

The success was that of man, the discomfiture that of woman. Woe to the man who precedes his age, but never yet has an age been in which genius and ambition are safe to woman!

The father and the child turned into their house; the day was declining; Adam mounted to his studious chamber. Sibyll sought the solitary servant.

"What tidings, oh, what tidings! The war, you say, is over; the great earl, his sweet daughter, safe upon the seas, but Hastings, oh Hastings! what of him?"

"My bonnibell, my lady-bird, I have none but good tales to tell thee. I saw and spoke with a soldier who served under Lord Hastings himself; he is unscathed, he is in London. But they say that one of his bands is quartered in the suburb, and that there is a report of a rising in Hertfordshire."

"When will peace come to England and to me!" sighed Sibyll.

CHAPTER IV

THIS WORLD'S JUSTICE, AND THE WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS

The night had now commenced, and Sibyll was still listening,—or, perhaps, listening not—to the soothing babble of the venerable servant. They were both seated in the little room that adjoined the hall, and their only light came through the door opening on the garden—a grey, indistinct twilight, relieved by the few earliest stars. The peacock, his head under his wing, roosted on the balustrade, and the song of the night-gale, from amidst one of the neighbouring copses,

which studded the ground towards the chase of Marybone, came soft and distant on the serene air. The balm and freshness of spring were felt in the dews, in the skies, in the sweet breath of young herb and leaf;—through the calm of ever-watchful nature, it seemed as if you might mark, distinct and visible, minute after minute, the blessed growth of April into May.

Suddenly, Madge uttered a cry of alarm, and pointed towards the opposite wall. Sibyll, startled from her reverie, looked up, and saw something dusk and dwarf-life perched upon the crumbling eminence. Presently this apparition leaped lightly into the garden, and the alarm of the women was lessened on seeing a young boy creep stealthily over the grass, and approach the open door.

"Hey, child!" said Madge, rising. "What wantest thou?"

"Hist, gammer, hist! Ah! the young mistress? That's well. Hist! I say again." The boy entered the room. "I'm in time to save you. In half an hour your house will be broken into, perhaps burnt. The boys are clapping their hands now at the thoughts of the bonfire. Father and all the neighbours are getting ready. Hark! hark! No, it is only the wind! The tymbesteres are to give note. When you hear their bells tinkle, the mob will meet. Run for your lives, you and the old man, and don't ever say it was poor Tim who told you this, for father would beat me to death. Ye can still get through the garden into the fields. Quick!"

"I will go to the master," exclaimed Madge, hurrying from the room.

The child caught Sibyll's cold hand through the dark. "And I say, mistress, if his worship is a wiz-

ard, don't let him punish father and mother, or poor Tim, or his little sister; though Tim was once naughty, and hooted Master Warner. Many, many, many a time and oft have I seen that kind, mild face in my sleep, just as when it bent over me,—while I kicked and screamed—and the poor gentleman said, 'Think-est thou I would harm thee?' But he'll forgive me now, will he not? And when I turned the seething water over myself, and they said it was all along of the wizard, my heart pained more than the arm. But they whip me, and groan out that the devil is in me, if I don't say that the kettle upset of itself! Oh, those tymbesteres! Mistress, did you ever see them? They fright me. If you could hear how they set on all the neighbours! And their laugh—it makes the hair stand on end! But you will get away, and thank Tim too? Oh, I shall laugh then, when they find the old house empty!"

"May our dear Lord bless thee—bless thee, child," sobbed Sibyll, clasping the boy in her arms, and kissing him, while her tears bathed his cheeks.

A light gleamed on the threshold—Madge, holding a candle, appeared with Warner, his hat and cloak thrown on in haste. "What is this?" said the poor scholar. "Can it be true? Is mankind so cruel? What have I done, woe is me! what have I done to deserve this?"

"Come, dear father, quick," said Sibyll, drying her tears, and wakened, by the presence of the old man, into energy and courage. "But put thy hand on this boy's head, and bless him; for it is he who has, haply, saved us."

The boy trembled a moment as the long-bearded face turned towards him, but when he caught and recog-

nised those meek, sweet eyes, his superstition vanished, and it was but a holy and grateful awe that thrilled his young blood, as the old man placed both withered hands over his yellow hair, and murmured—

"God shield thy youth—God make thy manhood worthy—God give thee children in thine old age with hearts like thine!"

