaking, the latter no sooner finished his narration, than the long pent-up wrath of the elder Heriot burst forth.

“It is all a lie! a cheat! A plan made up between them to rob, and then deceive us. Layton! a shirking rascal, no doubt. Williams! a Puritan—a canting, hypocritical Puritan. I hate all Puritans! As the money was robbed from you, Lady Carew must send me back my jewels. Leigh! the fine gentleman of the gang, with his lace ruffles, and his flaunting feathers, and his gold chains! He shall have chains of another metal soon. I will have my diamonds back, mark you! He rides of a night, does he? My hat and cloak! He will despoil me of my money, will he? I'll fit his dainty neck with a hempen collar. My hat and cloak, I say!”

“What are you going to do, sir?” inquired his son, reluctantly obeying the passionate command.

“To hang them all! You shall come with me!

Where are my diamonds? Gone! Who robbed you of the money? Leigh! Who confederates with him? This rascally draper! Who is their humble and most obedient servant? This canting Williams! He shall hang, I tell you, if there is any law in the land."

It is a singular fact, that strong passion, though it most frequently misleads, will sometimes leap to correct conclusions, where deliberate thought finds itself entirely at fault.

It was so in this case; and the very clearness, boldness, and precision with which the elder Heriot marked out the relations of the parties to each other, had the effect of strengthening the doubts of his son, and set him once more thinking. The result, however, of his meditations left him, in effect, almost in the same state of incertitude as before; and, operated upon by this feeling, he thought it wisest to attempt to restrain the impetuosity of his father. But it was of no avail: the elder Heriot's impressions were already fixed; and, in the mind of an old man, an impression once formed is difficult to eradicate.

"You cannot shake me, Frank," said the elder Heriot, walking briskly on; "what you would have sworn to last night, you certainly can swear to this morning."

"It is impossible, sir!" said the son. "I was very positive then; but I am less so now."

"They have lied to you, Frank!" said his father sharply—"the rascals have lied to you! The senses never deceive. If Leigh had been arrested as soon as you returned from Carew's, this tale would never have been told. But you came back late. Ha! I had forgotten that. What kept you?"

Francis Heriot felt embarrassed by the question so abruptly put; for he had concealed from his father, from some inexplicable cause, his subsequent adventure; and now, that in his attempt to shield the young girl a second time, he had incurred the anger of the all-powerful Buckingham, the young jeweller was still less inclined to enter into explanations which would meet but little sympathy, and, perhaps, create much unnecessary alarm. He, therefore, muttered something in a low tone, which the elder Heriot could not hear; and, then, suddenly changing the subject, raised his voice, and added—

"Suppose we see Layton first, sir. If, afterwards, you remain unconvinced of my mistake, it will be just as easy as it is now to obtain a warrant for the apprehension of Leigh."

"There is something in that," said the old man, looking keenly in his son's face. "There is more thought in that than in any thing you have said. Well; lead on!"

"When we leave there," continued the son, "we can, if you like, make a call on Mr. Leigh."

"No! no! I don't want to see the fellow."

"But I do," said the younger Heriot, quietly.

"Eh? Ha!" said his father, with another keen glance. "So you still doubt, do you? Be it so, then."

The worthy draper was occupying his old stand at the door, as Heriot and his son approached; and, though he pretended not to be aware of their presence until Francis Heriot accosted him, he had kept his eyes upon their movements from the moment they entered the street; and had also taken especial care to notify his clerk, by certain telegraphic signals, of their coming.

Layton received his visitors, however, with the same apparent frankness that had previously won the favourable regard of the younger Heriot. A curious observer would have said, perhaps, that the draper bustled about a little too much; and that he coughed rather too frequently for a man entirely at his ease; but there are very few who would have noticed these indications at all, and still fewer who would have drawn any unfavourable suspicions from them. Francis Heriot did not: his father as certainly did.

From the moment the old goldsmith entered the shop, he fastened his keen, black, glittering eyes upon the draper; so that, whichever way the latter turned and shifted, he still felt conscious those searching orbs were watchfully regarding him. It was a terrible trial to Layton's nerves; but he withstood

the scrutiny well. Williams did still better; he buried his head in the folds of his ledger, and busied himself with the most remarkable industry in examining his items of account.

"Too industrious!" thought the shrewd old goldsmith. "Much too industrious!"

As soon, however, as Layton grasped the character of the man he had to deal with, he grew more composed. His first care was to dismiss Williams from the counting-room, an order which the latter was by no means unwilling to obey, although he affected the same extreme carefulness as formerly with regard to his books and writing materials.

"An admirable young man, Mr. Heriot!" said Layton, nodding his head towards the receding figure of his clerk.

"Is he, indeed?" said the old man, calmly.

"A treasure, sir! a perfect treasure! I do not know how I could get along without him."

Layton was certainly sincere in that assertion, and the elder Heriot appeared to think it was spoken with considerable unction. Francis, however, accepted it in its literal interpretation; and, being anxious not to waste time in preliminaries, said—

"I have related to my father what passed between us this morning, Mr. Layton, and, as he appeared desirous of hearing the account you gave me of Mr. Leigh from your own lips, I have taken the liberty of bringing him here."

"I am sorry I have had any thing at all to do with the matter," said Layton, with his usual tradesman-like bluntness; "and if I had known previously what your suspicions were in regard to Leigh, I should have kept my own counsel. A still tongue shows a wise head, Mr. Heriot."

"True!" said the old man. "Very true!"

"I, of course, care nothing for Leigh. Why should I? He owes me money."

"He owes me a little," said the goldsmith. "Only a little, though."

"I wish we could change places, then," said Layton, with a shrug and a laugh.

"Do you?" said the old man, dryly. "Humph! I don't."

Layton laughed more heartily.

"Oh, not in wealth!" said he. "I should not know what to do with such a fortune as yours, Mr. Heriot. It was Leigh's account I was thinking of."

"Leigh's account? True, it was Leigh's account you meant. What do you call him—Basil? Mr. Basil Leigh? Do you spell his name Lee, or Leigh?"

"There it is, Mr. Heriot," said the draper, throwing open the book, "and there is the account. The amount you will find at the bottom of the page. It has been due, as you perceive by the date, a long time. Ah, here," he continued, referring to another book, "here are the original entries. I should be glad if you would buy the debt of me at a liberal discount."

"I am much obliged to you," said Heriot, resuming his seat; "I don't want it."

Heriot was growing a little acrid. He had expected to find no account at all; but there it was, with the items all regularly entered in their proper places; the dates far back, in point of time, and every thing indicative of an honest business transaction. His temper was failing; but his respect for Layton's veracity had increased.

"And so you saw Mr. Leigh last night?" he said, abruptly. Layton, however, was on his guard, and replied, carelessly—

"I had a very unceremonious message from Leigh; perhaps that is what you mean."

"Ha! yes! Francis said it was a message. I think, now, you did say it was a message, Frank?"

"I told you, sir, it was Mr. Layton's clerk, who brought him quite an insolent answer from Mr. Leigh."

"You saw the young man, just now," said Layton. "His name is Williams; a very worthy and reliable person, I assure you; and of such exceeding veracity, that, 'as truthful as Thomas Williams' is becoming quite a proverb in this neighbourhood. Shall I call him?"

"Not at present, if you please. I wish to ask if you are acquainted with the habits of Mr. Leigh?"

"Why, I believe they are pretty much like those of many other gentlemen. He lives fast, and does

not pay his debts quite as promptly as one could desire."

"He seems to have a handsome house."

"And furniture to match; as you will see, Mr. Heriot, if you take the advice I offered to your son this morning."

"And fine, fast horses, too, I suppose," said the goldsmith, sliding the suggestion easily at Layton; but the latter caught the drift of the question at once, and answered, carelessly—"I dare say. The thing is likely enough. All fine gentlemen like fine horses."

"You see him ride sometimes?"

"Oh, ay! sometimes; but not often. Business Mr. Heriot, must be attended to; and I rarely trouble myself with the affairs of other people."

"A very wise and prudent precaution. It saves you, without doubt, from many a difficulty. Frank, you hear what Mr. Layton says. I hope you will profit by it."

The younger Heriot laughed; but some thought crossed his mind at the same moment, and he coloured likewise.

"It seems to me, Mr. Heriot," said the draper, in his bold, open way, "perhaps I may be wrong; but it seems to me that the only way you can get at the bottom of this rascally business is, by casting your mind loose from the narrow, fixed point towards which you appear to have entirely directed it, and taking a wider sweep. Understand me, however.

I have no desire to shield Mr. Basil Leigh, if he is guilty; which, as I told your son, I think he is not: and I said so then, because I found it impossible to reconcile his presence at home with his having been seen on Hounslow Heath within a few minutes of the same time."

"It was Black Heath, I said; not Hounslow Heath."

"Black Heath, was it, Mr. Francis? Ah, true, so it was! I recollect, now; but Black Heath or Hounslow Heath, it is all one for the sake of my argument."

"Why, I confess," said Heriot, slowly, "it does appear to me to be impossible. That is, if Mr. Leigh was really at home at the time you have mentioned."

"You can ascertain for yourself whether I am correct, or not," said the draper, going to the door and opening it.

"Mr. Williams!"

"Pray do not call him just yet. We will see him presently. You said, a little while ago, we had commenced our search wrong."

"You mistake me, Mr. Heriot," replied the wary draper; "I cannot, of course, tell whether you are wrong or right. I only thought you had narrowed your field of vision too much."

"Of course—of course, that was what I meant; but what other mode would you advise us to pursue? You seem to have an excellent mind, Mr. Layton; and, as Francis is quite young and thoughtless,

and I am getting too old to take in, of myself, any thing more than a single view of a subject, we shall both of us be pleased to defer to your better judgment."

"How different the cunning old fox speaks now to what he did," thought Layton. "How feeble he seems to have gotten all at once; and what a piping treble he has thrown into his voice. Take care, Jack Layton, you are walking on tender ice!"

Such was the draper's mental soliloquy; but what he said aloud was very different.

"I am much obliged to you for your good opinion, Mr. Heriot," said he; "and, although my counsel may not be worth much"—

"Oh, yes it will!" replied the goldsmith, eagerly. "A great deal."

"Well, then, I will tell you what I would do. I would begin with the beginning."

"Very good. Excellent! Listen, my son! You say, Mr. Layton, you would begin with the beginning."

"By examining the spot where the robbery took place.* Many a clew has been found in that way; and, even if you discovered nothing, there would be nothing lost."

"Only my diamonds;" groaned the old man, mentally.

"I would then have the roads round about scoured by trusty agents, with orders to inquire diligently

what horsemen were seen upon them at that particular time. How they were dressed—the colour of their horses—and what speed they were making."

"You hear, Francis! I think Mr. Layton takes the proper view of the matter."

"But, in order to get as near as possible to the exact time at which the robbery occurred," continued the draper, speaking with a marked emphasis, and directing Heriot's attention at the same time to his son. "I say, in order to find out the exact time—for upon this point all the present difficulty turns—it will be necessary not to depend too much upon the clocks of innkeepers, which are proverbially either too fast or too slow; but to ascertain how long it takes to ride between Lady—Lady—what did you say was her name?"

"Lady Carew's," suggested young Heriot.

"Thank you—between Lady Carew's and the place where Mr. Francis was stopped; and then, again, from thence to your residence, Mr. Heriot. By this means, if Mr. Francis rode directly home, as I suppose he did, you gain a three-fold mode of comparison, which will give you the correct time, almost to a minute."

"The difficulty in following out this suggestion," said Francis Heriot, quietly, but colouring as he spoke, "arises from the fact, that I did *not* return directly home."

Layton saw the sharp, keen glance of the old gold-

smith direct itself full at the flushed face of his son; and the draper noted, too, that, although the young man met the look firmly, the expression of his countenance was that of suppressed embarrassment. There was, too, a momentary scintillation of light from Layton's own large, gray eyes; arising, probably, from the consciousness of his hard-won success. He had planted the barb, cautiously, in the very place he wished, and now, that his object was accomplished, he did not care to prolong the interview.

"If that is the case," said he, rising with a disappointed air, "I am all abroad, and my counsel good for nothing. Still, as Mr. Leigh lives opposite, it might be as well to give him a call. Were the affair mine, I should certainly do so."

"Would you? Well! This cloak—will you please to fasten it? I—I am old, and quite—quite nervous, you see!"

"Let me assist you, sir!" said Francis, hastening forward.

"No!" replied the old man, sharply. "Thank you, Mr. Layton!—you are very kind. Why do you stand?" he added, turning angrily to his son. "Are we to make the call, or not?"

"Certainly, by all means," said Francis Heriot.

CHAPTER V.

MR. BASIL LEIGH was seated in his parlour. It was quite a handsome room, with all the comforts, and conveniences, and luxurious appliances a modish gentleman could desire. And yet Mr. Basil Leigh did not seem altogether at his ease; he sipped his modicum of tea from the little delicate china cup then in fashion, and partook of the more substantial viands which the table presented, with an abstracted air, and an apparent absence of appetite, as if his thoughts were on other and less palatable matters. And so, indeed, they were. True to his promise to Layton, he had just returned from the dismissal of his dear friend, Mademoiselle Louise d'Ocquetonville, and the separation had been a stormy one. The lady had thrown out hints at parting which seemed to indicate that she was deeper in Leigh's secrets than he was aware, and he was now revolving in his mind whether it was possible that her knowledge extended so far as to compromise him. She had threatened to do it, and he was well enough acquainted with her disposition to know that, if she possessed the power, she would certainly execute her threat.

Coming over from France in the train of the

Duke of Buckingham, and but little acquainted with the forms of English justice, it seemed to Leigh most probable that Mademoiselle Louise would be less likely to seek her revenge by recourse to the laws of the land than by the agency of the duke, whose constant exercise of almost regal authority was well known to her. Whether Buckingham would give credit to any revelations she might make, or even, if he did do so, whether he would assume the championship of an angry and disappointed woman, were questions the solution of which depended more upon the mood of the duke at the moment than upon any thing else.

One thing gave Leigh a gleam of satisfaction: Buckingham was already under obligations to him. The services he had rendered were indeed of an equivocal character, but their being so was in Leigh's favour, since Buckingham would naturally shrink from having them exposed.

How far the favour of the versatile noble might be relied on, was the difficulty. The duke had always, heretofore, condescended to notice Leigh favourably whenever they met, and had also, in the first instance, recommended Louise to his favourable regard.

Whether Buckingham would consider the recent rupture a sufficient plea for disowning, for the future, his subservient friend, was a source of some uneasiness to Leigh, and his uneasiness was the greater

from a certain internal consciousness that, in the prosecution of a late affair, he had, in furtherance of his own purposes, betrayed the interests of his patron.

The men from whom Heriot rescued Esther Holmes, on the previous evening, were not strictly followers of Buckingham, but subordinates of Leigh's. It was Leigh to whom the enterprise had been intrusted, and who was also charged with the duty of finding out the residence of the fair girl. This knowledge, together with the fearful circumstances which surrounded her, and which made her fidelity heroic, he had succeeded in gaining, though with infinite difficulty; and he had not only kept the secret to himself, but, with purely selfish motives, had succeeded in throwing the conjectural suppositions of his patron as wide as possible of her true name, the position in which she was placed, and the locality of her residence.

Neither could the anticipated visit of the younger Heriot be regarded by Leigh with perfect composure. It was true, he was forewarned; but crime is always timid, and he was well enough aware how often the slightest possible clew leads the way to important developments. While he was reflecting upon the best mode of meeting the emergency, a loud knock at the door startled him.

"That is the young fellow now," said he.

Leigh instantly rose, and taking his well-curled

peruke from its customary block near the mirror, busied himself in adjusting it; humming, at the same time, with an assumption of gay unconsciousness, the air of a lively French song.

The position he adopted was well chosen, either for attack or defence; for the mirror commanded the door, and enabled him to scan, at a glance, the features of his visitor, without turning.

Instead of Heriot, however, a tall, angularly built, fiery-visaged man, with a purple nose, and an abundance of soiled lace and tarnished finery about his person, pushed past Spot, and, without waiting any announcement, swaggered directly across to where Leigh was standing.

"Morning, captain," said he.

"Shut the door, you fool!" replied Leigh, delicately smoothing his eyebrows.

The man muttered something between his teeth, but observing that Leigh continued calmly his little manipulations, he slowly retraced his steps and thrust the door to with his foot.

"Lock it," said Leigh.

"Locked it is," responded the man; "and now," he continued, flinging his peaked hat, with its ragged feather, passionately upon the floor, and striding abruptly back—"as Basil is a savoury herb, I should like Basil's words to be a little more palatable, too, or hang me if I stand them!"

"Tra-la-la!" said Leigh, making a grimace in

the glass. "Come here. Does this collar sit well? Handsome—is it not? Right Mechlin, I assure you."

"What the"—

"Rundell!" interrupted Leigh, sternly. "You forget yourself. You are not now among the drunken bullies of Alsatia."

The man broke out into a short, insolent laugh.

"Let me hear no more of that," said Leigh, looking over his shoulder with a quick significance that silenced his visitor instantly. "I have an infirmity of temper that might make a repetition dangerous."

"Why did you speak to me then as if I was a dog?" said the man, sullenly.

"A dog is a very faithful animal, Ned; but, unless he is admonished sometimes, he would forget his place, you know."

"This passes!" said the man, furiously; and clenching both his hands, he made one single bound forward, as if he was about to lay his insulter at his feet.

Leigh saw the movement, but, without evincing the least alarm, merely turned round, and, stooping forward, stared in the face of his visitor.

"Really, Ned," said he, "you surprise me this morning! Have you forgotten what an easy thing it is to hang you?"

"No easier than it is for me to have your company."

"It is astonishing how some people learn to deceive themselves, Ned! These foolish persons think it no more difficult to pull down a stone tower than a mud wall. I recollect one Will Oakley, who was simple enough to try it—perhaps you knew him! The exertion brought on congestion of the brain!"

"If you treat your friends in this way," faltered the man, dropping his eyes and changing colour, "how can you expect them not to turn on you?"

"What I want is obedience. What I am all the time inculcating is caution. When these are observed, I am satisfied; but when men become obstinate, or revengeful, I must of course betake myself to my remedy."

"I am sure, captain," said Rundell, humbly, "I always try to do the best I can."

"Ah, now you speak like a sensible fellow! There is some capital Burgundy in the case yonder—a present from my friend the duke—sit down and amuse yourself with it while I finish my toilet."

Rundell did not wait a second bidding; his brow cleared immediately, and although he addressed himself at once to his potations, he was still continuing his inroads when Leigh completed his personal adornment.

"Now," said the latter, "push aside that bottle, Ned, if you please, and let us proceed to business, for I am expecting a visitor whom it were quite as well you should not see. Where is the girl?"

"By this hand!" said the man, bringing his broad palm upon his knee as he spoke, "of all the slippery things in the world, next to an eel, is a woman. You think you have caught her as fast as a smith's vice, and the next minute she is through your fingers and off no one knows where."

"By which, I am to understand you have failed again," said Leigh, knitting his brow.

"Nothing less than the truth will satisfy you, captain, or else I should have trusted to my wit to see how far a lie would have served. Just as we laid our hands fairly on her, and while Lumley was keeping her fast, and I was busy disengaging my cloak to throw over her head, up rides a horseman at full gallop, and, swinging the butt of his riding-whip right and left, knocks Lumley down, and sends me sprawling after him into the middle of the street. In an instant, the hue-and-cry was raised, the girl was off, and we made our way into hiding as speedily as possible. Well, all is not lost that is not gained; and 'Better luck next time,' stands good yet. But if I ever meet with this young Master Heriot"—

"Heriot! what Heriot?" exclaimed Leigh, with a start.

"The old goldsmith's son. You ought to know him, for I see a jewelled ring upon your finger that looks very like his handicraft."

"I thought he was a peaceably-inclined young man; but he seems to have handled his whip well."

"Ay! and if I do not mark him for it, may"—

"Tut! tut! you must not talk in that way, Ned. A blow! Bah! that is nothing."

"It will cost him his life!" responded Rundell, with a scowl.

"Pooh! pooh! I know better than that. You will bear it patiently, Ned. The laugh will be against you, it is true; but then, you know, a light laugh breaks no bones."

Rundell said nothing; but, while his features assumed a fiendish expression, he drew from within his vest a long, keen dagger.

"A pretty piece of workmanship," said Leigh, carelessly.

"It is for him!" said the man, hissing the words through his teeth.

"Who, Heriot? Are you in earnest, Ned?"

"Look at me, and see!" said Rundell, presenting a face, every line of which was working with revengeful passion.

"Why, you do appear something like the incarnation of evil," said Leigh. "But put up your weapon and listen to me. Do you not think we might manage to wipe out this stain without shedding blood at all? Hear me out! Your failure will trouble the duke exceedingly. Now, if I was to drop a hint that the cause is owing to this young man, Heriot,—and suggest that, if we were quietly rid of him for a while, the affair could be readily

accomplished,—it seems to me that the duke would provide for his safety perfectly to your satisfaction, and without compromising us at all."

"And if he does not; what then?"

"Why, then, Ned, I am afraid you will have to take care of yourself."

"Of the jeweller, you mean."

"I was thinking of the heavy riding-whip, Ned. Not a bad weapon in vigorous hands, I should say."

"When will you hear from the duke?" said Rundell, abruptly.

"I shall endeavour to pay my respects to him to-day. It is always best to arrange such matters as these as soon as possible. Come, a parting glass; and then you must excuse me. Above all, do nothing till we meet again. Do not be concerned about the girl, it is but a little delay; but, whenever you capture her, remember, she is to be brought here. Here, to this house; such are my orders, and, of course, they must be obeyed."

"I shall not forget," said Rundell, taking up his hat.

"Hold yourself ready, then, at a moment's warning. I cannot tell how soon I may need you. Perhaps to-night, perhaps not until to-morrow; but, whenever it is, be ready!"

And with this parting injunction Leigh dismissed his subordinate; and then, flinging himself into a chair, was soon buried in profound thought. After a while he rose; and, taking up his rapier, said:

"Well, it is useless to wait any longer. I suppose our friend Heriot will not come to see me; so much the better; but, as suspicion is an ugly thing, he must be removed, nevertheless. Ha! who are these?" he suddenly exclaimed, approaching cautiously an angle of the window. "The old man, too! Why, what can he want here? Do they hunt in couples? Pest on't! I should have thought one would have been enough."

At this moment the door opened, and Spot, intruding his head, announced the goldsmith and his son.

