

THE LAST OF THE BARONS - VOLUME 1.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

THE LAST OF THE BARONS

by Edward Bulwer Lytton

DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

I dedicate to you, my indulgent Critic and long-tried Friend, the work which owes its origin to your suggestion. Long since, you urged me to attempt a fiction which might borrow its characters from our own Records, and serve to illustrate some of those truths which History is too often compelled to leave to the Tale-teller, the Dramatist, and the Poet. Unquestionably, Fiction, when aspiring to something higher than mere romance, does not pervert, but elucidate Facts. He who employs it worthily must, like a biographer, study the time and the characters he selects, with a minute and earnest diligence which the general historian, whose range extends over centuries, can scarcely be expected to bestow upon the things and the men of a single epoch. His descriptions should fill up with colour and detail the cold outlines of the rapid chronicler; and in spite of all that has been argued by pseudo-critics, the very fancy which urged and animated his theme should necessarily tend to increase the reader's practical and familiar acquaintance with the habits, the motives, and the modes of thought which constitute the true idiosyncrasy of an age. More than all, to Fiction is permitted that liberal use of Analogical Hypothesis which is denied to History, and which, if sobered by research, and enlightened by that knowledge of mankind (without which Fiction can neither harm nor profit, for it becomes unreadable), tends to clear up much that were otherwise obscure, and to solve the disputes and difficulties of contradictory evidence by the philosophy of the human heart.

My own impression of the greatness of the labour to which you invited me made me the more diffident of success, inasmuch as the field of English historical fiction had been so amply cultivated, not only by the most brilliant of our many glorious Novelists, but by later writers of high and merited reputation. But however the annals of our History have been exhausted by the industry of romance, the subject you finally pressed on my choice is unquestionably one which, whether in the delineation of character, the expression of passion, or the

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

suggestion of historical truths, can hardly fail to direct the Novelist to paths wholly untrodden by his predecessors in the Land of Fiction.

Encouraged by you, I commenced my task; encouraged by you, I venture, on concluding it, to believe that, despite the partial adoption of that established compromise between the modern and the elder diction, which Sir Walter Scott so artistically improved from the more rugged phraseology employed by Strutt, and which later writers have perhaps somewhat overhackneyed, I may yet have avoided all material trespass upon ground which others have already redeemed from the waste. Whatever the produce of the soil I have selected, I claim, at least, to have cleared it with my own labour, and ploughed it with my own heifer.

The reign of Edward IV. is in itself suggestive of new considerations and unexhausted interest to those who accurately regard it. Then commenced the policy consummated by Henry VII.; then were broken up the great elements of the old feudal order; a new Nobility was called into power, to aid the growing Middle Class in its struggles with the ancient; and in the fate of the hero of the age, Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick, popularly called the King-maker, "the greatest as well as the last of those mighty Barons who formerly overawed the Crown," [Hume adds, "and rendered the people incapable of civil government,"—a sentence which, perhaps, judges too hastily the whole question at issue in our earlier history, between the jealousy of the barons and the authority of the king.] was involved the very principle of our existing civilization. It adds to the wide scope of Fiction, which ever loves to explore the twilight, that, as Hume has truly observed, "No part of English history since the Conquest is so obscure, so uncertain, so little authentic or consistent, as that of the Wars between the two Roses." It adds also to the importance of that conjectural research in which Fiction may be made so interesting and so useful, that "this profound darkness falls upon us just on the eve of the restoration of letters;" [Hume] while amidst the gloom, we perceive the movement of those great and heroic passions in which Fiction finds delineations everlastingly new, and are brought in contact with characters sufficiently familiar for interest, sufficiently remote for adaptation to romance, and above all, so frequently obscured by contradictory evidence, that we lend ourselves willingly to any one who seeks to help our judgment of the individual by tests taken from the general knowledge of mankind.

Round the great image of the "Last of the Barons" group Edward the Fourth, at once frank and false; the brilliant but ominous boyhood of Richard the Third; the accomplished Hastings, "a good knight and gentle, but somewhat dissolute of living;" [Chronicle of Edward V., in Stowe] the vehement and fiery Margaret of Anjou; the meek image of her "holy Henry," and the pale shadow of their son. There may we see, also, the gorgeous Prelate, refining in policy and wile, as the

enthusiasm and energy which had formerly upheld the Ancient Church pass into the stern and persecuted votaries of the New; we behold, in that social transition, the sober Trader—outgrowing the prejudices of the rude retainer or rustic franklin, from whom he is sprung—recognizing sagaciously, and supporting sturdily, the sectarian interests of his order, and preparing the way for the mighty Middle Class, in which our Modern Civilization, with its faults and its merits, has established its stronghold; while, in contrast to the measured and thoughtful notions of liberty which prudent Commerce entertains, we are reminded of the political fanaticism of the secret Lollard,—of the jacquerie of the turbulent mob-leader; and perceive, amidst the various tyrannies of the time, and often partially allied with the warlike seignorie, [For it is noticeable that in nearly all the popular risings—that of Cade, of Robin of Redesdale, and afterwards of that which Perkin Warbeck made subservient to his extraordinary enterprise—the proclamations of the rebels always announced, among their popular grievances, the depression of the ancient nobles and the elevation of new men.]—ever jealous against all kingly despotism,—the restless and ignorant movement of a democratic principle, ultimately suppressed, though not destroyed, under the Tudors, by the strong union of a Middle Class, anxious for security and order, with an Executive Authority determined upon absolute sway.

Nor should we obtain a complete and comprehensive view of that most interesting Period of Transition, unless we saw something of the influence which the sombre and sinister wisdom of Italian policy began to exercise over the councils of the great,—a policy of refined stratagem, of complicated intrigue, of systematic falsehood, of ruthless, but secret violence; a policy which actuated the fell statecraft of Louis XI.; which darkened, whenever he paused to think and to scheme, the gaudy and jovial character of Edward IV.; which appeared in its fullest combination of profound guile and resolute will in Richard III.; and, softened down into more plausible and specious purpose by the unimpassioned sagacity of Henry VII., finally attained the object which justified all its villanies to the princes of its native land,—namely, the tranquillity of a settled State, and the establishment of a civilized but imperious despotism.

Again, in that twilight time, upon which was dawning the great invention that gave to Letters and to Science the precision and durability of the printed page, it is interesting to conjecture what would have been the fate of any scientific achievement for which the world was less prepared. The reception of printing into England chanced just at the happy period when Scholarship and Literature were favoured by the great. The princes of York, with the exception of Edward IV. himself, who had, however, the grace to lament his own want of learning, and the taste to appreciate it in others, were highly educated. The Lords Rivers and Hastings [The erudite Lord Worcester had been one of Caxton's warmest patrons, but that nobleman was no

more at the time in which printing is said to have been actually introduced into England.] were accomplished in all the "witte and lere" of their age. Princes and peers vied with each other in their patronage of Caxton, and Richard III., during his brief reign, spared no pains to circulate to the utmost the invention destined to transmit his own memory to the hatred and the horror of all succeeding time. But when we look around us, we see, in contrast to the gracious and fostering reception of the mere mechanism by which science is made manifest, the utmost intolerance to science itself. The mathematics in especial are deemed the very cabala of the black art. Accusations of witchcraft were never more abundant; and yet, strange to say, those who openly professed to practise the unhallowed science, [Nigromancy, or Sorcery, even took its place amongst the regular callings. Thus, "Thomas Vandyke, late of Cambridge," is styled (Rolls Parl. 6, p. 273) Nigromancer as his profession.—Sharon Turner, "History of England," vol iv. p. 6. Burke, "History of Richard III."] and contrived to make their deceptions profitable to some unworthy political purpose, appear to have enjoyed safety, and sometimes even honour, while those who, occupied with some practical, useful, and noble pursuits uncomprehended by prince or people, denied their sorcery were despatched without mercy. The mathematician and astronomer Bolingbroke (the greatest clerk of his age) is hanged and quartered as a wizard, while not only impunity but reverence seems to have awaited a certain Friar Bungey, for having raised mists and vapours, which greatly befriended Edward IV. at the battle of Barnet.

Our knowledge of the intellectual spirit of the age, therefore, only becomes perfect when we contrast the success of the Impostor with the fate of the true Genius. And as the prejudices of the populace ran high against all mechanical contrivances for altering the settled conditions of labour, [Even in the article of bonnets and hats, it appears that certain wicked falling mills were deemed worthy of a special anathema in the reign of Edward IV. These engines are accused of having sought, "by subtle imagination," the destruction of the original makers of hats and bonnets" by man's strength,—that is, with hands and feet; "and an act of parliament was passed (22d of Edward IV.) to put down the fabrication of the said hats and bonnets by mechanical contrivance.] so probably, in the very instinct and destiny of Genius which ever drive it to a war with popular prejudice, it would be towards such contrivances that a man of great ingenuity and intellect, if studying the physical sciences, would direct his ambition.

Whether the author, in the invention he has assigned to his philosopher (Adam Warner), has too boldly assumed the possibility of a conception so much in advance of the time, they who have examined such of the works of Roger Bacon as are yet given to the world can best decide; but the assumption in itself belongs strictly to the most acknowledged prerogatives of Fiction; and the true and important question will obviously be, not whether Adam Warner could have

constructed his model, but whether, having so constructed it, the fate that befell him was probable and natural.

Such characters as I have here alluded to seemed, then, to me, in meditating the treatment of the high and brilliant subject which your eloquence animated me to attempt, the proper Representatives of the multiform Truths which the time of Warwick the King-maker affords to our interests and suggests for our instruction; and I can only wish that the powers of the author were worthier of the theme.

It is necessary that I now state briefly the foundation of the Historical portions of this narrative. The charming and popular "History of Hume," which, however, in its treatment of the reign of Edward IV. is more than ordinarily incorrect, has probably left upon the minds of many of my readers, who may not have directed their attention to more recent and accurate researches into that obscure period, an erroneous impression of the causes which led to the breach between Edward IV. and his great kinsman and subject, the Earl of Warwick. The general notion is probably still strong that it was the marriage of the young king to Elizabeth Gray, during Warwick's negotiations in France for the alliance of Bona of Savoy (sister-in-law to Louis XI.), which exasperated the fiery earl, and induced his union with the House of Lancaster. All our more recent historians have justly rejected this groundless fable, which even Hume (his extreme penetration supplying the defects of his superficial research) admits with reserve. ["There may even some doubt arise with regard to the proposal of marriage made to Bona of Savoy," etc.—HUME, note to p. 222, vol. iii. edit. 1825.] A short summary of the reasons for this rejection is given by Dr. Lingard, and annexed below. ["Many writers tell us that the enmity of Warwick arose from his disappointment caused by Edward's clandestine marriage with Elizabeth. If we may believe them, the earl was at the very time in France negotiating on the part of the king a marriage with Bona of Savoy, sister to the Queen of France; and having succeeded in his mission, brought back with him the Count of Dampmartin as ambassador from Louis. To me the whole story appears a fiction. 1. It is not to be found in the more ancient historians. 2. Warwick was not at the time in France. On the 20th of April, ten days before the marriage, he was employed in negotiating a truce with the French envoys in London (Rym. xi. 521), and on the 26th of May, about three weeks after it, was appointed to treat of another truce with the King of Scots (Rym. xi. 424). 3. Nor could he bring Dampmartin with him to England; for that nobleman was committed a prisoner to the Bastille in September, 1463, and remained there till May, 1465 (Monstrel. iii. 97, 109). Three contemporary and well-informed writers, the two continuators of the History of Croyland and Wyrcester, attribute his discontent to the marriages and honours granted to the Wydeviles, and the marriage of the princess Margaret with the Duke of Burgundy."—LINGARD, vol. iii. c. 24, pp. 5, 19, 4to ed.] And, indeed, it is a matter of wonder that so many of our chroniclers could have gravely admitted a legend

contradicted by all the subsequent conduct of Warwick himself; for we find the earl specially doing honour to the publication of Edward's marriage, standing godfather to his first-born (the Princess Elizabeth), employed as ambassador or acting as minister, and fighting for Edward, and against the Lancastrians, during the five years that elapsed between the coronation of Elizabeth and Warwick's rebellion.

The real causes of this memorable quarrel, in which Warwick acquired his title of King-maker, appear to have been these.

It is probable enough, as Sharon Turner suggests, [Sharon Turner: History of England, vol. iii. p. 269.] that Warwick was disappointed that, since Edward chose a subject for his wife, he neglected the more suitable marriage he might have formed with the earl's eldest daughter; and it is impossible but that the earl should have been greatly chafed, in common with all his order, by the promotion of the queen's relations, [W. Wyr. 506, 7. Croyl. 542.] new men and apostate Lancastrians. But it is clear that these causes for discontent never weakened his zeal for Edward till the year 1467, when we chance upon the true origin of the romance concerning Bona of Savoy, and the first open dissension between Edward and the earl.

In that year Warwick went to France, to conclude an alliance with Louis XI., and to secure the hand of one of the French princes [Which of the princes this was does not appear, and can scarcely be conjectured. The "Pictorial History of England" (Book v. 102) in a tone of easy decision says "it was one of the sons of Louis XI." But Louis had no living sons at all at the time. The Dauphin was not born till three years afterwards. The most probable person was the Duke of Guienne, Louis's brother.] for Margaret, sister to Edward IV.; during this period, Edward received the bastard brother of Charles, Count of Charolois, afterwards Duke of Burgundy, and arranged a marriage between Margaret and the count.

Warwick's embassy was thus dishonoured, and the dishonour was aggravated by personal enmity to the bridegroom Edward had preferred. [The Croyland Historian, who, as far as his brief and meagre record extends, is the best authority for the time of Edward IV., very decidedly states the Burgundian alliance to be the original cause of Warwick's displeasure, rather than the king's marriage with Elizabeth: "Upon which (the marriage of Margaret with Charolois) Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick, who had for so many years taken party with the French against the Burgundians, conceived great indignation; and I hold this to be the truer cause of his resentment than the king's marriage with Elizabeth, for he had rather have procured a husband for the aforesaid princess Margaret in the kingdom of France." The Croyland Historian also speaks emphatically of the strong animosity existing between Charolois and Warwick.—Cont. Croyl. 551.] The earl retired in disgust to his castle. But Warwick's nature, which Hume has happily described as one of "undesigning frankness and openness," [Hume,

"Henry VI.," vol. iii. p. 172, edit. 1825.] does not seem to have long harboured this resentment. By the intercession of the Archbishop of York and others, a reconciliation was effected, and the next year, 1468, we find Warwick again in favour, and even so far forgetting his own former cause of complaint as to accompany the procession in honour of Margaret's nuptials with his private foe. [Lingard.] In the following year, however, arose the second dissension between the king and his minister,—namely, in the king's refusal to sanction the marriage of his brother Clarence with the earl's daughter Isabel,—a refusal which was attended with a resolute opposition that must greatly have galled the pride of the earl, since Edward even went so far as to solicit the Pope to refuse his sanction, on the ground of relationship. [Carte. Wm. Wyr.] The Pope, nevertheless, grants the dispensation, and the marriage takes place at Calais. A popular rebellion then breaks out in England. Some of Warwick's kinsmen—those, however, belonging to the branch of the Nevile family that had always been Lancastrians, and at variance with the earl's party—are found at its head. The king, who is in imminent danger, writes a supplicating letter to Warwick to come to his aid. ["Paston Letters," cxcviii. vol. ii., Knight's ed. See Lingard, c. 24, for the true date of Edward's letters to Warwick, Clarence, and the Archbishop of York.] The earl again forgets former causes for resentment, hastens from Calais, rescues the king, and quells the rebellion by the influence of his popular name.

We next find Edward at Warwick's castle of Middleham, where, according to some historians, he is forcibly detained,—an assertion treated by others as a contemptible invention. This question will be examined in the course of this work; [See Note II.] but whatever the true construction of the story, we find that Warwick and the king are still on such friendly terms, that the earl marches in person against a rebellion on the borders, obtains a signal victory, and that the rebel leader (the earl's own kinsman) is beheaded by Edward at York. We find that, immediately after this supposed detention, Edward speaks of Warwick and his brothers "as his best friends;" ["Paston Letters," cciv. vol. ii., Knight's ed. The date of this letter, which puzzled the worthy annotator, is clearly to be referred to Edward's return from York, after his visit to Middleham in 1469. No mention is therein made by the gossiping contemporary of any rumour that Edward had suffered imprisonment. He enters the city in state, as having returned safe and victorious from a formidable rebellion. The letter goes on to say: "The king himself hath (that is, holds) good language of the Lords Clarence, of Warwick, etc., saying 'they be his best friends.'" Would he say this if just escaped from a prison? Sir John Paston, the writer of the letter, adds, it is true, "But his household men have (hold) other language." very probably, for the household men were the court creatures always at variance with Warwick, and held, no doubt, the same language they had been in the habit of holding before.] that he betroths his eldest daughter to Warwick's nephew, the male heir of the family. And then suddenly, only three months

afterwards (in February, 1470), and without any clear and apparent cause, we find Warwick in open rebellion, animated by a deadly hatred to the king, refusing, from first to last, all overtures of conciliation; and so determined is his vengeance, that he bows a pride, hitherto morbidly susceptible, to the vehement insolence of Margaret of Anjou, and forms the closest alliance with the Lancastrian party, in the destruction of which his whole life had previously been employed.

Here, then, where History leaves us in the dark, where our curiosity is the most excited, Fiction gropes amidst the ancient chronicles, and seeks to detect and to guess the truth. And then Fiction, accustomed to deal with the human heart, seizes upon the paramount importance of a Fact which the modern historian has been contented to place amongst dubious and collateral causes of dissension. We find it broadly and strongly stated by Hall and others, that Edward had coarsely attempted the virtue of one of the earl's female relations. "And farther it erreth not from the truth," says Hall, "that the king did attempt a thing once in the earl's house, which was much against the earl's honesty; but whether it was the daughter or the niece," adds the chronicler, "was not, for both their honours, openly known; but surely such a thing WAS attempted by King Edward," etc.

Any one at all familiar with Hall (and, indeed, with all our principal chroniclers, except Fabyan), will not expect any accurate precision as to the date he assigns for the outrage. He awards to it, therefore, the same date he erroneously gives to Warwick's other grudges (namely, a period brought some years lower by all judicious historians) a date at which Warwick was still Edward's fastest friend.

Once grant the probability of this insult to the earl (the probability is conceded at once by the more recent historians, and received without scruple as a fact by Rapia, Habington, and Carte), and the whole obscurity which involves this memorable quarrel vanishes at once. Here was, indeed, a wrong never to be forgiven, and yet never to be proclaimed. As Hall implies, the honour of the earl was implicated in hushing the scandal, and the honour of Edward in concealing the offence. That if ever the insult were attempted, it must have been just previous to the earl's declared hostility is clear. Offences of that kind hurry men to immediate action at the first, or else, if they stoop to dissimulation the more effectually to avenge afterwards, the outbreak bides its seasonable time. But the time selected by the earl for his outbreak was the very worst he could have chosen, and attests the influence of a sudden passion,—a new and uncalculated cause of resentment. He had no forces collected; he had not even sounded his own brother-in-law, Lord Stanley (since he was uncertain of his intentions); while, but a few months before, had he felt any desire to dethrone the king, he could either have suffered him to be crushed by the popular rebellion the earl himself had quelled, or have disposed of his person as he pleased when a guest at

his own castle of Middleham. His evident want of all preparation and forethought—a want which drove into rapid and compulsory flight from England the baron to whose banner, a few months afterwards, flocked sixty thousand men—proves that the cause of his alienation was fresh and recent.

If, then, the cause we have referred to, as mentioned by Hall and others, seems the most probable we can find (no other cause for such abrupt hostility being discernible), the date for it must be placed where it is in this work,—namely, just prior to the earl's revolt. The next question is, who could have been the lady thus offended, whether a niece or daughter. Scarcely a niece, for Warwick had one married brother, Lord Montagu, and several sisters; but the sisters were married to lords who remained friendly to Edward, [Except the sisters married to Lord Fitzhugh and Lord Oxford. But though Fitzhugh, or rather his son, broke into rebellion, it was for some cause in which Warwick did not sympathize, for by Warwick himself was that rebellion put down; nor could the aggrieved lady have been a daughter of Lord Oxford, for he was a staunch, though not avowed, Lancastrian, and seems to have carefully kept aloof from the court.] and Montagu seems to have had no daughter out of childhood, [Montagu's wife could have been little more than thirty at the time of his death. She married again, and had a family by her second husband.] while that nobleman himself did not share Warwick's rebellion at the first, but continued to enjoy the confidence of Edward. We cannot reasonably, then, conceive the uncle to have been so much more revengeful than the parents,—the legitimate guardians of the honour of a daughter. It is, therefore, more probable that the insulted maiden should have been one of Lord Warwick's daughters; and this is the general belief. Carte plainly declares it was Isabel. But Isabel it could hardly have been. She was then married to Edward's brother, the Duke of Clarence, and within a month of her confinement. The earl had only one other daughter, Anne, then in the flower of her youth; and though Isabel appears to have possessed a more striking character of beauty, Anne must have had no inconsiderable charms to have won the love of the Lancastrian Prince Edward, and to have inspired a tender and human affection in Richard Duke of Gloucester. [Not only does Majerus, the Flemish annalist, speak of Richard's early affection to Anne, but Richard's pertinacity in marrying her, at a time when her family was crushed and fallen, seems to sanction the assertion. True, that Richard received with her a considerable portion of the estates of her parents. But both Anne herself and her parents were attainted, and the whole property at the disposal of the Crown. Richard at that time had conferred the most important services on Edward. He had remained faithful to him during the rebellion of Clarence; he had been the hero of the day both at Barnet and Tewksbury. His reputation was then exceedingly high, and if he had demanded, as a legitimate reward, the lands of Middleham, without the bride, Edward could not well have refused them. He certainly had a much better claim than the only other competitor for the confiscated estates,—namely, the perjured

and despicable Clarence. For Anne's reluctance to marry Richard, and the disguise she assumed, see Miss Strickland's "Life of Anne of Warwick." For the honour of Anne, rather than of Richard, to whose memory one crime more or less matters but little, it may here be observed that so far from there being any ground to suppose that Gloucester was an accomplice in the assassination of the young prince Edward of Lancaster, there is some ground to believe that that prince was not assassinated at all, but died (as we would fain hope the grandson of Henry V. did die) fighting manfully in the field.—"Harleian Manuscripts;" Stowe, "Chronicle of Tewksbury;" Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 335.] It is also noticeable, that when, not as Shakspeare represents, but after long solicitation, and apparently by positive coercion, Anne formed her second marriage, she seems to have been kept carefully by Richard from his gay brother's court, and rarely, if ever, to have appeared in London till Edward was no more.

That considerable obscurity should always rest upon the facts connected with Edward's meditated crime,—that they should never be published amongst the grievances of the haughty rebel is natural from the very dignity of the parties, and the character of the offence; that in such obscurity sober History should not venture too far on the hypothesis suggested by the chronicler, is right and laudable. But probably it will be conceded by all, that here Fiction finds its lawful province, and that it may reasonably help, by no improbable nor groundless conjecture, to render connected and clear the most broken and the darkest fragments of our annals.