Scarcely had the prayer ceased when the clash of timbrels, with their jingling bells, was heard in the street. Once, twice, again, and a fierce yell closed in chorus—caught up and echoed from corner to corner, from house to house.

"Run—run!" cried the boy, turning white with terror.

"But the Eureka—my hope—my mind's child!" exclaimed Adam, suddenly, and halting at the door.

"Eh—eh!" said Madge, pushing him forward. "It is too heavy to move; thou couldst not lift it. Think of thine own flesh and blood—of thy daughter—of her dead mother. Save her life, if thou carest not for thine own!"

"Go, Sibyll, go—and thou, Madge—I will stay. What matters my life, it is but the servant of a thought! Perish master—perish slave!"

"Father, unless you come with me, I stir not. Fly or perish. Your fate is mine! Another minute! Oh, heaven of mercy, that roar again! We are both lost!"

"Go, sir, go; they care not for your iron—iron cannot feel. They will not touch *that!* Have not your daughter's life upon your soul!"

"Sibyll—Sibyll, forgive me! Come!" said Warner, conscience-stricken at the appeal.

Madge and the boy ran forwards—the old woman unbarred the garden-gate—Sibyll and her father went

forth—the fields stretched before them calm and solitary—the boy leaped up, kissed Sibyll's pale cheek, and then bounded across the grass, and vanished.

"Loiter not, Madge. Come!" cried Sibyll.

"Nay," said the old woman, shrinking back; "they bear no grudge to me; I am too old to do aught but burthen ye. I will stay, and perchance save the house and the chattels, and poor master's deft contrivance. Whist! thou knowest his heart would break if none were by to guard it."

With that the faithful servant thrust the broad pieces that yet remained of the king's gift into the gipsire Sibyll wore at her girdle, and then closed and rebarred the door before they could detain her.

"It is base to leave her," said the scholar-gentleman.

The noble Sibyll could not refute her father. Afar they heard the trampling of feet: suddenly, a dark red light shot up into the blue air, a light from the flame of many torches.

"The wizard—the wizard! Death to the wizard, who would starve the poor!" yelled forth, and was echoed by a stern hurrah.

Adam stood motionless, Sibyll by his side.

"The wizard and *his daughter!*" shrieked a sharp single voice, the voice of Graul the tymbestere.

Adam turned. "Fly, my child—they now threaten *thee*. Come—come—come;" and, taking her by the hand, he hurried her across the fields, skirting the hedge, their shadows dodging, irregular, and quaint, on the starlit sward. The father had lost all thought—all care but for the daughter's life. They paused at last, out of breath and exhausted: the sounds at the distance were lulled and hushed. They looked

towards the direction of the home they had abandoned, expecting to see the flames destined to consume it reddening the sky; but all was dark—or, rather, no light save the holy stars and the rising moon offended the majestic heaven.

"They cannot harm the poor old woman; she hath no lore. On her grey hairs has fallen not the curse of man's hate!" said Warner.

"Right, father; when they found us flown, doubtless the cruel ones dispersed. But they may search yet for thee. Lean on me, I am strong and young. Another effort, and we gain the safe coverts of the Chase."

While yet the last word hung on her lips, they saw, on the path they had left, the burst of torch-light, and heard the mob hounding on their track. But the thick copses, with their pale green just budding into life, were at hand. On they fled: the deer started from amidst the entangled fern, but stood and gazed at them without fear; the playful hares in the green alleys ceased not their nightly sports at the harmless footsteps; and when at last, in the dense thicket, they sank down on the mossy roots of a giant oak, the nightingales overhead chanted as if in melancholy welcome. They were saved!

But in their home, fierce fires glared amidst the tossing torch-light; the crowd, baffled by the strength of the door, scaled the wall, broke through the lattice-work of the hall window, and streaming through room after room, roared forth—"Death to the wizard!" Amidst the sordid dresses of the men, the soiled and faded tinsel of the tymbesteres gleamed and sparkled. It was a scene the she-fiends revelled in—dear are outrage and malice, and the excitement of turbulent pas-

sions, and the savage voices of frantic men, and the thirst of blood to those everlasting furies of a mob—under whatever name we know them, in whatever time they taint with their presence—women in whom womanhood is blasted!