"Say, I shall be happy to see them," exclaimed Leigh, in a loud, cheerful voice. "Ha! Good morrow to you, Mr. Heriot! This is an unexpected pleasure. Mr. Francis, your servant! Be seated, gentlemen. You are looking well, Mr. Heriot. Will you excuse me while I fasten this rapier? I have promised to meet a friend at the palace of White Hall this morning."

"A fine old house this!" said Heriot, glancing round.

"Passable, sir! Passable!" responded Leigh, carelessly. "Not exactly what I would wish it; but still it will do."

"I dare say," said Heriot.

"Your tasteful eye would discover many things about it that might be improved; but changes of that kind require more means than I can command

at present. I suppose, Mr. Heriot," he continued, with a smile, drawing his chair familiarly between the father and son, "I suppose you imagine me a very dilatory paymaster, considering the trifling sum I owe you; but the truth is, there has been a sad irregularity of late in my usual receipts of money, arising from a variety of causes, which to explain fully would be tedious to you, and quite annoying to me. I must, therefore, throw myself on your indulgence a little longer."

"Mr. Leigh!" said the goldsmith, with a crabbed look, "I want my money."

"You shall have it, Mr. Heriot."

"Ay, ay! it is all very well to say I shall have it; and if bills could be paid with promises, I should not have many of them outstanding. But when? I want to know when?"

"When? Oh, shortly—very shortly!" responded Leigh, with his favourite indefiniteness.

"To-morrow?"

"Really, Mr. Heriot, that is drawing the bonds too tightly."

"The day after, then?"

Leigh frowned darkly; but observing the eyes of Francis Heriot turned full upon him, he burst into a gay laugh, and said—

"Be it so! I see we must have a fixed time. The day after to-morrow. And now, gentlemen," he added, rising, "as your business with me is ended,

will you permit me to remind you of my appointment?"

"Sit down, Mr. Leigh," said the elder Heriot, looking that gay gentleman thoughtfully in the face. "I dare say, you think me harsh and hard this morning. It is very natural you should do so; but I have reason, sir—I have reason."

"Now for it!" thought Leigh.

"I say, I have reason. My son, Francis, there, was robbed on the king's highway last night."

"Indeed!" said Leigh, turning his head, and steadily gazing at the younger Heriot. "Indeed! I am sorry to hear it; and, under such circumstances, can readily excuse the absence of your usual courtesy. I suppose the amount must have been quite large?"

"Five hundred pounds!" said Heriot, with a smothered sigh.

"Foh! is that all? I thought it more likely to be five thousand. The loss of such a trifle as that ought not to disturb your peace of mind a single minute."

"Ay, but it does—it does! Five pounds or five thousand, it is all one. The money has been stolen, and my diamonds, my beautiful diamonds. I will tell you what I mean to do," he continued, as if suddenly excited by the remembrance of his lost jewels. He clutched the arm of Leigh, and held it nervously with his long, bony fingers. "If I lay my

hands upon the man, I will never quit my hold till he swings upon the Tyburn tree. Never! never!"

Startled, as much by the fierce vehemence of the speaker as by his action, Leigh sprang to his feet, and, shaking himself loose, with a look of terror, from the grasp of the old goldsmith, exclaimed hurriedly—

"Mr. Heriot! this—this—I do not understand! I mean—these sentiments, coming from an—an old man—are so atrocious, so horrible, that my nature revolts at them. I—I shudder, even now, at the idea of so remorseless a revenge."

"I beg your pardon," said Heriot, meekly, and looking about him with a bewildered air. "I humbly beg your pardon. Perhaps this trouble has made me not exactly right here," placing his finger upon his forehead. "You say true—I am an old man. Seventy odd—ay, seventy odd!"

"Then, let me tell you, sir, with all deference, it would be well if you were to permit your son to assume a filial care, which seems to me very much needed," said Leigh, glancing haughtily at the younger Heriot.

"Who? He? Frank?" exclaimed the old man, shaking his head, with a cynical laugh. "No, no! He knows better—he knows better!"

"Mr. Francis Heriot," said Leigh, coolly, "I am sorry my engagements are of so pressing a nature that I cannot ask you to remain longer. Will you

favour me by withdrawing your father? His mind seems singularly disordered."

Francis Heriot understood, well enough, his father's motives for acting so strangely; but while he felt ashamed that such tricks should be resorted to, he did not dare to notice them, lest the suspicion of Leigh should be aroused; so he merely said—

"We will leave immediately."

The old man was sitting, at this time, in apparent unconsciousness, with his head bent upon his breast and his hands resting upon his knees. Looking slowly up at the respectful touch of his son, he passed his hands several times across his brow, as if to clear the confusion of his memory.

"Dear, dear!" said he, "I cannot make it out. It is very strange. I wonder where I can find my money,—can you tell me, Mr. Leigh?"

Irritated beyond endurance by the suspicion which he saw still dimly floating in the mind of the goldsmith, and not less so, perhaps, by the searching glances of his son, Leigh answered sharply—

"How should I know? If you wish to learn who robbed him of it, or whether he was robbed at all"—

"Stop, Mr. Leigh!" said Francis Heriot, sternly. "Do you doubt my"—

"Frank, I want to go home. Ah, me! I am seventy odd!" muttered the goldsmith, with apparently increasing feebleness.

But, if Leigh had not been confronting the

younger Heriot at that moment, he would have seen the dark, eager eyes of the old man watching him with a hawk-like vigilance, that betokened the rapid workings of an intellect far keener than that gay gentleman imagined it to be.

"Do you doubt my having been robbed in the manner my father has stated?" said Francis Heriot.

"I neither doubt nor care any thing at all about it," said Leigh. "I know very well that all young men are inclined to wild courses; and it is, therefore, no marvel to me when I sometimes hear of imaginary highwaymen despoiling them. Not that this is your case," continued Leigh, bowing sarcastically. "I consider Mr. Francis Heriot so much above the vices of the age, that I even refused to credit the statement of my informant, when I heard, some half an hour ago, of his having encountered you last evening, near Black Friar's Bridge, with a strange woman hanging on your arm."

"False! false!" cried the old man, rousing himself with a sudden vehemence. "Stamp the lie beneath your feet, Frank! You have no strange associate! There was no woman! Answer him, my son; answer him!"

"How Mr. Leigh could have learned this," said Francis Heriot with a quivering lip, "I have no means of knowing. The manner in which he has applied his information demands a notice to which, I trust, he will do me the favour to respond."

The closing words, addressed in a low tone to Leigh, were met by him with a significant smile, and a gay, nonchalant bow. To the ear of the elder Heriot they were quite inaudible; for he had now become really absorbed by one terrible thought—the disingenuousness of his son.

“Frank!” said he, brokenly. “This woman! Is it true?”

“Yes, sir,” said Francis Heriot, drawing himself up with a look of conscious rectitude. “It is true!”

The old man uttered a sharp, piercing cry, and, staggering back, leaned against a chair for support.

“Take me away!” said he, hoarsely. “Take me away! I must go home! Home!”

“This is your work, Leigh,” said the younger Heriot, going to the assistance of his father. “If I live, you shall answer for it.”

Leigh met the menace with an exulting smile.

“It is not often I condescend to oblige a citizen,” said he, impertinently; “but in this case, I am disposed to waive social distinctions. May I request you, as a favour, to make your arrangements as early as possible?”

With these words they bowed and parted; and while Heriot accompanied his father gloomily homewards, Leigh, humming an opera tune, moved lightly and gayly in the direction of White Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

WHATEVER crimes might have been imputed to Leigh—and the catalogue to which he could have pleaded guilty was a large one—his career, thus far, had been singularly successful; and the faculty he possessed of promptly and boldly meeting emergencies, was, perhaps, the chief cause of the long immunity he had enjoyed.

Reckless in his expenditures, gay in his manners, courteous in his address, an excellent swordsman, with a ready wit, and by no means scrupulous in his notions of honour, he had the very qualities which the quick perception of the versatile and dissolute Buckingham recognised as so eminently serviceable in a convenient friend.

Thus far Leigh had succeeded in retaining the favour of his eccentric patron, and he busied himself, as he went along, in devising schemes to strengthen the alliance at present existing between them, and to avert the consequences of the threatened disclosures which his defection from Louise might occasion.

Passing through the Mall, Leigh saw many gentlemen of the court playing at tennis, most of whom he recognised; but though he was spoken to by

several to join them in their sport, he excused himself on the plea of a prior engagement with the duke.

On reaching White Hall, he proceeded at once towards the suite of apartments occupied by his patron. The ante-room he found already crowded with quite a number of persons waiting an audience, but notwithstanding the unfavourable prospect thus afforded for a speedy conference, Leigh determined to facilitate matters by requesting an early interview; and the page, as if conscious that inferior affairs frequently took precedence of more important ones, did not hesitate to convey the message at once.

Presently he returned, but with a manner so changed, that Leigh saw, on the instant, the young attendant had met with a rebuke. As the latter approached, however, he put on his most winning smile, and said, cheerfully, "Well, François?"

"His grace desires you to wait, Leigh," said the page, saucily; and, turning on his heel, as if desirous of avoiding any further conversation, he crossed the room, and, seating himself within the embrasure of a window, looked down into the gardens below.

Baffled, but not altogether disheartened, Leigh paused for a moment to collect his thoughts; and, then, following his messenger, drew back the heavy curtains concealing the latter from the general view, and seated himself beside him.

"François," said he, in a low voice. There was no answer.

"François!" he repeated. "If a young gentleman should happen to find a tolerably well-filled purse at his girdle merely by answering a few simple questions, do you not think he would esteem it quite a fortunate occurrence?"

"He might, or he might not," said the page.

"Dear me!" said Leigh. "I thought the question did not admit of a doubt. But, I confess, I am very stupid this morning. Now, were I in your place, and a friend was to come to me and say, François, I desire a little information which I can well afford to pay for, and which can in nowise compromise you"—

"Are you sure of that?" interrupted the page, quickly.

"Oh, positive!"

"Well! What would you do then?"

"I should suffer him quietly to deposit the precious specific in my not unwilling hand, and, after putting it carefully away, should reply courteously to any questions that did not seriously involve the interests of my master."

The page laughed, and stretched out his hand. As he poised the glittering bait upon his finger, his eyes twinkled, and nodding his approbation, he said—

"Propound!"

"His grace is dissatisfied with me?"

"You are answering your own question," replied François, bowing.

"Is the cause serious?"

François shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can tell?" said he. "It is not to be denied, you have been very indiscreet, Mr. Leigh; and not the least among your indiscretions is that of having offended the charming Mademoiselle d'Ocquetonville."

"So," said Leigh; "she has been here?"

"The lady was detailing her wrongs, and your perfidies, to his grace, when I entered."

"And the duke; how did he appear to receive the narrative?"

"With the gravity of a judge, and the consideration of a parent. There. That is all I know concerning you," said the page, rising and throwing aside the curtain; "and as soon as Mademoiselle Louise takes her departure, my orders are to admit you. Ah, here she comes! Be cautious how you play your game, for the most dangerous of all antagonists is a revengeful woman."

At this moment, Louise, gayly dressed, and delicately rouged, swept majestically down the room; the crowd discreetly dividing before her. When she came to where Leigh was standing, she stopped suddenly, regarded him for a moment with a triumphant smile, and then making him a low, sarcas-

tic courtesy, passed onwards, amid a general tittering, that broke out into open laughter as soon as she had disappeared, and afforded quite a refreshing subject of conversation when Leigh, preceded by the page, was admitted to the presence of Buckingham.

No person, gifted with the commonest powers of observation, could have entered the apartment in which the duke was seated, without gathering, from the evidences around, the carelessly erratic character and singularly varied accomplishments of its occupant. It was not manifested so much from the array of books that loaded the shelves—although their titles ranged from Homer and Plutarch, Demosthenes, Cicero, Machiavelli, and Bacon, down to Rabelais, and the loosest French Chansonniers—as from the strange medley of things strewed in promiscuous disorder over the table and fauteuils; upon the seats and backs of chairs; and heaped up negligently about the room. On the table beside him lay, mixed up with important state papers, a new system of musical notation, many of the manuscript leaves of which were intermingled with plans and specifications for the magnificent palace he contemplated erecting; while admirable engravings of Raphael's splendid cartoons were strangely associated with ludicrous caricatures, and studies of heads from the pencil of Vandyke. Near by, was a collection of court and gala dresses; some grave and severe, and others of the quaintest and most fantastical descrip-

tion. A little farther on, perukes of several colours occupied their respective blocks. On one side of a gorgeous mirror hung weapons of different kinds, while on the marble slab before it lay huddled together a variety of musical instruments. From the walls, depended pictures by the best masters; and between them were foils and masks for fencing; hawking gloves, jesses, and bells; while scattered all about was a multitude of things equally indicative of the character of one who was "every thing by starts and nothing long."

And there sat the duke himself; with his dark complexion and his handsome face; with his bold black eyes, his sensual mouth, and his fine intellectual brow, the man whose vast and comprehensive genius exhibited itself by fitful flashes, and whose egregious follies filled up the intervals between.

The duke took no notice of the presence of Leigh, further than by a slight frown. But to François, whom curiosity tempted to linger, he said—"Why do you wait, sir? Go!" in so quick and sharp a tone, that the page started in confusion, bowed hurriedly, and precipitately retired.

For some minutes, Buckingham resumed his writing. At length he threw his pen aside, and, looking up suddenly, said—

"Come here! Are you aware," he continued, as Leigh approached, "that Mademoiselle d'Ocquetonville has been with me?"

"I had the honour of meeting that lady just now."

"Do you know that she accuses you of crimes, the penalty of which, under the law, is death?"

"I do not! But your grace must be conscious that, to a lady of her fervid temperament, trifling peccadilloes assume the aspect of great crimes. I trust, therefore, sir, that in any thing mademoiselle has said concerning me, you will make due allowance both for the mood which has prompted her revelations, and for that excess of imagination by which they are doubtless distorted and coloured."

"This is no answer," said the duke, sharply. "Are her charges true?"

"Until it shall please you to inform me what those charges are, it is impossible for me to affirm or deny them. Of the lady's personal complaints"—

"Of them hereafter. You robbed a citizen last night! Is that true? If you palter with me, I will have you hanged in chains, though all the judges of the land should plead for your pardon. Is it true? Answer me."

"Your grace is pleased to say so."

"I am not pleased at all! It is plain to me, you are a greater knave than I thought."

"A very faithful one," said Leigh, in a deprecating tone.

"How do I know that? Men are all faithful enough until they are discovered to be false. Where is the girl I bade you bring me?"

"I grieve to say, your grace, we have not yet succeeded. She was in our hands last evening, but, unfortunately, was rescued from us almost immediately."

"How could that be, when you were away robbing one of his majesty's lieges?"

Leigh bit his lip, and winced terribly at the plain-spoken words of the duke.

"It is true, nevertheless," said he. "I was not, indeed, present myself; but two persons, in whose fidelity I could confide, attempted to fulfil the commission, under my directions."

"In whose name?" said the duke; "in whose name?"

"In mine, of course. You could not suppose me guilty of committing your grace in so delicate an affair?"

"I do not know. You have deceived me already. How can I trust you, when I find the execution of my wishes transferred to unknown hands, while you, upon whom I relied, are absent upon rascally adventures of your own?"

"Ah, sir!" pleaded Leigh, "the temptation was so irresistible!"

The very impudence of this bold avowal was almost too much for the gravity of the duke; but, though his brow relaxed somewhat, and there was a slight quivering at the corners of his lips, his voice still retained its sternness.

"Who were your accomplices in this outrage upon the public safety?"

"Under favour, sir, I humbly ask if it would be proper in me to answer a question which might, or might not, involve the safety of others?"

"The old adage," said the duke, with a sarcastic smile, "Honour among thieves! Well, sir; well! it will be sufficient for me to learn they were none of my people."

"Oh! dear, no! They are too discreet, I trust, to commit any such follies."

"Follies, sir!" replied the duke, sharply; "over such follies as these, you will please to remember, I cast no mantle of protection. It is a favour that I remain passive. Who was this person,—the man that was robbed, I mean?"

Under ordinary circumstances Leigh would have refused, by answering, to criminate himself; but having a bold scheme in view, he saw at once the opportunity it gave him of carrying it out. He therefore replied, with an assumption of carelessness—

"There was a young man by the name of Heriot, the son of the wealthy goldsmith, who lost a sum of money upon Black Heath, last evening; and he is the same person to whom we were subsequently indebted for the rescue of the lady in whose fortunes your grace has been pleased to take so deep an interest."

Altogether ignorant of Buckingham's rencontre

with the young jeweller a few hours previous, Leigh was surprised to see the duke rise instantly from his chair, and pace the room in an agitated manner.

"Heriot! Heriot! Must this citizen be always baffling me? He crosses me at every turn."

"Perhaps," said Leigh, cautiously, "as he appears to be a serious difficulty in the way of success, your grace had better surrender the pursuit."

"Sirrah! sirrah! you mock me!" exclaimed the duke, fiercely. "Give up the pursuit! and to what purpose? To encounter the ridicule of Sedley, and the epigrams of Rochester? To hear de Grammont narrate the story of my discomfiture with all the malicious wit of which he is so expert a master? To endure the coarse, biting jests of Tom Killigrew, and the raillery of aping courtiers? I tell you, no! Obstacles are but stimulants to me; and such a one as this"——

"May be easily removed," suggested Leigh, quietly, "if your grace will condescend to empower me to undertake the task."

Buckingham stopped suddenly short in his walk, and looking keenly in the face of his visitor, said—

"You are a dark tempter, Leigh; and I can well understand how the disappearance of this young man would be of service to yourself. But you are in error. I will not consent to be a party to any such bloody purpose, not even to oblige so serviceable a friend as Mr. Basil Leigh."

"It is you who have mistaken my meaning, my lord duke," said Leigh, boldly. "The young gentleman himself has already hinted to me, this morning, his intention of sending me a cartel, and I know sufficient of his spirit to feel satisfied he will keep his word."

"For what cause?"

"A very simple one!" replied Leigh, with a laugh. "It appears he entertained some dim suspicions of my honesty, and I took the opportunity of resenting them in a manner becoming an injured man."

"So!" said the duke; "and you intend to meet him?"

"I have condescended to waive our difference in station," said Leigh, superciliously. "If he behaves himself well, however, I think I shall let him off easily."

"See that you do so!" said the duke; "I will have you spare his life. I like his manliness, although I may prefer he should have shown it in some other way. Let me know the result. In the mean time, keep a sharp look-out for the girl. If you fail again, expect no further favour from me. François!" the page appeared. "Wait, I will speak with you presently. Mr. Leigh, you will bear in mind what I have said."

"Your grace may depend upon me," replied Leigh, moving towards the door; and then, making a profound bow, he retired.

"Depend on you!" muttered the duke. "Ay, I will do so. But I will not fully trust you, nevertheless. These plots and counterplots, I do not like. You shall be watched, Master Leigh! you shall be watched! And this young Heriot!" he paused for a moment, and then striking his palms quickly together, exclaimed, "I have it—François! if Captain Oldcastle waits without, admit him."

CHAPTER VII.

IN the art of keeping up appearances, an art requiring the most consummate tact and address, Mr. Basil Leigh was a proficient. It was a species of dissimulation which came naturally to him; and even if the peculiar current of his life had not made it necessary, he would, without doubt, have exercised his talents in this way from the mere satisfaction which his skill in such pretensions gave him.

Mr. Basil Leigh rarely showed himself in his true colours to any one. He would not have been seen downcast for the world. He knew that a smiling face and a buoyant air floated a man pleasantly on the surface of the world, and obtained him ready assistance even among its whirlpools; and he had seen, alas! but too often, how honest timidity, by displaying its anxieties openly, was left unaided and

unpitied, to be cast helplessly stranded on the bleak shore; or was suffered to be dragged down into the vortex from which it might have escaped had but a single hand been stretched out to its relief.

True, therefore, to his natural inclinations, and guided by the lessons he had learned, when Mr. Basil Leigh took leave of the Duke of Buckingham, he re-entered the ante-chamber with such a light, jocund step, and so well-pleased a smile, that not one of all the crowd there assembled could have supposed that his interview had been any other than of the most gratifying character; and, yet, although the immediate apprehensions of Leigh were considerably lightened, he was very far from feeling perfectly at his ease. The manner of his patron had been abrupt and menacing; and, although it was evident the duke was inclined to continue his useful subordinate in favour, the conditions imposed were such as Leigh, having his own projects in view, did not feel at all disposed to comply with.

But, notwithstanding the differences that were beginning to exist between the duke and Leigh, it was the policy of the latter to keep others in ignorance of them. Strolling, therefore, through the park, he purposely encountered such of his courtly acquaintances as were abroad at that hour, and so charmed them by his happy, light-hearted manner, and the joyous tone of his conversation, that he not only effectually succeeded in impressing them with

a profound belief in the brilliancy and stability of his fortunes, but set them to thinking, after he had taken his departure, in what way they could best promote the interests of a gentleman, who, if they remained aloof, seemed destined to rise to the height of court favour without them.

This delicate and interesting duty being thus satisfactorily performed, Mr. Basil Leigh proceeded on his way homeward. He walked slow, because time hung rather heavy on his hands; and because, without looking too thoughtful, it gave him an opportunity of planning out his little schemes as he went along.

But, though he had matters for reflection, enough to keep his thoughts all the time active, he managed to preserve that air of satisfaction with himself which had so often led others to believe he was one of the happiest and most disengaged men in the world. He did more. He carried on the double process of looking about him and recognising, by a gay word or a laughing nod, such persons as he chanced to meet; while, at the same time, the under-current of his thoughts was busily working out the tortuous channels by which he was to escape from his present dangerous position.

In this way, with occasional interruptions, he reached the neighbourhood of Charing Cross; when, on casting his eyes towards Northumberland House as if he was carelessly surveying the stone lion on

the parapet above, he became aware of Ned Rundell standing by the gates, and, by quiet but significant gestures, seeking to attract his immediate attention.

Paying no more apparent regard to the signals than if they were not meant for him, Leigh continued his walk until he came to a narrow street leading towards the river—when he turned down it, and, passing into a small tavern, entered a retired room. Here he was shortly afterwards joined by his subordinate, who, carefully closing the door behind him, brought forward a chair, and, seating himself upon it, looked at Leigh with such a mixed expression of agitation and mystery, that the latter was both puzzled and alarmed.

"Well, Ned!" said he, impatiently, "what is in the wind now? You look as frightened as if all the constables in the city were at your heels; and as mysterious as a woman with her first secret."