I have judged it better partially to forestall the interest of the reader in my narrative, by stating thus openly what he may expect, than to encounter the far less favourable impression (if he had been hitherto a believer in the old romance of Bona of Savoy), [I say the old romance of Bona of Savoy, so far as Edward's rejection of her hand for that of Elizabeth Gray is stated to have made the cause of his quarrel with Warwick. But I do not deny the possibility that such a marriage had been contemplated and advised by Warwick, though he neither sought to negotiate it, nor was wronged by Edward's preference of his fair subject.] that the author was taking an unwarrantable liberty with the real facts, when, in truth, it is upon the real facts, as far as they can be ascertained, that the author has built his tale, and his boldest inventions are but deductions from the amplest evidence he could collect. Nay, he even ventures to believe, that whoever hereafter shall write the history of Edward IV. will not disdain to avail himself of some suggestions scattered throughout these volumes, and tending to throw new light upon the events of that intricate but important period.

It is probable that this work will prove more popular in its nature than my last fiction of "Zanoni," which could only be relished by those interested in the examinations of the various problems in human life which it attempts to solve. But both fictions, however different

and distinct their treatment, are constructed on those principles of art to which, in all my later works, however imperfect my success, I have sought at least steadily to adhere.

To my mind, a writer should sit down to compose a fiction as a painter prepares to compose a picture. His first care should be the conception of a whole as lofty as his intellect can grasp, as harmonious and complete as his art can accomplish; his second care, the character of the interest which the details are intended to sustain.

It is when we compare works of imagination in writing with works of imagination on the canvas, that we can best form a critical idea of the different schools which exist in each; for common both to the author and the painter are those styles which we call the Familiar, the Picturesque, and the Intellectual. By recurring to this comparison we can, without much difficulty, classify works of Fiction in their proper order, and estimate the rank they should severally hold. The Intellectual will probably never be the most widely popular for the moment. He who prefers to study in this school must be prepared for much depreciation, for its greatest excellences, even if he achieve them, are not the most obvious to the many. In discussing, for instance, a modern work, we hear it praised, perhaps, for some striking passage, some prominent character; but when do we ever hear any comment on its harmony of construction, on its fulness of design, on its ideal character,—on its essentials, in short, as a work of art? What we hear most valued in the picture, we often find the most neglected in the book,—namely, the composition; and this, simply because in England painting is recognized as an art, and estimated according to definite theories; but in literature we judge from a taste never formed, from a thousand prejudices and ignorant predilections. We do not yet comprehend that the author is an artist, and that the true rules of art by which he should be tested are precise and immutable. Hence the singular and fantastic caprices of the popular opinion,—its exaggerations of praise or censure, its passion and reaction. At one while, its solemn contempt for Wordsworth; at another, its absurd idolatry. At one while we are stunned by the noisy celebrity of Byron, at another we are calmly told that he can scarcely be called a poet. Each of these variations in the public is implicitly followed by the vulgar criticism; and as a few years back our journals vied with each other in ridiculing Wordsworth for the faults which he did not possess, they vie now with each other in eulogiums upon the merits which he has never displayed.

These violent fluctuations betray both a public and a criticism utterly unschooled in the elementary principles of literary art, and entitle the humblest author to dispute the censure of the hour, while they ought to render the greatest suspicious of its praise.

It is, then, in conformity, not with any presumptuous conviction of

his own superiority, but with his common experience and common-sense, that every author who addresses an English audience in serious earnest is permitted to feel that his final sentence rests not with the jury before which he is first heard. The literary history of the day consists of a series of judgments set aside.

But this uncertainty must more essentially betide every student, however lowly, in the school I have called the Intellectual, which must ever be more or less at variance with the popular canons. It is its hard necessity to vex and disturb the lazy quietude of vulgar taste; for unless it did so, it could neither elevate nor move. He who resigns the Dutch art for the Italian must continue through the dark to explore the principles upon which he founds his design, to which he adapts his execution; in hope or in despondence still faithful to the theory which cares less for the amount of interest created than for the sources from which the interest is to be drawn; seeking in action the movement of the grander passions or the subtler springs of conduct, seeking in repose the colouring of intellectual beauty.

The Low and the High of Art are not very readily comprehended. They depend not upon the worldly degree or the physical condition of the characters delineated; they depend entirely upon the quality of the emotion which the characters are intended to excite,—namely, whether of sympathy for something low, or of admiration for something high. There is nothing high in a boor's head by Teniers, there is nothing low in a boor's head by Guido. What makes the difference between the two? The absence or presence of the Ideal! But every one can judge of the merit of the first, for it is of the Familiar school; it requires a connoisseur to see the merit of the last, for it is of the Intellectual.

I have the less scrupled to leave these remarks to cavil or to sarcasm, because this fiction is probably the last with which I shall trespass upon the Public, and I am desirous that it shall contain, at least, my avowal of the principles upon which it and its later predecessors have been composed. You know well, however others may dispute the fact, the earnestness with which those principles have been meditated and pursued,—with high desire, if but with poor results.

It is a pleasure to feel that the aim, which I value more than the success, is comprehended by one whose exquisite taste as a critic is only impaired by that far rarer quality,—the disposition to over-estimate the person you profess to esteem! Adieu, my sincere and valued friend; and accept, as a mute token of gratitude and regard, these flowers gathered in the Garden where we have so often roved together. E. L. B.

LONDON, January, 1843.

PREFACE TO THE LAST OF THE BARONS

This was the first attempt of the author in Historical Romance upon English ground. Nor would he have risked the disadvantage of comparison with the genius of Sir Walter Scott, had he not believed that that great writer and his numerous imitators had left altogether unoccupied the peculiar field in Historical Romance which the Author has here sought to bring into cultivation. In "The Last of the Barons," as in "Harold," the aim has been to illustrate the actual history of the period, and to bring into fuller display than general History itself has done the characters of the principal personages of the time, the motives by which they were probably actuated, the state of parties, the condition of the people, and the great social interests which were involved in what, regarded imperfectly, appear but the feuds of rival factions.

"The Last of the Barons" has been by many esteemed the best of the Author's romances; and perhaps in the portraiture of actual character, and the grouping of the various interests and agencies of the time, it may have produced effects which render it more vigorous and lifelike than any of the other attempts in romance by the same hand.

It will be observed that the purely imaginary characters introduced are very few; and, however prominent they may appear, still, in order not to interfere with the genuine passions and events of history, they are represented as the passive sufferers, not the active agents, of the real events. Of these imaginary characters, the most successful is Adam Warner, the philosopher in advance of his age; indeed, as an ideal portrait, I look upon it as the most original in conception, and the most finished in execution, of any to be found in my numerous prose works, "Zanoni" alone excepted.

For the rest, I venture to think that the general reader will obtain from these pages a better notion of the important age, characterized by the decline of the feudal system, and immediately preceding that great change in society which we usually date from the accession of Henry VII., than he could otherwise gather, without wading through a vast mass of neglected chronicles and antiquarian dissertations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOOK I

THE ADVENTURES OF MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILLE

CHAPTER

- I The Pastime-ground of old Cockaigne
- II The Broken Gittern
- III The Trader and the Gentle; or, the Changing Generation
- IV Ill fares the Country Mouse in the Traps of Town
- V Weal to the Idler, Woe to the Workman
- VI Master Marmaduke Nevile fears for the Spiritual Weal of his Host and Hostess
- VII There is a Rod for the Back of every Fool who would be Wiser than his Generation

BOOK II

THE KING'S COURT

CHAPTER

- I Earl Warwick the King-maker
- II King Edward the Fourth
- III The Antechamber

BOOK III

IN WHICH THE HISTORY PASSES FROM THE KING'S COURT TO THE STUDENT'S CELL, AND RELATES THE PERILS THAT BEFELL A PHILOSOPHER FOR MEDDLING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER

- I The Solitary Sage and the Solitary Maid
- II Master Adam Warner grows a Miser, and behaves Shamefully
- III A Strange Visitor—All Ages of the World breed World-Bettors
- IV Lord Hastings
- V Master Adam Warner and King Henry the Sixth
- VI How, on leaving King Log, Foolish Wisdom runs a-muck on King Stork
- VII My Lady Duchess's Opinion of the Utility of Master Warner's Invention, and her esteem for its Explosion
- VIII The Old Woman talks of Sorrows, the Young Woman dreams of Love; the Courtier flies from Present Power to Remembrances of Past Hopes, and the World-Bettered opens Utopia, with a View of the Gibbet for the Silly Sage he has seduced into his Schemes,—so, ever and evermore, runs the World away
- IX How the Destructive Organ of Prince Richard promises Goodly Development

BOOK IV

INTRIGUES OF THE COURT OF EDWARD IV

CHAPTER

- I Margaret of Anjou
- II In which are laid Open to the Reader the Character of Edward the Fourth and that of his Court, with the Machinations of the Woodvilles against the Earl of Warwick
- III Wherein Master Nicholas Alwyn visits the Court, and there learns Matter of which the Acute Reader will judge for himself
- IV Exhibiting the Benefits which Royal Patronage confers on Genius,—also the Early Loves of the Lord Hastings; with other Matters Edifying and Delectable
- V The Woodville Intrigue prospers—Montagu confers with Hastings, visits the Archbishop of York, and is met on the Road by a strange Personage
- VI The Arrival of the Count de la Roche, and the various Excitement produced on many Personages by that Event
- VII The Renowned Combat between Sir Anthony Woodville and the Bastard of Burgundy
- VIII How the Bastard of Burgundy prospered more in his Policy than With the Pole-axe—and how King Edward holds his Summer Chase in the Fair Groves of Shene
- IX The Great Actor returns to fill the Stage
- X How the Great Lords come to the King-maker, and with what Proffers

BOOK V

THE LAST OF THE BARONS IN HIS FATHERS HALLS

CHAPTER

- I Rural England in the Middle Ages—Noble Visitors seek the Castle Of Middleham
- II Councils and Musings
- III The Sisters
- IV The Destrier

BOOK VI

WHEREIN ARE OPENED SOME GLIMPSES OF THE FATE BELOW THAT ATTENDS THOSE WHO ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS, AND THOSE WHO DESIRE TO MAKE OTHERS

BETTER. LOVE, DEMAGOGY, AND SCIENCE ALL EQUALLY OFF-SPRING
OF THE
SAME PROLIFIC DELUSION,—NAMELY, THAT MEAN SOULS (THE EARTH'S
MAJORITY) ARE WORTH THE HOPE AND THE AGONY OF NOBLE
SOULS, THE
EVERLASTING SUFFERING AND ASPIRING FEW.

CHAPTER

I New Dissentions
II The Would-be Improvers of Jove's Football, Earth—The Sad
Father and the Sad Child—The Fair Rivals
III Wherein the Demagogue seeks the Courtier
IV Sibyll
V Katherine
VI Joy for Adam, and Hope for Sibyll—and Popular Friar Bungey!
VII A Love Scene

BOOK VII

THE POPULAR REBELLION

CHAPTER

I The White Lion of March shakes his Mane
II The Camp at Olney
III The Camp of the Rebels
IV The Norman Earl and the Saxon Demagogue confer
V What Faith Edward IV purposeth to keep with Earl and People
VI What befalls King Edward on his Escape from Olney
VII How King Edward arrives at the Castle of Middleham
VIII The Ancients rightly gave to the Goddess of Eloquence a Crown
IX Wedded Confidence and Love—the Earl and the Prelate—the
Prelate and the King—Schemes—Wiles—and the Birth of a
Dark Thought destined to eclipse a Sun

BOOK VIII

IN WHICH THE LAST LINK BETWEEN KING-MAKER AND KING
SNAPS ASUNDER

CHAPTER

I The Lady Anne visits the Court
II The Sleeping Innocence—the Wakeful Crime
III New Dangers to the House of York—and the King's Heart
allies itself with Rebellion against the King's Throne
IV The Foster-brothers
V The Lover and the Gallant—Woman's Choice
VI Warwick returns—appeases a Discontented Prince—and confers
with a Revengeful Conspirator

VII The Fear and the Flight
VIII The Group round the Death-bed of the Lancastrian Widow

BOOK IX.

THE WANDERERS AND THE EXILES

CHAPTER

I How the Great Baron becomes as Great a Rebel
II Many Things briefly told
III The Plot of the Hostelry—the Maid and the Scholar in
their Home
IV The World's Justice, and the Wisdom of our Ancestors
V The Fugitives are captured—the Tymbesteres reappear—
Moonlight on the Revel of the Living—Moonlight on the
Slumber of the Dead

VI The Subtle Craft of Richard of Gloucester
VII Warwick and his Family in Exile
VIII How the Heir of Lancaster meets the King-maker
IX The Interview of Earl Warwick and Queen Margaret
X Love and Marriage—Doubts of Conscience—Domestic Jealousy—
and Household Treason

BOOK X.

THE RETURN OF THE KING-MAKER

CHAPTER

I The Maid's Hope, the Courtier's Love, and the Sage's Comfort
II The Man awakes in the Sage, and the She-wolf again hath
tracked the Lamb
III Virtuous Resolves submitted to the Test of Vanity and the
World
IV The Strife which Sibyll had courted, between Katherine and
herself, commences in Serious Earnest
V The Meeting of Hastings and Katherine
VI Hastings learns what has befallen Sibyll, repairs to the
King, and encounters an old Rival
VII The Landing of Lord Warwick, and the Events that ensue
thereon
VIII What befell Adam Warner and Sibyll when made subject to the
Great Friar Bungey
IX The Deliberations of Mayor and Council, while Lord Warwick
marches upon London
X The Triumphal Entry of the Earl—the Royal Captive in the
Tower—the Meeting between King-maker and King
XI The Tower in Commotion

BOOK XI

THE NEW POSITION OF THE KING-MAKER

CHAPTER

- I Wherein Master Adam Warner is notably commended and advanced—and Greatness says to Wisdom, "Thy Destiny be mine, Amen"
- II The Prosperity of the Outer Show—the Cares of the Inner Man
- III Further Views into the Heart of Man, and the Conditions of Power
- IV The Return of Edward of York
- V The Progress of the Plantagenet
- VI Lord Warwick, with the Foe in the field and the Traitor at The Hearth

BOOK XII

THE BATTLE OF BARNET

CHAPTER

- I A King in his City hopes to recover his Realm—A Woman in her Chamber fears to forfeit her own
- II Sharp is the Kiss of the Falcon's Bear
- III A Pause
- IV-VI The Battle
- VII The last Pilgrims in the long Procession to the Common Bourne

BOOK I.

THE ADVENTURES OF MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASTIME-GROUND OF OLD COCKAIGNE.

Westward, beyond the still pleasant, but even then no longer solitary, hamlet of Charing, a broad space, broken here and there by scattered houses and venerable pollards, in the early spring of 1467, presented the rural scene for the sports and pastimes of the inhabitants of Westminster and London. Scarcely need we say that open spaces for the popular games and diversions were then numerous in the suburbs of the metropolis,—grateful to some the fresh pools of Islington; to others,

the grass-bare fields of Finsbury; to all, the hedgeless plains of vast Mile-end. But the site to which we are now summoned was a new and maiden holiday-ground, lately bestowed upon the townsmen of Westminster by the powerful Earl of Warwick.

Raised by a verdant slope above the low, marsh-grown soil of Westminster, the ground communicated to the left with the Brook-fields, through which stole the peaceful Ty-bourne, and commanded prospects, on all sides fair, and on each side varied. Behind, rose the twin green hills of Hampstead and Highgate, with the upland park and chase of Marybone,—its stately manor-house half hid in woods. In front might be seen the Convent of the Lepers, dedicated to Saint James, now a palace; then to the left, York House, [The residence of the Archbishops of York] now Whitehall; farther on, the spires of Westminster Abbey and the gloomy tower of the Sanctuary; next, the Palace, with its bulwark and vawmure, soaring from the river; while eastward, and nearer to the scene, stretched the long, bush-grown passage of the Strand, picturesquely varied with bridges, and flanked to the right by the embattled halls of feudal nobles, or the inns of the no less powerful prelates; while sombre and huge amidst hall and inn, loomed the gigantic ruins of the Savoy, demolished in the insurrection of Wat Tyler. Farther on, and farther yet, the eye wandered over tower and gate, and arch and spire, with frequent glimpses of the broad sunlit river, and the opposite shore crowned by the palace of Lambeth, and the Church of St. Mary Overies, till the indistinct cluster of battlements around the Fortress-Palatine bounded the curious gaze. As whatever is new is for a while popular, so to this pastime-ground, on the day we treat of, flocked, not only the idlers of Westminster, but the lordly dwellers of Ludgate and the Flete, and the wealthy citizens of tumultuous Chepe.

The ground was well suited to the purpose to which it was devoted. About the outskirts, indeed, there were swamps and fish-pools; but a considerable plot towards the centre presented a level sward, already worn bare and brown by the feet of the multitude. From this, towards the left, extended alleys, some recently planted, intended to afford, in summer, cool and shady places for the favourite game of bowls; while scattered clumps, chiefly of old pollards, to the right broke the space agreeably enough into detached portions, each of which afforded its separate pastime or diversion. Around were ranged many carts, or wagons; horses of all sorts and value were led to and fro, while their owners were at sport. Tents, awnings, hostelries, temporary buildings, stages for showmen and jugglers, abounded, and gave the scene the appearance of a fair; but what particularly now demands our attention was a broad plot in the ground, dedicated to the noble diversion of archery. The reigning House of York owed much of its military success to the superiority of the bowmen under its banners, and the Londoners themselves were jealous of their reputation in this martial accomplishment. For the last fifty years, notwithstanding the warlike nature of the times, the practice of the

bow, in the intervals of peace, had been more neglected than seemed wise to the rulers. Both the king and his loyal city had of late taken much pains to enforce the due exercise of "Goddes instrumente," [So called emphatically by Bishop Latimer, in his celebrated Sixth Sermon.] upon which an edict had declared that "the liberties and honour of England principally rested!"

And numerous now was the attendance, not only of the citizens, the burghers, and the idle populace, but of the gallant nobles who surrounded the court of Edward IV., then in the prime of his youth,—the handsomest, the gayest, and the bravest prince in Christendom.

The royal tournaments (which were, however, waning from their ancient lustre to kindle afresh, and to expire in the reigns of the succeeding Tudors), restricted to the amusements of knight and noble, no doubt presented more of pomp and splendour than the motley and mixed assembly of all ranks that now grouped around the competitors for the silver arrow, or listened to the itinerant jongleur, dissour, or minstrel, or, seated under the stunted shade of the old trees, indulged, with eager looks and hands often wandering to their dagger-hilts, in the absorbing passion of the dice; but no later and earlier scenes of revelry ever, perhaps, exhibited that heartiness of enjoyment, that universal holiday, which attended this mixture of every class, that established a rude equality for the hour between the knight and the retainer, the burghess and the courtier.

The revolution that placed Edward IV. upon the throne had, in fact, been a popular one. Not only had the valour and moderation of his father, Richard, Duke of York, bequeathed a heritage of affection to his brave and accomplished son; not only were the most beloved of the great barons the leaders of his party; but the king himself, partly from inclination, partly from policy, spared no pains to win the good graces of that slowly rising, but even then important part of the population,—the Middle Class. He was the first king who descended, without loss of dignity and respect, from the society of his peers and princes, to join familiarly in the feasts and diversions of the merchant and the trader. The lord mayor and council of London were admitted, on more than one solemn occasion, into the deliberations of the court; and Edward had not long since, on the coronation of his queen, much to the discontent of certain of his barons, conferred the Knighthood of the bath upon four of the citizens. On the other hand, though Edward's gallantries—the only vice which tended to diminish his popularity with the sober burghesses—were little worthy of his station, his frank, joyous familiarity with his inferiors was not debased by the buffooneries that had led to the reverses and the awful fate of two of his royal predecessors. There must have been a popular principle, indeed, as well as a popular fancy, involved in the steady and ardent adherence which the population of London in particular, and most of the great cities, exhibited to the person and the cause of Edward IV. There was a feeling that his reign was an advance in

civilization upon the monastic virtues of Henry VI., and the stern ferocity which accompanied the great qualities of "The Foreign Woman," as the people styled and regarded Henry's consort, Margaret of Anjou. While thus the gifts, the courtesy, and the policy of the young sovereign made him popular with the middle classes, he owed the allegiance of the more powerful barons and the favour of the rural population to a man who stood colossal amidst the iron images of the Age,—the greatest and the last of the old Norman chivalry, kinglier in pride, in state, in possessions, and in renown than the king himself, Richard Nevile, Earl of Salisbury and Warwick.

This princely personage, in the full vigour of his age, possessed all the attributes that endear the noble to the commons. His valour in the field was accompanied with a generosity rare in the captains of the time. He valued himself on sharing the perils and the hardships of his meanest soldier. His haughtiness to the great was not incompatible with frank affability to the lowly. His wealth was enormous, but it was equalled by his magnificence, and rendered popular by his lavish hospitality. No less than thirty thousand persons are said to have feasted daily at the open tables with which he allured to his countless castles the strong hands and grateful hearts of a martial and unsettled population. More haughty than ambitious, he was feared because he avenged all affront; and yet not envied, because he seemed above all favour.

The holiday on the archery-ground was more than usually gay, for the rumour had spread from the court to the city that Edward was about to increase his power abroad, and to repair what he had lost in the eyes of Europe through his marriage with Elizabeth Gray, by allying his sister Margaret with the brother of Louis XI., and that no less a person than the Earl of Warwick had been the day before selected as ambassador on the important occasion.

Various opinions were entertained upon the preference given to France in this alliance over the rival candidate for the hand of the princess,—namely, the Count de Charolois, afterwards Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.

"By 'r Lady," said a stout citizen about the age of fifty, "but I am not over pleased with this French marriage-making! I would liefer the stout earl were going to France with bows and bills than sarcenets and satins. What will become of our trade with Flanders,—answer me that, Master Stokton? The House of York is a good House, and the king is a good king, but trade is trade. Every man must draw water to his own mill."

"Hush, Master Heyford!" said a small lean man in a light-gray surcoat. "The king loves not talk about what the king does. 'T is ill jesting with lions. Remember William Walker, hanged for saying his son should be heir to the crown."

"Troth," answered Master Heyford, nothing daunted, for he belonged to one of the most powerful corporations of London,—it was but a scurvy Pepperer [old name for Grocer] who made that joke; but a joke from a worshipful goldsmith, who has moneys and influence, and a fair wife of his own, whom the king himself has been pleased to commend, is another guess sort of matter. But here is my grave-visaged headman, who always contrives to pick up the last gossip astir, and has a deep eye into millstones. Why, ho, there! Alwyn—I say, Nicholas Alwyn!—who would have thought to see thee with that bow, a good half-ell taller than thyself? Methought thou wert too sober and studious for such man-at-arms sort of devilry."

"An' it please you, Master Heyford," answered the person thus addressed,—a young man, pale and lean, though sinewy and large-boned, with a countenance of great intelligence, but a slow and somewhat formal manner of speech, and a strong provincial accent,—"an' it please you, King Edward's edict ordains every Englishman to have a bow of his own height; and he who neglects the shaft on a holiday forfeiteth one halfpenny and some honour. For the rest, methinks that the citizens of London will become of more worth and potency every year; and it shall not be my fault if I do not, though but a humble headman to your worshipful mastership, help to make them so."

"Why, that's well said, lad; but if the Londoners prosper, it is because they have nobles in their gipsires, [a kind of pouch worn at the girdle] not bows in their hands."

"Thinkest thou then, Master Heyford, that any king at a pinch would leave them the gipsire, if they could not protect it with the bow? That Age may have gold, let not Youth despise iron."