Door after door was burst open with cries of disappointed rage; at last they ascended the turret-stairs—they found a small door barred and locked. Tim's father, a huge axe in his brawny arm, shivered the panels; the crowd rushed in—and there, seated amongst a strange and motley litter, they found the devoted Madge. The poor old woman had collected into this place, as the stronghold of the mansion, whatever portable articles seemed to her most precious, either from value or association. Sibyll's gittern (Marmaduke's gift) lay amidst a lumber of tools and implements—a faded robe of her dead mother's, treasured by Madge and Sibyll both, as a relic of holy love—a few platters and cups of pewter, the pride of old Madge's heart to keep bright and clean, odds and ends of old hangings, a battered silver brooch (a love-gift to Madge herself when she was young)—these, and suchlike scraps of finery, hoards inestimable to the household memory and affection, lay confusedly heaped around the huge grim model, before which, mute and tranquil, sat the brave old woman.

The crowd halted, and stared round in superstitious terror, and dumb marvel.

The leader of the tymbesteres sprang forward.

"Where is thy master, old hag, and where the bonny maid who glammers lords, and despises us bold lasses?"

"Alack! master and the damsel have gone hours ago! I am alone in the house; what's your will?"

"The crone looks parlous witchlike!" said Tim's father, crossing himself, and somewhat retreating from her grey, unquiet eyes. And, indeed, poor Madge, with her wrinkled face, bony form, and high cap, corresponded far more with the vulgar notions of a dabbler in the black art than did Adam Warner, with his comely countenance and noble mien.

"So she doth, indeed, and verily," said a hump-backed tinker, "if we were to try a dip in the horse-pool yonder it could do no harm."

"Away with her, away!" cried several voices at that humane suggestion.

"Nay, nay," quoth the baker, "she is a douce creature, after all, and hath dealt with me many years. I don't care what becomes of the wizard—every one knows [he added with pride] that I was one of the first to set fire to his house when Robin gainsayed it!—but right's right—burn the master, not the drudge!"

This intercession might have prevailed, but unhappily, at that moment Graul Skellet, who had secured two stout fellows to accomplish the object so desired by Friar Bungey, laid hands on the model, and, at her shrill command, the men advanced and dislodged it from its place. At the same time, the other tymbesteres, caught by the sight of things pleasing to their wonted tastes, threw themselves, one upon the faded robe Sibyll's mother had worn in her chaste and happy youth; another, upon poor Madge's silver brooch; a third, upon the gittern.

These various attacks roused up all the spirit and wrath of the old woman: her cries of distress, as she darted from one to the other, striking to the right and left with her feeble arms, her form trembling with passion, were at once ludicrous and piteous, and these

were responded to by the shrill exclamations of the fierce tymbesteres, as they retorted scratch for scratch, and blow for blow. The spectators grew animated by the sight of actual outrage and resistance; the hump-backed tinker, whose unwholesome fancy one of the aggrieved tymbesteres had mightily warmed, hastened to the relief of his virago, and rendered furious by finding ten nails fastened suddenly on his face, he struck down the poor creature by a blow that stunned her, seized her in his arms—for deformed and weakly as the tinker was, the old woman, now sense and spirit were gone, was as light as skin and bone could be—and followed by half a score of his comrades, whooping and laughing, bore her down the stairs. Tim's father, who, whether from parental affection, or, as is more probable, from the jealous hatred and prejudice of ignorant industry, was bent upon Adam's destruction, halloed on some of his fiercer fellows into the garden, tracked the footsteps of the fugitives by the trampled grass, and bounded over the wall in fruitless chase. But on went the more giddy of the mob, rather in sport than in cruelty, with a chorus of drunken apprentices and riotous boys, to the spot where the hump-backed tinker had dragged his passive burthen. The foul green pond near Master Sancroft's hostel reflected the glare of torches; six of the tymbesteres, leaping and wheeling, with doggerel song and discordant music, gave the signal for the ordeal of the witch—

“Lake or river, dyke or ditch,
Water never drowns the witch.
Witch or wizard would ye know?—
Sink or swim, is ay or no.
Lift her, swing her, once and twice,
Lift her, swing her o'er the brim,—
Lille—lera—twice and thrice—
Ha! ha! mother, sink or swim!”