Suddenly, Rundell rose, cast a suspicious glance all round the little room, looked beneath the tables, examined the fireplace, opened the cupboards, stole tiptoe to the door, and, after listening attentively, as if satisfied at length that no person was within hearing, he approached Leigh, and, bending over the back of his chair, said, in a low, exulting whisper,

"They are coming to my house to-night!"

"What, the constables?" said Leigh. "Well, they will find nothing there, I think; and if you feel your

own person at all in danger, you have only to slip down to Alsatia and defy the whole posse of them. Pest on't! why do you plague me with these things?"

"Speak lower, captain, if you please," said Rundell, with an air of offended importance. "Why should I care for constables, when I carry about me a secret that would open the doors of all the prisons in England?"

"Faith!" said Leigh, with a laugh, "a talisman of that kind would be well worth having."

"I have got it, then," said Rundell, confidently; "and it will not only obtain me a free pardon for all my little offences against the laws, but put a pretty sum of money in my purse, besides."

"What a fortunate knave you are!" said Leigh, sarcastically; "pray let me see this wonderful philosopher's stone."

"By this hand! I have a great mind not to say any thing more, since I find you do not believe me," said Rundell, doggedly.

"On the contrary, Ned! I think you one of the most reliable of men. Proceed!"

"Well, then," said Rundell, "first of all—but I must tell the story in my own way. You know, the young gentlewoman I have been set to watch so long, Mistress Esther Holmes, I think, you call her; though"—here Rundell cast at his employer a cunning look of triumph—"though I call her Mistress Esther Whalley."

Leigh started and bit his lip. He was now all eager attention. He well knew what a large reward was offered for the apprehension of Whalley, and inferred at once that Rundell had discovered the secret hiding-place of the regicide—a secret which Leigh supposed was known only to himself. It was upon this supposition, too, that the latter had rested for success in his designs upon the fair daughter of the stern old Puritan. The condition of the father's safety he had made in his own mind the turning-point in the daughter's destiny. Leigh loved Esther Whalley with all the passionate strength of his evil nature; and he had long since determined she should be his, in spite of the powerful Buckingham, and in opposition to her own probable repugnance; and his hopes had been the stronger since he depended for winning her consent less upon his own personal blandishments than upon her filial devotion. But now it appeared to him as if his elaborate fabric was all at once tottering above his head. He spoke, however, very calmly.

"Well, what of her?" said he. "So you have found out where she lives, I suppose?"

"Why, no; not exactly that, though I have tried hard enough, too. But I have done what I think a great deal better."

Leigh was instantly relieved; but he did not again betray his feelings. He merely said—

"Explain yourself. I do not understand what you could have discovered better than that."

"But I do," said Rundell, with a grin, "as you shall hear presently. You see, I was ordered to watch this young Mistress Whalley, and obtain all the tidings I could concerning her. Being acquainted, in my younger days, with some of Cromwell's old troopers, I thought if I set to work to claim friendship with them, now that their fortunes were under a cloud, it would look kindly like, and open their hearts towards me; especially if I pretended to have reformed my life, and to have come round to their way of thinking about the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, and such-like matters."

"You are a cunning rascal, Rundell!" said Leigh.

The ruffian laughed. Under the circumstances, he regarded the epithet as a compliment.

"I found them, as I expected," continued he, "a little shy at first. There were some unfavourable impressions to be got rid of, which cost me a little trouble; but when those wore off, and they saw how changed I was, they agreed to come to my house and talk over old times and old acquaintances. Being dissatisfied with the present government"—

"You? I never heard that before!"

"Bah! What do I care? I wanted to make friends with them, and so I was any thing they pleased. I am afraid, too, I hinted at the great

prospect of success which a well-conducted conspiracy would meet with, just now; and I know I railed terribly at the degeneracy of the men of the old Commonwealth, and praised highly the benefit which the people would derive if the king and the Duke of York were quietly got rid of; the chancellor tied up in his own woollen sack and thrown over Westminster Bridge; Buckingham, Rochester, and Sedley thrust out of the country; and Mr. Killigrew put in the pillory. In this way, by little and little, I got them to agree to try whether the old order of things could not be reinstated; and, as there seemed to be a difficulty in finding a quiet house where they could meet, without suspicion"—

"You offered them yours, I suppose?"

"They have agreed to assemble there to-night," said Rundell, nodding; "and, if I mistake not, from what some of them said, they expect some very important personages to be among them.—And now, Captain Leigh, I will thank you to tell me whether my secret is worth any thing, or not."

"That depends very much upon the use you intend to make of it. Is it your purpose to betray these people to the government?"

"Do you think I have led them on to this for nothing?" said the ruffian. "I take it, my information is worth a pretty large sum; and, as the affair is likely to create some little stir among their friends, perhaps it will be as well for me to go abroad after-

wards; where, if I spend my money like a gentleman, no person will ask how I came by it."

"Of course, you know the names of all these men," said Leigh, carelessly.

"Every one of them; but, as that is a part of my secret, I shall not tell even you, captain."

"You are perfectly right, Ned," replied Leigh, in a calm, unruffled tone. "But there is one thing you appear to have forgotten, and that is—unless your friends are really found guilty, you will not only get no remuneration whatever for the trouble you appear to have had, but will subject yourself to certain pains and penalties far less agreeable to contemplate. In a case of treason, Master Ned Rundell, the law requires two witnesses."

With a blank downcast look, Rundell inquired, falteringly, if that was really so.

"If you doubt it, ask any lawyer you please. And I am also under the impression, Ned, that your reputation for veracity is not quite so firmly established as to lead the judges to pronounce your evidence sufficient without being corroborated by another."

Rundell gasped unpleasantly, but he had no idea of losing the object for which he had so villanously toiled.

"Will not Dickon, my boy, do?" he said, eagerly.

"Humph!" said Leigh, shrugging his shoulders doubtfully. "With a little tutoring, I dare say, he

might be made to answer. The boy is acute enough, unless he should chance to get confused, or alarmed, and then he would most likely be good for nothing."

"I will risk that," said Rundell. "I know Dickon."

"As you please," replied Leigh, coldly.

"It will require a strong force to take them?" said Rundell, inquiringly.

"I should suppose so," said Leigh, rising; "but it seems to me you will be late in making your arrangements now."

"Stop a moment, captain," said Rundell, eagerly. "That is what I was going to say. It is time I was home. If I was missed, every thing would go wrong. What can I do? You see I am in a difficulty. I am afraid I cannot carry out my plans by myself. Now if you would only assist me, captain."

"Faith, not I!" said Leigh, shortly. "You must manage your own business, Master Rundell. This is an affair with which I desire to have nothing to do."

"Oh, but you must," entreated Rundell. "I do not know what to do. I cannot get along without you."

Leigh laughed quietly at the dilemma in which his follower was placed, and he saw plainly the time was come when he could make his own terms.

"You are a fool, Ned Rundell!" said he. "What interest have I in this matter?"

"Interest enough, I should say," replied Rundell.
 "You increase your reputation at court."

"Humph," said Leigh.

"You touch a part of the reward."

"Ah, now your argument grows stronger."

"And I will bring pretty Mistress Whalley to your house within three days."

"That settles the matter. But I thought you did not know where to find her?"

"I shall know to-night," said Rundell, significantly.

"Understand me, Rundell. If I consent to aid you, I do not wish my name to be connected with this villanous business."

"Just as you please about that, captain. So, if you will give information to the government, and see that the necessary warrants are made out, and the men ready to execute them—I will manage the rest."

"So be it then. And now for the terms."

After some little difficulty on the part of Rundell, these were agreed upon; and the hour of ten in the evening being fixed as the time for Dickon to meet the military and civil force in the quadrangle of Somerset House, Leigh parted from his companion, and, calling a coach, lost no time in returning to White Hall.

The plea of urgent business soon gained him admittance to Buckingham; but, finding his patron in

the great gallery, surrounded by a number of gentlemen, he stood aloof, and waited impatiently until his presence should be recognised. Presently Buckingham came towards him.

"To what good fortune," said he, with an ironical smile, "am I indebted for two visits from Captain Leigh in one day? Is it possible that his diligence has already surmounted all his former mishaps, and that he has caged his bird already?"

"If your grace will grant me the favour of a few words in private," said Leigh, in a low tone, "I have hopes that the subject upon which I desire to confer with you will amply justify my intrusion."

"Is the business pressing?" inquired the duke, quickly.

"So pressing, my lord, that it will not admit of delay," said Leigh, boldly.

"See that you make your assertion good, sir," said Buckingham, sharply. "I do not like to be interrupted. Come with me!" he continued, moving towards a private apartment at the farther end of the hall. As they approached it, the duke called out to one of the pages,—

"Keep the door; I desire to be private. Now, Captain Leigh," he added, with some sternness in his manner, "this affair should be one of moment, since it appears to have rendered you forgetful of your customary respect."

"I fear my relation will prove it so," said Leigh,

bowing to the rebuke. "Information of a dangerous conspiracy against his majesty's government has just reached me; and, although I am ignorant of the names of the persons concerned in it, I have certain knowledge of their intention to meet this evening."

These tidings were of so much more serious a nature than Buckingham had been led to suppose, that he now regarded his visitor with a look of eager surprise. He soon, however, regained his composure, and said, in a tone expressive of doubt—

"You move in such an eccentric orbit, Leigh, and have such an admirable way of embellishing all matters in which you are concerned, that you must pardon me when I ask, where, in this somewhat romantic revelation, the truth ends, and the fable begins?"

"Your grace does me an injustice," said Leigh, reddening. "I am only narrating what I believe to be wholly true."

"That is so uncommon in you, Leigh," began the duke, "that really—" but, as if suddenly repenting his sarcasm, he added, gravely, "We have had such a number of plots reported already, which were found on investigation to be either peurile or imaginary, that perhaps I have become too incredulous as to the possible existence of any persons foolish enough to attempt such a thing."

"You will find this serious enough, my lord duke,

and, as there is likely to be resistance offered, I am desired to obtain a force sufficient to secure the certain arrest of the parties."

"You, at least, appear to believe in your informant," said the duke, gravely.

"I cannot do otherwise, so please you, since he is a person acquainted with all the particulars of the plot, and is joined with the conspirators for the purpose of frustrating it."

"And perhaps," said Buckingham, sarcastically, "looking to a grateful government for a fitting reward for his services?"

"It may be so, sir," responded Leigh. "But I humbly submit to your grace, whether, if the benefit to the crown is an important one, it should take strict cognisance of the motive that actuated it? I confess I know the man, and such may possibly be his expectation; but, where a conspiracy actually exists, it is very rarely discovered unless by some such agency."

"And you feel satisfied of the existence of one at this time?"

"So much so, that I am willing to risk my favour with your grace upon the truth of my report."

Buckingham smiled equivocally. "That sounds well," said he. "What if I accept the gage? Of course, the person who has entered this conspiracy with such disinterested views is not Captain Leigh?"

"No, my lord!"

"I am to understand he does not even know any of the parties connected with it?"

"Only the one I have already mentioned."

"Nor the condition of the persons: whether they are sectaries, or of the established church?"

"Of this, I cannot speak positively. I believe them to be influential Puritans."

The anxiety of Buckingham now visibly increased. There was a clearness in the information, as far as it went, which, confirmed by the positive tone of Leigh, seemed to demand immediate attention.

"Well!" said he; "what assistance do you require?"

"If a small detachment of horse was stationed secretly within the gate of Somerset House before ten o'clock this evening, and the officer in command instructed to act under my direction, I think that that would be all that is necessary. The civil force"—

"Tut! What need of civil force in such a case? You shall have the men. Now get you away as speedily as possible. Speak not a word concerning this affair to any one. If there is to be any honour gained in crushing this plot, the fewer who share in it the better. At Somerset House, you say? The hour; ten! They shall be there. Report to me in the morning. Remember, to me only!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVANCING the course of our narrative only a few hours in point of time, let us now fling open to the view of the reader the exterior of an ancient and much dilapidated mansion, situated in a narrow street leading to the water side. Its construction, as we have already stated, was of a far earlier and ruder day. The arms, cut in stone on the face of the edifice, indicated that it once belonged to the noble family of Howard; and the date, 1527, that it was erected at a period when its haughty founder stood highest in the esteem of that blood-thirsty tyrant, Henry the Eighth. A great change had passed over it since then! The noble gateway which once led to the courtyard in front, had long since disappeared. The little chapel, forming one of its wings, had shared the same fate. In the rear, a confused mass of dingy dwellings, damp, mouldy, and weather-beaten, usurped the space where flourished, in days long past, an ample garden intersected by broad walks and terraces, and beautified with flowers and fountains. The water-gate was gone. The wide stone stairs, which formerly led to the richly decorated barges moored below, had given place to an unsightly wharf, at which the humbler sort of

craft discharged their freight, and where numerous watermen, in the badges of their calling, daily fought and struggled for the preference of any passengers who might stand in need of their services.

But, if the once noble mansion, deprived of its rich ornaments and graceful adjuncts, presented a desolate appearance from without, the evidences of spoliation and decay were still more deplorably visible within. The marble steps of the great staircase were cracked and broken in many places; its heavy balustrade had been rudely torn away; and of the numberless fair chambers to which it led, only a few remained even partially habitable,—all the others being choked up with dust and rubbish, their lattice windows wrenched forcibly off, and their doors, abstracted by ruffianly hands, might be recognised, applied to meaner uses, in the wretched hovels of the vicinity. The vast hall alone retained entire some portions of its former magnificence, and these were only such as the loftiness of the apartment placed beyond the reach of common desecration. Time had done much, and man still more, to deface its earlier beauty; but enough yet remained to inspire regret in the beholder, that the evil fortunes of its lordly founder should have been the cause of so noble a structure falling early into neglect and decay.

And yet this sombre and melancholy pile, ruinous as it was, bore evident marks of being inhabited.

If the few pieces of necessary chamber-furniture, neat, but plain in the extreme, scantily occupying the least injured of the rooms above, were not of themselves sufficient indications of the fact, the presence of two persons, seated in the great hall, would have settled the question conclusively.

One of these persons exhibited the stout, stalwart figure of a man, considerably over sixty years of age. The other was a slender, but beautiful girl, of eighteen. There was a small table beside them, and a lamp upon it; while midway of the huge fireplace, and almost lost within the dim recesses of its vast cavernous jaws, a feeble fire, lately replenished with pieces of broken board, flickered faintly up, penetrating at intervals, with a sort of ghastly indistinctness, the gloomy depths in its rear.

Beneath the light of the lamp—which was drawn close to the edge of the table, near by where the old man was seated—lay an open Bible, with broad steel clasps. It was a small Bible, strongly bound, and in every respect similar to those which many pious veterans, during the civil wars, were accustomed to carry in their belts. In close proximity to the sacred book was a long sword, the blade hidden by its iron sheath; and lying carelessly across the latter was a tall, steeple-crowned hat, without any ornament at all, with the exception of a small buckle, which served as a fastening in front to the narrow, black worsted band. Although the garb of the man

was plain and peaceful, it was evident, at a glance, that he had once been a soldier. You saw it in his quick, searching eye, in his erect carriage, and in the firm lines about the mouth. And you saw, too, from the resolute expression of his face, that he was one who, if he felt himself called upon to do a thing, would not do it negligently.

The face of the maiden, as we have already mentioned, was very beautiful; but its beauty was of a sad and pensive cast. Her fair, open brow wore the settled shadow of deep thought; and there were indications of care and suffering upon her pale features, that contrasted painfully with the sweet ingenuousness, and tender childlike simplicity, which evidently formed the prominent elements of her natural disposition.

She sat upon a low cushion, at her father's feet, with her head resting on his knee; while he, relaxed from his usually erect bearing, had laid his broad palm upon the smooth folds of her dark hair, and was bending over her with a look in which intense affection struggled with some secret sorrow. Presently he spoke, as if in answer to something she had said previously.

"Do not despond, my dear child! Though I am hunted like a wild wolf from lair to lair; yea, though I suffer death in the good cause, it is not for me to doubt the promises which yonder blessed book holds out to all who bear up bravely to the end. And it

is a sweet consolation to me now, in this hour of darkness, when the powers of the prince of evil are permitted to prevail against me, to feel, in looking over the actions of my past life, that amid manifold short-comings there are so few things upon which I reflect with regret, and so many over which my soul rejoices; and especially does it cry 'Yea and Amen,' to that ONE GREAT DEED for which I am now an outcast, with a price set upon my head. 'Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.' Yea, truly, it is so; and I meekly yield myself to his will! The evil days are upon us, my Esther, and our people are not now as when they winnowed the chaff from the threshing-floor of the Lord, and came out of Edom, from the winepress of Bozrah, with their garments dyed in the red blood of the newly-trodden vintage."

"Ah, sir," said Esther sadly, "those were fearful days, when much was done in the sacred name of truth, wherein truth had no share."

"Simple child!" said the old soldier. "What can you know of these things? Enough for us that the great work was done, although the crowning triumph may have been wrought out by unworthy hands."

"And to what end, my father? Oh, sir, bethink you of that. To elevate an obscure man to the seat which had been filled by a race of kings for more than six hundred years; and to restore the

throne again, amidst almost general joy, to the son of him you fought against, and overthrew."

"I do not wonder, seeing these changes, that you should think the condition of England no better now than it was before the war. But in this you are mistaken. A great good hath been accomplished; for they who once held themselves superior to all law, have been taught to respect those from whom all law has its rise. It was a stern necessity that compelled the people to take up arms, and I know of many pious and God-fearing men, who wrestled long and fearfully in prayer, before they girded up their loins for the conflict. But why should we talk of days, the memory of which is at once so sweet, and yet so bitter? Let us rather speak of the present, freighted with thunder-clouds though it be, but bringing no fear to such as are pure of heart."

"Father!" said the maiden, after a pause, "they say the new king has a kind heart, and has pardoned many of those who"—

"Enough!" interrupted the old Puritan, sternly. "I neither seek his forgiveness, nor desire it; for to accept a pardon, even were it freely tendered, would be to humble myself to my own dishonour. There is another land, my child, even the land beyond the sea, where the truth still prevails; and thither will we go, if it is permitted us to escape the snares by which we are surrounded."

"But the vessel I have so frequently visited,"

said his daughter, "is not yet ready to sail; and in the mean time the peril increases."

"The peril is small to those who have no fear," said the old man, cheerfully. "And who knows but that the delay may be productive of good fruits even in this land? Many chosen spirits are again at work; men of the old Cromwellian stamp, and our ancient war-cry, 'To your tents, O Israel!' may yet bring a fearful terror to the hearts of the gay revelers of the court; for there are those among us who love neither the worshippers of Baal, nor their supporters; and who dare not wait until the weeds arise and utterly destroy the promise of the vintage; but, like true labourers, will go forth and pluck them out while they are small and few."

"And you, my father?" said the maiden, earnestly, "surely you will not join in so desperate an enterprise?"

"It is the cause in which I have so long laboured," said the old soldier calmly; "and for which—if it is so written—I am content to die."

"Oh, sir, bethink you of our present condition, of the privations we have endured, and of the many perils by which we are surrounded. Think, too, what would become of me if you were suddenly taken away! Do not league with these desperate men. The time for success is past. The supporters of the glorious cause for which you once fought and suffered are either dead or scattered. The new king

reigns, and riots, and the people laugh, and cry 'Well done !' What hope, then, is there of a change to which so few incline ? Can a handful of men stand up against a host ?"

"I have thought of these things," he responded, slowly. "And, sometimes, it has seemed to me that the old fire was dying out, and that my heart was no longer in the work. Poor, dear England ! She whom I hoped to see uplifted for ever, bearing the light of the gospel truth as a beacon to all nations, how she has fallen into the pit that was dugged for her, glorying in her shame, and reviling with a clamorous tongue the memory of those true-hearted soldiers who fought the good fight, and laid down their lives that she might be redeemed ! Yet why should I despond ? Nothing is plunged so deep but that His hand can reach it. Yea, truly ; and His mercy and loving-kindness endureth for ever."

The old soldier paused, and, casting his eyes upwards, stood, for some moments, in that reverential attitude ; then, silently drawing his daughter towards him, and folding her to his heart, he added :

"Esther, my child, it is fitting I should see these friends. They hold a meeting to-night ; and if those who have been sent forth return with tidings that the field is prepared to receive the labours of the husbandman, I dare not withdraw my hand from the plough."

The maiden said no more, but, with a deep sigh,

she turned away, and, taking the lamp, brought forward her father's cloak and assisted him to gird on his sword. When these duties were accomplished, she once more disappeared into the darkness, enveloped her own person in a mantle, drew the hood closely over her face, and presented herself before the father, prepared to accompany him whithersoever he went. The old soldier regarded her with a look of surprise.

"What does this mean, daughter ?" said he.

"I am going with you," she replied quietly.

"Nay," said he, gently, "that cannot be. Sit you here in peace until I return. The way is not long, and the time will soon pass."

But Esther only shook her head, and answered, with the same quiet composure,

"I am going with you !"

"Indeed, you must not think of such a thing, my child," said he. "It is no fit place for you. It is a meeting of stern, bearded men."

"I know ! I know ! But if I was only by your side ; or, I will sit afar off, if you desire it, so that they shall not be disturbed by my presence. Ah, dear father !" she added, looking up into his face with earnest pathos, "do not chide me that I cling to you so closely, for I have no home now but in your heart ; and no joy, but in the knowledge of your safety."

"May Heaven bless you, my dear daughter," said

the old soldier, clasping her in his arms; "for you have been the truest, gentlest, kindest, dutifullest child that ever cheered a lone man's weariness. This sad lot of ours has stolen the bloom from your cheeks and the smile from your lips, and yet you have neither murmured nor rebelled. Ah, my sweet! if I could dower you with a principality, I should esteem it a reward too little for your deservings."

"And I as much too great," she replied, with a faint smile. "My desires do not extend beyond a simple cottage in the wonderful land, for which, I trust, we shall soon depart; and where, I have often heard you say, the summer airs are burdened with the sweet odours of the honeysuckle and the eglantine; and the sun, for days together, looks down from an azure sky, unshadowed by a cloud."