"Body o' me!" cried Master Heyford, "but thou hadst better curb in thy tongue. Though I have my jest,—as a rich man and a corpulent,—a lad who has his way to make good should be silent and—But he's gone."

"Where hooked you up that young jack fish?" said Master Stokton, the thin mercer, who had reminded the goldsmith of the fate of the grocer.

"Why, he was meant for the cowl, but his mother, a widow, at his own wish, let him make choice of the flat cap. He was the best 'prentice ever I had. By the blood of Saint Thomas, he will push his way in good time; he has a head, Master Stokton,—a head, and an ear; and a great big pair of eyes always looking out for something to his proper advantage."

In the mean while, the goldsmith's headman had walked leisurely up to the archery-ground; and even in his gait and walk, as he thus repaired to a pastime, there was something steady, staid, and business-like.

The youths of his class and calling were at that day very different from their equals in this. Many of them the sons of provincial retainers, some even of franklins and gentlemen, their childhood had made them familiar with the splendour and the sports of knighthood; they had learned to wrestle, to cudgel, to pitch the bar or the quoit, to draw the bow, and to practise the sword and buckler, before transplanted from the village green to the city stall. And even then, the constant broils and wars of the time, the example of their betters, the holiday spectacle of mimic strife, and, above all, the powerful and corporate association they formed amongst themselves, tended to make them as wild, as jovial, and as dissolute a set of young fellows as their posterity are now sober, careful, and discreet. And as Nicholas Alwyn, with a slight inclination of his head, passed by, two or three loud, swaggering, bold-looking groups of apprentices—their shaggy hair streaming over their shoulders, their caps on one side, their short cloaks of blue torn or patched, though still passably new, their bludgeons under their arms, and their whole appearance and manner not very dissimilar from the German collegians in the last century—notably contrasted Alwyn's prim dress, his precise walk, and the feline care with which he stepped aside from any patches of mire that might sully the soles of his square-toed shoes.

The idle apprentices winked and whispered, and lolled out their tongues at him as he passed. "Oh, but that must be as good as a May-Fair day,—sober Nick Alwyn's maiden flight of the shaft! Hollo, puissant archer, take care of the goslings yonder! Look this way when thou pull'st, and then woe to the other side!" Venting these and many similar specimens of the humour of Cockaigne, the apprentices, however, followed their quondam colleague, and elbowed their way into the crowd gathered around the competitors at the butt; and it was at this spot, commanding a view of the whole space, that the spectator might well have formed some notion of the vast following of the House of Nevile. For everywhere along the front lines, everywhere in the scattered groups, might be seen, glistening in the sunlight, the armourial badges of that mighty family. The Pied Bull, which was the proper cognizance [Pied Bull the cognizance, the Dun Bull's head the crest] of the Neviles, was principally borne by the numerous kinsmen of Earl Warwick, who rejoiced in the Nevile name. The Lord Montagu, Warwick's brother, to whom the king had granted the forfeit title and estates of the earls of Northumberland, distinguished his own retainers, however, by the special request of the ancient Montagus.—a Gryphon issuant from a ducal crown. But far more numerous than Bull or Gryphon (numerous as either seemed) were the badges worn by those who ranked themselves among the peculiar followers of the great Earl of Warwick. The cognizance of the Bear and Ragged Staff, which he assumed in right of the Beauchamps, whom he represented through his wife, the heiress of the lords of Warwick, was worn in the hats of the more gentle and well-born clansmen and followers, while the Ragged Staff alone was worked front and back on the scarlet jackets of his more humble and personal retainers. It was a matter of popular notice

and admiration that in those who wore these badges, as in the wearers of the hat and staff of the ancient Spartans, might be traced a grave loftiness of bearing, as if they belonged to another caste, another race, than the herd of men. Near the place where the rivals for the silver arrow were collected, a lordly party had reined in their palfreys, and conversed with each other, as the judges of the field were marshalling the competitors.

"Who," said one of these gallants, "who is that comely young fellow just below us, with the Nevile cognizance of the Bull on his hat? He has the air of one I should know."

"I never saw him before, my Lord of Northumberland," answered one of the gentlemen thus addressed; "but, pardieu, he who knows all the Neviles by eye must know half England." The Lord Montagu—for though at that moment invested with the titles of the Percy, by that name Earl Warwick's brother is known to history, and by that, his rightful name, he shall therefore be designated in these pages—the Lord Montagu smiled graciously at this remark, and a murmur through the crowd announced that the competition for the silver arrow was about to commence. The butts, formed of turf, with a small white mark fastened to the centre by a very minute peg, were placed apart, one at each end, at the distance of eleven score yards. At the extremity where the shooting commenced, the crowd assembled, taking care to keep clear from the opposite butt, as the warning word of "Fast" was thundered forth; but eager was the general murmur, and many were the wagers given and accepted, as some well-known archer tried his chance. Near the butt that now formed the target, stood the marker with his white wand; and the rapidity with which archer after archer discharged his shaft, and then, if it missed, hurried across the ground to pick it up (for arrows were dear enough not to be lightly lost), amidst the jeers and laughter of the bystanders, was highly animated and diverting. As yet, however, no marksman had hit the white, though many had gone close to it, when Nicholas Alwyn stepped forward; and there was something so unwarlike in his whole air, so prim in his gait, so careful in his deliberate survey of the shaft and his precise adjustment of the leathern gauntlet that protected the arm from the painful twang of the string, that a general burst of laughter from the bystanders attested their anticipation of a signal failure.

"'Fore Heaven!" said Montagu, "he handles his bow an' it were a yard-measure. One would think he were about to bargain for the bow-string, he eyes it so closely."

"And now," said Nicholas, slowly adjusting the arrow, "a shot for the honour of old Westmoreland!" And as he spoke, the arrow sprang gallantly forth, and quivered in the very heart of the white. There was a general movement of surprise among the spectators, as the marker thrice shook his wand over his head. But Alwyn, as indifferent to their respect as he had been to their ridicule, turned round and said,

with a significant glance at the silent nobles, "We springals of London can take care of our own, if need be."

"These fellows wax insolent. Our good king spoils them," said Montagu, with a curl of his lip. "I wish some young squire of gentle blood would not disdain a shot for the Nevile against the craftsman. How say you, fair sir?" And with a princely courtesy of mien and smile, Lord Montagu turned to the young man he had noticed as wearing the cognizance of the First House in England. The bow was not the customary weapon of the well-born; but still, in youth, its exercise formed one of the accomplishments of the future knight; and even princes did not disdain, on a popular holiday, to match a shaft against the yeoman's cloth-yard. [At a later period, Henry VIII. was a match for the best bowman in his kingdom. His accomplishment was hereditary, and distinguished alike his wise father and his pious son.] The young man thus addressed, and whose honest, open, handsome, hardy face augured a frank and fearless nature, bowed his head in silence, and then slowly advancing to the umpires, craved permission to essay his skill, and to borrow the loan of a shaft and bow. Leave given and the weapons lent, as the young gentleman took his stand, his comely person, his dress, of a better quality than that of the competitors hitherto, and, above all, the Nevile badge worked in silver on his hat, diverted the general attention from Nicholas Alwyn. A mob is usually inclined to aristocratic predilections, and a murmur of goodwill and expectation greeted him, when he put aside the gauntlet offered to him, and said, "In my youth I was taught so to brace the bow that the string should not touch the arm; and though eleven score yards be but a boy's distance, a good archer will lay his body into his bow ["My father taught me to lay my body in my bow," etc., said Latimer, in his well-known sermon before Edward VI.,—1549. The bishop also herein observes that "it is best to give the bow so much bending that the string need never touch the arm. This," he adds, "is practised by many good archers with whom I am acquainted."] as much as if he were to hit the blanc four hundred yards away."

"A tall fellow this!" said Montagu; "and one I wot from the North," as the young gallant fitted the shaft to the bow. And graceful and artistic was the attitude he assumed,—the head slightly inclined, the feet firmly planted, the left a little in advance, and the stretched sinews of the bow-hand alone evincing that into that grasp was pressed the whole strength of the easy and careless frame. The public expectation was not disappointed,—the youth performed the feat considered of all the most dexterous; his arrow, disdainingly the white mark, struck the small peg which fastened it to the butts, and which seemed literally invisible to the bystanders.

"Holy Saint Dunstan! there's but one man who can beat me in that sort that I know of," muttered Nicholas, "and I little expected to see him take a bite out of his own hip." With that he approached his successful rival.

"Well, Master Marmaduke," said he, "it is many a year since you showed me that trick at your father, Sir Guy's—God rest him! But I scarce take it kind in you to beat your own countryman!"

"Beshrew me!" cried the youth, and his cheerful features brightened into hearty and cordial pleasure, "but if I see in thee, as it seems to me, my old friend and foster-brother, Nick Alwyn, this is the happiest hour I have known for many a day. But stand back and let me look at thee, man. Thou! thou a tame London trader! Ha! ha! is it possible?"

"Hout, Master Marmaduke," answered Nicholas, "every crow thinks his own baird bonniest, as they say in the North. We will talk of this anon an' thou wilt honour me. I suspect the archery is over now. Few will think to mend that shot."

And here, indeed, the umpires advanced, and their chief—an old mercer, who had once borne arms, and indeed been a volunteer at the battle of Towton—declared that the contest was over,—“unless,” he added, in the spirit of a lingering fellow-feeling with the Londoner, “this young fellow, whom I hope to see an alderman one of these days, will demand another shot, for as yet there hath been but one prick each at the butts.”

"Nay, master," returned Alwyn, "I have met with my betters,—and, after all," he added indifferently, "the silver arrow, though a pretty bauble enough, is over light in its weight."

"Worshipful sir," said the young Nevile, with equal generosity, "I cannot accept the prize for a mere trick of the craft,—the blanc was already disposed of by Master Alwyn's arrow. Moreover; the contest was intended for the Londoners, and I am but an interloper, beholden to their courtesy for a practice of skill, and even the loan of a bow; wherefore the silver arrow be given to Nicholas Alwyn."

"That may not be, gentle sir," said the umpire, extending the prize. "Sith Alwyn vails of himself, it is thine, by might and by right."

The Lord Montagu had not been inattentive to this dialogue, and he now said, in a loud tone that silenced the crowd, "Young Badgeman, thy gallantry pleases me no less than thy skill. Take the arrow, for thou hast won it; but as thou seemest a new comer, it is right thou shouldst pay thy tax upon entry,—this be my task. Come hither, I pray thee, good sir," and the nobleman graciously beckoned to the mercer; "be these five nobles the prize of whatever Londoner shall acquit himself best in the bold English combat of quarter-staff, and the prize be given in this young archer's name. Thy name, youth?"

"Marmaduke Nevile, good my lord."

Montagu smiled, and the umpire withdrew to make the announcement to the bystanders. The proclamation was received with a shout that traversed from group to group and line to line, more hearty from the love and honour attached to the name of Nevile than even from a sense of the gracious generosity of Earl Warwick's brother. One man alone, a sturdy, well-knit fellow, in a franklin's Lincoln broadcloth, and with a hood half-drawn over his features, did not join the popular applause. "These Yorkists," he muttered, "know well how to fool the people."

Meanwhile the young Nevile still stood by the gilded stirrup of the great noble who had thus honoured him, and contemplated him with that respect and interest which a youth's ambition ever feels for those who have won a name.

The Lord Montagu bore a very different character from his puissant brother. Though so skilful a captain that he had never been known to lose a battle, his fame as a warrior was, strange to say, below that of the great earl, whose prodigious strength had accomplished those personal feats that dazzled the populace, and revived the legendary renown of the earlier Norman knighthood. The caution and wariness, indeed, which Montagu displayed in battle probably caused his success as a general, and the injustice done to him (at least by the vulgar) as a soldier. Rarely had Lord Montagu, though his courage was indisputable, been known to mix personally in the affray. Like the captains of modern times, he contented himself with directing the manoeuvres of his men, and hence preserved that inestimable advantage of coolness and calculation, which was not always characteristic of the eager hardihood of his brother. The character of Montagu differed yet more from that of the earl in peace than in war. He was supposed to excel in all those supple arts of the courtier which Warwick neglected or despised; and if the last was on great occasions the adviser, the other in ordinary life was the companion of his sovereign. Warwick owed his popularity to his own large, open, daring, and lavish nature. The subtler Montagu sought to win, by care and pains, what the other obtained without an effort. He attended the various holiday meetings of the citizens, where Warwick was rarely seen. He was smooth-spoken and courteous to his equals, and generally affable, though with constraint, to his inferiors. He was a close observer, and not without that genius for intrigue, which in rude ages passes for the talent of a statesman. And yet in that thorough knowledge of the habits and tastes of the great mass, which gives wisdom to a ruler, he was far inferior to the earl. In common with his brother, he was gifted with the majesty of mien which imposes on the eye; and his port and countenance were such as became the prodigal expense of velvet, minever, gold, and jewels, by which the gorgeous magnates of the day communicated to their appearance the arrogant splendour of their power.

"Young gentleman," said the earl, after eying with some attention the comely archer, "I am pleased that you bear the name of Nevile. Vouchsafe to inform me to what scion of our House we are this day indebted for the credit with which you have upborne its cognizance?"

"I fear," answered the youth, with a slight but not ungraceful hesitation, "that my lord of Montagu and Northumberland will hardly forgive the presumption with which I have intruded upon this assembly a name borne by nobles so illustrious, especially if it belong to those less fortunate branches of his family which have taken a different side from himself in the late unhappy commotions. My father was Sir Guy Nevile, of Arsdale, in Westmoreland."

Lord Montagu's lip lost its gracious smile; he glanced quickly at the courtiers round him, and said gravely, "I grieve to hear it. Had I known this, certes my gipsire had still been five nobles the richer. It becomes not one fresh from the favour of King Edward IV. to show countenance to the son of a man, kinsman though he was, who bore arms for the usurpers of Lancaster. I pray thee, sir, to doff, henceforth, a badge dedicated only to the service of Royal York. No more, young man; we may not listen to the son of Sir Guy Nevile.—Sirs, shall we ride to see how the Londoners thrive at quarter-staff?"

With that, Montagu, deigning no further regard at Nevile, wheeled his, palfrey towards a distant part of the ground, to which the multitude was already pressing its turbulent and noisy way.

"Thou art hard on thy namesake, fair my lord," said a young noble, in whose dark-auburn hair, aquiline, haughty features, spare but powerful frame, and inexpressible air of authority and command, were found all the attributes of the purest and eldest Norman race,—the Patricians of the World.

"Dear Raoul de Fulke," returned Montagu, coldly, "when thou hast reached my age of thirty and four, thou wilt learn that no man's fortune casts so broad a shadow as to shelter from the storm the victims of a fallen cause."

"Not so would say thy bold brother," answered Raoul de Fulke, with a slight curl of his proud lip. "And I hold, with him, that no king is so sacred that we should render to his resentments our own kith and kin. God's wot, whosoever wears the badge and springs from the stem of Raoul de Fulke shall never find me question over much whether his father fought for York or Lancaster."

"Hush, rash babbler!" said Montagu, laughing gently; "what would King Edward say if this speech reached his ears? Our friend," added the courtier, turning to the rest, "in vain would bar the tide of change; and in this our New England, begirt with new men and new fashions, affect the feudal baronage of the worn-out Norman. But thou art a

gallant knight, De Fulke, though a poor courtier."

"The saints keep me so!" returned De Fulke. "From overgluttony, from over wine-bibbing, from cringing to a king's leman, from quaking at a king's frown, from unbonneting to a greasy mob, from marrying an old crone for vile gold, may the saints ever keep Raoul de Fulke and his sons! Amen!" This speech, in which every sentence struck its stinging satire into one or other of the listeners, was succeeded by an awkward silence, which Montagu was the first to break.

"Pardieu!" he said, "when did Lord Hastings leave us, and what fair face can have lured the truant?"

"He left us suddenly on the archery-ground," answered the young Lovell. "But as well might we track the breeze to the rose as Lord William's sigh to maid or matron."

While thus conversed the cavaliers, and their plumes waved, and their mantles glittered along the broken ground, Marmaduke Nevile's eye pursued the horsemen with all that bitter feeling of wounded pride and impotent resentment with which Youth regards the first insult it receives from Power.

CHAPTER II.

THE BROKEN GITTERN.

Rousing himself from his indignant revery, Marmaduke Nevile followed one of the smaller streams into which the crowd divided itself on dispersing from the archery-ground, and soon found himself in a part of the holiday scene appropriated to diversions less manly, but no less characteristic of the period than those of the staff and arrow. Beneath an awning, under which an itinerant landlord dispensed cakes and ale, the humorous Bourdour (the most vulgar degree of minstrel, or rather tale-teller) collected his clownish audience; while seated by themselves—apart, but within hearing—two harpers, in the king's livery, consoled each other for the popularity of their ribald rival, by wise reflections on the base nature of common folk. Farther on, Marmaduke started to behold what seemed to him the heads of giants at least six yards high; but on a nearer approach these formidable apparitions resolved themselves to a company of dancers upon stilts. There, one jocolator exhibited the antics of his well-tutored ape; there, another eclipsed the attractions of the baboon by a marvellous horse that beat a tabor with his forefeet; there, the more sombre Tregetour, before a table raised upon a lofty stage, promised to cut off and refix the head of a sad-faced little boy, who in the mean time

was preparing his mortal frame for the operation by apparently larding himself with sharp knives and bodkins. Each of these wonder-dealers found his separate group of admirers, and great was the delight and loud the laughter in the pastime-ground of old Cockaigne.

While Marmaduke, bewildered by this various bustle, stared around him, his eye was caught by a young maiden, in evident distress, struggling in vain to extricate herself from a troop of timbrel-girls, or tymbesteres (as they were popularly called), who surrounded her with mocking gestures, striking their instruments to drown her remonstrances, and dancing about her in a ring at every effort towards escape. The girl was modestly attired as one of the humbler ranks, and her wimple in much concealed her countenance; but there was, despite her strange and undignified situation and evident alarm, a sort of quiet, earnest self-possession,—an effort to hide her terror, and to appeal to the better and more womanly feelings of her persecutors. In the intervals of silence from the clamour, her voice, though low, clear, well-tuned, and impressive, forcibly arrested the attention of young Nevile; for at that day, even more than this (sufficiently apparent as it now is), there was a marked distinction in the intonation, the accent, the modulation of voice, between the better bred and better educated and the inferior classes. But this difference, so ill according with her dress and position, only served to heighten more the bold insolence of the musical Bacchantes, who, indeed, in the eyes of the sober, formed the most immoral nuisance attendant on the sports of the time, and whose hardy license and peculiar sisterhood might tempt the antiquary to search for their origin amongst the relics of ancient Paganism. And now, to increase the girl's distress, some half-score of dissolute apprentices and journeymen suddenly broke into the ring of the Maenads, and were accosting her with yet more alarming insults, when Marmaduke, pushing them aside, strode to her assistance. "How now, ye lewd varlets! ye make me blush for my countrymen in the face of day! Are these the sports of merry England,—these your manly contests,—to strive which can best affront a poor maid? Out on ye, cullions and bezonians! Cling to me, gentle donzel, and fear not. Whither shall I lead thee?" The apprentices were not, however, so easily daunted. Two of them approached to the rescue, flourishing their bludgeons about their heads with formidable gestures. "Ho, ho!" cried one, "what right hast thou to step between the hunters and the doe? The young quean is too much honoured by a kiss from a bold 'prentice of London."

Marmaduke stepped back, and drew the small dagger which then formed the only habitual weapon of a gentleman. [Swords were not worn, in peace, at that period.] This movement, discomposing his mantle, brought the silver arrow he had won (which was placed in his girdle) in full view of the assailants. At the same time they caught sight of the badge on his hat. These intimidated their ardour more than the drawn poniard.

"A Nevile!" said one, retreating. "And the jolly marksman who beat Nick Alwyn," said the other, lowering his bludgeon, and doffing his cap. "Gentle sir, forgive us, we knew not your quality. But as for the girl—your gallantry misleads you."

"The Wizard's daughter! ha, ha! the Imp of Darkness!" screeched the timbrel-girls, tossing up their instruments, and catching them again on the points of their fingers. "She has enchanted him with her glamour. Foul is fair! Foul fair thee, young springal, if thou go to the nets. Shadow and goblin to goblin and shadow! Flesh and blood to blood and flesh!"—and dancing round him, with wanton looks and bare arms, and gossamer robes that brushed him as they circled, they chanted,—

"Come, kiss me, my darling,
Warm kisses I trade for;
Wine, music, and kisses
What else was life made for?"

With some difficulty, and with a disgust which was not altogether without a superstitious fear of the strange words and the outlandish appearance of these loathsome Delilahs, Marmaduke broke from the ring with his new charge; and in a few moments the Nevile and the maiden found themselves, unmolested and unpursued, in a deserted quarter of the ground; but still the scream of the timbrel-girls, as they hurried, wheeling and dancing, into the distance, was borne ominously to the young man's ear. "Ha, ha! the witch and her lover! Foul is fair! foul is fair! Shadow to goblin, goblin to shadow,—and the devil will have his own!"

"And what mischance, my poor girl," asked the Nevile, soothingly, "brought thee into such evil company?"

"I know not, fair sir," said the girl, slowly recovering her self; "but my father is poor, and I had heard that on these holiday occasions one who had some slight skill on the gittern might win a few groats from the courtesy of the bystanders. So I stole out with my serving-woman, and had already got more than I dared hope, when those wicked timbrel-players came round me, and accused me of taking the money from them. And then they called an officer of the ground, who asked me my name and holding; so when I answered, they called my father a wizard, and the man broke my poor gittern,—see!"—and she held it up, with innocent sorrow in her eyes, yet a half-smile on her lips,—and they soon drove poor old Madge from my side, and I knew no more till you, worshipful sir, took pity on me."

"But why," asked the Nevile, "did they give to your father so unholy a name?"

"Alas, sir! he is a great scholar, who has spent his means in studying

what he says will one day be of good to the people.”

”Humph!” said Marmaduke, who had all the superstitions of his time, who looked upon a scholar, unless in the Church, with mingled awe and abhorrence, and who, therefore, was but ill-satisfied with the girl’s artless answer,

”Humph! your father—but—” checking what he was about, perhaps harshly, to say, as he caught the bright eyes and arch, intelligent face lifted to his own—”but it is hard to punish the child for the father’s errors.”

”Errors, sir!” repeated the damsel, proudly, and with a slight disdain in her face and voice. ”But yes, wisdom is ever, perhaps, the saddest error!”

This remark was of an order superior in intellect to those which had preceded it: it contrasted with the sternness of experience the simplicity of the child; and of such contrasts, indeed, was that character made up. For with a sweet, an infantine change of tone and countenance, she added, after a short pause, ”They took the money! The gittern—see, they left that, when they had made it useless.”

”I cannot mend the gittern, but I can refill the gipsire,” said Marmaduke.

The girl coloured deeply. ”Nay, sir, to earn is not to beg.” Marmaduke did not heed this answer; for as they were now passing by the stunted trees, under which sat several revellers, who looked up at him from their cups and tankards, some with sneering, some with grave looks, he began, more seriously than in his kindly impulse he had hitherto done, to consider the appearance it must have to be thus seen walking in public with a girl of inferior degree, and perhaps doubtful repute. Even in our own day such an exhibition would be, to say the least, suspicious; and in that day, when ranks and classes were divided with iron demarcations, a young gallant, whose dress bespoke him of gentle quality, with one of opposite sex, and belonging to the humbler orders, in broad day too, was far more open to censure. The blood mounted to his brow, and halting abruptly, he said, in a dry and altered voice: ”My good damsel, you are now, I think, out of danger; it would ill beseem you, so young and so comely, to go farther with one not old enough to be your protector; so, in God’s name, depart quickly, and remember me when you buy your new gittern, poor child!” So saying, he attempted to place a piece of money in her hand. She put it back, and the coin fell on the ground. ”Nay, this is foolish,” said he.