And while the last line was chanted, amidst the full jollity of laughter and clamour, and clattering timbrels, there was a splash in the sullen water; the green slough on the surface parted with an oozing gurgle, and then came a dead silence.

“A murrain on the hag!—she does not even struggle!” said, at last, the hump-backed tinker.

“No, no! she cares not for water—try fire! Out with her! out!” cried Red Grisell.

“Aroint her! she is sullen!” said the tinker, as his lean fingers clutched up the dead body, and let it fall upon the margin.

“Dead!” said the baker, shuddering; “we have done wrong—I told ye so! She dealt with me many a year. Poor Madge!—Right's right. She was no witch!”

“But that was the only way to try it,” said the hump-backed tinker; “and if she was not a witch, why did she look like one!—I cannot abide ugly folks!”

The bystanders shook their heads. But whatever their remorse, it was diverted by a double sound: first, a loud hurrah from some of the mob who had loitered for pillage, and who now emerged from Adam's house, following two men, who, preceded by the terrible Graul, dancing before them, and tossing aloft her timbrel, bore in triumph the captured Eureka; and, secondly, the blast of a clarion at the distance, while up the street marched—horse and foot, with pike and banner—a goodly troop. The Lord Hastings in person led a royal force, by a night march, against a fresh outbreak of the rebels, not ten miles from the city, under Sir Geoffrey Gates, who had been lately arrested by the Lord Howard at Southampton—escaped—col-

lected a disorderly body of such restless men as are always disposed to take part in civil commotion, and now menaced London itself. At the sound of the clarion the valiant mob dispersed in all directions, for even at that day mobs had an instinct of terror at the approach of the military, and a quick reaction from outrage to the fear of retaliation.

But, at the sound of martial music, the tymbesteres silenced their own instruments, and instead of flying, they darted through the crowd, each to seek the other, and unite as for counsel. Graul, pointing to Mr. San-croft's hostelry, whispered the bearers of the Eureka to seek refuge there for the present, and to bear their trophy with the dawn to Friar Bungey, at the Tower; and then, gliding nimbly through the fugitive rioters, sprang into the centre of the circle formed by her companions.

"Ye scent the coming battle," said the archtymbestere.

"Ay—ay—ay!" answered the sisterhood.

"But we have gone miles since noon—I am faint and weary!" said one amongst them.

Red Grisell, the youngest of the band, struck her comrade on the cheek—"Faint and weary, ronion, with blood and booty in the wind!"

The tymbesteres smiled grimly on their young sister; but the leader whispered "Hush!" and they stood for a second or two with outstretched throats—with dilated nostrils—with pent breath—listening to the clarion, and the hoofs, and the rattling armour;—the human vultures foretasting their feast of carnage; then, obedient to a sign from their chieftainess, they crept lightly and rapidly into the mouth of a neighbouring alley, where they cowered by the squalid huts,

concealed. The troop passed on—a gallant and serried band—horse and foot, about fifteen hundred men. As they filed up the thoroughfare, and the tramp of the last soldiers fell hollow on the starlit ground, the tymbesteres stole from their retreat, and, at the distance of some few hundred yards, followed the procession, with long, silent, stealthy strides,—as the meaner beasts, in the instinct of hungry cunning, follow the lion for the garbage of his prey.

CHAPTER V

THE FUGITIVES ARE CAPTURED—THE TYMBESTERES RE-
APPEAR—MOONLIGHT ON THE REVEL OF THE LIVING
—MOONLIGHT ON THE SLUMBER OF THE DEAD

The father and child made their resting-place under the giant oak. They knew not whither to fly for refuge—the day and the night had become the same to them—the night menaced with robbers, the day with the mob. If return to their home was forbidden, where in the wide world a shelter for the would-be world-improver? Yet they despaired not, their hearts failed them not. The majestic splendour of the night, as it deepened in its solemn calm—as the shadows of the windless trees fell larger and sharper upon the silvery earth—as the skies grew mellow and more luminous in the strengthening starlight, inspired them with the serenity of faith—for night, to the earnest soul, opens the bible of the universe, and on the leaves of Heaven is written—"God is everywhere!"

Their hands were clasped, each in each—their pale faces were upturned; they spoke not, neither were they