"Why, then, throw aside your cloak, dearest," said he, "and, during the silent hours I shall be absent, indulge in dreams of that glorious land, and of its mighty forests; and of the untrammelled freedom the people of our Israel enjoy therein. Picture, too, if you will, the sweet, rustic cottage and the running brook, and the tangled thickets where the dun deer feed, and the wild flowers bloom. And if your fancy, warming with its theme, leads you in its sportiveness to lean upon a younger arm than mine, to incline your ear to tenderer accents than my old tongue can utter, and to fill your heart with a deeper and serener joy than a father's love can

give; so that it brings back the sunshine to your face, I shall not chide the vision." So saying, the old soldier stooped his head, and imprinting a kiss upon her fair uplifted brow, turned hastily away. Once more her voice detained him.

"Father," said she, "it may be that I am wrong, but I entreat you to remain this night. I do not know why it is—whether it arises from the great fear that overcame me this morning; or whether the peril, which already hangs on us, has made me timid, I cannot tell; but I feel as if the shadow of a great danger was gathering over you."

"Am I not now treading the very brink of the valley of the shadow of death?" said the Puritan, calmly. "But while the soul is kept free from stain, why need I fear for the peril of the body? If it is written that I shall fall into the hands of the Amalekites, neither the many secret places of hiding in this vast ruin; nay, nor the deepest caverns of the sea, can save me from my doom."

Making no further effort to detain him, Esther undid the fastenings of her cloak, and once more taking up the lamp, walked slowly by the side of her father in the direction of the outer door. Here again she paused, and laying her hand upon the heavy bolt, said, earnestly,

"Father, take me with you."

"It is impossible," said he.

"Then," she continued, quickly, "tell me where

the place is, that I may know where to find you if it be necessary."

"A prudent precaution," responded the old Puritan, gravely, "and yet, I think, a needless one. But if you are constrained to seek me, come to the house of Master Rundell, in the rear of St. Bride's church. There is an arched gateway"—

"I know it well," said she, repressing a shudder. "I have seen it often." A low, sombre-looking house, with the entrance under the archway."

"It is the same," said he. "Rap twice, lightly, and again twice with a bolder hand. If a voice from within asks, 'What lack you?' answer, speedily, 'A cruse of oil,' and the door will open. When you have ascended the stairs to the second landing, enter the left-hand door, and— But why need I tarry?" he added, hastily thrusting his hand into his belt. "Here are the directions which were sent me. You can read while I am on my way."

"One question more," said she. "This man—this Rundell—is he honest?"

"How can I doubt it," he replied, "since many of our sure friends have placed their lives in his hands? But you must stay me no longer, for the time presses."

Sadly and reluctantly Esther drew aside the bolt, and suffered her father to pass out. Then, carefully securing the door after him, she retraced her steps to the great hall, and, sitting down, sought by reflection

to banish the fearful apprehensions by which she was so strangely haunted. But it was of no avail! The torturing sense of an impending calamity crushed out all hopeful thoughts. She tried to read, but the letters danced and shimmered before her eyes. She looked about her, but the fitful flame discovered to her excited imagination a multitude of dim, spectral shadows, coming and going in the darkness beyond. Yielding at length to terrors, that, while taking no definable shape, stifled her breathing and weighed like a hideous nightmare upon her spirits, she sprang suddenly to her feet, and, scarcely pausing to cast her mantle about her, fled from the ancient ruin and hurried off at once to join her father.

CHAPTER IX.

CONFIDENT in the knowledge which her past sad experience had given her of the by-ways of the city, Esther studiously avoided the main thoroughfares, and, by threading the close lanes and dark alleys, hoped at once to shun observation and to reach the point of her destination by a nearer way.

But London by day, with visible signs and objects to guide the wanderer, is a very different city from London by night. Turning and winding, first this way and then another, now struck by the aspect of

dim houses that seemed familiar, and now baffled by penetrating purlicus of wretchedness altogether new and unknown; pausing now to look about her, and compose her half-bewildered faculties; and again, as some new hope sprang up, hastening impulsively on, until her very speed confused her recollection; after wandering up and down numberless dusky passages and narrow streets, she seated herself upon a door-step, wretched and weary, and waited till some one should pass by whose aid she might recover the true direction.

It was a long dark street into which she had plunged, from the depths of which rose up, at intervals, the noisy songs of revellers, blended, at times, with the music of lute, and gittern, and viol; and broken at others by deep oaths and imprecations, by shrieks and cries of alarm; the dull sound of heavy blows, and clashing together of steel weapons; the gradual subsidence of alarm in one place being but the prelude to a similar brawl in another.

Suddenly Esther saw numerous lights passing to and fro at a distance, and then a party of six or seven men, newly risen from their tempestuous orgies, approached towards her, laughing, and shouting, and singing snatches of wild drinking-songs. As they came nearer, she started up to fly; but then, again, it flashed across her mind, that if she fled and was discovered, the very attempt at avoidance would encourage an instant pursuit; so she fell

back into the recessed doorway, and, stooping down, endeavoured to shelter herself from observation until they passed. Her first movement, however, had already betrayed her; for, presently, one of the men darted ahead of his companions, and by a quick and unexpected bound seized her by the arm.

"So, ho! A prize—a prize!" he shouted, as the others came running up. "Why do you struggle, pretty mistress? Let me look at your face, and see if I have met with it before."

"Release me, sir!" she exclaimed with dignity. "It is not the part of true manhood to offer insult to the weak and unprotected."

"You have a sweet voice, dainty one!" said the ruffian, drawing her towards a lamp. "If your face is equal to it, you must be fair indeed! Glorious, by this hand! Come here, lads, and see the white wonder of Alsatia."

"Oh, sirs, sirs!" cried she, "if any of you have a sister whom you love, think what would be her shame if she had lost her way, as I have, and met with rudeness like this."

"Hear the sweet lady-bird!" said the man, with a laugh. "How prettily it talks!"

All of these wild wassailers, though flushed and heated with wine, felt, mingled with their surprise, an involuntary respect for the pale, patient face that was turned appealingly towards them; but only one was bold enough to stand forward in her defence,

against the ruffian in whose grasp she was still detained. This new champion was a young man, the only son of his widowed mother. He had a sister once, and he remembered still her low, tremulous voice, and her wan and wasted form; and how prematurely she died, with her hand clasped in his. And now, moved by the terror expressed in the pale face of the maiden before him, and softened still more by her touching appeal, he answered promptly her call, in reverence for the early dead, and, loosing the grasp of his companion, said—

"Let her go, Ralph! You can see, well enough, she is a stranger to such a place as this, and it would be a burning shame to trouble any more a young lady who seems sad enough already."

"It is none of your business what I do," said the ruffian, angrily. "Give way! I found the girl. If she has chosen to seek Alsatia, she must put up with Alsatian manners."

"If we have lost all respect for ourselves," said the young man, earnestly, to his companion, "let us, at least, respect innocence in another. Do not come nearer, Ralph!" he added, firmly. "I like you well enough to crush a flagon with, but not so well as to keep my temper if you seek to thwart me in this matter."

"Look ye, lads!" said the man. "Is this fair? What right has any man to interfere with my prize? By this hand, I will not bear it."

The opinion to which he appealed, however, was divided; and, while one or two expressed themselves in favour of the original captor, the greater number, weary already of the adventure, decided that the maiden should be suffered to pass free. With a deep growl of dissatisfaction, the man released his captive, when his antagonist, after guarding Esther to a short distance, said, in a kindly tone—

"This is a dangerous place for one of your beauty, madam, and I entreat you to make all speed out of it. All around you are the haunts of thieves and robbers, of fraudulent debtors, and of those who live by them and gradually grow like them. It is a sort of privileged place, and, being so, has become a general refuge for the desperate and unprincipled. Let me warn you, then, to hasten your steps from it, lest you meet with other night-revellers less compassionate and more daring."

"Indeed, sir," she replied, "I am very grateful to you. I am a stranger here—I wish to go to Fleet street, near St. Bride's church."

"Will you know Fleet street when you come to it?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, eagerly, "perfectly—every part of it."

"Then your way is clear enough. Take the next turning to the right, and keep straight on. You cannot miss it. And now," said he, lifting his beaver, "we may never meet again, dear madam, but

let me impress upon you, for your own good, never in future to pass unattended through the city after nightfall."

"I thank you," she said, while the tears started to her eyes. "It was wrong, I know, but circumstances—I—I cannot tell them"—

"Then do not," said he, interrupting her. "The first street on the right, remember. But, perhaps, I had better go with you?"

"Oh, no—no—no!" she said, eagerly. "I can find it. Do not think it unkind of me, if I say I would rather, at this time, pass on alone."

"As you will," said he, and bidding her good-night, rejoined his companions.

Relieved of her extreme terror, Esther lost no time in following the directions of her unknown friend; and, after a rapid walk of several minutes, succeeded in reaching a portion of the city from whence the way lay clear before her.

In the streets she was now traversing, she met many persons still abroad; and the circumstance of their presence, together with the occasional cry of the nightly watch, which she before looked upon as a reason for shunning the frequented thoroughfares, she now, in her altered state of feeling, regarded as a source of protection. Her cheeks, indeed, glowed when she found herself an object of close and sometimes daring scrutiny from those who passed her; and once, hearing the tread of feet keep constantly

the same measured beat behind her, she looked back under the impression she was followed; but if it was so, the increase of her pace induced, soon afterwards, her pursuer to desist.

At length she saw the steeple of St. Bride's church shoot darkly up towards the starry sky, and passing the narrow street alongside, she turned the angle of the graveyard, and, darting under the arched gateway, knocked at the door of Rundell's house. On giving the password, she was admitted immediately. But, before the doorkeeper suffered her to ascend the stairs, he held the lantern to her face, and examined it with an eager intentness that seemed to her altogether unnecessary.

"So," said he, "you are the fair daughter of Colonel Whalley? May I ask what brought you here? There is no danger abroad, is there, eh?"

She felt the eager, burning gaze of Rundell fixed upon her face; but she answered, calmly,

"Not that I know of. The truth is, Master Rundell, I was afraid to remain alone; and so I determined to brave my father's displeasure and follow after him. I should have been here much sooner, but that I lost my way."

"You will find the colonel up-stairs, and a dozen others with him. Take care how you go up, it is very dark. Guide yourself by the wall. I must remain at my post—there are others to come who may be here yet."

Lifting her eyes to thank him, she was so struck with a certain expression of subdued exultation in Rundell's face, that she turned away and commenced ascending the stairs without uttering a word. Something, too, about the man reminded her of some one whom she had seen not long before; but who it was, or where she had met him, she could not recollect.

And now came again those strange fears by which she had been driven to seek her father. While, at the same time, she felt keenly she could offer no sufficient reason for intruding upon deliberations to which she knew she would scarcely be considered either a welcome or proper listener. She was about to knock at the door, when the hum of voices from within reached faintly her ear, and her heart misgave her. Groping her way to the other side of the landing, she touched, at length, something with her hand, and discovering it to be a small, folding screen, she sat down beside it, and deliberated whether she should enter the room, or not.

Presently, she heard the low tread of some person coming cautiously up the stairs; and, with her senses sharpened by her previous suspicions, she listened attentively to the measured and almost cat-like footfall, and to the frequent pauses by which it was interrupted.

Painfully excited by the consciousness that no one, bearing friendly relations with the Puritans assembled in the chamber before her, need exercise

so crafty a vigilance in approaching them, Esther withdrew behind the screen, and, fixing her eyes upon the stairway, endeavoured to make out the appearance of the person whose stealthy approach alarmed her.

In a few minutes, the head of a man rose above the balustrade; and, then, creeping on his hands and knees, she heard the intruder move across the floor, and could just discern sufficient to ascertain that he had flung himself flat upon the ground before the door, and was endeavouring to catch the words of the speakers.

Treachery, then—terrible treachery—was at work. And this man, whoever he might be, was the traitor.

All at once, there was a slight noise of footsteps within the chamber, and the man threw himself towards the screen, grasping its edge with the evident intention of secreting himself behind it.

Esther Whalley held her breath. The life of her father, the safety of her friends, depended upon her escape. The very thought was agony. She was almost ready to shriek out from the extreme rigidity of nerve and statue-like immobility of person she imposed upon herself. Fortunately, the footsteps died away after a while, and the man, creeping back, caught hold of the balustrade, and, sliding noiselessly down it, disappeared.

With a brief ejaculation of thanksgiving for her unexpected deliverance, Esther withdrew slowly from

her hiding-place, and, catching the sound of a man's voice speaking below, she descended quietly the stairs until she reached a point at which the words became distinctly audible. In that instant, she recognised the voice of the master of the house, Rundell.

"D'ye hear, Dickon?" said he. "Tell Leigh I have them all safe, like partridges in a net. Bid him hurry up the soldiers; they should have been here before this. Say to him, Ned Rundell has made a glorious night's work. That Whalley, the regicide, is among them, which is a good thousand pounds in our pockets; and that Whalley's daughter is here, too. That will quicken him, I judge. Away with you!"

Esther paused to hear no more. Dashing up the stairs again, she knocked at the door and demanded to see her father instantly.

The moment she entered, and without bestowing any notice at all upon the grave-looking persons by whom he was at that time surrounded, she sprang towards him, and flung herself into his arms.

"Oh, fly! fly! Save yourselves!" cried she. "You are betrayed! The man Rundell is a traitor! I have heard it all! Hasten! hasten!—The soldiers will be here immediately.

Startled by this unexpected revelation, many cried out that the doors and windows should be barricaded instantly; while all drew their swords and prepared

to defend themselves to the last. A gesture from Whalley, to whom they seemed to look for leadership, imposed silence and drew them again about him. Calmly placing his daughter in their midst, he bade her relate briefly, but distinctly, what she had seen and what she had heard; so that all present might be satisfied her testimony was true.

Her story was soon told; and then Whalley, intrusting her safety to the general care, bade them continue their consultation as if nothing had happened, and, walking quietly from the room, closed the door after him.

For a moment, he determined to descend the stairs; but at that instant, a slight noise from below made him pause. It was Rundell, who, restless and agitated by the great prospect of reward, was once more creeping noiselessly to the door, in the hope of gathering, from the conversation of the speakers within, such treasonable expressions as might be used to convict them on the day of their anticipated trial.

Looking first about him with the same caution which had characterized his previous attempt, he peered through a slight opening in the door, and, seeing those within still apparently in grave consultation, was in the act of bending down and applying his ear to the aperture, when he felt himself grasped by a strong, nervous hand, and the cold barrel of a pistol pressed against his forehead.

"Speak but one word," said the stern voice of the old Puritan, "till I bid you, and, as the Lord liveth, I will spatter your brains against the wall. Open, brethren! I have caught the cunning fox in his own trap."

"Oh, my friends! oh, good gentlemen!" gasped the traitor, writhing in the agony of detected guilt, from one to another—"hear me! for God's sake, hear me! let me tell you what I came for. Would you injure your old friend? I meant nothing; indeed, I meant nothing. It was a foolish freak—nothing more. I am innocent—I will swear"—

"Stay!" said Whalley, sternly; "do not perjure your soul at this awful moment with a lie. Where are the keys of the back-door and the gate in the rear? Speak!"

"I do not know. I have lost them. They are below in the passage, I think. Let me fetch them to you. I will serve you truly. Why do you treat me so?"

"Search him, Brother Clopton," said Whalley to a grim old Puritan at his side.

"The man hath lied. They are here," said Clopton, producing a bunch of keys from the pocket of the prisoner's doublet.

"Take my place with the traitorous villain, Clopton," said Whalley, "my daughter demands my attention. If he resists, put him to instant death."

"I will not resist. Let me show you the way,

you will get lost unless I do. Help! help!" he cried, as his quickened sense caught the sharp clatter of distant hoofs galloping up the street.

"Gag him!" said Whalley, looking back, and in an instant, in despite of his fierce struggles, his jaws were wrenched forcibly open, and a gag secured.

"This is the door," said Whalley, halting and applying sundry keys to the orifice. At length, he inserted the proper one, and it yielded.

Preceded by the regicide, the whole party, with the exception of Clopton, crossed the little back-yard; and, after filing through a long, tortuous alley, scattered quietly, one from another, in among the numerous dark avenues by which that populous neighbourhood is intersected.

They had been separated but a few minutes, when the grim old Puritan, Clopton, emerged alone from a little lane leading to Fleet Ditch; and, leaning over its railing, dropped something into the turbid stream that glittered luridly in the starlight as it fell.

"Even so Joab smote Abner, the son of Ner, under the fifth rib," he muttered to himself, and, turning on his heel, walked slowly away.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT nine o'clock in the evening, Mr. Basil Leigh was seated at the front window of a coffee-room, looking out into the Strand, and having a fair view of Somerset House on the opposite side of the street. He had already partaken of such bodily refreshment as the fatigue and exhaustion of the day rendered more than usually needful, and was now sitting apart from the company, waiting impatiently for the hour to arrive when the military detachment was to make its promised appearance.

Thoughtful of his own comfort, Leigh had taken occasion, before leaving home, to effect such alterations in his dress as his experience in night adventures suggested would be serviceable. He had, therefore, cast off his gay habiliments of the morning, and was now dressed in a plain dark riding-suit, booted and spurred, and with an ample cloak lying on a chair beside him.

Without stood Spot, holding by the bridle his master's horse. The keen-eyed page was in his glory. He wore his embroidered livery with an air of conscious importance; and, as he leaned against a post, with his dainty little cap set jauntily on one side of his head, and his clustering locks freely exposed on

the other, he sought to attract the notice of passing citizens by gay, saucy remarks, and pert witticisms. Sometimes the page met with a sharp, angry retort; at others, with a pleasant smile and a good-humoured reply. But in either case Spot laughed merrily, and always strove manfully for the last word. Often, too, he would take time by the forelock, and hail persons as they approached; for, though the moon had not yet risen, starlight and lamplight combined enabled him to discern objects duskily at a considerable distance.

In this way Spot amused himself for a long time, very much to his heart's content; sometimes making the personal appearance of his victims a source of comment, and sometimes annoying them by shrewd, quick-witted guesses at their several callings. Gallants and templars, tradesmen and apprentices, all received a salutation from Spot. As for belated citizens' wives and their comely daughters, there was no end to the variety of terms, running through all the degrees of comparison, he used to express his opinion in regard to their differences, either in beauty or in merit.

But Spot's triumphs were not to last for ever. Had he been contented to rest upon such laurels as he had already won, he might have worn his honours without any feeling of unpleasant discomfiture. But Spot, like most wits and conquerors, by grasping at continual victory, laid himself open to a signal defeat.

While looking out for a new subject, Spot observed a stoutish man approach, walking briskly, and clearing his throat with a loud "Ahem!" as he advanced. Spot marked him at once; and, stepping into the middle of the pavement, made a low bow, and was commencing with—"I beg your pardon, good gentleman, but"—when he felt his ear suddenly caught between a strongly compressed finger and thumb, and heard a well-known voice exclaim—

"Ha! ha! I have taken you in the act, you little imp of mischief! At your old tricks still, I find! What brings you here at this time of night? Tell me, sirrah! tell me!"

"Oh! don't, Mr. Layton, please don't! I'm sure I did not know it was you."

"There! you can go, now," said the draper, with a parting twinge; "I have given you a feeling lesson, I hope."

"A very feeling lesson, indeed, sir!" said Spot, making a variety of grimaces.

"Take heed you remember it, then," said the draper; "it may be of service to you, for, I fear, you are no better than you should be."

"Not half so good!" said Spot, looking very penitent.

"What does he want with his horse, to-night? Pistols in the holsters, too! Answer me!"

"We are engaged on private duty, sir," said Spot, drawing himself up with reviving consequence; "and

I am not at liberty to—but here comes my honoured master."

Layton turned, and seeing Leigh issue from the door, advanced to meet him. Drawing his delinquent neighbour aside, he said, in a low tone—

"What does all this mean, Basil?"

"Nothing, Jack; nothing, upon my honour!" said Leigh, carelessly. "A little adventure; that is all."

"You are not, then, about to pay your respects to—to St. Nicholas?"

"Oh, no! I should not think of making a pilgrimage of that kind, without asking so able a clerk as yourself to join in company. No, Jack; this is in truth and very deed a little affair of the most lawful and praiseworthy character. I have cast off, and utterly abjure my ancient follies; and you will shortly hear of my being toasted at Guildhall and at court as one of our most loyal and patriotic citizens. I have strong thoughts of aspiring to the honour of the civic robe and chain."

"Ah, Basil! Basil!" said the draper, shaking his head gravely; "these rash night adventures of yours will end darkly enough, some time or other, I am afraid. The old man Heriot, I find, still clings to his suspicions concerning you; and his son will doubtless watch your movements narrowly. I am pretty certain the latter meditates something against you, even now; for Mr. Williams—that pattern-clerk

for honesty, sobriety, and veracity, and especially deserving of commendation for his extraordinary accuracy and neatness in accounts—as he chanced to be comparing his watch with St. Dunstan's clock, overheard your name mentioned by some person in passing; and, taking occasion to look quietly round, saw Mr. Francis Heriot deeply engaged in conversation with a military looking man, who is said to have formerly served in the low countries, under the Duke of York. One Cornet Lane, I think, Williams called him."

Leigh laughed gayly. "Do not make yourself uneasy," said he; "I understand it all. The young fellow chanced to take offence at something I said this morning, and promised I should hear from him in what is to me the pleasantest way imaginable. But, as I know you have a horror of taking life, and as I have promised merely to disable him for a short time, you will be able, by the day after to-morrow, to pay a visit of condolence to his father, coupled with the generous offer of any little attentions to the invalid which his situation may seem to require."

"You speak confidently, Basil!" said the cautious draper.

"Have I not reason?" said Leigh. "The rapier is a favourite weapon with me, and few can wield it better, as you well know. Besides, what skill can a paltry citizen have in its use? And which one, among those flat-capped pretenders to gentility who

wear swords, has ever been known to draw it, except, perhaps, in the thick of a street-brawl or a drunken fray? Why, I could spoil the fence of a dozen such with a stout oaken cudgel!"

Layton was once more about to interpose a word of caution, when he was interrupted by the steady tramp of a small troop of horse, and the clang of sabres. At the same moment, Leigh broke from him hastily, and taking the reins from the hands of the page, sprang into the saddle.

"Why, what on earth are you about, Basil?" said the draper, in astonishment. "Have these soldiers any thing to do with your affair to-night?"

"Every thing!" said Leigh, adjusting his stirrups. "Bring me my cloak," he added, turning sharply to the page; and, as soon as the latter disappeared, he bent down and whispered hurriedly to his companion—

"Take the boy with you, Jack, and see him safely housed. Ask me no questions now—you shall have a full explanation in the morning.—Spot, follow Mr. Layton, and take care I hear a good report of you on my return."