”Alas, sir!” said the girl, gravely, ”I see well that you are ashamed of your goodness. But my father begs not. And once—but that matters not.”

"Once what?" persisted Marmaduke, interested in her manner, in spite of himself.

"Once," said the girl, drawing herself up, and with an expression that altered the whole character of her face—"the beggar ate at my father's gate. He is a born gentleman and a knight's son."

"And what reduced him thus?"

"I have said," answered the girl, simply, yet with the same half-scorn on her lip that it had before betrayed; "he is a scholar, and thought more of others than himself."

"I never saw any good come to a gentleman from those accursed books," said the Nevile,—"fit only for monks and shavelings. But still, for your father's sake, though I am ashamed of the poorness of the gift—"

"No; God be with you, sir, and reward you." She stopped short, drew her wimple round her face, and was gone. Nevile felt an uncomfortable sensation of remorse and disapproval at having suffered her to quit him while there was yet any chance of molestation or annoyance, and his eye followed her till a group of trees veiled her from his view.

The young maiden slackened her pace as she found herself alone under the leafless boughs of the dreary pollards,—a desolate spot, made melancholy by dull swamps, half overgrown with rank verdure, through which forced its clogged way the shallow brook that now gives its name (though its waves are seen no more) to one of the main streets in the most polished quarters of the metropolis. Upon a mound formed by the gnarled roots of the dwarfed and gnome-like oak, she sat down and wept. In our earlier years, most of us may remember that there was one day which made an epoch in life,—that day that separated Childhood from Youth; for that day seems not to come gradually, but to be a sudden crisis, an abrupt revelation. The buds of the heart open to close no more. Such a day was this in that girl's fate. But the day was not yet gone! That morning, when she dressed for her enterprise of filial love, perhaps for the first time Sibyll Warner felt that she was fair—who shall say whether some innocent, natural vanity had not blended with the deep, devoted earnestness, which saw no shame in the act by which the child could aid the father? Perhaps she might have smiled to listen to old Madge's praises of her winsome face, old Madge's predictions that the face and the gittern would not lack admirers on the gay ground; perhaps some indistinct, vague forethoughts of the Future to which the sex will deem itself to be born might have caused the cheek—no, not to blush, but to take a rosier hue, and the pulse to beat quicker, she knew not why. At all events, to that ground went the young Sibyll, cheerful, and almost happy, in her inexperience of actual life, and sure, at least, that youth and innocence sufficed to protect from insult. And now she sat

down under the leafless tree to weep; and in those bitter tears, childhood itself was laved from her soul forever.

"What ailest thou, maiden?" asked a deep voice; and she felt a hand laid lightly on her shoulder. She looked up in terror and confusion, but it was no form or face to inspire alarm that met her eye. It was a cavalier, holding by the rein a horse richly caparisoned; and though his dress was plainer and less exaggerated than that usually worn by men of rank, its materials were those which the sumptuary laws (constantly broken, indeed, as such laws ever must be) confined to nobles. Though his surcoat was but of cloth, and the colour dark and sober, it was woven in foreign looms,—an unpatriotic luxury, above the degree of knight,—and edged deep with the costliest sables. The hilt of the dagger, suspended round his breast, was but of ivory, curiously wrought, but the scabbard was sown with large pearls. For the rest, the stranger was of ordinary stature, well knit and active rather than powerful, and of that age (about thirty-five) which may be called the second prime of man. His face was far less handsome than Marmaduke Nevile's, but infinitely more expressive, both of intelligence and command,—the features straight and sharp, the complexion clear and pale, and under the bright gray eyes a dark shade spoke either of dissipation or of thought.

"What ailest thou, maiden,—weepest thou some faithless lover? Tush! love renews itself in youth, as flower succeeds flower in spring."

Sibyll made no reply; she rose and moved a few paces, then arrested her steps, and looked around her. She had lost all clew to her way homeward, and she saw with horror, in the distance, the hateful timbrel-girls, followed by the rabble, and weaving their strange dances towards the spot.

"Dost thou fear me, child? There is no cause," said the stranger, following her. "Again I say, What ailest thou?" This time his voice was that of command, and the poor girl involuntarily obeyed it. She related her misfortunes, her persecution by the tymbesteres, her escape,—thanks to the Nevile's courtesy,—her separation from her attendant, and her uncertainty as to the way she should pursue.

The nobleman listened with interest: he was a man sated and wearied by pleasure and the world, and the evident innocence of Sibyll was a novelty to his experience, while the contrast between her language and her dress moved his curiosity. "And," said he, "thy protector left thee, his work half done; fie on his chivalry! But I, donzel, wear the spurs of knighthood, and to succour the distressed is a duty my oath will not let me swerve from. I will guide thee home, for I know well all the purlieu of this evil den of London. Thou hast but to name the suburb in which thy father dwells."

Sibyll involuntarily raised her wimple, lifted her beautiful eyes to

the stranger, in bewildered gratitude and surprise. Her childhood had passed in a court, her eye, accustomed to rank, at once perceived the high degree of the speaker. The contrast between this unexpected and delicate gallantry and the condescending tone and abrupt desertion of Marmaduke affected her again to tears.

"Ah, worshipful sir!" she said falteringly, "what can reward thee for this unlooked-for goodness?"

"One innocent smile, sweet virgin!—for such I'll be sworn thou art."

He did not offer her his hand, but hanging the gold-enamelled rein over his arm, walked by her side; and a few words sufficing for his guidance, led her across the ground, through the very midst of the throng. He felt none of the young shame, the ingenious scruples of Marmaduke, at the gaze he encountered, thus companioned. But Sibyll noted that ever and anon bonnet and cap were raised as they passed along, and the respectful murmur of the vulgar, who had so lately jeered her anguish, taught her the immeasurable distance in men's esteem between poverty shielded by virtue, and poverty protected by power.

But suddenly a gaudy tinsel group broke through the crowd, and wheeling round their path, the foremost of them daringly approached the nobleman, and looking full into his disdainful face, exclaimed, "Tradest thou, too, for kisses? Ha, ha! life is short,—the witch is outwitted by thee! But witchcraft and death go together, as peradventure thou mayest learn at the last, sleek wooer." Then darting off, and heading her painted, tawdry throng, the timbrel-girl sprang into the crowd and vanished.

This incident produced no effect upon the strong and cynical intellect of the stranger. Without allusion to it, he continued to converse with his young companion, and artfully to draw out her own singular but energetic and gifted mind. He grew more than interested,—he was both touched and surprised. His manner became yet more respectful, his voice more subdued and soft.

On what hazards turns our fate! On that day, a little, and Sibyll's pure but sensitive heart had, perhaps, been given to the young Nevile. He had defended and saved her; he was fairer than the stranger, he was more of her own years and nearer to her in station; but in showing himself ashamed to be seen with her, he had galled her heart, and moved the bitter tears of her pride. What had the stranger done? Nothing but reconciled the wounded delicacy to itself; and suddenly he became to her one ever to be remembered, wondered at,—perhaps more. They reached an obscure suburb, and parted at the threshold of a large, gloomy, ruinous house, which Sibyll indicated as her father's home.

The girl lingered before the porch; and the stranger gazed, with the passionless admiration which some fair object of art produces on one who has refined his taste, but who has survived enthusiasm, upon the downcast cheek that blushed beneath his gaze. "Farewell!" he said; and the girl looked up wistfully. He might, without vanity, have supposed that look to imply what the lip did not dare to say,— "And shall we meet no more?"

But he turned away, with formal though courteous salutation; and as he remounted his steed, and rode slowly towards the interior of the city, he muttered to himself, with a melancholy smile upon his lips, "Now might the grown infant make to himself a new toy; but an innocent heart is a brittle thing, and one false vow can break it. Pretty maiden! I like thee well eno' not to love thee. So, as my young Scotch minstrel sings and plays,—

'Christ keep these birdis bright in bowers,
Sic peril lies in paramours!'"

[A Scotch poet, in Lord Hailes's Collection, has the following lines in the very pretty poem called "Peril in Paramours:"—

"Wherefore I pray, in termys short,
Christ keep these birdis bright in bowers,
Fra false lovers and their disport,
Sic peril lies in paramours."]

We must now return to Marmaduke. On leaving Sibyll, and retracing his steps towards the more crowded quarter of the space, he was agreeably surprised by encountering Nicholas Alwyn, escorted in triumph by a legion of roaring apprentices from the victory he had just obtained over six competitors at the quarter-staff.

When the cortege came up to Marmaduke, Nicholas halted, and fronting his attendants, said, with the same cold and formal stiffness that had characterized him from the beginning, "I thank you, lads, for your kindness. It is your own triumph. All I cared for was to show that you London boys are able to keep up your credit in these days, when there's little luck in a yard-measure, if the same hand cannot bend a bow, or handle cold steel. But the less we think of the strife when we are in the stall, the better for our pouches. And so I hope we shall hear no more about it, until I get a ware of my own, when the more of ye that like to talk of such matters the better ye will be welcome,—always provided ye be civil customers, who pay on the nail, for as the saw saith, 'Ell and tell makes the crypt swell.' For the rest, thanks are due to this brave gentleman, Marmaduke Nevile, who, though the son of a knight-banneret who never furnished less to the battle-field than fifty men-at-arms, has condescended to take part and parcel in the sports of us peaceful London traders; and if ever you can do him a kind turn—for turn and turn is fair play—why, you will,

I answer for it. And so one cheer for old London, and another for Marmaduke Nevile. Here goes! Hurrah, my lads!" And with this pithy address Nicholas Alwyn took off his cap and gave the signal for the shouts, which, being duly performed, he bowed stiffly to his companions, who departed with a hearty laugh, and coming to the side of Nevile, the two walked on to a neighbouring booth, where, under a rude awning, and over a flagon of clary, they were soon immersed in the confidential communications each had to give and receive.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRADER AND THE GENTLE; OR, THE CHANGING GENERATION.

"No, my dear foster-brother," said the Nevile, "I do not yet comprehend the choice you have made. You were reared and brought up with such careful book-lore, not only to read and to write—the which, save the mark! I hold to be labour eno'—but chop Latin and logic and theology with Saint Aristotle (is not that his hard name?) into the bargain, and all because you had an uncle of high note in Holy Church. I cannot say I would be a shaveling myself; but surely a monk with the hope of preferment is a nobler calling to a lad of spirit and ambition than to stand out at a door and cry, 'Buy, buy,' 'What d'ye lack?' to spend youth as a Flat-cap, and drone out manhood in measuring cloth, hammering metals, or weighing out spices?"

"Fair and softly, Master Marmaduke," said Alwyn, "you will understand me better anon. My uncle, the sub-prior, died,—some say of austerities, others of ale,—that matters not; he was a learned man and a cunning. 'Nephew Nicholas,' said he on his death-bed, 'think twice before you tie yourself up to the cloister; it's ill leaping nowadays in a sackcloth bag. If a pious man be moved to the cowl by holy devotion, there is nothing to be said on the subject; but if he take to the Church as a calling, and wish to march ahead like his fellows, these times show him a prettier path to distinction. The nobles begin to get the best things for themselves; and a learned monk, if he is the son of a yeoman, cannot hope, without a specialty of grace, to become abbot or bishop. The king, whoever he be, must be so drained by his wars, that he has little land or gold to bestow on his favourites; but his gentry turn an eye to the temporalities of the Church, and the Church and the king wish to strengthen themselves by the gentry. This is not all; there are free opinions afloat. The House of Lancaster has lost ground, by its persecutions and burnings. Men dare not openly resist, but they treasure up recollections of a fried grandfather, or a roasted cousin,—recollections which have done much damage to the Henries, and will shake Holy Church itself one of these days. The Lollards lie hid, but Lollardism will never die.

There is a new class rising amain, where a little learning goes a great way, if mixed with spirit and sense. Thou likest broad pieces and a creditable name,—go to London and be a trader. London begins to decide who shall wear the crown, and the traders to decide what king London shall befriend. Wherefore, cut thy trace from the cloister, and take thy road to the shop.’ The next day my uncle gave up the ghost.—They had better clary than this at the convent, I must own; but every stone has its flaw.”

”Yet,” said Marmaduke, ”if you took distaste to the cowl, from reasons that I pretend not to judge of, but which seem to my poor head very bad ones, seeing that the Church is as mighty as ever, and King Edward is no friend to the Lollards, and that your uncle himself was at least a sub-prior—”

”Had he been son to a baron, he had been a cardinal,” interrupted Nicholas, ”for his head was the longest that ever came out of the north country. But go on; you would say my father was a sturdy yeoman, and I might have followed his calling?”

”You hit the mark, Master Nicholas.”

”Hout, man. I crave pardon of your rank, Master Nevile. But a yeoman is born a yeoman, and he dies a yeoman—I think it better to die Lord Mayor of London; and so I craved my mother’s blessing and leave, and a part of the old hyde has been sold to pay for the first step to the red gown, which I need not say must be that of the Flat-cap. I have already taken my degrees, and no longer wear blue. I am headman to my master, and my master will be sheriff of London.”

”It is a pity,” said the Nevile, shaking his head; ”you were ever a tall, brave lad, and would have made a very pretty soldier.”

”Thank you, Master Marmaduke, but I leave cut and thrust to the gentles. I have seen eno’ of the life of a retainer. He goes out on foot with his shield and his sword, or his bow and his quiver, while Sir Knight sits on horseback, armed from the crown to the toe, and the arrow slants off from rider and horse, as a stone from a tree. If the retainer is not sliced and carved into mincemeat, he comes home to a heap of ashes, and a handful of acres, harried and rivelled into a common; Sir Knight thanks him for his valour, but he does not build up his house; Sir Knight gets a grant from the king, or an heiress for his son, and Hob Yeoman turns gisarme and bill into ploughshares. Tut, tut, there’s no liberty, no safety, no getting on, for a man who has no right to the gold spurs, but in the guild of his fellows; and London is the place for a born Saxon like Nicholas Alwyn.”

As the young aspirant thus uttered the sentiments, which though others might not so plainly avow and shrewdly enforce them, tended towards that slow revolution, which, under all the stormy events that the

superficial record we call HISTORY alone deigns to enumerate, was working that great change in the thoughts and habits of the people, –that impulsion of the provincial citywards, that gradual formation of a class between knight and vassal, –which became first constitutionally visible and distinct in the reign of Henry VII., Marmaduke Nevile, inly half-regretting and half-despising the reasonings of his foster-brother, was playing with his dagger, and glancing at his silver arrow.

”Yet you could still have eno’ of the tall yeoman and the stout retainer about you to try for this bauble, and to break half a dozen thick heads with your quarter-staff!”

”True,” said Nicholas; ”you must recollect we are only, as yet, between the skin and the selle, –half-trader, half-retainer. The old leaven will out, –’Eith to learn the cat to the kirn,’ as they say in the North. But that’s not all; a man, to get on, must win respect from those who are to jostle him hereafter, and it’s good policy to show those roystering youngsters that Nick Alwyn, stiff and steady though he be, has the old English metal in him, if it comes to a pinch; it’s a lesson to yon lords too, save your quality, if they ever wish to ride roughshod over our guilds and companies. But eno’ of me. –Drawer, another stoup of the clary – Now, gentle sir, may I make bold to ask news of yourself? I saw, though I spake not before of it, that my Lord Montagu showed a cold face to his kinsman. I know something of these great men, though I be but a small one, –a dog is no bad guide in the city he trots through.”

”My dear foster-brother,” said the Nevile, ”you had ever more brains than myself, as is meet that you should have, since you lay by the steel casque, –which, I take it, is meant as a substitute for us gentlemen and soldiers who have not so many brains to spare; and I will willingly profit by your counsels. You must know,” he said, drawing nearer to the table, and his frank, hardy face assuming a more earnest expression, ”that though my father, Sir Guy, at the instigation of his chief, the Earl of Westmoreland, and of the Lord Nevile, bore arms at the first for King Henry –”

”Hush! hush! for Henry of Windsor!”

”Henry of Windsor! –so be it! yet being connected, like the nobles I have spoken of, with the blood of Warwick and Salisbury, it was ever with doubt and misgiving, and rather in the hope of ultimate compromise between both parties (which the Duke of York’s moderation rendered probable) than of the extermination of either. But when, at the battle of York, Margaret of Anjou and her generals stained their victory by cruelties which could not fail to close the door on all conciliation; when the infant son of the duke himself was murdered, though a prisoner, in cold blood; when my father’s kinsman, the Earl of Salisbury, was beheaded without trial; when the head of the brave

and good duke, who had fallen in the field, was, against all knightly and king-like generosity, mockingly exposed, like a dishonoured robber, on the gates of York, my father, shocked and revolted, withdrew at once from the army, and slacked not bit or spur till he found himself in his hall at Arsdale. His death, caused partly by his travail and vexation of spirit, together with his timely withdrawal from the enemy, preserved his name from the attainder passed on the Lords Westmoreland and Nevile; and my eldest brother, Sir John, accepted the king's proffer of pardon, took the oaths of allegiance to Edward, and lives safe, if obscure, in his father's halls. Thou knowest, my friend, that a younger brother has but small honour at home. Peradventure, in calmer times, I might have bowed my pride to my calling, hunted my brother's dogs, flown his hawks, rented his keeper's lodge, and gone to my grave contented. But to a young man, who from his childhood had heard the stirring talk of knights and captains, who had seen valour and fortune make the way to distinction, and whose ears of late had been filled by the tales of wandering minstrels and dissours, with all the gay wonders of Edward's court, such a life soon grew distasteful. My father, on his death-bed (like thy uncle, the sub-prior), encouraged me little to follow his own footsteps. 'I see,' said he, 'that King Henry is too soft to rule his barons, and Margaret too fierce to conciliate the commons; the only hope of peace is in the settlement of the House of York. Wherefore, let not thy father's errors stand in the way of thy advancement;' and therewith he made his confessor—for he was no penman himself, the worthy old knight!—indite a letter to his great kinsman, the Earl of Warwick, commending me to his protection. He signed his mark, and set his seal to this missive, which I now have at mine hostelrie, and died the same day. My brother judged me too young then to quit his roof; and condemned me to bear his humours till, at the age of twenty-three, I could bear no more! So having sold him my scant share in the heritage, and turned, like thee, bad land into good nobles, I joined a party of horse in their journey to London, and arrived yesterday at Master Sackbut's hostelrie in Eastchepe. I went this morning to my Lord of Warwick; but he was gone to the king's, and hearing of the merry-makings here, I came hither for kill-time. A chance word of my Lord of Montagu—whom Saint Dunstan confound!—made me conceit that a feat of skill with the cloth-yard might not ill preface my letter to the great earl. But, pardie! it seems I reckoned without my host, and in seeking to make my fortunes too rashly, I have helped to mar them." Wherewith he related the particulars of his interview with Montagu.

Nicholas Alwyn listened to him with friendly and thoughtful interest, and, when he had done, spoke thus,—

"The Earl of Warwick is a generous man, and though hot, bears little malice, except against those whom he deems misthink or insult him; he is proud of being looked up to as a protector, especially by those of his own kith and name. Your father's letter will touch the right string, and you cannot do better than deliver it with a plain story.

A young partisan like thee is not to be despised. Thou must trust to Lord Warwick to set matters right with his brother; and now, before I say further, let me ask thee, plainly, and without offence, Dost thou so love the House of York that no chance could ever make thee turn sword against it? Answer as I ask,—under thy breath; those drawers are parlous spies!”

And here, in justice to Marmaduke Nevile and to his betters, it is necessary to preface his reply by some brief remarks, to which we must crave the earnest attention of the reader. What we call PATRIOTISM, in the high and catholic acceptation of the word, was little if at all understood in days when passion, pride, and interest were motives little softened by reflection and education, and softened still less by the fusion of classes that characterized the small States of old, and marks the civilization of a modern age. Though the right by descent of the House of York, if genealogy alone were consulted, was indisputably prior to that of Lancaster, yet the long exercise of power in the latter House, the genius of the Fourth Henry, and the victories of the Fifth, would no doubt have completely superseded the obsolete claims of the Yorkists, had Henry VI. possessed any of the qualities necessary for the time. As it was, men had got puzzled by genealogies and cavils; the sanctity attached to the king’s name was weakened by his doubtful right to his throne, and the Wars of the rival Roses were at last (with two exceptions, presently to be noted) the mere contests of exasperated factions, in which public considerations were scarcely even made the blind to individual interest, prejudice, or passion.

Thus, instances of desertion, from the one to the other party, even by the highest nobles, and on the very eve of battle, had grown so common that little if any disgrace was attached to them; and any knight or captain held an affront to himself an amply sufficient cause for the transfer of his allegiance. It would be obviously absurd to expect in any of the actors of that age the more elevated doctrines of party faith and public honour, which clearer notions of national morality, and the salutary exercise of a large general opinion, free from the passions of single individuals, have brought into practice in our more enlightened days. The individual feelings of the individual MAN, strong in himself, became his guide, and he was free in much from the regular and thoughtful virtues, as well as from the mean and plausible vices, of those who act only in bodies and corporations. The two exceptions to this idiosyncrasy of motive and conduct were, first, in the general disposition of the rising middle class, especially in London, to connect great political interests with the more popular House of York. The commons in parliament had acted in opposition to Henry the Sixth, as the laws they wrung from him tended to show, and it was a popular and trading party that came, as it were, into power under King Edward. It is true that Edward was sufficiently arbitrary in himself; but a popular party will stretch as much as its antagonists in favour of despotism,—exercised, on its enemies. And

Edward did his best to consult the interests of commerce, though the prejudices of the merchants interpreted those interests in a way opposite to that in which political economy now understands them. The second exception to the mere hostilities of individual chiefs and feudal factions has, not less than the former, been too much overlooked by historians. But this was a still more powerful element in the success of the House of York. The hostility against the Roman Church and the tenets of the Lollards were shared by an immense part of the population. In the previous century an ancient writer computes that one half the population were Lollards; and though the sect were diminished and silenced by fear, they still ceased not to exist, and their doctrines not only shook the Church under Henry VIII., but destroyed the throne by the strong arm of their children, the Puritans, under Charles I. It was impossible that these men should not have felt the deepest resentment at the fierce and steadfast persecution they endured under the House of Lancaster; and without pausing to consider how far they would benefit under the dynasty of York, they had all those motives of revenge which are mistaken so often for the counsels of policy, to rally round any standard raised against their oppressors. These two great exceptions to merely selfish policy, which it remains for the historian clearly and at length to enforce, these: and these alone will always, to a sagacious observer, elevate the Wars of the Roses above those bloody contests for badges which we are at first sight tempted to regard them. But these deeper motives animated very little the nobles and the knightly gentry; [Amongst many instances of the self-seeking of the time, not the least striking is the subservience of John Mowbray, the great Duke of Norfolk, to his old political enemy, the Earl of Oxford, the moment the last comes into power, during the brief restoration of Henry VI. John Paston, whose family had been sufficiently harassed by this great duke, says, with some glee, "The Duke and Duchess (of Norfolk) sue to him (Lord Oxford) as humbly as ever I did to them."—Paston Letters, cccii.] and with them the governing principles were, as we have just said, interest, ambition, and the zeal for the honour and advancement of Houses and chiefs.

"Truly," said Marmaduke, after a short and rather embarrassed pause, "I am little beholden as yet to the House of York. There where I see a noble benefactor, or a brave and wise leader, shall I think my sword and heart may best proffer allegiance."

"Wisely said," returned Alwyn, with a slight but half sarcastic smile; "I asked thee the question because—draw closer—there are wise men in our city who think the ties between Warwick and the king less strong than a ship's cable; and if thou attachest thyself to Warwick, he will be better pleased, it may be, with talk of devotion to himself than professions of exclusive loyalty to King Edward. He who has little silver in his pouch must have the more silk on his tongue. A word to a Westmoreland or a Yorkshire man is as good as a sermon to men not born so far north. One word more, and I have done. Thou art kind and

affable and gentle, my dear foster-brother, but it will not do for thee to be seen again with the goldsmith's headman. If thou wantest me, send for me at nightfall; I shall be found at Master Heyford's, in the Chepe. And if," added Nicholas, with a prudent reminiscence, "thou succeedest at court, and canst recommend my master,—there is no better goldsmith,—it may serve me when I set up for myself, which I look to do shortly."

"But to send for thee, my own foster-brother, at nightfall, as if I were ashamed!"

"Hout, Master Marmaduke, if thou wert not ashamed of me, I should be ashamed to be seen with a gay springal like thee. Why, they would say in the Chepe that Nick Alwyn was going to ruin. No, no. Birds of a feather must keep shy of those that moult other colours; and so, my dear young master, this is my last shake of the hand. But hold: dost thou know thy way back?"

"Oh, yes,—never fear!" answered Marmaduke; "though I see not why so far, at least, we may not be companions."

"No, better as it is; after this day's work they will gossip about both of us, and we shall meet many who know my long visage on the way back. God keep thee; advise me how thou prosperest."

So saying, Nicholas Alwyn walked off, too delicate to propose to pay his share of the reckoning with a superior; but when he had gone a few paces he turned back, and accosting the Nevile, as the latter was rebuckling his mantle, said,—

"I have been thinking, Master Nevile, that these gold nobles, which it has been my luck to bear off, would be more useful in thy gipsire than mine. I have sure gains and small expenses; but a gentleman gains nothing, and his hand must be ever in his pouch, so—"

"Foster-brother," said Marmaduke, haughtily, "a gentleman never borrows,—except of the Jews, and with due interest. Moreover, I too have my calling; and as thy stall to thee, so to me my good sword. Saints keep thee! Be sure I will serve thee when I can."

"The devil's in these young strips of the herald's tree," muttered Alwyn, as he strode off; "as if it were dishonest to borrow a broad piece without cutting a throat for it! Howbeit, money is a prolific mother: and here is eno' to buy me a gold chain against I am alderman of London. Hout, thus goes the world,—the knight's baubles become the alderman's badges—so much the better!"

CHAPTER IV.

ILL FARES THE COUNTRY MOUSE IN THE TRAPS OF TOWN.

We trust we shall not be deemed discourteous, either, on the one hand, to those who value themselves on their powers of reflection, or, on the other, to those who lay claim to what, in modern phrenological jargon, is called the Organ of Locality, when we venture to surmise that the two are rarely found in combination; nay, that it seems to us a very evident truism, that in proportion to the general activity of the intellect upon subjects of pith and weight, the mind will be indifferent to those minute external objects by which a less contemplative understanding will note, and map out, and impress upon the memory, the chart of the road its owner has once taken. Master Marmaduke Nevile, a hardy and acute forester from childhood, possessed to perfection the useful faculty of looking well and closely before him as he walked the earth; and ordinarily, therefore, the path he had once taken, however intricate and obscure, he was tolerably sure to retrace with accuracy, even at no inconsiderable distance of time,—the outward senses of men are usually thus alert and attentive in the savage or the semi-civilized state. He had not, therefore, over-valued his general acuteness in the note and memory of localities, when he boasted of his power to re-find his way to his hostelry without the guidance of Alwyn. But it so happened that the events of this day, so memorable to him, withdrew his attention from external objects, to concentrate it within. And in marvelling and musing over the new course upon which his destiny had entered, he forgot to take heed of that which his feet should pursue; so that, after wandering unconsciously onward for some time, he suddenly halted in perplexity and amaze to find himself entangled in a labyrinth of scattered suburbs, presenting features wholly different from the road that had conducted him to the archery-ground in the forenoon. The darkness of the night had set in; but it was relieved by a somewhat faint and mist-clad moon, and some few and scattered stars, over which rolled, fleetly, thick clouds, portending rain. No lamps at that time cheered the steps of the belated wanderer; the houses were shut up, and their inmates, for the most part, already retired to rest, and the suburbs did not rejoice, as the city, in the round of the watchman with his drowsy call to the inhabitants, "Hang out your lights!" The passengers, who at first, in various small groups and parties, had enlivened the stranger's way, seemed to him, unconscious as he was of the lapse of time, to have suddenly vanished from the thoroughfares; and he found himself alone in places thoroughly unknown to him, waking to the displeasing recollection that the approaches to the city were said to be beset by brawlers and ruffians of desperate characters, whom the cessation of the civil wars had flung loose upon the skirts of society, to maintain themselves by deeds of rapine and plunder. As might naturally be expected, most of these had belonged to the

defeated party, who had no claim to the good offices or charity of those in power. And although some of the Neviles had sided with the Lancastrians, yet the badge worn by Marmaduke was considered a pledge of devotion to the reigning House, and added a new danger to those which beset his path. Conscious of this—for he now called to mind the admonitions of his host in parting from the hostelrie—he deemed it but discreet to draw the hood of his mantle over the silver ornament; and while thus occupied, he heard not a step emerging from a lane at his rear, when suddenly a heavy hand was placed on his shoulder. He started, turned, and before him stood a man, whose aspect and dress betokened little to lessen the alarm of the uncourteous salutation. Marmaduke's dagger was bare on the instant.

"And what wouldst thou with me?" he asked.

"Thy purse and thy dagger!" answered the stranger.

"Come and take them," said the Nevile, unconscious that he uttered a reply famous in classic history, as he sprang backward a step or so, and threw himself into an attitude of defence. The stranger slowly raised a rude kind of mace, or rather club, with a ball of iron at the end, garnished with long spikes, as he replied, "Art thou mad eno' to fight for such trifles?"

"Art thou in the habit of meeting one Englishman who yields his goods without a blow to another?" retorted Marmaduke. "Go to! thy club does not daunt me." The stranger warily drew back a step, and applied a whistle to his mouth. The Nevile sprang at him, but the stranger warded off the thrust of the poniard with a light flourish of his heavy weapon; and had not the youth drawn back on the instant, it had been good-night and a long day to Marmaduke Nevile. Even as it was, his heart beat quick, as the whirl of the huge weapon sent the air like a strong wind against his face. Ere he had time to renew his attack, he was suddenly seized from behind, and found himself struggling in the arms of two men. From these he broke, and his dagger glanced harmless against the tough jerkin of his first assailant. The next moment his right arm fell to his side, useless and deeply gashed. A heavy blow on the head—the moon, the stars reeled in his eyes—and then darkness,—he knew no more. His assailants very deliberately proceeded to rifle the inanimate body, when one of them, perceiving the silver badge, exclaimed, with an oath, "One of the rampant Neviles! This cock at least shall crow no more." And laying the young man's head across his lap, while he stretched back the throat with one hand, with the other he drew forth a long sharp knife, like those used by huntsmen in despatching the hart. Suddenly, and in the very moment when the blade was about to inflict the fatal gash, his hand was forcibly arrested, and a man, who had silently and unnoticed joined the ruffians, said in a stern whisper, "Rise and depart from thy brotherhood forever. We admit no murderer."

The ruffian looked up in bewilderment. "Robin—captain—thou here!" he said falteringly.

"I must needs be everywhere, I see, if I would keep such fellows as thou and these from the gallows. What is this?—a silver arrow—the young archer—Um."

"A Nevile!" growled the would-be murderer.

"And for that very reason his life should be safe. Knowest thou not that Richard of Warwick, the great Nevile, ever spares the commons? Begone! I say." The captain's low voice grew terrible as he uttered the last words. The savage rose, and without a word stalked away.

"Look you, my masters," said Robin, turning to the rest, "soldiers must plunder a hostile country. While York is on the throne, England is a hostile country to us Lancastrians. Rob, then, rifle, if ye will; but he who takes life shall lose it. Ye know me!" The robbers looked down, silent and abashed. Robin bent a moment over the youth. "He will live," he muttered. "So! he already begins to awaken. One of these houses will give him shelter. Off, fellows, and take care of your necks!"

When Marmaduke, a few minutes after this colloquy, began to revive, it was with a sensation of dizziness, pain, and extreme cold. He strove to lift himself from the ground, and at length succeeded. He was alone; the place where he had lain was damp and red with stiffening blood. He tottered on for several paces, and perceived from a lattice, at a little distance, a light still burning. Now reeling, now falling, he still dragged on his limbs as the instinct attracted him to that sign of refuge. He gained the doorway of a detached and gloomy house, and sank on the stone before it to cry aloud; but his voice soon sank into deep groans, and once more, as his efforts increased the rapid gush of the blood, became insensible. The man styled Robin, who had so opportunely saved his life, now approached from the shadow of a wall, beneath which he had watched Marmaduke's movements. He neared the door of the house, and cried, in a sharp, clear voice, "Open, for the love of Christ!"

A head was now thrust from the lattice, the light vanished; a minute more, the door opened; and Robin, as if satisfied, drew hastily back, and vanished, saying to himself, as he strode along, "A young man's life must needs be dear to him; yet had the lad been a lord, methinks I should have cared little to have saved for the people one tyrant more."

After a long interval, Marmaduke again recovered, and his eyes turned with pain from the glare of a light held to his face.

"He wakes, Father,—he will live!" cried a sweet voice. "Ay, he will live, child!" answered a deeper tone; and the young man muttered to himself, half audibly, as in a dream, "Holy Mother be blessed! it is sweet to live." The room in which the sufferer lay rather exhibited the remains of better fortunes than testified to the solid means of the present possessor. The ceiling was high and groined, and some tints of faded but once gaudy painting blazoned its compartments and hanging pendants. The walls had been rudely painted (for arras [Mr. Hallam ("History of the Middle Ages," chap. ix. part 2) implies a doubt whether great houses were furnished with hangings so soon as the reign of Edward IV.; but there is abundant evidence to satisfy our learned historian upon that head. The Narrative of the "Lord of Grauthuse," edited by Sir F. Madden, specifies the hangings of cloth of gold in the apartments in which that lord was received by Edward IV.; also the hangings of white silk and linen in the chamber appropriated to himself at Windsor. But long before this period (to say nothing of the Bayeux Tapestry),—namely, in the reign of Edward III. (in 1344),—a writ was issued to inquire into the mystery of working tapestry; and in 1398 Mr. Britton observes that the celebrated arras hangings at Warwick Castle are mentioned. (See Britton's "Dictionary of Architecture and Archaeology," art. "Tapestry.")] then was rare, even among the wealthiest); but the colours were half obliterated by time and damp. The bedstead on which the wounded man reclined was curiously carved, with a figure of the Virgin at the head, and adorned with draperies, in which were wrought huge figures from scriptural subjects, but in the dress of the date of Richard II.,—Solomon in pointed upturned shoes, and Goliath, in the armour of a crusader, frowning grimly upon the sufferer. By the bedside stood a personage, who, in reality, was but little past the middle age, but whose pale visage, intersected with deep furrows, whose long beard and hair, partially gray, gave him the appearance of advanced age: nevertheless there was something peculiarly striking in the aspect of the man. His forehead was singularly high and massive; but the back of the head was disproportionately small, as if the intellect too much preponderated over all the animal qualities for strength in character and success in life. The eyes were soft, dark, and brilliant, but dreamlike and vague; the features in youth must have been regular and beautiful, but their contour was now sharpened by the hollowness of the cheeks and temples. The form, in the upper part, was nobly shaped, sufficiently muscular, if not powerful, and with the long throat and falling shoulders which always gives something of grace and dignity to the carriage; but it was prematurely bent, and the lower limbs were thin and weak, as is common with men who have sparingly used them; they seemed disproportioned to that broad chest, and still more to that magnificent and spacious brow. The dress of this personage corresponded with the aspect of his abode. The materials were those worn by the gentry, but they were old, threadbare, and discoloured with innumerable spots and stains. His hands were small and delicate, with large blue veins, that spoke of relaxed fibres; but their natural whiteness was smudged with smoke-stains, and his beard—a masculine

ornament utterly out of fashion among the younger race in King Edward's reign, but when worn by the elder gentry carefully trimmed and perfumed—was dishevelled into all the spiral and tangled curls displayed in the sculptured head of some old Grecian sage or poet.

On the other side of the bed knelt a young girl of about sixteen, with a face exquisitely lovely in its delicacy and expression. She seemed about the middle stature, and her arms and neck, as displayed by the close-fitting vest, had already the smooth and rounded contour of dawning womanhood, while the face had still the softness, innocence, and inexpressible bloom of a child. There was a strong likeness between her and her father (for such the relationship, despite the difference of sex and years),—the same beautiful form of lip and brow, the same rare colour of the eyes, dark-blue, with black fringing lashes; and perhaps the common expression, at that moment, of gentle pity and benevolent anxiety contributed to render the resemblance stronger.

"Father, he sinks again!" said the girl.

"Sibyll," answered the man, putting his finger upon a line in a manuscript book that he held, "the authority saith, that a patient so contused should lose blood, and then the arm must be tightly bandaged. Verily we lack the wherewithal."

"Not so, Father!" said the girl, and blushing, she turned aside, and took off the partelet of lawn, upon which holiday finery her young eyes perhaps that morning had turned with pleasure, and white as snow was the neck which was thus displayed; "this will suffice to bind his arm."

"But the book," said the father, in great perplexity—"the book telleth us not how the lancet should be applied. It is easy to say, 'Do this and do that;' but to do it once, it should have been done before. This is not among my experiments."

Luckily, perhaps, for Marmaduke, at this moment there entered an old woman, the solitary servant of the house, whose life, in those warlike times, had made her pretty well acquainted with the simpler modes of dealing with a wounded arm and a broken head. She treated with great disdain the learned authority referred to by her master; she bound the arm, plastered the head, and taking upon herself the responsibility to promise a rapid cure, insisted upon the retirement of father and child, and took her solitary watch beside the bed.

"If it had been any other mechanism than that of the vile human body!" muttered the philosopher, as if apologizing to himself; and with that he recovered his self-complacency and looked round him proudly.

CHAPTER V.

WEAL TO THE IDLER, WOE TO THE WORKMAN.

As Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, so it possibly might conform the heads of that day to a thickness suitable for the blows and knocks to which they were variously subjected; yet it was not without considerable effort and much struggling that Marmaduke's senses recovered the shock received, less by his flesh-wound and the loss of blood, than a blow on the seat of reason that might have despatched a passable ox of these degenerate days. Nature, to say nothing of Madge's leechcraft, ultimately triumphed, and Marmaduke woke one morning in full possession of such understanding as Nature had endowed him with. He was then alone, and it was with much simple surprise that he turned his large hazel eyes from corner to corner of the unfamiliar room. He began to retrace and weave together sundry disordered and vague reminiscences: he commenced with the commencement, and clearly satisfied himself that he had been grievously wounded and sorely bruised; he then recalled the solitary light at the high lattice, and his memory found itself at the porch of the large, lonely, ruinous old house; then all became a bewildered and feverish dream. He caught at the vision of an old man with a long beard, whom he associated, displeasingly, with recollections of pain; he glanced off to a fair face, with eyes that looked tender pity whenever he writhed or groaned under the tortures that, no doubt, that old accursed carle had inflicted upon him. But even this face did not dwell with pleasure in his memory,—it woke up confused and labouring associations of something weird and witchlike, of sorceresses and tymbesteres, of wild warnings screeched in his ear, of incantations and devilries and doom. Impatient of these musings, he sought to leap from his bed, and was amazed that the leap subsided into a tottering crawl. He found an ewer and basin, and his ablutions refreshed and invigorated him. He searched for his raiment, and discovered it all except the mantle, dagger, hat, and girdle; and while looking for these, his eye fell on an old tarnished steel mirror. He started as if he had seen his ghost; was it possible that his hardy face could have waned into that pale and almost femininely delicate visage? With the pride (call it not coxcombry) that then made the care of person the distinction of gentle birth, he strove to reduce into order the tangled locks of the long hair, of which a considerable portion above a part that seemed peculiarly sensitive to the touch had been mercilessly clipped; and as he had just completed this task, with little satisfaction and much inward chafing at the lack of all befitting essences and perfumes, the door gently opened, and the fair face he had dreamed of appeared at the aperture.

The girl uttered a cry of astonishment and alarm at seeing the patient thus arrayed and convalescent, and would suddenly have retreated; but

the Nevile advanced, and courteously taking her hand—

”Fair maiden,” said he, ”if, as I trow, I owe to thy cares my tending and cure—nay, it may be a life hitherto of little worth, save to myself—do not fly from my thanks. May Our Lady of Walsingham bless and reward thee!”

”Sir,” answered Sibyll, gently withdrawing her hands from his clasp, ”our poor cares have been a slight return for thy generous protection to myself.”

”To thee! ah, forgive me—how could I be so dull? I remember thy face now; and, perchance, I deserve the disaster I met with in leaving thee so discourteously. My heart smote me for it as my light footfall passed from thy side.”

A slight blush, succeeded by a thoughtful smile—the smile of one who recalls and caresses some not displeasing remembrance—passed over Sibyll’s charming countenance, as the sufferer said this with something of the grace of a well-born man, whose boyhood had been taught to serve God and the Ladies.

There was a short pause before she answered, looking down, ”Nay, sir, I was sufficiently beholden to you; and for the rest, all molestation was over. But I will now call your nurse—for it is to our servant, not us, that your thanks are due—to see to your state, and administer the proper medicaments.”

”Truly, fair damsel, it is not precisely medicaments that I hunger and thirst for; and if your hospitality could spare me from the larder a manchet, or a corner of a pasty, and from the cellar a stoup of wine or a cup of ale, methinks it would tend more to restore me than those potions which are so strange to my taste that they rather offend than tempt it; and, pardie, it seemeth to my poor senses as if I had not broken bread for a week!”

”I am glad to hear you of such good cheer,” answered Sibyll; ”wait but a moment or so, till I consult your physician.”

And, so saying, she closed the door, slowly descended the steps, and pursued her way into what seemed more like a vault than a habitable room, where she found the single servant of the household. Time, which makes changes so fantastic in the dress of the better classes, has a greater respect for the costume of the humbler; and though the garments were of a very coarse sort of serge, there was not so great a difference, in point of comfort and sufficiency, as might be supposed, between the dress of old Madge and that of some primitive servant in the North during the last century. The old woman’s face was thin and pinched; but its sharp expression brightened into a smile as she caught sight, through the damp and darkness, of the gracious form of

her young mistress. "Ah, Madge," said Sibyll, with a sigh, "it is a sad thing to be poor!"

"For such as thou, Mistress Sibyll, it is indeed. It does not matter for the like of us. But it goes to my old heart when I see you shut up here, or worse, going out in that old courtpie and wimple,—you, a knight's grandchild; you, who have played round a queen's knees, and who might have been so well-to-do, an' my master had thought a little more of the gear of this world. But patience is a good palfrey, and will carry us a long day. And when the master has done what he looks for, why, the king—sith we must so call the new man on the throne—will be sure to reward him; but, sweetheart, tarry not here; it's an ill air for your young lips to drink in. What brings you to old Madge?"

"The stranger is recovered, and—"

"Ay, I warrant me, I have cured worse than he. He must have a spoonful of broth,—I have not forgot it. You see I wanted no dinner myself—what is dinner to old folks!—so I e'en put it all in the pot for him. The broth will be brave and strong."

"My poor Madge, God requite you for what you suffer for us! But he has asked"—here was another sigh, and a downcast look that did not dare to face the consternation of Madge, as she repeated, with a half-smile—"he has asked—for meat, and a stoup of wine, Madge!"

"Eh, sirs! And where is he to get them? Not that it will be bad for the lad, either. Wine! There's Master Sancroft of the Oak will not trust us a penny, the seely hilding, and—"

"Oh, Madge, I forgot!—we can still sell the gittern for something. Get on your wimple, Madge—quick,—while I go for it."

"Why, Mistress Sibyll, that's your only pleasure when you sit all alone, the long summer days."

"It will be more pleasure to remember that it supplied the wants of my father's guest," said Sibyll; and retracing the way up the stairs, she returned with the broken instrument, and despatched Madge with it, laden with instructions that the wine should be of the best. She then once more mounted the rugged steps, and halting a moment at Marmaduke's door, as she heard his feeble step walking impatiently to and fro, she ascended higher, where the flight, winding up a square, dilapidated turret, became rougher, narrower, and darker, and opened the door of her father's retreat.

It was a room so bare of ornament and furniture that it seemed merely wrought out of the mingled rubble and rough stones which composed the walls of the mansion, and was lighted towards the street by a narrow

slit, glazed, it is true,—which all the windows of the house were not,—but the sun scarcely pierced the dull panes and the deep walls in which they were sunk. The room contained a strong furnace and a rude laboratory. There were several strange-looking mechanical contrivances scattered about, several manuscripts upon some oaken shelves, and a large pannier of wood and charcoal in the corner. In that poverty-stricken house, the money spent on fuel alone, in the height of summer, would have comfortably maintained the inmates; but neither Sibyll nor Madge ever thought to murmur at this waste, dedicated to what had become the vital want of a man who drew air in a world of his own. This was the first thing to be provided for; and Science was of more imperative necessity than even Hunger.

Adam Warner was indeed a creature of remarkable genius,—and genius, in an age where it is not appreciated, is the greatest curse the iron Fates can inflict on man. If not wholly without the fond fancies which led the wisdom of the darker ages to the philosopher's stone and the elixir, he had been deterred from the chase of a chimera by want of means to pursue it! for it required the resources or the patronage of a prince or noble to obtain the costly ingredients consumed in the alchemist's crucible. In early life, therefore, and while yet in possession of a competence derived from a line of distinguished and knightly ancestors, Adam Warner had devoted himself to the surer and less costly study of the mathematics, which then had begun to attract the attention of the learned, but which was still looked upon by the vulgar as a branch of the black art. This pursuit had opened to him the insight into discoveries equally useful and sublime. They necessitated a still more various knowledge; and in an age when there was no division of labour and rare and precarious communication among students, it became necessary for each discoverer to acquire sufficient science for his own collateral experiments.