So saying, Leigh put spurs to his horse, and cantered lightly across the street, leaving the draper to proceed thoughtfully homewards, with the saucy, restless page keeping up an unheeded but incessant chattering at his side.

The clock of St. Dunstan's church was just strik-

ing ten, as the detachment, consisting of twenty troopers, filed through the gates, and entered the courtyard of Somerset House.

Leigh lost no time in introducing himself to the officer in command, and was immediately relieved from some embarrassment by finding the latter already known to him.

"This is a strange business, Leigh," said the officer, after some few words had passed between them. "Here I am under orders to perform a certain duty, the nature of which you were to inform me, and I find you almost as ignorant as myself as to what that duty is to be."

"Patience! Major Hartley," said Leigh; "in a few minutes more we shall have all the information we require. Will you oblige me by desiring your men to look that their arms are in good order? They may probably need them before the night is over."

"Ha! so we are to have a brush!" said the major, briskly. "Well, this looks more like business than any thing I have heard yet. Look ye, my lads," he continued, turning to his men, "as it is possible we may have occasion to try the ring of your metal before long, you had better tighten the girths of your horses, and examine the condition of your pistols. Be silent, and be speedy."

The troopers instantly dismounted, and, for a few minutes, the courtyard resounded with the sharp

click of pistols and the clang of swords upon the stone pavement. But, as soon as their officer's orders were accomplished, the men sprang into their saddles, and sat as still and motionless as before.

It might have been ten minutes after this, when a light knocking was heard at the gates, and almost immediately afterwards the voice of a boy called out, in a shrill undertone, for Mr. Leigh.

The latter instantly exchanged a look of intelligence with his companion, and, riding forward, responded to the summons.

"Well! Dickon," said he; "come this way, and speak low. Is all ready?"

"Yes," said the boy, in a whisper. "He says you must come quickly. He has got them safe. Colonel Whalley is among them, and his daughter, too."

Suppressing a fierce burst of anger, Leigh bade the boy hasten home and prepare his master for their coming; and then, venting deep and bitter curses against his treacherous subordinate, he returned to Major Hartley, and requested that the troops might be put in motion.

In expectation of this command the men had already gathered up their reins, and, as soon as the word was passed, lost no time in forming their line of march. Preceded by Leigh and the major, they moved at a quick pace in the direction of Newgate, until they came to a broad street divided longitudi-

nally, at that period, by a sluggish stream which discharged its dark, muddy, and pestilential waters into the Thames somewhere in the neighbourhood of Black Friars' bridge, and was commonly known by the name of Fleet ditch.

Wheeling, here, sharply to the right, Leigh now put spurs to his horse, and, bidding the others follow, again diverged at right-angles; after galloping a few hundred yards, and moving rapidly up a narrow lane, halted suddenly in rear of St. Bride's church, and in front of Rundell's house.

A few whispered words passed between Leigh and the major, and then the troopers were dismounted, their horses withdrawn to a short distance, and six of the men despatched through the arched gateway to guard the alley in the rear.

Busily occupied in these arrangements, Leigh more than once sharply reproved the boy Dickon for interrupting him while they were in progress; but now that the house was invested, he called to him, and inquired why it was that he had loitered by the way.

"I came here as quick as I could," said Dickon; "but, though I have knocked and called I don't know how many times, master will not let me in. I am afraid something has happened, sir," added the boy, uneasily, "for I heard a scuffling inside just now, and then something fell down heavily."

A gloomy foreboding crept over Leigh as soon as

he heard what the boy said, and, stepping up to the officer in command, he exclaimed, nervously—

"There is no time to be lost, major; for the lad yonder thinks there has been foul work going on within; and, I confess, I have my fears, too. Will you oblige me by ordering the doors to be battered in?"

"Had we not better attempt to obtain admission by gentle means?" inquired the officer. "It seems to me bad policy to create any more alarm than is necessary. I see, already, several heads thrust anxiously out of the windows above and below us."

"Do as you will," said Leigh; "but I am afraid it will only be waste of time."

"Not much," said the officer, advancing and applying his sword-hilt to the door; "for if I do not meet with a quick response, I shall proceed to enter without ceremony."

With an excitement that was growing painful by its intensity, Leigh listened eagerly for an approaching footfall; but all within the house seemed silent as the grave.

"Do you authorize me to break open this door, Captain Leigh?" said Hartley. "I am under your orders, and, of course, leave you to take the responsibility of the act."

"Be it so," said Leigh; "I was desirous you should do it at first."

"Very well! I passed a smith's shop just below.

Take a file of men, Sergeant Whipple, force it, and bring me an iron bar. Bring me a light, too; I see a tavern still open, a little beyond. Keep a sharp look-out, men; cover the door with your pieces. If any one attempts to escape, shoot him down. Patience—patience! and keep steady. Ha! here they come! Now, lads, with a will! There it goes!" he added, as the door suddenly gave way with a crash and precipitated two of the soldiers into the dark entry.

"Follow! follow!" exclaimed Leigh, and, grasping a pistol in one hand and a torch in the other, he sprang over the prostrate men and bounded up the stairs, supported by half a dozen of the troopers. He had scarcely reached the second landing and thrown the light of his torch into the vacant room, when he heard a loud cry from below; and, hastily descending, forced his way through the dense crowd that had by this time assembled from all parts of the neighbourhood, and saw, to his horror, yet not without a feeling of malignant satisfaction, the body of Rundell lying in a pool of blood.

"It is still warm," said Leigh, stooping down, and placing his hand upon the brow of the murdered man; but he instantly shrank back with a strong shudder, while a livid paleness overspread his face; for the moment of his touching the body Leigh heard the awful gurgle of the death-rattle, and saw the limbs suddenly contract spasmodically, and then

straighten themselves stiffly out, never to be moved by their own muscular action any more.

"Clear the house of this rabble," said Leigh, in a hurried whisper to the major. "It is plain the conspirators have escaped. Despatch one of your men to the authorities, and set a guard over the doors. I must leave you and try to unravel this terrible mystery."

Without saying any thing more, Leigh quitted the house; and, calling Dickon, endeavoured to extract from him all he knew in relation to the conspiracy. But it was evident that Rundell had determined to keep the boy in ignorance until the last moment, and had been cut off before his plans were fully matured.

Finding he could obtain no information from the boy in his present frightened state, Leigh mounted his horse and rode off. At first, as if desirous of getting as far as possible from the scene of the murder, he spurred past St. Bride's church, crossed Fleet street, and penetrated deeply the avenues beyond. Then, turning again, he made a wide sweep, and, coming out upon the main thoroughfare, threaded several narrow lanes trending towards the river; and, at length, halting, fastened his horse under the cover of an old building.

After traversing on foot the vacant space, interspersed with bunches of rank weeds and hillocks of rubbish, that stretched beyond, he leaped over a

low, stone wall, and found himself in the rear of the stately ruin which Colonel Whalley had selected for his hiding-place.

Here Leigh paused for a minute to take breath and look about him ; then, with the advantage of a partially-decayed buttress, he clambered up the angle, until, by reaching out his hand, he could grasp the stone sill of the window above. He could now see into the great hall ; and, with a thrill of satisfaction, he observed Esther Whalley sitting thoughtfully before the fire with her head resting upon her hand ; while her father, holding an open Bible near the lamp, was reading to her aloud.

Leigh waited to see no more. He hastily descended from his position, and, seeking his horse, turned homewards, muttering triumphantly to himself, "Safe ! safe ! And to-morrow, dainty Esther, you are mine."

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was but little sleep that night for Leigh ! The exciting events of the day, following each other with such startling rapidity, and ending with a scene of ghastly terror, had impressed themselves with so painful a vividness upon his mind, that the more he endeavoured to shake off their remembrance, the more distinct they became.

The consequence of this unnatural activity of the brain was to produce a state of nervous timidity altogether unusual with him. He started and turned pale at the slightest noise. The wind, beating against the shutters, made his heart leap fearfully. The cry of the watchman, pacing his nightly round, alarmed him. The quick, pattering footsteps of a belated traveller agitated him. The ticking of his own watch sounded sharper and clearer than he had ever heard it before ; and, as it brought to mind the superstitious fancy of the death-watch, he found himself wondering whether it might not be true. He heard the clock of St. Dunstan's strike one ; and, in the silence and darkness of the night, it sounded like a knell of solemn warning. He thought of the bells of the village where he was born. He thought of his past life ; of his happy childhood ; of his wild, wayward youth, and his dissolute manhood. He thought of his pious father, and of his gray head bowed by sorrow, and of his grave face, meekly resigned. He thought of his mother, and her tender counsels ; of her watchful care ; of her earnest and abiding love ; and, as these memories clustered about him, his heart softened, and he would have given worlds to have been once more a happy, pure-minded child.

But at that moment the tempter dispersed the sweet, but sorrowful vision ; and, by evoking the images of Esther Whalley and Francis Heriot, by

pointing out perils yet to be encountered and overcome, and by promising lawless yet rapturous delights in the future, hardened Leigh's heart back to its old callousness.

But he was yet to receive one fearful admonition more ; for, as his criminal resolves took the ascendancy, he heard from the depths of a sick chamber far up the street, a loud, unearthly cry ; the sharp, agonizing wail of a mourner, for one whose dear spirit had just taken its flight into the regions of the unknown. At that sad, piercing cry, Leigh crouched and cowered beneath the bed-clothes, drawing them over his head, as if he had heard and would shut out the despairing shriek of his better angel bidding farewell to his soul.

Again St. Dunstan's clock sounded. Twice ! Thrice ! and still Leigh tossed uneasily upon his couch. At length he fell into a broken slumber, in which the scenes he had passed through during the day were reproduced in distorted and fantastic forms, and yet, withal, terrible. Now, he was flying from justice ; plunging the rowels deeply into the foaming flanks of his horse until the blood spurted out in a stream ; and yet, it seemed as if both horse and rider were spellbound ever in one spot ; while behind him, for ever behind him, never nearer, and yet never more distant, were the pursuers, with their hands outstretched, ready to seize him. Suddenly, all was changed, and he found himself, somehow or

other—but without surprise to himself—in the presence of Esther Whalley ; but as he clasped her with a shout of triumph in his arms, she melted from his embrace, and in her stead he saw, as through a luminous mist, the handsome but vindictive face of Louise, gazing at him with a look of the most ineffable scorn. And yet it seemed to be not the face of Louise either, but a strange shape, whose features indistinctly resembled hers ; which, as his eyes rested upon them, dilated into vastness, and changing again, in some mysterious and inexplicable way, presented to his terror-stricken gaze the ghastly lineaments of Ned Rundell.

Leigh would have cried out ; but, though he opened his lips, no sound issued therefrom. He would have fled and hid himself, but he seemed rooted to the earth, and constrained, by some unseen power, to look ; and as he looked, he saw, in the midst of the luminous haze, a multitude of grotesque and malignant faces coming and going, restlessly ; shifting and shimmering—contracting and expanding ; but, at times, and from all quarters, with their fiery eyes turned constantly upon him.

Presently, he felt himself seized by the hair and lifted to an immense height ; and looking up in his agony, beheld himself suspended by a gigantic arm and hand only, that, swaying to and fro with an oscillating movement, suddenly loosed its grasp, and launched him, like a stone from a sling, down, down

into a fathomless abyss, into which he kept sinking and sinking deeper and deeper—holding his breath the while—until he alighted easily on his feet, he knew not where.

How long the darkness remained, he could not tell; but, after a while, it lifted a little, and then he had a consciousness of innumerable reptiles creeping and twining about him; and, suddenly, casting down his eyes, saw, with a loathing shudder, all manner of slimy and venomous creatures—adders, newts, toads, lizards—mingled with hideous things for which he had no name—writhing, and crawling, and leaping about the floor of what appeared to be a dungeon, damp and mouldy, and filled with noxious vapours. All at once, the green and slippery stone pavement seemed to heave beneath him, and then an enormous serpent, protruding itself through it, darted at him and wreathed its sinuous length, fold after fold, about him until, under the terrible agony of the constriction, he shrieked aloud, and, with great beads of sweat standing on his brow, and his face pale and haggard with the awful terror, suddenly awoke.

For a few minutes he sat upright in his bed, striving to master his bewildered faculties, and disentangle the real from the unreal. At length he drew a deep breath of relief, and, springing from his couch, huddled, carelessly, some clothes about him, threw back the folds of a shutter, and, looking up at the sky, saw that the sun was already risen.

Ringling a bell impatiently, he ordered a slight repast to be brought quickly, he cared not what; and in the mean time proceeded in a hurried manner to dress himself. This task was soon accomplished. And then, having despatched his morning meal with a like feverish impatience, he drew a plain, broad-leaved hat over his brows, and sallied forth into the street.

The cool freshness of the early morning air was not without its influence even upon him. But, though his nerves gradually recovered a firmer tone, and his resolution a more determined character, he had lost a portion of his former buoyant spirits, and walked the streets, just awakening into busy life, with a gloomy, downcast air, and a less confident step.

A walk of a quarter of an hour brought him once more to the ruinous mansion, within which he had stealthily seen, on the preceding evening, the fugitive regicide and his devoted daughter.

To his intense astonishment, the great out-door stood wide open. Half maddened by apprehension, lest his prey should have escaped him, he proceeded cautiously to the great hall, and finding it entirely stripped of its few articles of furniture, he dashed wildly up the dilapidated staircase, and entered the chambers above. They also were empty, and the house utterly deserted.

Venting bitter maledictions upon himself for procrastinating an arrest which he might have made

before so easily, Leigh now instituted strict inquiries after the fugitives throughout the neighbourhood, but no one could tell whither they had fled; and although he offered a large reward to any person who could lead him to a discovery of their present abode, the only information he could gain was, that in the gray of the morning, a strange boat was moored alongside the wharf, and that a little while afterwards the old man and his daughter were seen to enter it, and the boat then shot out into the stream, and proceeded in the direction of some landing-place higher up the river.

With a powerful motive now for the exertion of all his energies, Leigh lost no time in endeavouring to trace out the fugitives. He visited in person every landing-place on both sides of the Thames. He set spies to work, and stimulated them by promises of money for the smallest and most indifferent clue; but so cautiously had the flight of Whalley and his daughter been managed, that their place of concealment continued an impenetrable mystery.

But, though baffled for the present, Leigh did not utterly despair of eventual success. Reasoning within himself that Whalley would most likely seek a place of refuge where the houses were thickly settled, and the means of escape convenient, he ran over in his mind the topography of various localities up the river, and at length fixed upon the neighbourhood of Westminster Abbey as offering in its

labyrinths of lanes, courts, and alleys, and in its proximity to the water, the most secure concealment and the greatest facilities for eluding pursuit.

This neighbourhood he resolved should be strictly watched; and, returning to Alsatia, sought out certain loose-livers there, whom he had often employed in acts of a similar character, to whom he described the dress and appearance of Esther Whalley, charging them with the discovery of her present abode, or, failing in that, if opportunity offered, with the seizure of her person.

In no very amiable mood, Leigh now proceeded homewards. As he went along, he recalled to mind, with a feeling of malignant satisfaction, the promised message from Heriot, and hastened his steps with the hope of hearing from him the sooner. The simple desire which first actuated Leigh—that of disabling Heriot from pursuing an investigation which, even if it should not result in dangerous consequences, was at all events better avoided—was now become a darker and more blood-thirsty feeling. He panted for revenge! Esther Whalley had escaped him, and, in the blind passion of his disappointment, he attributed his failure to her previous rescue by Heriot.

Leigh had not been home more than fifteen or twenty minutes, when Cornet Lane was announced, and almost immediately afterwards that personage entered the apartment. He was a stout, well-built

man of some thirty years, with a bluff look, and the air of one who had seen service. He advanced gravely across the room, and, halting a few paces distant from where Leigh was seated, made a profound inclination to that gentleman, and said, in a tone half positive, half inquiring—

"I believe I have the honour of addressing Mr. Basil Leigh?"

"I answer to that name, sir!" responded Leigh, arching his eyebrows with the air of a person entirely ignorant of the purpose of his visitor.

"Happy to meet with you at last, sir!" said the cornet, bowing. "I am the bearer of a message from a friend of mine,—a gentleman whom you doubtless know already,—Mr. Francis Heriot."

"I know very little about Mr. Heriot," said Leigh, dryly, "and I care still less. Will you oblige me by proceeding with your message?"

The worthy cornet drew himself up stiffly, at this abrupt reply. He had been prepared to conduct matters with all the delicacy and respect usually evinced at that period on such occasions. But finding he was met in a different spirit, he waived all further ceremony.

"My presence seems to be unwelcome here," said he, bluffly. "Perhaps the contents of this note, which I have been commissioned to place in your hands, will justify the intrusion. Perhaps, too," he added, pausing until Leigh had read the missive,

"you will now be pleased to accord me a little more courtesy than you seemed disposed to do before. I am not inclined, sir, to thrust myself into any man's quarrel, but I will not forego the respect which is at all times due from one gentleman to another."

"Do you come here to threaten, sir?" said Leigh, knitting his brows.

"Not at all!" responded the cornet, calmly. "I merely desire you to remember that the hostile position which my friend has thought proper to assume neither justifies any reflection upon him in my hearing, nor any breach of good manners towards myself."

Leigh had it upon his lips to retort sharply; but, as he looked at the bronzed visage of the cornet, with its firm and decided lines, and the clear, resolute eye, he checked the passionate impulse, and said, with a deprecating smile—

"I fear I must confess myself in the wrong, cornet. Whatever the cause may have been that has led to this affair between Heriot and myself, you, certainly, have not been to blame."

"Certainly not!" said the cornet.

"You say truly, my dear sir!" continued Leigh, with another gracious smile, and a low bow. "Believe me, I regret very much, that an unlucky matter, this morning, should have so chafed me as to render me wanting in those courtesies which all, who know Cornet Lane, assert are so eminently his due. The

world speaks loud in your praise, sir; and, although I myself may have led, perhaps too willingly, a life of slothful ease, I can yet, in my better thoughts, do justice to one whose heroism before Dunkirk is still the theme of every tongue."

"Sir!" said the cornet, blushing to the very roots of his crisply-curled hair, "you honour me too much; vastly too much! There were many braver men than me in that fatal battle, but who were not so fortunate in escaping its disasters. I did my duty, sir! nothing more."

"I expected to hear you say as much; for a true hero is always as modest as he is brave. Well! well! I will say no more; though I cannot help confessing, that the warm friendship you entertain for Mr. Heriot speaks so well for his good qualities, that it has led me to doubt whether I may not have acted—of course, unintentionally—a little unjustly towards that gentleman."

Even to the open and guileless cornet this sudden and unexpected shower of praise looked so suspicious, that, although the face of Leigh presented nothing but the most winning openness, the bluff soldier had a latent feeling that the words addressed to him were intended to convey far less of real compliment than of covert sarcasm. He did not, therefore, respond quite as cordially to the warm impressiveness of his new admirer as the latter expected, but answered, gravely—

"I have no doubt, Mr. Leigh, that my friend Heriot is open to a satisfactory accommodation of this difficulty, if it be your intention to proffer a peaceable adjustment."

"Oh, dear, no!" said Leigh. "That would scarcely do at all! Mr. Heriot has thought proper to send me a cartel, and, of course, I have nothing to do now, but accept it. As I learn he is a good swordsman, my choice is the rapier; it is a quite gentlemanly weapon, and brings matters to a speedy issue. For the place of meeting, suppose we say the south-western angle of the Park? The little sheltered glade, there, seems to have obtained a certain prescriptive right to be chosen on occasions like the present,—though, indeed, I am indifferent."

"It will do, sir!" said the cornet, sententiously.

"So be it, then!" continued Leigh, pleasantly. "And now, for the hour. I am perfectly willing to suit my convenience to that of Mr. Heriot, though I would suggest that the earlier to-morrow, the better. Say six o'clock in the morning. Will that suit your friend?"

"We shall be punctual, sir!" responded the cornet.

"It is a source of gratification to me," said Leigh, with another gracious inclination of his head,—“of great gratification, indeed, to find this unfortunate affair arranging itself so smoothly. And now, that these preliminaries are settled, if you will favour

me with your address, I shall take pleasure in instructing a gentleman to call on you in the course of the evening, with whom all the minor details appertaining to this business will be, I have no doubt, as satisfactorily concluded."

"I shall be pleased to welcome him," said the cornet. "He will find me at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, at any time after four o'clock. It would be better to take it down in writing, to prevent mistakes. At the same time, I shall make bold to trouble you with a brief answer, under your own hand, to the contents of Mr. Heriot's note."

"By all means!" said Leigh, gayly; and drawing towards him the writing materials, he penned a short reply. When this was done he rose, and, handing the letter to the cornet, added—

"I believe there is nothing more that I have forgotten. For yourself, sir, I need scarcely add, that at a more auspicious time I shall be proud to number Cornet Lane among my especial friends."

The cornet bowed. "It is difficult for one of my sluggish nature, sir," said he, "to form new friendships. Yet I should be pleased to find our liking mutual."

Leigh returned, with his most amiable smile, the parting salute of the bluff soldier; but, as soon as the latter disappeared, he burst into a short, scornful laugh. "A solemn fool!" said he. "Dainty in his friendships, is he? As if I cared the turn of a

feather, either for his liking or his hate! But what new-comer is this? must I never be alone?" he exclaimed, with an angry frown, as the shrill voice of Spot was heard, disputing the passage of some one, whose soft and silky words could be occasionally caught in reply.

CHAPTER XII.

"I KNOW him now," continued Leigh, after listening for some time, with a curling lip. "It is that affected ape, Oldcastle, with his usual budget of love, mysteries, and extravagant marvels. Lies all. What can have brought him here, I wonder? But he will serve me!"

"I tell you, my good little hop o' my thumb, it is not necessary. So, prithee, let me pass, or I shall be constrained to walk over you. Speak with me! To be sure, he will. That is the door, is it? Why I am his bosom friend—his Pylades—his Pythias—his—egad, I have forgotten the names of the other affectionates. Ha! ha! Give you good-day, *Mons. le Capitaine*, as we used to say in France," continued the visitor, tripping into the apartment, with his silks rustling, and his feathers flying, and his handsome but boyish-looking face almost buried among the curls of his enormous peruke.

"Oldcastle! Is it possible!" exclaimed Leigh, with an affectation of the greatest surprise and pleasure. "Why, to what fortunate chance am I indebted for your presence within the gates of Temple Bar?"

"Egad! I scarcely know. 'A truant disposition, good, my lord,' as the player says. Faugh! I have half repented of it already. Prithee, have compassion, Leigh, and order your Ganymede to purvey me a stoup of canary. How do you manage to exist in such a smoky atmosphere? It has spoiled me a most admirable collar of Flanders lace; one that was sent me by special courier from"—

"I remember its history," said Leigh, chiming in with the humour of his visitor. "A love token, was it not? A noble lady, nearly allied to royalty—one of the princesses of"—

"Leigh!" said Oldcastle, bashfully, "Prithee, do not profane the name of that dear angel in a place surrounded by the domiciles of greasy citizens. It should be whispered only in lovely gardens, where the soft breath of the fragrant south kisses the blushing roses. It should be sung only by birds of Paradise, if birds of Paradise ever do sing, which I am not naturalist enough to say. An excellent wine, this! Your health, *Mons. le Capitaine!* I have long promised you a visit to your city dwelling-place, and I must say that, considering its surroundings, you are very prettily housed. Admire this

feather, Leigh!" he added, caressing the plume of his beaver. "Is it not a perfect paragon of loveliness? There is—ahem!—a—quite a pretty romance attached to it. The beauteous donor"—

"What, another?"

"Oh, I mention no names. Just imagine my surprise. I had been sighing like a love-lorn Strephon, and for once—for the first time I should say—was afraid I had made no impression; when, just as she was going to incline her ear to my vows, the proud old earl, her father, insisted upon it that seclusion in the country was good for her health. One token—one only token of her undying attachment, she contrived to send me. It was this dear plume."

"And the lady?" said Leigh, looking very sympathetic.

"Ah! do not ask me the sad sequel," cried Oldcastle, sinking his voice to a broken, tremulous whisper. "The poet says, truly, 'Fathers have flinty hearts,' and sagacious Will Shakspeare somewhere speaks of 'Patience being seated on a monument smiling at Grief.' Respect my feelings, my dear Leigh, and let me draw a veil over the gloomy landscape of the past."

"The lying coxcomb!" muttered that gay gentleman, casting a look of mournful interest upon his afflicted friend.

"But you have asked me how I gathered courage

to venture within the gates of this Babylonish city of muck and mammon? and it is fitting I should respond. Leigh! I was enticed into it by my love of good company."

"If you mean mine, I feel highly honoured."

"Ahem! Of course, that was one inducement; but, to tell you the truth, not the only one. Sedley and my Lord of Rochester, smitten with a sudden enthusiasm for the science of archæology"—Old-castle cast a queer, sidelong glance at his companion, as he said this—"Smitten, I repeat, with a sudden enthusiasm for the noble science of archæology, are at this time busily engaged in their antiquarian researches, and, I dare say, expending a vast amount of miscellaneous erudition upon the statue of the huntress Diana, lately discovered somewhere in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's."

"If the statue had been that of Venus, I should have thought it less unlikely," said Leigh, shrugging his shoulders. "And you?"

"And I was pressed into their service; but, as soon as I passed the city gates, a vision of an odious jeweller, who dwells not far distant,—a gray-haired old man—one Master Heriot, I think, they call him,—associated with certain spectral and harpy-like figures in the shapes of unpaid tailors, smart sons of St. Crispin, and other phantasmagoria of a kindred genus, so daunted me, that, I am ashamed to say, I deserted my company and sought out this

sheltering haven of yours, partly to fulfil my old promise of a visit, and partly to compose my nerves by the sedative effect of your friendly voice; and—shall I add?—further induced thereto by the pleasing prospect of a reviving draught of canary, of a flavour only equalled—so I have heard—by that precious vintage, now, alas! hermetically sealed from my lips, in the cellars of my former friend the duke."

"How former friend? You surely do not mean to say you have quitted the service of the duke?" said Leigh, in great astonishment.

"Why, no—not exactly. The service has quitted me—would be the properer mode of expressing the fact! Egad, sir! I am heartily sorry—but so it is. 'Othello's occupation's gone,' or, in the words of old, red-nosed Noll's pedantic secretary, Master Milton, I am 'retired leisure,' and can walk about the 'trim gardens' he speaks of, with an abandon that would be perfectly delightful, if it was not quite so tiresome."

"And your offence—was it so serious?"

"Excuse me—I did not think it serious at all! I—you know my constitutional susceptibility—I fell in love. 'Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!'"

"What, again?"

"Does it surprise you? Prithee, tell me what I could do better! I had plenty of time on my hands,

and the sentiment is so delicious! 'Oh, my lord duke,' said I, 'beware of jealousy!'

"And he?"

"He 'looked daggers, but used none.' What could he say? I do not mean to assert that he feared my powers of fascination, because that would imply self-esteem on my part, which I have not—or little, very little."

"Come, come, Oldcastle, be serious. Are you really parted from the duke?"

"Yes! I have been flung off from that great luminary, and am now an independent planet. From my former profession of arms, I style myself 'Mars the younger.' But you look incredulous. Fortunately, I can convince you. I have, or had, his letter of dismissal. François brought it me on Wednesday last, just as I was seated, pen in hand, under the inspiration of one of the daintiest love-ditties imaginable; but the rascally page dissipated the afflatus. I shall always regret it; for never before had my imagination soared to the sublime height it did that hapless morning. I have marked it in my mental calendar, as 'the day of the lost lyric.' You know the duke's hand," he added, thrusting his own into his pocket, and drawing from it a miscellaneous collection of things. "No, it is not among these. Stay; let me show you this."

He unfolded a square piece of paper and dis-

played, curled up within, a delicate lock of auburn hair.

"I see," said Leigh, glancing at it carelessly for a moment,—“a child's tress.”

Oldcastle regarded his companion with a look of the most profound compassion.

"You call this a child's tress?" said he. "Well, well, in one respect you are right. She was, indeed, a child in feeling; but, in years, a woman. Love was her nature, and Loveliness her name. Return, thou precious relic of my Angelina! Ha! here is the duke's letter," cried he, drawing from another pocket a scented billet, the superscription upon which was written in a neat, female hand. "No! This is—ahem?—fragrant with musk—my favourite odour. Is not the device upon the seal a pretty one? Cupid bestriding the world, with the motto—'I govern all.' How true!"

"Humph!" said Leigh. "It looks, to me, more like a fat boy upon a beer-barrel; and the motto, I think, would still apply."

"Oh, fie!" cried Oldcastle, reproachfully. "Love is the only universal sovereignty, and you must not impugn his rightful sway in the hearing of his most devoted subject. But, here, at last, is the object of my search. The duke writes a bold, sharp, decided hand, and, in this respect, it is well adapted to the subject-matter within. Prithee, read it, and absolve me."

"Plain and abrupt," said Leigh, returning the letter with a smile. "His reason for dismissal, he says, is 'certain delinquencies.'"

"Ah, yes; I know. It is a term he has chosen to gloss over the real cause. The word 'delinquencies' allows of a broad interpretation, and my passionate devotion to one who shall be nameless, may, perhaps, be considered by him—in the sense in which he writes—as rendering me delinquent in my duty towards himself."

"And you then are really free?"

"Free as that 'chartered libertine, the air, to move where'er I please;' that is not verbally what the poet says, but it expresses my condition exactly."

Leigh sank his head upon his breast in deep thought for a few minutes, and then, grasping the hand of his companion, said, energetically—

"I am glad of it!"

Leigh did not know how intently, through his wilderness of curls, Oldcastle had been watching him.

"My dear friend," repeated Leigh, "I am very, very glad of it."

"Well, really!" said Oldcastle, looking extremely hurt at the pleasure expressed by his companion, "I did not expect this of you, Leigh."

"What do you think of the conduct of the duke?" inquired Leigh, abruptly.

"I am afraid I ought not to say," said Oldcastle,

casting down his eyes, and fumbling with his sword-knot. "His grace has been, on the whole, a very good master. He has infirmities, of course. Every man has. Perhaps, it is wrong to admit it; but I am positively shocked to find myself, after all his kindness, not quite so grateful as some persons would affect to be. I am sorry to distress you by such a confession, Leigh, for I know how high you stand in the favour of his grace."

"Tut! Do not mind me. Look on me as your friend. Since the duke has cast you off, what right have I to suppose he will not rid himself of me in a like manner, if I should happen to fall under his displeasure? I have thought of this sometimes, and have half resolved to sever all connection. I can do without him much better than he can do without me, I think. But we will talk this over after a while. What do you propose to do? You are not a man to kiss the ground under the frowns of fortune!"

"Egad, I hardly know. The duke will scarcely recommend my services to his friends; and my being conscious of this, makes me entertain a spice of malice against him. It is very improper, I am aware, but I have something of dear woman's nature, and I do not love to be thwarted."

"And if you were put into a pleasant way of revenging yourself, would be very glad of it, no doubt?"

"Ah, you must not probe my failing too deeply: I should be sorry to be tempted with an opportunity."

"Suppose we make a solemn league of amity between us, Oldcastle?" said Leigh, gayly. "The duke, it seems to me, has treated you scurvily."

"Oh, very badly, indeed. Barbarously! Perfidiously!"

"If we could devise a little plot that would certainly annoy his grace, I think you would enjoy it?"

"Enjoy it!" echoed Oldcastle, rapturously.—'Earth can no bliss afford'—always excepting the love of woman—that would give me a greater delight."

"I think I know of a plan," said Leigh, with a significant smile; "but I shall have no time to perfect it until I am free of a troublesome little affair that is to take place to-morrow morning."

"My dear Leigh, you astonish me! Is it a duel you are speaking of so lightly?"

"Yes!" said Leigh, carelessly. "Though I can scarcely call it by so dignified a name. A young citizen has plucked up spirit enough to challenge me, and I have condescended to meet him. You chance to be here at a very opportune time, Oldcastle. Can I trouble you to meet one Cornet Lane at his lodgings in Charing Cross, and conclude any arrangements with him that may have been left unsettled?"

"You may command me, certainly. I know this cornet very well; if it is our Dunkirk hero. But who is the principal party?"

"His name is Heriot!"

"What, the son of mine ancient pecuniary enemy? I have seen him, too. Why, I should say, although report speaks him a very respectable and accomplished young gentleman—for a citizen, I mean—he scarcely knows a 'hawk from a handsaw,' or a sword from a soap ladle."

"That is his affair, not mine," said Leigh, coolly. "But, enough of this for the present. Let me now give you a brief sketch of my plot against the duke, premising, first of all, that, following your example, I shall prudently conceal the lady's name."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON the perilous night that Esther Whalley, after leaving Alsatia, passed hurriedly down Fleet street to join her father, she little dreamed, as she cast a quick glance at the dingy establishment of the wealthy jeweller, and saw, with a momentary blush, a light burning in a room above, that the elder Heriot and his son were seated there, eagerly conversing upon events in which she had borne so prominent a part.

The face of the old goldsmith was grave and anxious. He had listened at first to the narrative of his son, as the latter related the circumstance of his rescue of the young girl on the night of his own robbery, with a mixture of pettishness and pride; as if he thought it foolishness in him to have interfered at all, and yet was constrained to admire him for having done so. But when Francis Heriot went on to tell how, on that very morning, he had shielded the same young girl from the designs of the Duke of Buckingham in person, and the threats that powerful nobleman used at parting, the elder Heriot became seriously alarmed.

"It is a bad business, Frank!" said he. "The duke is a bitter enemy when he is thwarted. I do not like it at all. You must into hiding until his anger is appeased."

"I cannot see, sir," said his son, "that I have done any thing beyond what my duty required. I have committed no wrong; but have rather saved others from doing so."

"How do you know that? Who was this girl?"

"I have been thinking," said Francis, colouring a little, "whether I ever saw her before; and, sometimes, I have fancied her face was not altogether unfamiliar to me; but, if so, it must be many years since we met."

"You saw her safely home? Where does she live? What is her name; her station?"

"There, again, I am equally unable to answer you. She appeared anxious to conceal her place of residence. From some words she chanced to let fall, I fear she has relatives in hiding. That she is a modest and pure-minded gentlewoman, I am certain."

"Do you mean to say," said his father, looking aghast, "that she is connected in some way with the fugitive Puritans, for whom the government is making such strict search?"

"It is only a surmise of mine. Nothing more."

"A very terrible one!—Oh, Frank! Frank! are you so blind that you cannot see if this be really so, and I fear it is—what danger you stand in from the anger of the duke? How do you know but what his design, in seeking to capture the person of the girl, was to obtain information of the place where her friends lay concealed? There are three or four men of great influence under the Commonwealth, who are known to be still secreted in the city. It is even said that Whalley is one of them."

"That can scarcely be so, I think, sir," said Francis; "for his escape was confidently reported long since. I should grieve very much to find it otherwise. Your frequent commendation of him, in years past, has always led me to believe him a sincerely pious and upright gentleman. I still remember the pleasant visit we paid him at his country-

seat when I was quite a child; and the little girl with flaxen ringlets, who brought us flowers, and who buried her head in her father's arms when you called her my little wife."

"Do not let us speak of these things, Frank!" said his father, rising and pacing the room with unwonted agitation; "the remembrance of them unmans me. We were boys together, he and I; and a purer, loftier spirit, I never knew. There are few men like him in these degenerate days. We were friends even up to manhood,—dear friends, I may say; and then our paths diverged. He was ambitious of fame, and I of wealth. He has gained the name of—*regicide*! and I of—*miser*! Such is the consummation of our young desires!"

The old man smote his hands together, as he spoke; and as he dropped his head upon his breast, his whole latter lifetime of sordid meanness passed in review before him. "Truly, I believe," said he, with a deep sigh, "he is the happiest of the twain."

"Father!" said Francis Heriot, reproachfully.

"Peace, boy!" returned the old man. "Let me commune for a little while with my own heart. Conscience is a stern monitor, Frank, but it is a steadfast and a true one. Treasure up what I may say now, my dear boy, and mark well my counsel. Take no heed to the contrary at any other time, for habit has become all-powerful with me; and, although I feel that my days are rapidly drawing to a close, I

dare say I shall die, as I have lived, a hard, grasping, avaricious man."

"Oh! sir, you have always been kind, and generous, and indulgent towards me."

"It is well you think so, Frank," sighed his father, with a mournful shake of his head. "Let my dear-bought experience, then, be as a lamp to your feet. Never, never, my son, love wealth, for the sake of wealth; it is an illusive cheat, like those rivers of the East which glitter afar off to the eyes of the delighted traveller, and then, insensibly fading away, leave him athirst, and in despair. The swarthy labourer, that earns his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, and lies down at night to peaceful and contented slumbers, is happier far than he who piles up ingots of gold, that he may gloat upon treasures he trembles to enjoy. I have been all my life learning this simple truth; and now it brings but one feeling, and that is, Remorse! Be you liberal and gracious, charitable to all men, friends with all men, reverencing virtue, and abiding by the right, having compassion for the frailties of others, loving goodness and mercy, and exercising the power that wealth gives—not in treading upon the necks of abject wretches, as I have done—but in soothing their sorrows, and relieving their necessities. It is too late for me to grasp the blessings that follow gentle deeds like these; for I have so encrusted myself about with worldly habits, that my better na-

ture only glimmers occasionally through the chinks and crannies of the almost worn-out shell. Think of this, my son; and as you would reverence my memory, let these counsels sink deep into your heart, for they are of far more priceless worth than all the riches which at no very distant day will be yours."

While Francis Heriot was lost in wonder at this solemn and unusual mood of his father, the old man took up the lamp with a trembling hand, and said, mournfully—

"I feel strangely weak and weary, to-night. Lend me your arm, Frank."

"Oh! sir," replied his son, "I am afraid you are ill. Let me send for a physician."

"Pish!" said the goldsmith, in his old, testy way. "It is nothing; only a passing spasm. Age is always ailing, Frank," he continued, with a faint smile, as he reached the door of his chamber; "and doctors are of little use when the light begins to flicker in the socket. Good-night, my son, I shall be better to-morrow."

But Francis Heriot did not depart. He placed the lamp on a small stand near the fireplace, and, carefully shading it, took his seat thoughtfully at the bed-side. After remaining silent for some time, the old man suddenly looked around.

"Frank," said he, "what did you say the name of the young woman was?"

"Esther Holmes, sir!"

"It was her mother's name. Poor Whalley! poor Whalley!" muttered the goldsmith, half unconsciously. His lip trembled, and, heaving a deep sigh, he sank back and buried his head in his pillow.

Francis Heriot had found the key to his mystery! As a flash of lightning bursting through the overshadowing gloom sometimes reveals in startling distinctness objects at a remote distance, so did those few, simple words bring clearly and sharply out from the mists of intervening years the face of the timid daughter of Whalley; and he saw at once its close resemblance to that of the maiden whose preserver he had been. The hair darker, it was true, but the same soft, pensive eyes, and the same expression of features, only matured, and rounded into womanhood. Finding, after an hour's watching, that his father had composed himself for sleep, and that his breathing was calm and regular, Francis Heriot retired to his own chamber, where he lay awake until after midnight, thinking now of the sweet face of Esther Whalley, and now pondering gravely upon the result of his difficulty with Leigh.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LITTLE after sunrise on the second morning succeeding the conversation between the goldsmith and his son, several persons were seen hastening across the park of St. James, and making towards a small belt of woodland at its southwestern extremity. Passing in among the trees, and entering the fair open space beyond, they looked about them as if in the expectation of meeting with others that had preceded them; but finding themselves the only persons upon the ground, they gathered into a knot, and began to converse with each other upon the expected duel.

While they were talking in low tones of the cause of the duel, and the merits of the combatants, Leigh entered the arena, accompanied by Oldcastle. Our gay gentleman bowed with a pleasant smile to the intruders; while Oldcastle, without affecting any surprise at their presence, kissed his hand to them quite delightedly. Neither Leigh nor his friend joined the group, however; but retired to some distance, and conversed apart.

"This is some of your doings, Oldcastle," said Leigh, reproachfully. "I thought I told you to keep the affair a secret."

It was evident, however, that though he affected to feel displeased at the intrusion of witnesses, he was by no means so much dissatisfied as his tone implied.

"Egad! I believe you did say something of the kind," responded Oldcastle; "but, my dear friend, I had your reputation in my thought. I well know your skill, and was really desirous you should 'win golden opinions from all sorts of men,' as the player has it; and so I determined to do you a service, by hinting to some half a dozen of the duke's people what was going forward. There are none others, you see."

Leigh was about to say it was of no consequence, but at that moment his eyes were attracted by an eager movement in the group of persons of whom he had been speaking; and, looking in the direction in which two of them were pointing, he saw Francis Heriot and Cornet Lane coming through the trees towards the open space on which he was standing. After acknowledging the presence of his antagonist by a low bow and a smile, Leigh made a step or two forward, and then halted; while Oldcastle tripped lightly past him to meet the cornet. Francis Heriot also stood apart at no great distance. The face of the young jeweller was pale, as if he had weighed well the chances of the encounter; but the calm composure of his manner also showed that he had thoroughly prepared himself to meet them.

This modest and quiet demeanor was not lost upon the spectators, who began to feel an additional interest in the issue, and were already making comparisons between the manly repose of the young jeweller, and the confident, half-insolent look and attitude of Leigh.

The preliminaries were soon arranged. The rapiers measured, and found of equal length; the position of the combatants indicated; and then, throwing off their cloaks and doublets, they slowly advanced towards each other, and, after making the customary salute, paused for the signal to begin. It was given, and instantly the opposing swords clashed together. After a few cautious passes on the part of Leigh—which he seemed to have made for the purpose of testing the skill of his adversary—his face lighted up with satisfaction, and his manner became gay, and perhaps a trifle careless. Raising, for a moment, his eyebrows towards Oldcastle, the latter saw immediately, that his principal had no doubt whatever of the result.

Heriot had marked the action too; but it had no further effect upon him than to stimulate him to a more guarded use of his weapon. Keeping his eyes firmly fixed upon those of his antagonist, he continued to maintain altogether the defensive; and to parry, sometimes barely, the quick successive lunges that were darted at him with lightning rapidity.

This cool and wary conduct had, in the progress

of the contest, a marked effect upon Leigh. He became irritated, that an affair which he had piqued himself on closing in a few minutes should have lasted so long. He now changed his tactics; and, by feigning to throw himself open to his opponent, to induce Heriot to quit his guarded manner of combat, and assume the offensive.

But Heriot had taken his resolution, and was resolved to keep it until his adversary should so far exhaust himself by constant attacks, as to render the contest more equal between them.

Finding all his lures ineffectual, Leigh now pressed the combat with a rapidity and vehemence, that more than once brought the point of his rapier close to the breast of Heriot before the latter could succeed in putting it aside. Even he, calm as he had been, felt that this state of things could not last long, and faltered a little in his defence. Leigh was not slow in noticing that his adversary was beginning to parry his thrusts less confidently; and, elated by the prospect, plied his weapon still more rapidly; until, at length, observing that Heriot's guard was imperfect, he made a furious lunge, and, in the act of doing so, slipped, and fell upon his hand.

"Strike!" cried he, fiercely, seeing Heriot draw back as if for the purpose of making a thrust. "Strike! and take a coward's victory."

But the point of the young jeweller's rapier was already lowered to the ground.

"Stand up, and take your place, sir!" said Heriot, quietly. "If the victory is to be mine, I have no wish to owe it to an accident."

Leigh was instantly on his feet. But the seconds now interfered.

"The forbearance of Mr. Heriot," said Lane, "will not justify the contest proceeding any farther."

"That is my opinion," said Oldcastle. "'Put up your bright swords, or the dew will rust them.' Egad, that is aptly quoted."

Leigh was livid with rage. He accused Oldcastle of truckling to his new friend. He sought even to pick a quarrel with the cornet; but that bluff soldier, without deigning to reply, merely regarded him with a look of stern contempt. Notwithstanding these rebuffs, Leigh vehemently insisted upon his right as the challenged party—since Heriot had waived his advantage—of determining at what point the contest should close; until, weary of this word war, Heriot said, quietly,

"Let him have his way, gentlemen. Come, sir, I am ready!"

Finding all further opposition fruitless, the seconds once more withdrew.

With his teeth clenched, and a dark malignant scowl upon his brow, Leigh now addressed himself to the encounter. All his former gayety and nonchalance was gone. His right foot, well advanced, pressed firmly the sward; while his fingers clutched

the hilt of his weapon with a nervous eagerness that indicated, more plainly than any words he could have uttered, the deadly passions by which he was stirred.

The pause, which had been beneficial to Heriot in restoring his equanimity, had operated the very reverse upon Leigh. He had lost his temper, and with it a portion of his usual skill. His eyes glared more upon his adversary than upon the point of his weapon; and, noticing the change, Heriot suddenly became the assailant.