In applying mathematics to the practical purposes of life, in recognizing its mighty utilities to commerce and civilization, Adam Warner was driven to conjoin with it, not only an extensive knowledge of languages, but many of the rudest tasks of the mechanist's art; and chemistry was, in some of his researches, summoned to his aid. By degrees, the tyranny that a man's genius exercises over his life, abstracted him from all external objects. He had loved his wife tenderly, but his rapid waste of his fortune in the purchase of instruments and books, then enormously dear, and the neglect of all things not centred in the hope to be the benefactor of the world, had ruined her health and broken her heart. Happily Warner perceived not her decay till just before her death; happily he never conceived its cause, for her soul was wrapped in his. She revered, and loved, and never upbraided him. Her heart was the martyr to his mind. Had she foreseen the future destinies of her daughter, it might have been otherwise. She could have remonstrated with the father, though not with the husband. But, fortunately, as it seemed to her, she (a Frenchwoman by birth) had passed her youth in the service of Margaret

of Anjou, and that haughty queen, who was equally warm to friends and inexorable to enemies, had, on her attendant's marriage, promised to ensure the fortunes of her offspring. Sibyll at the age of nine—between seven and eight years before the date the story enters on, and two years prior to the fatal field of Towton, which gave to Edward the throne of England—had been admitted among the young girls whom the custom of the day ranked amidst the attendants of the queen; and in the interval that elapsed before Margaret was obliged to dismiss her to her home, her mother died. She died without foreseeing the reverses that were to ensue, in the hope that her child, at least, was nobly provided for, and not without the belief (for there is so much faith in love!) that her husband's researches, which in his youth had won favour of the Protector Duke of Gloucester, the most enlightened prince of his time, would be crowned at last with the rewards and favours of his king. That precise period was, indeed, the fairest that had yet dawned upon the philosopher. Henry VI., slowly recovering from one of those attacks which passed for imbecility, had condescended to amuse himself with various conversations with Warner, urged to it first by representations of the unholy nature of the student's pursuits; and, having satisfied his mind of his learned subject's orthodoxy, the poor monarch had taken a sort of interest, not so much, perhaps, in the objects of Warner's occupations, as in that complete absorption from actual life which characterized the subject, and gave him in this a melancholy resemblance to the king. While the House of Lancaster was on the throne, the wife felt that her husband's pursuits would be respected, and his harmless life safe from the fierce prejudices of the people; and the good queen would not suffer him to starve, when the last mark was expended in devices how to benefit his country:—and in these hopes the woman died!

A year afterwards, all at court was in disorder,—armed men supplied the service of young girls, and Sibyll, with a purse of broad pieces, soon converted into manuscripts, was sent back to her father's desolate home. There had she grown a flower amidst ruins, with no companion of her own age, and left to bear, as her sweet and affectionate nature well did, the contrast between the luxuries of a court and the penury of a hearth which, year after year, hunger and want came more and more sensibly to invade.

Sibyll had been taught, even as a child, some accomplishments little vouchsafed then to either sex,—she could read and write; and Margaret had not so wholly lost, in the sterner North, all reminiscence of the accomplishments that graced her father's court as to neglect the education of those brought up in her household. Much attention was given to music, for it soothed the dark hours of King Henry; the blazoning of missals or the lives of saints, with the labours of the loom, were also among the resources of Sibyll's girlhood, and by these last she had, from time to time, served to assist the maintenance of the little family of which, child though she was, she became the actual head. But latterly—that is, for the last few weeks—even

these sources failed her; for as more peaceful times allowed her neighbours to interest themselves in the affairs of others, the dark reports against Warner had revived. His name became a by-word of horror; the lonely light at the lattice burning till midnight, against all the early usages and habits of the day; the dark smoke of the furnace, constant in summer as in winter, scandalized the religion of the place far and near. And finding, to their great dissatisfaction, that the king's government and the Church interfered not for their protection, and unable themselves to volunteer any charges against the recluse (for the cows in the neighbourhood remained provokingly healthy), they came suddenly, and, as it were by one of those common sympathies which in all times the huge persecutor we call the PUBLIC manifests when a victim is to be crushed, to the pious resolution of starving where they could not burn. Why buy the quaint devilries of the wizard's daughter?—no luck could come of it. A missal blazoned by such hands, an embroidery worked at such a loom, was like the Lord's Prayer read backwards. And one morning, when poor Sibyll stole out as usual to vend a month's labour, she was driven from door to door with oaths and curses.

Though Sibyll's heart was gentle, she was not without a certain strength of mind. She had much of the patient devotion of her mother, much of the quiet fortitude of her father's nature. If not comprehending to the full the loftiness of Warner's pursuits, she still anticipated from them an ultimate success which reconciled her to all temporary sacrifices. The violent prejudices, the ignorant cruelty, thus brought to bear against existence itself, filled her with sadness, it is true, but not unmixed with that contempt for her persecutors, which, even in the meekest tempers, takes the sting from despair. But hunger pressed. Her father was nearing the goal of his discoveries, and in a moment of that pride which in its very contempt for appearances braves them all, Sibyll had stolen out to the pastime-ground,—with what result has been seen already. Having thus accounted for the penury of the mansion, we return to its owner.

Warner was contemplating with evident complacency and delight the model of a machine which had occupied him for many years, and which he imagined he was now rapidly bringing to perfection. His hands and face were grimed with the smoke of his forge, and his hair and beard, neglected as usual, looked parched and dried up, as if with the constant fever that burned within.

"Yes, yes!" he muttered, "how they will bless me for this! What Roger Bacon only suggested I shall accomplish! How it will change the face of the globe! What wealth it will bestow on ages yet unborn!"

"My father," said the gentle voice of Sibyll, "my poor father, thou hast not tasted bread to-day."

Warner turned, and his face relaxed into a tender expression as he saw

his daughter.

"My child," he said, pointing to his model, "the time comes when it will live! Patience! patience!"

"And who would not have patience with thee, and for thee, Father?" said Sibyll, with enthusiasm speaking on every feature. "What is the valour of knight and soldier—dull statues of steel—to thine? Thou, with thy naked breast, confronting all dangers,—sharper than the lance and glaive, and all—"

"All to make England great!"

"Alas! what hath England merited from men like thee? The people, more savage than their rulers, clamour for the stake, the gibbet, and the dungeon, for all who strive to make them wiser. Remember the death of Bolingbroke, [A mathematician accused as an accomplice, in sorcery, of Eleanor Cobham, wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and hanged upon that charge. His contemporary (William Wyrcestre) highly extols his learning.]—a wizard, because, O Father!—because his pursuits were thine!"

Adam, startled by this burst, looked at his daughter with more attention than he usually evinced to any living thing. "Child," he said at length, shaking his head in grave reproof, "let me not say to thee, 'O thou of little faith!' There were no heroes were there no martyrs!"

"Do not frown on me, Father," said Sibyll, sadly; "let the world frown,—not thou! Yes, thou art right. Thou must triumph at last." And suddenly, her whole countenance changing into a soft and caressing endearment, she added, "But now come, Father. Thou hast laboured well for this morning. We shall have a little feast for thee in a few minutes. And the stranger is recovered, thanks to our leechcraft. He is impatient to see and thank thee."

"Well, well, I come, Sibyll," said the student, with a regretful, lingering look at his model, and a sigh to be disturbed from its contemplation; and he slowly quitted the room with Sibyll.

"But not, dear sir and father, not thus—not quite thus—will you go to the stranger, well-born like yourself? Oh, no! your Sibyll is proud, you know,—proud of her father." So saying, she clung to him fondly, and drew him mechanically, for he had sunk into a reverie, and heeded her not, into an adjoining chamber, in which he slept. The comforts even of the gentry, of men with the acres that Adam had sold, were then few and scanty. The nobles and the wealthy merchants, indeed, boasted many luxuries that excelled in gaud and pomp those of their equals now. But the class of the gentry who had very little money at command were contented with hardships from which a menial of

this day would revolt. What they could spend in luxury was usually consumed in dress and the table they were obliged to keep. These were the essentials of dignity. Of furniture there was a woful stint. In many houses, even of knights, an edifice large enough to occupy a quadrangle was composed more of offices than chambers inhabited by the owners; rarely boasting more than three beds, which were bequeathed in wills as articles of great value. The reader must, therefore, not be surprised that Warner's abode contained but one bed, properly so called, and that was now devoted to Nevile. The couch which served the philosopher for bed was a wretched pallet, stretched on the floor, stuffed with straw,—with rough say, or serge, and an old cloak for the coverings. His daughter's, in a room below, was little better. The walls were bare; the whole house boasted but one chair, which was in Marmaduke's chamber; stools or settles of rude oak elsewhere supplied their place. There was no chimney except in Nevile's room, and in that appropriated to the forge.

To this chamber, then, resembling a dungeon in appearance, Sibyll drew the student, and here, from an old worm-eaten chest, she carefully extracted a gown of brown velvet, which his father, Sir Armine, had bequeathed to him by will,—faded, it is true, but still such as the low-born wore not, [By the sumptuary laws only a knight was entitled to wear velvet.] trimmed with fur, and clasped with a brooch of gold. And then she held the ewer and basin to him, while, with the docility of a child, he washed the smoke-soil from his hands and face. It was touching to see in this, as in all else, the reverse of their natural position,—the child tending and heeding and protecting, as it were, the father; and that not from his deficiency, but his greatness; not because he was below the vulgar intelligences of life, but above them. And certainly, when, his patriarchal hair and beard smoothed into order, and his velvet gown flowing in majestic folds around a figure tall and commanding, Sibyll followed her father into Marmaduke's chamber, she might well have been proud of his appearance; and she felt the innocent vanity of her sex and age in noticing the half-start of surprise with which Marmaduke regarded his host, and the tone of respect in which he proffered him his salutations and thanks. Even his manner altered to Sibyll; it grew less frank and affable, more courtly and reserved: and when Madge came to announce that the refecton was served, it was with a blush of shame, perhaps, at his treatment of the poor gittern-player on the pastime-ground, that the Nevile extended his left hand, for his right was still not at his command, to lead the damsel to the hall.

This room, which was divided from the entrance by a screen, and, except a small closet that adjoined it, was the only sitting-room in a day when, as now on the Continent, no shame was attached to receiving visitors in sleeping apartments, was long and low; an old and very narrow table, that might have feasted thirty persons, stretched across a dais raised upon a stone floor; there was no *rere-dosse*, or fireplace, which does not seem at that day to have been an absolute

necessity in the houses of the metropolis and its suburbs, its place being supplied by a movable brazier. Three oak stools were placed in state at the board, and to one of these Marmaduke, in a silence unusual to him, conducted the fair Sibyll.

"You will forgive our lack of provisions," said Warner, relapsing into the courteous fashions of his elder days, which the unwonted spectacle of a cold capon, a pasty, and a flask of wine brought to his mind by a train of ideas that actively glided by the intervening circumstances, which ought to have filled him with astonishment at the sight, "for my Sibyll is but a young housewife, and I am a simple scholar, of few wants."

"Verily," answered Marmaduke, finding his tongue as he attacked the pasty, "I see nothing that the most dainty need complain of; fair Mistress Sibyll, your dainty lips will not, I trow, refuse me the waisall. [I.e. waissail or wassal; the spelling of the time is adopted in the text.] To you also, worshipful sir! Gramercy! it seems that there is nothing which better stirs a man's appetite than a sick bed. And, speaking thereof, deign to inform me, kind sir, how long I have been indebted to your hospitality. Of a surety, this pasty hath an excellent flavour, and if not venison, is something better. But to return, it mazes me much to think what time hath passed since my encounter with the robbers."

"They were robbers, then, who so cruelly assailed thee?" observed Sibyll.

"Have I not said so—surely, who else? And, as I was remarking to your worshipful father, whether this mischance happened hours, days, months, or years ago, beshrew me if I can venture the smallest guess."

Master Warner smiled, and observing that some reply was expected from him, said, "Why, indeed, young sir, I fear I am almost as oblivious as yourself. It was not yesterday that you arrived, nor the day before, nor—Sibyll, my child, how long is it since this gentleman hath been our guest?"

"This is the fifth day," answered Sibyll.

"So long! and I like a senseless log by the wayside, when others are pushing on, bit and spur, to the great road. I pray you, sir, tell me the news of the morning. The Lord Warwick is still in London, the court still at the Tower?"

Poor Adam, whose heart was with his model, and who had now satisfied his temperate wants, looked somewhat bewildered and perplexed by this question. "The king, save his honoured head," said he, inclining his own, "is, I fear me, always at the Tower, since his unhappy detention, but he minds it not, sir,—he heeds it not; his soul is not on this

side Paradise.”

Sibyll uttered a faint exclamation of fear at this dangerous indiscretion of her father’s absence of mind; and drawing closer to Nevile, she put her hand with touching confidence on his arm, and whispered, ”You will not repeat this, Sir! my father lives only in his studies, and he has never known but one king!”

Marmaduke turned his bold face to the maid, and pointed to the salt-cellar, as he answered in the same tone, ”Does the brave man betray his host?”

There was a moment’s silence. Marmaduke rose. ”I fear,” said he, ”that I must now leave you; and while it is yet broad noon, I must indeed be blind if I again miss my way.”

This speech suddenly recalled Adam from his meditations; for whenever his kindly and simple benevolence was touched, even his mathematics and his model were forgotten. ”No, young sir,” said he, ”you must not quit us yet; your danger is not over. Exercise may bring fever. Celsus recommends quiet. You must consent to tarry with us a day or two more.”

”Can you tell me,” said the Nevile, hesitatingly, ”what distance it is to the Temple-gate, or the nearest wharf on the river?”

”Two miles, at the least,” answered Sibyll.

”Two miles!—and now I mind me, I have not the accoutrements that besem me. Those hildings have stolen my mantle (which, I perceive, by the way, is but a rustic garment, now laid aside for the super-tunic), and my hat and dague, nor have they left even a half groat to supply their place. Verily, therefore, since ye permit me to burden your hospitality longer, I will not say ye nay, provided you, worshipful sir, will suffer one of your people to step to the house of one Master Heyford, goldsmith, in the Chepe, and crave one Nicholas Alwyn, his freedman, to visit me. I can commission him touching my goods left at mine hostelrie, and learn some other things which it behooves me to know.”

”Assuredly. Sibyll, tell Simon or Jonas to put himself under our guest’s order.”

Simon or Jonas! The poor Adam absolutely forgot that Simon and Jonas had quitted the house these six years! How could he look on the capon, the wine, and the velvet gown trimmed with fur, and not fancy himself back in the heyday of his wealth?

Sibyll half smiled and half sighed, as she withdrew to consult with her sole counsellor, Madge, how the guest’s orders were to be obeyed,

and how, alas! the board was to be replenished for the evening meal. But in both these troubles she was more fortunate than she anticipated. Madge had sold the broken gittern, for musical instruments were then, comparatively speaking, dear (and this had been a queen's gift), for sufficient to provide decently for some days; and, elated herself with the prospect of so much good cheer, she readily consented to be the messenger to Nicholas Alwyn. When with a light step and a lighter heart Sibyll tripped back to the hall, she was scarcely surprised to find the guest alone. Her father, after her departure, had begun to evince much restless perturbation. He answered Marmaduke's queries but by abstracted and desultory monosyllables; and seeing his guest at length engaged in contemplating some old pieces of armour hung upon the walls, he stole stealthily and furtively away, and halted not till once more before his beloved model.

Unaware of his departure, Marmaduke, whose back was turned to him, was, as he fondly imagined, enlightening his host with much soldier-like learning as to the old helmets and weapons that graced the hall. "Certes, my host," said he, musingly, "that sort of casque, which has not, I opine, been worn this century, had its merits; the vizor is less open to the arrows. But as for these chain suits, they suited only—I venture, with due deference, to declare—the Wars of the Crusades, where the enemy fought chiefly with dart and scymetar. They would be but a sorry defence against the mace and battle-axe; nevertheless, they were light for man and horse, and in some service, especially against foot, might be revived with advantage. Think you not so?"

He turned, and saw the arch face of Sibyll.

"I crave pardon for my blindness, gentle damsel," said he, in some confusion, "but your father was here anon."

"His mornings are so devoted to labour," answered Sibyll, "that he entreats you to pardon his discourtesy. Meanwhile if you would wish to breathe the air, we have a small garden in the rear;" and so saying, she led the way into the small withdrawing-room, or rather closet, which was her own favourite chamber, and which communicated, by another door, with a broad, neglected grassplot, surrounded by high walls, having a raised terrace in front, divided by a low stone Gothic palisade from the green sward.

On the palisade sat droopingly, and half asleep, a solitary peacock; but when Sibyll and the stranger appeared at the door, he woke up suddenly, descended from his height, and with a vanity not wholly unlike his young mistress's wish to make the best possible display in the eyes of a guest, spread his plumes broadly in the sun. Sibyll threw him some bread, which she had taken from the table for that purpose; but the proud bird, however hungry, disdained to eat, till he

had thoroughly satisfied himself that his glories had been sufficiently observed.

"Poor proud one," said Sibyll, half to herself, "thy plumage lasts with thee through all changes."

"Like the name of a brave knight," said Marmaduke, who overheard her.

"Thou thinkest of the career of arms."

"Surely,—I am a Nevile!"

"Is there no fame to be won but that of a warrior?"

"Not that I weet of, or heed for, Mistress Sibyll."

"Thinkest thou it were nothing to be a minstrel, who gave delight; a scholar, who dispelled darkness?"

"For the scholar? Certes, I respect holy Mother Church, which they tell me alone produces that kind of wonder with full safety to the soul, and that only in the higher prelates and dignitaries. For the minstrel, I love him, I would fight for him, I would give him at need the last penny in my gipsire; but it is better to do deeds than to sing them."

Sibyll smiled, and the smile perplexed and half displeased the young adventurer. But the fire of the young man had its charm.

By degrees, as they walked to and fro the neglected terrace, their talk flowed free and familiar; for Marmaduke, like most young men full of himself, was joyous with the happy egotism of a frank and careless nature. He told his young confidante of a day his birth, his history, his hopes, and fears; and in return he learned, in answer to the questions he addressed to her, so much, at least, of her past and present life, as the reverses of her father, occasioned by costly studies, her own brief sojourn at the court of Margaret, and the solitude, if not the struggles, in which her youth was consumed. It would have been a sweet and grateful sight to some kindly bystander to hear these pleasant communications between two young persons so unfriended, and to imagine that hearts thus opened to each other might unite in one. But Sibyll, though she listened to him with interest, and found a certain sympathy in his aspirations, was ever and anon secretly comparing him to one, the charm of whose voice still lingered in her ears; and her intellect, cultivated and acute, detected in Marmaduke deficient education, and that limited experience which is the folly and the happiness of the young.

On the other hand, whatever admiration Nevile might conceive was strangely mixed with surprise, and, it might almost be said, with

fear. This girl, with her wise converse and her child's face, was a character so thoroughly new to him. Her language was superior to what he had ever heard, the words more choice, the current more flowing: was that to be attributed to her court-training or her learned parentage?

"Your father, fair mistress," said he, rousing himself in one of the pauses of their conversation—"your father, then, is a mighty scholar, and I suppose knows Latin like English?"

"Why, a hedge-priest pretends to know Latin," said Sibyll, smiling; "my father is one of the six men living who have learned the Greek and the Hebrew."

"Gramercy!" cried Marmaduke, crossing himself. "That is awsome indeed! He has taught you his lere in the tongues?"

"Nay, I know but my own and the French; my mother was a native of France."

"The Holy Mother be praised!" said Marmaduke, breathing more freely; "for French I have heard my father and uncle say is a language fit for gentles and knights, specially those who come, like the Neviles, from Norman stock. This Margaret of Anjou—didst thou love her well, Mistress Sibyll?"

"Nay," answered Sibyll, "Margaret commanded awe, but she scarcely permitted love from an inferior: and though gracious and well-governed when she so pleased, it was but to those whom she wished to win. She cared not for the heart, if the hand or the brain could not assist her. But, poor queen, who could blame her for this?—her nature was turned from its milk; and, when, more lately, I have heard how many she trusted most have turned against her, I rebuked myself that—"

"Thou wert not by her side?" added the Nevile, observing her pause, and with the generous thought of a gentleman and a soldier.

"Nay, I meant not that so expressly, Master Nevile, but rather that I had ever murmured at her haste and shrewdness of mood. By her side, said you?—alas! I have a nearer duty at home; my father is all in this world to me! Thou knowest not, Master Nevile, how it flatters the weak to think there is some one they can protect. But eno' of myself. Thou wilt go to the stout earl, thou wilt pass to the court, thou wilt win the gold spurs, and thou wilt fight with the strong hand, and leave others to cozen with the keen head."

"She is telling my fortune!" muttered Marmaduke, crossing himself again. "The gold spurs—I thank thee, Mistress Sibyll!—will it be on the battle-field that I shall be knighted, and by whose hand?"

Sibyll glanced her bright eye at the questioner, and seeing his wistful face, laughed outright.

"What, thinkest thou, Master Nevile, I can read thee all riddles without my sieve and my shears?"

"They are essentials, then, Mistress Sibyll?" said the Nevile, with blunt simplicity. "I thought ye more learned damozels might tell by the palm, or the—why dost thou laugh at me?"

"Nay," answered Sibyll, composing herself. "It is my right to be angered. Sith thou wouldst take me to be a witch, all that I can tell thee of thy future" (she added touchingly) "is from that which I have seen of thy past. Thou hast a brave heart, and a gentle; thou hast a frank tongue, and a courteous; and these qualities make men honoured and loved,—except they have the gifts which turn all into gall, and bring oppression for honour, and hate for love."

"And those gifts, gentle Sibyll?"

"Are my father's," answered the girl, with another and a sadder change in her expressive countenance. And the conversation flagged till Marmaduke, feeling more weakened by his loss of blood than he had conceived it possible, retired to his chamber to repose himself.

CHAPTER VI.

MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE FEARS FOR THE SPIRITUAL WEAL OF HIS HOST AND HOSTESS.

Before the hour of supper, which was served at six o'clock, Nicholas Alwyn arrived at the house indicated to him by Madge. Marmaduke, after a sound sleep, which was little flattering to Sibyll's attractions, had descended to the hall in search of the maiden and his host, and finding no one, had sauntered in extreme weariness and impatience into the little withdrawing-closet, where as it was now dusk, burned a single candle in a melancholy and rustic sconce; standing by the door that opened on the garden, he amused himself with watching the peacock, when his friend, following Madge into the chamber, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, Master Nevile. Ha! by Saint Thomas, what has chanced to thee? Thine arm swathed up, thy locks shorn, thy face blanched! My honoured foster-brother, thy Westmoreland blood seems over-hot for Cockaigne!"

"If so, there are plenty in this city of cut-throats to let out the surplusage," returned Marmaduke; and he briefly related his adventure to Nicholas.

When he had done, the kind trader reproached himself for having suffered Marmaduke to find his way alone. "The suburbs abound with these miscreants," said he; "and there is more danger in a night walk near London than in the loneliest glens of green Sherwood—more shame to the city! An' I be Lord Mayor one of these days, I will look to it better. But our civil wars make men hold human life very cheap, and there's parlous little care from the great of the blood and limbs of the wayfarers. But war makes thieves—and peace hangs them! Only wait till I manage affairs!"

"Many thanks to thee, Nicholas," returned the Nevile; "but foul befall me if ever I seek protection from sheriff or mayor! A man who cannot keep his own life with his own right hand merits well to hap-lose it; and I, for one, shall think ill of the day when an Englishman looks more to the laws than his good arm for his safety; but, letting this pass, I beseech thee to advise me if my Lord Warwick be still in the city?"