At length, watching his opportunity, he made a direct lunge—which Leigh parried in part, but Heriot, changing, by a dexterous movement, the course of his rapier, passed it obliquely through the breast of his adversary.

The weapon of Leigh dropped instantly from his nerveless grasp, and he fell heavily back into the arms of Oldcastle. The next minute, exhausted partly by previous violence, and partly by loss of blood, he fainted.

"Bring the coach to the edge of the wood," cried Oldcastle, to one of the spectators; "quick, quick."

"Is he dead?" asked Heriot, with a look of horror.

"'Tis a dangerous thrust, but not a hopeless one," said Lane, after examining the wound. "I have known many men recover from far worse thrusts than this."

In the mean time the carriage came up, and Leigh was lifted into it.

"Drive on slowly," said Oldcastle to the coachman; "I will take the nearer path, and meet you at the gate. Gentlemen," he continued, "this is an unfortunate business; and I regret to say, I have yet a more unpleasant duty still to perform. 'Tis true, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true.' Mr. Heriot, you are my prisoner!"

"If this is a pleasantry of yours, Captain Oldcastle," said the cornet, indignantly, "let me tell you I consider it not only ill-timed, but impertinent."

"It is a serious truth, Lane!" said Oldcastle, shaking his head, sadly. "I wish from the bottom of my heart, it was not so."

"By whose authority do you profess to act, sir?" inquired Heriot.

"By the command of the Duke of Buckingham, and under the authority of this warrant," replied Oldcastle, displaying the writ of arrest. Lane read it through carefully.

"It is but too true," said he.

"Can you tell me, sir, what is the nature of the charge the duke has preferred against me?" asked Heriot, turning pale.

"I am afraid it is a very grave one, Mr. Heriot," replied Oldcastle; "but, as the servants of the duke are ordered to bring you to Whitehall before conveying you to prison, you will probably hear it from his own lips; when, I sincerely trust, you will be

able to exonerate yourself from the suspicions against you."

"Will you permit me to speak a word in private with my friend, before I surrender myself to the guidance of these good people?" said Heriot, anxiously.

"I do not know that I ought to do so," replied Oldcastle, doubtfully; "but, if the cornet will pledge himself for your safety in the mean time, and promise to perform no act at your hands that shall have any bearing upon the matters with which you stand charged, I am disposed to accede to your wish."

"He may safely promise that," said Heriot; "for what I wish to speak with him about has reference solely to my father; and the duke would scarcely wish to implicate him."

"I give you my word of honour, Oldcastle," said the cornet, "that I shall listen to nothing but what you yourself would approve."

"Make haste, then," said Oldcastle, "for I must meet Leigh at the Park gate."

Heriot and his friend immediately drew a little apart from the others.

"I wish you, Lane, to go directly from here to my father," began Heriot, "and inform him of my duel with Leigh, and the reason I do not return. I kept this meeting a secret from him, because I knew he would have sought to prevent it if it had been disclosed. Explain to him how it happened, to-

gether with the result. Say, I am under arrest from charges laid by the Duke of Buckingham. There is nothing more necessary; he will understand the whole matter. You already are aware how it has arisen."

"But I do not like your chance of exculpating yourself, nevertheless. There are men about the duke who will swear any thing he bids them. Take my advice; the morning is early yet, and not many persons abroad; escape if you can."

Francis Heriot grasped the hand of his friend, and, returning, gave himself quietly up to his captors.

"Now, Cope," said Oldcastle, turning to the swarthy-visaged man, who appeared to act as a sort of "lance prisade" to the little party; "remember—I have made the arrest, and turned the prisoner over to you for safe keeping. My duty here is now completed; whatever of responsibility now remains, falls upon you."

"Never fear, sir," returned the man; "I shall take care of myself, I warrant me."

"Stay, Oldcastle," said Lane, "I will go with you. I should like to learn the exact condition of this man, Leigh, little as I like him."

And, casting a significant glance at Heriot, as if he would impress him once more with the advice he had so lately given him, the bluff soldier hastened to join Oldcastle, who stood impatiently waiting for him among the trees.

CHAPTER XV.

FRANCIS HERIOT was now left alone with his captors. Resolving, if an opportunity offered, to follow the counsel of his friend the cornet, he suffered himself to be conducted across the Park in the direction of the gate nearest to Whitehall. Determined to betray no symptoms of restlessness, whereby the suspicions of Cope might be aroused, he conversed easily and gayly as they went along, and spoke so confidently of being able to exonerate himself from any charges injurious to his honour and loyalty that might be brought against him, that, already prepossessed in his favour by the manly conduct of which they had so lately been witnesses, the men relaxed somewhat of their vigilance, and regarded their prisoner with a sympathy altogether unusual with people of their thoughtless habits.

Cope, however, was less impressible. He more than once sharply reprov'd his men for being less cautious than he thought the occasion demanded.

"I must do my duty, sir," said he, as, on one of these occasions, he detected a furtive smile on the lip of Heriot. "It is not my business to inquire whether you are innocent or guilty. My orders are to take you straight to the duke's presence, and from thence to whatever prison it may be thought proper

to send you. From this, I am inclined to think the matter is already decided."

"That would be rather a strange proceeding, Master Cope!" said Heriot, "to judge a person before he has been allowed to speak in his own defence. Do you not think so?"

"I trouble my head very little about it," replied Cope, carelessly; "if I am told to do a certain thing, I do it, right or wrong; the responsibility is none of mine."

"But, sure you must be mistaken in supposing I have been already prejudged."

"Must I?" said Cope; "well! you will soon find out. Here we are, at the gate; stand aside, men, and let the troop pass—Ha! look to your prisoner!"

A loud cry, and a rush from the men, showed that his advice came too late. Darting suddenly from them as the gate opened, Heriot broke through the files of advancing horse, and, quick as thought, emerging upon the street, turned in the direction of the river. One advantage he had already gained, which he strove to improve to the utmost. Cope and his people had experienced some little difficulty in extricating themselves from the troop, which had been thrown into confusion by the noise and bewildered haste arising from the escape; so that when they again caught sight of the fugitive, he was already some distance ahead.

Starting instantly in pursuit, they pressed Heriot

so closely, that, as he reached Westminster Abbey, they were nearly with him. Determined not to be taken while a single hope remained, Heriot roused all his energies to lead his pursuers astray. Dashing through the long, narrow, crooked streets that abound in that region, he led them an exhausting chase; and by winding through numerous lanes and alleys, sometimes doubling upon his own footsteps, and taking such other dark and dingy avenues as chanced to present themselves, he had a fair prospect of baffling Cope and his followers at last. But if Heriot was fleet on foot than his pursuers, their superior knowledge of by-ways and shorter passages to points upon which he was advancing more than made up the difference; and almost in despair at being met at every turn, the young jeweller was about suddenly to surrender himself, when an unforeseen circumstance brought the pursuit to a close.

He was halting, half breathless and irresolute, at the corner of a long, narrow court, when Cope and two of his people came out of an alley hard by. Heriot once more turned and fled; but he had not run more than a few hundred yards when he saw, to his dismay, that all further progress was interrupted by a blank wall thrown across the end of the court. Cope knew it, too, for he shouted in triumph; but his shout soon changed to a cry of alarm, for, stung to madness at finding his path thus suddenly blocked up, Heriot ran back a few steps, as if he would force

his way by the road he came, and then, as he saw Cope halt to receive him, he sprang forward at an angle of the wall, and catching, by a powerful leap, the projecting end of a shutter attached to the house adjoining, swung himself to the top of the brick coping, and, dropping into the enclosure beyond, crossed the division-fences of numerous little back yards, until, finding himself approaching the water, and seeing a door stand open in the rear of a house having a greater appearance of respectability than any he had yet passed, he determined to go boldly in and claim the protection of its occupant. He paused in the dim passage, to collect his thoughts. After rapping at a door for some time, and receiving no answer, he ventured to turn the handle of the lock, and enter the apartment; but he had scarcely done so, before he felt himself in the powerful grasp of an old man in the garb of a Puritan, and saw the barrel of a pistol pointed directly at his breast. Heriot shuddered, but he neither cried out nor resisted.

"Speak!" said the Puritan, sternly; "what brings you here?" A suppressed shriek from an inner apartment interrupted Heriot's reply, and his momentary fear was merged into intense astonishment, as he beheld Esther Whalley dart across the room, and cling in wild alarm to the upraised arm of the old man.

"Father! father!" exclaimed she, "have mercy,

have—ah! forbear: it is a friend—a dear friend! It is my preserver, Mr. Heriot!"

At this unexpected disclosure Whalley staggered back with a deep groan, and clasping his hands reverently together, said, with a trembling lip and upraised eyes—

"I thank thee, oh merciful Father! that through thy overwatching providence, I have been saved the shedding of this young man's blood!"

After a solemn pause, he extended his hand to his visitor, and added, with the quiet gravity that so well became his grand and massive features—

"You are welcome to my poor house, Mr. Heriot. Yea, heartily; though I never thought the time would come when I should be permitted to see you face to face, and to thank you, by my own lips, for the kindness you have done my dear daughter here. It was a rough meeting, ours, Mr. Heriot; but you will surely pardon my violence when I tell you, that having many enemies and but few friends, I could scarcely expect a visit, so abrupt as yours, from any but the former."

"Ah, sir!" said Heriot, "it is I who ought to ask forgiveness for my intrusion; but, indeed, I was not aware who lived here, and only entered the house with the purpose of asking concealment until a trifling danger I have unconsciously incurred, shall have passed away. I have been pursued, this morning, and have only succeeded, a

short time since, in throwing the rascals off my track."

Heriot spoke lightly, and even gayly, of his adventure; but Esther seemed to understand the cause instinctively. Whalley noticed his daughter's agitation, and looked grave.

"Go in, my dear child," said he, tenderly. "We will join you presently. Ask Martha to place whatever our scanty larder affords upon the table. Mr. Heriot appears to have been abroad early this morning, and, I dare say, has not yet broken his fast."

No sooner had Esther disappeared, than Whalley, motioning his companion to be seated, threw himself into a chair beside him, and said, with a deep sigh—

"It is the unhappiness of persons situated as we are, Mr. Heriot, to be too often a source of misfortune to others. I think, from what I have already learned, that I can trace to the services you have rendered my daughter, the source of your present trouble. But, whether I am correct or not, in this supposition, let me say at once, if you will accept of such precarious shelter as I can give, I shall be pleased to have you as my guest. It is due to you, however, that I should first explain the danger you will incur by remaining in this house. If, afterwards, you incline to take up your abode with us, and trust to the guardianship of that all-seeing Providence on whom my hopes repose, I should

prove false to my own heart, if I did not rejoice in your decision. Yea, even though I say, still, that the wisest counsel I can give you, is to fly. Mr. Heriot," continued the old man, rising in calm, sorrowful dignity, "I am he whom men call 'Whalley, the Regicide!'"

It was, perhaps, fortunate for the equanimity of Heriot, that he was already prepared for this avowal. He did not, therefore, betray any surprise, but made answer, with deep respect—

"The name of Colonel Whalley, however it may have been abused by others, has never been mentioned by my father or myself, but with sentiments of the warmest regard. I knew you, before you spoke, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Whalley; "is your recollection so good? Why, you were but a little child, when we last met!"

"It was not that, sir!" said Heriot. "A conversation with my father, on the night before last, put me in possession of facts which, by refreshing certain remembrances of my youthful days, led me to recognise an old playmate of mine in the young lady who has just left us; though it was not design, but a happy chance, that has brought about a meeting which, in my ignorance of your place of abode, might never, otherwise, have taken place."

"Call it not chance, my young friend," said Whalley, in a tone of grave reproof. "There is

no such thing as chance. All things are ordered by His will, and governed by His power. Surely, the finger of God is in this! And your father spoke of me! What! can he still find time, amid the cares of business, to bestow one poor thought upon his ancient friend?"

"Ah, sir!" said Heriot, earnestly, "that dear friendship is his happiest memory."

As if those few words had awakened a slumbering chord in his own breast, a shade of tender sadness stole over the stern face of the old Puritan. Passing his hand hurriedly across his brow, he said, in a low, mournful tone—

"We will speak more of this some other time. Your words disturb me. Yea, truly, I am greatly moved! God forgive me, I have not been free from bitter thoughts. Give me your hand! Not a word more. I hear my daughter call. Come!"

Heriot found Esther sitting at the head of the breakfast-table, waiting for their arrival. She welcomed the young jeweller with a faint smile, but he could not help noticing that, in her large, earnest eyes, were traces of recent tears.

Quietly and gravely the simple morning meal was concluded; and, when the parting grace was said, Whalley retired to his chamber, while Martha bustled about, setting the house in order, and, with her keys jingling, by an occasional pleasant word and a never-failing smile, sought, in her untaught,

joyous-hearted way, to make "a sunshine in a shady place."

"You have found at least one faithful heart, in your adversity," said Heriot to Esther, as he saw her eyes resting affectionately upon the cheerful face of the active hand-maiden.

"You mean Martha. She is, indeed, the best of women! I missed her sadly while she was away, arranging the house for our reception. It was only yesterday morning that we came here; and we never know how soon we may be compelled to depart. We seldom remain long in one place," she added, sadly.

"You must be very lonely," said he.

"Why should you think so?" she asked, turning her pale, beautiful countenance full upon him. "Surely no one can be really lonely, with duties to perform, and hopes to cling to, and memories to cherish. Sorrowful I may have been oftentimes; but lonely, never!"

As she quietly resumed her work, Heriot gazed at the pale face, now slightly suffused with a blush, and thought within himself how strong that filial love must be, which had enabled her to bear up under the many trials and privations through which she had passed. Old memories, too, came crowding back upon him, as he gazed; and in spirit he was once more a light-hearted boy, wandering by her side across the lawn of Waltham House, plucking

to her hand the sweetest primroses and violets, and listening to her expressions of childish delight. The years that had passed since then, seemed to have vanished utterly; and it was only when he was roused from his reverie by the jingle of Martha's keys, that he awakened from his delicious trance, and said, with a sigh—

"I have been thinking of the old manor-house, and of my childhood there. Those were happy days!"

Esther's lip trembled, but she constrained herself to say, softly—

"Indeed! I was in hopes you had forgotten them."

"Never! never!" he replied, earnestly. "The lapse of time may prevent our immediate recognition of persons, but it cannot take from us the remembrance of places and events. Places change but little; and events in which we have been interested, fix themselves indelibly, while of the growth from childhood to maturity we take no account, but always picture the personages of the scene looking now as we saw them then."

"By all of which I am to understand," she replied, shaking her head, with a dubious smile, "you wish to explain how it was you did not know me when we met before. And yet it will prove, perhaps, a stumbling-block to your argument, when I say I recognised you immediately."

"Did you?" he exclaimed, joyfully; and then he added, in a tone of gentle reproach, "Oh! why, why did you not make yourself known?"

"Was it for me to do that?" she answered, fixing her eyes steadily upon her needlework. At this moment her father entered.

"I am afraid, Mr. Heriot," said he, "you will find this but a dull house, after the active life you have been accustomed to lead. We have books, sir, if you are fond of reading. Mine, I fear, are too grave for your taste; but Esther has some of Master John Milton's writings, which will, doubtless, please you better."

"I have no fear of the house proving dreary to me, sir!" replied Heriot, with a smile; "but if you could put me in the way of sending a letter to my father, it would relieve the anxiety under which he is at present labouring. I am sorry to say he has heard, by this time, of my arrest, but does not know how happily I have escaped."

"Martha will take it!" said Esther, rising, and turning pale. "Or, Mr. Heriot, if I"—

"Arrest! escape! This is more serious than I thought," exclaimed Whalley, with a troubled air. "Be seated, Esther. Martha shall see the letter safely delivered, and, in the mean while, we will tax Mr. Heriot's kindness to tell us how this has happened."

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE never was, perhaps, an old house which more suddenly assumed a cheerful aspect than the one in the purlieus of Westminster, within whose time-discoloured walls Francis Heriot remained a not unwilling sojourner. It was singular to mark how happy he seemed. His happiness was not indeed of a boisterous character; but calm, soft, equable, and to an ordinary observer, would have appeared more like a state of trance. Days came and went, and yet he scarcely noted their flight beyond an occasional exclamation of surprise at their passing so speedily. The feet of time for him were printless; and the lulling hours strewed odorous blooms along the blushing way, and on the air flung opiates.

The letter of Francis Heriot to his father had met with an immediate response. The goldsmith expressed himself thankful for the safety of his son; and, though he did not conceal his anxiety at the risk which Francis would incur by remaining at the house of Whalley, he yet advised him—his hand evidently trembled as he wrote the words—to make no change then; but to remain, and assist his old friend in any way that his service might be found useful.

"In the mean time," wrote the elder Heriot, in

conclusion, "I am about to make interest at court to have the infamous writ of arrest revoked, and do not doubt of succeeding. It is fortunate, however, that you have eluded the grasp of Buckingham, as he might otherwise have felt constrained to justify his act; and means with him are never wanting." Below, was written as if by a hasty afterthought, "I have just seen your friend Lane: he tells me the man Leigh has had his wound dressed, and is doing very well." Here the old goldsmith's acerbity once more broke out, for he could not resist adding, by way of comment, "this comes of picking and stealing!"

Accompanying the epistle was a well filled purse, and such changes of raiment as the writer supposed his son would find most needful. It was strange, that in the whole of the letter, there was not one word of Esther Whalley. The old goldsmith appeared to have studiously avoided even the mention of her name; and, as this silence could not be attributed to his having forgotten her existence, the only inference to be drawn from it was, that he had determined to let matters take their course, without interfering with the young people at all. Francis Heriot so construed it, and it is probable he was right, for he knew his father's general mode of reasoning very well.

And Esther Whalley! was she happier now from the presence of this new inmate? There was, in-

deed, a brighter light in her eyes, and a faint colour, like the daintiest tinge of the rose, came gradually back to her cheeks. She was gayer, too, though that was only at times. At others, she seemed to be more cast down than ever before. These intervals of depression were, however, very rare, and never came under the notice of Heriot; for when she felt her sadness overpowering her, she sought the seclusion of her chamber, and did not reappear until her usual tone of cheerfulness was restored.

And thus the days glided insensibly by. Whalley occupied with his books, and making ready for that departure which he had learned was near at hand. Martha cheerful and self-sacrificing; now busying herself with her household matters, and now, standing forth to obtain information concerning the vessel, whose time of sailing had been twice fixed, and as often delayed. Heriot and Esther, too, read together such books as mutually interested them, or wearied of that—for even books sometimes weary—to converse in low tones freely of the past, and of the future; but seldom, or never, of the present. Or else—and it was often the choice of both—they would sit, for hours, in the embrasure of a window overlooking the Thames, and watch the floating barges, and the white sails of numberless vessels gliding up and down the stately river, and comment upon the myriads of people whose busy lives were passed upon its bosom.

Sometimes, too, in the mild evening twilight, when all these resources failed, they would sit in silent communion with their own deep thoughts. Neither of them had spoken of love, and yet each loved the other. Heriot, with all the happy warmth of his ardent nature, and Esther, not less truly, yet with fear and trembling. He could not, or would not, see any barrier to his hopes; while she saw too well there was one great barrier, which, in her devotion to her father, seemed impossible to be overcome. But if she could not resist the spell of loving, and the delicious feeling of being beloved, what woman's heart will blame her? Hope has a syren voice, and cheats us with dreams of future bliss, even when our heaven of the present is most overclouded.

And thus it was, that, as if blinded at times by the light of each other, they sought to shut out the world of the present, and live in the inner sphere of their own hearts; seeing by, and moving in, the realm of spirit only, and subduing all thoughts and all feelings to the one sweet, passionate dream of love.

But as the third week was passing away, there came a change; and the melancholy prevision of Esther Whalley, and the dim forebodings which Francis Heriot had so resolutely shut out, were now to be realized.

Martha had brought tidings that the ship would certainly sail for New England the following day.

She was also the bearer of a message from the goldsmith to his son, informing the latter that the writ of arrest had been withdrawn, and urging him to take leave of his friends, and return home immediately.

To such a message Francis Heriot could make but one response. He tried to reply cheerfully to Whalley's hasty expression of thankfulness, and even succeeded, for a moment, in repressing his own sadness, as he congratulated the Puritan and his daughter upon their brightening prospects of escape. Esther did not reply, but crossing the room, went to the old, familiar window, and buried her face in her hands. Even Whalley's stern lip quivered.

"Did I not know, my young friend," said he, "that a child's duty to its parent is the first of all earthly duties, I would ask you to tarry with us until we left dear old England for ever. But, perhaps, it is better as it is. We shall often think of you, Mr. Heriot, in the new land to which we are going. Yea, truly, very often; and not the less that your father's kindness, during your brief sojourn with us has spoken out, not in words only, but in generous deeds. Say to him that, if I have not refused the rich token of his love, it is only lest he should suppose my heart is turned away from my ancient friend. Neither must he be angered at my returning his gift, when I have gathered from the safe hands in which they are held, such fragments

of my fortune as I have yet been able to retain. It is fitting now," added the old man, reverently, "that I should wait upon the Lord, for He has been our rock of refuge and our sure defence, when the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against us. Farewell then, son of mine ancient friend; and if it is permitted us to meet no more on earth, may our lives be so ordered that, in the better land above, we shall stand side by side before the throne of the Eternal."

When he had spoken these solemn words, the old man wrang convulsively the hand of his companion, and then, turning away, sought the solitude of his own chamber.

A few minutes after her father had disappeared, Esther came out from the inner room, where she had been seated, and gently approaching Heriot, said, very soft and low—

"Francis! we have been very happy together—much happier than I thought it was possible to be in the presence of so many dangers. My friend, there is one sorrowful, parting word to say, which I fear to speak, and yet which must be spoken."

"Must we speak it, Esther?" he said, looking up with a trembling lip.

"I will not affect to misunderstand you," she answered, casting down her eyes, "and yet, ungrateful as I must appear to say so, after all your kindness—Francis! we must part!"

"Oh, no! no! Esther, I implore you, recall those cruel words. I love you truly, deeply, devotedly. Say, oh, say you will remain! Life to me would be worthless without you!"

"My friend—my more than friend! we have, both of us, duties to perform, in which any thought of self should bear no part. The tie which binds you to this land—a son's requital of a father's love—must not be broken by any act of mine. I, too, must follow, with a faithful heart, and with such poor service as my weak hands can offer, the path of that kind parent in whose happiness I have shared, and whose misfortunes only endear him to me the more. Farewell, my friend! We met in an evil time; and now that the clouds are breaking away, and a serener day is opening for my dear father, we must not let our selfish sorrows shadow his brightening path."