"Yes, marry, I know that by the hostelries, which swarm with his badges, and the oxen, that go in scores to the shambles! It is a shame to the Estate to see one subject so great, and it bodes no good to our peace. The earl is preparing the most magnificent embassy that ever crossed the salt seas—I would it were not to the French, for our interests lie contrary; but thou hast some days yet to rest here and grow stout, for I would not have thee present thyself with a visage of chalk to a man who values his kind mainly by their thews and their sinews. Moreover, thou shouldst send for the tailor, and get thee trimmed to the mark. It would be a long step in thy path to promotion, an' the earl would take thee in his train; and the gaudier thy plumes, why, the better chance for thy flight. Wherefore, since thou sayest they are thus friendly to thee under this roof, bide yet a while peacefully; I will send thee the mercer, and the clothier, and the tailor, to divert thy impatience. And as these fellows are greedy, my gentle and dear Master Nevile, may I ask, without offence, how thou art provided?"

"Nay, nay, I have moneys at the hostelrie, an' thou wilt send me my mails. For the rest, I like thy advice, and will take it."

"Good!" answered Nicholas. "Hem! thou seemest to have got into a poor house,—a decayed gentleman, I wot, by the slovenly ruin!"

"I would that were the worst," replied Marmaduke, solemnly, and under his breath; and therewith he repeated to Nicholas the adventure on the pastime-ground, the warnings of the timbrel-girls, and the "awsome" learning and strange pursuits of his host. As for Sibyll, he was

evidently inclined to attribute to glamour the reluctant admiration with which she had inspired him. "For," said he, "though I deny not that the maid is passing fair, there be many with rosier cheeks, and taller by this hand!"

Nicholas listened, at first, with the peculiar expression of shrewd sarcasm which mainly characterized his intelligent face, but his attention grew more earnest before Marmaduke had concluded.

"In regard to the maiden," said he, smiling and shaking his head, "it is not always the handsomest that win us the most,—while fair Meg went a maying, black Meg got to church; and I give thee more reasonable warning than thy timbrel-girls, when, in spite of thy cold language, I bid thee take care of thyself against her attractions; for, verily, my dear foster-brother, thou must mend and not mar thy fortune, by thy love matters; and keep thy heart whole for some fair one with marks in her gipsire, whom the earl may find out for thee. Love and raw pease are two ill things in the porridge-pot. But the father!—I mind me now that I have heard of his name, through my friend Master Caxton, the mercer, as one of prodigious skill in the mathematics. I should like much to see him, and, with thy leave (an' he ask me), will tarry to supper. But what are these?"—and Nicholas took up one of the illuminated manuscripts which Sibyll had prepared for sale. "By the blood! this is couthly and marvellously blazoned."

The book was still in his hands when Sibyll entered. Nicholas stared at her, as he bowed with a stiff and ungraceful embarrassment, which often at first did injustice to his bold, clear intellect, and his perfect self-possession in matters of trade or importance.

"The first woman face," muttered Nicholas to himself, "I ever saw that had the sense of a man's. And, by the rood, what a smile!"

"Is this thy friend, Master Nevile?" said Sibyll, with a glance at the goldsmith. "He is welcome. But is it fair and courteous, Master Nelwyn—"

"Alwyn, an' it please you, fair mistress. A humble name, but good Saxon,—which, I take it, Nelwyn is not," interrupted Nicholas.

"Master Alwyn, forgive me; but can I forgive thee so readily for thy espial of my handiwork, without license or leave?"

"Yours, comely mistress!" exclaimed Nicholas, opening his eyes, and unheeding the gay rebuke—"why, this is a master-hand. My Lord Scales—nay, the Earl of Worcester himself—hath scarce a finer in all his amassment."

"Well, I forgive thy fault for thy flattery; and I pray thee, in my father's name, to stay and sup with thy friend." Nicholas bowed low,

and still riveted his eyes on the book with such open admiration, that Marmaduke thought it right to excuse his abstraction; but there was something in that admiration which raised the spirits of Sibyll, which gave her hope when hope was well-nigh gone; and she became so vivacious, so debonair, so charming, in the flow of a gayety natural to her, and very uncommon with English maidens, but which she took partly, perhaps, from her French blood, and partly from the example of girls and maidens of French extraction in Margaret's court, that Nicholas Alwyn thought he had never seen any one so irresistible. Madge had now served the evening meal, put in her head to announce it, and Sibyll withdrew to summon her father.

"I trust he will not tarry too long, for I am sharp set!" muttered Marmaduke. "What thinkest thou of the damozel?" "Marry," answered Alwyn, thoughtfully, "I pity and marvel at her. There is eno' in her to furnish forth twenty court beauties. But what good can so much wit and cunning do to an honest maiden?"

"That is exactly my own thought," said Marmaduke; and both the young men sunk into silence, till Sibyll re-entered with her father.

To the surprise of Marmaduke, Nicholas Alwyn, whose less gallant manner he was inclined to ridicule, soon contrived to rouse their host from his lethargy, and to absorb all the notice of Sibyll; and the surprise was increased, when he saw that his friend appeared not unfamiliar with those abstruse and mystical sciences in which Adam was engaged.

"What!" said Adam, "you know, then, my deft and worthy friend Master Caxton! He hath seen notable things abroad—"

"Which, he more than hints," said Nicholas, "will lower the value of those manuscripts this fair damozel has so couthly enriched; and that he hopes, ere long, to show the Englishers how to make fifty, a hundred,—nay even five hundred exemplars of the choicest book, in a much shorter time than a scribe would take in writing out two or three score pages in a single copy."

"Verily," said Marmaduke, with a smile of compassion, "the poor man must be somewhat demented; for I opine that the value of such curiosities must be in their rarity; and who would care for a book, if five hundred others had precisely the same?—allowing always, good Nicholas, for thy friend's vaunting and over-crowning. Five hundred! By'r Lady, there would be scarcely five hundred fools in merry England to waste good nobles on spoilt rags, specially while bows and mail are so dear."

"Young gentleman," said Adam, rebukingly, "meseemeth that thou wrongest our age and country, to the which, if we have but peace and freedom, I trust the birth of great discoveries is ordained. Certes,

Master Alwyn," he added, turning to the goldsmith, "this achievement maybe readily performed, and hath existed, I heard an ingenious Fleming say years ago, for many ages amongst a strange people [Query, the Chinese?] known to the Venetians! But dost thou think there is much appetite among those who govern the State to lend encouragement to such matters?"

"My master serves my Lord Hastings, the king's chamberlain, and my lord has often been pleased to converse with me, so that I venture to say, from my knowledge of his affection to all excellent craft and lore, that whatever will tend to make men wiser will have his countenance and favour with the king."

"That is it, that is it!" exclaimed Adam, rubbing his hands. "My invention shall not die!"

"And that invention—"

"Is one that will multiply exemplars of books without hands; works of craft without 'prentice or journeyman; will move wagons and litters without horses; will direct ships without sails; will—But, alack! it is not yet complete, and, for want of means, it never may be."

Sibyll still kept her animated countenance fixed on Alwyn, whose intelligence she had already detected, and was charmed with the profound attention with which he listened. But her eye glancing from his sharp features to the handsome, honest face of the Nevile, the contrast was so forcible, that she could not restrain her laughter, though, the moment after, a keen pang shot through her heart. The worthy Marmaduke had been in the act of conveying his cup to his lips; the cup stood arrested midway, his jaws dropped, his eyes opened to their widest extent, an expression of the most evident consternation and dismay spoke in every feature; and when he heard the merry laugh of Sibyll, he pushed his stool from her as far as he well could, and surveyed her with a look of mingled fear and pity.

"Alas! thou art sure my poor father is a wizard now?"

"Pardie!" answered the Nevile. "Hath he not said so? Hath he not spoken of wagons without horses, ships without sails? And is not all this what every dissour and jongleur tells us of in his stories of Merlin? Gentle maiden," he added earnestly, drawing nearer to her, and whispering in a voice of much simple pathos, "thou art young, and I owe thee much. Take care of thyself. Such wonders and derring-do are too solemn for laughter."

"Ah," answered Sibyll, rising, "I fear they are. How can I expect the people to be wiser than thou, or their hard natures kinder in their judgment than thy kind heart?" Her low and melancholy voice went to the heart thus appealed to. Marmaduke also rose, and followed her

into the parlour, or withdrawing-closet, while Adam and the goldsmith continued to converse (though Alwyn's eye followed the young hostess), the former appearing perfectly unconscious of the secession of his other listeners. But Alwyn's attention occasionally wandered, and he soon contrived to draw his host into the parlour.

When Nicholas rose, at last, to depart, he beckoned Sibyll aside. "Fair mistress," said he, with some awkward hesitation, "forgive a plain, blunt tongue; but ye of the better birth are not always above aid, even from such as I am. If you would sell these blazoned manuscripts, I can not only obtain you a noble purchaser in my Lord Scales, or in my Lord Hastings, an equally ripe scholar, but it may be the means of my procuring a suitable patron for your father; and, in these times, the scholar must creep under the knight's manteline."

"Master Alwyn," said Sibyll, suppressing her tears, "it was for my father's sake that these labours were wrought. We are poor and friendless. Take the manuscripts, and sell them as thou wilt, and God and Saint Mary requite thee!"

"Your father is a great man," said Alwyn, after a pause.

"But were he to walk the streets, they would stone him," replied Sibyll, with a quiet bitterness.

Here the Nevile, carefully shunning the magician, who, in the nervous excitement produced by the conversation of a mind less uncongenial than he had encountered for many years, seemed about to address him—here, I say, the Nevile chimed in, "Hast thou no weapon but thy bludgeon? Dear foster-brother, I fear for thy safety."

"Nay, robbers rarely attack us mechanical folk; and I know my way better than thou. I shall find a boat near York House; so pleasant night and quick cure to thee, honoured foster-brother. I will send the tailor and other craftsmen to-morrow."

"And at the same time," whispered Marmaduke, accompanying his friend to the door, "send me a breviary, just to patter an ave or so. This gray-haired carle puts my heart in a tremble. Moreover, buy me a gittern—a brave one—for the damozel. She is too proud to take money, and, 'fore Heaven, I have small doubts the old wizard could turn my hose into nobles an' he had a mind for such gear. Wagons without horses, ships without sails, quotha!"

As soon as Alwyn had departed, Madge appeared with the final refreshment, called "the Wines," consisting of spiced hippocras and confections, of the former of which the Nevile partook in solemn silence.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE IS A ROD FOR THE BACK OF EVERY FOOL WHO WOULD BE WISER THAN HIS GENERATION.

The next morning, when Marmaduke descended to the hall, Madge, accosting him on the threshold, informed him that Mistress Sibyll was unwell, and kept her chamber, and that Master Warner was never visible much before noon. He was, therefore, prayed to take his meal alone. "Alone" was a word peculiarly unwelcome to Marmaduke Nevile, who was an animal thoroughly social and gregarious. He managed, therefore, to detain the old servant, who, besides the liking a skilful leech naturally takes to a thriving patient, had enough of her sex about her to be pleased with a comely face and a frank, good-humoured voice. Moreover, Marmaduke, wishing to satisfy his curiosity, turned the conversation upon Warner and Sibyll, a theme upon which the old woman was well disposed to be garrulous. He soon learned the poverty of the mansion and the sacrifice of the gittern; and his generosity and compassion were busily engaged in devising some means to requite the hospitality he had received, without wounding the pride of his host, when the arrival of his mails, together with the visits of the tailor and mercer, sent to him by Alwyn, diverted his thoughts into a new channel.

Between the comparative merits of gowns and surcoats, broad-toed shoes and pointed, some time was disposed of with much cheerfulness and edification; but when his visitors had retired, the benevolent mind of the young guest again recurred to the penury of his host. Placing his marks before him on the table in the little withdrawing parlour, he began counting them over, and putting aside the sum he meditated devoting to Warner's relief. "But how," he muttered, "how to get him to take the gold. I know, by myself, what a gentleman and a knight's son must feel at the proffer of alms—pardie! I would as lief Alwyn had struck me as offered me his gipsire,—the ill-mannered, affectionate fellow! I must think—I must think—"

And while still thinking, the door softly opened, and Warner himself, in a high state of abstraction and revery, stalked noiselessly into the room, on his way to the garden, in which, when musing over some new spring for his invention, he was wont to peripatize. The sight of the gold on the table struck full on the philosopher's eyes, and waked him at once from his revery. That gold—oh, what precious instruments, what learned manuscripts it could purchase! That gold, it was the breath of life to his model! He walked deliberately up to the table, and laid his hand upon one of the little heaps. Marmaduke drew back his stool, and stared at him with open mouth.

"Young man, what wantest thou with all this gold?" said Adam, in a petulant, reproachful tone. "Put it up! put it up! Never let the poor see gold; it tempts them, sir,—it tempts them." And so saying, the student abruptly turned away his eyes, and moved towards the garden. Marmaduke rose and put himself in Adam's way. "Honoured sir," said the young man, "you say justly what want I with all this gold? The only gold a young man should covet is eno' to suffice for the knight's spurs to his heels. If, without offence, you would—that is—ahem!—I mean,—Gramercy! I shall never say it, but I believe my father owed your father four marks, and he bade me repay them. Here, sir!" He held out the glittering coins; the philosopher's hand closed on them as the fish's maw closes on the bait. Adam burst into a laugh, that sounded strangely weird and unearthly upon Marmaduke's startled ear.

"All this for me!" he exclaimed. "For me! No, no, no! for me, for IT—I take it—I take it, sir! I will pay it back with large usury. Come to me this day year, when this world will be a new world, and Adam Warner will be—ha! ha! Kind Heaven, I thank thee!" Suddenly turning away, the philosopher strode through the hall, opened the front door, and escaped into the street.

"By'r Lady," said Marmaduke, slowly recovering his surprise, "I need not have been so much at a loss; the old gentleman takes to my gold as kindly as if it were mother's milk. 'Fore Heaven, mine host's laugh is a ghastly thing!" So soliloquizing, he prudently put up the rest of his money, and locked his mails.

As time went on, the young man became exceedingly weary of his own company. Sibyll still withheld her appearance; the gloom of the old hall, the uncultivated sadness of the lonely garden, preyed upon his spirits. At length, impatient to get a view of the world without, he mounted a high stool in the hall, and so contrived to enjoy the prospect which the unglazed wicker lattice, deep set in the wall, afforded. But the scene without was little more animated than that within,—all was so deserted in the neighbourhood,—the shops mean and scattered, the thoroughfare almost desolate. At last he heard a shout, or rather hoot, at a distance; and, turning his attention whence it proceeded, he beheld a figure emerge from an alley opposite the casement, with a sack under one arm, and several books heaped under the other. At his heels followed a train of ragged boys, shouting and hallooing, "The wizard! the wizard!—Ah! Bah! The old devil's kin!" At this cry the dull neighbourhood seemed suddenly to burst forth into life. From the casements and thresholds of every house curious faces emerged, and many voices of men and women joined, in deeper bass, with the shrill tenor of the choral urchins, "The wizard! the wizard! out at daylight!" The person thus stigmatized, as he approached the house, turned his face with an expression of wistful perplexity from side to side. His lips moved convulsively, and his face was very pale, but he spoke not. And now, the children, seeing

him near his refuge, became more outrageous. They placed themselves menacingly before him, they pulled his robe, they even struck at him; and one, bolder than the rest, jumped up, and plucked his beard. At this last insult, Adam Warner, for it was he, broke silence; but such was the sweetness of his disposition, that it was rather with pity than reproof in his voice, that he said,—

”Fie, little one! I fear me thine own age will have small honour if thou thus mockest mature years in me.”

This gentleness only served to increase the audacity of his persecutors, who now, momentarily augmenting, presented a formidable obstacle to further progress. Perceiving that he could not advance without offensive measures on his own part, the poor scholar halted; and looking at the crowd with mild dignity, he asked, ”What means this, my children? How have I injured you?”

”The wizard! the wizard!” was the only answer he received. Adam shrugged his shoulders, and strode on with so sudden a step, that one of the smaller children, a curly-headed laughing rogue, of about eight years old, was thrown down at his feet, and the rest gave way. But the poor man, seeing one of his foes thus fallen, instead of pursuing his victory, again paused, and forgetful of the precious burdens he carried, let drop the sack and books, and took up the child in his arms. On seeing their companion in the embrace of the wizard, a simultaneous cry of horror broke from the assemblage, ”He is going to curse poor Tim!”

”My child! my boy!” shrieked a woman, from one of the casements; ”let go my child!”

On his part, the boy kicked and shrieked lustily, as Adam, bending his noble face tenderly over him, said, ”Thou art not hurt, child. Poor boy! thinkest thou I would harm thee?” While he spoke a storm of missiles—mud, dirt, sticks, bricks, stones—from the enemy, that had now fallen back in the rear, burst upon him. A stone struck him on the shoulder. Then his face changed; an angry gleam shot from his deep, calm eyes; he put down the child, and, turning steadily to the grown people at the windows, said, ”Ye train your children ill;” picked up his sack and books, sighed, as he saw the latter stained by the mire, which he wiped with his long sleeve, and too proud to show fear, slowly made for his door. Fortunately Sibyll had heard the clamour, and was ready to admit her father, and close the door upon the rush which instantaneously followed his escape. The baffled rout set up a yell of wrath, and the boys were now joined by several foes more formidable from the adjacent houses; assured in their own minds that some terrible execration had been pronounced upon the limbs and body of Master Tim, who still continued bellowing and howling, probably from the excitement of finding himself raised to the dignity of a martyr, the pious neighbours poured forth, with oaths and curses,

and such weapons as they could seize in haste, to storm the wizard's fortress.

From his casement Marmaduke Nevile had espied all that had hitherto passed, and though indignant at the brutality of the persecutors, he had thought it by no means unnatural. "If men, gentlemen born, will read uncanny books, and resolve to be wizards, why, they must reap what they sow," was the logical reflection that passed through the mind of that ingenuous youth; but when he now perceived the arrival of more important allies, when stones began to fly through the wicker lattice, when threats of setting fire to the house and burning the sorcerer who muttered spells over innocent little boys were heard, seriously increasing in depth and loudness, Marmaduke felt his chivalry called forth, and with some difficulty opening the rusty wicket in the casement, he exclaimed: "Shame on you, my countrymen, for thus disturbing in broad day a peaceful habitation! Ye call mine host a wizard. Thus much say I on his behalf: I was robbed and wounded a few nights since in your neighbourhood, and in this house alone I found shelter and healing."

The unexpected sight of the fair young face of Marmaduke Nevile, and the healthful sound of his clear ringing voice, produced a momentary effect on the besiegers, when one of them, a sturdy baker, cried out, "Heed him not,—he is a goblin. Those devil-mongers can bake ye a dozen such every moment, as deftly as I can draw loaves from the oven!"

This speech turned the tide, and at that instant a savage-looking man, the father of the aggrieved boy, followed by his wife, gesticulating and weeping, ran from his house, waving a torch in his right hand, his arm bare to the shoulder; and the cry of "Fire the door!" was universal.

In fact, the danger now grew imminent: several of the party were already piling straw and fagots against the threshold, and Marmaduke began to think the only chance of life to his host and Sibyll was in flight by some back way, when he beheld a man, clad somewhat in the fashion of a country yeoman, a formidable knotted club in his hand, pushing his way, with Herculean shoulders, through the crowd; and stationing himself before the threshold and brandishing aloft his formidable weapon, he exclaimed, "What! In the devil's name, do you mean to get yourselves all hanged for riot? Do you think that King Edward is as soft a man as King Henry was, and that he will suffer any one but himself to set fire to people's houses in this way? I dare say you are all right enough in the main, but by the blood of Saint Thomas, I will brain the first man who advances a step,—by way of preserving the necks of the rest!"

"A Robin! a Robin!" cried several of the mob. "It is our good friend Robin. Harken to Robin. He is always right."

"Ay, that I am!" quoth the defender; "you know that well enough. If I had my way, the world should be turned upside down, but what the poor folk should get nearer to the sun! But what I say is this, never go against law, while the law is too strong. And it were a sad thing to see fifty fine fellows trussed up for burning an old wizard. So, be off with you, and let us, at least all that can afford it, make for Master Sancroft's hostelrie and talk soberly over our ale. For little, I trow, will ye work now your blood's up."

This address was received with a shout of approbation. The father of the injured child set his broad foot on his torch, the baker chucked up his white cap, the ragged boys yelled out, "A Robin! a Robin!" and in less than two minutes the place was as empty as it had been before the appearance of the scholar. Marmaduke, who, though so ignorant of books, was acute and penetrating in all matters of action, could not help admiring the address and dexterity of the club-bearer; and the danger being now over, withdrew from the casement, in search of the inmates of the house. Ascending the stairs, he found on the landing-place, near his room, and by the embrasure of a huge casement which jutted from the wall, Adam and his daughter. Adam was leaning against the wall, with his arms folded, and Sibyll, hanging upon him, was uttering the softest and most soothing words of comfort her tenderness could suggest.

"My child," said the old man, shaking his head sadly, "I shall never again have heart for these studies,—never! A king's anger I could brave, a priest's malice I could pity; but to find the very children, the young race for whose sake I have made thee and myself paupers, to find them thus—thus—" He stopped, for his voice failed him, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come and speak comfort to my father, Master Nevile," exclaimed Sibyll; "come and tell him that whoever is above the herd, whether knight or scholar, must learn to despise the hootings that follow Merit. Father, Father, they threw mud and stones at thy king as he passed through the streets of London. Thou art not the only one whom this base world misjudges."

"Worthy mine host!" said Marmaduke, thus appealed to, "Algates, it were not speaking truth to tell thee that I think a gentleman of birth and quality should walk the thoroughfares with a bundle of books under his arm; yet as for the raptril vulgar, the hildings and cullions who hiss one day what they applaud the next, I hold it the duty of every Christian and well-born man to regard them as the dirt on the crossings. Brave soldiers term it no disgrace to receive a blow from a base hind. An' it had been knights and gentles who had insulted thee, thou mightest have cause for shame. But a mob of lewd rascallions and squalling infants—bah! verily, it is mere matter for scorn and laughter."

These philosophical propositions and distinctions did not seem to have their due effect upon Adam. He smiled, however, gently upon his guest, and with a blush over his pale face, said, "I am rightly chastised, good young man; mean was I, methinks, and sordid to take from thee thy good gold. But thou knowest not what fever burns in the brain of a man who feels that, had he wealth, his knowledge could do great things,—such things!—I thought to repay thee well. Now the frenzy is gone, and I, who an hour ago esteemed myself a puissant sage, sink in mine own conceit to a miserable blinded fool. Child, I am very weak; I will lay me down and rest."

So saying, the poor philosopher went his way to his chamber, leaning on his daughter's arm.

In a few minutes Sibyll rejoined Marmaduke, who had returned to the hall, and informed him that her father had lain down a while to compose himself.

"It is a hard fate, sir," said the girl, with a faint smile,— "a hard fate, to be banned and accursed by the world, only because one has sought to be wiser than the world is."

"Douce maiden," returned the Nevile, "it is happy for thee that thy sex forbids thee to follow thy father's footsteps, or I should say his hard fate were thy fair warning."

Sibyll smiled faintly, and after a pause, said, with a deep blush,—

"You have been generous to my father; do not misjudge him. He would give his last groat to a starving beggar. But when his passion of scholar and inventor masters him, thou mightest think him worse than miser. It is an overnoble yearning that oftentimes makes him mean."

"Nay," answered Marmaduke, touched by the heavy sigh and swimming eyes with which the last words were spoken; "I have heard Nick Alwyn's uncle, who was a learned monk, declare that he could not constrain himself to pray to be delivered from temptation, seeing that he might thereby lose an occasion for filching some notable book! For the rest," he added, "you forget how much I owe to Master Warner's hospitality."