"I know it! I know it!" he answered, sadly. "But if I should succeed in gaining his consent—if his noble heart should respond to my entreaty?—Oh, Esther! do not turn away—do not crush out utterly the last hope to which I cling!"

"Francis! I implore you, spare me! You wrong me—you wrong your own heart. Hope never dies, they say; but, if withered to the earth by the frosts of the world, springs up anew with its first warm sun. You will be happy when I am gone. Indeed, you will. Do not teach me to believe it

will not be so; for already I have enough to bear."

"And this, then," said he, bitterly, "is the end of the dream that I have cherished!"

Alas! that, after such dreams, there should come, but too often, a terrible awakening!

"Better, far better," cries the torn heart in its anguish, "that I had never lived at all!"

And—

"Better, far better," cried Francis Heriot, "that I should have dreamed on thus for ever!—It is a dream that can never be dreamed again!"

But, as he said this, two dark, earnest eyes glistened upon him through the tears that crowded their long lashes, and a fair, white hand was placed tremblingly upon his shoulder, and a voice—HER dear voice—was murmuring in his ear—

"Forgive me!" said she, imploringly. "I fear I have been much to blame. But, oh, Francis! if you could only know the desolation of a heart pining for companionship, you would pity me, even while you condemned."

"I have nothing to forgive, Esther," said he; "for you are all truth and goodness. Think again over your sad decision. Your father's friends are many in the new land to which he is going, and he will no longer need your filial care. Remain, then, here with me. I am sure he will rejoice in your happiness, as you have sympathized with his sor-

rows. Or, if you will not do this, take me with you. I will wander the wide world with you, until we find a fitting resting-place, and will strive to make your home as happy as a devoted heart can. Let me, then, go with you; for life, without your dear presence, will be but one long, gloomy day, deepening into an endless night."

"I should have thought of this!" she murmured, clasping her hands. "I should have thought of this!"

"Esther! dear Esther!" he said, "let me plead with you once more!"

"You must not!" said she; "indeed, you must not! If you love me, I entreat you, spare me!"

"As you will," said he.

"Francis!" said she, tremulously, "a few words—only a few,—and on this, this sad subject; let them be our last. You will hear me, will you not?" she added, in such sweet, sorrowful tones of entreaty, that he was constrained to turn his head away in order to conceal his emotion.

"When I say," she continued, "that, from the time we were children together, your welfare has occupied my thoughts; that the simple words which your father then spoke—it may have been jestingly—have always been present in my memory; that, in any of those day-dreams in which young people are prone to indulge, your image always formed a part of the pleasant vision, you may judge how diffi-

cult it must have been for me to school my heart to follow that path of duty which is due to him who cherished me in infancy, who has dowered me with the only wealth he has now to give, the whole love of his great heart, and who has laboured diligently to instil into my breast those principles of piety and humble reliance, which have been his own strong and sure anchor in this time of our tribulation. Oh, Francis! could I desert him now? You, too, have a father; and, oh! think what would be his sorrow if you should leave him childless in his old age, and what would be my shame if I induced you to do so. Let us, then, rise superior to our grief, and these clouds will one day pass away. There is no gloom so heavy, my father will tell you, but what the sun will at some time pierce; nor any sorrow so deep but that time will bring alleviation."

Soothed by the pure and truthful words of the noble-minded maiden, Francis Heriot rose, and, imprinting one long, burning kiss upon her lips, poured forth a thousand blessings upon her head, and then abruptly quitted the house, never to enter it again.

Little was he aware of the terrible ordeal that yet awaited her he loved so truly and so well.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE last rays of the setting sun were yet lingering ruddily upon the roofs and spires of the great city, when a boat put off from the water-stairs of the Westminster Bridge. In this boat, which was called "The Mary Jane," were seated four persons. Two of these were watermen, in the usual short, full coats and badges of their calling. The other two, seated by themselves, were Whalley and his daughter. Both the latter were muffled in their cloaks, but not so closely as to be likely to elicit remark, or to raise any suspicion of mystery; for the evening air blew cold and fresh upon the river, and sufficiently justified such a precaution on the part of any persons whose occasions might lead them to sail upon it at so late an hour.

Whalley had walked the streets leading to where the boat was moored, with his head erect, and that calm and composed bearing which conscious rectitude alone can give; while Esther, clinging to his arm, moved less confidently by his side.

Scarcely had the boat shot out into the stream, before two men came bounding hastily down the stone steps, and, standing at the edge of the water,

surveyed intently, for a minute or two, the receding figures of the Puritan and his daughter.

"Run, run, Barton!" said the foremost man to his companion, "bid them make all speed with the boat. I tell you that is she. I have seen her face before."

"Well, if you think so, Lumley," began the other.

"Think!" said Lumley, sharply. "I know it. Away with you. Tell Duke and Merrill to jump in. Four oarsmen, recollect, or she will escape us yet. The fellows have the stream in their favour, and they pull well."

The man instantly disappeared, while Lumley stood waiting impatiently until the boat should be brought round.

"I wonder, for my part," said he, musingly, "what Leigh sees in the girl that he should be willing to fling so much money away upon her capture. I have seen plenty of faces more to my liking than hers. Ah! here is the boat! Steady, my lads; hold on to the chain, there, while I jump in. Now, bend to it with a will! There's a well-filled purse to be earned to-night, and a shower of curses if we miss it."

"But," cried Merrill, "there is a man with her, Barton tells me. What are we to do with him?"

"Take him too, I suppose," said Lumley. "Though I don't know how Leigh will like it."

He was furious enough this morning about our not finding the girl, until the doctor told him, if he raved on in that way much more, his wound would open afresh, and, then, he had better make his last will and testament."

"That quieted him down, I reckon," said Barton.

"Well, yes! a little. But he has a strong will of his own, and cares neither for doctor nor d—— when he is crossed. Pull away, men," he added, turning to the rowers. "If you will lay us alongside yonder boat within twenty minutes, I will give you an extra goldpiece."

"It is the little 'Mary Jane,'" said one of the boatmen. "She shows a light pair of heels, but we'll try what we can do."

"Keep out into the stream, towards the Surrey side," said Lumley, quickly, "and then strike across and head them. If they suspect we are chasing them, they will take to one of the stairs and get off."

"All right, sir," said the men.

And the direction of the boat was immediately changed.

In the mean time, unconscious of the peril that was impending, Whalley and his daughter sat in the soft twilight, conversing in low tones together: he speaking such words of gentle cheer as he thought might tend to mitigate her sadness, and she rather listening than replying.

"What ship did you say, sir?" inquired one of the boatmen, during a pause.

"The Good Intent. She sails for New England on the morrow," replied Whalley.

"I know her, sir," answered the man, and a clean-looking craft she is. I took a woman aboard of her this very day. Hallo! pull hard, Tom," he exclaimed, calling suddenly to his companion, "there's a four-oared boat coming across our bows."

"She looks in a mighty hurry," said Tom, "but we can pass her, I think."

"Lay to, there, will you?" shouted a voice across the water. "I want to speak with you."

At this unexpected encounter, Whalley felt Esther cling closer to him, and, looking down, he saw that her face was become deadly pale.

"Oh, father!" said she.

"Peace, child!" he whispered. "It may be nothing but an idle freak. Keep calm, and whatever happens, do not mention either your name or mine."

"Ah, then, you fear it is—it is"—

She could say no more, but she felt her father's arm clasp her with a firmer compression.

"Pull on, Tom, never mind them," said the boatman. "It is only some wild apprentices."

"Lay to, will you?" shouted Lumley again, as his boat came nearer. "Draw in your oars and wait, or I will put a brace of bullets through your heads."

"What means this outrage, gentlemen?" exclaimed Whalley, with dignity, as the strange boat ranged alongside. "By what right do you presume to stop peaceful persons?"

"I shall not answer that," said Lumley. "By the right of the strong hand, if you will. Good evening, fair lady," he added, taking off his beaver and saluting Esther with mock courtesy. "You have led us a long chase, but it is happily ended at last. May I ask the favour of you to step into this boat, and join our pleasant company?"

"This lady is under my protection, and does not leave my side," said Whalley, sternly. "Pass on your way, sirs, and leave us to pursue ours."

"Bend to it, Tom!" said the owner of 'The Mary Jane,' indignantly.

"You had better not," said Lumley, pointing his pistol at the boat. "The moment you lift a hand, look out for a hole in your cockle-shell. We have no business with you, my good fellows," he added, "but your freight must bear us company. If the old man chooses to remain, why, let him; but the girl we will have."

"Thank God, they do not know you!" whispered Esther, rising. "Proceed to the ship, it is me they seek. Go, dear father, go!"

"Never!" said Whalley, firmly; "if we are compelled to submit to these ruffians, we will go together."

"Father! father! I entreat!"

"Not a word more. My resolution is taken. Hark ye, sirs! before we consent to do your bidding, let me see the authority under which you act."

"Up lads, and show yourselves!" cried Lumley to his companions, and on the instant, Barton, Duke, and Merrill stood by the side of their leader. "Here is the authority you wished to see, my worthy sir," continued Lumley, with a laugh. "Four proper men, and tall; with pistols in their belts, swords by their sides, and hands ready enough to use them, if need be. Are you answered?"

"I am," said Whalley, quietly; "but take heed what you are doing. The law will not suffer so gross an outrage to remain unpunished."

"Come! step over, will you?" said Lumley, savagely. "We obey our orders, and care nothing for the law. Let the woman come by herself, if you will, and go your ways."

"I will not!" said Whalley.

"Do! do! I implore you, do!" said Esther. "God will watch over me."

"And is not your God my God?" said he, reproachfully. "There is no help for it. We must go, Esther. But above all things be calm, and be silent."

"It is well you have made up your minds to come quietly," said Lumley, making room for them on the seat before him. "Hark ye! my good fellows,"

he added, addressing the boatmen of the "Mary Jane." "We have keen ears and long arms, and if you dare to whisper a word of what you have seen, I would not give a worn-out sixpence for either of your lives. Give up your oars; we must let you drift about here for a little while. There is the value of them," he added, tossing a coin into the boat.

The oars were yielded with an ill grace, and then Lumley ordered his people to pull away and make for the nearest landing.

Immediately the command was given, the boat shot towards the shore. As they approached it, Lumley touched the Puritan on the shoulder, and said, in a low, deep, resolute voice :

"You have thrust yourself into this business, my friend, and you must take the consequences. If you breathe but a syllable to arrest the attention of any one on the wharf, or offer any resistance whatever, the peril will not be to us, but to the young lady at your side. Bear this in mind; for we are men it is dangerous to trifle with."

"We shall neither call out, nor resist," said Whalley, calmly, who had his own reasons for maintaining the utmost reserve.

As soon as the boat touched the wharf, one of the watermen was despatched for a carriage, and when Whalley had lifted his daughter into it, for she was faint and weak with alarm, he seated himself next

her; and Lumley and Barton having taken their places opposite, their companions mounted the box by the side of the coachman, and the vehicle drove rapidly off.

After rattling through various streets for the space of, perhaps, twenty minutes, the coach suddenly stopped before the door of a large and respectable-looking house; and, soon afterwards, Whalley and his daughter found themselves standing alone in the midst of a handsome apartment, and heard the key of the door turned sharply upon them.

"Sit down, my child!" said Whalley, bringing forward a chair. "You must summon up all your resolution. There is a mystery about this outrage which I cannot understand."

"Oh, father," she replied, "what can we expect but the worst? I fear the hand of the libertine Buckingham is in this; and if so, you are lost."

"There is a power beyond even kings or nobles," said the old man, reverently, "and in that power I place my trust."

Clasped tenderly in each other's arms, both father and daughter remained for some time silent. At length, they heard a feeble footstep approach the door, and the lock shot back as if with a trembling hand. Immediately afterwards, the door swung open, and Leigh entered the apartment. His face was frightfully pale, and his step tottering and slow. He was bareheaded, and without the customary

peruke. He wore no doublet, but, instead of it, was cased in a loose wrapper of silk brocade. His points were untied, and his feet thrust hastily into a pair of delicately-worked slippers. But, if his face was ghastly, there was a malignant fire in his dark eyes, and a smile of fiendish satisfaction playing about the corners of his mouth, that might have shaken a more resolute spirit than Esther Whalley. Her father regarded his strange visitor with less fear, perhaps, but with far more surprise.

"Be seated, Colonel Whalley!" said Leigh; and, at this unexpected address, the heart of the old Puritan sank, for the first time, within him. Leigh leaned heavily on the back of a chair, and, bowing to his guests, said with difficulty:—

"I—I did not expect visitors to-night; but such visitors are at all times welcome."

"You have taken a lawless and unusual method to obtain them, sir," replied Whalley. "May I ask for what purpose we are brought here?"

"All in good time," responded Leigh. "If you had favoured me with your address," he added, with a painfully sarcastic smile, "I might, perhaps, have desired the pleasure of your company in a more ceremonious manner. As it is, I have used the only means that offered."

"Oh, sir!" said Esther, "have pity on my father, and let him pass free."

"Peace, my child!" said Whalley. "This—this

person—has some motive for acting as he has done; I fervently hope it is a good one."

"That is as you may judge," said Leigh, writhing with sudden pain. "I must be brief—I—Colonel Whalley, love your daughter."

"Sir!" said Whalley.

"I will save you on one condition."

"Name it!" exclaimed Esther, eagerly.

"The price, fair lady, is easily stated," said Leigh. "There is a thousand pounds offered for the arrest of your father. I will secure his safety and forego the reward."

"And the condition is"—

"Your hand!"

Esther sank back into a seat with a fearful shudder.

"No! no!" said she. "And yet—yet—father, if—if it will save you"—

"You shall make no such sacrifice," said Whalley.

"Think again," said Leigh, biting his thin, blue lips, with suppressed passion. He was in torture all this time, but he resolutely bore it.

"Think again! If I speak one word to my fellows, within call—if I once breathe to them the name of my guest, you are lost for ever."

"Speak it out, then," said Whalley, boldly. "What matters to me a few more years of life, in comparison with her happiness?"

"Father! dear father! we must submit. I am ready!"

"No, Esther, never! What! shall I, who have lived to these years in the fear of evil, consent, for a brief existence, to barter away the child of my heart to a stranger?"

"So," said Leigh, "you have forgotten me, then?"

"Ay! if I ever knew you," responded the Puritan.

"Do you recollect," said Leigh, setting his teeth close, "one John Morley?"

"Surely, I do!" replied the old man. "It was the name of my steward—a worthy man—a very worthy man. To what does your question tend?"

"He had a son, who bore his father's name."

The Puritan looked in the pale, contorted face of Leigh, with a strange and undefinable fear.

"I am sorry to say," responded he, "I remember him, likewise. A lad incorrigibly vicious; the bane of his good father's house, and the terror of the country round."

"You ordered him to be put into the stocks," said Leigh, darkening as he spoke. "You exposed that boy to the rude gaze of grovelling churls and gossiping women."

"I did my duty, as an upright magistrate should; praying, as I did so, that the correction of the boy might lead to the future honesty and well-doing of the man."

"Such as he has become, he stands before you, then," said Leigh, with an exulting scowl. "It was a bitter day when you pronounced that sentence against me. Sitting there, in those accursed stocks, the sport of drunken clowns and hooting boys, I swore in my heart a deadly and unquenchable hatred to you and yours; and I have kept, thus far, my oath. It was I who instigated the people to burn your house. It was my hand that fired your well-filled granaries. It was I who was among the foremost to destroy your dainty flower-gardens, your boat-house on the river side, and the trees upon your grounds. I did all this in token of my revenge. I did yet more. You became a proscribed man, and I hunted you out with the perseverance of a sleuth-hound. I dogged your steps; I followed you wherever you went. When you doubled, I doubled too. When you took to hiding, I ferreted out your hiding-places. And I would have consummated my revenge by giving you up to the government, but that my love for your daughter prevented me. I worshipped her; I idolized her; and I resolved to make her hand the price of your safety."

"Thou unmitigated villain!" cried Whalley, releasing himself from his daughter, and advancing with his clenched hand uplifted.

"Strike!" said Leigh. "And that blow, though it be but the weight of a finger, seals your doom."

"No!" said Whalley, letting his hand fall as he

saw the agonized expression of Leigh's face. "No! I will not harm you. Do as you will with me. I leave you to God and your own conscience."

"Once more, for I grow faint. Does your daughter consent?"

"Never!" said Whalley. "Under the peril of her father's curse."

Leigh placed his hands to his side, and writhed his lips in agony. For a moment, he sank into a chair and rested himself; then he rose, and, moving with difficult steps towards the door, said, as he opened it:

"I leave you now to the prison and the headsman."

Whalley regarded the frantic man with a stern look; and, then, clasping his daughter's hands between his own, spoke, even in this extremity of danger, words of sweet comfort in her ear. But she heard them not. Her senses were paralyzed; for the awful fate they had escaped so long seemed now about to overtake them. Whalley strode to the door and tried it, but found it fast. The windows, they, too, were secured; and then he returned to his daughter, and awaited, with such calmness as he could command, whatever next was to befall.

Suddenly, he heard a wild outcry from the interior of the house, and then the hurry and tramp of numerous feet. Listening intently, he heard voices cry out, "He is dead! He is dead!" while others

called loudly for a physician. And then the street-door opened and shut, and opened and shut again; and then there was a noise at the door of the apartment in which he and his daughter were confined. Presently it was burst open, and Lumley and his associates, entering with oaths and revilings, seized rudely hold of Whalley and Esther, and thrust them into the street.

"What is all this?" said a burly man, hastening up the steps. "Take your hands off these good people. Lumley! What have they done?"

"Leigh is dying; perhaps dead by this time, Mr. Layton," said the ruffian. "He would get out of bed to see these people in spite of all I could say; and now see the end of it!"

"But who are these?" said Layton.

"How do I know?" replied Lumley. "Leigh seemed to have taken a liking for the girl; and as he paid us well to bring her to him, we did it. Curse them! he would have got better if they had not crossed his path."

"It was his own fault, not theirs," said Layton, and then, turning to Whalley, he added: "My good friend, go your ways! Leigh had his follies, but he is now beyond the law."

"I make no war upon the dead," said Whalley. "If you would do me the kindness to have a coach brought up to the corner of the next street for this young lady, I shall rest your debtor."

"Certainly, sir!" said the draper, calling Williams from the opposite side of the street. That precise young man obeyed with unusual alacrity the instructions of his employer, and even volunteered to assist Whalley in lifting Esther into the coach; an offer which the Puritan declined, with many thanks.

With this providential termination of their last and most terrible adventure, ended the severe trials of Whalley and his daughter. By ten o'clock that night, they succeeded in reaching the ship in safety, to the great joy of the disconsolate Martha; and early the following morning, set sail, with a fair wind, for the land of their adoption.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIX years have passed away. On a beautiful eminence, overlooking the little city of New Haven, and commanding a fine view of Long Island Sound, stands a fair mansion, in front of which is a smoothly shaven green lawn, intersected by winding walks, and dotted with picturesque clumps of forest trees. There are, also, shrubs and evergreens interspersed about the lawn; and, on the southern slope, a garden, filled with rare and beautiful flowers.

On a rustic bench, beneath a shadow of a noble oak, are seated a lady and gentleman, neither of whom had yet seen thirty summers. They are watching the gambols of a couple of children, one of whom—a boy—is chasing a butterfly in its eccentric flight; while a little flaxen-haired girl sits upon the grass, scattering a mass of wild-flowers over her lap, and humming to herself some infantile tune. Midway between them stands a tall, white-haired man, leaning upon a staff, and surveying, with a grave smile, first one child and then the other. At length, he takes the little girl by the hand, and calling to the boy, moves towards the rustic seat.

"Well, Francis, my son," said he, "is not the youthful vigour and serene majesty of this new land worthy of the new race that is springing up within it?"

"I, at least, ought to love it," said Francis Heriot, clasping the hand of his wife, and looking fondly in her eyes; "for it has been indeed a happy land to me."

"And you, Esther? What say you?"

"Ah, dear father," she replied, laughing. "I have answered that question a hundred times already, and always in the same thankful spirit."

"But yon stately house, which you have foolishly called after our dear old mansion at Waltham, is scarcely the rustic cottage we once spoke of in our darker days. Nor is yonder noble sound the run-

ning brook with which you were fain to have been content. Of these little ones," he added, looking fondly at the children, who were climbing about his knee, "if I remember rightly, we spoke not at all."

"I should have been content with the rustic cottage and the running brook," said Esther, with a smile; "but dear Francis, after his father's death, must needs come in search of his lost love; and—and always generous and thoughtful—must seek to preserve the memory of our childhood, by building a new Waltham House, in a new land."

And this happy change had taken place within six years! In the mean time, other changes, more or less various in their relation to individuals connected with our story, had occurred.

The elder Heriot only survived a few months after the departure of Whalley and his daughter; and Francis Heriot, after closing the business and realizing a portion of his father's investments, sailed for New England. How he was received the reader has just seen.

Master Jack Layton rose, in the mean time, to the dignity of an alderman; but fell, at length, a victim to apoplexy at a grand civic feast.

Of Buckingham's meteoric career, history and the chronicles of the day are full. Dryden has immortalized his eccentric life; and Pope his miserable death.

Mr. Williams, that very correct young gentleman,

unwilling to hide his light under a bushel, joined the sect of the Muggletonians, and became a famous preacher; but having, unfortunately, imbibed the opinion, that "to the pure all things are pure," his practice of the axiom rendered him so grossly amenable to the laws of the land, that, at a certain assizes in the fourth year of his career, he was condemned to ten years' imprisonment, and mulcted in so large a fine, that his followers, while they bewailed him as a martyr, buttoned up their pockets.

Oldcastle married his Angelina; a fat, frowsy girl, the daughter of a soap-boiler in the city. He obtained wealth, but lost caste. He was never known to speak of his old love, but once, after his marriage.

The cornet joined his friend Heriot at New Haven, and remained all his life a bachelor; dividing his time, pretty equally, between fishing and shooting, and the pleasant company at Waltham House.

Nothing positive is known of the after career of Louise d'Ocquetonville, although it has been asserted by some travellers, that she rose to be an actress of some note at one of the theatres in Paris; and that after a while, she became devout as she grew old, and sought to expiate her earlier sins by entering a nunnery.

And thus ends the story of the Regicide's Daughter.

THE END.

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