He took her hand with a frank and brotherly gallantry as he spoke; but the touch of that small, soft hand, freely and innocently resigned to him, sent a thrill to his heart—and again the face of Sibyll seemed to him wondrous fair.

There was a long silence, which Sibyll was the first to break. She turned the conversation once more upon Marmaduke's views in life. It had been easy for a deeper observer than he was to see that, under all

that young girl's simplicity and sweetness, there lurked something of dangerous ambition. She loved to recall the court-life her childhood had known, though her youth had resigned it with apparent cheerfulness. Like many who are poor and fallen, Sibyll built herself a sad consolation out of her pride; she never forgot that she was well-born. But Marmaduke, in what was ambition, saw but interest in himself, and his heart beat more quickly as he bent his eyes upon that downcast, thoughtful, earnest countenance.

After an hour thus passed, Sibyll left the guest, and remounted to her father's chamber. She found Adam pacing the narrow floor, and muttering to himself. He turned abruptly as she entered, and said, "Come hither, child; I took four marks from that young man, for I wanted books and instruments, and there are two left; see, take them back to him."

"My father, he will not receive them. Fear not, thou shalt repay him some day."

"Take them, I say, and if the young man says thee nay, why, buy thyself gauds and gear, or let us eat, and drink, and laugh. What else is life made for? Ha, ha! Laugh, child, laugh!"

There was something strangely pathetic in this outburst, this terrible mirth, born of profound dejection. Alas for this guileless, simple creature, who had clutched at gold with a huckster's eagerness! who, forgetting the wants of his own child, had employed it upon the service of an Abstract Thought, and whom the scorn of his kind now pierced through all the folds of his close-webbed philosophy and self forgetful genius. Awful is the duel between MAN and THE AGE in which he lives! For the gain of posterity, Adam Warner had martyred existence,—and the children pelted him as he passed the streets! Sibyll burst into tears.

"No, my father, no," she sobbed, pushing back the money into his hands. "Let us both starve rather than you should despond. God and man will bring you justice yet."

"Ah," said the baffled enthusiast, "my whole mind is one sore now! I feel as if I could love man no more. Go, and leave me. Go, I say!" and the poor student, usually so mild and gall-less, stamped his foot in impotent rage. Sibyll, weeping as if her heart would break, left him.

Then Adam Warner again paced to and fro restlessly, and again muttered to himself for several minutes. At last he approached his Model,—the model of a mighty and stupendous invention, the fruit of no chimerical and visionary science; a great Promethean THING, that, once matured, would divide the Old World from the New, enter into all operations of Labour, animate all the future affairs, colour all the practical

doctrines of active men. He paused before it, and addressed it as if it heard and understood him: "My hair was dark, and my tread was firm, when, one night, a THOUGHT passed into my soul,—a thought to make Matter the gigantic slave of Mind. Out of this thought, thou, not yet born after five-and-twenty years of travail, wert conceived. My coffers were then full, and my name was honoured; and the rich respected and the poor loved me. Art thou a devil, that has tempted me to ruin, or a god, that has lifted me above the earth? I am old before my time, my hair is blanched, my frame is bowed, my wealth is gone, my name is sullied. And all, dumb idol of Iron and the Element, all for thee! I had a wife whom I adored; she died,—I forgot her loss in the hope of thy life. I have a child still—God and our Lady forgive me! she is less dear to me than thou hast been. And now"—the old man ceased abruptly, and folding his arms, looked at the deaf iron sternly, as on a human foe. By his side was a huge hammer, employed in the toils of his forge; suddenly he seized and swung it aloft. One blow, and the labour of years was shattered into pieces! One blow!—But the heart failed him, and the hammer fell heavily to the ground.

"Ay!" he muttered, "true, true! if thou, who hast destroyed all else, wert destroyed too, what were left me? Is it a crime to murder Alan?—a greater crime to murder Thought, which is the life of all men! Come, I forgive thee!"

And all that day and all that night the Enthusiast laboured in his chamber, and the next day the remembrance of the hooting, the pelting, the mob, was gone,—clean gone from his breast. The Model began to move, life hovered over its wheels; and the Martyr of Science had forgotten the very world for which he, groaning and rejoicing, toiled!

CHAPTER VIII.

MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE MAKES LOVE, AND IS FRIGHTENED.

For two or three days Marmaduke and Sibyll were necessarily brought much together. Such familiarity of intercourse was peculiarly rare in that time, when, except perhaps in the dissolute court of Edward IV., the virgins of gentle birth mixed sparingly, and with great reserve, amongst those of opposite sex. Marmaduke, rapidly recovering from the effect of his wounds, and without other resource than Sibyll's society in the solitude of his confinement, was not proof against the temptation which one so young and so sweetly winning brought to his fancy or his senses. The poor Sibyll—she was no faultless paragon,—she was a rare and singular mixture of many opposite qualities in heart and in intellect! She was one moment infantine in simplicity and gay playfulness; the next a shade passed over her bright face, and

she uttered some sentence of that bitter and chilling wisdom, which the sense of persecution, the cruelty of the world, had already taught her. She was, indeed, at that age when the Child and the Woman are struggling against each other. Her character was not yet formed,—a little happiness would have ripened it at once into the richest bloom of goodness. But sorrow, that ever sharpens the intellect, might only serve to sour the heart. Her mind was so innately chaste and pure, that she knew not the nature of the admiration she excited; but the admiration pleased her as it pleases some young child; she was vain then, but it was an infant's vanity, not a woman's. And thus, from innocence itself, there was a fearlessness, a freedom, a something endearing and familiar in her manner, which might have turned a wiser head than Marmaduke Nevile's. And this the more, because, while liking her young guest, confiding in him, raised in her own esteem by his gallantry, enjoying that intercourse of youth with youth so unfamiliar to her, and surrendering herself the more to its charm from the joy that animated her spirits, in seeing that her father had forgotten his humiliation, and returned to his wonted labours,—she yet knew not for the handsome Nevile one sentiment that approached to love. Her mind was so superior to his own, that she felt almost as if older in years, and in their talk her rosy lips preached to him in grave advice.

On the landing, by Marmaduke's chamber, there was a large oriel casement jutting from the wall. It was only glazed at the upper part, and that most imperfectly, the lower part being closed at night or in inclement weather with rude shutters. The recess formed by this comfortless casement answered, therefore, the purpose of a balcony; it commanded a full view of the vicinity without, and gave to those who might be passing by the power also of indulging their own curiosity by a view of the interior.

Whenever he lost sight of Sibyll, and had grown weary of the peacock, this spot was Marmaduke's favourite haunt. It diverted him, poor youth, to look out of the window upon the livelier world beyond. The place, it is true, was ordinarily deserted, but still the spires and turrets of London were always discernible,—and they were something.

Accordingly, in this embrasure stood Marmaduke, when one morning, Sibyll, coming from her father's room, joined him.

"And what, Master Nevile," said Sibyll, with a malicious yet charming smile, "what claimed thy meditations? Some misgiving as to the trimming of thy tunic, or the length of thy shoon?"

"Nay," returned Marmaduke, gravely, "such thoughts, though not without their importance in the mind of a gentleman, who would not that his ignorance of court delicacies should commit him to the japes of his equals, were not at that moment uppermost. I was thinking—"

"Of those mastiffs, quarrelling for a bone. Avow it."

"By our Lady, I saw them not, but now I look, they are brave dogs. Ha! seest thou how gallantly each fronts the other, the hair bristling, the eyes fixed, the tail on end, the fangs glistening? Now the lesser one moves slowly round and round the bigger, who, mind you, Mistress Sibyll, is no dullard, but moves, too, quick as thought, not to be taken unawares. Ha! that is a brave spring! Heigh, dogs, Neigh! a good sight!—it makes the blood warm! The little one hath him by the throat!"

"Alack," said Sibyll, turning away her eyes, "can you find pleasure in seeing two poor brutes mangle each other for a bone?"

"By Saint Dunstan! doth it matter what may be the cause of quarrel, so long as dog or man bears himself bravely, with a due sense of honour and derring-do? See! the big one is up again. Ah, foul fall the butcher, who drives them away! Those seely mechanics know not the joyaunce of fair fighting to gentle and to hound. For a hound, mark you, hath nothing mechanical in his nature. He is a gentleman all over,—brave against equal and stranger, forbearing to the small and defenceless, true in poverty and need where he loveth, stern and ruthless where he hateth, and despising thieves, hildings, and the vulgar as much as e'er a gold spur in King Edward's court! Oh, certes, your best gentleman is the best hound!"

"You moralize to-day; and I know not how to gainsay you," returned Sibyll, as the dogs, reluctantly beaten off, retired each from each, snarling and reluctant, while a small black cur, that had hitherto sat unobserved at the door of a small hostelrie, now coolly approached and dragged off the bone of contention. "But what sayst thou now? See! see! the patient mongrel carries off the bone from the gentleman-hounds. Is that the way of the world?"

"Pardie! it is a naught world, if so, and much changed from the time of our fathers, the Normans. But these Saxons are getting uppermost again, and the yard measure, I fear me, is more potent in these holiday times than the mace or the battle-axe." The Nevile paused, sighed, and changed the subject: "This house of thine must have been a stately pile in its day. I see but one side of the quadrangle is left, though it be easy to trace where the other three have stood."

"And you may see their stones and their fittings in the butcher's and baker's stalls over the way," replied Sibyll.

"Ay!" said the Nevile, "the parings of the gentry begin to be the wealth of the varlets."

"Little ought we to pine at that," returned Sibyll, "if the varlets were but gentle with our poverty; but they loathe the humbled fortunes

on which they rise, and while slaves to the rich, are tyrants to the poor.”

This was said so sadly, that the Nevile felt his eyes overflow; and the humble dress of the girl, the melancholy ridges which evinced the site of a noble house, now shrunk into a dismal ruin, the remembrance of the pastime-ground, the insults of the crowd, and the broken gittern, all conspired to move his compassion, and to give force to yet more tender emotions.

”Ah,” he said suddenly, and with a quick faint blush over his handsome and manly countenance,—”ah, fair maid—fair Sibyll—God grant that I may win something of gold and fortune amidst yonder towers, on which the sun shines so cheerly. God grant it, not for my sake,—not for mine; but that I may have something besides a true heart and a stainless name to lay at thy feet. Oh, Sibyll! By this hand, by my father’s soul, I love thee, Sibyll! Have I not said it before? Well, hear me now,—I love thee!”

As he spoke, he clasped her hand in his own, and she suffered it for one instant to rest in his. Then withdrawing it, and meeting his enamoured eyes with a strange sadness in her own darker, deeper, and more intelligent orbs, she said,—

”I thank thee,—thank thee for the honour of such kind thoughts; and frankly I answer, as thou hast frankly spoken. It was sweet to me, who have known little in life not hard and bitter,—sweet to wish I had a brother like thee, and, as a brother, I can love and pray for thee. But ask not more, Marmaduke. I have aims in life which forbid all other love.”

”Art thou too aspiring for one who has his spurs to win?”

”Not so; but listen. My mother’s lessons and my own heart have made my poor father the first end and object of all things on earth to me. I live to protect him, work for him, honour him; and for the rest, I have thoughts thou canst not know, an ambition thou canst not feel. Nay,” she added, with that delightful smile which chased away the graver thought which had before saddened her aspect, ”what would thy sober friend Master Alwyn say to thee, if he heard thou hadst courted the wizard’s daughter?”

”By my faith,” exclaimed Marmaduke, ”thou art a very April,—smiles and clouds in a breath! If what thou despisest in me be my want of bookcraft, and such like, by my halidame I will turn scholar for thy sake; and—”

Here, as he had again taken Sibyll’s hand, with the passionate ardour of his bold nature, not to be lightly daunted by a maiden’s first ”No,” a sudden shrill, wild burst of laughter, accompanied with a

gusty fit of unmelodious music from the street below, made both maiden and youth start, and turn their eyes; there, weaving their immodest dance, tawdry in their tinsel attire, their naked arms glancing above their heads, as they waved on high their instruments, went the timbrel-girls.

"Ha, ha!" cried their leader, "see the gallant and the witch-leman! The glamour has done its work! Foul is fair! foul is fair! and the devil will have his own!"

But these creatures, whose bold license the ancient chronicler records, were rarely seen alone. They haunted parties of pomp and pleasure; they linked together the extremes of life,—the grotesque Chorus that introduced the terrible truth of foul vice and abandoned wretchedness in the midst of the world's holiday and pageant. So now, as they wheeled into the silent, squalid street, they heralded a goodly company of dames and cavaliers on horseback, who were passing through the neighbouring plains into the park of Marybone to enjoy the sport of falconry. The splendid dresses of this procession, and the grave and measured dignity with which it swept along, contrasted forcibly with the wild movements and disorderly mirth of the timbrel-players. These last darted round and round the riders, holding out their instruments for largess, and retorting, with laugh and gibe, the disdainful look or sharp rebuke with which their salutations were mostly received.

Suddenly, as the company, two by two, paced up the street, Sibyll uttered a faint exclamation, and strove to snatch her hand from the Nevile's grasp. Her eye rested upon one of the horsemen, who rode last, and who seemed in earnest conversation with a dame, who, though scarcely in her first youth, excelled all her fair companions in beauty of face and grace of horsemanship, as well as in the costly equipments of the white barb that caracoled beneath her easy hand. At the same moment the horseman looked up and gazed steadily at Sibyll, whose countenance grew pale, and flushed, in a breath. His eye then glanced rapidly at Marmaduke; a half-smile passed his pale, firm lips; he slightly raised the plumed cap from his brow, inclined gravely to Sibyll, and, turning once more to his companion, appeared to answer some question she addressed to him as to the object of his salutation, for her look, which was proud, keen, and lofty, was raised to Sibyll, and then dropped somewhat disdainfully, as she listened to the words addressed her by the cavalier.

The lynx eyes of the tymbesteres had seen the recognition; and their leader, laying her bold hand on the embossed bridle of the horseman, exclaimed, in a voice shrill and loud enough to be heard in the balcony above, "Largess! noble lord, largess! for the sake of the lady thou lovest best!"

The fair equestrian turned away her head at these words; the nobleman

watched her a moment, and dropped some coins into the timbrel.

"Ha, ha!" cried the tymbestere, pointing her long arm to Sibyll, and springing towards the balcony,—

"The cushat would mate
Above her state,
And she flutters her wings round the falcon's beak;
But death to the dove
Is the falcon's love!
Oh, sharp is the kiss of the falcon's beak!"

Before this rude song was ended, Sibyll had vanished from the place; the cavalcade had disappeared. The timbrel-players, without deigning to notice Marmaduke, darted elsewhere to ply their discordant trade, and the Nevile, crossing himself devoutly, muttered, "Jesu defend us! Those she Will-o'-the-wisps are eno' to scare all the blood out of one's body. What—a murrain on them!—do they portend, flitting round and round, and skirting off, as if the devil's broomstick was behind them! By the Mass! they have frighted away the damozel, and I am not sorry for it. They have left me small heart for the part of Sir Launval."

His meditations were broken off by the sudden sight of Nicholas Alwyn, mounted on a small palfrey, and followed by a sturdy groom on horseback, leading a steed handsomely caparisoned. In another moment, Marmaduke had descended, opened the door, and drawn Alwyn into the hall.

CHAPTER IX.

MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE LEAVES THE WIZARD'S HOUSE FOR THE GREAT WORLD.

"Right glad am I," said Nicholas, "to see you so stout and hearty, for I am the bearer of good news. Though I have been away, I have not forgotten you; and it so chanced that I went yesterday to attend my Lord of Warwick with some nowches [buckles and other ornaments] and knackeries, that he takes out as gifts and exemplars of English work. They were indifferently well wrought, specially a chevesail, of which the—"

"Spare me the fashion of thy mechanicals, and come to the point," interrupted Marmaduke, impatiently.

"Pardon me, Master Nevile. I interrupt thee not when thou talkest of

bassinet and hauberks,—every cobbler to his last. But, as thou sayest, to the point: the stout earl, while scanning my workmanship, for in much the chevesail was mine, was pleased to speak graciously of my skill with the bow, of which he had heard; and he then turned to thyself, of whom my Lord Montagu had already made disparaging mention. When I told the earl somewhat more about thy qualities and disposings, and when I spoke of thy desire to serve him, and the letter of which thou art the bearer, his black brows smoothed mighty graciously, and he bade me tell thee to come to him this afternoon, and he would judge of thee with his own eyes and ears. Wherefore I have ordered the craftsman to have all thy gauds and gear ready at thine hostlerie, and I have engaged thee henchmen and horses for thy fitting appearance. Be quick: time and the great wait for no man. So take whatever thou needest for present want from thy mails, and I will send a porter for the rest ere sunset.”

”But the gittern for the damozel?”

”I have provided that for thee, as is meet.” And Nicholas, stepping back, eased the groom of a case which contained a gittern, whose workmanship and ornaments delighted the Nevile.

”It is of my lord the young Duke of Gloucester’s own musical-vendor; and the duke, though a lad yet, is a notable judge of all appertaining to the gentle craft. [For Richard III.’s love of music, and patronage of musicians and minstrels, see the discriminating character of that prince in Sharon Turner’s ”History of England,” vol. IV. p. 66.] So despatch, and away!”

Marmaduke retired to his chamber, and Nicholas, after a moment spent in silent thought, searched the room for the hand-bell, which then made the mode of communication between the master and domestics. Not finding this necessary luxury, he contrived at last to make Madge hear his voice from her subterranean retreat; and on her arrival, sent her in quest of Sibyll.

The answer he received was, that Mistress Sibyll was ill, and unable to see him. Alwyn looked disconcerted at this intelligence, but, drawing from his girdle a small gipsire, richly broidered, he prayed Madge to deliver it to her young mistress, and inform her that it was the fruit of the commission with which she had honoured him.

”It is passing strange,” said he, pacing the hall alone,—”passing strange, that the poor child should have taken such hold on me. After all, she would be a bad wife for a plain man like me. Tush! that is the trader’s thought all over. Have I brought no fresher feeling out of my fair village-green? Would it not be sweet to work for her, and rise in life, with her by my side? And these girls of the city, so prim and so brainless!—as well marry a painted puppet. Sibyll! Am I dement? Stark wode? What have I to do with girls and marriage?”

Humph! I marvel what Marmaduke still thinks of her,—and she of him.”

While Alwyn thus soliloquized, the Nevile having hastily arranged his dress, and laden himself with the moneys his mails contained, summoned old Madge to receive his largess, and to conduct him to Warner’s chamber, in order to proffer his farewell.

With somewhat of a timid step he followed the old woman (who kept muttering thanks and benedicites as she eyed the coin in her palm) up the ragged stairs, and for the first time knocked at the door of the student’s sanctuary. No answer came. ”Eh, sir! you must enter,” said Madge; ”an’ you fired a bombard under his ear he would not heed you.” So, suiting the action to the word, she threw open the door, and closed it behind him, as Marmaduke entered.

The room was filled with smoke, through which mirky atmosphere the clear red light of the burning charcoal peered out steadily like a Cyclop’s eye. A small, but heaving, regular, labouring, continuous sound, as of a fairy hammer, smote the young man’s ear. But as his gaze, accustoming itself to the atmosphere, searched around, he could not perceive what was its cause. Adam Warner was standing in the middle of the room, his arms folded, and contemplating something at a little distance, which Marmaduke could not accurately distinguish. The youth took courage, and approached. ”Honoured mine host,” said he, ”I thank thee for hospitality and kindness, I crave pardon for disturbing thee in thy incanta—ehem!—thy—thy studies, and I come to bid thee farewell.”

Adam turned round with a puzzled, absent air, as if scarcely recognizing his guest; at length, as his recollection slowly came back to him, he smiled graciously, and said: ”Good youth, thou art richly welcome to what little it was in my power to do for thee. Peradventure a time may come when they who seek the roof of Adam Warner may find less homely cheer, a less rugged habitation,—for look you!” he exclaimed suddenly, with a burst of irrepressible enthusiasm —and laying his hand on Nevile’s arm, as, through all the smoke and grime that obscured his face, flashed the ardent soul of the triumphant Inventor,—”look you! since you have been in this house, one of my great objects is well-nigh matured,—achieved. Come hither,” and he dragged the wondering Marmaduke to his model, or Eureka, as Adam had fondly named his contrivance. The Nevile then perceived that it was from the interior of this machine that the sound which had startled him arose; to his eye the **THING** was uncouth and hideous; from the jaws of an iron serpent, that, wreathing round it, rose on high with erect crest, gushed a rapid volume of black smoke, and a damp spray fell around. A column of iron in the centre kept in perpetual and regular motion, rising and sinking successively, as the whole mechanism within seemed alive with noise and action.

”The Syracusan asked an inch of earth, beyond the earth, to move the

earth," said Adam; "I stand in the world, and lo! with this engine the world shall one day be moved."

"Holy Mother!" faltered Marmaduke; "I pray thee, dread sir, to ponder well ere thou attemptest any such sports with the habitation in which every woman's son is so concerned. Bethink thee, that if in moving the world thou shouldst make any mistake, it would—"

"Now stand there and attend," interrupted Adam, who had not heard one word of this judicious exhortation.

"Pardon me, terrible sir!" exclaimed Marmaduke, in great trepidation, and retreating rapidly to the door; "but I have heard that the fiends are mighty malignant to all lookers-on not initiated."

While he spoke, fast gushed the smoke, heavily heaved the fairy hammers, up and down, down and up, sank or rose the column, with its sullen sound. The young man's heart sank to the soles of his feet.

"Indeed and in truth," he stammered out, "I am but a dolt in these matters; I wish thee all success compatible with the weal of a Christian, and bid thee, in sad humility, good day:" and he added, in a whisper—"the Lord's forgiveness! Amen!"

Marmaduke then fairly rushed through the open door, and hurried out of the chamber as fast as possible.

He breathed more freely as he descended the stairs. "Before I would call that gray carle my father, or his child my wife, may I feel all the hammers of the elves and sprites he keeps tortured within that ugly little prison-house playing a death's march on my body! Holy Saint Dunstan, the timbrel-girls came in time! They say these wizards always have fair daughters, and their love can be no blessing!"

As he thus muttered, the door of Sibyll's chamber opened, and she stood before him at the threshold. Her countenance was very pale, and bore evidence of weeping. There was a silence on both sides, which the girl was the first to break.

"So, Madge tells me thou art about to leave us?"

"Yes, gentle maiden! I—I—that is, my Lord of Warwick has summoned me. I wish and pray for all blessings on thee! and—and—if ever it be mine to serve or aid thee, it will be—that is—verily, my tongue falters, but my heart—that is—fare thee well, maiden! Would thou hadst a less wise father; and so may the saints (Saint Anthony especially, whom the Evil One was parlous afraid of) guard and keep thee!"

With this strange and incoherent address, Marmaduke left the maiden

standing by the threshold of her miserable chamber. Hurrying into the hall, he summoned Alwyn from his meditations, and, giving the gittern to Madge, with an injunction to render it to her mistress, with his greeting and service, he vaulted lightly on his steed; the steady and more sober Alwyn mounted his palfrey with slow care and due caution. As the air of spring waved the fair locks of the young cavalier, as the good horse caracoled under his lithesome weight, his natural temper of mind, hardy, healthful, joyous, and world-awake, returned to him. The image of Sibyll and her strange father fled from his thoughts like sickly dreams.